New Directions Journal Fall 2009

Psychoanalytic Writing from New Directions, a program of The Washington Center for Psychoanalysis, Inc.

Washington Center for Psychoanalysis INC.

VOLUME 4
ISSUE 1

New Directions in Psychoanalytic Writing

Editors:
Jessica Arenella, Ph.D.
Kathie Hepler, M.A.

Editorial Board:
Sharon Alperovitz, M.S.W.
Deirdre Callanan, Ph.D.
David E. Cooper, Ph.D.
Martha Dupecher, Ph.D., M.S.W.
Robert Winer, M.D.

Published by the
Washington Center For Psychoanalysis
New Directions Program

www.washpsa.org

Editor: 202.333.6332 / 917.304.5901

NOTE: All of the writing contained herein is protected by copyright. Copyright for each of the individual pieces is retained by the author and cannot be reproduced in any form without the author's explicit consent. The author may reproduce or publish her or his piece in whole or in part at her or his own discretion without notification to the Washington Center for Psychoanalysis.

Editor's Note

Jessica Arenella, Ph.D.

This is my first time editing the New Directions Journal and I want to start by thanking all of the faculty and students for their patience as I climb this steep and tortuous learning curve.

I especially want to thank my co-editor Kathie Hepler, M.A., for sharing her experience and expertise so generously. I also must thank our consultant, Deirdre Callanan, Ph.D., for sharing her wisdom with such alacrity concerning the poetry submissions. Paco Martínez-Alvarez has been essential for the transformation of vague plans and ideas into a tangible and functional format, always with good humor, support, and finesse.

I am sure that after I turn off my computer and sleep for a few days that I will want to thank Bob Winer, M.D., for granting me the opportunity to become an editor of the New Directions Journal.

Of course, this journal would not exist without our wonderful writers at New Directions. I have enjoyed the interplay of words and ideas that we have shared in editing these works together.

We have a new feature in this issue that I think will be of particular interest to our newest students. The graduation remarks by several former students have been included as minor literary works describing with loving humor, great pathos, and significant agita, the birth of ones literary self through New Directions.

I welcome your feedback and suggestions regarding this issue of the journal.

Jessica Arenella, August, 2009

Table of Contents

Nocturnes on a Theme of Napalm

Bo Lane Holland Winer

I: WATER

There are many stories I could tell you that have all the requisite parts: beginnings, ends, and middles, reasons to tell them, lessons learned. The basics I learned by parsing out the parables of Jesus, rambling the streets and allies of language with Proust, watching my neighbors through the eyes of Faulkner. I can tell you stories about dust storms, hills of mica, warm cream on raisins and oatmeal, riding in a Thunderbird on the "roller coaster" road out on the great flat plains.

There are so many of these potential stories that have collected in my mental file cabinet that when I sit down to write a short piece an unconscious slot machine turns on, the wheels roll, come to a stop, and a story slips out of the box. Because I believe that the first priority of writing craft is to match the style to the content the small stories seem to tell themselves and I just do the typing. Ultimately my hardest task is to fake some punctuation since stories have a no regard for such human habits and I've never been to grammar school.

These easy stories require so little of me that they're boring to write so I limit them to 500 words and hit print. Readers, on the other hand, like these anecdotes. They come to me weighted down with quotes and tell me how this one moved them to action or that one is embroidered on a pillow. I stand there embarrassed that I have no memory of ever having read, let alone written, words in that particular order.

I relegate these tales to the same category where I abandon the daydreams that come to me when my mind slips a cog and goes drifting off in search of entertainment. But I identify with the admirers of my anecdotes for the same reason that I find daydreams are very satisfying. They have this charming characteristic that in them I'm always the star. Depending upon their age my friends imagine they are warrior princesses, soccer stars, super-moms, or still-not-dead. Having always been disgustingly mundane I daydream about signing a bill into law that limits taxes to an equal percentage of all assets changing hands. Of course, buried in that fantasy is this delusion that I rule the world and it is this sugar-coated game of self-delusion that makes daydreaming such a common recreation. The risk, of course, comes when we take our perfection all too seriously like I did when I was young and thought myself a marvel.

Imagine me, a skinny, flat-chested 17-year-old girl who'd hardly ever been out of one little county in Kansas, being asked by a military recruiter from Wichita to teach some young men to swim so they could join the Marines. Semper Fidelis! I'd have stammered awkwardly and held to the fringes of any other event that included even one of these prime mid-western white or brown-bread boys. Anyone could see that I was cut off a much flimsier branch on evolution's tree than the

big-breasted blondes who turned these boys' eyes. The recruiter, however, had gifted me with a sort of script to use with his recruits and an excuse to touch them. *Just relax. The water will hold you up. Don't fight it. Lift your elbows higher. Breathe with the stroke. Breathe and stroke*.

In addition to memorizing the Red Cross training book that summer I spent my free time scouring the library for maps of the thoracic, scapular, and humeral regions in the landscape of male anatomy.

The recruiter brought down three or four groups of these friendly, good-natured, more than slightly anxious young men that summer and the regular swimming teacher just pretended to always be gone when they arrived. I never asked her why. I even imagined that she thought I was a better teacher than she was. And the boys did learn, often faster than my much younger students so the recruiter complimented me effusively. Which I loved.

In every group there was a skillful flirter who unknowingly taught me a tactic that I then tried out on the shy boy who always reminded me of myself. There wasn't a one of them, even the mean or ugly boys, that I'd didn't learn to love a little.

On the final day of these lessons the recruiter let it slip that he had chosen me not for my exceptional skill but because these particular boys were all terrified of water. Since most of them weren't more than a year or two older than I was, they were too proud to chicken out on a girl. This, unfortunately was the first indication that during my otherwise lonely summer I had been an innocent in the cruelest definition of the word. My thread of self-delusion had been spliced into cord after cord of national delusion until that whole twisted rope ran from my bacteria purged swimming pool all the way into the swampy jungles of Vietnam . . . and then returned to me as familiar names in the Wichita paper that listed Kansans killed in action. First one and then another and another and very soon I realized that I too had played a part in killing them..

I could have made a longer story out of all this, told you how I fell asleep every night for years listening to the drum-and-bugle call of their teeth chattering from in the frigid the early morning water. How my own teacher had refused to teach them because she knew where the boys would be going. How, even after I realized the truth, I wasn't able to throw away the Marine corps t-shirt that the recruiter had loaned a boy who'd then left it behind. How, despite being wrapped in plastic that shirt's erotic smell of male sweat and chlorine had somehow been replaced with a more potent mix of jungle rot and regret. But the easy stories never hold my attention for long.

II: LIGHT

Unlike day dreams day-frights are those strange experiences in which a potential for personal disaster develops but ultimately dissipates with no real harm done. During them I feel as if one part of my brain is watching to see what will happen and the other is preparing for defensive action. Alert but never pushed into flight or fright.

These kind of events are often the basis of my favorite writing projects because though they

don't come together by themselves they can be crafted into a cohesive and multi-layered story. I could give you a whole series of narratives about traveling with strangers on the back roads of Oklahoma and Arkansas trying to get reluctant Negros, Indians, Latinos, and poor Whites to sign papers that would insure their right to vote. Stories about the familiar preachers' sons from small towns in Kansas and the exotic Jews from the suburbs of Kansas City who went shack to shack persuading these frightened and resentful people to register for something most of them didn't even understand. I was actually forbidden to get out of the car unless someone from the law came to ask questions.

My favorite uncle was a city cop. The chief-of-police ate breakfast every a day at the café where'd I worked all through high school. I knew cops, trusted them, and charmed them. I told them half-truths that the idealistic boys believed were lies. "Oh, they're just do-gooders who think all this matters. We both know it won't but we don't want the feds down here riling up folks. What's your number so there if there's any ruckus I can call you? Quiet like." We'd shake hands. They'd mostly flirt. I'd tease them how it was their women folks they really needed to worry about voting against them.

Everyone laughed and no trouble ever came. Not once. But the situation was always tense because everyone was afraid. The cops were afraid that the boys were going to make some kind of trouble that would lose them their jobs. The boys were afraid because they had never been on back roads at night among people so "ignorant." And I was afraid because I empathized with the "victims" justifiable fear and anger at both sides for so casually stripping them of their hard pressed sense of self-esteem; after all I was another of those people that these white men felt they had to manage "*for their own good.*"

Actually I was most angry at myself because I hated being belittled by all these men but was also afraid that I was just missing some critical piece of knowledge that totally disproved my own opinion that everyone was over-rating the importance of paper and badges.

What I did know was that I was horrified by the bare bulbs in the dark hovels and shacks, the weak interior lights in the police cars, the lack of light in the car where I was forced to sit almost all night, and the single candle burning on the dirt floor where a cadaverous family of the Indians lived like prairie dogs in a dugout under the ground.

All these people could be stories I would enjoy writing because in the short-run nothing dangerous developed and in the long run everything changed for the better because all of us were able to hold our peace.

III: ROPE

There are, however, even darker day-frights, more on the order of day-terrors, that I can occasionally mold into a story but only if the actual terror was experienced by someone else. To tell one of these always seems too much like thieving but I'll appropriate this story because it illustrates

so well where the boundary road runs between what I can write up and what I can't.

***** Because "Roger" and I were the only employees in a little bar near the university we never got off work before 1:00 in the morning so he often insisted on dropping me off at my low-rent apartment. He worried because it was at the edge of the Negro part of town but I had chosen to live there because it felt to me like the only really safe place in the city. I liked the women and their back-and-forth sass, always calling me "white bitch" when everything was going fine and crooning, "Honey, Honey" when I needed a friend. Most of all I liked the revival meetings, twice a week, with music that soared into amen chorus where I felt closer to God than I ever would again. Roger allowed this but refused to accept that I could be safe when the only entrance to my apartment was through a door at the back that was lit by only one yellow bulb.

Many nights he came up and we talked about trivialities: some of our customers, the music on the jukebox, that the lady who ran the liquor store next to our bar who used to be the mistress of some crime politico. The only exciting thing that ever happened was one night a couple of guys, not our customers, got in a fight in the back parking lot. I'd been told to never call the police. Instead the boss had given me a "secret number" to call if there was trouble. So I did. Roger was not at all surprised when the police arrived to deal with the problem but I was stunned. After work he explained that the syndicate didn't like trouble around their bars. Then I understood why some mornings I'd find cigarettes and alcohol glasses that had appeared without explanation in the back room that was luxuriously appointed with an antique pool table.

So that was how we were. Friends but in no way intimate. Never anything sexual. No approach-avoid. Just a kind of shared deadness. It was oddly comfortable. All summer.

My apartment was an attic room with a shower in a closet and a small kitchen in the corner. There was a single table that I pushed against the staircase railing and kept large knife laid out on it. "To protect myself," I said but that wasn't true. I had, no have, a thing with knives. Make familiars of them. Roger had good instincts so he thought it was dangerous for me to keep one out on display. "If someone broke in they'd likely use it on you," he argued and I agreed but didn't move from where I was sitting on the floor beside my single piece of furniture, a mattress on the floor.

That night—the night—we talked longer than usual. He told me that he'd survived two consecutive tours of duty in Vietnam as a Navy medic assigned to the Marines. It shocked me to learn that the medics weren't issued guns because they were supposedly non-combatants so they had to arm themselves with equipment stripped from the dead.

I was surprised when Roger, who seemed pretty tough, admitted that he'd occasionally used a gun to save one of "his" riflemen but he rarely shot in his own defense. As the war went on, he had felt less and less attached to his life. Instead he was drawn to the injured, the dying, his men or natives caught in crossfire, and even eventually to injured enemy soldiers. All these filled him with purpose when nothing else mattered.

At the same time the natural choices of his duties became more difficult. Since medics always had limited time and capabilities they were forced to make quick decisions about who to save and who to abandon: the nearest? the least injured? the most injured? a good soldier? or a man he liked instead of one he didn't? Days became a series of life-and-death decisions that he learned to make on the fly. *This one. Not that one. It's done.*

While other men took drugs, even the morphine that had been issued to them to help injured soldiers; while other men drank and whored during down time in local villages, Roger wandered the streets listening, not wondering, not thinking, not in any way questioning why he was there. He just walked and listened, listened and walked. Was relieved when he could go back to the battlefields where his assignment gave him a list and a place.

When he signed up for a second tour it wasn't because of a deeply personal decision but because someone put a paper on the table and a pen in his hand. America had become a fantasy, a faint fantasy, a little village of hobbits in a small European woods that still possessed lines betweens fairies and orcs.

Near the end of his second tour he received a letter from his long estranged father, a Chicago businessman with deep and often violent ties to crime. The letter was simple: *Your brother was killed yesterday. He should never have there but you were his hero.*

I … (yes, I'm actually still a part of this story) … I understood a parent who could be so upset by a catastrophe that they had to blame it on someone other than themselves. Why a child had to carry the shame was not something I had ever understood—or as it turns out, ever would.

That night I cried for Roger and he comforted me in one of those strange reversals of role when the weight of deep pain can be handed over to someone else to carry for a while. So the time had grown later than we usually parted before he began to stir to leave. A paste of gray blurred the darkness. The world would wake up before Roger and I had even begun to sleep.

. . . and then we heard a deep wild scream that sounded like a woman was having her skin peeled off. I froze in confusion but Roger sprang up, his wire always ready for a hair's-breath escape. He grabbed that knife off my table even as he was moving in a tumbling jaguar's take-off to save . . . what?

I caught up. The long, whined screams seemed to come from every direction at once. The streets remained empty except for our mad pursuit. I was running so close behind him that I feared he might turn, not recognize me, and slit my throat. We ran this way and that and the scream taunted us like an evil clown from the house of horrors. She screamed higher and weaker and higher and weaker until there was nothing left but the early twittering of birds as they woke to the breeze as if no one had been slaughtered in the whole history of men.

Eventually we got back to my house and I pried that knife from his fingers that were bloody from holding it too near the blade. I put him on my bed and made a fresh pot of tea. While I waited

for the water to come to a boil I watched him curl up like a frond on my bed and for some few minutes I really loved him like I have so rarely been able to do in my life and from across the room he began to slowly give me his story.

I cannot use his words. It was too long ago and I have thought of them too rarely. But I can tell you what I remember him saying. "We were coming through the jungle carrying a guy that had been hit in the belly. I carried him on my back to keep his guts from falling out. The other medic had been hit in the leg but he was still able to carry one of those skinny kids they round up in the slums and send to us just to fill up their quotas. Most them died before they'd tied their boots. But there were some that fought like maniacs and danced through the bullets.

"Ahead of us the jungle was a brighter green. That meant there was a clearing for one of those shit villages where the gooks lived. We always had to hang wide around them because they'd be up the trees like monkeys. Drop grenades on us, bags of shit, parts of our own guys — arms and legs with pieces of their uniforms still on them.

"This time I heard barfing. Big dry heaves. Frizzo we called him. I never knew his real name and then . . . Oh, shit, oh shit, oh shit. I went fucking lime green. Like fucking jellies in a box. Somehow I hadn't gone around the clearing but had walked right in like my feet were cut off from my head. Looked up where Frizzo was looking and I thought I'd already seen the worst, it couldn't go deeper, and then they were hanging there. All these women hanging by their necks from a net that someone had woven with ropes like a web. Across the whole clearing. Their faces were purple and bloated. Their legs had been pulled wide with more rope. Their women parts pulled out and hanging like rags from their cunts. Some even had little babies hanging off the cords. Who? Who could ever? Who could even think up something so awful . . . and then I knew—back at camp I'd heard laughing . . . 'decorating Christmas trees' — hadn't known —hadn't known. The guy on my back was dead. Never looked up."

And then Roger slept, really slept for a few hours before he got up and left. Our time together was short. But at odd moments since I've wondered how someone could go on holding such horror inside him. Perhaps, perhaps he never really slept again.

If that had not been an escaped parrot but an actual woman we had failed to save then this would have been a too emotionally scarring experience for me to write up but as it happened the wild chase remained a day-fright that another writer could have written up even as a comedy. I couldn't because of the knife.

The memory of the women hanging from the trees was certainly a day-terror for Roger but for me, the listener, the writer as vampire, this was a full, rich story that would challenge my commitment to both spare-writing and keeping my readers' interest until my reason for telling the story has been revealed.

IV: GLASS

Knife catalogs, ten-most wanted lists, gun shows, black ice roads, street fights, urban riots, the lure of deep water far from shore in a storm, haunting Times Square in the darkest hours. And not ever was I so much as threatened. Do you suppose the villains guessed that no one could scare me as much as I scared myself?

Most of these scenes I could craft into stories; however, some events defy the confinement of my narrative structure. Day-terrors pollute the mornings and often leak through my nights and naps, again and again.

Bitter tea, day after day, in my morning cup.

In my nightmares, the after hours twin to day-terrors, I'm often assigned the welfare of a child or children in imminent danger of being destroyed by one Disney's charming creations: Maleficent, Ursula, Cruella De Vil, Madame Medusa, assorted nasty stepmothers, and that terrible alligator with the ticking clock in her belly.

I must hold the open the door to the secret passage while a string of third-graders plunge through it to avoid capture by Macbeth's henchmen who are slashing and burning through the halls above. I must facilitate the escape of a row of eleven little girls and Madeline who are sneaking away from fork-wielding Frenchmen hungry for thirty pounds of tender flesh and bone. I must protect reckless children running too close to the cliff edge, or in front of racing cars. I shield an orphanage from pieces of satellites/meteorites/or lexan panels falling, falling, falling from the sky. And despite all these heroics I almost invariably fail to save anyone at all.

I can give you lists upon lists upon lists upon lists of these nightmares but no stories. They remain isolated shocks from a stun gun. Day-terrors, however, really happen, really put you and everything you value into peril and then smash it. After a nightmare I wake up but after day-terror I've never been to sleep.

Some people can make stories of such moments in their lives. I can't. My own memories of both nightmares and day-terrors are never more than vaguely connected flittering images. Twentieth century poets are be able to make a kind of sense out of their own fragments but for me, a storyteller, all this shredded language remains a dismembered alphabet — black-wet fortunes written in the leavings of my morning cup.

…….. After years of protests that drew meager crowds,
Thousands of letters no one answered
Kent State University is 24,000 students who don't care
Unless the army threatens to draft their own body.
What does it matter if they choose violence or non-violence?
Which would make a difference? What could win a war?

A handful come. Outnumbered by the newsmen who arrange them in a cluster.
Wandering speeches … Nixon's invasion of Cambodia…
Nixon's invasion of Cambodia
More sound bites to cut, shots in the air, and curses.
Close in cameras make the rally looked much bigger than it is.
Pictures it seems can lie even more easily than words.
She's just hoping someone will listen.
The press only needs a few male heads to yell out their rants.
24,000 students who've never been townies
Circling and circling their fires, revving their engines.
Circling, circling the yellow livered speeches … Nixon's invasion of Cambodia…
Nixon's invasion of Cambodia …
Shots in the air. And curses!
The ROTC building's burned but no one thinks to charge the press.
24,000 students don't notice that bikers and guardsmen are all townies.
Then the army descends upon the whole, "*Burn you, Pinko faggots and whores.*"
No one thinks to charge the press when a rally's called for May the fourth
No one thinks, not even her in her daisy print jumpsuit of red-white-and-blue.
No one even imagines they're dressing for war.
Revving their engines. Giving their speeches … Nixon's invasion of Cambodia…
Nixon's invasion of Cambodia …
She gathers her books and hurries up an embankment onto an open field
Nothing makes a difference? Nothing wins a war?
What does it matter if we chose to act or to not?
When the rally's called it's just another rally, just another day.
She's more than grateful that the press has arrived
So someone else might listen to the sound of skin melting
Off tiny women with children wrapped to their chests.
The crowd's ahead. "More than a few," she thinks, "That's good."
…… One swift clink of beer mugs for her birthday in a bar.
Then shouts from outside. Biker gangs burning cars or tires in the street
Students line the sidewalks to watch the bonfire.
Black leather bikers revving their engines, circling and circling.
Shots in the air. And curses. *Burn you, Pinko faggots.*
Pole up the ass bitches. Comi-loven' whores.
Black leather bikers burning cars and tires in the street.

A reporter with a cameraman who asks her,
"Is this a protest against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia?"
Shots in the air. And curses. *Burn you, Pinko faggots!*
She tells him what each person before her has said,
"This is just the town gangs making trouble again."
He turns left to question her friend and then left and then left again
Until he asks a button-down collar and ironed khaki pants
Perpetual outsider kid who likes to pretend he's a dude.
Each leading question the reporter asks the pasty repeats in the affirmative.
Together they make the local late news.
"Is this a protest against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia?"
And the national news by morning.
"We're protesting Nixon's invasion of Cambodia."
It makes better copy and sound bites
Than saying townies are making trouble again. Shots in the air. And curses.
24,000 students who couldn't care less
If we sliced off the whole of Asia and set it a'drift into space.
And maybe 50 who'd protest any invasion of anything
But less than a dozen who meet to organize a rally.
And they're too busy giving finals and taking finals and grading finals
To print more than a few flyers and spread a thin layer of words.
……. *Burn you, Pinko faggots. Pole up the ass bitches. Comi-loven' whores.*
Which makes a difference? What wins a war?
One shot. Then a volley.
She's from Kansas; of course, she knows rifle blast when she hears it.
Are they practicing for some ROTC parade?
One shot. Then a volley.
The town gangs making trouble again?
24,000 students.
Glass breaks in the window behind her.
A boy yells, "They're shooting people. Get down."
She walks into green.
"Get Down!!! Get Down!!!" Her feet step forward without intent.
One shot. Then a volley.
Her books drop slowly behind her. Crumbs on the trail.
She walks and never thinks to stop and help anyone.

She walks on small white flowers hidden in the bloody grass.
One shot. Then a volley.
She circles the calls for rescue, police, guardsmen, medical crews.
She circles reporters and cameramen and button-down boys with ironed khaki pants.
She circles Nixon and Cambodia and drops pieces of her own promises behind her,
Crumbs on the trail. *One shot. Then a volley.*
She hears her fifth grade teacher explaining how to raise and lower the flag,
"Above all else, most important, never let the flag touch the ground."
She walks by helicopters scouring out intrigues on balconies,
Through search lights pinning everyone else in their tracks.
One shot. Then a volley.
Tanks range up and down the streets and she circles them with her steps.
"No one's allowed to leave for any reason including death."
Maybe, she wonders, *this isn't just another of my paranoid psychotic delusions.*
And then she walks into summer and loses her shoes.
Walks over snow until the police recognize her from times before
And as usual they wrap her in a blanket and take her home
Where she's already been sitting for hours on the lawn in the night
Trying to fit slivers of glass together before her fingers bleed her to death.
Even the madwoman on the first floor in her daisy print jumpsuit knows
Such tiny pieces will never again be a pane.

Time

Fedwa Malti-Douglas, Ph.D.

I am writing the preface and acknowledgments to a forthcoming book, *Partisan Sex*, that was born of my earlier book, *The Starr Disrobed.* As I am writing, I insert the place (New York) and the publisher (Columbia University Press) of that earlier work. It is time to add the date of publication for the book. I think about it. I search my brain. The date remains a blank. I do not want to interrupt my writing by crossing the house to my stack room where my books reside merely to derive the date. So I write 1990 with a question mark and the word CHECK, for the year of publication. I finish the text and print it. Then I reread it on paper and mark up the typos. The next stage, the insertion of the corrections, will be done by my husband, Allen, since his computer is newer and has a much larger screen that permits a more detailed look at the words.

In the middle of writing a short essay for an upcoming weekend conference on psychoanalysis and trauma, Allen walks into the room where I am composing my contribution.

"Are you aware?" he asks me "that when you typed the date for the *Starr Report* book you wrote it as 1990?"

"No," I answer. I add that I had placed a question mark and the "CHECK" word so that we could verify the date of publication.

"You wrote 1990. The book came out in 2000. I just checked it. That's ten years too early. Doesn't that tell you anything?"

"No," I respond.

I am not actually thinking about the preface and acknowledgments because my mind is embedded in the trauma piece and specifically in how I will insert the famous Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again

I am wondering how to intellectually weave together the impossibility of putting Humpty Dumpty's body parts together after his physical fall. Is he still alive? If he is that badly broken into pieces, why the efforts to put him together again — first by the king's horses (an interesting choice — how can horses possess the ability to perform such an act unless we are in the realm of allegory) and then by the king's men? What happened to Humpty Dumpty's mental state? Is the falling apart but a metaphor for another type of fall, perhaps mental? We know nothing here, concerned as we are with the attempt to put him together again. In my contribution, I wanted to relate this

familiar incident to the sensation of one's mind falling apart while attempting to deal with multiple traumas, and more importantly how one attempts to put the broken parts of one's self together again, if that is at all possible.

Here is Allen interrupting me as I was reading and rereading the nursery rhyme. He asks me again:

"You really didn't realize you had typed in that date?"

I am getting frustrated. My mind is jumping between the broken Humpty Dumpty and my own typographical error.

"No," I answer again. "I was just typing a date with a question mark because I could not remember the exact year."

"You read the text over and marked it up, didn't you?"

"Of course, I did. You know that."

"You still don't get it?"

My voice reflects my impatience. "There's nothing to get."

"1990," he repeats, "Think about that."

I madly try to push Humpty Dumpty out of the way. I concentrate as hard as I can.

"Oh, my God," I respond. "In 1990, we were still in Texas. It was before coming to Bloomington."

"That's right."

"Oh, my God," I catch myself repeating. "It was before all the shit happened. Before all the attacks. Before all the threats."

I was already conscious of the fact that my brain had scrambled time references while it attempted to fight the invasion of the PTSD. Using those four letters to describe the multiple earthquakes that had taken place in my head over the decades always made me feel uneasy, ashamed, guilty. As if I were exploiting my misfortunes. It was an effort for me to remember that I had been buried by an avalanche of examinations and then diagnosed with this four-letter illness by a prominent New York psychiatrist.

I had unconsciously rewritten my own intellectual trajectory with a simple typographical error. I had eliminated from my mind more than ten agonizing years of my life. Where was I during all that time when I was but a shadow of myself? I was mildly aware of sleepwalking through my job. Perhaps it is not accidental that we utter the short phrase "only the shadow knows" when something baffles us or when we would rather not look at reality in the face.

A Perfect Fire

Ona Lindquist, L.C.S.W.

Really.
I only ever built one fire

Lowly burns a slow light
beams log to log

Under lean moons
tarry shadows in the shallow.

O *The hissing bark stammers*
light scatters in the jitter.

O *The dryness of a lonely beauty*
in a bridled rage.

Old memory drags the weep
night trains push through it.

Hum and rumble lull
and stone me

In the fallen silence
in the space between

The creative hour
and the dying swan

It's Our Breath

Madeline Karpel, M.S.W.

I look up at the moon through the tall window of the Second Presbyterian Church in Baltimore on a frigid mid-January afternoon, late. The moon is luminous through the bare tree branches in the deepening blue of the sky. The warmth of the large room presses against the weather outside.

I am a Jew who has spent many Sunday afternoons listening to music in churches. Sometimes it is religious music, a Mass or a Requiem, an organ recital, but often, it is not. Today it is a violin and piano recital: Bach, Beethoven, Franck, Ravel. Two hours of music my husband and I listen to sitting on a hard wooden pew. There is a cushion on the seat, but the wood is uncomfortable against my back, a painful reminder of my body as I try to focus only on the music. The church is elegant and spare. The walls and columns and moldings are the color of cream in a bowl. The high arched ceiling is soft gray stucco. The sun plays around the edges of the heavy drapes that have been drawn against it. The bright beam of light is blinding and I close my eyes. In any case, this is how I prefer to listen.

We are used to sitting next to each other like this, listening to music. Over the years there were so many hours in recital halls or school auditoriums or churches. Sometimes I feel very close to him as we listen together. Sometimes I feel alone with the music. Sometimes I imagine the audience is a congregation whose members share a fundamental belief in the transformative power of music. The musicians are deep in their wordless conversation. We are all listening. The music holds us.

The musicians play and the light in the room slowly fades until finally the chandeliers and sconces are lit. I listen, eyes closed. I try to listen only, to clear my mind, to lose myself in the music and let it carry me along. I am surprised when tears come. There are no sad thoughts, no memories. I am moved by the yearning I hear in the violin and the piano, but the tears also feel like a response to the beauty of the moment. Being with my husband, the music, the church, the bright winter afternoon. I hope that I am not alone in what I feel, but maybe he is thinking about work, maybe the others are composing shopping lists or worrying about their children, as I sometimes do.

After the concert, while I wait for my husband in the side aisle of the church, I gaze out at the night, admiring the moon that glows coldly in the winter sky. People are buttoning coats and pulling on hats, getting ready to step out of this bright warm space into the icy evening air. A man approaches. He looks as if he is at home in this church, as I am not. He is tall, silver haired, wearing a suit and wool overcoat. "It's our breath," he says to me as he passes. I feel confused; I don't understand his meaning. Embarrassed, feeling like an interloper in this church, which I assume is

his church. I try to make sense of his remark. Maybe it is an aspect of his religion I don't know about. Something about the breath of the spirit present in the beautiful music we have just heard? Or had he also heard a mourner's sob in the first chords of Bach's Chaconne?

He says "It's our breath ... the moisture on the windows ... it's our breath that fogs up the glass."

Fishing the Woolly Bugger in the Impasse Pool

Lee S. Dukes, D.Min.

Joan describes a sleepless night. She recites the litany of problems she faces related to her marriage and family life. She feels overwhelmed and unable to think about solutions to any of her problems. "I should just throw myself into the pond at the farm and be done with it. I'm so messed up right now….I need to be in the hospital." I interpret to her that she is already in a hospital the two times a week that she meets with me at my office. She looks startled and then perks up and says, "That's right." I interpret further that maybe she is experiencing the need to be in my office more than twice a week. She is open to this interpretation and to the option to consult me more often in dealing with her feelings of being overwhelmed and stuck.

I discuss the situation with the psychiatrist to whom I have referred her for evaluation and Joan and I have a consultation with her spouse. It is agreed by all that a structural change makes sense. Joan and I will schedule five sessions per week for a month. We will evaluate her status at the end of this period.

I am convinced that Joan does not want to be hospitalized literally. I understand that she wants to have her overwhelming feelings contained, and she wants someone to help her begin to understand her life situation differently. This place of being stuck has something to do with the relationship between Joan and me and her ability to utilize me for this process. What are we going to uncover here? I keep this question in mind as we proceed.

With the structural change, the work becomes more intensely focused. Associations and interpretations flow freely from day-to-day. Joan's anxiety and self-destructive fantasies decrease steadily. Am I simply experiencing that Joan needs more of a traditional psychoanalytically-oriented structure? I'm not a psychoanalyst. I'm a pastoral psychotherapist with psychoanalytic training practicing in a small southern town. Little awareness of pastoral psychotherapy exists here, much less of psychoanalytic thinking. But this process we have structured is working. Still,

what else is lurking beneath the surface of the relationship between Joan and me to be discovered and understood?

In the beginning of the third week, Joan's night is interrupted by her awaking to anxious, overwhelming and obsessive thoughts. In my office the following morning, her thoughts become more focused as we begin to talk. Toward the end of the session, she reaches into her purse and pulls out a small fishing fly. My office is furnished with several artistic pieces of fly-fishing memorabilia. In my community I am known as an avid and passionate fly fisherman. In this same community, Joan is known as an accomplished fly fisherwoman having participated in numbers of specialized expeditions all over the country. As had surfaced earlier in our exploration of her history, she was affectionately introduced to fishing by her maternal grandfather at an early age. Joan drops into my hand the fly she retrieves from her purse. I immediately recognize it as a Woolly Bugger, size eight. "I couldn't sleep last night so I got up and tied ten of these. I brought one to you because I know you will use it. You are a fly fisherman."

I look at the fly and study it. "I think you're trying to give me something more than this fly you have tied. Let's try to understand what it means tomorrow." Her eyes widen at my comment. She leaves the office that day appearing more hopeful in mood.

Over the night, I mull over the meaning of this Woolly Bugger that has been given to me by Joan. The Woolly Bugger is known the world over by fly fishermen. A caterpillar worm imitation, it is probably in the top five flies in the world as a go-to in tough times. The Woolly Bugger is often used in deep pools when the fish are not active on the top and one has to go deep out of sight in search of them.

So, I go deeper. I consult Mr. Webster. Woolly cites a second definition...lacking in clearness and sharpness, marked by mental confusion, lacking order. Bugger cites a second definition…a worthless person. I get it. The Woolly Bugger has been dropped into the unconscious pool of dialogue between Joan and me. I am hooked.

The next day as we begin the session, Joan is eager to begin our exploration of the meaning of the Woolly Bugger. I tell her of my consultation with Mr. Webster and then I make an interpretation. I think when you gave me the Woolly Bugger you gave me a symbol of what you experience as the confused, disordered, ugly, worthless, mentally unfit parts of yourself. You want to see how we might make sense out of these experiences of yourself in a different way. The moment the interpretation is made, Joan sits up in amazement and excitement. She is hooked by the Woolly Bugger and the depth of her unconscious that it symbolizes.

The Woolly Bugger interpretation begins a long process of exploration of the unconscious work that Joan and I do together. The impasse is broken. We resume our earlier structure of twice a week sessions at the end of the month with much increased intensity and exploration. I place Joan's Woolly Bugger in a display box that fly fishermen utilize to keep flies from special expeditions.

Several years ago Joan suggested that the Woolly Bugger encounter needed to be in my book on fly-fishing or psychotherapy or both. When I ask her permission to utilize it for this essay, she readily agrees. And as she and I remember the encounter, she is led to another depth of exploration in relation to her current life struggle. The Woolly Bugger is a great fly for exploring the deep pools. It hooks big fish and sometimes it hooks the human beings who fish it.

Untimely Losses

Gina Sangster Hayman, L.I.C.S.W.

Did she smoke secretly or drink more than the social cocktail
at the end of a busy day, the glass of carefully selected
red wine she'd enjoy with her second husband
over a quiet dinner in their new home

Did he quit exercising the prescribed minimum
three times per week for thirty minutes
and revert to the home-cooking of his
Tennessee youth, knowing it was wrong
inhaling his paunch in the bedroom mirror
before sliding into one of his customary pressed
shirts, looped with an understated but distinguished tie
His wife of nearly thirty years loved him anyway
and his two children came home from their disparate worlds
calling him Daddy

Maybe the transgressions of her youth
in the unhinged early sixties, one of the prettiest Jewish girls
on campus, came back to haunt, like her dead son's spirit
only accusatory, demanding recompense for what we
thought was a free ride

Or he wasn't the thoughtful father, devoted husband,
upstanding member of the community but someone else

whose life could end too soon with no great loss to the world
if there is such a soul not worth saving
It must have been something the rest of us can point to,
something to explain his going shy of 60, the sudden stroke
taking her away from the abundant blended family
gathered around her like a wild and colorful garden
tended by a gardener of unbridled imagination

We vow to follow doctor's orders, take Lipitor, pass up the
bacon and glistening little link sausages in their steaming trays
at the church retreat. We'll become vegetarians, never forget
our vitamins, practice safe sex, get to the gym, some of us
might even start to pray

Dear God, keep us safe
Help us understand why a woman whose smile
greeted us just the other day is gone, why her grandchildren
must find a way to keep her close without the sound of her voice

Dear God, help us to accept
the children in their twenties who come home now
where their mother lives alone, their father's beautiful
pin-striped suits still hanging in the closet above
his neat rack of shined sensible shoes, the life lessons
he taught echoing in the silent hallways

If we lean down close and listen
we can hear the Southern lilt of his voice, her throaty laugh,
even the words they might say
It isn't easy to live
with the eternal footman waiting in the wings,
counting our days, ushering those we love
out a side door before we've had time to say goodbye,
before we're ready to let them go or face our own
certain going

Lew's Bench

Joy Anna Marie Mills, M.A., M.Div.

Shinzen Young *tells me, "People live forever in wave form. The activity called Lew ripples through the universe in waves as well as particles. Let go of needing to know and voluntarily a new way of knowing will arise."*
Barry Williams *says, "Let the grief work on you."*

Inarticulate waves of unease build slowly all week approaching the sixth anniversary of the burying. The relentless restlessness; I scan for its source. "Lent. March. Palm Sunday, March 23. March 23, the day we buried Lew's ashes—most of them—in Duxbury. 2002. This is 2008, six years," I recite to myself. "Holy Week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter—and this year Lew's birthday on Wednesday. This has to be it. What else could it be?" Wearily, I think, "How can I possibly have more to grieve? This is just another in an endless string of anniversaries."

To calm the waves, I resolve: Sunday I will go to Lew's memorial bench in St David's arboretum and bury the ashes I have kept in my grandmother's heavy cut-glass powder jar on my desk. Bury them in Pennsylvania where we lived the second half of our marriage. Bury them at St David's where we both served as priests.

Instead Friday morning at 8:45, my mood plummets. After a delightful hour of morning reading, talking and breakfasting in the living room with Buck, my husband of four years, I walk into the bedroom to get dressed. As I pass my antique curly maple dressing table, depression crashes over me like a rogue wave. In an instant I am drowning in an undertow of despair. Standing in the closet, bewildered by the ordinary task of choosing clothes, I try to figure out what is going on. Is this anger and loneliness? Almost Easter and no children paying attention? I could generate anger about that. But the suddenness. The intensity. Unbidden tears slide down my cheeks.

Buck hugs me as I head out to my therapy appointment with my therapist who anchored me in the unremitting storm of dying, death and grieving. In our session, I ramble around in my thoughts, probing the pain, finding no resonances. He follows my words, interjects his. Accompanied, I go further, teary and floundering. Suddenly, I sense an opening. I drop down and then surface: "All those questions we had about the words of the liturgy, all our conversations about how to talk about God." I sob. "Together we were on the tantalizing verge of new words, new images. All we needed was time to put words around what we were experiencing. Now I will never hear his words, see his images." The connection between my pain and this loss is excruciating.

*****

The arboretum is on my way home; I will go there.

In the dirt circle beyond Old St David's Church, I pull my car to a stop. I walk across the wooden planks of the tiny foot bridge onto the soft earthen path that rings the arboretum. Immediately, I see defiant clusters of vibrant, petite, yellow flowers on their four-inch spring green stalks. It seems as if they were planted beneath the budding trees to lighten my heart. Next to them an array of equally small and brave white flowers shimmers in the late March sun. On my right the stream I could cross in two strides bubbles swiftly over the rocks on its gradual downhill course. I slow my pace as, on my way to Lew's bench, I pass by an ancient, sagging, moss-imbedded bench where I sat to read the marriage service on our first wedding anniversary six months after Lew's death. When I came to the words "I give you this ring…," I removed the broad gold band Lew had slid onto my finger 28 years before and shifted it onto my right hand where I already wore the matching band I had given him.

Now the path, following the stream, turns gently to the left and begins to rise. Walking in a contemplative rhythm, I notice tender sea green shoots poking up from the thawing earth. Further up the slight incline I see the sturdy new teak bench purchased and installed by Lew's friends. Here at the edge of the arboretum, hardy, pale yellow daffodils flower in burgeoning masses. The tall trees have barely budded so that the sun still shines on them from across the open expanse of the broad greening field with the huge, higgledy-piggledy rectangle of parishioners' dormant Victory gardens. I chose the location for the bench: in the arboretum but as close as possible to Lew's garden patch where each year he struggled with weeds and bugs to produce fresh vegetables. When they were finally served up at family dinners, Lew would say, "Fifteen minutes ago these vegetables were. . . ." and our children would chime in, ". . .growing in the garden." Then sighs and laughter.

I study the handsome bronze plaque designed by a member of Lew's men's group. A flame opens the lower circumference of the circle and twists upward; the inscription reads: "*In Memory of Lewis H. Mills, Senior Associate Rector, 1985-1994. Listen Carefully and Rejoice in the Voice of God.*" I sit on the bench and pay attention. Seeing the field of new grass lit by the sun rising higher into the sky, I double over to hold and comfort myself. Wrenching sobs rock my body. "There is no choice; I have to do this; I have to do even this work alone." The sobs subside when I look up. The sharp, clear radiance astonishes me.

Once again, bidden, yet unexpected, I am pulled through the eye of the needle. The welling up of Presence permeates me with certainty. Lew's words and images are imbedded in mine and I will write the theology.

Rappahannock Falls

Don Chiapinelli, M.S.W.

Arthur stood up on the concrete barrier. The rush hour traffic, having quickly recovered from the momentary slowdown caused by the crashing of his truck into the guardrail just a few moments ago, resumed its pace behind him. He heard a voice. He looked over and saw a woman standing nearby, her arms motioning towards him. Her mouth was moving but none of her words made their way to him. He looked back out, away from the woman and the cars, and into the cold air. The blue sky was filled with large strokes of clouds, their pale hue beginning to darken and color up from the lowering sun behind him. He lifted and held his arms straight out to the side. He felt a pain in his left shoulder, and then noticed the red wetness traveling down his arm and towards his hand, scarlet drops falling from his fingertips through the air, splattering softly on the pavement below.

Arthur closed his eyes. He heard the telephone ringing back in his kitchen, and he saw himself picking up the dull green handset from the old wall phone, the coiled cord snagged and twisted up on itself, unforgiving as he pulled it towards his ear. It was Smith from the Sheriff's office telling him that they had issued a warrant, and he could either come down to the station on his own or they would send a patrol car out to get him. After some silence Arthur said he'd be right down and he placed the handset back in the telephone's metal grip. He picked it back up and held the cord out with his arm so that it was suspended in air over the pale blue and green linoleum floor. It began to untangle itself, moving slowly at first and then gradually picking up speed as the snags and twists finally gave way until it spun around and around like a top. He watched it spin itself out the other way, and then back, and then again, until eventually it came to rest and he placed the handset carefully back up on the wall, its cord hanging in a long green loop, its line drawn against the faded yellow wall.

Arthur picked his keys up off the counter and headed out the front door, locking it behind him. He stepped into his white Tacoma and headed out of the subdivision, turning right down Brooke Road; he drove under the railroad overpass, and then left onto Andrews Chapel Road, passing Grafton Elementary. He turned left onto the highway, heading north, and drove the five miles until he saw the green sign with white letters up ahead announcing the familiar span of gray road across the river, Rappahannock Falls Bridge. When his truck reached the bridge he quickly wrenched the steering wheel to the right and headed for the river, plowing into the guardrail. But the bridge would not allow it. As the truck slammed into the rail Arthur was thrown into the steering wheel and up against the windshield, his seatbelt slicing through his shoulder and cutting quickly into his flesh. The Tacoma came to rest up against the concrete safety barrier – a Jersey

wall – that marked the edge of the bridge from thin air. Arthur moved slowly across the seat to the other side of the truck, opened the door and got out. His ears were ringing, and he heard its high even tone above the sound of the traffic passing beside him as he made his way down the pavement towards the midpoint of the bridge.

Arthur opened his eyes. He saw short thin puffs of white breath suspended before him in the cold January air. He saw the river moving peacefully down below. Standing quietly up on the Jersey wall he heard a car slow down in the traffic behind him, and a little girl's voice. A single word sailed through the air and over the pavement at him. "Jump!" And then all it took was a slight shifting of weight forward and he was airborne. They say all kinds of things about what happens in the moments before your life comes to an end. For Arthur, it was as if everything stood still while he remained suspended in air, held up in place by the crisp January cold above the icy water far down below.

The Rappahannock is a beautiful and majestic river; its headwaters begin on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge and 184 miles later its endings spill out through the Tidewater and into the Chesapeake Bay. Midway on its journey, having been joined a few miles earlier by the waters of the Rapidan, it winds through Fredericksburg, a small town steeped in Civil War history, with old growth forest lining its banks. Large rocks and huge stone cast about here and there give shape and sound to the water which rushes by them in the spring, eventually slowing to a thick pace under the burden of the summer's heat. In the fall bright red and orange leaves fill up its banks, drifting down and making their way out into the water, eventually coming to rest in the bottom of the river's shallow pools. In the winter the water moves quietly, determined, waiting.

Just north of town, Rappahannock Falls Bridge carries the highway 1,743 feet across and 163 feet above the river. Arthur faced east, the sun at his back, before he turned over in the air two and a half times, his meeting with the water delivering a loud unmistakable smack. He felt a visceral sickening crack, and everything began to close in around him, cold, dark, and numbing. A man raced down the riverbank and propelled himself out into the water. He grabbed a hold of Arthur's shirt, and then slid his arms underneath his shoulders and legs. He could feel the place where his back had broken. He held Arthur suspended in the river, its water quietly rocking him as they waited for the approaching sirens to arrive. The man told Arthur to hang in there, not to worry. He said, "Help is on the way." He studied Arthur's pained face, his blue eyes, and then he prayed out loud, white puffs of words floating down to the water in the softening air.

The next day, Tuesday, the headline in the Free Lance-Star would read, "Man Dies After Leaping Into River." The journalist noted that at least ten people have jumped from the bridge in the past eight years. A couple years back another man had jumped too, but he landed on the riverbank instead and survived. And then Wednesday's headline read, "Bridge Jumper Faced Sex Charges," and reported about two young girls, and an older one. On Thursday Arthur's obituary

stated that he is survived by his wife, two children, and his mother. It read, "Arthur was a member of Salem Christian Church. He served as a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy for 24 years, and held the title of Master Chief Religious Program Specialist. The funeral will be private, with burial to follow in Arlington National Cemetery."

Sheilah

Cynthia Young, Psy.D.

Sheilah, our nanny, died five weeks after my father died. If my father hadn't died, maybe Sheilah would still be alive. I'm pretty sure she wanted to talk to me but I think she didn't want to burden me. I wasn't paying careful attention. I can remember her asking me how I was feeling, I can remember her watching me as if to measure my mood, while we played with my daughter Sarah, while she folded the laundry. I can remember feeling the psychic nudge, and thinking "if she has something to say, she should just say it, I don't have the energy for this."

I can see her standing in the hallway outside of Sarah's room. She's standing there still if the physicists are right and all time is constant and static. When her grandmother died Sheilah felt cold in that hallway and swore she smelled roses, a sure sign of a visitation. She said, "Come here, come here, can't you smell them?" I thought maybe I smelled the roses too.

She's standing in the hallway, saying she feels sick. I'm saying "Go to bed, don't worry about the laundry, I'll take Sarah to the pool." She goes down to her bedroom. Sarah and I go to the pool. And that's that.

The night Sheilah died, Sarah and I came home from the pool. I fed Sarah, put her to bed, and went to bed myself. At one in the morning our dog George woke me up. My husband mumbled "ignore him", but the dog was intent, insistent, frantic. I put on a robe and stumbled down the stairs to the front door, but George didn't want the front door, he ran to the door to the basement, frantic, whining, I thought, "maybe a deer", I thought I didn't want to wake up Sheilah, but George was making such a fuss that I figured we'd be less apt to wake her if I just went with him. We walked down the carpeted stairs to the basement, I noticed the light was on under Sheilah's door, I heard loud breathing and thought she was snoring. I was relieved we hadn't woken her (why was her light on, why was she breathing so loud?) I walked to the sliding glass doors that faced the woods, opened them for George, who no longer seemed to want to go out, and Sheilah called my name, "Cy?", long and sad and hopeful. I went into Sheilah's room, and she was lying in her bed, panting, with her Rosary in her hands. She said 'I can't breathe.'"

The paramedics and the extreme shock trauma unit were wonderful. As they wheeled her out, still doing CPR, the head technician turned to me and said gently, gently, "Don't expect her to make it." My husband went with the ambulance. I stayed behind with Sarah, trying to find Sheilah's address book, trying to find anyone who could make decisions about her life and death.

We say that Sheilah died of an acute blood disorder, an inability to clot, internal bleeding. Privately, I say Sheilah was killed by her vow of chastity which resulted, as such a vow often does, in her pregnancy. She died of a ruptured ectopic pregnancy she was… too kind? too ashamed?… to mention.

The Filipino Community went crazy. Sending her body back to the Philippines would cost $10,000, a price my husband felt was too much to pay, money that could support a family in the Philippines for many years. I was never sure if the money was too much or not, but Sheilah's body looked horrible, swollen and distorted out of all recognizable shape. People who didn't know us and hadn't known Sheilah began a fund raiser, so that rather than being cremated, Sheilah's body could be flown home. Their slogan was "Not in a can but a coffin".

The local Filipino newspaper printed stories that we had let Sheilah suffer in the basement alone, sick and starving, over the weekend or for a week, before we did anything. They said Sheilah was pregnant with my husband's love child, that she had in her final despair fled through the woods behind our house, run into a tree, and knocked herself unconscious, and it was this head trauma that had killed her. They did in fact raise the money to send her body back. I don't know if it brought her family any comfort. I don't know if anything can bring any comfort when your child dies.

A local woman from the Philippines, who I think was running for a congressional seat, organized a memorial service for Sheilah, a month after her death. They told us the time, but when we arrived the service had been going on for a half hour. They were in the middle of talking about how abandoned and alone Sheilah was in her last hours. They stopped and acknowledged us when we came in, and changed the topic to Sheilah's reunion with God in heaven. They had food, afterwards, but I couldn't eat. I thought I should have, it would set them at ease. I'm ashamed that I couldn't. But I felt they hated us, I thought they had intentionally even told us the wrong time for the memorial service. Several months later I found the piece of paper on which I had written the time for the memorial service. They had told me the correct time, and I had written it down right. I had just remembered it wrong.

Sitting in the phone booth, calling Sheilah's mother in the Philippines to tell her her daughter is dying, is happening now, always, still, before I was born, after I'm dead. Inviolate, immovable, like Kali and eternity, like Mary's Sacred Heart. I wish I could warn her mother what's coming. I wish I could say where the fathers have gone.

We Named You For Your Food

Michael K. Harty, Ph.D.

If there's a "moment of comprehension" in this story, it came fifty years after the fact. Last year, in my efforts to mine my personal history for poetry material, I had been thinking about experiences on the school bus. For eleven years of my Texas childhood, twice a day I joined that self-contained rolling society, and it was the setting for many a formative episode. The bus was a kind of experiential lab where one learned, often in vivid ways, about status, power, and authority, about competition, generosity, trust, betrayal, and sexual mythology. Now, from the safe distance of advanced adulthood, all that might provide poem fodder. I'd been thinking about social stratification by seating priority; about bus-borne romances, real and imagined; about which atrocities were visible, and which not, in a rear-view mirror; and similar esoterica.

Around the same time, the news programs were dominated by talk of illegal aliens and the supposed threat they represented. A substantial part of the U.S. population seemed to believe we were being inundated by drug-smuggling, disease-bearing, fast-procreating brown-skinned hordes bent on bankrupting the welfare system and obliterating the English language. So for me, two lines of thought came together in memories of the Mexican children who rode the bus with my schoolmates and me. A few of those children belonged to settled families – hired hands on the larger cotton farms – but most were the children of *braceros*, seasonal workers who migrated up from Mexico for the growing season, might remain for the harvest, then moved on to other crops or returned south of the border. Often they would be camped in tarpaper shacks, converted chicken houses, or any other lodging their foreman could find that was cheap and close to the fields. The children too young to work were sent to whatever school was nearby, but rarely stayed long. I could remember them lined up at the bus stop on chilly mornings, their breath visible, wearing only thin shirts that might have been suitable a thousand miles to the south. I could remember their smell of wood smoke and cooking fat. I could remember teachers bent over them, urging them to pronounce words they hadn't heard before while they stared down at the page, their cheeks darkening. And then I could remember how bravely and recklessly they ran the bases, taunting fielders in the language that was their own. I could remember jokes about Speedy Gonzalez and beans and chiles and the Catholic Church.

The school-bus poem I eventually wrote didn't turn out as I had thought it would. It's entitled, "We Named You for Your Food".

The things we taught ourselves
to believe: you children of hot-blooded people

would not need coats. At recess
you liked to field grounders
bare-handed. You did not want to read with us.
You were slow. You were happy.

We knew to stay away
from your smell of woodsmoke and Catholicism.
Switchblades. Head lice.

An old purple bus with green
fenders and Mexican plates
stood among the shacks where our bus
(official yellow) came for you. Perhaps
someone lived in the purple bus. I never knew
anyone who looked inside.

Among your cousins and sisters,
eyes shadowed down and away, you climbed
the three metal steps like a mountain.
Silent in your seat you might have seen
fathers and mothers, older brothers
early in the fields, bowed
over cotton rows, leaning into the straps
of nine-foot bags dragging behind.

On the other side
we watched nondescript birds
flock to earth, gabble in bird language,
then rise together in a sentient cloud,
a flexing balloon held coherent
by secret alien signals telling all at once,
the season is over, it is time to go.

Perdoname, por favor, no he entendido.

I wanted that last line to be in Spanish; it says, “Please forgive me, I did not understand.”

The Breast

Susan O'Dell, Ph.D.

Her fingers slowly slither and methodically linger on cushy terrain of my right breast. Over and over, back and forth, pushing deep and prodding, she hesitates and glides over my nipple. Finally done she moves deftly to my left breast. I breathe; my right breast passes this dogged inspection. I lay on the white paper covering the black table now sticky from the gleaming sweat on my neck. The blue green cotton gown, untied, falls off my shoulder. My feet press hard into the cold metal stirrups. The stark florescent light fills the examining room.

She chatters at me. Her fingers move up and over and under my left breast. There is more pushing and prodding. Her doctor presence is penetrated with details of her summer trip to France. It was her husband's 65th birthday. She talks of wine and castles. She pushes deep into my left breast. She asks if my practice is affected by the recession. I say no, but the end of the year means the end of yearly insurance benefits for some of my patients. I say my insurance is changing. She tells me to get Blue Cross and Blue Shield because the reimbursement for her is high. She tells me she is tired of insurance companies dictating how much money she can make.

I start to say something but she cuts me off. Wait, she says, I feel something. Her pushing and prodding slows down and she rubs a spot back and forth on the side of my left breast. Her fingers quickly and then slowly trace a meandering path all over my breast. She makes deep circles around my nipple. She goes back to the spot. She goes back to my right breast and back to the left. I feel something in your left breast that isn't in your right breast, she says. Maybe it's a cyst. I'm not comforted.

The stark florescent light beats down on me. My foot cramps, locked in the stirrup. I'm dizzy. My head starts to buzz. I say, I just had a mammogram last month. I went to that place you told me to go to. I can't remember the name. You read their report. You sent me a postcard and told me it was OK. She doesn't hear me. Or, maybe I didn't say it. She tells me I need an ultrasound. She tells me the place where I got my mammogram doesn't do diagnostic mammograms. Why not, I say. She doesn't answer. What do I do? She says maybe Rush Medical Center does them. Why should I go to Rush when she's connected to Northwestern Hospital? She says that she will check Rush out for me. She will send to me a referral. I believe her.

A day goes by. Another day goes by. The weekend comes. Another day. Nothing. I call her office. I leave a message. I check my mailbox. I check my fax. I check my voice mail. Nothing. I call her office again. I leave a voice mail message for her secretary. Nothing. I call again. I leave another message. I leave a message on her cell phone. I explain what I want. I need a referral to Rush so I can get an ultrasound. Nothing. The holidays are coming. I know I won't get an

appointment with Rush soon.

I replay her voice over and over. I feel something. I feel something. I'm angry. I'm scared. I try hard to reassure myself with the OK results of the other mammogram. Just as I am almost comforted, fear grabs me again. Maybe that mammogram wasn't read right. Maybe that technician didn't really know what she was doing. Over and over, I make a list of all of the women I know who have had breast lumps; mastectomies; diagnostic mammograms; breast cancer; cysts; lumpectomies. I remember them. I remember running cancer survivor groups at Gilda's Club all those years ago. I remember that poster of the woman with the tattoos over her mastectomy scar. Courage. I have none.

Finally, finally she calls me back. Sorry, she says, my secretary walked out. Just left one day. I haven't been able to replace her. Things are backed up. Sorry. She says she can't fax the referral to me. Sorry. She'll put it in the mail. I believe her.

A day goes by. And, another. And, another. No referral. My partner offers to go to her office to get the referral. I write a letter giving someone permission to turn it over to her. She gets the piece of paper and brings it home. There's a picture of a breast with a circle where the "palpable mass" is located on my left breast. I can't look at it.

I don't call Rush for two days. I have to do it. I call. A woman answers the phone at the Breast Imaging Center. I flinch. I talk. I tell her what the doctor said. I tell her I need an ultrasound. She tells me to bring the film and the report and the referral. She tells me to call her after I have the film and the report so I can get an appointment. She says they are booked, but I have a lump so I can get in soon. I flinch. I call the mammogram place. They tell me to write a letter so my partner can have permission to pick up the film and the report. I do this. The film and report is on my desk. I can't look at it. I put it in the back of the file cabinet until Wednesday at 8 AM. Five days away.

Wednesday comes with a snowstorm. I drive us in the early morning traffic. I want control. We arrive and I fill out the paperwork. Lots of questions about lumps and cancer and surgeries. I answer everything. Soon I am with the mammogram technician. She angles my breast in just the right way and then tells me to hold my breath. She takes six pictures. I ask her about the ultrasound. She says that it will be done if anything shows up. She tells me to wait while she checks the films out. I wait and wait. I read the signed list of all of the days the room has been cleaned. I read the certification declaring that the mammogram machine is up to official standards. I don't pace. But, I want to. My mind flickers and fades and I read the cleaning list again. The mammogram technician comes back and tells me to follow her for the ultrasound. I follow her. I surrender.

I meet the ultrasound doctor. She introduces herself and I forget her name. She tells me

that the mammogram matched the first mammogram. Nothing showed up. Nothing. Normal. Fine. She tells me she wants to do an ultrasound in the area my doctor felt something. I lay down. I shut my eyes. She rubs warm jell on my breast. It isn't comforting. The ultrasound wand slowly traces my breast. No pushing. No prodding. Just easy gliding back and forth. I open one eye and see the ultrasound doctor focused on the screen as she goes back and forth over my breast. Finally she turns off the ultrasound machine. The wand stops. She says that nothing showed up. The two mammograms are fine. The ultrasound is fine.

It's done. There's nothing more to do. I leave. I find the locker holding my clothes. I hook up my lacy red bra. I guide my breast into the left bra cup. I flinch. I pull my wool sweater over my head and down my chest. I glance at my breast, once again a familiar mound under my sweater. I zip up my down jacket. My breast disappears.

Multiplying Blessings

Sylvia J. Schneller, M.D.

October, 2005. Mississippi Gulf Coast:

I stand on the slab of my once beautiful, country home. Only dangling wires, shattered pieces of wood floor, and concrete posts remain. I am surrounded by fallen trees, pieces of the metal fireplace chimney, tumbled remnants of the washing machine, and mud. I come hoping to find the family Thanksgiving platter. All I see are broken picture frames, the faces of family eaten away by water; sodden books once read on lazy summer weekends; and remnants of sheets, bedspreads, and empty garbage bags hanging from the broken branches of dying trees. My collection of multicolored Fiesta Ware plates, the ones upon which Thanksgiving dinner was served for twenty-five years, are neatly stacked fifteen feet below where they were stored in the kitchen cabinet. I imagine that a god caught the dishes as the house dissolved around them, held them steady during the howling winds, waited until the flooding waters dissipated, and lowered them protectively to the ground. My husband, John, is thrilled with this discovery, but I give this gift only a passing glance. "I don't care about that," I cry. "Help me find my grandmother's platter."

I know that the family heirloom, a Thanksgiving platter with the bird's colorful body and tail worn by fifty yearly servings of turkey, gravy, and oyster dressing, has been shattered into fragments by the one-hundred-forty-mile-per-hour winds and twenty-four- foot storm surge of Hurricane Katrina. The plate, passed down in the early sixties from its buyer Marmee to my mother, was vested

with the privilege of cooking Thanksgiving dinner. When I became an adult, the preparation of this family meal became for me a rite of passage into womanhood.

Knowing Mom relished cooking, I had hesitated to request that she relinquish the responsibility of Thanksgiving dinner. Finally, after several false attempts, I had blurted out the invitation to celebrate at my house instead of hers. Mom looked startled and declined, reminding me that she was not too old to do it. I persisted reassuring her it was not about her age and mumbled something about my turn.

Reluctantly, she agreed. That Thanksgiving Mom taught me to make the special family dishes, those passed down from Marmee; turkey smeared with butter and cooked under an aluminum foil tent without basting, oyster dressing, and gravy from a roux browned in the buttery turkey drippings. The next summer Mom died from recurrent colon cancer. Perhaps, without realizing it, we both knew this was to be our last Thanksgiving together and prepared ourselves in this way. I inherited the turkey platter.

I walk around the slab half-heartedly kicking my toe through the cracked layer of marsh mud. The thick, gray crust of dirt covers everything, the debris, the dead plants, the rotting limbs of trees. It crumbles, with a loud crunch, under my feet into pieces. All the pieces resemble the platter in shape and color. Frustrated, shuffling my feet and stirring up a cloud of dust, I strike something. It is a small triangle of porcelain. I yell, "John, quick. Come here. I found something."

He and my son-in-law Jim spend the next several hours raking and sifting through the layers of dirt and broken tile. They find all except one large section upon which the tail is painted. Discouraged, I insist we forget about it. Undaunted, John returns twice more. He never finds the missing piece. I sob every time I look at the fragments and tell him to throw them away. The sadness of seeing the shattered platter is more than I can bear. John, however, carefully washes the fragments. Fearful I may toss them out in anguish, he hides them from me.

At Christmas, my daughter, Tanya, presents me with a pristine new platter, embossed and painted by my three grandchildren, Ashley, Andrew, and Matthew. I do not, until months later, see the love that went into the turkey's gentle, naïve expression, its orange, red, and gold tail, each feather individually imprinted by a child. But that Christmas Day, still grieving the loss of my vacation home in Mississippi and the neighborhood of my primary home in New Orleans, I appreciate the love that went into the drawing and painting of the gift as best I can.

In our struggle to rebuild our lives, I forget the platter. We rent an apartment in Houston to cope with the blight surrounding our New Orleans home. Another Thanksgiving approaches. John informs me that he has found a shop in Houston that repairs china. From deep inside a pail, John pulls out a towel containing the treasured fragments. I am awed by his love.

We enter the shop of two tiny, leprechaun-like men. I burst into tears when they tell me that not only can they reconstruct the platter but also can recreate the missing piece and paint it to

match. Is it possible that I will have not just one but two platters, an aged heirloom and a budding heirloom?

The following weekend, visiting my daughter-in-law Tricia in Houston, I notice in her dining room, amidst the china not yet put away after her Thanksgiving dinner, a smaller replica of my ancestral platter. Confused, as it looks so much like the broken but recently repaired plate, I call to her and ask when she got it.

Blushing, Tricia looks down, "Mom. Last year after the storm I searched e-Bay for a turkey platter like the one you lost. I found this and called Tanya thinking we could give it to you for Christmas. When she told me of the one she and the kids painted, I didn't want to spoil her surprise. So I kept this one to remind me of you."

Tears welling into my eyes, I hug her, grateful to be triply blessed, not in platters but in love.

To My Son, Age 13

Gina Sangster Hayman, L.I.C.S.W.

Leaving the yellow kitchen,
the black and calico cats
prowling for more breakfast
— my female cat waiting
till the younger boys have their fill

And my son,
wrapped in a bath towel,
his blonde hair spikey wet
— turning to the sound of my voice
reminding him of things for the day:
the check for karate class,
lunch money, to feed the cats
because I won't be home till Sunday

He always says “I love you”
unprompted, the most affectionate
in his dispersed family
— older sisters in New York
and North Carolina
building their young lives brick by brick,
his Dad only ten blocks away
but in another world
he inhabits a few nights a week

He comes home to me, his true home,
his room painted gray and black
with details of red, the colors
of his martial art — my son, *Shodan,*
newly christened Black Belt,
proud and humble at the same time,
bowing to his mentors,
holding the door open,
now remembering to pick up his dishes
and hang his wet towel

He turns to the sound of my voice,
his music — Kanye West or Naz
or Tabi Bonney in the background
— telling me “I love you” as we say goodbye,
my son, on the cusp of being the man
I imagine

Jeremiah Speaks

Gina Sangster Hayman, L.I.C.S.W.

This white lady came to see me at the detention center. I ain't even know she was coming and I'm in the gym doing some reps and they tell me I got to go down to the first floor for some interview. Anyway, I been through this before back in January and I figure it can't be no worse than that because that time they kept me in there for what seem like days doing some kind of head test one after the other, asking me all kinds of questions till I felt like… I don't know… I was just straight up angry, know what I'm saying?

So here we go again but I had a little natural high on from the workout so I told myself to be cool, not like the last time when I got a attitude and I know that young bitch wrote down every damn thing I said or did in her little book like I was her home work project or some shit. Anyway, like I said this white lady, she's older and walk up to me and told me her name, asked me was I *Jeremiah Jenkins* and I say, yeah and she reaches out her hand and we shake hands like we was at a meet 'n greet somewhere. So I turn the light on in one of them interview rooms and ask her which side of the table she want me to sit at and she said either one so we sit down cross from each other.

She explain she have to ask me some questions so I can get some more *services,* that's the word she use, like counseling or therapy, from the same place where Miss Jones work at who's been coming to see me since I got locked up again. So I guess that'll be awright since Miss Jones is cool with me even though I don't see why I need somebody besides her but when you get locked up like that you just got to do what people say do and not ask too many questions or act like you ain't cooperating. So I'm giving this white lady all kinds of eye contact, looking dead in her face and doing my best to pay attention to what she be saying. Like I said, I'm feeling pretty good from the gym so I'm not getting too *agitated* like I be sometimes, at least not yet.

It ain't nothing but the same ole - same ole with her questions like she want to know stuff about my family *background,* you know how they ask their questions real polite like you ain't going to figure out they want to know if anybody in your family ever been crazy an shit or if you ever felt like you want to kill somebody. Naw, naw, not me, I never had a thought like that in my life. It don't matter what I say anyway because she already got the whole rap from that young bitch back in January but I ain't giving up nothing I don't feel like talking about like when she say something about me calling my *aunt* my *mother*. Well, shit, yeah, she raised me since I been a baby, what I'm supposed to do, call some lady I ain't never even seen that I can remember, call her my mother? It ain't like I remember being fifteen months old and somebody telling me she got shot behind some witness protection situation. All I know is she name me out the Bible and I seen some pictures of her, this pretty brown-skin woman with a big smile. They say she drank and smoke before I was

born but people say a lotta shit don't necessarily be true.

I don't remember nothing about her anymore than I remember nothing about my old man, shit, nobody even know who the mug is in the first place and I know they got that all wrote down in all them records and reports too. *Father unknown.* I seen that shit before. I know what I'm talking about. But you got to sit there an act like you real interested in the same damn questions over and over again. Same shit, different day. But like I said, I don't want to do nothing to mess up my parole; I already got kicked back on a violation this time just from laying up in that crib with Keisha that weekend and my mom have to go and tell my probation officer.

So when the white lady ask me if I'm *sexually active* I tell her, yeah. That's one question in her little interview I ain't hesitate about and have no trouble telling the straight up truth about. I mean, my eighteenth birthday about to roll around in a few weeks, what she think, I'm trying to be some kind of boy scout or some shit? Anyway, she ain't make nothing of it except to give me a little lecture about the *AIDS epidemic* and how it's scary out here and telling me I'm a young man with a whole long life to live and I need to take care of myself. Like I'm supposed to think she really give a shit. But okay, like I said, I'm-a be a good boy and say yes and no and shake my head and go along to get along so I can get the hell out of here.

It was almost funny when she ask me if I have a hard time paying attention sometimes and that girl Deja was walking across the lobby with her probation officer and I couldn't help myself staring at her ass but the lady don't say nothing and act like she don't even notice I can't hardly pay attention to nothing she be saying, but anyway, I got myself together and we went on and finished what we had to do. I don't even know if she believe me half the time but the one thing I did give up to her was how *angry* I get and don't know why. I don't know if she think I'm crazy or if the other young bitch wrote down in her report that I'm crazy and should be locked up in St. E's but maybe somebody can do something about the way I get so angry I don't even know what I be doing or saying. I like to kill my little brothers, I mean, she know they ain't my blood brothers, they my cousins, but I been raised with them, I mean I was in the house first since my mom – I mean, my aunt – took me so I wouldn't get put in no foster care. And then those little punks came along and act like they own the place when they ain't nothing but babies. They got a pops ain't much better than mine, but at least they know who he is and he come around once in awhile.

Maybe everybody gonna miss me when I go to college like I'm planning on. I just gotta get things straight so I can graduate and not mess up my parole. I didn't mean to hurt the little punks for real but they get on my damn nerves and sometimes I got to show them who's boss around there. You watch, when I'm gone everybody's gonna say where's *J, when he's coming back*? You wait and see. But maybe I won't come back once I get over there to West Virginia, once I get myself together and show everybody I can make something of my life, no matter how all this shit got started, I can *be* somebody.

Charlie and Maude

Cynthia Ezell, M.S., L.M.F.T.

If we were lucky and Charlie was feeling mischievous, he'd let us follow him into his bedroom at night, wide-eyed and jostling for position at his knees. With a bit of theatrics, he would reach up to the fleshy crevasse behind his right eyelid and pop out the ceramic eyeball he had worn since losing the real eye in an accident with a bedspring sometime in 1912. The round yolk of non-vision, with its carefully painted on pupil and iris, bobbed in the glass of water on the bedside table where Charlie had placed it. Lifeless, yet terrifying in its imitation of sight, it leered at us, inanimate, yet mocking, sending the girls squealing out of the room while the boys feigned bravery and stared it down. Charlie loved playing the provocateur.

I have a photo of Charlie and Maude, his new bride, taken in 1918, on their wedding day. She wore a dark grey linen blouse and a pleated skirt. Her long black hair was bound at the nape of her neck in a bun. Her look was solemn, as if she had a premonition of the difficulty ahead, as if she knew at eighteen that her life would include the Great Depression, a second World War, giving birth to nine children at home and being a grandmother to twenty-five, of which I will be number twelve.

Maude's family name was Moss and it always seemed that the name had shaped her, that her personality had developed according to the laws of genus and phylum. Like moss, which grows in damp places hidden away in shaded woodlands, Maude was quiet and non-assuming, fragile and soft. My memories of her are like that too, hazily tucked in between the larger fragments of childhood recollections. Memories of Charlie, however, flash neon sign bright.

When my cousins and I were little, Charlie would throw a quilt over his back and let us climb on. He would pretend to be a bucking bronco, or an African elephant carrying us someplace far off and exotic. When he tired, he'd shake us off and morph into a monster, or a tiger, and, knees shuffling across the wood plank floors, he would chase us from room to room, bellowing or roaring beast-like over our laughter. In the evenings he would sit in the, big yellow armchair facing the fireplace in the "company" room of their small farmhouse, two or three of us perched on his knees. He'd read Uncle Remus to us, changing his voice as the narrative volleyed from Brer Rabbit, to Brer Fox and back again.

One of Charlie's jobs was to keep Maude alive, and this was always so, even before she got so sick later on. When my mother was a girl, the family lived on a farm that sat along the banks of the Cumberland River. If Charlie came home and asked where Maude was, and none of the children could locate her, he would search the house, he would look in the garden, then the hen house or the water pump in the backyard. If he could not find her near the house, he would hurry down the long slope of pasture that led to the acres of rich bottom land running alongside the riverbank.

Sprinting, he would rush to the river, hoping not to see her standing along the edge about to step in, hoping not to see an apron floating, swirling out of reach in the swift current, hoping her deep unfathomable sadness had not overtaken her. Maude's depression must have been a constant companion, a jealous lover lying in wait, hoping to steal her away. Charlie battled that lover and won, keeping her with him for fifty years, losing her finally to heart disease when she was sixty-eight.

Maude died in the grim chill of January, three weeks before my twelfth birthday. I was clammy and uncomfortable in the dress-up clothes my mother insisted I wear for the visitation the night before Maude's funeral. To escape the hordes of grown-ups, I stole off to the little anteroom that had been set up for the family in preparation for the next day's service. The folding chairs were lined up to face a set of double doors that opened to the front of the auditorium, giving the family a side view of the casket and the podium behind which the preacher would stand to deliver the eulogy. Ensconced in this small room, the family could watch the funeral without being viewed in return by the merely acquainted, the gawkers, the non-related. We could be bereft, unaffected, or inconsolable in private.

I was alone in the anteroom, bored, and sleepy. In front of me, just through the doors, was Maude in her shiny oak casket, her quiet dead face strangely foreign and familiar at the same time. I was surprised when Charlie walked down from the back of the auditorium and into my line of vision. He seemed quite old to me, his shoulders a bit slumped under his suit coat, with a hint of shuffle in his lanky gait. He stood over the open coffin, gazing at Maude lying ashen and fancied up in her black linen sheath, her grey-black hair captured by a plain wool hat with a silver hat pin holding it in place, as if she might spring up at any moment and the hat tumble from her head. As if something in his grief might animate her in a way that her life could not.

The light above the casket spotlighted them both as Charlie stood beside her, hands gripping the casket, as if he were contemplating climbing in himself, lying down beside her for good. I wondered briefly if he would shake the casket, and rouse her back to life. I realized that Charlie was crying, his head hung over his chest, quiet sobs shaking his body, and I was transfixed. I knew I was witnessing a private moment, and should look away, but I could not. I had never seen Charlie cry. I had never seen him hold Maude's hand, or give her a kiss. I had never heard them call each other a special name, or gaze lovingly into each other's eyes, yet on that day he sought her pale absent countenance with a longing so deep and ragged I realized that Charlie had a life to which I had not been witness, not until this moment in the soft, lonely quiet of death. He must have loved her terribly. He must have loved her like the river, calm on the surface, yet deep and swift underneath.

Imagining Lulu

Danna Halpin, L.C.S.W.

Within the one square block I freely roamed in the spring of 1956, the world was safe and predictable, as tidy as the boxwood hedges that lined the walkways of virtually every house on our suburban New Orleans street. My parents and grandparents, pleased at last to have a bit of ground, planted it with fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. For my brother and I, there was a swing, a slide, and, very briefly, before the cats caught on, a sand box with a cheery green and yellow striped awning to protect us from the sun.

Grandma worried that life in this little Eden, wouldn't prepare me for the perils that awaited in the real world, and so she spun out cautionary tales for every possible risk. She told me, for example, about a boy named Joe. "He lived down the street from Uncle Frank and Aunt Lena." Joe liked to jump trains that chugged near his neighborhood by City Park. "And you know what happened to Joe?" she asked me with her face close up and sorrowful. "He fell and got his HEAD CUT OFF." It was an effective, if ghastly, story. To this very day, you will never catch me jumping a train.

Most of her stories, like the ones about children who came down with polio after playing in the flooded streets after a rainstorm (a common New Orleans pastime) were meant to keep me safe, but others were just sad stories to prepare me for life's Vale of Tears. Accordingly, I wasn't spared news of children who died and left grieving mothers, or of mothers who died and left grieving children. Grandma was a kind of Sorrow Artist. She could bring grown men to tears with her rendition of *Please Mr. Conductor, Don't Put Me Off of the Train.* On the other hand, there was Mother, who hated all things lachrymose. "You're going to warp the child!" she would scold, to no avail.

But despite Grandma's best efforts, I was not prepared for Lulu Lapeyrouse.

I heard her before I saw her, heard her as I played along the back fence where Grandpa's Cucuzza vine thrived and lizards roamed like miniature dinosaurs among the fresh green leaves and tendrils.

My first response (oh, shame!) was amusement at her wobbly, high-pitched wail. I thought someone over the fence was playing a joke, maybe doing a parody of the seals at Audubon Zoo. But in an instant I knew better. It was truth, that sound, and it rose up again and again in moans, wails, at times, shrieks that made my knees go weak. For a moment, I felt a wave of panic, as if it wasn't the world, but my perceptions that had become broken. I put my fingers in my ears and cried out, and in an instant, felt Mother and Grandmother near. "It's just poor Lulu, visiting her Mama," Grandma said. Mother took my hand and suggested we go inside and do something really fun. Bake cookies!

But Grandma was already leading me in the opposite direction, into the Lapeyrouse's back yard, where I came face to face with a young woman in a wheelchair, her limbs tied down, her head lolling, her mouth drooling. "Hello, Lulu," Grandma said, "This is my granddaughter." Lulu's twitches slowed, her cries quieted, her head held almost still. I looked in her eyes and she looked in mine, looked so hard into mine that I could not help but know that there really was a person, just like the rest of us, living inside Lulu's shriveled, spasm ridden body.

For a few more days, Lulu's cries were the background music to life in our safe and sanitized suburban back yard. Then she was gone, returned to someplace called "the home." How hard I tried *not* to imagine her life, but the echo of her cries stayed in my mind and broke my heart. Grandma's worries for my naiveté were over. Lulu's wordless eloquence had done the trick.

It Was Just a Dream...

Robert J. Winer, M.D.

Most of my night dreams are prosaic, nothing to get especially stirred up about, plausible extensions of scenarios from my daily life, no more compelling than a typical daydream. But then there are the occasional vivid dreams, which may have a nightmarish quality or a feeling of joyous transcendence. I awake, and for better or worse they evaporate. It's these latter dreams I want to talk about.

I don't have the thought — it was just a dream — when I wake up from a *bad* dream. I just feel relief then, glad that it's over and that I'm awake now. And so relieved that the horrible tidings weren't true. That fluorescent orange junk wasn't really spewing from the center of my chest, I haven't been sawed in half and hollowed out, I don't have just months to live. And I don't think: it was just a dream.

"It was just a dream" is what I'm thinking when I wake up from a great dream, and that thought signals disappointment, probably bitterness. Why can't I stage that fabulous show in my real life? Why can't I fly? Why can't I be sixteen? Why can't I have her? That's the crux of it of course, it was just a dream. But hold on for a second. It was *real* in the dream. Isn't that the point of dreams – that they feel entirely true? So why do I discount the experience? Some of the most intensely pleasurable moments of my life have occurred in dreams (along with some of the scariest). Broadly speaking, I have two forms of consciousness — waking and sleeping — and phenomenologically each is totally compelling when I'm in that state. The reality I experience when I'm dreaming

doesn't feel less real than the reality I live in when I'm awake. So why do I give short shrift to my experience in dreams?

The most obvious reason is that I can't make them happen and I can't control them. I'm not in the driver's seat when I get on roller coasters either, but I do know roughly what the ride will be like, and I've chosen to hop on board. Not so with dreams. This is ironic, of course, because the dream is entirely of my own manufacture, even though I don't have access to its construction. I think the catch is that when I wake up, I cannot choose to fall back asleep and pick up where I left off. (Occasionally that does happen, but certainly not at my bidding.) And in that moment I feel the loss.

The exquisite cruelty of the situation is that, as Freud reminds us, a dream is the realization of a wish. My good dreams aren't just happy scenarios, movies I've stumbled into; they're expressions of specific longings that are very important to me. That's the rub. And so, when I awake, I have to bear that the realization of my desire has been deleted: it was just a dream. Moving through my days, I feel the ache of the dreams I can't realize, the losses that can't be undone. We try to make the best of what we have. Our lives are narratives of loss and incomplete mourning (it is in the nature of things that mourning will always be incomplete). Contending with our losses, we push forward. We try to reach the clearing of acceptance, the recognition that what has happened cannot be undone, the knowledge that we will always be living in the consequences. We mourn our murdered alternative selves, the roads that could not be taken; we weren't there.

Memory is both a blessing and a curse, both the warehouse for storing my experiences and the graveyard that never lets me escape my deceased. Dreams are where we revive our memories and longings, breathe life back into them, but just briefly, for they deflate as we awake, leaving us empty-handed, for it was just a dream, a cruel tease. And so the thought "it's just a dream" becomes a marker for my recognition that there's no escaping the realities of my life, the choices made, the accidents befallen, the injuries suffered and inflicted. This is my lot. In a recent interview, Woody Allen said that at 73 he can no longer sustain the fantasy that young women would find him desirable. Age brings us that too, the cancellation not only of prospects, but even of musings. But we still have our dreams at night, where life is timeless and anything is possible.

Welcome to Rock Springs

Jeanne Magagna

My brother Gianni sent me the Union Pacific train ticket and five dollars. I kept both carefully pinned beneath my underclothes worn with my everyday black woolen dress.

It was September 1898 and I had just turned eighteen. My mother felt it best to let me find my freedom in the New World. My back was already weak and deformed through starvation and she could see no future for me apart from working for a life-time in the worn-out Trentino fields.

My hunch-back ached as I trundled slowly through the Ellis Island gateway with the hundred and fifty survivors of the sea journey from Naples to New York. I had been sleeping for sixty nights in a bumpy bunk bed positioned in a dormitory of babies, young mothers and older Italian women. Our numbers had diminished as the storm caught hold: pneumonia and scarlet fever had captured and imprisoned some in death.

When, after a few days, the custom officers finally let me leave Ellis Island, I **walked** to Penn Station with my light bag containing a cotton nightie, old yellowed underwear and my grey Sunday dress. Boarding the Union Pacific train headed West, I discovered I lacked a word in common with the black porters and suited white gentlemen. I stared carefully watching their lips move when they spoke to one another. By silently mimicking their mouths with mine, I gradually learned "hello, please, thank you, may I have some water please, no thank you."

Four days later I had completed the first stage of my self-learning. I was determined to continue this, for I liked the new challenge of this strange language. I had left school at age thirteen to support my parents by picking courgettes and peppers for the Clez farmers' outdoor vegetable market.

My panasegalla, the hard-bread rolls, were secreted in the folds of my hand-crocheted black shawl and in the pockets of my heavy wool dress. Agua, or "water", as the Americans called it, would make it possible for me to survive this long trail from New York's high buildings, through flat green Kansas wheat fields to Wyoming's barren land. I was hypnotized by the miles and miles of desert mottled with grey-green sage brush and a few herds of deer and antelope scattered in the distance. As we traveled through the Wyoming plains I felt myself to be entering an extra-terrestrial space where no people, no places, existed. How could anyone live here? The only signs of humanity, erupting each hundred miles along the railroad, were small oases consisting of ten or twelve worn-down grey shingled buildings which provided coal, food supplies and a shelter for passengers waiting to alight for the train journey out West.

The train stopped at Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlings and finally my new home. Arriving at my destination I saw a sign across the street. It read ***The Grand Hotel and Bar***. I would live on the

second floor of this six-bedded hotel. It was here that I was headed to make the beds, sweep the floor, become a maid while trying to catch words drawled by the Wyoming cowboys en route to Denver.

Shortly I spotted my sleepy-eyed, fattened brother, Gianni. He stood beside the rail-tracks with tear-filled eyes and a tender smile of joy, right beside the white lettered log board saying, **Welcome to Rock Springs**.

So, this was Rock Springs, a coal-mining town with not an ounce of water within sight.

> **Rock Springs** where I was to meet and marry the janitor who swept the floors of the Grand Café Bar below.
>
> **Rock Springs**, the place where I was to learn English,
> sell large extra high white Angel food cakes for people's birthdays,
> and work without pay as my Italian friends' interpreter.
>
> **Rock Springs** where I was to raise four children, under twelve,
> single-handedly after my forty-one year old husband
> drowned in quicksand.
>
> **Rock Springs**, where I subsequently was to become the first woman
> rancher after winning a battle the other ranchers who wanted to buy the
> sheep and homestead land that my husband, Louis, had received in
> exchange for doing extra chores as a cleaner.
>
> **Rock Springs**, the place where my four children were to be raised:
> a rancher, a lawyer, a Stanford University writer and a son who,
> aged sixteen, was to die of diphtheria.
>
> **Rock Springs**…my home till now when I find myself an old woman,
> ready to die.

A Bumpy Landing in Havana*

Jeanne Parr Lemkau, Ph.D.

The seat of the chair sagged too close to the floor and allowed me neither to settle nor rise with ease. As I sat in the lobby of the Hotel Plaza in Central Havana, a tall uniformed doorman at the main entrance welcomed guests with a sweep of his arm. They streamed by me, heading eagerly toward the bar and their afternoon *mojitos*, seeking relief from the tropical heat. Graying middle-aged men, sporting straw hats and fanny packs, belched smoke from newly purchased *Cohibas* as they passed. Over the neo-classical arch that separated the lobby from the bar hung a sign that read, "*El socialismo además de justicia, es eficiencia y es calidad*." Socialism, aside from being just, is efficiency and quality. Surrounded by frothy pink and white architectural frosting, the message looked strange.

I reached for the old-fashioned telephone on the pedestal table next to me. It was a model I had only seen in movies from the forties; the receiver felt heavy and awkward when I put it to my ear and was connected with the hotel operator.

"*Quiero hacer una llamada*," I said, my voice faltering, "*Por favor*." I hadn't spoken Spanish for over a year, and then I had been in a group with a translator to fall back on. Now I was on my own. Whenever I opened my mouth, I tiptoed linguistically, unsure of what I would say or understand in a country where Spanish appeared to have neither vowels nor consonants.

The phone connection crackled. I thought the operator said that I needed to see the hotel receptionist before I could place a call. Pushing myself up from my chair, I approached the front desk jammed and jangling with tourists conversing in Spanish and German and Dutch. A cluster of cute young women in navy suits and white blouses attended them.

"*Perdóneme*," I ventured, trying to catch the eye of one of the receptionists. Should I have said "*Discúlpeme?*" I wondered, wishing I had taken the time to learn when to use these two versions of "Excuse me."

She looked my way. "*¿El teléfono?*" I asked.

"*Un dólar la llamada*," she replied, gesturing for me to leave a dollar and return to the table with the telephone.

I poked at the waistline of my skirt, loosening the money belt where I had stashed fifteen hundred dollars in cash, my best guess as to what I might need to live for one month in Havana. I figured on fifty dollars a day to cover lodging, transportation and food, hopefully with enough left over for extras or emergency. I'd left credit cards at home, no good here since the embargo forbade U.S. banks from doing business with Cuba. I handed the young woman a dollar and headed

toward the phone. Suddenly overwhelmed by fatigue, heat, and confusion, I collapsed back into the chair.

Like the '54 Chevy I had seen from the taxi on the way in from the airport, I had been puttering along — on pistons held together with duct tape and a prayer, but puttering along — until this whiz-bang collision with Cuba. I felt all bent fender and broken headlights, stalled in the middle of a busy intersection. It was only Day One and already the reality of what I had chosen to do felt much harder than I had anticipated. How was I going to manage a full month in Havana when the simple act of making a phone call stopped me in my tracks?

The grandiosity of what I had proposed to do washed over me. In my request for professional leave I had promised, to "study the Cuban health care system and the effects of the embargo." What I had written sounded plausible enough to elicit approval from the requisite university committee but I'd omitted the details because I didn't have any. Like most university faculty, I had learned the stressful art of making a public commitment— to write a paper or teach a course for which I was unprepared—and then rushing delivery in a fit of panic. The style, a bit hard on the nerves, had boosted my productivity. But never before had I been quite this bold. I must have been in a state of wild self-delusion to think I could actually live up to the expectations I had generated. After all, this was Cuba, a country more foreign than any other I had visited, a country where I knew no one and where my pretensions of speaking Spanish would be utterly tested.

And Cuba was communist. Even if my language skills were adequate, I imagined the country was rife with secret protocols and cultural mandates that I would never be able to decipher. Dealing with my emotional insides was going to be a more of a challenge than I had thought.

I tried to push away my fears, reminding myself that the agenda I had set for this first month was modest — to get used to Havana, immerse myself in Cuban Spanish, make initial contacts, and develop a research plan that I would carry out in future trips. "Take one day at a time," I told myself, as if I were one of my alcoholic patients. But I could not let go of my anxiety and wound up instead with therapeutic clichés echoing each racing thought.

I fingered the satchel of papers in my lap, several pages of names, phone numbers, and addresses I had compiled in hopes that these contacts would give shape and direction to what would come next. There were names of doctors and psychologists, friends of friends, and distant nodes on the world-wide web of Cuba aficionados. Only two people on the list had I actually ever met, and those only briefly at international meetings in the United States. One was an economist turned tour organizer named Rodrigo, listed in my notes as "My Man in Havana," as if wishing would make it so. The second was a physician named Enrique.

The doctor would have to wait. I felt too shaky to approach a new colleague on the telephone in a language that reduced me to a sixth grade vocabulary. Besides, in the span of half a day and two airplane flights, I had tumbled down Maslow's hierarchy of needs; the necessity of

finding shelter, food and care eclipsed loftier aspirations. I needed a place to live that was within my budget and that would offer human contact beyond the tourist-hotel variety.

By e-mail when I was back in Ohio, Rodrigo had assured me that he would arrange for me to stay in a casa particular, a private home where for twenty-six dollars a day I could live with a family and be fed "the best food in Cuba." A phone call when I reached Havana, he said, would do the trick. I read his phone number to the hotel operator.

I had a vague vision of the living situation I was hoping for. Back in the early seventies, during several months of Peace Corps training in Puerto Rico, my husband, Phil, and I had lived in the home of Anna and Enrique and their five children, surrounded by sugar cane fields and within earshot of the local cantina. Anna spoke English but only as last resort, instead patiently encouraging and correcting our Spanish baby talk. The children were our younger siblings. Anna felt like Mom, Enrique, our benevolent father.

We'd been in our early twenties. Now I was in my fifties. But with only a few hours in Havana behind me, I already felt orphaned. It didn't matter that I had chosen to travel to Cuba by myself or that I had a husband, daughter, and parents at home who loved me. They weren't in Havana and I already felt painfully separated from the sooth of the familiar. Being taken in by a welcoming Cuban family was the most appealing possibility I could imagine, which was a good thing, since — thanks to Rodrigo — I was about to be adopted.

From the other end of the phone Rodrigo greeted me in good English. He sensed my anxiety. "*No hay problema*," he assured. He had arranged lodging for me with an older couple who no longer had children at home. I was to take a taxi to a certain corner in Vedado the next day. There his man Humberto would be waiting and would take me to meet new family. With a concrete plan to address my basic needs, I felt myself relax. Mustering the courage to make a second call, I gave the operator the number of the doctor.

*****

The following afternoon, I flagged a yellow cab in front of the hotel and showed the taxista the address in my notes that Rodrigo had given me. It was easier than trying to say it, and I was conserving my energy.

Leaving the hotel we turned onto Calle Neptune and entered Central Havana. I stared out the window taking in block after block of decayed nineteenth century buildings, each two or three stories high, huddled shoulder-to-shoulder in dust and diesel haze. The thoroughfare was congested with bicycle rickshaws, beeping taxis and pedestrians trying to keep to the broken sidewalks. Old cars spewed their sooty fumes into the narrow street. We crossed several wide boulevards lined with grayed and gritty edifices and pillared walk-ways and finally climbed a long hill to come to a brief

stop in front of La Escalanata, the grand stairway entrance to the University of Havana. According to my map, we were just entering Vedado, the municipality where I would be living. With Central Havana behind, more modern buildings pulled me into the twentieth century.

We passed the Habana Libre Hotel— the Hilton in its pre-revolutionary incarnation and one of the city's most prominent landmarks. An abstract mosaic in black, blue and white decorated the front of the boxy tower. Just beyond, the taxi came to a stop at the main intersection of Vedado. There on the corner in front of La Copelia ice cream stand loomed a billboard-sized Fidel Castro in military green, fist in the air, his image emblazoned with the declaration, "Against terrorism and against the war!" It jarred me: without wanting to, I remembered 9/11.

We turned left, in front of the super-sized Fidel. We traversed avenues dotted with statues and topiary, passed a movie theater named for Charlie Chaplin, then made several more turns. Though the streets were potholed and the houses looked scrappy, the neighborhood looked better off than Central Havana and pleasant enough. A canopy of trees shaded the broken sidewalks and green plants crowded each other on patios. So far so good, I thought. The driver slowed to verify the address as we neared our destination. On our right stood a mint green apartment complex, on our left, a block of adjoined one-story houses with patios. There, in front of a chicken-wire fence, a man waved us over. It was Humberto, a noticeable presence with over six feet of authority, wavy black Elvis hair, and a surplus of gold necklaces that suggested he had family in Miami.

Humberto grabbed my bags, unlocked the metal gate and led me through the patio to the wooden front door. It was almost double my height and propped open. Hearing us approach, Marta and Norberto—my hosts— burst through the doorway in an explosion of friendly greeting. The two of them chattered loudly at once. Awash in a torrent of Spanish, I understood little.

"*Me llamo Juanita*," I ventured, hardly recognizing the timidity in my voice. "Juana" would have been more appropriate now that I was middle-aged but the younger version seemed to be the only appellation available to me.

Norberto and Marta pulled me into a noisy tangle of hugs and pats. The grapple of their welcome took me by pleasant surprise, evoking the physicality of Nicaraguans that had comforted me in my Peace Corps years. I gave myself over to their hands and arms.

"Juan–EEE–ta. Juan–EEE–ta," Norberto squealed. He was a diminutive fellow. He reached up and grabbed both of my shoulders to get a closer look, then displayed all of his teeth in a grin that seemed to hang on his cup-shaped ears. I couldn't help but laugh. Marta tugged my arm, pulling me deeper into their cozy home.

Norberto and Marta were five to ten years older than I. They were physically matched only in their coloring – their skin dark honey, their eyes chocolate brown. Otherwise, they were a study in contrast. She was all curves and plumpness, generous in size and disposition; he, all muscles and angles, compacted in a tiny frame. Her voice was soft and mesmerizing, his booming as if to

compensate for his stature. When he spoke to me, he loudly enunciated every syllable, as if each word were a carefully wrapped gift.

With Marta at one elbow, Norberto the other, I was given the house tour. It was brief since their dwelling was modest, though the oversized entrance and twenty foot ceilings gave the illusion of space. The living room was furnished with a sofa, dark wooden chairs covered with red plastic cushions, and a television surrounded by knick-knacks. Their dining room was crowded with a table and chairs to accommodate a large family. The only bathroom was off the kitchen. To my relief there was hot water. Norberto stood on tip toes and stretched to demonstrate how to adjust the heater that wrapped around the showerhead.

The room that would be mine was off the living room. It was clean and tidy with all the amenities I could hope for: a good reading light, a wall mirror, an empty closet with hangers, shuttered windows that I could close at night, and even a small Soviet refrigerator. Norberto had earned the refrigerator by participating in state-sponsored demonstrations for the return of Elián González when the six year old had washed up on Florida shores.

That night, as I collapsed onto the freshly made double bed, I knew I had found a nest I could settle into. With Norberto and Marta, I would have a secure base from which to figure out my next steps. They might not be my Mom and Dad, but they would care for me.

*This is an excerpt from Chapter 1 of the forthcoming book, *Lost and Found in Cuba.*

Before Words

Catherine Ambrose, M.S.S., L.C.S.W.

I am falling asleep. Falling, tripping, tumbling, tipping, sliding into sleep. Every week, same time, same client. It is late afternoon, and the bright winter sun warms the room through the west facing windows. Dust motes drift lazily. I shift, digging my fingernails discretely into my palm. I blink, and my eyelids are soothing and warm over my tired eyes, like a soft blanket. I should have had coffee earlier. I clench my jaws shut, stifling a yawn, sucking air through my nose. I have no idea what she has been talking about. I've laughed when I've heard about therapists falling asleep in a session—who could do such a thing? My patient wanders on, and my thoughts slip away. Oh my god, was I nodding? Where is she? What is she talking about? Her mother? I grab a phrase, a lifeline, and cling to it, trying to follow her. Mother, visiting mother in nursing home. I jab my nails

harder into my palm. I've missed the details, but probably I've got the thread of a theme—elderly parents failing, fears of loneliness in old age, of deteriorating: sore feet, arthritic hips, increasing nearsightedness, crumbling teeth. I shift my position in my chair again, and begin to think, to think I've been drowning, but here is the shore, I recognize the shore.

"It is as if no one listens to me." Her sentence reaches me like a foghorn in the mist. Shame. I've been caught. Shit, I have no excuse. I am a lazy, inattentive therapist. But this is boring, lifeless, familiar, dull, dull, exquisitely dull, how can you possibly blame me for being bored? But wait, no, perhaps I am not snagged, because she continues, "It's what drives me crazy about my relationship with her, she never recognizes what is important to me." Ah. Not caught yet. But I know, of course, that she is talking about me. Egg, chicken; chicken, egg. Mother, me, now, then, hatched, unborn. I try, okay, not hard, but listlessly, responsibly, to locate some reasonable interpretive comment. I really do. How can I tell her about this? Something about how I have not heard her, and now am like her mother to her. I know there are words for this, and that the words are projective identification, but I cannot grasp what they mean and the thought is slipping away like a dream… and no, I cannot, don't want to. My thoughts are fragments, wisps of mist in my dozy shame.

When I speak with my supervisor about it, he comments that there is a deadness in the room, and wonders about its source. I have some sense that he is right, but his words seem a far remove from the fog I experience when I am with her. In this kind of netherworld, words themselves are the foreign tongue. Fog is fog is fog is fog, it cannot be made to represent itself and so remains unnameable. Mere words are wraiths, less than shadows of what they try to express. I say them anyway, dutifully, since after all when it comes down to it I have nothing else. "Something is making you afraid you will come apart."

A few weeks later, she is confused about the boy who comes to her house to help her with the computer. "He's cute," she says, "but he's too young for me, of course." And she is puzzled by her rage at him when he can't come again tomorrow—it is a hateful, murderous, inordinate rage. Her voice is rising, shrill, frantic, out of proportion. How dare he exert this power over her? So she kills him. She smiles with satisfaction. Who has the power now? Oh, it has been a symbolic murder, of course, she has found another helper, deflected that terrible of dependency and hope. But here is the really strange thing. "I have a feeling," she says, "that this is a kind of microcosm of something that I do all the time. It makes me so angry when someone controls me. I feel so powerless, like I'm falling apart." Words, not shadows, echoed back to me from sessions ago. Borrowed, given, hers, mine, ours? Her eyes meet mine. We are both awake.

Survival and the Hope of Rescue

Miriam F. Weiss, M.D.

It was August. I had just finished a three-week shift at St Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction Colorado. Free of my pager, and with the whole day ahead of me, I planned a morning walk on the Monument Trail of the Colorado National Monument, a quick drive to the airport, and a 5:00 PM flight home. For more than five decades, starting as a girl scout, I have climbed mountains and descended canyons, in summer or winter, carrying a daypack or a week of supplies for camping, whenever work or vacation-travel permitted.

For the first hours I concentrated on taking pictures of the desert, framing magnificent vistas carefully, sharing photos with my husband in my imagination. My thoughts were home in Ohio. I was equipped for a walk, not the wilderness. I carried two bottles of water, a cucumber and a tomato for lunch, the park map, my cell phone, and my camera. It was not until my rescue that I understood I had hiked a dried-out streambed, not the man-made trail. Both flowing water and human trail makers mark the desert with piles of rocks. In this place, the way carved by a past flash flood was clearer than the path made by people. So where the trail crossed a dry creek, I followed what I thought were cairns into a wash, and kept going. Around 11 o'clock I retraced my steps to hike back to the road where my car was parked.

It was early afternoon before I realized that I could not identify any landmarks. I bush-whacked my way to the top of a ridge, then another ridge, then a third. There was no sign of a track ascending to the road. My cell phone indicated "no service", and I met no other hikers. To quiet my wave of panic, I made a plan. According to the park map, the trail connected one road to another. Since I could not find my way up and out to the road where my car was parked, I reasoned I could walk to the other road and flag down a ride. I retraced my steps, but in reality I found my way back into the same dry streambed.

As the hours passed I discarded my hope of catching my plane, but I clung to a hope of reaching the distant road. Initially the midday light and heat were like annoying companions. But when my first bottle of water was gone, their demands grew more insistent—parched lips, headache and nausea. At the start, sweat dried on my skin; later, I stopped sweating. I made no urine. But my intestines were over-filled with urgent pressure. I fought anxiety by counting my steps. Over and over I reached one thousand, and started again.

I fought against resting. That part of mind that calculates odds kept me awake: "Pay attention. Survive." Under a ruthless sun, my imagination sought cool white sheets on a soft bed in a darkened room. The rocks radiated heat like an oven, but a languorous daydream took me in and out of a

drowsy nap, watching shadows on the ceiling. In reality there was no shade to give coolness and too much light to find shadows. "Pay attention."

As the path made by the creek grew wilder, I continued to believe I was on the trail indicated by the park map. I rationalized that my hike had advanced from "moderate" to "difficult." Where water had tumbled over cliffs during spring's flash floods, there were dry waterfalls. These I climbed down. I forced all of my awareness into my hands and my feet. Time slowed. "Will the rock crumble if I shift from my right foot to my left toe? Will the shelf remain solid if I ease my hand there? Is this tiny tree with dusty leaves rooted deeply enough to hold my weight?" My clinging was as precarious as the few plants that found a roothold on the drop-off. The rock itself seemed a living presence, each pebble and grain of sand poised to slide and plummet like me.

After each scramble, when my way was flat again, I counted my steps and hoped to see the road. But the dry stream's path descended between higher and higher cliffs. Each climb down became more difficult, and each straight section shorter. Then I reached a crevice that was deeper than any that had preceded it. I stopped and took stock of what was left of my strength. I had half a bottle of water in the late afternoon heat. I knew I could not go forward, or turn back. The place I had reached felt impassable as despair.

After a moment, I tried my cell phone. I found that if I stood in a certain spot, facing south, I had service. It was 5:00 PM. The 911 operator told me that rangers had begun to search for me hours before my call. Apparently my car had been parked at the trailhead too long. I told the operator that I was unhurt, but too tired to continue, and that I was on the Monument Trail. She advised me to stay in one place. As I tried to tell her of my terror, my phone stopped working. The battery charge was exhausted like me.

Around 6:30 PM, I heard a man's voice calling, "Hello!" from some distance. I yelled in response, my throat burning with effort, "Hello, I'm here!" The voice grew closer, and then farther and farther away. That was the moment when I understood that I was not on the marked trail—that it might not be possible for others to find me. I had crossed a line to a place of powerlessness. I was cornered. I could no longer put one foot in front of the other. Sunset was on its way, and night. I imagined how my terror would be magnified by darkness. I feared becoming prey for the mountain lions warned about on park bulletin boards. Despite fatigue, all my senses were vigilant. I was as twitchy as a rabbit, and as vulnerable. I had no matches and no knife. Options and plans gone, I waited. Patience was my strength; silence, my only defense. And I had a poem memorized in college:

"I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love

For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
but the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting."
- T.S. Eliot (1888 - 1965), **The Four Quartets**

Under the first star of evening, I heard a whistle. Again I screamed "Here I am!" and this time the whistler responded to my calls. Within minutes Team 7 of the Mesa County, Colorado Search and Rescue Squad climbed over a rise. My rescuers told me I was only a quarter of a mile from the road. They radioed the other teams with the news of our good fortune. After two bottles of water and a package of fruit-flavored gummy bears, I felt ready to walk out. With Team 7's help I descended the cliff of the last dry waterfall and followed my rescuers to the road. There I met a reporter from the newspaper, a cameraman from the local TV news, three paramedics with an ambulance, two policemen, and the park ranger whose voice I had heard earlier that day, but who said he had not heard me. My relief was tempered by mortification. I was back to familiar rules, to the privilege of living in a civilized and idealistic world where the most foolish human life is precious.

I thanked the Park Service and the Mesa County Search and Rescue squad with charitable donations. My letter of gratitude to the Park requested that some of the money be used to develop better trail-markers and signs within the Monument. So a year later my husband and I chose to take our summer vacation in Colorado. I wanted to see if I could identify the place where I got lost, and recover beauty uncontaminated by fear. It was straightforward and joyous to hike the 12-mile Monument Trail in his company. We had a U.S. geologic survey map, a compass, robust sandwiches, extra water, whistles, and a first-aid kit.

A bright new sign, with a freshly painted arrow and the word "TRAIL" pointed up the hill away from the place where I had wandered into the streambed. On the marked trail, we laughed.

Searching for the words to write this essay is like looking for beads scattered from a broken necklace. Here is a memory as round and shiny as the too-bright sun. There is a brilliant gem of fear. Here is the taste of thirst. There is the acuity of fatigue. For a short time I lived in terror for my survival. In those hours, the fragments of my vulnerability coalesced into my whole world. That world, despite the usual illusion of safety, is never very far. It is the simplest truth of living.

Creamed Corn

Don Chiappinelli, C.S.W.

That morning, a Sunday morning, a cold and bright February morning with the sun shining and coffee made and the lazy day just beginning to move along, the telephone rings. A simple ring-ringing. Now, years later, my mind races through all the endings that could possibly be on their way to me in a telephone ring, and I brace myself for their news. That February morning it was my mother calling. My father in a matter of seconds is shockingly, and simply, gone. I remember the phone dropping out of my hand, and it landed down next to me on the couch with a thud.

There are two stories about my father and me that stir up my feelings of ambivalence about his death. One is a family story about forgiveness and missing him; the other, a more private and difficult story of my relief at his having gone, will have to wait its turn to be told. As this one – the family story – goes, my father, the son of an Italian immigrant, would sit at the head of the table each night at dinner with all of the food placed in front of him as he dished it out deciding what my brother, sister and I – the youngest - would have. If we ever said "That's enough!" regarding whatever he was putting on our plate he would give us double, swiftly dishing out our punishment for having challenged him. If we didn't eat everything on our plates we would have to finish it at the next meal before being allowed to have anything else.

One night at dinner when I was five or so my father was ladling creamed corn onto my plate and although I knew better I said, "That's enough!" Before I could take the words back he loaded another huge scoopful onto my plate. My hatred of creamed corn was sincere then, as it is now, so I don't really know exactly why I said "that's enough" on that particular night except to say that in some ways I suppose I felt that, of him, I had had enough.

I did not eat the creamed corn he gave me that night. To my father this was, of course, a declaration of war and the creamed corn was waiting for me on the table at breakfast. Already at his office, my father telephoned to get a report from my mother who reluctantly told him that I was still sitting at the table but that the creamed corn remained untouched. I hoped I might luck out with a reprieve at dinnertime since it had already been planned that I would be spending the weekend at the safe haven of my grandparents' house – my mother's parents – as I often did. My father, however, insisted that the creamed corn get packed along with me and I don't remember much of that weekend now except that the battle of wills must have continued so that on Sunday afternoon the creamed corn came back home with me and I faced it, yet again, resting still in its black bowl.

Then Monday arrived and somehow the creamed corn went missing at breakfast — gone without as much as a word. It was then that I knew, and everyone else knew, that I could claim

an unheard of victory; but everyone also knew that my victory would have to go unmentioned and without ceremony in order to be upheld. And although I had finally been listened to when I said "that's enough," my father's rule over me – and my battles with him about it – found their measures in other ways and for many years to come.

I was thirty or so when I came out to my father, and I brought Byron — my then boyfriend, now partner — home one evening to meet the family. When everyone had sat down to dinner and all the food was on the table and everyone's glass was full — and just before we picked up our forks to eat — my mother asked, "Can I get anyone anything?" Everyone said no except for Byron who quickly made his place in the family known by saying "You wouldn't happen to have any creamed corn, would you?" The shock of the unmentionable victory finally mentioned provoked a collective gasp around the dinner table that was immediately followed by an anxious silence. We all looked up at, and then away from, one another and my face grew red hot.

It was my father who finally broke the silence when he looked over at me from the head of the table and said, "You know, Don, I never liked creamed corn either." The simple words caught me off guard, not unlike the simple ringing of the telephone years later, and brought tears that I quickly tried to swallow as a new kind of space for him opened up inside me and an old one began to collapse. Then the choreography of our family dinner rose up and moved along with a kind of ease and grace that I had never felt before.

Now, many years later, Byron, always the storyteller as his father was, will ask someone if they've heard the creamed corn story and he'll launch into it — sometimes even if they say they have. It seems silly now, but every time he speaks my father's words my eyes fill up again and again and that place for him inside me expands.

How to Write a Professional Paper

Mary Davis, M.D.

1) Think of a topic: a patient who's driving you crazy, a pattern of behavior you've seen repeatedly, a question you want an answer to.

2) Think of another topic, because the first one is too complicated and you don't know where to start.

3) Read lots of papers about the first topic, and forget what your original question was.

4) As you're listening to patients, get distracted by thoughts about what you've read.

5) Begin to use what you've read as you listen to patients.

6) Remember the original question, and realize it's meaningless, but there's another, related question that's interesting.

7) Read everything you can find about the new question, and then forget that question.

8) After a year or so, remember the second question, because your most difficult patient is illustrating it perfectly.

9) Write down that patient's history and put into words what her central problem is, after changing your mind about that central problem at least twice.

10) Talk to trusted colleagues about your patient, and argue about what they think.

11) Rewrite what you've written.

12) Repeat steps 10 and 11 at least three times.

13) Throw out what you have written so far and repeat step 9.

14) Repeat steps 10 through 13 until done.

14) (Optional) Add footnotes and bibliography.

15) (Optional) Submit for publication.

Freewriting

Sylvia Flescher, M.D.

When I do a free-write, I always discover something new. Or not new exactly. It's more like I re-discover a truth I need to face again and again. Maybe some of the most fundamental and uncomfortable truths are like that: we can only think about them for a short time and then we have to re-bury them.

So at a New Directions weekend a couple of years ago, I was in a Saturday morning writing group. Our instructor had spread out on the table several dozens of post-cards. There were some in color, some in black and white; reproductions of paintings, sculptures, photographs, even cartoons. It was a cornucopia of images, perfect for evoking all kinds of associations and projections. As we filed in, we scanned the table, picked up one or another post-card for a closer look, murmuring reactions, our creative juices already beginning to flow. We sat down and our instructor told us to pick a post-card and write for twenty minutes about whatever that post-card brought to mind. The room fell silent as twenty intense women, all of us peculiarly psychologically-minded, set to work.

Nothing is random, of course. My problem is I'm always trying to stay one step ahead of my unconscious, a tiresome and Sisyphean task indeed. So I gaze at the table and find myself unable to choose between several cards. What if I don't pick the "right" one? Or do I mean "write" one?

I notice others have picked and are already scribbling. A familiar anxiety threatens to overtake me: what's wrong with me? How come it seems easier, less conflicted for them? Maybe I don't belong in this group after all. But it's too late to quit now. I'm committed and I'll just have to see it through. Go for it, Sylvia, I say to myself encouragingly.

My hands are drawn to two post-cards and, before I even know what I am doing, I have chosen to write about both of them. I pull my chair away from the table and begin typing on my lap-top. This is a first for me and a big step. For too long I have been unable to use the computer as a friendly tool, an extension of my thinking, creative self. The thoughts begin to flow and my fingers are flying. This is what I write:

> I am torn between these two photos. (*One is a sepia-toned photograph of a lovely young woman in a 1920's low-waisted dress, gazing at a flowering tree, with a melancholic expression on her face.)* This sepia one is so sad: it makes me think immediately about my Aunt Zofka, the one I never knew, the one I've named my daughter Sophia after. She was born in 1920-something (so many of the details of her life are unknown to me) in Poland and was killed by the Nazis. I think I look like her. This photo evokes Europe and the sad, gray past that I can never quite escape. In the front-yard of my house in NJ, there is a magnolia tree. Every spring, its glorious blossoms last for a few short, wonderful days, making me feel acutely the passing of each spring and each season and each life. So Aunt Zofka is looking off into the future, seeing her premature, violent death, in the lovely flowering branches.

Must I write about her? (*Here come the tears, always at the ready when I write….)*
Must I memorialize my murdered relatives and eternally live in the shadow of my father's grief and rage?
Must I always and forever atone for surviving or.....

Can I give myself permission to luxuriate in the other postcard? (*A photo with vibrant colors, of a patio-garden in the foreground and a gentle hilly landscape in the background.)* Also in Europe, but so very different. Sunny Greece or Italy, where the Mediterranean climate grows flowers almost all year long. The patio is well-tended, but empty, clean, inviting. Someone is taking good care of this home. The vista of houses nestled into the hill-side evokes townspeople nearby but not impinging upon me. We all have enough space. I can be alone but not lonely. I can write and paint and day-dream all day long. Make love and take a siesta when the afternoon sun gets too strong. And then a walk down into the village with my love for a leisurely simple dinner. Life would be so good.

And there you have it, in a nut-shell. Part of my conflict about writing is that I feel I *should* be writing about the Holocaust, I *should* be fulfilling my father's commandment for me to perpetuate his life-work in some way. (He was a psychoanalyst.) After all, didn't I say in an early session on the couch "my father wanted me to write his auto-biography," not even realizing my slip until my analyst pointed it out to me. From a very young age, I somehow felt that I had an obligation to make up for my father's unspeakable losses. I was to be mother/father/sister/son all rolled into one. I didn't feel like my life was my own to be chosen and lived. And to leave him would have been out of the question. So I lived at home through college and not far away through medical school. Fortunately for me, my father died when I was 23, and I was nominally free to pursue my own destiny. But it was too late: I'd already been shaped and scarred by the burden of being a Holocaust survivor's child.

But slowly, slowly I am emerging from that shadow. I am struggling to find my own voice, to express my own unique experience, even if it means a lot of crying along the way. My father always hurried me along, warning me "Life is short, Sylvia, life is short." Maybe now, at long last, I am realizing that some things cannot be hurried. I can grant myself permission to take my own sweet time and follow as many detours as my heart desires. This is MY life, the only one I'll have, and I'll write IF I feel like it, WHEN I feel like it and about WHATEVER I feel like.

Now I have to figure out how to get onto that sun-splashed patio with the to-die for view.

Remarks at Graduation May 2009

Martha Blechar Gibbons, Ph.D., R.N.

When I entered New Directions three years ago, I had no idea that I would be participating in a diet plan. The literature that I read about the program never indicated this. Sharon Alperovitz didn't mention it when she described the writing experience to me. Friends who had preceded me in the program never hinted that this might be a possibility. But in the first year of my participation in New Directions, I lost 89 pounds… of adjectives! Following this, the adverbs began to peel off, and I shed a total of 22.5 pounds.

In my second year of New Directions, my Sunday morning writing group instructor, Tesa Conlin, informed me that I could no longer start my sentences with the word "and." I was stunned. I had been placing the word "and" at the beginning of my sentences since kindergarten. Changing this behavior was not going to be short term therapy. But now every time I begin to form the letter "A" at the beginning of a sentence, I sense Tesa behind me, breathing down my neck, her blue eyes piercing the paper in front of me. Like a dog when it hits an electric fence, I am shocked into submission.

In my third year of New Directions, I participated in Elizabeth Reese's Poetry Workshop. Dutifully following her directions, I came to class with my original poem. Each of us read our creations, and when it was my turn, I shared mine. Liz listened, responded, and proceeded to cut my poem in half. I felt a bit bereft, but definitely lighter.

Now, after all of this, the reason I do not appear emaciated is due in large part to my Sunday morning writing group. Even we experienced shrinkage: our group downsized in number from six to five, and finally to four. Yet the four of us remaining have learned that while there may be power in numbers, there is something very significant, possibly life altering, that can be exchanged in an intimate environment. The initial loss was our ultimate gain, and allowed us to come to know, support, and challenge one another in a way that facilitated our group and individual development. I conclude these three years feeling lighter, but liberated, and very grateful to everyone in New Directions for this experience.

Leaving of Class of 2007: A Whitman's Sampler

Sheila Felberbaum, L.C.S.W., A.P.R.N.

Great are the folks at New Directions and myself.
We are each just as good and bad
writers as those that came before us and after.
What machinations they went through
What procrastinations before putting pen to paper…
Weeks gone by without words of worth…
Yet drawers and closets cleaned, files rearranged and flowers planted.
Jealousy of the well-published…disdain of own work
Aspirations of greatness…places on best-seller lists,
Awards awarded, and book tours standing- room only.
What they felt…do we not we feel it in ourselves?
What they wished…do we not wish the same? (p.156)

Prologue
Transformative moments:
Essays so ably given by Peter Shaft and Judy Batchelor
at NMCOP, a Psychoanalytic Conference, in 2003
which serendipitously influenced my path, propelled me toward
New Directions and the summer option at Stowhof
in the hamlet of Stowe Vermont.
Fifteen pages of writing required,
what had I? Professional jargon to hide behind or
the poems of my heart….*personal candor* I decided
All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor (p.20)
Piecing together fragments written during the illness and the dying of my mother
A poem, I did transfigure,
Never expecting this elegy would the template be for three years of workshops;
Revision, revision, revision (my computer screen spell check message
suggests that I should consider revising the aforementioned fragment).
A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning.
Has anyone fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and
rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full?

To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring…he brings neither
cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. (p.24)

Oh, what of that virgin experience?
Sue Willen's free writes… joy, did bestow
in prompts: prodigious, evocative, instructive and catalytic.
They included:

I couldn't believe my eyes
Remember it's a secret
Describe the flower provided using simile, memory, and metaphor.

I will never forget that summer: the welcome from alumni who offered me
a place at the table to eat, to write, to laugh, to cry, to grow;
Gay, Peter, Ursula, Doris, Michael, and, of course Judi
who asked me about my menopausal flashes and adolescent exuberance
as we lounged beside a reflecting swimming pool,
the small group process with Bob and Bo Winer, deconstructing my poem,
forming a dyad with Martha Dupecher reconstructing our analyst's offices
in rhyme and verse and
basking in the glow of Sharon Alperovitz as she dispensed grace, beauty, and an
uncanny ability to calm wounded healers.
I take part….I see and hear the whole (p.71).

Two more Stowe summers, at Edson Hill,
Denise Orenstein, Mistress of Knowing, taskmaster supreme,
provoked the best and the worst, the deepest of the deep,
the ridiculous to the sublime in memorable prompts:

Close your eyes: touch, feel, and smell the object in your hand
The worst meal you have ever had
The word or image you associate to writing
The worst thing you have ever done in your life

In the Beginning

First weekend New Directions: One Washington Circle,
a boutique hotel in Washington D.C.

All is made ready by our Wizard Paco Martinez-Alvarez,
a genus of coordination, humor and endless patience
absorbing two page papers snail mailed, e-mailed or faxed,

and procuring rooms to sleep, work and learn.
Critical Thinking Thursday:
Who am I to judge the work of others? Read and critique.

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise, maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man, stuffed with the stuff that is course, and stuffed with the stuff that is fine. (p.45)

It is with confusion we wander among:
Discussion Groups, the Combined Scientific Meeting,
Writing Workshops, and Writing groups.
I ultimately refer to the Sunday morning meeting as my Home Group:

Mary Carpenter and Liz Hersh steer us through the rough, the tough,
the touching and the transcendent.
"Write for yourself first, as honestly as you can, later on deal with other concerns"
Mary tells us. "Don't change a word of it" Liz intones at the end of my poem.
We began with 6 students then reduced by assorted life experiences to myself
and Ann Devaney, a finer writing partner, a finer friend, there could never be.

Full Circle

In March of 2007, a paper I did present
for NMCOP, the conference from which, for me, it all began.
Peter Shaft provided the frame, as we extolled New Directions
and described the writing process for

"Poetic License: Mourning a Parallel Process" by Sheila Felberabaum
I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new washed babe… (p.34)

As We End

Can the years past truly be three? What New Directions has meant to me:

intellectual stimulation, collegial bonding, emotional stretching, finding a home.
Will you seek a far off? You surely will come back at last,
Happiness not in another place, but this place…not for
another hour, but this hour (p.107).
Great is the flow of words, *and equally great* is the ending of words, knowing when enough is enough is also great.

[Page references are to excerpts from Whitman, Walt (1855, 2005). *Leaves of Grass*, 2005, *150th Anniversary First Edition*. Oxford University Press.]

Washington Center for Psychoanalysis INC.

4545 42nd Street NW, #309
Washington, DC 20016
202.237.1854
Fax 202.237.1856
center@washpsa.org
www.washpsa.org