

The Palimpsest Review

Vol. 6



The Palimpsest Review is a publication of
the Pennsylvania State University –
an equal opportunity university.

The Palimpsest Review

No. 6 1998

The Palimpsest Review is the student literary publication for the Pennsylvania State University campuses outside the University Park main campus. All the short stories and poems published herein are the products of students enrolled on those campuses during the academic year prior to the semester of publication.

The Palimpsest Review wishes to offer its thanks to the Office of Campus Student Affairs, most notably Cy Falatko for his assistance in administering the program; to Dean of the Commonwealth College, Dr. Joseph C. Strasser, for his assistance at the college level and working with the other deans; and finally we owe our continued thanks to Dr. Monaca Gregory, Hazleton campus Director of Academic Affairs, for her continued assistance in providing space and computer time.

The Palimpsest Review, The Pennsylvania State University, Jim Manis, Editor-in-chief, Hazleton, PA 18201-1291, is a non-profit publication of the Pennsylvania State University, published once each year. Poetry and short story manuscripts should be submitted during the spring semester of each year, with proper S.A.S.E. Only work by students enrolled on one of the Pennsylvania State University campuses, excluding the main campus, will be considered.

Copyright © 1998 The Pennsylvania State University

The Pennsylvania State University is an equal opportunity university.

The Palimpsest Review

No. 6 1998

Editor in Chief

Jim Manis (Hazleton campus)

Fiction Editors

Claudia Limbert (DuBois campus)

Dinty Moore (Altoona campus)

Poetry Editors

Michael D. Riley (Berks campus)

David Chin (Wilkes Barre campus)

Managing Editor

Antonio Vallone (DuBois campus)

Student Editor

Lakeisha Thorpe (Hazleton campus)

Contents

From the Editor's Desk	5
Poetry	9
Evelyn Brady "Safeguard"	10
Jenna Boyle "Last Night"	12
Kate F. Van Schaick (Judge's Selection for Best Poem) "Ruskie"	14
Michael Riedl "Little Round Top, Since July 1863"	16
Nancy Nottingham "In Pursuit of Scholarship"	17
Arturo Zilleruelo "On Haven Fair Road"	18
Bryan Dondero "Dandelion Sutra"	20
Arturo Zilleruelo "Girl"	21
Laura Guthrie "night's flight of fancy"	22
Deb Gillispie "Muddy Creek"	23
Todd Davis (Poetry Judge) "Looking for the Light"	24
Short Stories	27
Charles Patterson "In the Eyes of the Beholder"	28
Jenna Boyle "An Adjustment"	33
Peter Lawler "Math Class Is Murder"	38
Ken Lopez "Exonerating the Curse of San Miguel de Allende"	42
Christopher H. Brown "Silent Revelation"	48
Nora Miller (Judge's Selection – Best Short Story) "Star"	56
Raymond E. Petersen (Fiction Judge) "The Cardinal Trait of a Writer" ...	68
Drama	71
R. Michael Dotts "Pulp-Free Fiction"	72

Jim Manis

Editor-in-chief

Email: jdm12@psu.edu



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to the sixth edition of *The Palimpsest Review*. This year we've introduced a new genre—drama—to the publication. Our final two pieces are one act plays from two young writers on the Berks campus. We hope that you'll find this addition as exciting and worthwhile as we have. We look forward to receiving more submissions in this genre in the near future.

Our Future:

Last year was our final year as a Commonwealth Educational System publication. We came out under the C.E.S. banner even though the C.E.S. no longer existed at the time of our printing. This year we are a “cross platform” publication, operating under the auspices of the university *sans* University Park. In other words, we are something of an underground, certainly revolutionary publication. This makes financing the publication difficult at the very least. The deans in charge of the various colleges within the Penn State system seem uncertain about what to do with us. We owe a great debt this year to Dean Strasser of the Commonwealth College for taking the lead at that level and convincing his fellow deans to pitch in and make the publication viable through one more year.

What the future actually holds for us remains somewhat uncertain. The deans have a difficult time committing, although faculty from a variety of the colleges and students from across the system have voiced their continued

heart felt support. The problem is that we “belong to no one.” University folk are proprietary. They want credit for whatever is done within their provence, and whenever something is done outside of their provence, they are uncertain how to act. Others seem simply afraid of the competition which they believe *Palimpsest* offers to local, campus publications.

Palimpsest exists, as do other Penn State publications, to give the students a voice. Writers know that their work improves as they strive for an audience, and when they publish their work they inevitably become better writers. We exist in order to assist our students in the persuit of their audience and in the persuit of excellence. Consequently, we continue to call upon writers within the system, whether they be students or facutly, to voice their concerns about the existence of *Palimpsest* to their college deans and the president of the university.

***Palimpsest onLine!* and Penn State's Electronic Classics Series Sites:**

The e-zine version of *Palimpsest*, *Palimpsest onLine!* continues to flourish. This year we gained links to publications in England as well as with an increasing number in the U.S. And we received our first request from a foreign publisher to be placed in contact with one of our writers whose work appeared on the Web. There is no surer sign of success than that.

Our Electronic Classics Series site has grown much faster than we ever anticipated. We now have over 125 “electronic books” available for free download, viewing and printing. Readers from around the state, from other states and from other countries have contacted us to tell us of their interest and (dare we say) appreciation! If you haven't visited our sites, we hope you do in the near future, and let us know what you think.

A Note on Submissions:

We are soliciting short stories of 5000 words or less and up to six poems of 100 lines or less, each, from all Pennsylvania State University campuses except University Park for the seventh volume of *Palimpsest*. Prose should be double spaced. The author should submit a brief cover letter identifying his or her campus affiliation at the time of submission. Make sure an S.A.S.E. is enclosed. Campus creative writing instructors are encouraged to assist student writers with manuscript format and the submission process.

A Message to Those Whose Work Was Not Accepted:

There is simply no way to express the importance of work submitted for publication when that work is not accepted, but believe me it is. You make the magazine better because you tried. And if you are really serious about writing, you won't let our judgement about the relative merits of the work you sent us impede you from trying again. I for one truly do value your contributions, regardless of how intangible they may be.

And Finally, Congratulations:

Kate F. Van Schaick (Beaver campus), whose poem, "Ruskie," won this year's "Judge's Choice Award in Poetry"; and **Nora Miller** (Berks campus), whose short story, "Star," won this year's "Judge's Choice Award in Fiction." Nothing pleases an editor more than to be able to turn a check over to a writer. We only wish we could do that for all of you.

Publishing the Work of Student Writers
from

Commonwealth College

Altoona College

Abington College

Berks–Lehigh Valley College

Capital College

Behrend College

The Palimpsest Review accepts short stories, poems and plays from all Pennsylvania State University campuses other than University Park. Cash prizes are awarded for the best short story and the best poem to appear annually; judging is provided by professional writers, not associated with Penn State in any way.

Each issue contains professional essays on the subject of writing, of the highest literary merit, from the judges.

Poetry

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

— Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” from *Leaves of Grass*



A poem should not mean
But be

— Archibald MacLeish, “*Ars Poetica*”

Evelyn Brady

Safeguard

Cold and hard
your body
the table they've laid you on
Skin mottled and blue
reminds me of Italian marble
the foyer of Michael Donato's house
that you built when I was nine
A year-and-a-half of chemotherapy
They said you had six months

Navy blue suit
from a store you wouldn't be caught dead in
Not blue jeans
faded and torn at the knee
Not the Notre Dame sweatshirt
I gave you at nineteen
I was never a fan

Black wing tip shoes
polished like brass
look brand new
Not sneakers stained green by the grass
with no laces
easier to slip on and off
and leave by the door

Palimpsest

I lean close and inhale
Familiar scent of Safeguard
fills my lungs
You read *Green Eggs and Ham*
in a voice low and soothing
small child on your lap
I fall asleep against your sweater

Jenna Boyle

Last Night

I find him asleep, his long body
In the middle of my bed.

 Trying to fit myself beside him, I contort
My body to meld with his.

In this twisted position I lie
Staring at the alarm, still awake,
3:24. He is snoring.
I try to imagine his dreams.

Still asleep, he reaches for me.
Five fingers sliding down my ribs.
His long leg drapes over my hip.
I still perch on the edge.

I lie passive in his arms
Watching his face, wondering
How he sees me. Am I
A compliant girl or his seductress?
I try to escape his hold, but he wakes.
Turning me to face him, we now
Share the middle. My musings
End when confronted with his eyes.

Palimpsest

They seem to me a strange
Blue, murky like the water
Of an agitated pond or fog.
His fingertips comb my hair

Away from my face. He touches
Soft lips in a long light kiss
Creating a warm want but
He again is sleeping.

With a fingertip, I touch him
From temple to the stubble on his chin.
With my hand on his face,
My breathing slows. I fall to sleep.

Kate F. Van Schaick

Judge's Selection for Best Poem

Ruskie

it was Poplar—when I turned
to you—Brian—away
from everything—else I wanted
a mental picture
of you—at the moment
to lock away
a vision
of all that I am
I drive this way—a lot—these days
but I've forgotten—
don't have a clue
where I am—and I think
I just ran—over an—alien's fetus
I
Can't
Be
Sure
But that's what—it looked—like
white—glowing—misshapen
guess that's why—they say
Never
Drug
And
Drive. True—
but I know
where I am—now—the alien—is gone
so it doesn't much—matter
a white sign is—demanding—attention
with "Busy Beaver"
placed—boldly—in red
how sick is that—seems they sell more than
hardware—after all
you laugh—smoke billows—transforms

Palimpsest

you—into—The Joker
we hit—Castle Shannon—and I take
the—long cut
less cops
less trouble
no speed—limit
till Mt. Lebo—that is—but who cares
different car
different plates
they won't hassle
but you know that
doesn't matter—we're almost
home—free
it was Poplar—when I turned
to you—Brian—away
from everything—else I wanted
a mental picture
of you—at the moment
to lock away
a vision
of all that I am
but you're not here—Brian
you're—stuck—in my head
adhered to my mind
I've—gone—too—far
can't control
my obsessing
but—I've always known
where to find you
always been—willing
to shift—from—here to
there
Where the light is not broken

Michael Riedl

Little Round Top, Since July 1863

To be at peace,
I sit in silence
Upon the hill.
My eyes surveying the
Green mountains and
Valleys.

Solitude surrounds me.
The air is warm and
Its stillness: soothes.
Stresses melt away,
And run down the hill like
Rain.

Time permits this
Only for so long.
As I leave this peaceful
Place, I vow to return
In the evening's fading
Light.

Nancy Nottingham

In Pursuit of Scholarship

I keep falling in love
with dead women.

They parade
their proud spirits
on paper bound
with thick hide
and sit patiently,
lurking,
waiting,
on library shelves.

Like ticks
sensing warm blood,
they leap upon me
as I pass down the aisle
affixing to a kindred spirit.

Resurrecting
and resurrected,
symbiotic
we give life to each other.

Arturo Zilleruelo

On Haven Fair Road

Death came suddenly for this one,
It came painted powdered blue,
with engine earthquake-loud,
with tinted windows and dimmed headlights
on a rain-slicked road.
It came with the familiar warmth of gold leaves and acorns
no more than a few bounds away.
It came down heavy, as the jaws of a foxtrap.
It came down heavy as a bullet in the throat.
It came down heavy as four dimensions meeting, colliding,
stopping dead.
It came down heavy; it crushed, it tore,
it came and snapped bone and ground muscle,
It burst heart and lungs, it punctured kidney and intestine,
and half ripped away a bushbush tail.
It came and was gone in the space of two murmuring heartbeats,
leaving only me to watch
the final seconds:
the whole body twisting, contorting, convulsing
in an orgasm of broken spine and electricity gone mad.
Spasm, release,
spasm, release,
spasm,
then an ejaculation of blood and bile from the little mouth,
with its jaws unhinged,

Palimpsest

opened wider than weeping,
wider than screaming.

A passing into vacuum space?

A rebirth into god's raging heart-furnace?

No.

A last tremor that shook the blood-blackened brokenness
from end to end,

ecstasy in its oldest and truest sense.

I stood at the muddy roadside, watching.

From the sky, a single acid drop

(it burned my pen-hand).

That? Mother, mourning.

This? An obedient son's eulogy.

A final look, a step, a breath,

exeunt, exeunt, exeunt omnes.

Bryan Dondero

Dandelion Sutra

Scents of yellow honey

Warm

Glowing

Like the sun

Bringing life to a higher be—ing

Metamorphosing

Into Super Nova

EXPLODING!

and waiting to be reborn.

Arturo Zilleruelo

Girl

No makeup hides

her weariness.

The delicate curves of

pale white feet

are visible through leather sandals.

A cigarette,

all ash and filter,

adheres to a dry mouth.

She seizes it

between thumb and forefinger,

lets it fall to withered grass,

littered with leaves

red, gold,

dead, cold.

It smolders.

Laura Guthrie

night's flight of fancy

treatment of a trip in winter
is like snow falling from the sky
all the lights break & glitter
before black pools of darting eyes
absorbing all the looted litter
and picking peaches from the sky

rest now before the jeering road
laughing loudly at your numbing pain
stop. let your mind lick its load
before your death goes down the drain
while your bodywave's breaking at the node
night remains the savior of the sane

Deb Gillispie

Muddy Creek

Downstream we flow,
Smooth, waveless water
No need to row.
Warm sun through filter
Of shade trees so grand,
His breath the only sound.

Damp rockless sand,
Baked against the round
Of my bare back.
Shades of vision closed tight,
In the background so black,
He is still in my sight.

Breeze tangles my strands,
Smelling day after storm,
Mist sprays over my hands,
Cooling my body's form.
Body heat again rises,
His hands touch my inner thighs.

Todd Davis

(Poetry Judge)

Looking for the Light: Making Poems from the Improbable

My father and I have a passion for stone, in part born out of our love for things that last, durable and dusky in their beauty, and in part because my mother loves stone walls. After my parents moved from their farm in the Berkshires of Massachusetts to Indiana, my father began to build with stone to deal with the loss, an attempt to give back to his wife a portion of what she had to leave behind.

For the past fourteen years, he and I have built hundreds of feet of wall, an anomalous act in the Midwest. Unlike the Northeast, in the Midwest one must seek out the stone. Each spring in Massachusetts, rock surfaces like the bloated bodies of the drowned, and farmers have no choice but to drag them from the earth. In Indiana far fewer perish. Instead we plunder the alluvial fan of the creek that runs on the north border of my parents' land, using a wheelbarrow during the driest months of summer to haul our precious stone up the bank to the waiting tractor-wagon.

I have learned the most about writing poems in building these walls with my father. It seems to me that too often we writers allow words to consume us, blinding us to the forms that flood our vision in the world beyond the text. When we allow the light of living, imbued with the sacredness of flesh and spirit, to guide our eye, we will be amazed, perhaps even stunned, into revelation. What we see, of course, will inevitably differ for each writer, but in our new-found sight we will begin to understand how to make poems from the world that surrounds and sustains us, how each footing stone pushes into the ground, laying a foundation for the building of a wall, not unlike the first word in a poem that begins our journey.

One of my earliest memories takes place in Connecticut at my maternal grandparents' home. I'm playing on an old stone wall that borders their backyard. A row of cedar trees grows across the way. The green seems almost unbearable when I remember it today: both of my grandparents dead, my own parents growing older. I spy a rose-colored piece of granite three stones from the top of the wall. At this age, I don't understand the way rock latches to

rock, holding back the weight of the sky. I slowly wrestle this hard rose from the gray thorns that surround it. Several large stones crash down when I finally pull my prize free, and my index finger is crushed, leaving an indelible impression about the price of beauty.

Wrestling with words is an equally dangerous act as removing a stone from a wall. Each word precariously balances upon the other, and like a stone wall, the words take on another life when placed together, standing for something that they could not stand for alone. If William Carlos Williams is correct that there are no ideas but in things, then we carry an especially difficult burden in trying to find the words that can adequately represent the things of this world. As most writers will confess, however, I am more than willing to risk the pain in building poems because of my desire to touch others with what I have seen. The problem many of us have is in discarding romantic notions about what is worthy of our attention and what is not. The subject of a poem matters little in comparison with our way of seeing that subject.

When I first began to write, I thought there was nothing I could say. I didn't live the urban experience of Ginsberg, nor was I capable of the dizzying aesthetic heights of Wallace Stevens. It seemed as if every poet I read lived a life so foreign to my experience and so much more engaging that to begin to write was already to admit defeat. What could the son of a veterinarian have to say? I mucked shit from kennel floors, fed boarders, and buried the dead dogs and cats whose owners had no other place to bury them in a small field out near the railroad tracks. Not exactly the stuff of poetry, I thought.

I didn't break this dismal spell on my own. In a poetry class taught by the Zen poet Lucien Stryk, I finally was helped to walk into the open field of poetry where one can see for miles as on the prairies. A Zen Buddhist, Stryk's own poems demonstrate the sacredness of the most simple or mundane act. And with his help, I discovered the work of Raymond Carver and Mary Oliver and Jim Harrison and Maxine Kumin and Stephen Dunn and Wendell Berry and a host of other writers whose work spilled out before me like light shining through the canopy of leaves in a maple. With the help of this light, I began to select stones from my own life, carefully brushing away the mud so I might see all of the blemishes and imperfections that make such stones unique and worthy of telling. Soon poems began to appear, their structures unfolding out of the natural world where they were born.

Of course, there are still many days when I cannot find the light. I am part of the earth, and the rhythms of sky offer days of cloud, as well as days when sun and moon hang together into late morning. On gray mornings, I try to

remind myself of the blessing found in all days—the kind of light that sifts slowly down through cloud and fog—and then begin my work with words. Some mornings this means waiting in silence, but more often I find in the silence some memory breaking in like a fallen branch snapped underfoot, white bottom of a doe flashing back into the undergrowth.

This past weekend my father, my son Noah, and I scoured the creek-bed for good footing stones. The wall that will be built with these stones will hold this memory: deep blue sky of autumn; late light of day slanting across the tops of the trees that begin at the edge of the meadow; a single red-tailed hawk catching an upward current, soaring like the words I hope to find some time in the coming winter months in a poem that says how much I love the things of this world and the people that walk with me in it.

Contributor's Note:

Todd Davis is an associate professor of English at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, where he teaches creative writing, film, and American literature. His poems have appeared in numerous literary reviews, including *The Worcester Review*, *The Red Cedar Review*, *Yankee*, *Appalachia*, *Blueline*, *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Image*, and *Aethlon*. He has published or has forthcoming essays in such journals as *Critique*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, and *Style*.

Short Stories

The traditional view is that true art is moral . . . essentially serious and beneficial, a game played against chaos and death, against entropy. It is a tragic game, for those who have the wit to take it seriously, because our side must lose; a comic game—or so a troll might say—because only a clown with sawdust brains would take our side and eagerly join in.

— John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*

Fiction writers are . . . thoughtful interpreters of the world. But instead of producing interpretations—instead of doing research or criticism—they doodle on the walls of the cave. They make art objects which must themselves be interpreted. How convolute, how absurd, how endlessly interesting is this complexity!

— Annie Dillard, *Living by Fiction*

It is through action that man steps forth from the repetitive universe of the everyday where each person resembles every other person; it is through action that he distinguishes himself from others and becomes an individual. Dante said as much: “In any act, the primary intention of him who acts is to reveal his own image.” At the outset, action is thus seen as the self-portrait of him who acts.

— Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*,
Trans. Linda Asher

Charles Patterson

In the Eyes of the Beholder

Dan lay motionless, staring at jet planes making smoke lines across the blue sky. His clothes were folded next to the empty hospital tray, but he had no intentions of getting out of bed that morning to put them on. The hospital robe was loose, too loose, and the blankets were just not warm enough. His fingers were still too cold and his legs too numb to feel. He had been recovering at Liberty Memorial Hospital for a few days already, but he hated it there, almost as much as he hated life itself.

“Danny, how are you feeling this morning?” his mother asked as she walked into the sterile room. “Are you awake, dear?” A groan quietly responded to the familiar voice. Turning his head ever so slowly, Dan looked with feeble eyes into his mother’s face.

“Dad’s at work now, but he’ll stop over when he’s done. I brought you your clothes; the doctors say you might be able to come home tonight. Would you like that?”

Dan’s cool, blue eyes began to get moist. Seeing his mother’s sincerity only made the homesickness worse. Soon, tears rolled down both of their cheeks onto the white, hospital sheets.

“Ian is here. He wants to talk to you.”

Dan rolled his eyes, stared back at the window, and let out a sigh. “You can let him in, but not yet,” Dan answered.

“What’s going on between you two?”

“There you go again Mom, always asking about that thing I want least to talk about at the moment,” Dan snapped back.

“Well, I wish you would open up more especially to your father and me. I brought you into this world, and I brought you into this hospital when you got hurt on your ninth birthday, and I brought you here again when...” but

tears prevented the words. She just wept. For the hundredth time that week, she wept. “Look,” she said after drying the tears, “things haven’t been all that great these last few years and your father’s new job isn’t helping, but we have to be strong. We’re a good family, Dan, and we’re going to get through these waters and come out winners at the end of all of this.”

“Thanks for the support, Mom, but it was you who was so adamant about a divorce; ready to quit and give up. I guess it takes a near death experience to really understand life, right?”

“Your father and I are not getting a divorce and that is the last I want to hear of that,” Mrs. Holgert said as she wiped her nose with her handkerchief. “I need to go, but I’ll be back in a few hours for lunch. I hope that by then we can have some more of this resolved before you see Dr. Peterson this afternoon. Do you still wish to see Ian?”

“I don’t think I’ll be going anywhere for awhile,” Dan replied half to his mom and half to himself.

“Alright, then I’ll bring him in,” she said, picking up her pocket book hastily in the way all professional, working moms do. “Love you.”

Dan just smiled faintly and returned to his sixth floor view. Then he noticed the picture by his bed. It was a symbol of good times long gone, when the future held something meaningful, when life had purpose. There they were: Mom, Dad, Rich, and Dan, all smiling for the camera. Rich was six years older than Dan, and possibly the only one in the family who Dan genuinely loved. He would take Dan and Ian to ball games when Mr. Holgert was out of town, or he would take the boys exploring some summer afternoons. Dan’s throat became a giant lump as he remembered the funeral last August.

“Damn drunks, can’t even hit the right car. Why did it have to be his?” Dan whispered.

“Danny,” a voice patiently called from the doorway. “Can I come in?” Ian asked.

Dan did not move a hair, but groaned just loud enough for Ian to hear. “My

mom baked a few of those butterscotch cookies you like. Remember when we snuck some butterscotch cookies into the Christmas pageant under Rich's coat, and all night people asked us for the recipe, but since we didn't know it we made one up." Ian's voice faded as he heard Dan's heavy sigh. They always used to laugh at that story, but this seemed to be the wrong time to mention Rich. Ian became all apologies, but Dan just focused his eyes on the ceiling. It was bad enough that they were on rough terms after Dan's accident, but now that he had brought up Rich's name Ian knew his sympathy speech had just rolled out the door. "Look Dan, I know it's tough for you, not being able to walk and stuff, but if I could take your place I would."

"Shut up, Ian, you don't have a clue," Dan spat back. "It was your fault anyway." But as he said those words and saw the hurt on Ian's face he knew that he didn't really mean them. He knew deep down that it was his fault for not looking both ways before crossing Lakeland Avenue, the main road in Bradington. But now that he had come out and said it, he would have to play along with his cruel words no matter how much he wanted to take them back.

"How is it my fault?" Ian asked in his squeaky sixteen-year-old tone. Ian's vocal chords were still growing even though most of his friends had matured, and he was very self-conscious of his voice both when singing and speaking.

"Well, if you hadn't taken so long at the pet store we wouldn't have been rushing to get home."

"You're going to blame my extra five minutes, which you agreed to in the first place, on not watching for cars?" Ian said, his forehead becoming wet with sweat. Ian never turned red, but he sweated like no other man alive. It would only take one embarrassment, one joke or a hot cup of cocoa, and he would unleash pints at a time. This was one of those moments, and Dan knew as soon as he saw the beads forming on Ian's brow that that he had overstepped his boundaries.

"You're right, Ian, it's stupid of me to think that," Dan said slowly as he shut his eyes. "But don't ever tell me, neither today or next year, that you

know how this feels.”

“Alright, but don’t mark me a liar if I tell you I would take your place, because I would.”

“Look, I appreciate your concern, Ian, but you just don’t understand. If you really sat where I sit now, then I might believe your little pity phrase and give you a hug. But you don’t sit where I sit. You sit up in a plastic chair with your elbows resting on your healthy knee joints. Damn it Ian, I don’t even have knee joints anymore.”

“It’s not bull, Dan I really mean it because we’re friends. And don’t friends stand by each other until the end? Didn’t we swear to that when we were nine?”

“Shut-up, you’ll be the only one standing!” shouted Dan in a threatening tone. He turned his head quickly away from his friend. “Ouch, Damn neck!”

“Come on Dan, you’ll be home tonight. It’s going to be alright, man.”

“I want you to leave, Ian,” Dan said after several seconds of silence. “Just go home. I’ll call you sometime.”

“This isn’t just about your legs, is it Dan?” Ian asked firmly. “This is about your mom and dad; it’s about Rich too. This is about things never being fair for Dan Holgert, right?”

“I want you to leave, Ian, and take the cookies to school or something,” Dan said looking out the window.

“Fine. If you don’t want to talk about it then I’ll go. You’ll call me later, right?”

“Sure Ian, I’ll give you a ring sometime, alright? Now please go. I’m really not in the mood for company.”

Ian stood up slowly, reaching his hands out for the side table. Standing next to the hospital equipment was a long, plastic reed with an orange tip at one end and a handgrip at the other. Ian fumbled for the cookie tray once he had his stick in hand, and then, grabbing the tray in his left hand he slowly turned in the direction of the door. Dan closed his eyes as he heard the steady tapping

Palimpsest

of Ian's stick on the linoleum floor fade away.

"Ian," A voice called from across the room. "Thanks for coming today man. I guess I'll see you over the holiday after school lets out?"

"Yeah Dan, I guess you'll see me over the holiday."

Jenna Boyle

An Adjustment

I had just gotten home from work and barely said hello to my family before climbing the stairs and curling up in bed. My head throbbed. My body ached. I just wanted to sleep, but the phone rang. Someone downstairs picked up the line, and I waited anxiously to hear them call for me. But I heard my mother crying out, “No, no ...” I had never heard her sound that way before.

I eased myself out of bed and walked slowly down the hall and down the stairs. I tried to listen for my mother’s voice, to hear what she said, to figure out what was wrong, but she was listening, not speaking. I continued my slow pace at the bottom of the stairs into the foyer. I could see both my parents in the kitchen. My mother was holding the phone, facing me, facing north. Her face was wet; she was crying. My father stood about an arm’s length away, facing east. I walked to my mother’s side, opposite my father, feeling awkward, out of place. I looked between the two, wondering what they knew. My mother, placing her hand over the receiver, looked at my father and whispered, “She doesn’t know.” I looked at him, his eyes met mine. He leaned forward at the waist and stated quite plainly, “Eileen is dead.” I didn’t think about how or when it happened. I slid to the floor and became sadness, no longer human.

As foul as I felt, I recovered myself once my mother hung up the phone. We had to make flight arrangements to get to Florida. Eileen and Chuck, my aunt and uncle, had moved there five years ago to open a flower shop with their friends, and now Chuck was alone. They had no children and he had no family there in Florida. After an hour on the phone with airlines we had four seats on the same non-stop flight for the next morning.

Packing was a joke. It took me hours to pack one suitcase. I’d forget myself and stare at the wall, lost in numb feeling. I thought of how she had finally quit smoking within the last month or two, how much she had struggled, and I laughed, then cried.

Palimpsest

* * *

We arrived safely at Miami International the next morning. We rented a car and drove the two hours across Florida to Naples. How strange it was to feel warm sun and see palm trees in November. We drove straight to the restaurant where we were to meet my uncle and his parnters from the flower shop and some of Eileen's relatives for lunch. We met in the parking lot, and Chuck choked when he tried to tell me that she would have liked my haircut. I beelined for the bathroom. I remember how good the cold water felt on my burning eyelids. I wanted to stay in that bathroom. It was safe, and I was alone there, but I went back into the restaurant. I never would have guessed how hard it was to keep from bawling into a bowl of chicken noodle soup.

Chuck's friends let us stay in a condo they had rented out during the season. I remember spending a lot of time on the lanai watching the water fountain in the lake. My predominant vision was her laughing. She found something funny in everything. I imagined her telling me to cheer the hell up. She always said to my uncle, "Cha-lie, would you shut the hell up." She always told people to "Deal with it" or "Adjust." She never lost her New York accent. When I spent part of a summer with them and worked at their shop, everyone in the store had New York accents. That was when she told me she had been married before. I remember the scene at Naples' airport when I was leaving that summer. The both of us were so quiet because we were both on the verge of tears. We had a wonderful friendship. She wasn't just a relative. I remember the first time Chuck brought her to meet us. I was about four and after they got married, I remember asking her if I had to call her Aunt Eileen since she had married my uncle. We were sitting on the pool deck at our house. I remember her laughing, and the sun shone on her, making her look like an angel. She said to me, "Don't you dare!" I adored her from the moment I met her. Most children did.

We arrived Tuesday, and the wake was Friday. The time in-between passed in a haze. I can't recall much of it, but I remember the wake clearly. I had

prepared for the worst. I had tissues and didn't wear mascara. But I avoided crying by avoiding all the people there. I sat in the back and watched them, coming and going, nodding sympathetically at Eileen's mom and my uncle, looking at the piles of pictures that were displayed. So many people hurting. Once they all left and only the family remained, I left my seat in the back and went through the pictures.

There were so many pictures. Albums and shoeboxes full. I found one that was taken at French Creek of her and me sitting on a boulder. I was six and she was twenty-six. I was beginning to go through pictures of her with the daughters of their flower shop partners when one of them, Allie, came and stood behind me. Allie was a year younger than I and had lived closer to Eileen all her life. She had lived close to them in New York and then in Naples. I tensed at her presence. I was jealous of the time she had had with Eileen, but beyond that she had always been the kind of girl I didn't like. I had met her a few times over the years, and we never got along well. We avoided all conversation. She turned to me with her overly made-up face and asked me if I wanted to go get some ice cream with her, her boyfriend, and his friend. I looked at her and hoped that the iciness I felt traveled in my glare. "I don't exactly feel like ice cream right now." I knew her mother had told her to invite me and I resented it.

I was more withdrawn that night than usual. I was thinking about Allie and Eileen. Allie called Eileen her aunt, but were they as close as she and I, I wondered. A nasty, sour feeling sank into my stomach, and my resentment grew. I went to bed without saying goodnight to anyone.

The next morning, I sat in the car, staring out the window, not seeing the scenery that passed. With all my strength and courage, I tried not to think of where I was going. That's a trick that never works for me. The pressure built in my head and chest. I felt overwhelmed. Those damn tears marched disobediently down my cheeks, falling on my dress because I refused to call attention to myself by wiping them away. The day before had gone so easily, I was caught unaware by that choking feeling, that rush of dread. I don't understand why

there was a difference for me between Eileen's wake and her funeral. I guess that's when the never-seeing-her-again became more indelible.

Once the ceremony began, my tears didn't stop. They rolled down like soldiers obeying orders from a source that was not me. Dozens of flower arrangements lined the wall and a small podium stood to the right of her coffin. Allie stepped behind it. My tears ended. She began to recite a poem she had written for Eileen. It was such a shallow piece of selfishness. "She'll never see me graduate and she won't be here for me when I do this or that." A dull throb started in my head, and I felt nauseated. Eileen didn't see me graduate, either, but she was alive then. It didn't matter that much. This isn't about you, and what about what Eileen was missing out on, I wanted to say to her. Why did she get Eileen so close to her while I was so far? I knew I was being juvenile, but I couldn't help my feelings. I watched her throughout the ceremony. She was so calm and dry-eyed. She didn't deserve Eileen, I thought.

Other people spoke and they asked friends and then family to get in line to see Chuck and Eileen's mother. Brightly colored flowers formed a path to Chuck, and they made the parlor smell like the flower shop. There was a wreath of all Jacaranda roses, her favorites. At the end of all those flowers was her coffin. It was closed. Beyond the coffin was Chuck. He looked so calm. He must have turned himself off to deal with all the other mourners. When I got to him, I hugged him hard and cried selfishly on his shoulder. We should all have been consoling him, yet he was holding me. I let go when I realized that if I didn't I'd never let go.

We went to the flower shop after the funeral. As I walked in, I remembered walking in four years earlier, when I had spent part of the summer with them. Chuck had picked me up, and when I walked in, I saw Eileen in the back corner. The store was full of customers, but I heard her call my name. We waded toward each other and embraced. I learned so much about her in that little vacation. I wished that there had been more. I should have written to her more often, I should have taken more time to get to know her better, I should have, I should have. How could I have known she would die too soon? Even

while I remembered, I could hear her telling me what an ass I was being. She had such a wonderful way of making people lighten up when they started feeling just how I was. Her answer to life's harshest blows was a laugh and a smile with just a hint of wickedness shining through.

I walked out of the store and sat on the plastic lawn chairs in the front. Cars droned past the store, and I kept thinking about Eileen and Allie. Allie spent so much time with her they must have been close. I lost the store—it wasn't there—no cars, no highway, just me and the plastic chair. It even felt cold despite the warm Florida sunshine. I didn't hear the door open either, and I gradually became aware of a hand on my shoulder. I looked up into my uncle's face. He sat down in the chair next to me.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked.

"Nothing much."

His fingers were at the back of my neck, and he gave me a light squeeze.

"Come on. Tell me. Is it about Aunt Ei?"

I felt my face pucker up, and I said in that strangled voice I get when I talk and cry at the same time, "Yeah."

His eyes were red, but he wasn't crying.

"I was just thinking about Eileen and Allie. Allie got to spend so much time with her." I dropped my head on his shoulder. "I hate that you guys live so far away." I was still thinking of them as one, Chuck and Eileen.

He laughed, but it was more like a soft sigh, and I felt him shake his head. He's going to tell me how horrible I am, I thought.

"Eileen and I haven't been spending that much time with them. Eileen hardly sees Allie at all. And besides, Allie is a spoiled brat." He put his arm around me and squeezed my shoulders. "There was something special between you and Eileen. She loved you so much."

All my grief resurfaced, and tears marched sideways over my nose and down my cheek and onto Chuck's shoulder. After a few minutes I could feel the sun warming my body through my dress. I saw in my mind Eileen's laughing eyes and heard her voice, "You'll adjust."

Peter Lawler

Math Class Is Murder

I had begun watching the clock much too early. I anticipated class to be over in a minute or so when the timepiece hanging on the wall revealed to me that it knew better. I observed that there were in fact ten algebra-packed minutes to endure before the bell would ring signifying the end of eighth period. I dropped back into my seat, feeling disappointed.

It had been humid all day, and I was melting underneath my clothing. The latest forecast had predicted rain and I was looking forward to a cool shower. It was not the heat of summer that bothered so much as the humidity. I had a tendency to become very agitated when my clothes adhered like glue to my body.

The equations on the chalkboard made no sense to me and they wouldn't have even if I had remembered to bring my textbook to class. Since I hadn't, I was having trouble motivating myself. I was also having trouble keeping myself awake.

A few minutes later I experienced a dizzy, achy, fog in my head as though my body was trying to think and fall asleep at the same time. The only atmospheric elements keeping me from drifting away to Never-Never Land were Mr. Spith's annoying, logical integer graphs. Then, I let go.

"Negative three, sir!" I was called on while in a state halfway between sleep and consciousness. Somehow negative three came to the tip of my tongue and escaped my mouth.

"Obviously, Mr. King, you have not been paying attention!" Spith's voice blared as though he were speaking through a megaphone.

"What was the question, sir?" I asked groggily.

"Will someone please repeat the question for this moron?!" Spith demanded in the same impatient, amplified voice. However, no one answered. The usually

fear-inspiring voice of James Spith elicited nothing but silence.

At this point, I glanced around the room at my classmates. Not only was there no one speaking, but there was no one moving. The students resembled wax statues. Their eyes stared blankly at the board. Their hands still held their pens and pencils in writing positions, but there were no numbers on their papers. They just sat and stared.

“Joseph, please repeat the question to Vincent, who obviously was not listening!” Spith demanded of Joe, sitting next to me.

Joe was, under normal circumstances, a likeable, pudgy kid with a baby face and a bright, toothy smile. When he spoke to me his eyes were filmy, and his jaw made a sharp, cracking sound as though it hadn’t been used in years.

“The question was ‘How pathetic is your life, you sorry excuse for a student and a human being?’”

My jaw dropped and drool oozed out as I stared in disbelief, first at Spith, then at Joe, then back at Spith. It sounded as though I had heard the voice of Satan, although never having heard it before, I could not have been certain. I wondered, at that point, if I had somehow accidentally stumbled into an episode of *The Twilight Zone*.

Spith walked from the chalkboard to my desk and leaned over so that his face was inches from mine. His breath stank of Folgers coffee and his thick beard looked like it was infested with lice. His large forehead, due to a receding hairline, stuck out at me and for the first time that day, I saw the reflection of lightning on his slightly bald head. It was raining.

I wanted to turn my head or squirm out of my seat or even die, but most of all, I wanted desperately to escape from Spith’s breath and his zombie classroom. When he spoke, his putrid breath infected my lungs.

“Does that clarify things for you, you shriveling twerp?!”

“Twerp” became “Twirpew!” as he spit in-between my eyes.

“Yes sir,” I offered, but my voice was hardly louder than a whisper.

“Louder!”

“Yes sir!”

“Louder, boy!”

“YES SIR!” I screamed at the top of my lungs. Tears of ignominy rolled down my cheeks, but I neither sniffled nor cringed. My expression was now fearless and defiant.

He gripped my shoulder and his hand felt like an iron vice. I tried to shake him, but he would not budge.

“Now, Mr. King, how pathetic is your life, you sniveling, pathetic excuse for a human?” His eyes were fixed on mine through thick-lensed bifocals, and all I could do was stare back in disbelief and horror.

“Is this a math class?” I asked, gaping at my teacher.

His grip tightened, and I heard my shoulder blade crack. Blood ran down my chest over my left nipple, soaking my T-shirt.

“I ask the questions around here young man. Now, answer me!” His eyes became smaller, and he leaned closer as my shoulder bled.

“I – I don’t have an answer, sir.”

Spith suddenly hoisted me over his head while the other students remained petrified, and I felt the rest of the bone in my shoulder being crushed. Spith tossed my body through the air as though I was a rag doll. I landed against the open book closet located at the back of the wall, and as my arms flailed, I took a few shelves with me to the floor. One of the shelves struck my head.

“So, Mr. King, you think you can neglect your homework, come to school unprepared, and then fall asleep in my class? Well, you’ve got another think coming!” Spith’s voice resonated. It wasn’t quite as smooth as before. It began to sound raspy and several octaves deeper.

“Look at you! You are a living mess! You forget your homework, your textbook, and the shirt on your back!” He emphasized the word shirt, and when I looked down, I discovered my torso was bare. Did I forget to put a shirt on this morning?

“Not only that, but you don’t even have good hygiene!” Spith spat in disgust.

Palimpsest

I glanced around and was suddenly covered with flakes of dandruff. I remembered specifically using Head-and-Shoulders that morning.

He marched towards me, and with every footfall, thunder struck outside. Lightning flashed across the sky, coupled with thunder, and the class came to life. They all started laughing. They were laughing at me—giggling and pointing as I lay helpless in a clutter of dandruff and broken bookshelves.

Spith reached out with one hand and lifted me once again over his head by my neck. For an instant while my feet dangled a few feet above the floor, I saw a sight which permanently imprinted itself on my memory. As lightning struck, I beheld a shadowy figure with eyes made of fire standing in place of Spith and throttling me by my neck. Then, it was Spith again.

He let go and caught me by my head with both of his palms. I felt pressure applied to both sides of my cranium and soon realized my skull was being crushed. His grip tightened until I could no longer bear the pain. Blood oozed from my eyes and my temples.

I wanted to scream but no longer could. I was still halfway in-between the state of consciousness and sleep. It was some kind of dream world, which belonged to whatever Spith was.

A sickening wonderful crack reverberated throughout the room, and I knew I was free. I'll tell you how I knew I was free from the hellish nightmare too. The sense of touch is the last sense the body loses when a person dies, and immediately after the crack resounded, I felt nothing.

Ken Lopez

Exonerating the Curse of San Miguel de Allende

In 1963 a courageous team of five adventurers risked their lives to bicycle to the top of San Miguel Mountain. One of those adventurers, my father, had a penchant for disaster and succumbed to the perilous hill. Thirty years later, as his successor, I tried to achieve the glory that escaped my father. This is the story of a new generation of adventure hunters, eager to taste glory. The quest for San Miguel Mountain was ours to seize.

We, who had never ventured farther south than Queretaro, were all novices to the adventure game, so such a trip excited all of us. Wonders of that forgotten land had spilled over into the States, and everyone wanted a piece of its thrills and mystery. On that day, Friday 13, 1993, we would have an immersion into what was believed to be a fictitious scene. Boarding the 5:15 bus from Mexico City, with thousands of villagers perusing the terminal, peddling sweets, rare candies, and artisans heaving gargantuan, weaved baskets on top of their heads, the entire melee seemed all too intimidating, but that intimidation was the driving force behind our mission. The urgency to seek new heights overwhelmed us, and we embraced it. Several hours later as a crescent moon capped the southern sky, we had entered into a city called San Miguel de Allende, flashing a rustic colonial decor and various remnants of former and current greatness. Cracking façades on buildings flashed murals of former Mexican revolutionaries, men of great courage, strength, and desire, and that drawing captured the

essence of what we hoped to accomplish.

At the break of morning, a local transit bus whisked us away to a coffee house two blocks north of that same mural laden colony. It was in this establishment that several locals had gathered. Patrons of the coffee house spoke adamantly about local heroes and legends of Mexico's exalted history. They recalled Zapata, the intolerance of Hidalgo and his troops never conceding defeat for the honor of their home country in battle. They seemed to exalt everything that they could recount about past experiences in the town.

Gabriel Jose, a corn harvester, had cultivated the dense land atop the mountains that outline the town for more than 40 years. He spoke with great uncertainty about a problem that had already engulfed other regions of the country and, as he believed, might soon take San Miguel in its talons as well. He winced as an approaching thunderstorm threatened to wipe out his entire crop. Jose and his Kwasmmodo-backed wife, Annalilia, scoped the weather pattern, expecting the worst. They recounted the story of a previous storm that touched down just past their gazebo, shattering several windows. "I wouldn't want to go into those mountains on the bike excursion they are having next week," Annalilia said, and then added, "The storms will leave you stranded for days, maybe even months!"

We came to realize stories such as Jose's, are only a small segment of the enchanting story that compose the history of San Miguel de Allende.

Shifting our eyes toward the decorated walls of the restaurant, we noticed an announcement addressing an upcoming bicycle excursion into the mountains. "All welcome to join, bikes and equipment provided," it read. It was a challenging proposition, one that few cyclists could muster sufficient courage to accept. The trail up the mountain was extremely steep and rugged. The last team to attempt to scale the mountain failed miserably, and all five cyclists perished after being caught in the rage of a hurricane that thrashed the terrain. Still there was something irresistible and captivating about the mountain. All

the elements of disaster had been well documented and seemed all the more imposing as a bubbling volcano loomed in the background.

The blaze of the morning sun wove a path for us to follow on our excursion. Each team member was given a personal compass, a jug of water, and a map of the terrain. The map was very disorganized, and everyone hypothesized about what direction to head in. The terrain was similar to a maze, with large boulders, razor sharp weeds, and ravenous animals, like lions, tigers and bears. Such animals were a rarity throughout the rest of the country, but we learned that the unusual was a trademark of this land. The team fronted their bikes to the foot of the mountain for some practice drills, in order to prepare for any dangers that the rigorous, meandering voyage would present us. The designated leader of the cyclists was named Juan, who failed to disclose his last name, leaving that to “chance,” he said. Juan was approximately 6’5”, stately for a Mexican, and sported a long, scraggly beard. He failed to disclose any previous experiences he may have had with the particular terrain, probably leaving that to “chance” as well. Still the rest of the collective listened patiently as he began to describe the tactics that were to be employed in case we encountered an emergency. After enduring a series of drills throughout the morning that emphasized team unity, the start of the trek was at hand. Flanking me on my right was Jim and Tom; to my left stood two newcomers, Tonya and Dave. Jose initiated a group prayer and final pep talk.

Jim and I had grown up together in a small Oklahoma town, as we matured the need to seek adventure overwhelmed us. That was probably fomented by our father’s death; nevertheless the genuine opportunity was being presented and now we stood on the precipice between a courageous accomplishment and a second and third fateful death.

“Dios, please get us to the top safely and avoid all pitfalls, small and large, guide us and protect us, Amen,” Juan prayed. Tonya seconded the prayer, “Let’s ride.”

A scorching mid-afternoon sun overwhelmed us as we scaled the hills. Fresh

legs soon grew weary, and the crew decided to take a much needed rest. I stretched my hand down to the bottom of my backpack, clutching a fresh ham sandwich. I also plucked two slices of pickles adding a spell of Americana to the meal. Descending from the stoop I was sitting on, I decided to strike up a conversation with Tonya. She glanced at me momentarily and then asked, "What are you coming here for, another *gringo* looking for adventure, steal a glimpse of the mountains?" Despite her searing dislike of anything I could do or say, I admittedly felt that something deeper between us was yet to evolve. Somewhat repulsed by her unfriendliness, I proceeded to head back to the camp for some simmering tamales off the campfire. "My name is Rick. my father tried unsuccessfully to climb this hill. I am just trying to fulfill his dream," to which she shouted over to my side of the hill in reply: "Well, city slicker, you never know where your dreams might take you."

Thunderous storm clouds formed in the sky, as the boisterous crew began to assemble the tent for the evening.

"Leave your bags on that big rock. Let's get this equipment up in a hurry before the storm hits," Jose snapped, piercing the internal bickering that had overcome the cyclists. We discussed everything, while I interjected my own worries about completing the trip safely. So far we had been leveled with a wind storm, treacherous terrain, and an unnerving leader. It made each member question whether the experience was worth it. During the following day, we discovered the answer in a fashion that none could have conceived possible.

Passing downpours gave way to an emerging sun, blazing a new trail for us to walk along. Birds belted out a chorus that called for awakening, as the rest of the team groggily set foot to conquer the final stretch of the mountain. After walking for approximately one mile, our team came across a rampaging stream that had been ravaged by the previous night's wicked storm. The current's rapid pace, unrelenting in its motion, frightened all of us, but we were entrapped by the barricade of wilderness. Jose latched onto a tree branch and attempted to swing himself across the width of the stream, crossing safely. Upon reaching

the other side of the barricade, our team was surrounded by vicious animals, the likes of tigers, elephants, and rhinos. Killer bees swarmed above us.

“Stop, and if we don’t move, they won’t do anything. Just sit tight everyone,” I chided, trying to calm my teammates. After waiting impatiently for several minutes, the menacing congregation of animals dispersed, and we soldiered on, scaling the large mountain embellished by snow capped peaks. The mountain had a touch of everything:: sunflowers bloomed at the foot; snow crowned each step.

The elevation is 12,000 feet, and the final stretch of the sojourn had been tumultuous for both our legs and our stamina. By now everyone ached for rest, and the air had grown thin. Another 500 feet to climb to reach the apex of the mountain. Our hearts pounded, our wills were fading fast in our attempt to hang on. The road had been clobbered by rainstorms, hailstorms, and packs of rabid creatures tore at our clothes and possessions, at times stripping us of emergency cantinas and sleeping bags. But just as all great soldiers do, we marched on perilously, withstanding and conquering every obstacle that besieged us. Three hundred feet more, cramps and charlie horses overtook our youthful crew, but we managed to press on, as the setting sun cast a final shadow on our journey.

“The world is ours,” exclaimed Jose, the first to reach the pinnacle of the mountain. The other four members took their turns peering out at the endless range of mountains unfurling their beauty. And as all great pioneers try to recall their struggles and days of sweat and tears and anguish, I afforded myself one last push. Catapulting my exhausted body to the top and joining the others, I came to realize the dream that had haunted my family. Now vanquished was the curse of La Montana San Miguel de Allende, at least until the next series of challengers proposed a quest.

Two weeks after our successful voyage, I remained coalescing with deep flesh wounds that I had suffered during the trip at a local hospital. One Monday afternoon after I had finished watching the Dodgers’ game on television, there

was a rapping at my hospital door. I was too weak to answer it, but the in-house nurse strode over and opened it. I thought it might be my brother Jim, who had escaped scot-free of any injury, just as Mr. Ironman had notoriously done for years. It was not him, but someone who had brightened every moment of the trip, Tonya.

“I heard you were laid up for weeks, so I thought I’d come by,” she said, flashing a captivating smile. “I’ve been doing quite a bit of thinking about you.”

“Really?” I asked, but before she could explain, my nurse barged in.

“Rick, it’s time to take your pills, you want to get better, am I right?” But perhaps I had only been dreaming, dreaming of the church directly opposite the Morales de Zapata in San Miguel de Allende, dreaming of love, mystery, and the chance that we could do it all again someday, as clouds gathered in peaceful sky outside my window.

Christopher H. Brown

Silent Revelation

No one said a word. It was silent except for the loud humming of the Chevy Nova's engine and the occasional squealing of the tires when my father took a turn too fast. The leather seats burned my legs, and I knew from past experience not to touch the seatbelt buckle or it would do the same. There was no air-conditioning in the car, and the heat and humidity had yet to escape out of the windows, adding physical discomfort to my mental duress.

"Dad, where's mom?"

"Just keep quiet."

I knew he wouldn't tell me but I had to try. It was often best to let him alone in times like this. Any added conversation was bound to upset him more or just be a waste of breath. Yet my curiosity and fear were begging me to break the tension. I had to do it, not only for me, but for my brothers as well. My older brother, Tommy, and I sat on opposite sides of the car, holding our younger brother, Daniel, securely in the middle. Danny held his Winnie the Pooh bear in his left arm, and he sucked on his right pinky instead of the traditional thumb. His nose continued to run even after he had stopped crying. Mom had dressed him in his blue pajamas, which made him look like a little blue bunny. Looking at him made me wish that I, like him, was too young to understand what was going on.

That Saturday had begun in familiar fashion except that my father had mysteriously left earlier in the morning. My mom rushed downstairs in her bathrobe and screamed at us for having the house in a mess. "You guys better have this place cleaned up by the time your father gets home!"

I was playing basketball with Tommy. I had just made my last shot, going

ahead of him by one point. We didn't have a real basketball net or even a real basketball for that matter. We had to improvise with one of Mom's laundry baskets and placed it against the glass slide door, which led to the backyard. Tommy found an old Nerf ball in his closet that he had received from our grandparents a few years before.

"That was a lucky shot," I remember Tommy saying.

"See if you can do better," I said.

I knew what was about to happen so I didn't hesitate to egg my brother on. He hated being beaten by his eleven-year-old brother, so I had to rub it in his face. He grabbed the ball and charged right at me, elbowing me in the head as he dunked it in the wash basket.

"I am the champion!" He sang his favorite Queen song.

"Are you boys cleaning up down there?" Mom shouted.

Without responding to her I ran across the room and punched Tommy in the head. It wasn't a hard punch, but I let him know that I wasn't pleased with his actions. He then came after me, and we wrestled on the ground. Danny began to cry.

"What's going on down there?" Mom screamed.

When we didn't respond, she realized we were fighting again and that she would have to break it up. She thundered down the stairs in her bathrobe, wearing curlers in her hair. She ripped Tommy off of me and slapped him in the face.

"Why did you hit me? He started it," Tommy said. "I'm telling dad when he gets home." Tears filled his eyes as he ran upstairs to his room, slamming his door loudly. My anger quickly changed to sympathy for my brother. I was as much to blame for the fight as he was, yet he was the one to get slapped. My sympathy was short lived though, as I awaited my punishment.

My mom looked at me with disappointed eyes before grabbing Daniel off the sofa. She held him over her shoulder, caressing his head and singing softly in his ear.

“Momma’s gonna buy you a diamond ring, and if that diamond ring...”

“It wasn’t my fault, Mom. Tommy started it,” I shouted.

“Maybe you should go to your room and think it over a while. Then, when you and your brother can get along, the both of you will come down and clean this living room up. Your father will kill me if he comes home and sees this place like this.”

I began crying as I ran up to my room. My mom followed shortly after with Danny hanging over her shoulder. He sucked on his pinky with his eyes closed.

I had quickly grown bored of my room so I cracked my door to see what was going on. Across the hall from me was Tommy, with his tongue stuck out. I returned the gesture, then ventured cautiously out of my room so not to alert my mom of my defiance of her punishment.

“Mom, Billy isn’t in his room,” Tommy shouted with a smile on his face.

“Shut up, you jerk,” I responded as I ran into my mom’s room.

“What are you doing, Billy? I thought I told you to go to your room.” My mom was busy drying her hair, talking to my reflection in the mirror.

“I know, Mom, but I’m bored.” I took a seat on the bed and began to scratch Danny’s back. He was sleeping in the middle of the bed. “Where are you going anyway, Mom?”

“I’m going crazy!” That was her typical response, which basically meant that I was too young to know what she was talking about or that it didn’t pertain to me, but I ventured on.

“No you’re not. Where are you really going?”

“I told you, I’m going crazy. Now go get your brother and start cleaning that downstairs before your father gets home.”

“Okay,” I responded disappointedly and then turned around and walked out of the room to get Tommy. We went down stairs to clean the living room together as if nothing had happened earlier between us. I turned around one last time to catch a glimpse of Mom, searching for signs to her future destination,

before finally heading downstairs. Tommy also showed interest in our mom's peculiar behavior.

"Where's Mom going?"

"She said she was going crazy."

"Crazy? What do you mean, crazy?"

"I don't know. That's what she told me. Don't worry about it. Just start cleaning."

We began to clean when my mom came thundering down the stairs to the hallway closet. I watched her every move to find a clue to where she was going. Her hair was curled, which struck me as being strange because the only time that was done was if she was going to take us to the mall or go shopping at night. She was dressed rather nicely, at least better than she usually was. She had make-up on and her perfume was the light, fresh scent of flowers. She grabbed her purse, then ran into the kitchen to check the time. "Where is your father?" she yelled. "He told me four o'clock, and here it is going on four-thirty." She placed Daniel in his crib and went into the powder room to check how she looked one more time before she was to head out the door.

"Why is Mom all dressed up?" I whispered into Tommy's ear.

"I don't know. Why don't you ask her?"

"Fine." I pushed the powder room door open. "Mom?"

"What is it, Billy?"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going away for a while, but your dad will be home soon."

"Where is Dad?"

"That's what I'd like to know. He probably stopped by Tabernacky's Pub on his way home from watching the game at John's."

"Yeah, but where are you going?"

"I told you already. I'm going crazy..."

"C'mon, Mom!"

"Don't worry about it, Billy. Just make sure you and Tommy clean up and

keep an eye on your little brother.”

“Okay, Mom.”

“I’ve got to get going. I love you guys. I’ll be home around eight o’clock tonight. Bye!” She closed the door and went away.

Since Tommy and I were getting along again, we decided to clean by shooting the toys into the toy box like basketballs. We enjoyed playing so much that it took the place of the task at hand; that being our responsibility of cleaning the living room. About five o’clock my dad came home. He walked in, said nothing, and slammed the door behind him. “How was the game, Dad?” I asked, not because I wanted to know but because I wanted to take his mind off the messy living room. He didn’t respond but just ran upstairs. This wasn’t the first time I had seen my father like this. Many times late at night when Tommy and I were watching *The Dukes of Hazard* my father would come home, screaming, throwing things and yelling at us.

“Where’s your mom at?” he demanded.

“Dad. Mom told me she was going crazy.”

“Crazy, eh? I’ll show her crazy,” he mumbled—what he thought was under his breath. Tommy stopped playing with the toys and began to clean faster than ever before. I began to help. When we finished with the toys, I grabbed Daniel because he was crying, and took a seat next to Tommy on the couch. We sat and listened as our father, who was up in his room, as he ranted and raved, throwing things against the walls. Tommy turned to me with concern in his face.

“I’m going to find out what Dad is all mad about. He’ll tell me,” he said proudly. “Hold Danny and don’t worry.”

I had always looked up to Tommy for his bravery, so I listened to his advice and waited patiently for a response. I heard discussion upstairs followed by a loud “Get out of here!” Tommy sluggishly walked down the steps. A tear entered his eye as he approached the couch.

“What’s going on, Tommy?”

“Dad is mad again. I don’t know why. He’s just mad again,” he rambled on.

“Just sit down and relax. I’m sure everything is going to be just fine,” I said.

I ran up to my room to catch a glimpse of the situation without looking suspicious when I noticed my dad packing suitcases, just throwing the clothes in, not caring if they wrinkled or got torn. He mumbled to himself, too low for me to make out the words, as he stumbled around the room. Shortly after, he made his way downstairs.

“Get your jackets on and get in the car,” he yelled to us. I looked at Tommy, confused about my dad’s demand since it was eighty degrees that autumn day, but nevertheless grabbed my jacket. Tommy did the same, putting one on Danny as well.

“Where are we going, Dad?” I pleaded.

“Just get in the damn car!”

“C’mon, Billy. Grab Danny.” Tommy looked concerned but yet he still took control and led us to the car. My dad threw the suitcases in the back, got into the driver’s seat, and started the engine.

We were taking the back way from our house on old Reber Road. We sped through forests, and past Nevin’s farm, blowing through leaf covered roads, leaving a storm of dust behind us. There were no other cars on the back roads, which was probably good the way my dad was driving. I tried to visualize places we could have been going—maybe to Grandma and Granddad’s, or back to John’s where my dad had been watching the game. Or maybe we were just going for a ride. But it didn’t matter where I imagined we were going, I had a feeling I wouldn’t like it.

After some time Dad turned on to a familiar highway, which led to the shopping mall that Mom took us to sometimes. We had been there just two weeks before. Tommy and I had played Star Wars in the arcades while Mom shopped around with Danny, who slept most of the time in his stroller. At least that’s what he was doing when I saw him.

“Meet me at the clock in the middle of the mall at two-thirty, together. Tommy, you stay with your brother, alright?” Mom had said.

“Yes, Mom,” Tommy responded condescendingly.

I ran out of money early that day forcing me to ask Tommy for some, but he said, “Get your own money, geek!” So I walked around the mall for what seemed like forever. I couldn’t find Mom, so I decided to just wait at the clock until two-thirty. At quarter after, I spotted Mom on the other side of the mall in a men’s clothing store. She was talking to a salesman in a suit and tie. He was making weird faces at Danny and shaking Danny’s rattle in front of him. My mom smiled at him and laughed a lot, like they were old friends, but I had never seen the man before. I began to get up and walk to her, but I was afraid I’d get in trouble for not being with Tommy. So I sat there making sure she wouldn’t see me.

As she left the store the man whispered in her ear and smiled. She nodded to him, smiled back, and began to head towards me. I didn’t know what to do. If she had seen me without Tommy, she would have been upset with me.

“Hey, geek. I ran out of quarters too,” Tommy said as he tapped me on the shoulder. For once, I was relieved to see my brother. My mom met us at the clock right on time, and we headed home.

My dad headed up the highway at increasing speeds, around seventy miles per hour the speedometer read. I stared out the window at the billboards and signs as we sped by. “Silver Bullet,” the one read. “Miller Time,” read another. Then a sign with “DUI, YOU CAN’T AFFORD IT,” whizzed by.

“Leave me with the kids. She’s got a lot of nerve,” Dad mumbled. He was mumbling the whole time, of course, but it wasn’t until then that I could make out what he was saying.

He slammed on the brakes and turned right, throwing me into Tommy and Tommy against the window. Danny started to cry, but Tommy quickly calmed him down. We came to a screeching halt in someone’s driveway. I had seen

Palimpsest

that house before, just in passing, but that was the first time I had actually been there. A bunch of people stood under a tent and around a pool. Everyone watched as my dad jumped out of the car, ran to the back, pulled the suitcases out of the trunk, and threw them in the middle of the lawn. I saw my mom come running toward the car. In the background the salesman from the mall stood. My dad jumped into the car, squealed the tires, and took off, speeding down the highway.

Dad continued to look in the rearview mirror, his eyes bloodshot and watery, a paradigm of mixed emotions. I turned to look at Tommy who was holding a sleepy Danny in his arms. He looked at me, our eyes having a mutual understanding, and then he looked away. My dad was staring hard at the road ahead, and I too stared out the car window all the way home.

Nora Miller

Judge's Selection – Best Short Story

Star

“One, Two, Three! Drop!” they chanted, all giggling as the rocks echoed a thumping tune when they pounded against the dark, open bay. Every year they tried to time the exact middle of their trip, hoping one year they would see a little island of pebbles emerging above the water. They knew it was impossible, but each year they grabbed a handful from the parking lot and boarded the ferry for their journey out to sea.

Gulls winged over the sea, turning their white breasts to the dark blue water before they squawked and set off for the golden streaks painting the sky. She could feel the air begin to change, the dampness whispering about her face. Her heart burst with anticipation as the churning waves leaped up and held her there as she searched. There it was, her Star. Breana and Nicolette had their backs to the island, too busy squinting to see who the new guy was.

“Hey! We’re almost there. God, it looks so beautiful.”

“Oh shit, Gloria, I think I forgot to pack my toothbrush,” Breana said.

“You know, that is so typical for you. I think last year you forgot to bring sneakers and instead brought about fifty million dress shoes,” Nic said.

“I have an extra one. I’ll give it to you later,” Gloria said.

“Thanks, Mom,” Breana said.

They began to walk from the top deck, coming down the stairs, where the ramps were beginning to be set up. Gloria stepped over the little gap between the ramp and the ferry. The water rocked against the dock and bounced off as if it was confused about the direction that it wished to flow.

“Ooh, we’re here!” Breana said, wrapping her skinny arms around Gloria’s neck and planting a kiss on her cheek.

Breana danced ahead of Nic and Gloria, stopping at the usual place, and waited for them to join her in their annual routine. They stood in a line, their

hands on each other's shoulders, and spread their legs. Running clear across the dock, directly between their legs, was a yellow line, which divided the states. Their left feet were in New Hampshire while their right feet were in Maine.

"You guys are retarded. You do that every year and every time you giggle and laugh like you're four or something." Jon smiled as he pushed Nic into Breana, who of course stumbled and practically knocked Gloria over.

"You're just jealous that we can be in two states at once," Breana yelled.

"Oh, yea, that's it!"

Star Island existed as a Unitarian Universalistic Conference. Most of the young people had been raised as Unitarian. Some of their parents were not originally Unitarian but had converted later in life. Gloria's family had been coming to the conference of All Star II, since she was four years old. At four, she was placed in the "Twinklers" group, where she met her closest friends, Nic and Breana. They were "Twinklers" too. They were now considered the Youth group, no more cutesy name to describe them. This was their last year as youth. Next year they could apply to work as a "Pelican" or be part of the adults. Gloria smiled at the thought of living at Star for the summer with her friends from across the world, whom she had met right here.

"Hey are you guys going to apply to be Pelicans for next year?"

"Oh Gloria, you are so future oriented. This is our last year as youth. Stop worrying about it. Next year, we have to plunge into the deep, dark serious world of adults!" Nic said.

Nic and Breana stayed in the cottage where all the girls were. Gloria enjoyed staying where her parents were. She always told them that her parents made her get a room with theirs, but it was really because she liked having some place to come back to and not worry about having at least one of them there all the time. Gloria enjoyed the quiet, a word they wouldn't even want to spell, much less check what the meaning was.

"Gloria, you have to come see the new guy, he's so cute!" Breana beamed with excitement.

“I will. We’re meeting in ten minutes at Brookfield.”

Breana and Nic scrambled up the grassy hill, back to their mirrors. Gloria took a seat on the charcoal rock, absently tugging a silky white blossom from its slender stem. The rock’s roughness dug into her legs, making her fidget and finally stand up. As she rose, she caught a glimpse of his white shirt, rolling with the wind as smooth as silk. He stood at the edge of the cliff, his hands jammed in the pockets of his jeans. She moved closer, watching as his chest rose with the fullness of the salty air. Turning away from the cliff’s edge, he peered at her, staring at her face and glancing down to her feet and back up again. She blushed and he turned away.

Gloria did not have many friends, especially of the male gender. She was quiet and worse when confronted by a guy. She was not used to any attention and she didn’t know how to handle it. She never had someone look at her that way, especially before they would notice Breana or Nic. She struggled to push away the idea that it was because they were not there with her. They had always been the *lookers* and even though she was always with them and turned heads, she knew the turns were for Breana and Nic. She hoped he was going to be at the meeting as she strolled down to meet the rest of her friends.

“Did the meeting start yet?” Breana asked, out of breath from running.

“No, but Suzanne and Ryan aren’t here yet,” said Gloria, wondering where the advisors were.

Nic walked in followed by Suzanne and Ryan. They gathered in a circle, grabbing the mats from the side to sit on. Gloria looked around seeing mostly familiar eyes looking back at her. He was there yet his eyes never met hers.

The chatter subsided as Suzanne got up and began to speak, explaining the things they did together and her role as advisor. Not everyone went to the groups for their ages. Some people just wanted to enjoy their time away and have nothing planned. Gloria and mostly everyone else enjoyed being together, playing games and talking. It broke up the afternoon and allowed a time where everyone could be together. They had a unique bond. Some met during

their first year and the rest seemed to just be added on as the years passed. They spent one week together throughout the year, occasionally sending letters to one another after returning to their homes. Each year they returned to Star it was as if they had never left. Hugs were spread all around and chatter began as if they had been constantly together.

“Gloria! Where are you going, can’t you see there is a storm coming?” Nic said

“I’ll be back.”

Gloria chased the storm, scurrying over the rock as black clouds boiled in a dark sky. She stood at the edge of East Rock, as she watched the storm build. Gloria loved the power of nature; it’s energy able to destroy and the quiet benediction of a giant setting sun. The wind howled and spears of lighting slashed and shot across the jagged rocks and surf into sharp relief. She reached up and released the pins out of her smoothly twisted hair. Her brown curly locks rushed over her shoulders as she raised her hands to the sky. She whirled around, tilting her face to the angry heavens as the rain began to lash out.

“You’re gonna catch cold.”

She topped spinning and lowered her arms, focusing her eyes in on him standing there in front of her.

“How long have you been there?”

“Long enough to watch you provoke this storm. I never saw someone give so much love to something that doesn’t give a crap about what it could do.”

“Yea well, nature also gives us a lot of nice things, too. I think it is only fair to love everything it can do.”

They both stood there as the rain continued to coat them. Gloria shivered and reached up to brush her hair from her face.

“I watched you today, when you were standing on that cliff. I didn’t mean to be spying or anything, I just knew that you were new to the island.”

“How did you know that?”

“Oh, we can just tell. Plus, that cliff is actually forbidden. Someone died

there so they don't want anyone on it."

"Did they want to die?"

Gloria stared speechless. She pondered how to answer such a question. Why would anyone want to die?

"Uh, I'm not really sure."

"I just meant that some people may want to die, and this is where they choose to do it... some place nice and peaceful. Is this one forbidden?"

"No, this is where we always go. It's really nice up here at night, especially when it is not raining."

He came toward her and wrapped his windbreaker around her. They went slowly back to the rocks, back to their cottages. Gloria wished she had gotten his name. It occurred to her as she piled her wet clothes on top of one another and wrapped her towel around her shivering body. She poured a stream of slightly discolored water into her basin. The soap slid over her cheeks, and she frantically splashed water toward her face, as the stinging penetrated her eyes.

"I'm with you and you're with me,
And so we are all together,
So we are all together,
So we are all together,
Sing with me, I'll sing with you,
And so we will sing together.
Star is our home."

They danced around holding hands and parading into the lobby and back into the dining hall. The younger children held onto the older, bigger hands, squeezing with all their might. This was family; everyone laughing and loving one another. Loving Star.

Palimpsest

“Star Island is our Spirit’s home,
Our Spirit’s home, woo-woo,
Our Spirit’s home, woo-woo...”

She spotted him leaning against the pillar, watching. She wondered why he wasn’t participating.

“I know it’s hard to jump right into these kinds of things, especially because you are new, but seriously, it is so much fun! I don’t know what I would do without this place and my friends. Isn’t it great?” She stared at him, waiting for a reply. He just looked, looked hard and long.

“I guess I should tell you my name. It’s Brandon.”

“I’m...”

“Gloria. I already figured out what your name is. Do you come with your family every year? I’ve seen you with your mom and dad. You were playing tennis with your dad... At least I thought it looked like your dad.”

“Oh yea, he beat me yesterday. Every once in a while I can beat him, though. I just have to get him running from line to line. That’ll tire him out, and he knows us young people never get tired.”

“My mom used to be able to beat me when I was younger. She probably could even now if she was here.”

“Oh, are you just here with your dad? Is he any good at tennis? We could play doubles if you wanted to.”

“I’m here alone.”

“You’re kidding! Where are your parents?”

His eyes drifted away and slowly surfaced back to her face.

“My mother died a little less than a year ago. I don’t have a father.”

He grabbed her hand and a small child’s hand entered his other hand. The ymerged with the others and danced in the dining hall. He squeezed her hand tightly and tried to get the words correct. She smiled at the sight of him stumbling over his own feet and being pulled by an eager child.

Palimpsest

* * *

He didn't come to the evening meeting. She wanted to find him and be with him. She struggled in the darkness; only the narrow light from her flashlight allowed her to continue. She saw the outline of his broad shoulders with the help of the moon. She sat down beside him and listened to the fog bells gently toll.

"I think the sea whispered for me to come." His eyes were heavy with confusion. The scurried beside him and listened to the fog bells gently toll.

Gloria met his eyes. He stared at her, searching her face. She hoped he was not searching for an answer. She could not think of what to say.

"You didn't come to the evening meeting."

"I know, I still feel somewhat like an intruder. You guys are all so close, and I'm still just the new guy."

"Oh, you shouldn't feel like that. We all have a weird relationship. This is the only time we really see each other. Breana, Nic and I just get along so great. We're all very different, though. It's kind of funny when you see us together. They both are so giggly, and they think of me as their mom.... There is just something about this place that brings us together. You'll see, it will get easier."

"No, I don't think I will see."

Far out on the diamond blue water, a sail boat slowly glided, glossy and white in the shimmer of the moon. She watched a gull swoop in toward them, only to bullet back through the darkness. She wondered if the gull was returning to her young. Probably waiting for her to return with a meal or something for the night. The wind teased her hair, dancing it around her face. She swept it behind her ears.

"I don't understand. You can hang out with us this week, and we will write to each other until we see each other next year. Everybody is going to like you. I know that Breana and Nic will. They were already telling me that the new guy was cute."

“Hmph, I won’t be cute next year, I might not even be here.”

“Why not?”

His pause seemed like eternity. She crossed her fingers, watching as her knuckles began to turn white. The sea did not seem inviting. She wished she wasn’t sitting so close to the edge. She wished he was not sitting so close. She looked out across the sky. The stars seemed to be telling ancient secrets as they flickered in the night sky.

“I’m sick... I’ve been sick with the HIV virus for a while.”

The gleam of light swirled around, signaling to the boats that there was land. It signaled to her that he spoke. She could not think of anything to say, although she wanted to say something; she wanted to comfort him.

“This place is so peaceful. I think when I’m in that other world, I will feel this place beckoning,” he said, looking at her and trying to smile. She tried too, but only came up with a slight turn upwards in the corners of her mouth.

“I’m glad you didn’t just say something to say something, if you know what I mean. Every time I have to tell someone they always give me this philosophical crap about how everything will be fine and that they’re sorry. I hate that. I didn’t think you would do that to me.”

“Did you feel like you had to tell me?”

“No, I wanted to tell you. You’re one of the few I’ve actually wanted to tell.”

“Can I show you something?” She eagerly stood and reached for his hand, hoping he wanted to come.

“Sure.”

Gloria led him down between the pit of two rocks. They wiggled through, avoiding the small puddles of seawater that lay undisturbed and breathless. They reached a small narrow gap. Only the light of the moon reflected off the water.

“It’s called the Orange Squeeze. You have to be small enough to crawl through here but at the end is a rock shaped like a seat and your own bay and sky and world. I love it out here, and I’m one of the few people that can actually fit. Do

you want to see?”

“That’s only if I can fit.” He smiled, and she saw his white teeth glimmer against the moon.

They sat there, sharing the beauty of the place with only each other. They watched where little flickering lanterns sparked the birth of the sun. The bay began to fill with early risers, seeking for the best place to capture the catch of the day.

“How did your mother die?”

“A.I.D.S. She was sick when I was born.”

“And your father?”

“I guess you didn’t believe me when I said I didn’t have one, huh? I don’t know if he is dead yet. He gave my mother the disease. She didn’t know. They married, and she didn’t know of his past... I don’t remember him. He left after I was born and took pretty much everything we had.”

“Do you live by yourself?”

“I got a job at first and enrolled in a community college to take some night classes. I thought I had a purpose in mind. I would live by myself and support myself and wouldn’t depend on anything or anyone. I was one of those rare few who was still doing fairly well even though my years with the virus kept piling up. They kept on testing me and testing me, and I just got tired of it. I knew I was getting sicker. I seriously didn’t need them to tell me. I just couldn’t see straight. I just couldn’t understand what I was doing... That’s why I came here.” He paused and looked out across the bay.

“My mom made enough for me to be comfortable, and I have an aunt who sends me money every once in a while. I live by myself, and I can take care of myself. It just gets lonely.”

“I don’t think I could do that. I would be so scared not having my parents there or anything.”

“You have a different situation. You have a mom and a dad who will be there for you as long as they can. That’s why you can’t imagine being without

them. I still think about my mom. Sometimes I swear she is just away and is going to come back, but growing up knowing she was sick helped me accept her death easier, I think.”

“Have you ever thought about trying to locate your dad. I mean at least to know who he is?”

“I’d rather not know, Gloria. I really would just rather leave it the way it is. I don’t need him, and although I was curious before and would ask my mom questions, I think it is just better to think of him as being dead.”

“You know I’ve heard of support groups for people with the virus. They can put you with people around the same age so that you can have people to talk to who know what it’s like.”

“You’re cute, Gloria. You are definitely the mom type, huh? I know about them, but I actually would rather associate myself with people like you. Someone who doesn’t have the disease. I don’t need to dwell on it anymore. I’d rather talk and laugh and share things with friends you pick, not friends who you are put with. Plus, I’m not going through denial. I know I have it.”

“I guess that makes sense. I don’t think I could even handle something like that.”

“I think you could. I think you would be great at helping others deal with their problems.”

“I wish I could help you.”

“I know you want to help me, but you are, just by helping me enjoy the rest of my life.”

She didn’t think he would show up for the “Manhunt.” Although she felt closer to him and knew he trusted her, she didn’t think he felt comfortable with the idea of hanging out with all of them. She rubbed her forehead, whirling around when fingers tapped on her shoulder.

“So, what exactly is this ‘Manhunt’ thing?” He smiled at her, knowing she was aware of the paleness in his face.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.”

“Well, let’s see. What we do is that since we are the oldest youth members, the younger children really look up to us. I think you got that picture from the way they run after us all the time. Anyway, the ‘Manhunt’ is when we all hide around the island and the kids come and try to find us. Usually what happens is they find a few of us all by themselves and then at the end we all pretty much come running out before the time is up. We run around here and let one of the kids catch us. It’s all about making them feel special that they actually caught one of us. We even give them little prizes afterwards. So, are you ready to hide?”

“Sure, I can hide, but I don’t know about that running stuff.”

She watched as he lined up next to her, all the youth holding hands and chanting, “We will not be caught!” They scattered quickly after the bell was rung and went to their hiding places.

“So, how long do we stay here?”

“When we hear the next bell that means there is five minutes left. We will come out then. I forgot to mention that the people who are caught, which we always make all of us, line up and march down to the dock and jump into the water. It is absolutely freezing, so if you don’t want to do it you don’t have to.”

“I can do that.”

Time hurried by as the children scramble past their hiding place yelling and screaming. They could hear that some had been caught. That was good, because it kept the children happy.

“It’s time.”

They ran out, only to be swarmed with hungry children for the excitement of catching one of the bigger kids. Many had been caught already, and parents looked on with thanks in their eyes, knowing very well their kids would talk about this for a very long time.

Single file and one hand on the right shoulder of the person in front of

them, they marched to the dock and jumped in, one after the other, singing till their bodies hit the icy surface.

“The water is cold my Lord, Kumba Ya,
The wate is freezing my Lord, Kumba Ya,
Oh, Lord, Kumba Ya.”

Together, they decided to meet at the Orange Squeeze after the evening meeting. He didn't show up to the meeting, and she hoped it would not affect their later plans. She walked out alone, cursing herself as she slipped and scraped the side of her arm. Continuing on she squeezed her way through and spotted him sitting there.

“I wasn't sure if you would be here.”

“I'm sorry, I was just tired after the hunt. I just rested for a little bit. Man, those kids really get excited to see us suffer and jump in that water.”

“I know, and they never feel sorry for us. Wait until they get to be this age and then they'll see.” She laughed as she thought of herself as a “Twinkler,” longing to catch a big kid.

“I wish I would have found this place before. Everything is so beautiful and everyone is so nice. I wish my mom could have seen this place. I wish she could have met you, too.”

“I wish I had met her.”

She looked at him; his eyes were weary and his face pale and grayish. He was so thin. She wished he was fat, so very fat. His fingers skimmed through his hair and nervously reached down to her hand. She held tightly, hoping somehow her warmth could make his skin glow with color.

“When I'm half a world away, this is the place that whispers for me to come. You can make this your place too?”

“I'd rather make you the reason for me to come.”

She smiled back at him as she rested her head on his shoulder and waited for the sun to take over the heavens.

Raymond E. Petersen

(Fiction Judge)

The Cardinal Trait of a Writer

Better to write for yourself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self.

— *Cyril Connolly*

We write to find ourselves.

In that sense, we're locating where we are in the values of this time and place. It is the crossroads that the sociologist C. Wright Mills referred to as the intersection of biography and history. Every moment is both an individual, private one and a cultural, public one.

Being too aware of this could more likely lead to paralysis than writing. But writing involves the faith that there are the right words for the moment, words that can transcend the limitations of generational communication and outlive the cultural moment in which they were born. An awareness of craft makes this possible.

This applies as well to the craft of characterization, which is the sinew of writing.

I am always more successful with a writing project when there is a conscious social theme or a set of subthemes underlying the work. This is because the social themes provide the context for the tension experienced by the characters, and serve as the driving force behind their behavior. The values of social institutions transmitted culturally thus are the internal and external environments of characters. Even characters such as Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Ellison's Invisible Man and Dostoevsky's Underground Man define themselves in relationship to the dominant culture. Indeed, they are defined especially so in reaction to it.

So how does this assist in the craft of characterization?

Palimpsest

Consider how the cultural milieu of your characters sets into motion their sense of craft, for it is a universal that humans have craft. Every habit, obsessive/compulsive behavior, scratched itch, work routine, fetish, truth-telling, obfuscation, lie, theft, or cheat is informed by craft, and how we engage in these behaviors, and more importantly why, is informed by culture.

Anorexia is a late-twentieth-century Western (perhaps United States-ian) disease. Imagine how rich is the opportunity for character description and development from the effects of this single cultural phenomenon on the perception of characters affected by it.

In addition to providing more wealth of detail than any one writer would ever need, the benefit of pursuing social themes in the craft of characterization is that it puts you in the world. That is, it transports you from the solitary and often lonely work of writing into an engagement with life, giving your effort the possibility of meaning. To do this, the facts have not only to be right—which is necessary and sufficient for nonfiction—but also feel right. It is when the facts feel right in new and previously uncomfortable ways that fiction can create new social paradigms. This is the literary tradition to which Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Dickens, Upton Sinclair, and Alice Walker belong.

It is the combination of that sense of meaning and the growing awareness of your own craft that will give you respect for yourself as a writer. Every habit, obsessive/compulsive behavior, work routine, fetish, truth-telling, lie, theft, and cheat, every scratched itch, is something to pay attention to, for we write to find ourselves. And by the way, pay attention to your dreams—and your past.

My grandfather was a blacksmith and farrier by trade. At this moment I'm looking at his anvil hammer, whose five-pound head was made of cold-rolled steel that has been mashed and bent up on one end from the force of thousands upon thousands of blows. His anvil chorus fed a family of ten in the Great Depression. As difficult as it is to get my mind around that fact, it is not what I will remember best about him.

What I remember is when I was 15 years old and accidentally snapped in two a power-takeoff shaft for the hay crimper. I pulled the hay crimper into the yard and just stared at it, knowing I was in trouble.

My grandfather, who was 81 years old, came over and asked me what was wrong. I showed him and he didn't say anything, just fired up the forge and welded it so well, with such a fine tolerance, that it slipped perfectly inside its sleeve. Then he and I were the only people in the world who ever knew that it was broken once. In time I was the only one who knew, until now.

It was the one time in my life that I witnessed him at work in his trade, and I wish I could remember more: about how he could tell by the glow of coals that the heat was right, just how long the broken ends needed to be in the fire, how to hammer the shaft into one square piece so it would fit inside the sleeve, and tempering of the steel so it would never snap again.

That I can't remember my grandfather's craft has made me pay more attention to others. My father-in-law told me recently that what he remembered about his father was the first thing he did when he got home from work. After a full day of carpentry, he sharpened all the saws, because there were no power tools—so he was ready for the next day's work. And with every handsaw cut he left half of the pencil line, on each piece of lumber.

So pay attention to how people define themselves by their craft, including how you define yourself while you write. And remember that needing to write isn't a life-style choice. It's like getting a lawnmower for your birthday. It's that kind of gift. There are connotations. The willingness to accept the connotations is the cardinal trait of a writer.

Contributor's Note:

Ray Petersen teaches political science and history at Jefferson Community College in Watertown, New York, and frequently offers local writing workshops. His first novel, *Cowkind*, was published in 1996 by St. Marin's Press, which nominated it for the PEN/Hemingway and PEN/Faulkner Awards. His second novel, *True North*, is forthcoming in 1999.

Drama

Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks:
I'll tent him to the quick: if 'a do blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
More relative than this: the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

— *Hamlet*. II, ii, 538 - 48.



For the first time in our six-year history, *Palimpsest* includes drama along with poetry and short stories. We hope our readers find the play concluding our current edition, as enjoyable as we at *Palimpsest* have.

R. Michael Dotts

Pulp-free Fiction: From Concentrate

Or

The Story of a Town and Its Black Hole in One Absurd, Blasphemous
Act ... or Maybe a Little More.

Characters:

Mayor

Councilman 1 (CM1)

Attorney General (AG)

Councilwoman 1 (CM1)

Councilwoman 2 (CM2)

Councilman 2 (CM2 or Herb)

Treasurer

Secretary

Stock Boy (Mat)

The Author (TA)

Manager

Sale Ad

The Black Hole (BH)

Tourists

Messenger

Volunteer

Volunteer 2

Palimpsest

ACT I
SCENE 1

What to do with a black hole?

Setting: *A room with a table in the center with several large chairs arranged around it.*

Narrator: Hello and welcome. Our story begins in the small town of Weasel Valley, in the nation of Snarfestonia. The town has a predicament, and the mayor has called an emergency meeting of the town council and his cabinet, concerning the presence of a black hole in their town. He is a very sad black hole because he does not want to be a black hole, he wants to be a ballerina. As you can imagine, there isn't much call for a ballerina who... well, why don't you just watch and see?

[Motions to the center of stage as the curtain is lifted, showing the Mayor, town council and the mayor's cabinet arranged around the table. One man has his head down on the table and appears to be sleeping.]

Mayor: *[Bangs gavel.]* Well, I suppose you're all wondering why I've called you here today?

Councilman 1: Uh... actually, no, Mr. Mayor. We know it's about the Black Hole and that we have no idea where Smilin' Bob has gotten too.

Mayor: I know that you know, I just love saying that. So, does anybody have any ideas on what to do with our Black Hole or where to look for Smilin' Bob?

Attorney General: Mr. Mayor, I'm still having my department look into whether the Black Hole has to be given a position at the Ballet.

Palimpsest

Mayor: Very well... [*Looks at the AG in confusion.*] And who are you again?

AG: I'm your Attorney General, sir.

Mayor: Ah, yes, of course. Okay, thank you.

Council Woman 1: Don't we have to give him a job at the ballet?

Mayor: Why would we have to do that?

CW1: Affirmative Action, sir. Being a Black Hole makes him a minority, and since the ballet is funded by the city... .

AG: We're still looking into that.

Council Woman 2: [*Finishing checking her makeup and putting her compact back in her purse.*] Just give him a job at the ballet, and then we can quietly get rid of him later.

CM1: With all due respect, what the hell are you talking about? It's a Black Hole! It will suck the other dancers and audience into itself!

CW2: But I've heard that he is a very nice Black Hole.

CM1: It doesn't matter. He's a Black Hole, that's what Black Holes do! That's what makes him a Black Hole in the first place!

Councilman 2: [*Lifts his head off the table, obviously drunk.*] Why don't we make money off of him. Give tours, sell merchandise and such. People would come from everywhere. [*Drops his head back on the table.*]

Treasurer: Mr. Mayor, that is perhaps the longest statement anyone has ever heard come out of Herb's mouth. Perhaps we should listen to him. The town could use the mon... Uh, excuse me, Mr. Mayor?

Palimpsest

Mayor: [*Pushes his secretary off his lap.*] What? Who are you?

Treasurer: I'm your treasurer, sir. Perhaps we should listen to Herb and use the Black Hole to our advantage. We could make great money off of tours and merchandising.

Mayor: Hmmm... Excellent idea! I like it. Give yourself a raise.

Treasurer: Uh... yes, sir.

Mayor: Okay, everyone start working on this Black Hole tour thing and get the rights to merchandising and whatever else we need to do. Meeting adjourned. [*Starts to follow the secretary into the office..*] If my wife calls, I'm in a meeting.

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE 2

Inspiration.

Setting: *An aisle in a large department store, a large "aisle 5" sign hangs from above.*

[*The Author wondering down the aisle looks from shelf to shelf, clenching a piece of paper in his hand. Walks past a stock boy on stilt.*]

Stock Boy: [*To the Author.*] Can I help you, sir?

The Author: Yes, I'm looking for inspiration.

SB: Try aisle 9.

Palimpsest

TA: Thank you [*Turns and heads for aisle 9.*] Let's see... Aspiration, no... castration? Ouch... um, demonstration... infestation... Hmmm, no inspiration.

Manager: Is there a problem, sir?

TA: [*Eyeing the manager's tie suspiciously.*] It depends, how are you spelling "sir?" S-I-R, or C-U-R?

Manager: S-I-R, of course.

TA: Okay, then where do you keep your inspiration?

Manager: At home, in my sock drawer.

TA: No, no, not your personal inspiration. Where do you keep it in the store?

Manager: We don't.

TA: What do you mean, you don't sell inspiration? Your ad says that you sell anything and everything! [*Shoves the ad he has been clenching in his fist in the manager's face.*]

Manager: Well, yes, cur, and I am spelling that C-U-R! You have to read the small print.

[*The author squints at the sale ad.*]

TA: What's it say, it's too small?

Sale Ad: Except inspiration: banned by the government of Snarfestonia.

TA: Oh, thank you.

Palimpsest

Sale Ad: No problem.

Manager: Yes, inspiration was banned due to the unfortunate Black hole incident. Somebody had an accident with their inspiration and created the beast.

TA: [*Looking nervous.*] Oh, yeah, the good old Black Hole. [*Looks down beside manager's feet.*] Shut-up, don't remind me.

Manager: Excuse me, sir?

TA: Oh, nothing. I was just talking to my pet aardvark.

Manager: [*Looking around.*] Where? You can't have pets in here.

TA: He's sitting right beside your left foot. He's invisible today.

Manager: Ouch! [*Grabs his left ankle.*] What was that?

TA: Oh, he doesn't like you, so he nibbled your left ankle. Don't worry, though, he's had all of his shots.

[*Manager makes a shooing motion around his feet.*]

TA: He's not there anymore. [*Points off stage.*] He's in that leather desk chair over there. [*Looks offstage in the direction he's pointing.*] No, I'm not going to do that.

Manager: What?

TA: He wants me to drop a 'bow on you.

Manager: Wh-What?

Palimpsest

TA: Oh, he's really into professional wrestling and wants me to do an elbow drop on you.

Manager: [*Shaking his head.*] Look, we don't sell what you're looking for, so just leave.

[*The Author walks out, yelling at the ground beside his feet as he goes. Manager limps off in the other direction, clutching his left foot.*]

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE 3

Tourist Season.

Setting: *Several buses pull up in front of a large black hole.*

[*Tourists exit the buses with cameras and camcorders. They slowly begin to be pulled toward the Black Hole. The buses also begin to follow the tourists.*]

Black Hole: Burp... I'm sorry, whoops. Sorry. Hey nice camera... sorry.

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE 4

Litigation.

Setting: *City Hall Conference Room.*

Mayor: Whose stupid idea was that tour bus thing? It was a disaster.

[*Messenger comes in and hands a note to the mayor.*]

Mayor: [*Reading message.*] How interesting. It seems that it wasn't such a bad

Palimpsest

idea after all. It seems the families of the tourists have all sent lawyers to sue the Black Hole. They haven't been seen since. Whose idea was it?

Treasurer: That would be me, sir.

Mayor: Give yourself a raise. Who are you, again?

Treasurer: I'm your treasurer, sir.

Mayor: Okay, whatever. So what do we do now? I guess meeting... [*Messenger returns with another message. Mayor reads it.*] Whose idea was that again?

Treasurer: That would be me, sir.

Mayor: You're fired! It seems the Black Hole doesn't like lawyers either. He just spit them out. Ideas on what to do now?

Secretary of Education: We should hire more Law Professors at Weasel Valley University.

Mayor: What? Why?

SE: Well parents are going to be enrolling their children like crazy next semester. Lawyers are the only thing so far that the Black Hole hasn't liked.

CM1: Never mind that. If we don't get rid of him, we won't have a town by next semester.

Herb: [*Obviously drunk again, lifts his head.*] Black Hole is a great nothingness, right? Well, why don't we find some infinite being, like God, and stuff him in the Black Hole?

Palimpsest

Mayor: Who are you? Never mind, it doesn't matter. You're a genius. Give him a raise. Who knows where to find this God fellow?

AG: I don't know if he even exists, sir.

CM1: He does too exist! Sir, we'll have to send out someone to find him.

Mayor: I want volunteers in my office in one hour who can go find this God fellow.

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE 5

The Volunteer.

Setting: *Mayor's office, with a large desk at the center of the far wall, a large bay window behind it.*

[*Mayor sits behind the desk. One volunteer stands in front of the desk. The Treasurer and Attorney General stand off to one side.*]

Mayor: [*Reading from paper on his desk.*] Well, gentlemen, I'm glad that you are here. I just want you to know how proud I am that all of you have answered your town's call in its time of need.

Volunteer: Sir, I'm the only volunteer here.

Mayor: [*Looks up.*] Oh, yes, of course. Well, your mission is to find some fellow named God and bring him back so we can stuff him in that Black Hole. You look physically fit. Good luck. [*Stands and shakes Volunteer's hand.*]

Volunteer: Thank you, sir. I'm the strongest and fastest person in town. I won't disappoint you, sir. [*Turns and walks out the door.*]

Palimpsest

[*Mayor, Treasurer and Attorney General gather around the window to watch him as he leaves. After several seconds, all grimace.*]

AG: But apparently not the smartest person in town.

Mayor: Humph... right into the Black Hole... What a shame. [*Walks back to desk.*] Well go get me more volunteers. And this time give them a test to make sure they know what a Black Hole looks like.

[*Door to office opens, a small hunched over, middle-age man shuffles in.*]

Mayor: Hello, who are you?

Volunteer 2: That doesn't matter. I have consulted many wise men, and I believe I know where to find what you seek.

Mayor: What? You know where I can find Southern Style: Extra Sweet Lipton iced tea?

Volunteer 2: What? No, I know where to find God.

Mayor: Get out of here. I'm not looking for God, go ask your wise men where to get extra sweet.

AG: Wait, actually, sir, we are looking for God, remember... Black Hole?

Mayor: Oh yes, I'd forgotten.

AG: [*To Volunteer 2.*] Please, sit down. Now tell us where we can find God.

Volunteer 2: [*Unfolds map on Mayor's desk.*] Look here [*Pointing to map.*] See that line? That is the border between Being and Nothingness. There is a group of monks called the Chain-Smoking Bushmen of the Andes.

Palimpsest

They believe that God exists in the smoke of their cigars. We can most probably find God there.

Mayor: Excellent! Send an envoy to bring back God.

Volunteer 2: You can't. You could never find their abbey. They will come for me... in their own [*Trailing off as if remembering something*]... good time... [*Reaches up and touches the back of his head.*] With their baseball bats and that annoying humming of old TV show themes... [*Suddenly looks up, aware of where he is.*] They are quite strange by your standards. I will need a tractor-trailer load of Camel 100s, non-filtered, and a case of tootsie roll pops.

Mayor: Of course, as a peace offering. Are the tootsie roll pops for their children?

Volunteer 2: No, they're for me. I recently quit smoking, and when I'm around people who are smoking, I suck on tootsie roll pops.

Treasurer: You said most probably, what does that mean?

Volunteer 2: The wise men were divided. Several said that God exists in the smoke of the Bushmen, others said that only the Alcoholic Eskimos of the Sahara can help find God.

AG: Excuse me? Chain-Smoking Bushmen, Eskimos in the Sahara desert, do you really expect us to believe all of this?

Volunteer 2: Allow me to explain. Very few people have ever heard of the Bushmen. Nobody is quite sure how the Bushmen came to live on the border of Being and Nothingness. They have a strange and unique theory on God. They believe that God exists in the smoke of their cigars, and therefore they must continue smoking to keep God in

Palimpsest

existence. Their legend tells that of all of the things that God created he loved tobacco the most. During the time of the Great Rebellion, when God threw Satan out of Heaven, Satan objected, saying that if he was not allowed to be in Heaven to direct his forces, then God should not be allowed to either. So, God being a fair and just God agreed and decided to live in the smoke of tobacco. The Bushmen took it as their job to provide enough smoke for God to exist.

AJ: I'm scared to ask about the Eskimos.

Volunteer 2: They were originally from Siberia, but one night in a drunken stupor, they decided to take a road trip, and their bus ran out of gas in the middle of the Sahara, and they've been there ever since. You see, they believe that God exists in one chamber of the hourglass of time. Now, God's first creation was alcohol. However, he had to create time so he would know how long to brew his beer. He liked his alcohol so much that when he was creating time, he filled the hourglass with it. Now, when time began, the drops of alcohol began to drip, and to keep from drowning, he was forced to drink the alcohol. In the alcohol induced stupor that followed, God dreamed the world, in the beginning of course it wasn't that bad. But the more alcohol God consumed the worse things got until he passed out, and since then every thing has gone to hell. We must wait for the time of AA, when God will rectify the evils of the world. I will need a trailer load of alcohol for them. They have taken a vow of silence that only allows them to speak when they have a hangover.

AG: Go with the smoking Bushmen, and return as soon as you can. If they cannot help you, we will have alcohol ready for you to take to the Eskimos.

Palimpsest

Volunteer 2: They like Jack Daniel's, and throw in a case or two of Bombay Sapphire Gin. [*Walks toward the door.*] I will return.

AG: But who are you? [*The man just turns and gives them a big smile before walking out.*]

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE 6

Questions.

Setting: *A small room with a desk, a chair, a bed and a small refrigerator.*

[*The Author is sitting on the bed talking to his Aardvark, who is sitting in the desk chair, wearing a pair of arrow through the head gags.*]

Aardvark: Why are they looking for Smilin' Bob?

TA: he was the resident superhero.

Aardvark: So where did he go?

TA: He found some inspiration and went off to try and become a writer.

Aardvark: Why won't he come back? The town needs him?

TA: You know what? [*Aardvark is about to answer him, but he keeps going.*] I really need some inspiration. I've never had an original thought in my life.

Aardvark: What about Bob?

Palimpsest

TA: Nope, someone else invented him. I just gave him a story.

Aardvark: Well, there's always me.

TA: No, you're stolen too. Sure, I mean I took you from a two-dimensional, annoying advice spewing comic and molded you into what you are today... which is pretty much just a three-dimensional annoying advice spewing pet...

Aardvark: Hey! No need to insult me. You did make me what I am, don't forget that. What about Pete?

TA: Well, he's mine, but he's an offshoot of you. You know, Angry Aardvark—Pissed-off Platypus...

Aardvark: I see. One thing has been bothering me though. What did the store manager mean, inspiration was banned because of the Black Hole incident?

TA: Somebody tried to cross the border from Being into Nothingness while using inspiration. In the calamity that resulted another traveler who was crossing from Nothingness into Being was trapped in what was to become the Black Hole, who at heart is a sorry, shattered man. He snuck over to the Burger Hut one night and stole their capital B and H, so now he is a Black Hole. Now he's wanted by the police. No, not the Weasel Valley Police Department, the music group that Sting used to be in.

Aardvark: So, where do we fit into the Black Hole and the town and everything?

TA: In the end.

Aardvark: Stop it! I hate when you do that. Stop talking in circles.

Palimpsest

TA: Would you prefer I speak in squares? Or perhaps parallelograms? I always liked them.

Aardvark: So who was the second volunteer?

TA: it doesn't matter. He isn't who he is anyway.

Aardvark: Just for once I would like a straight answer from you.

TA: Straight, huh? Okay. How about this, and you can quote me on this: In a place that does not exist there is a man who is not who he was.

Aardvark: What?!!

[*Curtain.*]

Don't forget to look us up
on the Web —

[http://www2.hn.psu.edu/
faculty/jmanis/palimp.htm](http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/palimp.htm)

If you know a Penn State writer,
make sure she knows about

The Palimpsest Review.

Pass the word!