

2019

Dedications

“I dedicate my appearance in these pages to Robin Hinchcliff, Mary Katzenstein, and Alison Van Dyke for their gracious support, and to the CPEP faculty and students who have enriched my life.”

-Adam

“For those who dare barter wisdom, at the place expelled by many.”

-Julio Iglesias

“I dedicate the CPEP Program to all the volunteer students and adults who dedicate their time and effort, especially Toni, Kyri’s mom – who among others – teach us to persevere in the face of adversity, value time and education, and become adult intellectuals we were meant to be. Also, to everyone who contributes to the elevation of the forgotten.”

-Umar

“Thanks for helping me be so much more active and inspired surrounding education! CPEP rules.”

-Robert Lawrence

“Life can often challenge, excite, disappoint, and remake you. Although it is you who can awaken, create, and motivate life.”

-Raymond “Soldier” VanClief

“A measure of intelligence is the ability to think beyond the confines of one’s conditioning.”

-Reggie

“For those previous few, brave enough to dare – despite consequences, institutions, or contracts signed under subtle duress.”

-Lucas

“Expression costs nothing. Try it. Embrace it. Notice it. Free it.”

-Two Beings

“The CPEP program is changing lives one mind at a time.”

-Mike

“Dedicated to struggle, wisdom and, infinite change ...”

-Superb

“I dedicate this to those who know the feeling of imprisonment and rebirth.”

-Justin Kelly

“For you Grandma, the strongest person I know. My heart, my best friend, my inspiration. This Too Shall Pass.”

-Nicholas Hansen

Contents

<i>CPEP Voices</i>	2	Dedications
<i>Kenneth A. McClane</i>	5	One Editor's Comment
<i>Adam Roberts</i>	7	Let's Get Biz-Zay
<i>Sheldon Preston Johnson</i>	8	Colors
<i>Adam Roberts</i>	10	He Was Around Before Cars Was Born
<i>Tyreek Williams</i>	11	Survivor's Remorse
<i>Anonymous</i>	12	Feather
<i>F. Ashford</i>	13	The Belly
<i>David Hartman</i>	17	Love
<i>Tony Carnevale</i>	18	Oh Wize Wizard
<i>Tony Carnevale</i>	19	Volubilis Lusorius
<i>Will Izzo</i>	20	Silent Voices
<i>Maximino Alvarez</i>	21	Einstein
<i>Sheldon Preston Johnson</i>	22	Bucket Theory
<i>Adam Roberts</i>	24	Planned Obsolescence
<i>Just</i>	33	Raindrops
<i>Nathan Powell</i>	34	In the Wordshade/Under a Sky Made of Bars
<i>Robert Lawrence</i>	35	Soundscaping in the Joint
<i>Adam Roberts</i>	36	Good Old Porcelain
<i>Cody Testerman</i>	38	Memory Card
<i>Lucas W. Whaley</i>	39	TURN
<i>Nick Hansen</i>	40	Frenemy

One Editor's Comment

I began working as a co-editor of *Writer's Bloc* a year ago, and it has been a high point in my life. Truthfully, I wasn't certain how things would transpire. I had edited magazines before—I even helped create the longest still-running student-led literary magazine at Cornell in 1969—but working at Auburn presented many challenges. Would we get submissions? Would the men work with me? I wanted to be a true co-editor. I didn't want to be thought of as other than a spirited reader and writer. And I wanted *Writer's Bloc* to be a good journal. None of this could have happened without the brilliant editorial cooperation of Lucas Whaley and Sheldon Johnson.

Our editorial meetings were true moments of intellectual give-and-take. Considering our different histories, we were in total agreement about what should be included in the magazine. At times, Lucas might argue for this, Sheldon for that, and I for something else, but each of us worked with an admirable sense of trust and good-natured raillery.

In ancient China, the Emperor would ask his delegates to gather poems from the vast reaches of the country so that he might understand what his people experienced. In many ways, *Writer's Bloc*, like any fine compendium of writing, fulfills the same function. It is our celebration of a time and a place, of dreams and aspirations, of fears and dismissals. Although there are moments of reality—and harsh ones at that—there are also lovely eruptions of the fanciful. It is a true literary gumbo.

Let me personally thank the Cornell Prison Education Program for providing me the opportunity to work with these wonderful writers; the Auburn Correctional Staff; Kyri Murdough for being the indomitable inspiration to so many (not only we in *Writer's Bloc*, but everyone at Auburn); Kyri's wonderful mother Toni, who helped us, particularly at the outset of our endeavor; and a legion of others too numerous to name.

But most importantly, let me thank Lucas and Sheldon. This is their labor of love. And thanks also to the many fine writers and artists who grace these pages.

I said that this was one of the best experiences in my life, and I was not being hyperbolic. It is a privilege to see something take shape, find its place in the world, and speak as only the heart and mind can. As the spiritual reminds us, “It is we who witness. It is we who love.” And as my mother often told me, “Learn from the past; live in the future.”

Writer’s Bloc is a mighty preachment—a testimony. Let me put it succinctly: The walls without need not be the walls within, and dreams, even in the darkest of places, speak powerfully. *Writer’s Bloc* reminds us that there is nothing more irrepressible than the human spirit. When one writes, or paints, or plays the saxophone, he or she is proclaiming a resounding *I am*; he or she is celebrating, just as powerfully, that you are present, too.

We live for each other: we are indissolubly connected. None of us came here as an isolate; none of us, just as truthfully, can exist as a spiritual citadel. If nothing else, *Writer’s Bloc* affirms that nothing diminishes human hope and the need to be corroborated. I am mindful of something that the esteemed poet Gwendolyn Brooks once said while contemplating the Cold War, with its grim possibilities for nuclear annihilation, “In this terrible time, the human heart can outweigh and countervail the atomic bomb.” And it can. And it must.

Kenneth A. McClane
W.E.B. DuBois Professor of Literature Emeritus



Colors
Sheldon Preston Johnson

Blue skies, Green pastures
Black clouds, Beige grams.
Yellow Daffodils blossom from
Purple rains and the sweat of
Melinated hues.
Ebony stones and
a Whitewashed face.
Clear tears of Jade envy
from Blackmailed hate.
Dark-hearted from Chalky outlines
souls lost in an
interstellar Milky way.
10 million found unity in Red Clay.
Sand blasted Pyramids confirm
they have forever been led astray.

Black Cat bad luck?
Why not,
Black Streaks on a Brindled Dog?
A stampede of consumers
on a Black Friday
A Translucent temper followed by
a Black whimper in Ferguson.
A glorious portrayal of serenity
Speckled by Coal emissions.
Snow White lies drift like Manna
from an all Silvery Sky
but with hair like wool
and Copper skin
was Jesus just another European guy?

Was it Black magic
that led the way for Harriet's escape?
Was it a great white hope
that greeted Natives
with small pox, Azure waters
and Mahogany docks?
Olive leaves in Hazel trunks.
Permanent Wine stains
on Slate Grey dumps.
The Black HOOD-IE
that left Trayvon slumped
amongst RAINBOW skittles.
How bout'
The Chrome guns and Black talons

from 'Car 51'
that left Shawn Bells' widow
in an Inky suit
instead of a matrimonial White one.

Diverse hues of Faun and Camel,
Caramel and Chestnut
camouflage Iraqi soldiers
while dust filled tears streak
the Cocoa faces of Iraqi Mothers'
Black Love once superseded all others
now, its Black-on-Black crime
Batson juries
federal grants and the clangin'
of Blue Steel gates.
Green uniforms that radiate
Ice Blue hate.
Sapphires and Emeralds for the
price of Crimson Blood!
While one White Hope diamond
brought clarity
to Sierra Leon's abysmal disparity.
Cinnamon freckles
on a Frosty judge
in a Jet Black robe
left a 'Man Child'
in a promise land: BROKEN.
Alone, with an Electric White Tamper
contemplating the square inches
of a DOCCS nuclei forever!

He was
around
before
cars
was
born



Survivor's Remorse
Tyreek Williams

Crazy ole' Dave
from Backwater Country.

Rock n' back and forth
In that rickety chair.

On the shabby porch
Of his Victorian abode,

Surrounded by woods
and rustic roads.

Timber-wood fills the firewood stove;
for winter brings the freezing cold.

Crazy ole' Dave remembers the war;
blood-stained livery on
charred legionnaire's flesh.

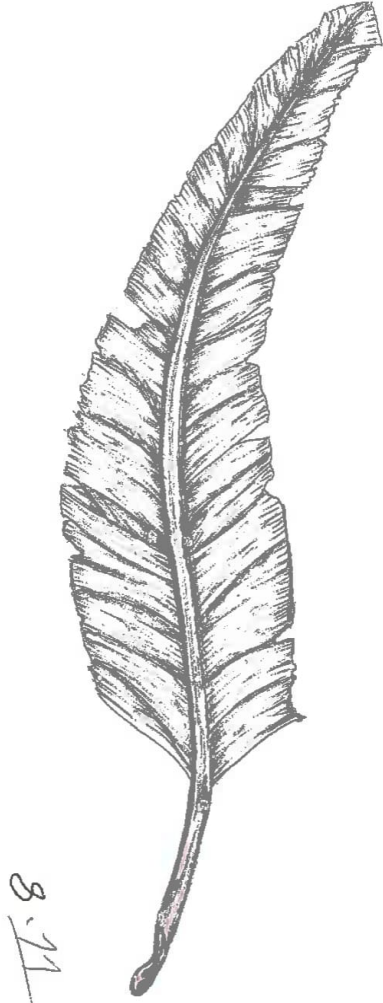
Moonshine drowns these
Wounded souls.

In cornfields doused
in survivor's guilt,

As flowers wilt
in shaded eyes.

Crazy ole' Dave from Backwater Country,
rock n' back and forth in that rickety chair.

Moonshine drowns these
Wounded souls.



The Belly
F. Ashford

The recreation center conveniently turned reception hall specifically for the day's event was carefully decorated to suit the occasion. There were flowers of all sorts, paintings – nice paintings like the one of Jesus sitting at the table with his disciples for the last supper, and an area sectioned off for gifts – mostly stuffed animals. Tears flowed while guests consoled one another and although the mood was somber. This was just as much a reunion as it was a memorial. I saw Gary. What a loser. We acknowledged one another having gone to school together but I had long stopped fantasizing about him years ago. We shared a kiss once. Senior year, Tessa, my sister, had said it was just a phase I thought was incredibly ridiculous considering things then.

It sparkled still. The pendant. I first took notice of it my junior year of high school. It was a gift to Tessa from our father Frank for her 15th birthday. Now she wears it. Ms. Thornbrook. Former "Miss New York," former Communication In Crisis teacher, former significant other to the "Corndale Butcher." She was Tessa's love interest in Highschool and the years that followed. It was decent, I guess. Frank had bought it from some discount jeweler downtown. It reminded me of one of those pieces you saw in the movies except this wasn't a grandfather's watch or an engraved wedding band bestowed on bended knee from some geezer attempting to enamor his soon-to-be. This was a pendant and it sparkled in the picture as it did then, seven years ago where we talked secretly in the back of the school auditorium, our usual meeting place.

"I'm hearing things."

"Me too," Tessa said.

"Is it true?"

"Does it matter?"

"Not really."

"And you?"

"What?"

"Is it true?"

"Maybe."

"It's all over school."

"So?"

Tessa was passive aggressive though she'd believed otherwise. I realized it almost as soon as we were able to communicate with one another. I didn't know the name for it then but even when we were kids I was convinced Tessa was psychologically unstable. She's only forty-seven seconds older than me and she'd sower by God that gave her authority over me. "It's the natural order of things," she'd say. Oddly enough, we got along exceptionally well. She was the girl version of me, I was the boy version of her. Tessa's really strong. I mean, emotionally. She never cried. Ever. Even now. I don't know how she does it, being around so many different personalities. Then again, Tessa had always been socially active. Debate Team, Swim Team, Drama Club, cheerleader, I mean... you name it. She was the most extraordinary, ordinary person I'd ever known. She wore her clothes perfect. Not too tight, not too baggy. She had this way about her and it was silently seductive the way she wore her hair. Always up with some big hair thing that reminded me of sharks teeth to keep it positioned just

right. She wore glasses but not the big geeky ones nerds wear at science conventions, they were thin-wired. She was shy with make-up but our complexions made it unnecessary. See we're mixed breed. Our mother is white, our father black as the night on a country road. In my opinion, you couldn't have paired two more awkward people together. At twenty-three, I'm still trying to figure out what my parents have in common. I see both of them in Tessa. Maybe that's where the passive-aggressiveness comes from.

"What if dad finds out?"

"I dunno."

"He suspects," Tessa said.

"How do you know?"

"I heard him and mom talking about how girls never call."

"So?"

"Mom thinks you're too focused on academics to care about girls."

"And dad?"

"Like I said, he suspects."

"Whatever. I'm gonna be late."

"Ugh! One more friggin' year."

"Sure, I guess."

"After high school I'm moving away."

"With her?"

"We're in love."

"Yeah, well... be careful Tess."

"Sure, I guess."

That was the last time I saw Tessa at school. I didn't see much of Tessa at all after that year. Frank couldn't control her. Tessa started running away when we were eleven. I'd always find her in these weird places. Places like "The Heritage Library" on Wicker Rd. It had been closed for years but for Tessa, it was her sanctuary. Then there was the bookstore over on Waverly. It hadn't been closed down yet but how Tessa got into some of those places after closing time is a mystery. She was always easy to find though, Frank just never knew where to look. It's not like we had it bad or anything, Tessa was just searching, I guess. For what? I dunno. Mom says she's giddy. My folks are nice enough people but their perspective on life is too simple for me. It was for Tessa too. I wish she was here now. She's the only true friend I have. No one's so much as said a word to me since my arrival. I understand, I guess. Food's awful too. The chicken wings are undercooked, the Spanish rice, if that's what it is, is bland, and the seafood pasta tastes nothing like seafood pasta. The punch is okay. Spiked, perhaps. This has been my position for the last forty-five minutes or so, right here by the punch bowl, staring, looking away. People are talking about me. I can tell. It's cool, I guess. I've accepted who I am. It's everyone else who has the problem.

"I'm worried about you."

"I gotta go, Tess."

"Look, you're embarrassing me!"

"Really," I said, "and which one are you again, the pot or the kettle?"

"I'm not the one running around exploiting myself in boys bathrooms!"

"Of course not, you prefer the privacy of a teachers lounge during afterschool hours."

"It's different for me."

"Really? How so?"

"We're in love."

"Tess, you're sixteen!"

"And I know what love is."

I saw her last weekend. Tessa. She's different. She didn't say much, she never does anymore. She just sits there. Sometimes she touches my hand, but mostly she just sits there. She touched them the first time she saw them. My breasts. I got them done last year. I don't really know how I feel about them but I often stare at them in the mirror. Frank doesn't know. Mom does. My aunt Jenn told her a few months ago. We keep in touch, me and my aunt, but I limit it to phone conversations here and there because she talks too much. I haven't seen my folks since my senior year of high school. Frank had found out about my exploits. We fought, I gathered my things, and moved out. That's when dad became Frank to me. I went to North Carolina and waited tables for three years. I enrolled in a Community College, got my degree, and was sitting in the reception area of "Schroeder and Miles" waiting to be interviewed for a receptionist position after having quit my former job as head bartender at Greely's, a titty bar over on Maples Rd. in Raleigh when I got the call. It was aunt Jean. She didn't want to talk over the phone and asked if I could come back to the city because Tessa was in trouble. Tessa was never in trouble. Not after high school. So I came. When aunt Jean saw me she was speechless. I was no longer that tall lanky pretty boy with the good hair from Corndale High. I was a woman now, and proud of it. That was the first time I'd come back. This is my second return, though only for a brief period. It's weird too because where I'm from, boys grew up to be men... not women. It was the same as I'd remembered. White folks had come in and renovated some of the rough parts like Corn Hill Projects. Bellville Square, known as "The Belly" too, had been renovated to appeal to students attending Rockport Community just up the road. That's where I grew up by the way, "The Belly". Its former name representative of its character. It's "Hope Lane" now. I hope they got rid of the roaches. I hope they dug up the bodies behind section H-A. I hope all the spirits that haunted the place found solace elsewhere. Spirits of murdered civilians, murders that have gone unsolved to this day. I had my first fight in "The Belly." His name was "Rocky," big Italian kid who'd gotten off one too many times calling me "little yellow nigger boy." I was nine or ten then and he was few years older. He was busting me up pretty good when Tessa came across the field with Franks "Louisville Slugger." He never saw it coming. Tessa clunked him real nice right over the top of the head. Blood spurted out like a faucet but he was out cold. From that day forward, nobody messed with Tessa. Nobody. I got to enjoy the aftermath of her glory on several occasions throughout junior high. Mostly for boys picking on me. Girls too.

Weird. Glancing at me from across the room is Gary. I don't know what to make of it. He's a jerk, always has been. He's married now and here with his wife, Jenny Henson. She went to Corndale too. She was prettier back then. Ms. Thornbrook too was pretty then.

"Tessa, what you're doing with her is not love."

"You don't know jack shit, okay?!"

"Whatever, Tess. You're going to end up hurt."

"You're wrong as always."

"Am I?"

"You're weak, you know that?"

"Am not!"

"Just like mom. I don't know how she takes it. She just sits there while he talks to her like crap."

"What is she to do?"

"Friggin' stand up for herself for once in her life!"

"C'mon Tess."

"No! It's true!"

"Look, I'm gonna be late for class."

"Not yet."

"C'mon Tess, what is it?"

"Promise me something."

"What is it Tess?"

"Promise me you'll always be there for me when I need you."

"Tess, c'mon...what's going on?"

"Promise me!"

"Okay, fine!"

"Now you can go."

I kept my promise. In fact, I'm only here because Tessa asked me to come. I'm not sure why but she mentioned the pendant. Well, she didn't actually mention it. It was more this weird gesture where she pretended to either be taking it off, or putting it on. There's a picture of her, Ms. Thornbrook, wearing the pendant over by the stuffed animals. She had it on the day of the funeral last year too as she lay lifeless in her coffin. Even in the picture it sparkles. She had it on in the newspaper too. There was an article about the murder but Tessa is not the person these awful writers made her out to be. The whole "Corndale butcher" thing was something Corndale students echoed recklessly after the murder. Thankfully, it never caught on with journalists who just titled the article: "Teacher/student love affair gone fatal." I still have the article. Page four: third column from the left of the "Rochester Tribune." Lies. All lies. Tessa had already graduated from Corndale five years prior to the murder. But I understand the journalism thing, I guess. The asylum where Tessa is housed is decent enough. It's home to 250 insane offenders but Tessa is not insane. It's just that, nobody knows Tessa like I do.

Anyway, I never knew what caused Tessa to react the way she did on that cold and fateful day, but I do know this... nobody messes with Tessa. Nobody. I think I've overstayed my welcome here. One-year anniversary memorial or not, the looks are getting nasty now. I think I'll leave. As for the pendant, whatever it means to Tessa, I don't know. All I know is that it sparkles... even in the picture, the way it always used to.



Oh, Wize Wizard...
Tony Carnevale

Solitude shaped these thoughts,
Asunder from ash as seasons pass:
Fettered iron fence not free.

A garrison-state, down a silent path
battle of silhouettes
Obviate a war, on parchment.

Shapeless words gave slight sentiment:
In ways of communiqué
Without assail of aspiration.

Asperity fashioned from your age
A power-key of apologizes followed,
Fearsome future to unfold.

Yew shaped ash with time:
Untold trials stacked against,
Righted in hands only, own.

Youth will be no more, when
Calendars stop stacking on the floor:
We fathom a faceless marrow,

Help us oh, wize wizard!

Volubilis Lusorius
Tony Carnevale

Round and round up and down
Where does it go?
Round and round up and down
All for show
Names and names nobody knows
Horses come horses go
Round and round up and down
On a pole on a pole all for show
Kids they come kids they go
Round and round up and down
Nobody knows
Moms and dads, moms and dads they watch
 the show
The kids the kids they go, up and down
Round and round
Where do they go
Nobody knows nobody knows
All the names and all the shows nobody knows
 nobody knows
Just round and round up and and down

Silent Voices
Will Izzo

Within me are many silent voices,
Voices of my interminable ancestors,
Voices of my past relationships,
Voices of missed opportunities and dreams lost,
Voices of lost talents not explored or nurtured.

And of the whispers of voices the others
Drown upon
Of the flippy, funny, fundamentals.
Of mirages floating and marbles rolling.

Through me those shadow voices,
Voices blue, and green...voices buried
And stashed, and I reveal the cloaked,
Voices bared and shared and changed.



Bucket Theory

Sheldon Preston Johnson

Theoretically, my position may appear to be insane; psychotic even, but let me explain. One's dignity is based upon their ability to maintain their self-worth. Would you agree? One's self worth, how they feel and how they represent themselves is initially founded upon the concepts of the hygiene our parents, siblings, elders or guardians taught us. The importance of grooming and appearance; combed hair, clean finger nails, flossing, the regular use of deodorant; clean underwear and socks. This sense of cleanliness are the building blocks of self-worth and self-esteem.

But who does one become, better yet, what does one become when they no longer care how they look, how they smell, and how they are perceived? What happens when the corner stone of self-love is fractured and shakes the foundation of one's core values?

Take for example, this three-gallon bucket I have in this 6x8 cell. When one first considers the monetary value of a three-gallon bucket, I admit it doesn't seem that important; not until you weigh in a host of other factors that enhance its value. It becomes equivalent to America's dependency on crude oil.

"This guy is crazy," but just listen for a moment. Then you can decide whether I've flown over the cuckoo's nest.

I have to admit, after being imprisoned for more than twenty years, I don't have much left but my dignity. Family and friends have either ceased to exist or have moved on. Every day, I witness people all around me bursting at the seams: literally and figuratively. And as I bear witness to this frightening reality, I always ask myself at what point did this person's unravelling begin? Was it the loss of love? Abandonment? Addition, abuse, or the onset of a mental illness that made suicide a bonafide method of escape? When does one no longer care about their existence? And what is this a testament to? Society's inability or outright refusal to truly rehabilitate its minority and instead annihilate the self-worth and self-love of its imprisoned majority? How does one stay afloat within a sea of cultural conflict? Navigate along invisible borders and cross burnt bridges? Without a minimal sense of self?

So now can you begin to see how this three-gallon bucket is attached to the thread of my dignity? Allow me to continue. I am in a facility where everything is ran through the yard. What does that mean exactly? That means I have to go outside regardless of inclement weather to take a shower. Unless I am a porter (janitorial engineer) pushing a broom; have earned honor block privileges; am keeplock (23 hour in-cell lockdown), for violating one of over a hundred-nineteen rules to be exact; one of which § 118.30 Tidy, ironically states:

an inmate shall maintain the cleanliness and orderliness of his or her living quarters, clothing and person.

I have to admit, it did not dawn on me how valuable this three-gallon bucket was until a recent facility lockdown. For those of you who do not know what a facility lockdown is, it's when they cease all movement throughout the facility and confine everyone to their cells for the purpose of searching the entire facility. This goes on for

twenty-four hours a day, for however many days that entire search might take. Which is usually 7-10 days; depending on the severity of the incident which triggered the lockdown (multiple assaults, demonstrations, etc.).

So now ask yourself, how would you wash your ass if you were confined to a cell for 7-10 days with no hot water and no bucket? Good question, right. Should you do it in the sink, where you are expected to brush your teeth and wash your face? How about the porcelain bowl where you urinate and defecate? Last night, after I lathered up my body, I used an eight-ounce cup to pour frigid water over and onto my head while watching layers of grayish dead skin cells accumulate in pools of water on the floor of this 6x8 closet sized cell.

What if we're not locked down you might ask? Like I mentioned earlier, everything is in the yard: commissary telephones, showers, barbershop, package room, etc. So, my ability to perform a number of tasks is severely curtailed because of time. And for the record, time in its application here is a misnomer. Overall, I am allotted on average, Monday-thru-Friday, less than two hours a day in the yard. A half hour of that is potentially spent on being searched while proceeding to the yard. God forbid an incident occurs while the yard run is in progress; I may never get there.

Hypothetically, if I decide to call my family, I could potentially miss the opportunity to take a shower. Long story short, I have to usually pick and choose between commissary and a shower; package room or a shower; you get the point. Which is a perfect transition to the point I was trying to make in the first place: this three-gallon bucket is my dignity. It is where I wash my underclothes, my dishes and yeah, my body; when my chances of getting to the shower are no longer an option.

So now on this lockdown in particular, they have chosen to confiscate all three-gallon buckets. Ironically, during the last lock down less than ninety days ago, they confiscated all five-gallon buckets. There are no alternatives being provided. They do not sell buckets at the commissary or issue them out for free. The facility laundry is done once a week. Once a week, I am permitted to send my clothes to the laundry to be placed into an industrial washing machine to be washed simultaneously with hundreds of others prisoners' clothes. Really?

Now they have decided to arbitrarily confiscate the corner stone to my dignity, because I look too clean? Because I value myself and care about how I look? How I feel? What other people perceive me? What could be the ultimate objective? To devalue and dehumanize me so their treatment and violation of my most basic rights won't seem so inhumane? Because once my ability to maintain myself worth via this three-gallon bucket is absolved, I mentally and emotionally begin to unravel. Do you get it?

Maybe not, but begs the question, when there exists no legitimate penological security interest to a prisoner having a bucket and it's a practice that has been allowed for decades, and no alternatives are being provided for guys to wash their clothes and bodies, what happens next? What human deprives someone of their ability to maintain a basic degree of cleanliness? How does this make America great again? What rehabilitative measures are being achieved? Why would someone attempt to deprive a human being, albeit a prisoner, the right to their dignity?

Dec.
2017
AR COMICS

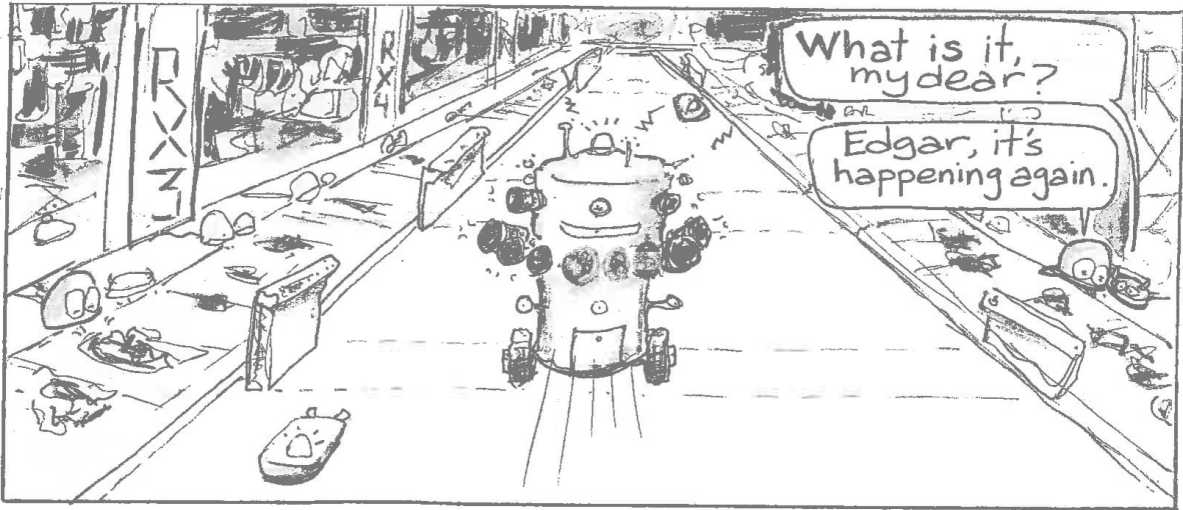
Blapped When Ascence

FINAL
ISSUE



ADAM ROBERTS
Script, pencils, inks, colors, letters

NANCY QUINTANILLA
doctora, editor latino/a/x scifi



SERVICE

TICKET #A67;53

>LINE:RX3

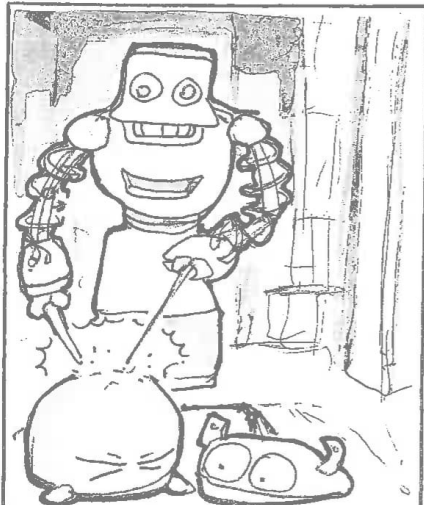
>UNIT:173

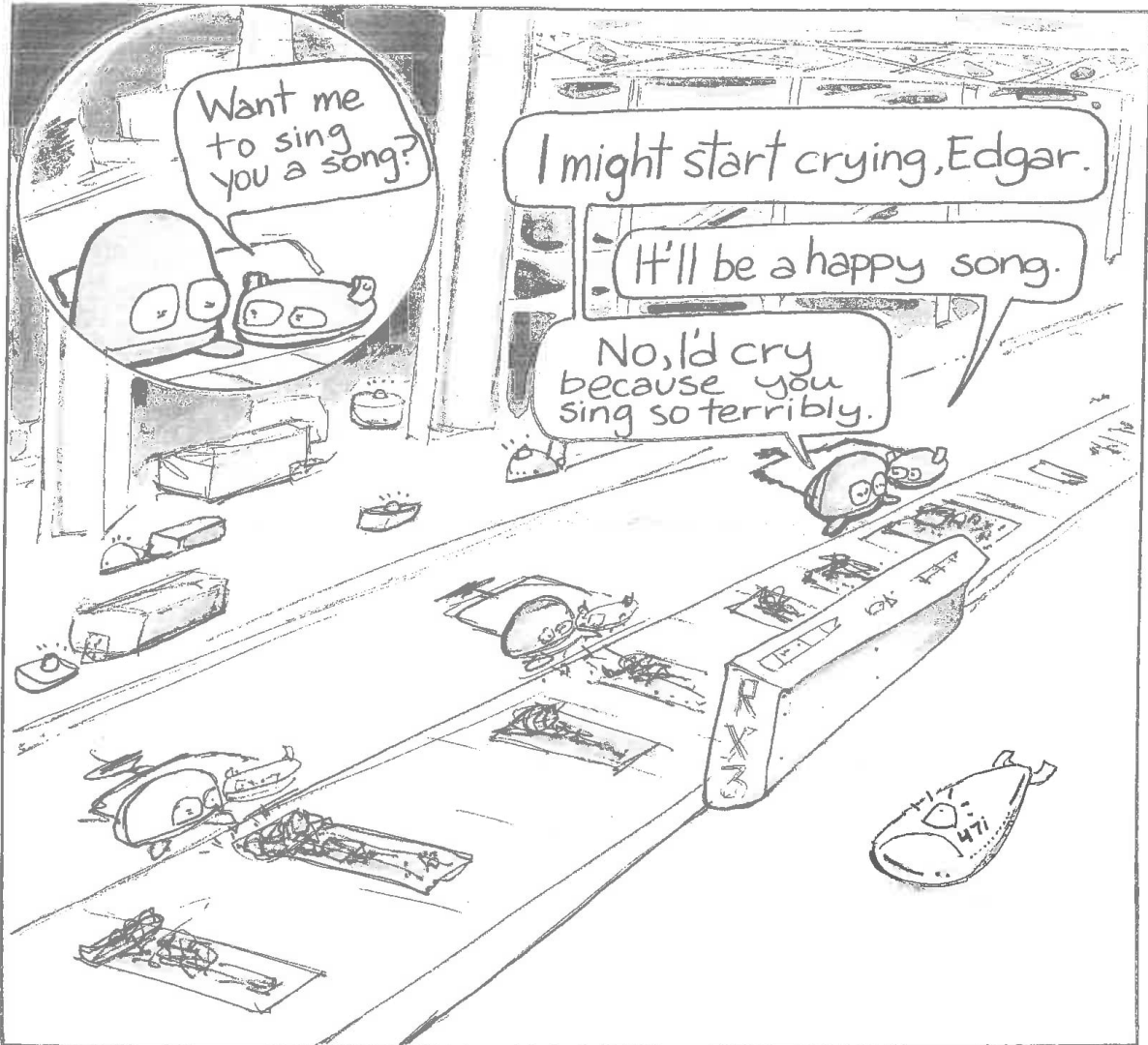
>TYPE:FABRICATOR

*PROBLEM(S):

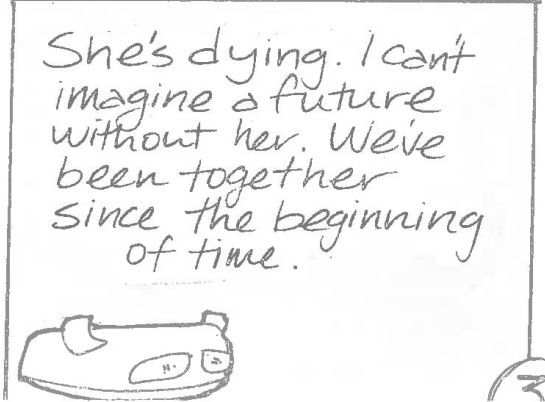
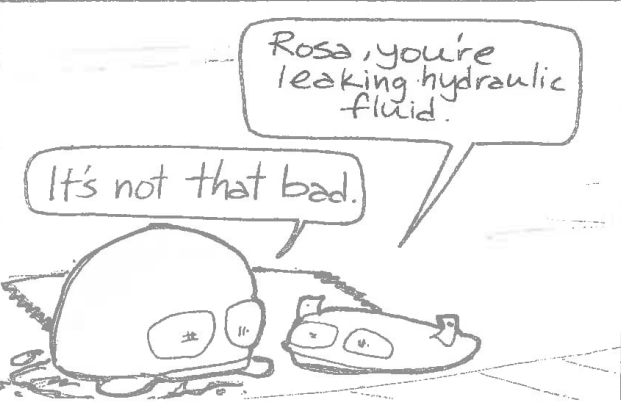
LOOSE ARTICULATOR BEARS

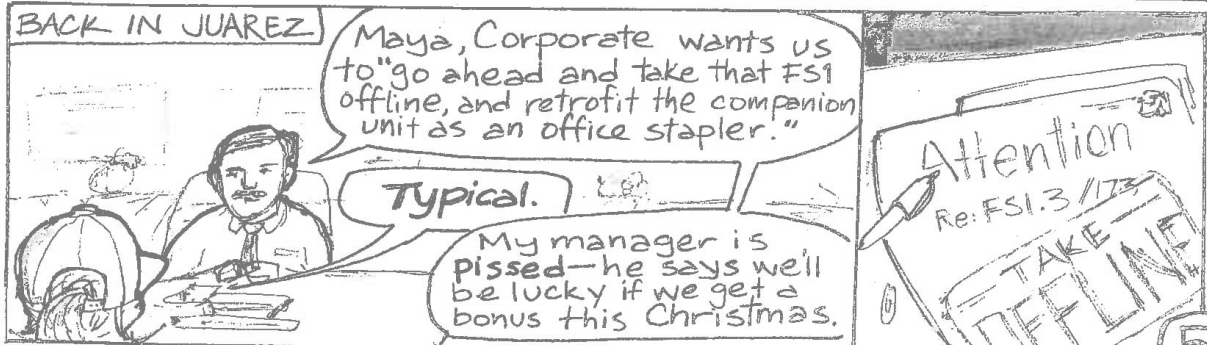
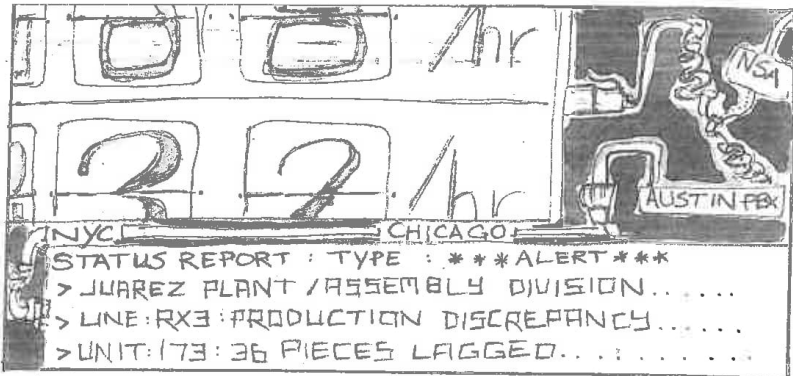
CHIP MALFUNCTION

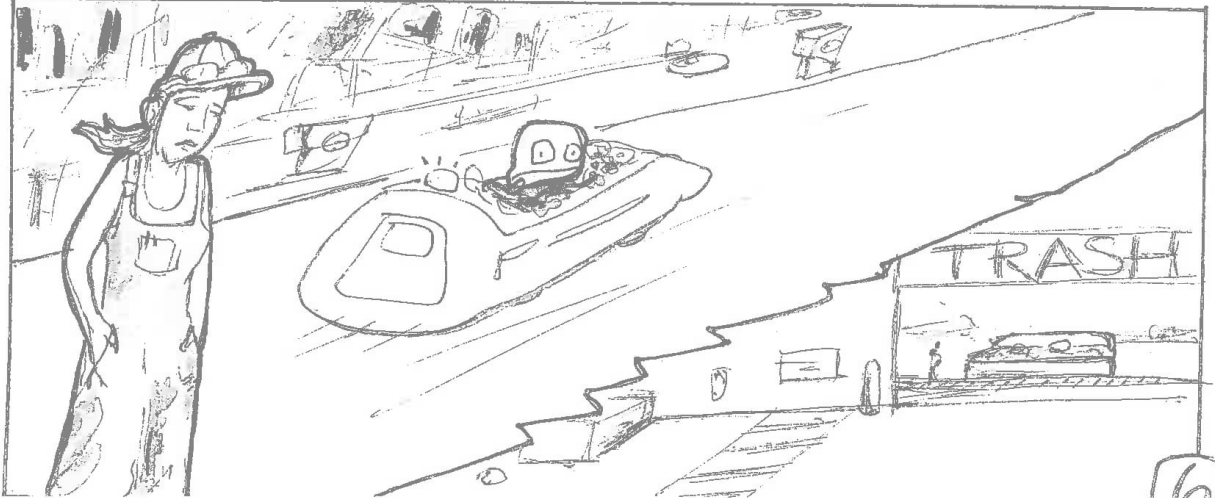
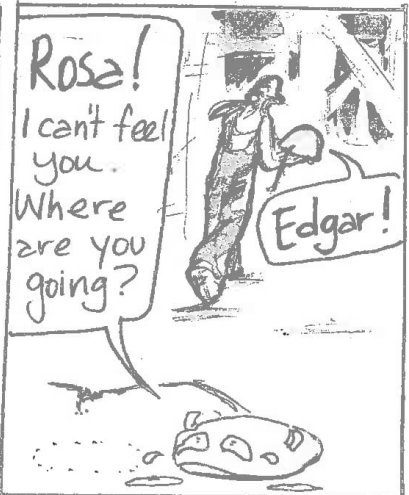
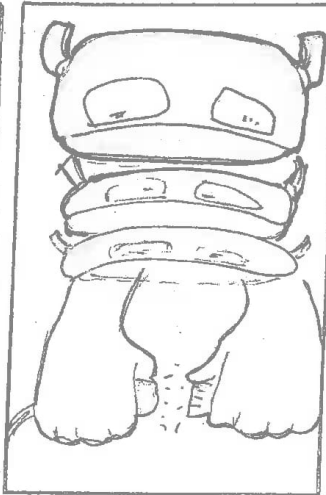


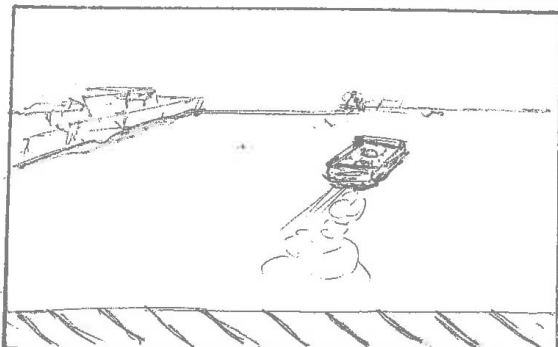
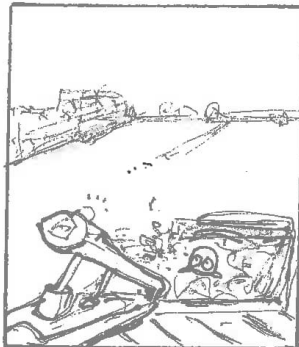
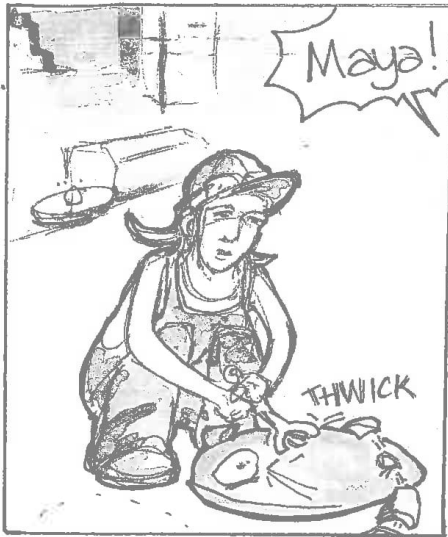


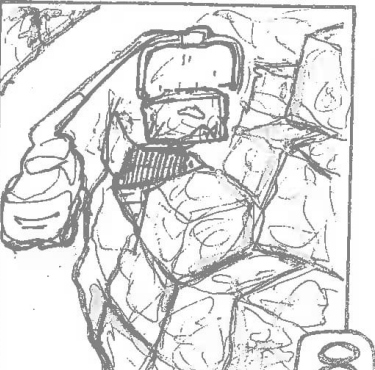
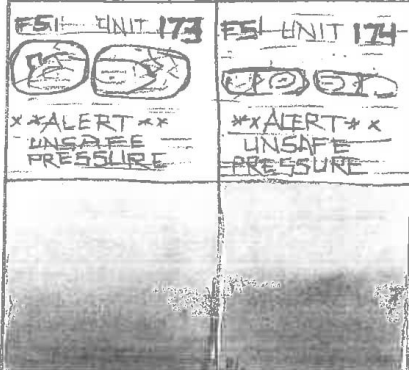
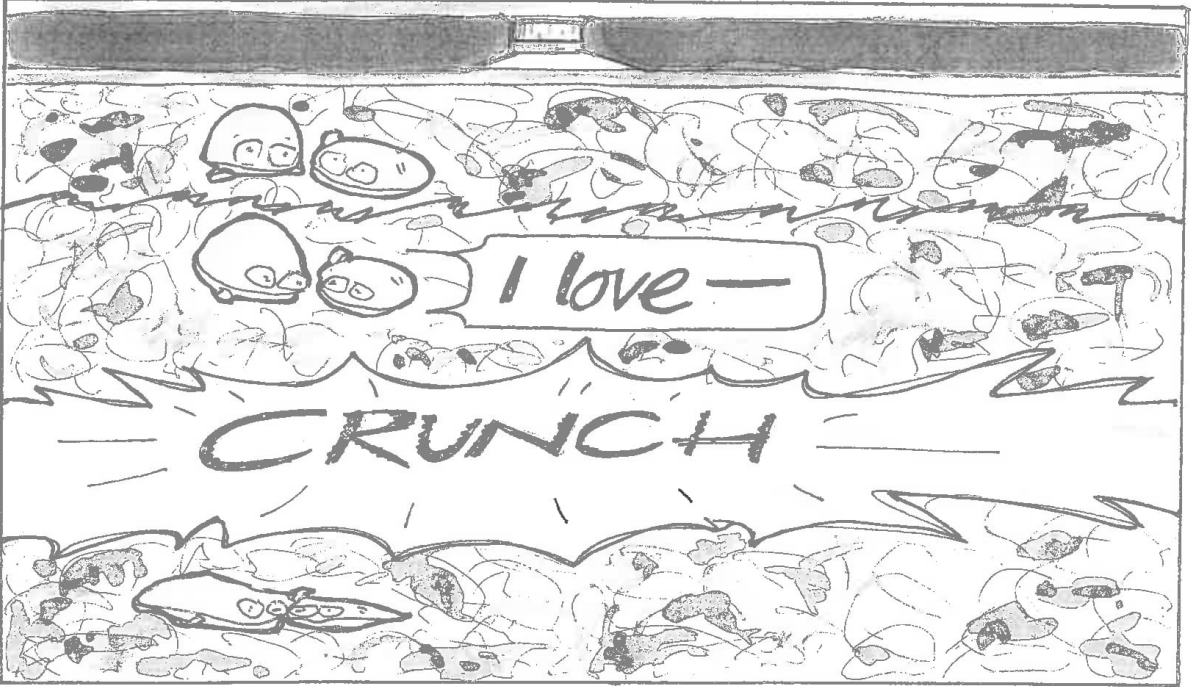
TURNKEY Dept.

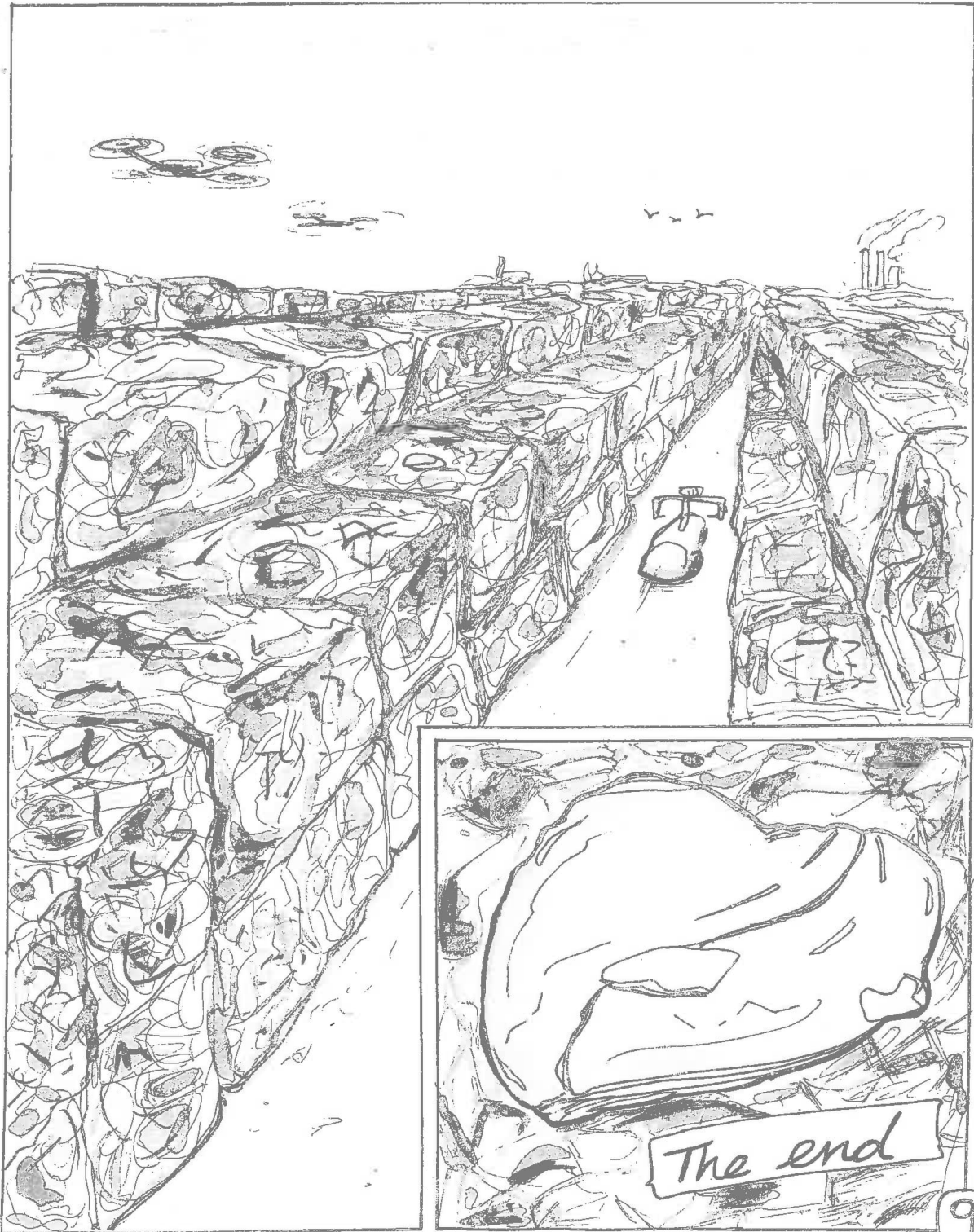












Raindrops
Just

Raindrops keep falling with nowhere to land.
The sky is crying,
Because somewhere in the world a child is dying
unchecked, distress, because we're too busy fighting,
fighting a war within a war,
We think freedoms coming for sure,
unless you're uneducated, or poor,
poor souls, forever lost
LOST in the sauce, or the system
And to the victor goes the victims,
pools of venom you can swim in
The dive to your death can be so blissful inhale, EXHALE.
Raindrops keep falling with nowhere to land.
The sky is pissing, because somewhere in the world another child is missing,
missing a father, who couldn't bother with a toddler
made with a woman who didn't matter,
before or after she surrendered
Lord forgive us for what we've made of this place
we call life,
for this God we call money,
for these wrongs we call right.
May we find peace in Each other
instead of death by our own hands
And please give these raindrops a safe place to land.

In the Wordshade
Under a Sky Made of Bars
Nathan Powell

Somewhere among the line
I missed the heist
That stole my mind.
Perhaps they wore masks,
Like the Lone Ranger,

These words
I am compelled to use
Are not my own.
We don't think about it
Cause we think in IT; to be.

Tiny lettered soldiers
Shape our thoughts.
[Latin, French, Greek, German]
Operate like foreign invaders,
manifesting destiny,
invisibly moldering history
in manufactories
of murky origin.

Whose dammed language is it anyway?
Who claims it?
Chest filled with arrogant air.
MINE!
All mine.

Smooth narrative myths
Encase us within Pretty ugly bubbles.
Look for the bump in the seamless
Seem less
The unseemly glitch in the overlay,
Unsee.

Gregorio Cortez
Killed the Lone Ranger
Long before he was born,
But it is hard to member Cortez,
The masked Law Man.

Soundscaping in the Joint

Robert Lawrence

In prison there are seldom moments of complete tranquility. There is always some sort of hustle and bustle. Nevertheless, on this beautiful morning, around 7:15am, there seems to be an unnatural amount of quiet. By extension, there are four distinct identifiable sounds that grab my attention. The high-pitched chirp of a baby bird that cries for its parents' attention. The hinge of a door in desperate need of lubricant; the sound of familiar footsteps, and my neighbor's boisterous seventeen-year-old radio.

The high-pitched chirp-chirp is consistent and irritably close. Such innocence associated with being young. Indeed, the sounds generated by this baby bird resonate deep within me. For example, welcoming home my six-day-old nephew from the hospital after his birth allowed me an opportunity to witness firsthand his powerful vocalizations surrounding his frustrations as a result of hunger, or wanting attention. The texture of both scream and chirp are granular and eerily similar. Thus, as a result of each sound, I am left with a love/hate association of both.

If only lubricant was available, surely someone would generously oil the hinges of the door that makes all the noise in the morning. This door is twenty-five yards away, yet it seems like twenty-five inches. Constant creaks and moans are a reflection of keep-locked inmates utilizing this door en route to enjoy their one-hour-per-day recreation in a fenced enclosure. The door opens and closes much faster now; the succession of sixty or so inmates eager to bask in what little beauty fall has left. Who could blame them? Being confined twenty-three hours will definitely have that effect. However, it is the grainy roar of this majestic iron door that pits me against these innocent individuals who have no choice but to use this door. Awful is the perfect description of the sound it makes. Similarly, it's almost as if a piece of chalk is being scraped against a chalkboard. This particular sound almost single-handedly derailed me from my special place surrounding my soundscape.

Sticky footsteps stop in front of my cell. The porter laid down too much max on the floor causing me to identify the limp in my friend Nick's walk. He sustained this injury the day before in a fierce competition we had on the handball court. "Good morning Bam, how you doing?" Nick exclaimed with his thick Long island accent, causing the 'G' in 'doing' to be obsolete. His voice this morning seems to be lacking something, probably another restless night. I feel bad for totally ignoring him. As he walks away, I am reminded of his wet slushy footsteps. Likewise, I start to associate his slushy steps with that of an octopus a friend of mine used to have when we were young. The octopus would cup its arms against the side of the tank. Ben would gently pull the octopus off one leg at a time, causing a rhythmic slurp-slurp sound.

Soon after Nick's departure, I noticed my neighbor's radio come to life. I can faintly hear the inspirational lyrics of J. Cole that are completely being swallowed by the heavy bass-line. What separates us is just a quarter inch steel wall that shakes from the thunderous bass of Flo's model 88 radio. The quality of sound makes this radio worth every penny. When the bass is turned up, it's like experiencing a breathtaking moment over and over again; your innards become acutely aware, transmitting a feeling that is welcomed to say the least. I am often times reminded of the new charter-buses when being started-up, the ground-rumbling sensation can be compared to Flo's radio.

I am hopeful you enjoyed the vivid picture created in an attempt to allow you to eavesdrop on my soundscape in the joint.

Good Old Porcelain

Adam Roberts

I didn't want this to be my subject any more than I wanted my life to turn out the way it did. Tasked with finding an object in my cell that can stand as a metaphor for my life, it took all of two seconds to focus on the toilet.

Too obvious, man. Think think think of something better. The bars, yes that's the ticket, the bars are my life, me, the caged bird, etc. Meh my army jacket is the metaphor for my life, because it's resilient and has lots of pockets, which I love, oh how I adore pockets, with all their – Focus, schmuck. Face it, you can do no better. It's right there, don't fight it.

Even the most use-stained clichés have a truth, a potency. While it's sound practice to rid clichés from one's thought sand language, this is one baby I don't want to throw out with the bath water. The choice is no less correct for being obvious and facile. Thus, after a fashion, we get to the toilet, the terlet, the bowl, the can, the crapper. The conduit of waste, like the waste I made of all the opportunities I had. Even after pissing away an education from an elite university, there were connections with captains of industry (the fathers of friends), and a Congressman for whom I interned. And yet.

A quick curriculum vitae from your faithful flusher of opportunities: upper middle class upbringing, family in the professions; showed early promise, but didn't like all the work that work entailed; became a low-B student; managed to get accepted to a small, fine university, and ran amok; transferred to a large, name brand university, where I went to pieces; was "asked" to leave said school, by which point I'd begun shooting heroin, and the rest, as the court records say, is history (see murder, irreparable harm to an entire family, and painful ripples for generations to come). This led to a wholly deserved twenty-five-to-life sentence, which I began in 1999, as a newly detoxed twenty-three-year-old.

While my brain recalibrated to operating without daily opiate baths, I lived a flat, flavorless existence. But that changed as I spent my twenties in Attica, becoming a human again. Though I ended my affair with heroin, it would be years before I stopped the other extracurriculars. You see, some toilets take longer than others to stop flushing.

In the summer of 2016, I was back in a classroom setting, and finally, at age forty, mature enough to appreciate what I'd been given. And truly, it was an opportunity. Two years earlier I was in Great Meadow, a prison devoid of volunteer programs. Now I was in Auburn with its plethora of positive activities, accepted into the Cornell program, and taking a class with Peter Enns, a distinguished professor with well-deserved accolades. Peter taught about the politics of unequal education, while the assigned reading underscored just how fortunate I was to grow up in the North Shore Long Island enclave I called home, and just how much opportunity I had squandered.

And then, one night midway through the semester, after noting several shared frames of reference and historical touchstones, I realized Peter and I were the same age. On that muggy August evening, sitting betwixt my close friends Paris and Jose, my mind replayed snippets of anecdotes Peter had shared over the course of the semester. Flashing

across my synaptic film, split screen, played juxtaposed images of the divergent lives our respective paths had led us on.

While Peter was toiling away on his senior thesis, I was graduating from sniffing to skin-popping. He: thugging it out in Baltimore, Teaching for America! —me: knocking around Bushwick, shooting a bundle of dope a day! His doctoral work at a prestigious grad school—my learning to “bid” without having my head handed to me in Attica. He the family man – me getting married in Great Meadow’s visit room (we have 2 adorable labs named Baker and Sherman!). His teaching about unequal education in Auburn—my learning from him.

I am not so vain to suggest that that could have been me—Peter was smarter and hungrier and harder working than I was at a crucial point in life—but it felt like I was looking at my doppelganger, someone living closer to the life I might have ended up inhabiting had I not begun using my arm as a pin cushion. That realization rocked me, rendering me unable to concentrate for the next hour. I’d be lying if I didn’t tell you I lavished myself with no small amount of self-pity that night. The toilet tank of my life was struggling to fill up. *Jiggle the handle, for crying out loud!*

For five years in Attica, I was an office clerk in the maintenance department. Several friends worked in the plumbing shop, a surprisingly clean and cozy room, where I’d repair to in the early afternoon. The inmate plumbers and their civilian bosses regaled me with tales from their adventures working in the prison’s dark tunnels and dank catwalks. In old prisons, the plumbing system is in a constant state of disrepair. The plumbers work full time to stay on top of the cascading failures of old, rusted pipes, cracked PVC, and ad hoc patch jobs. (NB: the world belongs to plumbers, a job constantly in demand and impossible to outsource; it would behoove you to be nice to them.) One of their stories sticks with me all these years later.

There was this nogoodnik who locked in A-block and made a pastime of flushing bed sheets, often flooding his cell, other cells on the company, and the catwalk. His was a mess that affected the lives of those around him. It didn’t take long for the plumbers to tire of his antics so rather than unclogging his toilet in the traditional manner, they hooked up a high-pressure water supply and blasted the contents of his toilet trap into his cell. Books, magazines, and papers were transformed into a soggy mass. Clothes left unfit for wear. And the kicker: the sheet was blasted out of the toilet with such forces that it splattered against the ceiling and stuck there like a sodden cocoon. But, they said in an earnest tone, he stopped flushing sheets. Some are only capable of learning the hard way.

As for yours truly, I began to learn from the mistakes of others. I’ve learned what not to flush so as to avoid making catastrophic messes. From older, smarter men I learned how to clean the toilet, and keep it clean. If someone were to look closely at it, I would not be embarrassed. These days, like an ad for cleaning products, my toilet sparkles and gleams.

Memory Card
Cody Testerman

□ ▲ ○

Collected gold rings as blue blur
Mushrooms made me think I was saving a princess from evil turtles
One hundred bananas got me red balloon, broke barrels on crocodiles
Raced with friends and hopped off the rainbow road
Got away after getting six stars
Blown through roadblocks to avoid spike stripes in a hot pursuit
Pulled triggers, threw knives, noob tubed, and even shot zombies, 'twas my duty
Used a typewriter under an umbrella
Stood as king at the Iron Fist tournament
Screen watched the split screen and show the golden gun
Tipped my wagon while fording a river, caught cholera, again

TURBO

Brought war to the gods – made a loud hill silent
Hunted for ducks with my dog – raided tombs
Shattered Joe's glass jaw – danced twice for a revolution

Woke from a frozen sleep to stop a flood
Hid in a cardboard box as snakes chase one another
Being followed by ghosts in a me didn't stop me from eating cherries
Red, yellow, blue, yep caught 'em all but splashing had to effect
A sweet tooth for an ice cream truck, clowns taste funny
Up down up down left right left right ABAB select start
Broke boxes with a spin for apples, careful of TNT and Nitro
A cog in a death machine, my rifle was also a chainsaw
As a native I hunted dinosaurs with only a knife and bow
Regretted attaching chickens with the master sword
Relived historic battles as famous Chinese Generals, beware of Lu Bu
Alien scum dies beneath my boot, hail to the king baby
Chose my destiny, had my sight and might tested, but now I'm FINISHED.

ABXY

TURN
Lucas W. Whaley

Tonight while walking I saw
A daffodil sprung alone
Along a spar of rotted wood
As though washed there
Between chainlink fence
And the wall it faced
Away from me
Leaned into concrete and braced
Against its own shadow.
I understood.
Yellow petals paled at edges
As if bled out around it
Onto pools of dark and floodlight
I wanted so badly
For either of us to reach
Back through dappled gloom,
To grant the other a little color-
But then,
Why should the daffodil be different
Than anyone else?

Frenemy
Nick Hansen

Across the yard my ego walks with me
Our heads held high.
Paralyzed by his allure,
That is my only fear.
He yearns for power,
He must be number one.
He soars with ascendancy,
Knowing he can crush my sympathy.
He glosses over empathy,
Full of scorching irony.
His insanity masked as rationality,
Only I can check his apathy.
What will fill my voids, my vulnerabilities?
Love with hate? Understanding with ignorance?
I know who he is,
Only I can be his master.

