



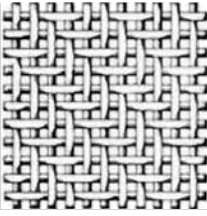
Fall 2009 | Volume 26 | Number 1

WEBER THE CONTEMPORARY WEST

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India/Postcolonial Focus



Deriving from the German *weben* – to weave – *weber* translates into the literal and figurative “weaver” of textiles and texts. *Weber* (the word is the same in singular and plural) are the artisans of textures and discourse, the artists of the beautiful fabricating the warp and weft of language into ever-changing patterns. *Weber*, the journal, understands itself as a tapestry of verbal and visual texts, a weave made from the threads of words and images.

Of Empresses, Empires, and Jewels

Benjamin Disraeli, several-time British Prime Minister, famously dubbed India “a jewel in the Crown of England.” A long-term political moderate of the British Conservative Party, Disraeli advocated maintaining rather than expanding British interests. He eventually promoted expansion

of British power when it became clear that Russia had increased its sphere of influence beyond the Balkans into the Far East.

(Readers of Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* may remember these territorial disputes in the Himalayas known as the “Great Game.”) In his private correspondence with Queen Victoria, he pledged “to clear Central Asia of Muscovites and drive them into the Caspian.”

One step to secure British advantage was the purchase of 44% of the shares of the Suez Canal Company with the help of Lionel de Rothchild in 1875 through a short-term loan. Disraeli exercised this act of strategic genius with the secret consent of the Queen, but without the consent of Parliament and over resistance from his own cabinet. Having secured a shortened passage to India – one of England’s most profitable territories – Disraeli also helped put the Queen on an equal nominal footing with Russian Czar Alexander II (who during his bachelor days made a state visit to England and was one of her suitors) by introducing the Royal Titles Act to Parliament in 1876. Through the Act, which was officially entitled “An Act to

enable Her most Gracious Majesty to make an addition to the Royal Style and Titles appertaining to the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom and its Dependencies,” Queen Victoria could be pronounced “Empress of India.” Adding such a resonant title to the long list of territories and protectorates over which she kept dominion signaled not only the global influence of the Crown, but also gave the Emperor of Russia a sense of England’s staying power and resource commitment to the Indian subcontinent.

It was rumored that public support for the Act also stemmed from the general belief that the Queen should outrank her daughter, Victoria, the Princess Royal, who would become Empress of Germany once her husband Frederick III ascended to the German Imperial Throne (not until 1888, as it turned out, and then only for 99 days).



“NEW CROWNS FOR OLD ONES!”

originally published in *Punch* in 1876

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Dear readers and supporters of *Weber – The Contemporary West*,

Our journal has a tradition of letting our editing and content speak for themselves, without introductory or explanatory prefaces. Today, however, I want to give you a brief update on the future of *Weber*, as decreasing state funds for higher education are forcing us to re-envision our journal on a different scale.

As many of you are no doubt aware, the global downturn of the economy has left deep scars on state budgets across the United States, which in turn have severely affected funding for higher education. Weber State University was hit with a double-digit retrospective budget adjustment for the 2008-09 academic year and is projected to face similar downward corrections in the years to come. WSU's College of Arts & Humanities as the primary sponsor of *Weber – The Contemporary West* was required to make corresponding budget adjustments, which have already had, and will continue to have, various effects on the journal.

Chief among those adjustments was that our long-standing Managing Editor, Kay Anderson—the administrative pivot of the journal—left *Weber* earlier this year. The issue in front of you, featuring our engaging India/postcolonial focus section and our fine art layout, is the last issue to carry Kay's artistic fingerprint. Let me publicly say thank you to Kay for her years of extraordinary service and dedication, combined with the best wishes for the future. The journal will not be the same without her design and layout skills, and her knowledge in matters pertaining to printing and journal management. At the same time, I want to welcome Elizabeth Dohrer as our new Managing Editor into our office and look forward to working with her on future *Weber* issues.

In addition to these changes in our office, *Weber* has also lost much of its annual funding for daily operations, printing and mailing, as well as the payment of author honoraria. What that means in concrete terms is that we will have to scale down our current publication cycle of three issues a year to two issues in 2010 and 2011 each, and that rhythm may likely continue into 2012 until funding is restored sometime in the future. Much as we regret this reduced publishing schedule, we want to thank Dr. Madonna Miner, the Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities, for her foresight in not shutting down the journal altogether, when numerous legitimate venues are competing for ever diminishing resources. Fortunately, the journal has received several external grants to support continued operation, however diminished, at the level of two issues a year.

With that in mind, I want to ask our contributors (past, present, and future) not to submit any additional/future work for consideration for the time being. Since we had been working as a full-scale operation until very recently, we have, in the interest of strategic planning, built up a sizable backlog of excellent work, and this backlog was fueled further by a substantial increase in our annual submissions. We are, therefore, not able review or accept any work for the remainder of this year and a good part

of 2010—and maybe even beyond—but want to publish the work we have already accepted instead. Possibly, we might re-open our submission process briefly in summer of 2010 (1 June to 30 August) to help us regulate the flow of submissions in the future and make the review process more manageable for us. We do, however, want to urge you to please check our website for review details. We very much appreciate that and want to ask for your understanding in advance in not being able to return manuscripts and/or respond to inquiries.

For the same reason, we will, for the foreseeable future, no longer be able to make honoraria payments to our contributors, which has long been part of the journal's practice and philosophy. Believing that good art should receive at least a token payment ("real market value" payment being out of the question for us), we have—much in contrast to many other journals—gone out of our way to generate funds for that specific purpose. Given the current economic crisis and the more immediate needs of the journal, however, we feel that both *Weber* and our various constituencies are better served by keeping the journal in print, if only on a smaller scale, rather than funneling our dwindling resources into payments for our contributors. Just the same, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the generous support of the Utah Arts Council over the years, which has provided much-appreciated support for honoraria payments, combined with the hope that the Council will see continued value in supporting *Weber* in the future. Should the Council limit any possible support in the future to honoraria payments, as it has in the past, we would of course gladly honor such an agreement and disperse such monies accordingly.

I also want to acknowledge the generous contributions from the Hemingway Foundation, the Dr. W. C. Swanson Family Foundation, the Nebeker Family Foundation, and Weber State University's RS&PG Committee, which have helped the journal thrive over the years. We owe a profound thank you to the Howard family for endowing our annual Dr. Sherwin W. Howard Poetry Award, the Junior E. and Blanche B. Rich Foundation for endowing the Dr. O. Marvin Lewis Essay Award, and the Seshachari family for funding our annual Dr. Neila C. Seshachari Fiction Award. Through these prize monies, we are able to (quite literally) pay tribute to the culture of literature, just as we gratefully commemorate the prominent citizens in whose names these awards are given and who themselves have a reputation as well-recognized writers and thinkers. As a journal balancing the work of local and regional artists with national and international features, we hope that our donors will continue their support in these times of need and provide us with the financial basis to sustain *Weber's* double life in print and digital form. Finally, I want to acknowledge the moral and financial support of the many friends of the journal throughout Weber State University, and especially of Dr. Kathy Herndon, Chair of the Department of English, for providing the necessary reassigned time to make the editorial work connected with *Weber* possible.

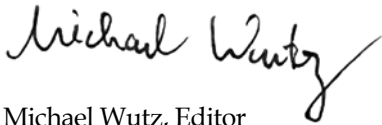
I also want to express our appreciation to our individual and institutional subscribers in helping us maintain a support base and readership that stretches from Utah to Europe and India and back. We currently enjoy a print run of about 800 copies per issue

and want to see that as an affirmation of what the journal has to offer—pressured as it is by a wide array of print journals and an increasing digital-only market—and the niche it has created for itself. With that in mind, I want to ask you to please continue your current subscription to *Weber* and thus help us through this time of need by keeping your commitment to our publication.

While we may, for the time being, not be able to live up to our customary publishing cycle, we will, as in the past, strive to provide you with first-rate poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and art within our covers. We have already lined up an impressive list of writers and artists for future issues, and our well-recognized Conversation/Interview and Global Spotlight series are flourishing features that will continue to set *Weber* apart from other journals. We are also working on new special focus sections, such as our annual FilmFocus (to echo the Sundance Film Festival taking place in our backyard) and—as you can see in this issue—a special focus on India and the postcolonial diaspora with plenty of local, that is to say, Utah, color. Eventually, of course, as our financial restrictions ease, we fully intend to resume our regular publishing rhythm and be “back on track,” as we have been for years.

Let me, in closing, please reiterate our continued dedication to making *Weber* a vibrant and viable part of literary print culture and our commitment in providing you with a cutting-edge journal for your reading pleasure and your personal library or institutional holdings. I hope we can count on your understanding in these trying times and look forward to your continued subscription and support.

With best wishes from all of us at *Weber*—



Michael Wutz, Editor

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Leah Souffrant

Lifting the Cup/Crossing the Border of Maternity

A Conversation on the Poetics of Meena Alexander



Marion Ettlinger

PRELUDE

Meena Alexander's writing is deeply informed by her lived life, her experience in the world and all over the world. This blend of attention to the particular and the global makes Alexander's writing resonate on different levels – as poetry of witness, post-colonial experience, private, personal expression as a woman, as lyric art – because the writing “contains multitudes.” Born in Allahabad, India, and raised in India and Sudan, Meena was eighteen when she went to study in England. We see her interest in the idea of motherhood emerge early, both in her poems and in books such as *House of a Thousand Doors* and *River and Bridge* and in her critical work *Women in Romanticism*. Now she says, “Motherhood stands as a first ground, one we all migrate from.”

Early on, Meena's interest in body, memory, and internal time consciousness led her to the study of phenomenology, and she published papers in philosophical

journals on bodily space, dislocation and memory. However, it is through her poetry that we are most generously acquainted with her unique perspective on experience.

Her six books of poetry include *Illiterate Heart*, which won the PEN Open Book Award, *Raw Silk* and *Quickly Changing River*. She is the author of the memoir *Fault Lines* and editor of *Indian Love Poems* (Everyman's Library). Her *Poetics of Dislocation* is forthcoming in November 2009 from the Poets on Poetry Series, University of Michigan Press. Her awards include fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim foundation, Fulbright foundation, and Rockefeller foundation for a residency at Bellagio. She is Distinguished Professor of English at the Graduate Center and Hunter College CUNY. She currently serves as an Elector, American Poets Corner, Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

In this conversation, we turn primarily toward the intimacies of Meena Alexander's work, especially the ways in which maternal imagery and experience are at play in her writing. After finding a quiet corner in a bustling café in Manhattan, our conversation was typical of conversations with Meena, a generous poet repeatedly unveiling yet another layer, another piece of knowledge or personal history or poetic insight. The richness of Meena's poetry and the scope of her mastery across genres is no surprise to a person who encounters the poet live.



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Quickly Changing River, your most recent collection, is dedicated to your mother, and “amma” figures often in your work, not only in this collection, but in all of your work. The mother is a central figure, and much of your work comes through familial relations. Amma speaks to the poet, through the poet...

Yes. This always surprises me.

It must surprise you often, because it's there all the time.

I wonder why!

This question of the mother as a forming principle is there in a great deal in the writing. It is not anything I could have predicted, even something I might have run away from, but it's there, and when you're writing poetry you have to go where the imagination takes you. And I think for me, this whole question of mothering and maternity and generations—kind of molten stuff—comes to us. So far as the post-colonial goes, that is intricately bound up in family and history, and for me the way it comes to me, oddly enough, is through my mother's line. The whole anxiety of influence Harold Bloom talks about in terms of men, when as a woman you create something—as a daughter and also as a mother—there is a powerful, wordless kind of space in which you exist.

Many of your poems are from the point of view of the daughter, and the mother is amma. We hear advice, warnings, comfort, anxiety through this amma figure through the work. There's more of a presence of the daughter's position in relation to the mother, rather than from the point of view of the mother. I wonder if you have felt any kind of resistance, unconscious perhaps, to writing about your own experience of being a mother.

Well, it's very complicated. I think that in a way, my intent to carve myself out a space

as a writer happened at the same time as becoming a mother. And that's very difficult.

You've been a mother for over two decades, so it is a big part of your life.

It is a huge part of my life, and I could not conceive of my life without it. And the other thing is, having children actually opened up a whole body of material that otherwise would have been barred from me. I've had friends who've decided not to have children so they could have more space for themselves. But in my case, I think there is psychic space that would have closed up: the space of childhood, the space of growing up. But there is something very complicated here, about competing spaces. The poet A.K. Ramanujan, we saw him in Chicago over 20 years ago. We were all at the dinner table and he said to me, “I saw some new poems of yours in *Chandrabhaga*. Could you read them out?” Another friend pulled out the journal. (They were poems about my baby son that later appeared in the volume *House of a Thousand Doors*.) At that moment, my son wanted to sit on my lap, and he made a big fuss, and I took him onto my lap, and everyone was waiting for me to read. But I absolutely could not read while this child was in my lap. It was just impossible. Everyone was waiting, no one understood, and I said, “I'm sorry, I can't read the poems.” There was something in that bodily weight, that utter physicality, that prevented me. I was wholly mother, unable to be a poet—or rather act that out in public.

Just today I was just sitting on a bench with the new pages I am working on, and a woman came and sat at the next bench. She had a very small baby, tiny, and she was completely absorbed in this child: changing the diaper, breastfeeding. And I was working away at my poems. And I wondered, would it be right to say that she is as absorbed in her work as I am in mine? But no, she is *more* absorbed in her work than I am in mine! That was so interesting to me, almost an issue

of precedent. So, when I say “competing spaces,” I really mean that in a deep way. The spaces aren’t empty, but substance. When you create a poem, it becomes substance when it comes out of you, so I think this whole question of what it means for a woman to write a poem and have children is important. I had to write, or I would have gone mad.

My daughter was about four and she said to me on the elevator, “Mama, why do you always talk to yourself? Other mothers don’t do that.” And I realized, I’m just talking to myself all the time. My poor child will have a nervous breakdown. My daughter said, “You know, I really hate poetry, mother.” Now she writes poems herself. But my son, a singer, has a more simple relationship to poetry. With daughters there is a difference.



You have said your prose is autobiographical. Would you describe your poetry that way with as much conviction? Is your poetry autobiographical?

What would it mean to write autobiographical poetry? In poetry, there is always that extraordinary tension between what is extremely intimate—and therefore by dint of being intimate it is autobiographical—and that other horizon: the mythic, the metaphysical, what words can’t reach. That always has to be there for a poem. So, I suppose there is a kind of “confessional poetry,” but even that kind of poetry goes beyond what we think of as memoir.

In your memoir Fault Lines, in the chapter where you describe the birth of your son, you also describe your work on the novel Nampally Road. In the paragraph in which you’re discussing the novel you write, “In my life that work marks the

crossing of a border.” And this imagery of border-crossing shares the page with the description of pregnancy and later childbirth. I was wondering if in your own lexicon of border-crossing, migration, location/dislocation, the experience of becoming a mother could be seen as a kind of border-crossing.

I think so, very much. There is a certain violence in giving birth. Not to sound atavistic, but it is violent: one life being pushed or pulled out of another. There is a tearing. There are great forces unleashed within the body, which are completely consuming, which you might know about theoretically—you might have read about them—but it doesn’t make sense.

Nothing makes sense until you go through it, right? So, what does that do for a poet?

I once wrote a poem called “Passion” (in *River and Bridge*). I wrote it about that space between giving birth and becoming a mother. There is that space, and I hadn’t read any poems about it. You aren’t psychically a mother, but you’ve given birth. Giving birth is dislocating, in a deep sense of the word, because if one’s body is one’s ground, then the experiences of gestation and giving birth, which are part of the cycle of life, are also profound dislocations. So there is some knowledge that can come out of that. What the knowledge is, I don’t know; I can’t put into words. I might capture some little shard of something. So, I think in that way, it is not unrelated to going to a different country, trying to reinvent yourself. For me the experience of coming to America was bound up with motherhood, because I was pregnant when I came here and gave birth shortly after my arrival. So that journey became for me a migration. In an interview, someone asked me about the eight year gap

between two books. He asked, “What were you doing those eight years?,” and I said, “Well, I had two children!” Also, I think I didn’t have a language to write of my experience.

One writer became aware of a “tone-deafness” on the subject of motherhood until she became a mother, and then all of a sudden – and this was written relatively recently – she felt that there were other voices. Did you feel that you became more aware of the fact that women are mothers – and writing as mothers – when you were a mother, or did you feel more isolated as a poet writing about this? This is an interesting time in the history of women’s writing, in the eighties...

My son was born in 1980 and my daughter was born in 1986, and there was not this whole explosion of writing about motherhood. It was just a different experience. And my friends who were feminists—some didn’t really have children. It was very hard for me, because when I came to New York it was something I had to struggle through.

You mention other feminists. In terms of motherhood and being a feminist as a mother, what was that like – because there has historically been a tension?

When my daughter was born, I was writing *Women and Romanticism*, which was about struggling women writers—about Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Mary Shelley.

Maternity is completely culturally bound, but it is also something very physical. There is this real materiality to a young child.

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Your recent poem, “Nocturnal with Ghostly Landscape on St. Lucy’s Day” (published in a special issue of the Massachusetts Review dedicated to Grace Paley) evokes images of a mother and son, and it underscores the difficulty of communication between the two. The son tries to give a rose to the mother, the mother has her eyes shut, and the mother later searches for the son by looking out the window, spotting

the moon instead. The imagery suggests a lot of emotional hit-or-miss there. Is there something about the mother-child relationship that you’re trying to get at, specifically through that imagery.

It is hit-or-miss, isn’t it? Because I think that is true to my experience of my children. You try,

but you don’t really know whether you’re getting it. In that poem, that complicated maternal emotion is both subtle and fierce.

Yes, there is the motherhood in it, but also there is the history. It’s written in a time of war, and she looks for her son, but she feels her son is falling into a pit of debris of this useless war. Then she sees another boy, who is like her son, float up from the river, and perhaps he’s dead and perhaps not, and it seems like he’s Iraqi. The wound on the television screen fills the room.

Here is a fragment that I cut from the published version of the poem:

*Concerning the lad there are other things to be told,
Vivid sky-bending details—*

*How the mother, in her misbegotten quest for pastoral
Took off for the wilds of Grasmere*

*And the child in his loneliness shat his
insides out
And the father carried the child into the
night air*

*Showed him the spreading stars, the
Milky Way,
Did his best to take care of the child*

*Who unable to tolerate that his mother
went off like that
Never forgave her. Joie du sang des étoiles*

*He taught himself to sing as he turned
into a man
His voice attuned to harsh accommodations,*

*The cellos and ondes martenot of an
invisible orchestra
Strummed into high vaulted, throat
bursting air.*

*Again, the fragment shows the intensity
of familial relations that are, in the shorter
version, concentrated on the mother-son
dynamic.*

*Some of the most haunting poems of war
are those of the mother writing about the
child. Speaking of traditions, you edited the
book Indian Love Poems. How do you see
yourself as a New York poet and as a part
of the Indian tradition?*

There's this ancient genre in Tamil literature written by the mother of the warrior. The voice is the voice of the mother talking about her warrior son. It's sad, fierce, and proud but damaged in some critical way.

I see myself very much as part of the Indian tradition, but that is also a tradition of movement and change. Themes of migration and exile are embedded very deeply, even, in the ancient epics like the *Mahabarahta*, for instance. Talking about inspiration, I love some of the classical Indian poetry, such as the lyrics of Mirabai, who kept wandering, but themes of maternity and

childhood also come from within the Indian tradition. At the same time, I am a New York poet, so you can slice it in different ways.

Different hats that you wear...

...or that I don't wear. Now this year is going to be a year of travel. I recently wrote a series of poems set in Darfur, and they are in children's voices.

*Has the type of response to your work been
different here than in India?*

It is an interesting question. Some years ago I was reading at Columbia, and the audience was equally split between people who were Indian and those who had really no connection with India, but were interested in poetry. And the questions I was asked were very different, and that fascinated me.

Different in what way?

Someone who had no Indian connection would ask me something about the emotion or the mother figure or some image that revealed the emotional connection, whereas the person that was Indian would say, "You know that kind of tree—I have that in the window and climbed it as a child, and you do this or that with it in the poem." So the initial response starts at the surface, of the outer going in rather than starting in and coming out. Of course you hope for both to come together.

*That is interesting because, as an American
reader of your work, one of the questions I
had was about the density of the language
in your poems, the precision of the vocabulary
that you use to describe that tree, for
example, or the architecture or even colors.
It's very precise and rich and dense, creating
a wonderful sort of tapestry of imagery.
It has the double effect, perhaps more for
the North American reader, of both inviting
you in through its lushness and also
keeping the reader at a remove because it's*

not familiar. To what extent, as a poet, are you aware of that double move, combining the intimacy of that private, personal, emotional world, which may come forth naturally, and the barrier created by the density of those images?

I think it's deliberate. I'm sure it is deliberate, this reticence, or else I don't think I could get through it. There is this very constructed language, not "natural"; it is artificial, it is constructed. I find that particularly in the poem, "Nocturnal with Ghostly Landscape." It is a made thing. Yes, there is a mother and a son connection that is very deep and very private and comes out of my life, but you should be able to read the poem and not have me anywhere near it. And that is very important to me. I find the poem a little weird myself, because it is also like a painted surface, which is very richly painted and has very little transparency in it. At the same time I was writing two sonnets, and it's like breathing; there is nothing there. I wrote the two at the same time, like a painter doing on the one hand this incredibly lacquered surface, and on the other a surface that is almost transparent, but they are both poems. And at the same time I was doing another poem that was sort of in between in terms of density and thickness. As a writer you have to write what comes to you, you have to take hold of it.

When I was younger I wanted to be a painter, but my parents didn't like that idea. Then I wanted to be a philosopher, but my father did not like that. He told me that Bertrand Russell said, "Philosophy is like looking for a black cat on a black mat." I would love to be able to write a long narrative poem that had a lot of transparency in it. I have been reading

Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*.

I remember I first read it when it came out, and I was stumped by it. I thought: extraordinary poem, but then I put it aside. But just yesterday in the subway, I read it again and observed the underlinings I'd made when I first read it and I thought: what a remarkable poem! That is prose/poetry, full of long citations and all sorts of things. Poetry is an extraordinarily capacious art. I never thought I would write sonnets, but here I am writing

sonnets, producing a whole bunch of them. You have to sort of go where the wind takes you.

Your poems often come through a child's perspective, whether it's a child-Meena or some other child image.

I think that my childhood is close to me, and I do believe that our first

experiences are very powerful for us, though we do not have the words for them. I did have quite an unusual childhood, and I think I asked questions which I could not ask now, about god and materiality. Children have that intuition. We kind of "din" it out of them.

I have a cycle of poems which are written from the perspective of a child, and I used a series of drawings that I found on the Human Rights Watch website called "The Smallest Witnesses." A woman called Annie Sparrow, a pediatrician, went to the refugee camps and took crayons for the children to draw with. They had an exhibition and put these amazing pictures that the children drew on their website. At the Human Rights Watch office, they took out boxes from their store-room containing these drawings. They are children's drawings, and of course when you draw there are no words, but space changes. Things happen simultaneously. You'll have a blue ostrich next to fire coming out of the sky, next to someone

Poetry is an extraordinary capacious art. I never thought I would write sonnets, but here I am writing sonnets, producing a whole bunch of them. You have to sort of go where the wind takes you.

lying on the ground with a gash in her head just red. There are all these things but with an incredible sort of innocence to them. The children don't look in a certain way. And you put it down there, then what happens is something else. Obviously the poems are not written in childlike language at all. The language I use is "sophisticated," is not attempting to be a child's voice, but nevertheless it is that. Because without that child's voice, I couldn't have written the poems, without that knowledge that came to me by looking at those drawings by children.

Art by children can be really intense, but they don't really have much protection.

In the poem "Monet's Trousers," you write about Alice, the artist's wife....

And she's already dead.

*She's this silent figure that is almost invisible or non-existent, but she is seen in the poet's imagination in that poem, that is how her presence comes forth. That poem specifically connected to me the extent to which your work is motivated by a conviction that you must speak for those who do not have voices. I felt Alice is one of those figures. I recall the quote by Tillie Olsen from *Silences*, that you may be speaking for the "mute inglorious Miltons, those whose waking hours are all struggle for existence: the barely educated, the illiterate, the women." I feel like that poem is doing that, is giving Alice a voice.*

I am glad you see that. Alice is already dead in that poem, but she is also the only one who could wash his trousers. It was that love, these loves that we have in this mutable, imperfect world of ours. I think there is a very powerful need in me to write about

or through or with those who don't have a voice: children who are in the refugee camps in Darfur, or Alice, or in "Lavinia Writes," which is about Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*.

I think there is a very powerful need in me to write about or through or with those who don't have a voice....

You mentioned that when you became a mother you wrote poems about the experience and felt you were writing them in a vacuum. By including your own mother as a figure, there is another silent figure to whom you are giving a voice.

Indeed, I was reading Tillie Olsen when I became a mother. *Silences* was a very important book for me, as were Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*, Viviane Gornick's *Fierce Attachments*, and Jane Lazarre's *Mother Knot*. I remember they were four books that I read very carefully, desperately trying to understand. And then I was writing my book *Women and Romanticism*, with the mother-daughter pair Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley.

My mother's mother died when my mother was sixteen, and I think she had a strong sense of loss, and the sense of loss was also the gap through which history came into my mother's life. I never knew my grandmother. So I am haunted by the maternal, the absence and the lack. The maternal is always this lack, because we are always making up the mother. Man or woman, we all have to deal with that resonance in some way. That for me is very powerful.

To try to find or excavate your own presence in history...

When you read the Greek tragedies, for example, there is that real presence of history, the maternal.

As a poet-mother, in the sense that you are both...

Shouldn't you be talking to the kids?

I'm interested in your point of view as a poet being a mother, not your point of view about your children. Not writing about one's children, but writing about oneself in that position.

But how could I do that? That would destroy me. I can't do that.

You can't write about being a mother?

No! Would you ask me to throw myself out of a window?

You have a strong reaction.

Of course I couldn't do that. It's the most unpoetic thing. Keats says, "The poet is the most unpoetical thing," because he is continually going places and being extinguished. He says, if I go into a room and see a sparrow, I become that sparrow; if I go into a room and see a man or a woman, I become that man or woman; if I see the sun or the moon, I become the sun or the moon. Now Wordsworth is different, with the egotistical sublime; for him, things must stay intact.

The trouble about being a mother is that you become extinguished completely.

So the mother is inherently one of these silenced figures?

Completely. At least, that is what I've learned, the way I was brought up by my own mother. And underneath is a kind of seething silence. You are extinguished. What else is there for you to do or even be if you've given birth to these children?

I did have a strong reaction, because this question touches a nerve.

There is an emerging body of work by women writing about the experience of being a mother. Rachel Blau duPlessis says, "Motherhood leads to, demands,

provokes, and excites innovations in poetry and inventions in poetics." Writing about that subject forces a kind of experimental writing, form becomes an issue. Would you agree that motherhood as an experience or as a topic triggers this?

I think that for me the experience of motherhood is profoundly bound up with questions of migration and loss and reinvention. I'm not in my home ground, and I think for me what is most interesting about the experience of motherhood is that it forces me onto history, it forces me to confront everything that is larger and bigger than me.

Is it one's own mortality, rather than the mortality of others, that comes to the surface for the mother?

On the contrary, I think I'd have the opposing reaction. I think that before I had children I was very conscious of my own mortality, and after I had children that weight was completely lifted for me, and my life didn't matter that much.

A dispersion of self?

It didn't matter. I was not so central to my own life, because here is another life, and I didn't matter so much. Perhaps for me, when I write poetry, I matter so much, and as a mother there is a space where I'm not supposed to matter so much. That's how I was brought up to see it.

I think in most cultures that is part of the image of motherhood.

Yes, I can't imagine a culture in which that is not the case, though probably there is a small population somewhere in which things are different.

If you think of poetry as self-fashioning, bound up with the cultivation of the self and the refinement of certain difficult thoughts, and really making something—as an artist—

then when you're a mother it is something completely different. You are doing something for other people, and they have a claim on you that can be so total that the other thing is pushed aside, or has to be pushed aside. I wrote a long poem called "Night Scene in a Garden," which is completely about maternity, in my mother's voice and mine, and it was performed Off-Off Broadway. I remember when I was writing it, my little daughter was pounding on the door and I will never forget it, feeling as if I had nothing left, and it wasn't because of the writing but the child knocking. If I was a mother in that deep way, I couldn't write, I would be gone. It's like the most profound passion: you're nothing.



So you feel that the poet and the mother are in a sense two separate parts.

Obviously they are not, because the mother is a poet in some very deep way, and the poet is a mother, she cannot deny it. But it is like the girl with two heads that I saw in a circus once. There is such intensity in the maternal bond, it is so fierce that you get swept away.

The risk for all mothers, in a sense, is that the intensity can become all-encompassing, so that the poet or those with other passions have a small advantage in that they have something to offset that enveloping.

I like when you say "small advantage," but you do have all the small tender buttons and you can use them. I've always wished I could be the type of poet who could write a poem about lifting up a cup and putting it down again, but I can't. Maybe I'm just not ready for that yet. A very simple act, and in

that everything else is given. Maybe I'll get there sometime.... Do you see what I mean? There's a kind of simplicity in what inspires you. It's an interesting question, because maternity is obviously very complex.

It is interesting that your reaction to "what would it be like for Meena Alexander to write about being a mother" brings you to ask, "what would it be like to write a poem

simply about lifting up a cup and putting it down," because it does speak to the way in which there is a simplicity in being a mother, it being as much a part of you as picking up the cup and putting it down. It is something that can yet potentially contain so much complexity.

Perhaps the poem about motherhood would be a simple lifting of a cup.

I don't think I have art enough to do that yet. I don't think I'm ready for it, not good enough yet.

What are you working on now? Or what are the projects that are beyond the horizon?

That's the cup one. I have these four Darfur poems, and I will be in France this fall at the Camargo Institute on the Mediterranean, and I want to be working on that poem that is a gesture of simplicity. The questions you ask about maternity boil down for me to questions about ontology. This is why I find it impossible, because it has to do with *being*, so to talk about maternity is highly theoretical.

In the poems, the child, the mother, the familial locators are a kind of motif through which your poems...

...enter the world. I use the maternal, the children, and in that way, the body becomes the crossroads. That makes sense to me, that the body is a crossroads.

That is interesting in your work. It is so much about mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, and the "I" enters the world through familial relations. The structure that holds up the building of the poem is this network of family, creating the space for emotional experience in the poems. Yet, the "I" is not the mother, unless it's the voice of "a mother."

I don't want to be the mother! When I think of mother, I think of my mother: I don't want to be my mother. I feel that very deeply.

So, the space that is the voice of the "I" is a self who is not the mother.

Maybe there is no "I." A friend observed that there is hardly an "I" in your poems, and I thought that's okay.

But in the sense of being in the lyric tradition, there is.

Yes, they are not Language poems.

They are from the individual perspective. And that individual perspective exists, except in experiencing the world as a mother, other than in the amma poems, where it is your mother's perspective.

Structurally, I think the interior motion of writing the poem comes from wanting a room without walls. I want the stuff that happens inside to radiate out. There is a great Kerala woman poet, Balamaniamma, who writes these extraordinary poems of maternity and intimacy, very beautiful poems. I couldn't do that. The small detail becomes so telling.

Again, it's that cup.

Yes, and I can't do that, though I would love to. I find that the work I do is invaded by all sorts of things.

That lushness.

Yes, but also embattled. There's disturbance, but also that density of the paint. It's hard to talk about all of this, so much comes up.

Leah Souffrant is a poet and scholar. In 2007, She was awarded a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry. She is a founding co-chair of the Poetics group at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she is pursuing a Ph.D. in English. Her current research investigates the poetics of motherhood in contemporary American poetry. Souffrant was Artist-in-Residence at Altes Spital in Switzerland in 2000 and holds an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars and a BA from Vassar College in Russian literature. Her writing has appeared in *Poet Lore*, *Memorious*, *The Burnside Review*, *Poets & Writers Magazine* and elsewhere. She teaches at Baruch College and writes in Brooklyn, where she lives.

Meena Alexander

Boy from Rum

A lad from Rum (ancient word for
Byzantium) is lost in a garden

Of creatures who have no tongue.
They make music brushing wings,

Fleshly things that pour down the back,
All muscle and grit.

The boy stumbles through
A mess of shrubs, comes upon a girl

Seated in a pavilion.
Her palms are marked in henna,

Her face is veiled in gold.
Under her flows a channel of milk.

*

My son comes with singing words
From the Duc d' Orléans who lived

In the same time as the boy from Rum
(Struck dumb in a garden painted

For a Muslim emperor, King of Kings).
My boy who is tall and lean like

The lad from Rum, dressed though
In jeans and black wool jacket,

Plucks off his cap and sings —
Quand je fus pris au pavillon,

*Je me brulay à la chandelle,
ainsi que fait le papillon.*

Then he sips warm milk, nibbles
At bruised cookies I have made for him.

Restless he plucks up the phone
And sings. Can she hear

The old woman, his grandmother
Sitting at the edge of a veranda

Where monsoon mists pour?
It's night time there.

Someone sets a candle at her side.
No words only music

This is my whole dream.
Dull witted moths spill into flame.

Afterwards, Your Loneliness

(For Mirza Ghalib 1797-1869)

Indigo Interior (Delhi 1857)

You were holed up in the cold
No oil to light the lamps, even mice started shivering.

You had to sell your clothes, the camel hair robe,
Woolen kurta knit with finest lambswool,
Turkish cap, all of it,
Down to the cotton coverings she stitched
For your bed, all this to get a few morsels of food,
For yourself and that mad brother
Who tore cotton, silk, off his own flesh
And started scratching – unbearable itch, he had – poor Yusuf.

At night you waited for a lightning flash
So you could put out your hands, touch paper, ink.

The lane where you lived was shut with stones,
Huge stones to keep out the Brits, shoved
Against the mouth of the gully.

Roses shriveled, all their color sucked
Into the crevices of rock.
On the Ridge, keekar trees held out crowns of thorns,
Calling, calling you.

Clothes tumbling off your back, you tried to set out,
Stick in hand, from Kashmiri Gate.

Scarlet Exterior (Bombay November 2008)

In Bombay where you've never been
 People clamor by India Gate
 So many in starlight and smoke.
 In the blood spotted alley way, on the causeway.

At dawn, clouds cling to a spittoon of fire
 Dragon flies shimmer on burnt metal,
 Raving threads of light
 Pierce us into other selves we long to be,
 Ruinous shimmering metamorphosis.

Who are we? Where are we?
 Stuck in the mess of Delhi, what can you tell me?

Gashed Silver

You pretend to be hard of hearing.
 You say – Why is no one coming to see me?

My mirror flickers. Can no one come?

The postal system is in utter chaos,
 The letter I wrote to the British Queen
 Victoria (Diamond of the Sky, Maker of Kings)
 Concerning my pension,
 Who knows if it was even delivered to her?

Gashed Gold

Be near me, you cry, as dung spills
Down your lane and you try to stumble out.
Were you speaking to the ghosts who live in your head?

‘There is one world of mud’ you wrote ‘another of spirit.’
What did you mean?

Mirza Ghalib— show me where the horizon goes,
Where sight must cease.

Your loneliness makes fiery footprints in the sand.

At night stars throw down their spears.
They beckon, making spirit signs,
Coming closer and closer.

Note:

I read Ghalib’s memoir Dastanbuy where he describes his experiences during the Revolt of 1857. He was in Delhi when the British, in retaliation, destroyed much of the city. I happened to read the book after the attack on Bombay, November 26, 2008.

“Afterwards, Your Loneliness” started as a prose poem with details of ordinary life including something that shocked me—an NDTV talk show where an actress cried out, “Carpet bomb them!” (she was speaking of people in Pakistan). These elements melted away in the finished version of the poem. Though held together by a single voice the poem is divided into planes of sharp color each afloat in a distinct zone. In this way, memory and imagination can do their work.

The English text I used is Mirza Ghalib, Dastanbuy, transl. Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970). I am grateful to David Lelyveld for reading the very first draft and saving me from historical difficulty. I am grateful to Professor C.M. Naim for reading a subsequent version of the poem and clarifying details of the text. He also helped me understand something of Ghalib’s lived experience.

Priti Kumar

Years of Independence and Challenges (1940-1950)

My beloved mother, Saran Kumari, whom we all called “Baua,” passed away peacefully at home in her own bed on February 17, 2006, at the mature age of 94. She lived a full and varied life. Born into a privileged family in Jodhpur, India, in 1910, she was married into another upper middle class family of Dholpur, India. She lived a comfortable life raising her nine children till 1947, when India got its independence, and her life encountered new challenges: the family’s patriarch (her father-in-law) died; her husband had a stroke; the Maharaja of Dholpur was deposed, and his princely state was merged into a new province called Rajasthan. Thus, the political became personal for her. She kept the family together, nursed and restored her husband to relatively good health, and managed to get her children educated all by her ingenuity, sacrifice, hard work, love and faith in God that never wavered. Even though she herself was home schooled, all her children went to college becoming doctors, engineers, educators, and artists. She had a voracious appetite for reading and passed that on to her children and grandchildren.

Baua was a traditional woman, but she had a tremendous capacity to change with the times. She was strong like a willow branch that bends but never breaks. She faced many hardships including the early illness of her husband and the early death of a son, a



“Baua,” 1910-2006

grandson and a daughter-in-law. She endured all this with great dignity and courage. She moved to different cities in India making the necessary adjustments, and after her husband passed away in 1982, she moved to a different continent, North America, in 1987 to be with her children and grandchildren. She had little knowledge of English, but that never stopped her from making new friends and spreading her love to all who came to know her.

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece I am currently working on entitled “My Mother’s Story.” Using my mother’s voice, I am writing primarily for my family, especially my grandchildren, so they will know their heritage and better understand the multiple changes and challenges Baua faced in her life always with a smile. She continues to be a great source of courage and unconditional love for me and for my family. Baua left a legacy of happy families.

My aunt-in-law, who was the matriarch of our family, passed away in 1939. Now I have to assume her role and responsibilities as the main manager of the inner workings of the household. The old cook lady has been with our family far longer than I am, so she undermines my authority as much as she can. My husband's advice is to let the things go for a while as they were going under my aunt-in-law. Don't rock the boat, don't make waves. I still have to maintain *purdah* with male servants and do not talk with them directly. One of the younger children serves as the go-between. Sometimes it is downright hilarious when the child repeats a conversation back and forth without having a clue what he or she is saying. The cleaning ladies are a little better as they follow my instructions, perhaps hoping to be tipped well on holidays. I never realized how time-consuming running a household is. When aunty was doing it, I used to think that she is just making more work for herself, but now I know better. My reading and sewing time is getting less and less.

I still listen to the political news from my husband as he translates the English newspapers for me. Mahatma Gandhi is so popular and his "Quit India" movement is really scaring the British government. They are clamping down on the freedom fighters with a heavy hand by beating them with sticks and filling the jails with them. I know the Maharaja's sympathies are with the British, and we are not to display any sentiments about the freedom move-

ment openly. I cannot help but feel sorry for the victims of British atrocities and their treatment of Indians. When I visited my mother last summer, we discussed these issues and decided to do something to show our support for the Mahatma's ideals about burning the British goods and the fine clothing made in the mills of Manchester. I gave two of my fine saris to her to be sent to Lucknow where her natal family lives. They can give them to the freedom fighters to add to the bonfires that are going on in many big cities. This is my small contribution to our country's fight for freedom. Only my husband knows about this; we thought it is better to be discreet given the fact that our family is loyal to the Maharaja and should not be supporting the freedom movement. But I do have a spinning wheel at home and with my father-in-law's permission I use it every day to spin the cotton. Home spun is one of the ways Gandhiji thinks we can be less dependent on British goods. I can not be more vocal about my feelings but pray for the success of our country's efforts to send the British back to England.

At the home front things are taking shape in a new routine and the management of the servants is getting better. The old cook has left the household claiming that her age does not allow her to do the hard work anymore. This was the turning point, as I am the one to hire the new cook and she follows my rules. The kids are growing well too. Soon Daya will have to leave for his college education

Baua faced life always with a smile. She continues to be a great source of courage and unconditional love for me and for my family. Baua left a legacy of happy families.

to Agra or Delhi, as Dholpur has no college. All our boys have to go away for higher education. As far as the girls' education is concerned, their school only goes up to 5th grade, and then some girls study privately at home and go to the next big town to sit for their final Board examinations. That's what my daughter, Darshan, is planning to do. The younger kids are doing well in their respective classes. I make sure that they finish their homework and study regularly. My father-in-law is keen for his retirement, but the Maharaja does not approve of it and keeps denying his request. My father-in-law wants to spend more of his time in Soamibagh, Agra, where our *Satsang* is, but so far his plans are on hold.

1947 IS A MEMORABLE YEAR FOR OUR family, as Daya, our eldest son, is married on February 9 with great pomp and show. This is the first grandson getting married, so my father-in-law celebrated it with zest. It is considered a great blessing to be able to celebrate and see one's grandchildren being married. Almost all our relatives have come from far and near. The wedding celebrations go on for a week. The night before the *Barat* (groom's party) leaves for the home of the bride, we have a gala dinner and several religious ceremonies. Our family priest conducts many ceremonies in the daytime, like the sacred thread ceremony when a sanctified holy thread colored with turmeric and *Roli* (red color) is put on the bridegroom's body for purification, protection and well being. The next ceremony, called *Tel-Madha*, is conducted by the married women of the family. Seven married women rub turmeric and oil on the groom's face and hands before he takes his bath. After a sumptuous

lunch and a little rest, all of the guests gather for the Henna (*Mehndi*) ceremony that keeps on going until late evening. This evening's dinner is a formal affair. The ladies dress up in their beautiful silk saris and deck themselves with fine jewelry. The men wear their traditional Indian attire — long tunics, tight britches, and red or orange turbans. For our family this is even more special, as the Maharaja of Dholpur has accepted the invitation to come to our home with all his courtesans. This is a rare honor. It shows that he holds my father-in-law and our family in high regard. The court musicians present a classical Indian music program and other entertainments that are enjoyed by all. The dinner is indeed lavish, with four or five snacks, six main courses, and five kinds of sweets along with a variety of drinks. It is enjoyed and relished by all guests. The Maharaja's gracing this occasion is the highlight of the evening's festivities. Next day the *Barat* leaves for Khurja for the wedding ceremony at the bride's home town. After three days, when the *Barat* comes back with the new bride, we have another party during which she is introduced to her new family and receives many gifts from them. The new bride's name is Sarveshwari. She seems to be very nice.

1947 is also a momentous year for India. On August 15 at midnight, the bells of freedom are ringing. The mighty British Empire, on which "the sun never sets," has to bow down and grant freedom to India, but they have divided our great country to create a new country, East and West Pakistan. There is great turmoil and a lot of bloodshed, as Hindu-Muslim riots are erupting everywhere. A lot of changes are happening. No one is sure what the

future will bring. One of the first acts by the Congress government is to help the refugees coming from Punjab and Bengal and to provide food and shelter to millions of homeless people due to the division of our beloved country. The second act is to unite the country, which is divided into hundreds of princely states.

This is going to impact our family more than we could imagine. The new Home Minister, Vallabh Bhai Patel, is a very wise and shrewd politician. He is trying to find ways to appease the Rajas and Maharajas, while planning to take away their states.

British rulers liked the kings and princely states, as they acted as their pawns and gave them a big share from the state revenues. But a free India must have one constitution and one central government for all. Patel started his clever plan to depose the kings and kingdoms gradually. First, he took four or five little states and merged them into one. Our Dholpur state is merged with three other states (Bharatpur, Alwar and Karauli). The new union is called Matsaya, and its chief administrator is the Maharaja of Dholpur. All of this seems fine, but in reality the power to govern is gradually being transferred from the kings to the central government. This is bringing drastic changes for all the employees of the Maharaja and their families, including our family. In our states up till now, the employees of the Maharaja holding high positions in his court

never thought of leaving the comforts of Dholpur life or being transferred to any other sites. Now the new government rules bring dislocation and financial hardships to many of them. So far the final authority rested with the Maharaja. Employees could request any changes in their work or compensa-

tion by appearing in his court. Now they are faced with a distant, almost faceless employer with different rules and regulations. All of these changes are bringing anxiety and worry among the state employees.

Ours is a big family by now. Most of our children are in schools

or colleges, except Daya who is married and is employed by the Ministry of Commerce and posted in Bombay. Bhagat is in medical school in the neighboring state. Darshan had completed her Intermediate (12th grade) privately and is now living with Daya and his new bride in Bombay devoting her time to the pursuit of music and the fine arts. Her grandfather is trying to settle her marriage, as he wants to see his first granddaughter's wedding in his lifetime. Next to her is Anami, who broke all academic records of Dholpur State by attaining first position in 10th grade and now is ready to go to Agra for higher studies. Priti is not following her sister's path in pursuing her education. After her 5th grade she persuaded her grandfather to study in the boys' school. Since co-education is not allowed, she studies at home with the

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help of two tutors (one for math and English and one for Sanskrit), but takes the final exams at the boys' school in a separate room supervised by a male teacher. Swami, Guru and Satnam are young and studying in primary grades; Hem, the youngest daughter, is still at home.

BY THE END OF 1948, it is clear to all of us that some state employees are going to be dispersed or transferred to other states. At the first opportunity, my father-in-law repeats his request for retirement to the Maharaja, and for the first time the Maharaja relents, perhaps sensing his own demise in the near future. Before my father-in-law is able to plan his retirement in Agra, my husband is promoted to the position of a civil judge and transferred to the state of Karauli, which is about 200 miles from Dholpur. His promotion to the judgeship is long overdue and we are happy for it, but the celebrations are bittersweet. For me this will bring separation from my husband, as leaving Dholpur and moving the whole family to Karauli seems very drastic. I with all our young children will stay in Dholpur with my father-in-law in our ancestral home, and my husband will go alone to Karauli and take charge of his new post. Our family and our household are going to be divided. I am not happy, nor is my husband, but we have no other choice as the house in Karauli is not going to be big enough for all of us. Right now he is not even assigned his new residence

In late October, my husband's cousin brother came to visit us and informed my father-in-law that my husband in Karauli is seriously ill.... We are all stunned. I have never seen my father-in-law so shattered and emotional.

by the government, so he is going to live with another civil officer from Dholpur who is also living alone there. I am sorry for us, and I am very sorry for my duty-bound father-in-law who is postponing his long-awaited move to be near his *Satsang* and his *Guru*. After my husband leaves, the house seems very quiet, and at times I feel

very lonely, but I do understand the logic and reasoning behind not leaving Dholpur as yet.

In late October, my husband's cousin brother came to visit us and informed my father-in-law that my husband in Karauli is seriously ill. He has just received a phone call from the person with whom

my husband is living. We must leave as soon as possible to see and bring him back to Dholpur. We are all stunned. I have never seen my father-in-law so shattered and emotional. He comes to the inner courtyard to speak to me, but cannot say a word. He almost breaks down in tears. My brother-in-law conveys the grave news and tells me that all of us must get ready for the tedious journey to Karauli right now. Getting to Karauli is not very easy. It is not connected by train, so we have to travel partly by train and then take a bus to reach there the next day. Among all the children living with us, Priti is the oldest. Daya, his wife, and Darshan are living in Bombay now, and Bhagat and Amani are in Gwalior and Agra attending their colleges. We cannot wait for them to come to travel with us. I am so confused and shocked by all this

that I cannot think straight. Poor Priti at age twelve has to pack and keep the younger siblings from crying. Hem, my youngest daughter, is only four; she is unable to understand the gravity of the situation. My father-in-law has composed himself, though he seems to have aged many years in just a few hours.

Somehow after an all-night journey we reach our destination about

mid-morning. My husband is at home. He had a stroke on his left side. He is unable to move his left hand and leg, but he is conscious and able to speak. The chief medical officer of Karauli is looking after him. We all are exhausted and the kids are scared. I go to the kitchen and

take charge of the food preparations after getting acquainted with the cook and other servants. Next day Bhagat and Anami both arrive at different times and take charge of many duties. My sister-in-law (my husband's older sister) and her husband also join us within two days. The pressure on all of us is tremendous, but sharing it with the family makes it more tolerable. The younger kids are marvelous as if they have absorbed the seriousness of this illness. They are trying to be quiet and cooperative. We are all living on nervous energy and praying for the best. After three weeks of treatment and massages, my husband is improving a little, so we arrange a station wagon and a car to transport him and all of us to Dholpur. It is not going to be easy, but there is no other choice. This time Bhagat and Anami are here to help in

the travel. It takes us the whole day to reach Dholpur. Thank God we had no major problems and my husband took the car journey well.

Our lives have taken a new direction and a different path. The luxury of having many helpers and servants is almost gone since my father-in-law is retired and my husband is on medical leave. I have a woman to cook and

another young man to help me with my husband's care. Thank God the old family servants, Gopi and Ram Sahai, are still with us. Money is also tight, but my father-in-law is dipping into his hard-earned savings without telling me. We are not going to interrupt Bhagat and

Anami's college education, and they are trying to live as frugally as possible. My husband is improving slowly, and after many months of physical therapy and massages he is able to walk with a stick and sit up by himself. The younger kids are doing their studies well. Darshan, Daya and his wife are back in Bombay. Our extended family (uncles and cousin brothers) are a big help too. That is why people want to have large and caring families. When the chips are down and you need a shoulder to cry on and a hand to hold yours, they are always there. The strength of our faith and support of our family are the two greatest blessings for us.

1949 brought a joyous occasion in our lives. Daya and Sarvesh have a baby girl. She was born on the 2nd of May. It is thrilling for all of us, but for my father-in-law it is especially signifi-

Somehow after an all-night journey we reach our destination about mid-morning. My husband is at home. He had a stroke on his left side. He is unable to move his left hand and leg, but he is conscious and able to speak.

cant to see his first great-granddaughter. It is a tradition in our community to have the naming ceremony and festivities when the baby is ten days old, and he arranges a big feast to welcome her. All of the close family and friends are invited. There is music, good food and gifts for the baby. She is named Jyoti, which means light. She is beautiful!!

My husband is moving better and walking without assistance. This summer we have to make some decisions about Priti's education. She has passed 8th grade and wants to continue her high school, but the high school in Dholpur is for boys only. They will not even allow her to con-

tinue home study and take the exams at the school. My sister, Surat, and her husband, Anand Prakash, a professor of English in Allahabad, have very generously offered to house her and let her continue her education over there along with their daughter, Shashi. This will not cost us much and she will be able to get a proper education. I am not sure if my father-in-law will agree to this, but I have to try my best to convince him. To my great surprise, he accepts this arrangement without much persuasion. She will leave for Allahabad by the end of June. I will be sorry to let her go as she is helping me so much, but in the larger scheme of things it will be good for her.

Now that my husband is feeling better, my father-in-law has decided to

go to Agra by the middle of June. He will not allow anyone to accompany him this time. Even the servant who was supposed to go with him is not permitted. Previously he had agreed to take one of the grandkids with him, but now he has changed his mind. We are unable to understand his insistence on going to Agra alone. We all try to

reason with him, but he seems resolved and does not want to discuss the arrangements any more. It is very unlike him, but he must have his reasons. Finally we give up and he leaves for Soamibagh around the middle of June. Bhagat is leaving for medical college, Anami is

One most important happening we came to know later on was that on the night of June 30, the day my father-in-law passed away, he visited all his absent grandchildren – Daya, Bhagat, Darshan, Anami and Priti – in their dreams almost at the same time. People can interpret it however they want, but I say it is a miracle and the purest form of love.

attending a wedding in Jodhpur, Priti is going to Allahabad, and of course, Darshan, Daya and his family are in Bombay. The whole family is scattered all over the country. I am feeling very sad, lonely and scared.

Almost two weeks later my fears and trepidations come true when we get a call from Agra informing us that my father-in-law has fallen and we must come there immediately. I do not think my husband is strong enough to go alone. Besides, I want to see my father-in-law, too. We call on the extended family in Dholpur (my husband's cousin brothers) and they arrange for a van to take all of us to Agra. They are also accompanying us. We arrive there early afternoon and find my father-in-law in a trance. He is awake (at least

conscious), but he is listening to the *Path* (the religious reading and singing), which his *Guru* has asked be performed. He opens his eyes, looks at us and says "Radhasoami," then says to his son, "I am glad you are here, Satgur Prasad." We sit down near his bed and listen to the *Path*. When the last *Biniti* (the last prayers sang by all of us) ends, he again opens his eyes and pronounces "Radhasoami" once more, and closes them forever. Suddenly we all feel a glow in the room, a cool breeze touches us, and our beloved father is gone!! There is so much peace and calm on his face that it takes us some time to fully realize the immense impact of this tragedy—or is it a tragedy? He is gone to his ultimate home, to his supreme father, to the loving lotus feet of his loving *Guru*. This is the departure of a great soul, but it is also a union of *Surat* (soul) and *Shabd* (divine sound). All who are present are blessed with Grace and Love. For a while we are speechless. We bow our heads to the great omnipresent power that takes care of all of us.

When we come back to Dholpur, it finally hits us. We no longer have my father-in-law's physical presence, protection and his constant guidance. This is the end of a chapter in the book of our family. Gradually it dawns on us why he was not allowing anyone to accompany him on this last trip to his *Guru* and his *Satsang*. He perhaps knew this was going to be his last trip, and he wanted to be alone and ready for his journey beyond this mortal world. Life for all of us is going to be very different from now on. New challenges, crucial changes are looming just ahead. One most important happening we came to know later on was that on the night of June 30, the day he passed away, he visited all his absent grandchildren—Daya, Bhagat, Darshan, Anami and Priti—in their dreams almost at the same time. People can interpret it however they want, but I say it is a miracle and the purest form of love. We will always have him in our hearts, no matter where we live or how we live.



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Candadai Seshachari

A Cobra, a Dog, a Grandfather

Textured Memories of Death and Dying

I remember reading an article by Maxine Hong Kingston, in *Mother Jones* I think, in which she argues that instead of writing novels celebrating violence, we should write novels about peaceable communities where animals would share space with humans in a mutually recognizable state of tension and tolerance. A philosophy of live and let live would control the shared destinies of both humans and animals. Even as snakes and foxes dart in and around the communes, its denizens would recognize that animals had as much right to survive as humans. The two worlds would be bound together by empathy, with the obvious burden of ensuring the survival of the animal species falling to the humans. A sense of oneness with nature would be the essence of this peaceable colony, Kingston opined. What Kingston failed to mention was that a sense of death and dying of another being, human or animal, is a *sine qua non* for transcending the subjective predicament of one's existence. I can, based on the many deaths I have known, vouchsafe for that.

MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY AGO, for a decade I lived in the small but busy market town of Khammammet in the



Shiva, the god of destruction

Deccan plateau of southern India that could serve as the prototype of Maxine Hong Kingston's fictional colony. Then a bustling town of some twenty thousand, Khammammet is situated half way between two important railroad junctions of Kazipet and Vijayawada, and stands on the banks of the river Manjira. The spunky and sometime turbulent river is a tributary of the life-giving Godavari, which traverses across peninsular India, bestowing upon the land a rich harvest of grain, vegetable and fruit. During the non-monsoon months, the Manjira of my memory would shrink and become a tame,

mostly shallow river, losing much of its fury, but during the deluging months of June through September, it would rage over its banks and sweep into the outskirts of the town, with its waves washing against the embankment of a nearby canal. The house I grew up in, like the granite sentinels guarding the entrance to a Hindu temple, stood on a rising mound guarding one of the less trafficked entrances to the town.

The view from our brick and mortar house, set on a plinth that rose several feet high from the road-base and the open dry gutter that in season drained the rain water, swept over the tops of neem and mango trees, over an idle rice-milling plant, across the irrigation canal that served as a breeding haven for malaria-carrying anopheles mosquitoes, over the many wells which provided drinking water to the neighborhood and the green paddy and peanut fields. When the riverbed was dry, an older sister and a younger brother and I would stake claim to a patch of moist, rich sedimentary soil and grow eggplants, ash-pumpkins, cucumbers, bitter melons, snake gourds, and an assorted variety of greens. When the rains came, the river would disgorge snakes as varied and deadly as those alphabetized in any handbook on reptiles. The deadliest of these were the banded kraits, with their prominent arched backbone and wide and alternating yellow and black bands and, of course, the dreaded dusty brown Indian spectacled cobra.

It seemed that the snakes were everywhere: in the open gutter, by the roadside, and peering from crevices of warm and moist crumbling brick walls. They were there by day in the hot sun, and they were there by night after the sun had sunk behind the rugged hillocks some twenty miles away across the uneven, rocky plateau. They sped past you avoiding the brilliance of the flashlight, or glided shimmeringly in the dazzling light of the August moon. The snakes became part of the scene with other living creatures like the goats, pigs, cows, the water buffaloes, donkeys, the ubiquitous crows, and colonies of foraging rhesus monkeys as they moved from treetops to treetops, from one neighborhood to another on their way to the next town down the train tracks. Shy but vengeful scorpions of all sizes, shades, and stings competed for their own hiding places as well. Once my mother was prostrated with a purple and blotchy swelling of the body and high fever for a whole week as a result of a deadly scorpion sting. All that week, I remember being on good behavior, praying to Lord Varada, the great giver of boons, beseeching that my mother be restored to full health. There were many untoward incidents of scorpion stings and snake-bites, but I don't remember any people dying from them. We just learned to live with the dangers and beware of them. The deadly critters were there as much as we were there. We kept out of their way as it was their wont to keep

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out of our path. And when the paths crossed, you took appropriate measures.

I remember one such occasion. One hot and humid August evening, when the bright Orion hung low in the southern sky, the rest of my family and I had just returned home from a stroll to the banks of the swollen Manjira. As we entered, my mother hesitated for a moment and shrilly said she smelled a cobra. The male cobra emits a smell that is akin to the fragrance of a common cactus-like flower called the *keveda* in Hindi. Soon my father discovered the cobra that had obviously surfeited itself on a large bullfrog and was lying in well-arranged coils next to a row of spinach in the vegetable patch below the kitchen window. My father, standing directly on a rock that jutted over the somnolent cobra, struck the reptile hard across its several folds with a metal-tipped grain thrasher. Killing a cobra was one thing, but dispatching it in traditional India of more than half a century ago was another.

The cobra is sacred to the Hindus. Cobra myths are part of the Hindu creation myths. One such myth says that the cobra was used to churn the waters of the universe to create the earth. *Naga panchami* is a day consecrated to remembering *Ananta*, the divine cobra, which stands as a symbol of eternal wisdom and power. All depictions of *Shiva*, the god of destruction, for instance, show the divine hooded cobra

adorning his neck and topping his matted hair. *Vishnu*, the lord of preservation, is shown resting within the folds of the seven-headed *Ananta*, with its ribbed hood fully spread out to symbolize god's protective umbrella over all creation. Indeed none of the depictions of gods or goddesses is without the presence of some creature that is closely

associated with them. *Lakshmi*, the goddess of prosperity, for instance, has her elephant; *Saraswati*, the goddess of learning and wisdom, has her peacock; *Durga*, the goddess of destruction of evil, has her tiger or lion; and *Krishna*, beloved of all animal lovers, has his herd of cows. There is not

a single god or goddess in the Hindu pantheon that is not closely associated with some animal or the other. In the Hindu cosmology, nature is whole and one. The animal and human are two aspects of the same creation. One cannot be separated from the other, nor does one exist without the other. There is wholeness in the Hindu sense of the universe.

Now to the cobra my father killed. It had to be given a ceremonial cremation. Two servants, who lived with their families across the street on the grounds of the idle rice milling plant, helped carry the five-foot long brown and yellowish gray lifeless snake on two bamboo sticks, with its white ribbed and slimy underside oozing blood and white fluid in the moonlight. They piled the cobra on a heap of twigs

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that had been washed ashore by the river. They arranged and rearranged the length of the reptile until it lay like a twisted coir rope. As I watched, the servants emptied several spoons of milk they had brought from my home into what was once the hissing mouth of the cobra. We strew the seasonal chrysanthemums, burnished marigolds and the heady jasmine on the reptile as the servants lit the pyre. I remember folding my palms, seeking forgiveness of another life even as I bid it goodbye. The bright and breezy blue-tipped orange flames soon consumed the cobra. Even today, much like William

We strew the seasonal chrysanthemums, burnished marigolds and the heady jasmine on the reptile as the servants lit the pyre. I remember folding my palms, seeking forgiveness of another life even as I bid it goodbye. The bright and breezy blue-tipped orange flames soon consumed the cobra.

Wordsworth, I can recall the scene in its every detail; I can see the outlines of the cobra disappear in the flames and smell its scorching, acrid flesh in my nostrils. At such moments, I realize anew my oneness with all things in creation. My mother had taught me that all god's creations had *jivatmas*, that all creatures share the same divinity as we do. I felt a strange closeness to the cobra even as I was watching its body turn to ashes.

My experience with the cobra reminds me of Edward Abbey's reaction to finding a horny rattler a few inches away from his bare feet as he sat on the steps of his trailer sipping an early morning cup of coffee in Arches National Park. His first impulse was to reach for his loaded .45 British Webley, but on rethinking, he recognized that it would be murder to kill a fellow creature at such close quarters, an

incident which he describes with much feeling in his *Desert Solitaire*. Instead, to ward off such future encounters with rattlers, he domesticated a stray gopher snake, for they are known to rout rattlers in any encounter. Often Abbey would drape the "sleek, handsome and docile reptile" around his arm or neck, a veritable new-world *Shiva*, as he went

about his duties in the park. Sometimes when it was too windy or sunny, Abbey would place the gopher inside his shirt where it would wrap itself around his warm body and would occasionally poke its head from under the shirt to survey the scene, much to

the delight of park visitors. That is the kind of closeness I felt toward the cobra even as I was watching its body turn to ashes. I had apotheosized the *naga*, to give the cobra its hoary Sanskrit name; it would cease to be a snake, but would live within me as a reminder of the sanctity of all life.

From the cobra to the dog should be a pleasant transition under most circumstances, but it is not. For nearly fifteen years, from the early seventies to mid-eighties, we had a black-and-white AKC registered purebred Springer spaniel. We brought him home as a three-month old pup from American Fork. Our two dog-loving daughters named him Prince Pepperelli; he was a charmer from the very word go. He grew up to be a handsome dog. The loveliest dog around for miles, he was a friend of the cop on the beat, the

mailman in uniform, the neighborhood joggers, and children of all ages. He would occasionally stick his head in Miss Chadburn's speech class or Mrs. Farrell's sewing class at South Ogden Junior High looking for our daughter Priya. At home he was the delight of us all; it was a pleasure to come home just for the joy of being pounced upon, pawed and licked by Peppi, as our

Springer was affectionately called. It delighted me to no end early one fall when a student in one of my classes introduced herself as a childhood friend of Peppi's. She and her brothers had taken him on many a fishing expedition to Beus Pond. But my story has to do with the last days of his painful existence.

During the last two years of his life, our Springer had become progressively, excruciatingly arthritic. He could move only with great difficulty. It seemed he moaned and groaned all day long. He ate and wagged his tail less and less, and the light and love in his eyes were now tinged with visible pain. He should have been mercifully put to sleep a whole six months earlier. The veterinarian would have eased him out of his pain in no time. My wife Neila urged me to no end to let him go, but I did not know how to let go of him. It would have been easy to cradle him in my arms as Dr. Hall eased the life-releasing needle into his painful, contorted muscles, but I could not because, consciously, I was reacting to a story I had once heard of unmitigated cruelty perpetrated on a family Labrador.

Several years ago, my wife and I were over for a dinner at a colleague's home in the company of our good friends, Levi and Althea. At the end of a very pleasant evening, as we were trading one pleasant memory after another, our host related the chilling story of how in cold blood he had bludgeoned his full-grown black Labrador to death. It transpired that on the

My grandmother, who sat at his feet, told me precious stories about my grandfather's life as she kept massaging his ice-cold feet. She told me my grandfather loved me the best of all. She told me I was blessed to be by the bedside of my dying grandfather.

meager income of a teaching assistant at a prestigious mid-western university, he could barely pay for his education, his rent, gas, and feed and clothe his family of wife and several children. They were as close to deprivation as they could get. Instead of starving the dog, our

host said, he decided to end its life. One fine autumn morning, as the early frost was beginning to lift, he loaded his Labrador into the truck for its last ride. Once in the country, out of sight of civilization, as his Labrador frolicked and gamboled, he took a thwack at the dog's skull with a heavy two-headed sledge hammer. In the act of stilling the Labrador, our host slipped in the wetness of the morning and fell to the ground, and the sinewy dog, stunned but not disabled, suddenly turned violent and hurled itself at its master. There ensued a struggle between beast and man like the ones made famous by Jack London in his tales of the wild. My colleague had to bludgeon the animal repeatedly before the family pet's body twitched and convulsed and went limp in bloody death.

Every time I think of this heinous betrayal of the unsuspecting dog by its cruel master, I feel an indescribable sadness at the cruelty meted out to a family pet. My not letting go of my own Prince Pepperelli when it most needed to die, in some twisted, perverted way, was a vicarious attempt to shield him from a master-inflicted untimely death.

There is another death that lingers in my mind: it is that of my paternal grandfather. I was visiting my grandparents in their home in Secunderabad, a British colonial garrison town, which headquartered the Military Engineering Services of the British Southern Command in India. I was barely seventeen at the time and had

come from the university dorms, where I was staying, to be with my grandfather who was on his deathbed. He was eighty-two and had been in a coma for a couple of days after suffering a paralytic stroke. As I set eyes on him, I intuitively knew his end was near. He had never been ill a single day in his life, or that was what my grandmother said. A tall man at six feet two, he walked erect. He had an aura of authority about him. A chief accounts officer in the British army stationed in Secunderabad, he worked directly under British generals and had picked up a strong sense of military sternness. Albeit his external severity, he was a loving, caring grandfather, and I remember with something analogous to wicked pleasure that his learned sternness wore down as he grew older.

He was gone as gently as the breeze that the ceiling fan stirred. At the moment of his death, I felt he was alive in me. I knew within me that life was continuous and unending. I knew I was part and parcel of the same undying divinity.

The grandfather I saw stretched out before me hours before he died was still the same man. Lying on his back on the cot, he somehow did not look as tall. Minus his glasses, he seemed unfocused and distant. His glazed eyes had receded into their sockets. His dehydrated skin fell loosely in folds over the bones of his face. His lips seemed to have collapsed into his mouth. Stubbles

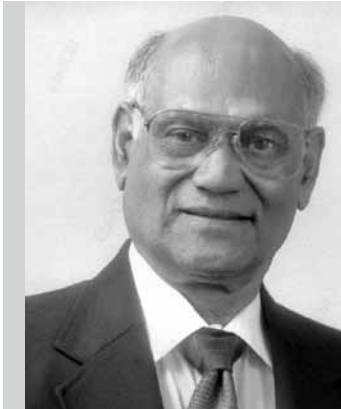
of gray covered his face. His failing body was draped in a *dhoti* and the upper part of his body was bare under a white linen towel. As I sat next to him by his bedside, I gently forced ice water into his mouth and frequently wiped imaginary sweat-beads from his forehead. My grand-

mother, who sat at his feet, told me precious stories about my grandfather's life as she kept massaging his ice-cold feet. She told me my grandfather loved me the best of all. She told me I was blessed to be by the bedside of my dying grandfather. I counted myself thrice blessed because I had been present at the deathbed of two other grandparents. A decade later I would be kneeling by this very grandmother's side and be holding her hands as she breathed her last. In her dying eyes, I could see that she remembered I had held my grandfather's hands too as he lay dying.

Soon my grandmother and I heard this gurgling sound in his throat as his chest began to heave with each cavernous breath. We knew his end had come. My grandmother asked me to cup my right hand over his ear and intone the

name of god. I kneeled down on the floor and leaned forward and whispered, Narayana, Narayana, Narayana. I said, Thatha, do you hear me? This is Checha. Patti is sitting at your feet. Do you feel her touch? Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, I intoned. He was gone as gently as the breeze that the ceiling fan stirred. At the moment of his death, I felt he was alive in me. I knew within me that life was continuous and unending. I knew I was part and parcel of the same undying divinity. His grandmother was present at his birth and his grand-

son was holding his hands as he died. He was surrounded by his loved ones when he was born and was surrounded by loved ones when he died. That is the Indian tradition. It has been that way for several millennia. You are always born and you always die in the midst of family who love you. Death is one more event in the unending cycle of life and karma. Death is as much a part of life as birth. The cobra, the dog, my grandfather, and I are all one in an abiding cycle and subsist in the same divinity. Nobody need have told me that; I knew that in the depths of my soul.



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Diane Kulkarni

Getting Here From There

A Conversation with Nagamani Kulkarni



Ian (3) and Madeleine Felix (5), with their great grandmother, Nagamani, Christmas 2008, Perry, UT.

My mother always said, "You can't get here from there," but she hadn't heard this story. It begins with two people from different states in India, unaware of each other for a long time but on the same path: meeting in Bangalore at the Indian Institute of Science (IIS) to complete their Ph.D.s, marrying and starting a family in Hyderabad that would one day contribute to America and the world.

PRELUDE

Bapu Sakharam Kulkarni was born one hundred and one years ago in 1908. He was raised in Borgoan, a village in Maharashtra state, about 200 miles east of Mumbai (Bombay). His family farmed 100 acres, growing mangoes, wheat, corn, red and green chilies, and lentils for market; they also raised safflower for oil used in their home. Of five brothers, he and his youngest brother were the only ones to earn a college degree. Because the village had no school, he did his early education in Chikhli, a town six miles from Borgoan.

During the monsoon season, the Penganga River, adjacent to Borgoan, had plenty of water. Since there was no bridge over the river, the bullock cart tracks that normally ran through the river bed were covered with water. At such times, Bapu

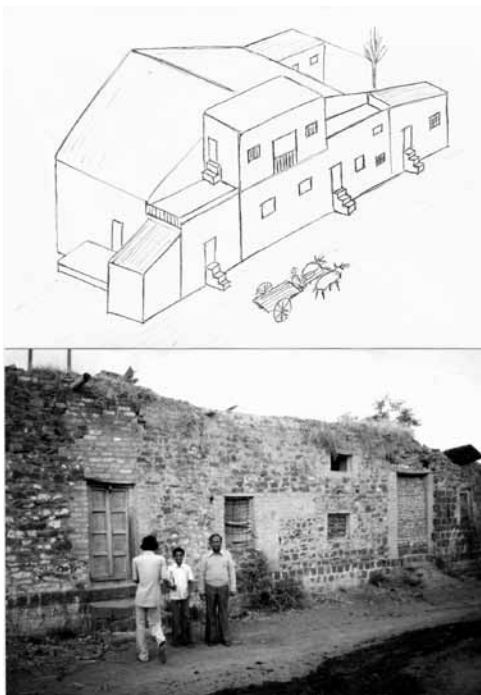
had to swim across the river with his books strapped on his head. Later, because travel by bullock cart took about three hours each way, he stayed in Chikhli with his father's sister during the school year, coming home only on breaks.

Bapu graduated from a high school in Khamgoan, another nearby town near Borgoan, as a gold medalist, the top of his class. After he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Nagpur University, he moved to Bangalore to complete his Ph.D. at the Indian Institute of Science, a prestigious institution established by the British. He received his Ph.D. in chemical engineering in 1939, along with the Sudborough Gold Medal for the best research work.

It was at the IIS that Bapu met Nagamani Shama Rao who was also working on her Ph.D. They married in 1943 immediately after she got her degree, and they moved to Hyderabad where he began teaching at Osmania University.

During 14 months' work at the New Orleans, Louisiana Southern Regional Research Laboratory, starting in 1953, Bapu received a patent on the Filtration and Extraction Process that is still used by the oil industry today. He became a professor and established the College of Technology at Osmania. He was the Chair of the Chemical Engineering Department in 1963 when he retired at the mandatory age of 55.

Nagamani Shama Rao was born in 1916 in Bangalore, a city in South India. Her father, Dr. Shama Rao, was a Captain in the British Army during the First World War. He was sent to Kashmir, then to Afghanistan, Rawalpindi in Pakistan, and lastly to Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq and western Iran). During battle, he was exposed to chemical warfare, probably mustard gas. Once back in India, he set up



Above: a drawing by Suresh Kulkarni of the ancestral home in Borgoan as it stood in the 1950s. Below: after the family moved away from the village, the house was reclaimed by the weather and the land.

his medical practice first in Coimbatore and later in 1923, in Nagpur. His two daughters, Nagamani and Saroja, and his son, Nagendra, attended Marathi school. Eventually, the dry, dusty climate of Nagpur negatively affected Dr. Rao's damaged lungs and he developed tuberculosis. He moved his family back to Bangalore where he died in 1925 when Nagamani was nine years old.

After he passed away, his parents wanted Nagamani's mother, Thangadi, to arrange child marriages for her two daughters, but she refused because she wanted them to get an education. Because her father's family could not offer them monetary support, they became destitute. They received a little help from other relatives, and eventually Thangadi found work as an English teacher because she knew the language. Nagamani and Saroja, known as the "Singing Sisters," sang for neighbors, and one day they met a friend of their father's who had served with him



Bapu at work in the New Orleans laboratory, 1953.

during the war. When he heard about the family's desperate situation, he advised Thangadi to apply for her husband's army pension, which was due her. So she took her children to see an officer and he made it possible for them to receive her father's pension and also a children's pension to help support them until they turned 21. This enabled them to pursue an education.

Because there was no public transportation system, Thangadi was able to rent a house close to each school as they moved up through the standards (grades) so that they wouldn't have to walk far. When Nagamani was admitted to the IIS in Bangalore to work on her Ph.D. in physical chemistry, they moved again. Nagamani was the first Ph.D. in her family and her clan, the Sankethi community.

CONVERSATION—March 9, 2009

How important is having an education to the people of India?

It is life insurance. Having a higher education means you get a good job and can then get on well in life. When marriage proposals come, young men with higher degrees are considered first because they would pro-

vide security for the future. My father, who came from a very poor family, had talent and my grandfather recognized his potential, so he selected him for my mother and paid for his medical school in Madras.

Describe your upbringing as it affected your desire for an education.

When I was nine years old, my father died. We were so poor, but my mother wanted us to get an education. Her father was the first college graduate in the family. I don't know his real name—we always called him B.A. Ramaswamy. He educated his four daughters in English. He was also very fond of music, so when he moved to Bhopal to assume his job as Conservator of Forests, he brought along the music teacher and his family to teach his daughters how to play the musical instrument *veena*.

After my grandfather died, my father took over caring for the family. Later, my mother became a teacher and my cousin, Amruta, became the first female lawyer in our clan. The Sankethi community was established by a female Sanskrit scholar. She left Tamil Nadu to escape discrimination and settled in Bangalore with her followers. The Sankethis have their own language, a hybrid of Tamil and Kannada, and the women have a unique way of wearing their sarees.

Amruta made sure that my sister, brother and I completed our degrees. When I received my master's, my mother warned



Thangadi and her sister, Lakshmi Bai, playing the *veena*.

me to keep that a secret because no man would marry a highly educated woman.

Since you were in school during the British occupation, did you as a woman find any barriers to achieving your educational goals?

Because we had our father's army pension, there were no barriers. I never sensed any discrimination from the British. They welcomed anyone who wanted to study. Many of my classmates were women and none of us felt there were any obstacles.

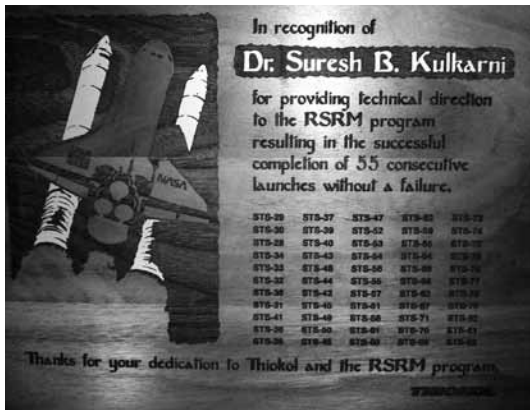
What sacrifices did you make so that your children could achieve their goals?

I never went anywhere during their early years, not even to see a movie. We realized that Suresh and his sister, Roshni, were bright, so I only wanted to be at home to keep a watch over their studies, to help when needed. Both children attended English-medium schools. Suresh was very good in math, so engineering was his natural choice. Roshni loved biology, so she chose medicine. We left their career choices to them. Since they had their own drive to achieve, we didn't have to push them. They had a competition



Some of the Ph.D. students in the Indian Institute of Science in the 1940s. Nagamani is second from the right in the front row. Bapu is second from the right in the back row.

When I received my master's, my mother warned me to keep that a secret because no man would marry a highly educated woman.



Awarded by Thiokol Corporation: "In recognition of Dr. Suresh B. Kulkarni for providing technical direction to the RSRM (Redesigned Solid Rocket Motor) program resulting in the successful completion of 55 consecutive launches without a failure."



Lifetime Achievement Award of the National Hemophilia Foundation given to Roshni Kulkarni, MD.

between them although they were in different classes. Suresh studied late into the night. Roshni got up very early. Both took meticulous notes. I always encouraged them, saying, "You're going to shine one day."

They lived at home during their undergraduate studies and then for his master's degree, Suresh went to the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur near Kolkata (Calcutta), the most prestigious engineering school during that time. Roshni finished her medical studies at Osmania Medical College Indian Institute of Medical Sciences in Hyderabad. She later did her internship in Denver, CO, and her residency in Detroit, MI.

What accomplishments have your children made in their respective fields since they migrated to the U.S.?

When Suresh became the Vice President of Space Engineering at Thiokol Corporation in

1989, overseeing the Space Shuttle mission readiness and success, I was so proud of him. He took me to Cape Kennedy to see a launch of the Space Shuttle, and seeing that, I knew that all the sacrifices we had made were well worth it. During his 31-year career, he worked on various projects, including a commission appointed by President Bill Clinton. As a member of the Space Launch Broad Area Review (BAR) team, he investigated commercial flight failures and recommended corrective action. He has worked with CEOs, professors, scientists, leadership in the Air Force and Navy, and with astronauts, including John Young, the first to fly the Space Shuttle and one of those to walk on the moon. In whatever he did, he succeeded and reached beyond his dreams. I'm so happy that even in his retirement, he's kept busy and productive.

Roshni has excelled in her field of pediatric hematology/oncology. After more

When Suresh became the Vice President of Space Engineering at Thiokol Corporation in 1989, overseeing the Space Shuttle mission readiness and success, I was so proud of him.... I knew that all the sacrifices we had made were well worth it.

than 30 years in clinical work, teaching, and conducting research at Michigan State University, I was so pleased when in 2006 she was appointed as the Director of the Division of Blood Disorders with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, GA. In 2007, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and everything looked dim. However, even during months of chemotherapy, she continued to work from her home for both the university and the CDC. She is currently traveling the world, focusing on the health of women and children with blood disorders. We were all greatly honored when she was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Hemophilia Foundation in November.

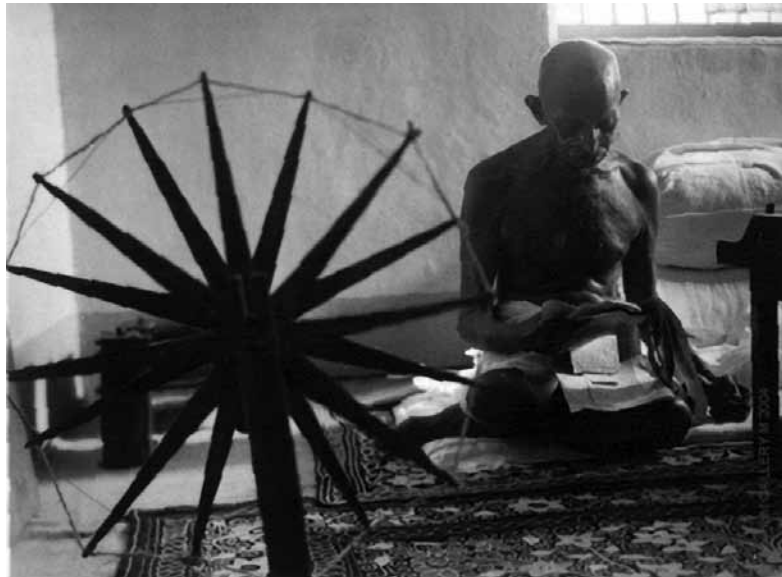
You told me that you, your sister and your mother met Mahatma Gandhi early in your life. What impact did seeing him have on you?

Because of my mother's teaching position, we were privileged to see Gandhi when he was visiting Bangalore. I was 12 years old. I was standing next to my sister, Saroja, while she sang his favorite song. He looked up at us from his spinning wheel. On Mondays, Gandhi refrained from speaking, so I remember it was a Monday when we saw him. He sat quietly spinning cotton thread for *khadi*, homespun cloth. The two most important things he inspired me to follow were truthfulness and simplicity in life. Gandhi preached against all excess. Being simple was natural to me, and I continue to follow his ideas.

How did the assassination of Gandhi affect you?

We had gone to a friend's house to attend a *puja* (religious ceremony). When we returned at 3 p.m., we heard the news over the radio. We were so stunned. At first, we couldn't even cry—it was such a shock. Voice of America and BBC news described the assassination which took place at the Birla Mandir in Delhi. We heard later that Nathuram Godse, the Hindu assassin, believed that Gandhi showed too much leniency towards Muslims, especially when he urged Nehru to excuse Pakistan's debt to India. Godse was part of a Hindu group opposed to Gandhi because he was trying to ease Hindu-Muslim tensions, which always led to riots. Gandhi was against Partition. He wanted peace between Hindus and Muslims. He said, "There are many causes that I am prepared to die for, but no cause that I am prepared to kill for."

In 1947, at the time of the Partition of India and the formation of the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan, Osman Ali Khan was the ruling Nizam (Muslim ruler) in Hyderabad. Although



Mahatma Gandhi with his spinning wheel by Margaret Bourke-White © Time Inc.

the majority of the city's population was Hindu, he decided to side with Pakistan and not join the Union of India. How were you impacted during the Police Action when Indian troops invaded and forced annexation of Hyderabad?

When we moved to Hyderabad in September of 1943, the city was under the rule of

the Nizam. My husband was recruited by Osmania University as a faculty member and because of my Ph.D. I was offered a job in the department of chemistry. However, my appointment had to be approved by the Muslim government. Because of a Muslim decree called a *Farman*, that stated that "no woman shall be permitted to work alongside a man," I was not allowed to work. I applied for jobs in high school but was rejected everywhere because either my qualifications were too high or the medium of instruction was in Urdu, a language I did not know. I did not work for three years until the Nizam's government was overthrown by the Indian government. During those years without work, I bore my children.

For the majority of us, becoming part of Pakistan was unthinkable. We were in the center of the country, but the Nizam was resisting. He was supported by Pakistan's leadership, but Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister under Nehru, did not let this fester. He sent in Indian troops to end the stalemate. Divisions broke out and it was a frighten-

ing time. We had to leave. We took our two children and left by train to stay with my husband's family near his village. Then he had to return because of work and the children and I went to Nagpur to stay with my uncle. There was a lot of back-and-forth travel. The situation was unstable. We heard about the vicious attacks on trains in the north, so somehow my husband and I were able to get two armed guards to stay with us in our compartment until we reached Hyderabad. People thought that the guards had arrested thugs, and when they looked in our window and saw us, they were disappointed. When the Indian troops moved into the city, the Nizam surrendered and everything went back to normal.

How were you and your family impacted by Partition?

The horrifying incidents during Partition occurred in the northern part of India and we were in the south, but we heard the stories about the atrocities described by refugees who had come to Hyderabad during that time. In our locality we were all human be-



Gandhi's Six Principles

1. Truth: learning from your own mistakes and conducting experiments on yourself
2. Nonviolence: nonresistance connected in a way to religion
3. Vegetarianism: carved in the Hindu and Jain traditions in India
4. Brahmacharya: spiritual and practical purity
5. Simplicity: giving up unnecessary spending
6. Faith: belief in a Higher Power and that all religions are equal

ings first and were close to all of our Muslim friends. I believe that every religion should be respected because the goal of all religions is to do good, not evil. However, some people always interfere, which leads to intolerance and then evil deeds.

Based on your life experience, what are your feelings about the recent terrorist attacks and the future of India?

These attacks were well-planned, with the help of Pakistan and local Muslim groups who gave the terrorists shelter and aid. How does a nation with so many different groups and parties work together during a time like this? We know how difficult it is in America to find consensus with a two-party system. Everything seems to be in a turmoil with wars, terrorist attacks, hatred. Curb-ing terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan through diplomacy and dialogue is a good idea. I feel sorry for Obama because of the multitude of problems he has to solve.

I read that Hyderabad is the third most riot-prone city in India, after Mumbai and Ahmedabad in Gujarat. You offered protec-

tion for your Muslim neighbors during the 1990 Hindu-Muslim riots when 300 people died and thousands were wounded. Describe that period and how it fits with November's attacks.

This rioting is an old conflict. We feel that it's political sometimes, not just religious. A pig thrown into a mosque, someone shoving a cow in the bazaar—that's all it takes to start a riot. Then a politician takes credit for controlling it, and he gets re-elected. The day this one started in 1990, a man of one faith killed an auto-rickshaw driver of the other faith several miles away, and reprisals escalated. I was in an auto-rickshaw going downtown. We were heading toward the shopping center when suddenly the driver turned down the nearest street. I asked him why he did that, and he said that a riot had started and was spreading our way. He rushed me back home. For ten days, we were confined to our houses. I let our Muslim neighbors know that we welcomed them and would protect them in case of attack.

What are your feelings looking back over your 93 years?

Over the years, I have seen a lot of changes, and I have adjusted. Because of the progress in communication, such as email, better telephone lines, and video conferencing over the internet, I was recently able to communicate with many of my relatives in India. This is progress I could never have dreamed about in my younger years.

I have had a very long and good life. I came to this country when I was 76 years old, after my husband passed away. It was sad to be uprooted from my home, but all of my children were here, settled and happy. Now I don't worry about anything at all. I know that this is why I have lived so long. Suresh built our house next door to my two great grandchildren and I see them nearly everyday. What more could I ask?

Diane Kulkarni

Just a Little More Salt

Culture shock is what happens when a traveler suddenly finds himself in a place where... the familiar psychological cues that help an individual to function in society are suddenly withdrawn and replaced by new ones that are strange or incomprehensible.

– Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*



Diane McLaren and Suresh Kulkarni, married June 24, 1972.

As the Air India Boeing 747 neared Bombay, I readied my three-year-old daughter, Sharmila, for landing in her father, Suresh's homeland. This was our first stop before heading on to Hyderabad where we'd spend the next two months with his family. Although I was excited to be nearly there, I also had misgivings. His father had disowned Suresh after we married five years before.

After more than 30 hours in the air and in transit from Salt Lake City, both Sharmila and I were exhausted. I rehearsed what Suresh told me to do once we landed and were in the airport: "Claim the baggage by hand (it will be in a pile with everybody else's stuff), go through customs, and once outside, my former classmate, Jayaraman, will find you and make sure you make your connecting flight to Hyderabad."

I had been over-confident before we left home with all our luggage, the umbrella stroller, two carry-on bags filled with needed items, and my bulky purse. "No problem," I'd told my husband. "I'm an experienced traveler. Remember, I've been to Europe three times before I was 20 years old — once all by myself." But as we neared this bustling Asian city, even before the wheels touched down on the tarmac, I realized this was not like Europe. All along both sides of the runway were dilapidated huts where poor people were living out their lives: eating and sleeping, giving birth, and raising

little children in the roar of jet engines thrown into reverse, next to screeching tires, noxious fumes, and the very real possibility of catastrophe at any moment.

When the doors opened for our descent to the ground, a blast of hot, humid air nearly took my breath away. November at home meant cold, but not here. For a brief moment, I yearned to be snowed in at Thanksgiving. At the baggage claim area where all the suitcases were dumped into a heap, I looked up the wall, observing a sea of faces, hands and countless bodies jostling for space and pressed against a large plate glass window. *How will I find Jayaraman? I don't even know what he looks like!* Sharmila screamed as I juggled the bags instead of carry her. She wailed through customs that took too long. My head was spinning as coolies battled over carrying our bags. And then we emerged outside into the blast of sun and a pushing, swaying mob. "Diane Kulkarni?" I turned to see a smiling face. "Hi, I'm Jayaraman, and I'm here to take care of you and Sharmila."

While he took our luggage to his car, we waited on the sidewalk and were soon surrounded by a crowd of little children, some no older than Sharmila, dressed in grimy rags, their eyes bloated with running sores and their feet and hands black with dirt. One little girl came up to Sharmila who was dressed up in her Sunday best and

I readied my three-year-old daughter, Sharmila, for landing in her father, Suresh's homeland.... Although I was excited to be nearly there, I also had misgivings. His father had disowned Suresh after we married five years before.

tried to touch her face. I shielded her while feeling miserable for those little kids.

Looking back, I realize how audacious I had been when Suresh told me I'd have to travel alone with a toddler, going ahead of him by two months because he couldn't take that much time off work. The journey itself wasn't what scared me, although the thought of taking my little girl into the unknown was frightening. My foreboding was meeting my father-in-law for the first time.

Five years earlier, in June of 1972, Suresh and I had married after waiting 1,106 days for his parents' permission, which never came. That we needed their permission at all was a foreign concept to me, an American girl born and raised in Denver, Colorado, to be independent and to make her own decisions. A couple of weeks after our wedding day, a letter arrived from his father addressed to "Suresh Kulkarni, formerly my son." My heart crumbled! The hard reality of our decision hit home. Suresh had broken every rule to take me as his wife, and now he had been disowned and cast out of his loving family because of that choice.

My family members immediately closed ranks to support us, but I knew nothing would heal the wound Suresh had suffered, except reconciliation with his father. Suresh decided as soon as he read the letter that he wouldn't accept losing his family. He would write a letter every Sunday evening to keep

them informed about our lives. We wrote faithfully, but heard no word in response for the next two years.

When Suresh was hired by an aerospace company, Thiokol Corporation near Promontory, Utah, we moved 500 miles from Denver to Brigham City, not far from the plant. Two months before Sharmila was born in 1974, my mother died suddenly, leaving me without the love and support I'd enjoyed all my life. That very morning, I had planned to pick her up at the bus station because she was coming to help me put the nursery together. Instead, I received my stepfather's call that she was gone.

The following Sunday night, Suresh wrote to his parents about my mother's death. Days later, his mother wrote to us, breaking the long silence. She consoled me and encouraged me, saying that she could not replace my mother but wanted to be a help. "Will you call me Mother?" she asked. Although the chasm had been bridged, his father remained quiet.

In 1976, my mother-in-law came to the U.S. for a visit, and the following year Sharmila and I began our journey to the other side of the earth. I wondered what my reception would be in the Kulkarni house. As we stepped onto Hyderabad soil from the plane's last stair, I saw someone resembling Suresh standing near the arrival area with his hand in the air. We walked what seemed like miles before I awk-

Suresh had broken every rule to take me as his wife, and now he had been disowned and cast out of his loving family because of that choice.... I knew nothing would heal the wound Suresh had suffered, except reconciliation with his father.

wardly put Sharmila's hand in his and said, "Here's your granddaughter."

SURESH AND I FOUND EACH OTHER without looking. In 1967, he traveled 11,000 miles from Hyderabad in order to finish his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering at the University of Denver (DU). South Denver, where the University is located, is at least 20 miles from my home in Lakewood—I hardly ever drove to that side of town. However, in 1967, I began attending Calvary Temple, a large church about a mile from DU and became active in the college group, editing and producing a monthly publication and helping to plan social events.

In 1969, one of the many students from DU to join our activities was a graduate student from Thailand who was Suresh's roommate. For several weeks before I actually met him, Suresh and I talked often by telephone. I liked his positive outlook on life, his cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Suresh suggested that we meet and was agreeable to going on a double date with me and his roommate. So I arranged it with a friend of mine who had been a cheerleader and a dancer. When he and his roommate came to my apartment to pick us up, I immediately regretted setting up this date for Suresh with the

prettiest, most vivacious girl I knew. For me, it was love at first sight.

A few days later, he and I had a spaghetti dinner at the Campus Lounge near the University to celebrate the conclusion of his doctoral coursework, and by the end of the week, we had com-

mitted ourselves to marriage. Since I was 23 years old, and most of my friends already had married, I thought we should begin planning our wedding for the following year. However, cultural differences interfered with my romantic notions. Instead, we began the long wait for permission.

AROUND 4 A.M., three weeks after Suresh arrived in Hyderabad during our first visit, the



Sharmila watering grandmother's plants, 1977

conductor on our train bound for Aurangabad tapped on our compartment door. As had been planned, we would be stopping at Jalna station for ten minutes, just time enough to meet Suresh's paternal grandmother, Bai. She was 82 years old and the matriarch of the family. She had traveled over 80 miles by bullock cart and bus to reach Jalna where one of her sons lived. Meeting her on the train after such an arduous effort on her part was humbling. Usually, family members travel great distances to meet their elders, but my father-in-law said that our attempting a trip to his village would be a hardship for Sharmila and me because of its primitive condi-

tions: no electricity, running water, indoor toilet, or furniture. He warned us about the scorpions and cobras. Because we were too soft for such a journey, Bai decided to come to the train, sacrificing strength and sleep in order to meet Suresh's wife and daughter.

Sharmila was still asleep in the top bunk while I hurriedly prepared for our meeting. When the train pulled into the station and stopped, Suresh brought Bai into our compartment. I bowed to touch her feet, a sign of respect, but she prevented me from doing so and began speaking to me in her native language, Marathi. I roused Sharmila so they could meet. Bai took her little hand and kissed it. As she spoke to me, she put two one-rupee coins into my hand. I wished I could have understood her words, but her presence and demeanor were enough. I knew that I was now, officially, an accepted member of the Kulkarni family.

However, the larger family's acceptance could not erase the fact that our marriage had been a disappointment to Suresh's parents. For years, they had been making big plans for the future of their promising eldest son who had earned his Masters from the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kharagpur near Calcutta, and then his Ph.D. from America. Suresh was a very eligible bachelor. Before we married, he began receiving letters from industrialists in India, including pictures of their qualified daughters. The plan was that,

Matrimonial Examples (from *India Abroad* "Classifieds")

Groom

31-year-old, 6-foot, handsome, US born MD seeks tall, slim, pretty MD/DO/DDS professional, 27-29 years old. Please email parents with bio and photo.

Bride

Parents request correspondence for their very beautiful, M.D. 28-year-old daughter, from tall, fair, handsome and successful professionals, including M.D.s. Email bio and photo.

if he agreed to the match, Suresh had the father's word that he would be set up for life, in high style. I read several of the letters and asked him what was going on. "My parents have advertised in the newspapers for me," he said. "I never wanted that."

He explained how Indian marriages were arranged, almost always by advertising in the larger newspapers that were read in both north and south India. The goal was to match him and his credentials with a bride of the same caliber, educational status, caste, religious community, and food habits. Suresh would then read the various proposals, study the pictures, and if he was interested, his parents would set up meetings with the girls' parents.

After meeting, the girls had the chance to say "yes" or "no," as did

Suresh explained how Indian marriages were arranged, almost always by advertising in the larger newspapers that were read in both north and south India. The goal was to match him and his credentials with a bride of the same caliber, educational status, caste, religious community, and food habits.

Suresh. Since his family refused to accept dowry, he truly was a wonderful prospect for parents in search of the perfect match.

Between Suresh and me, there was little in common. I was not Indian, not Hindu, not vegetarian, and had completed only two years in college, but we loved each other and enjoyed the same activities. In my mind, that was enough for a marriage to begin. I couldn't comprehend what it would be like to decide to marry after meeting a stranger for a few minutes. In considering this unique way Indians choose a mate, I began to see a bigger picture of the culture which had influenced Suresh most of his life. I decided from the beginning not to let any rejection get in the way of the relationship I wanted to develop with his family.

Living in my in-laws' house, eating at their table, spending time talking with them, their neighbors and other family members, I understood the immense forces of tradition and expectation that undergird and build Indian families. It was easy to feel like an interloper, someone who had "snatched" away their promising son and stolen their future happiness and security because now his home and career flourished—not in India, but in America.

We soon settled into the daily routine of the house with its predictable schedule of bathing, cooking, eating, resting, shopping, and taking an early evening walk to the little three-sided shed that served as a lending library.

Later, after a light dinner, we'd all watch the evening *Doordarshan News* and *I Love Lucy* on television.

Some of the most enjoyable times occurred away from the house on day trips. We would visit Nehru Zoo to see the animals and ride the train; drive to Public Gardens, or walk to Indira Park so that Sharmila could play on the equipment with her uncle, Vijay. To restock the refrigerator, we drove to the Secunderabad Vegetable Market weekly to haggle for the best prices on a huge variety of veggies. After a few weeks, we traveled to Bangalore and New Delhi to meet members of my mother-in-law's family.

One Saturday afternoon, after careful planning days in advance, we drove around ten miles to Gandipet Lake, the source of drinking water for Hyderabad and the neighboring city of Secunderabad. We bathed and dressed early, put together a delicious picnic, and took along a *razai* (large rug) to sit on when we ate our lunch. Sharmila was excited about this family outing and having a picnic. She had become adept at eating *chapatis* (wheat tortillas), *bhaji* (vegetable curry), and *dahi-bhat* (yogurt rice) with her hand. After we ate our lunch, my father-in-law stretched out on the *razai* for his usual time of rest. When Sharmila saw him lying there, she went over to engage him in conversation, and since he was at her level, she sat down on his stomach. I saw their obvious affection for each other and felt satisfied.

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Sharmila and her grandfather after lunch at Gandipet Lake, 1977

Still, I wanted my own connection with him, so I asked my mother-in-law to teach me how to make fresh lime juice, something he loved. Each day, after our afternoon rest, I'd pick two or three limes from their tree in the backyard, squeeze them, add sugar and a pinch of salt and then take the offering to his room upstairs on the rooftop. I'd knock on the shuttered window behind the ironwork and he'd open one side to reach for the glass. Taking a sip, he'd say, "Just a little more salt." Suresh told me that it was unusual for a Brahmin to receive and taste food from the hands of a non-Brahmin, so I treasured this acceptance.

Over the next eleven years, we—including our second daughter, Anjali, who was born in 1979—visited the Kulkarnis in Hyderabad three more times, spending from two to four

months each visit. Our relationship with his parents grew. In 1990, when Suresh was in India without us, his father called me at home in Brigham City. "Suresh tells me that you want us to come live in your house," he said. Their immigration was imminent, so happily I said, "Yes. I want you both to live with us." I didn't know how that would work out or if they would like the town, but it was a phone call I had long hoped to receive from him.

Unfortunately, my father-in-law was diagnosed with cancer a year later and died in 1992. My mother-in-law arrived at our house three weeks after his passing with her bulky purse, a carry-on containing needed items, and two bulging suitcases filled with everything she could possibly bring. She has been living with us for the last 17 years.

Diane Kulkarni

Waiting for Word

From your phone call this morning
I think I see the picture. You arriving
hours late, your father lying thin, so thin
on his cot, in deep coma but waiting for
your hand in his, your voice soft in his ear
letting him go, for saying his own goodbye
with eyes fast shut, his final breaths far
out beyond you.

Then you, following the ways of
all eldest sons for their fathers, stoop
to light his funeral pyre. That part could
not have been easy, after having come
so far only to lose him again.

I can't forget that it was
me, chosen by you, who caused
his silent chasm
that laid like India on
our hearts.



Diane Kulkarni, who lives in Perry, Utah, graduated with a degree in English from Weber State College in 1987. She coordinated the Writing Center from 1987-1994 and then retired. She has been a freelance writer and editor since 1982 and continues to enjoy desktop publishing and encouraging non-writers to write stories about important events in their lives.

Sheila Chowdhury

Travels and Travails of an Indian Army Wife



Gangtok, India, the capital and largest town of Sikkim

Having married an Army officer in the Indian Military, I was in some ways prepared for a transfer from one city to another in a short space of time. It turned out to be every two years that we were given our marching orders. Every alternate posting was to a non-family station—the husbands proceeded to their units while the wives either stayed on in army-provided houses, or packed their belongings and moved with their children, cooks, maids and pets to his or her parents' homes.

When my husband, Arun, was posted to Sikkim, I chose to move our family to a little rented house in Kalimpong, near Sikkim, so we could be close to him. Both were hilly terrains,

surrounded by snow-covered mountains with houses dotting the entire landscape. Sikkim was a kingdom by itself, ruled by a Maharaja, who much later, after India's independence from the British in 1947, opted to be a part of India. Tibet, at that time a part of India, was taken over by the Chinese when they invaded India in 1953. It was of strategic importance to both countries, and the Dalai Lama, who was the head of the religious order of Buddhism, fled from Tibet to India with his followers in order to take refuge.

The Maharaja of Sikkim ruled his country with the aplomb of those days, where royal lives were made up of parties, dances, feasts—an endless merry-go-round of festivities. Of course, the



army officers were deluged with invitations to be part and parcel of those happy times, but were too occupied with their tasks of guarding the borders between India and China and building roads and bridges to participate often. They did, however, find time for an occasional escape into the grandeur and luxury of the royal palace to gorge on the delicious food beckoning them from the tables groaning under the weight of hundreds of delicacies!

Arun's unit was given the task of building a bridge across the river Teesta, one of the longest bridges in the world at the time. The work was arduous and back-breaking. The labor force consisted of a large number of Tibetans who had escaped to Sikkim once the Chinese invaded their country.

As soon as the bridge was completed, there was much cheering, dancing and singing amongst the workers, and a large number of them rushed onto the bridge to participate in the joyous celebrations. Suddenly, there was a thun-

derous cracking sound and the bridge collapsed into the roaring, fast-flowing waters of the river Teesta, taking everyone along with two officers into the icy cold waters. No one survived. It was a tragedy beyond comprehension.

The entire unit went into mourning. Arun couldn't eat for days. Even though he was not at the camp that day, it had been his responsibility as the commanding officer to restrain the workers from getting onto the bridge in such numbers when the cement was still wet and extremely dangerous.

When I heard the news, I rushed to his camp to be with him in his time of grief. I rented a *jonga*, which is a heavier version of a jeep. The drive to his camp was picturesque beyond words. At the same time, it was terrifying because it was a very narrow road with many hair-pin bends as it wound its way around the mountains which you could touch just by stretching your hand out of the window. The other side was a deep ravine, and all around were colorful birds and butterflies fluttering,



Arun in his uniform

and trees with orchids in abundance clinging to their trunks in a loving embrace.

But I was not really inclined to take in the beauty. I was filled with sadness at the thought of the grief my husband and his unit must be experiencing. A loneliness enveloped me. What is loneliness? A seagull's plaintive cry for the blue waters of the sea? A sadness engulfing the hearts of mourners around the bier of a loved one? A solitary figure walking with a heavy heart on a beach buffeted by lonely thoughts of the past?

A hushed silence followed us into the tents of the soldiers who sat with still faces, still unable to absorb the fact that their comrades had been snatched from their sides so soon...so very soon.

Eventually, the bridge was rebuilt, and Arun received his marching orders to England to attend a two-and-a-half year engineering course in Gillingham, Kent. Our excitement was short-lived, however, because we could not take our daughter, Ritu, now 18 months old, with us, as children would pose a major problem in our ability to find a place to rent in the U.K. So we traveled to my parents' home to leave our daughter with them. They were overjoyed, and the gleam in their eyes and the joy on their faces made the parting less of an ordeal.

We sailed to England on the 'Stratheden,' a floating mansion, and were very lucky to be assigned to a first-class cabin on the top deck. We rubbed shoulders with brigadiers and generals who, I'm sure, felt that Arun, as a mere captain, had no business being there!

We rented a little house and settled down to a life of suburban bliss.

This soon turned to boredom as I had nothing to do and the whole day to do it in! My neighbor was the headmaster of a local school and suggested I could teach, as my master's degree in Economics qualified me to teach in a

As soon as the bridge was completed, there was much cheering, dancing... the workers rushed onto the bridge to participate in the joyous celebrations. Suddenly, there was a thunderous cracking sound and the bridge collapsed into the roaring, fast-flowing waters of the river Teesta.... It was a tragedy beyond comprehension.

school. The idea appealed to me immensely and I was soon on my way to the superintendent's office where a vacancy had been advertised. After examining my credentials, and asking me a number of questions, he informed me that he was satisfied but would have to enforce one condition. I waited, and he blurted out that I would have to conform to the dress code of the school, which was a Western dress, instead of the sari I was wearing. I looked at him in complete amazement and said that I found the request strange as I felt that my sari would be an education in itself for the students. It would generate many questions, such as which country did I come from, where was it on the map, what was my dress called, how did I fold it around myself, etc. He was,

however, unwilling to change the rules. So I stood up and told him that I was not interested in the job and walked out with my first job offer down the drain but my head held high!

A month later I was interviewed by a female superintendent. Initially I was a little hesitant because I anticipated a repeat of the last incident. Toward the end of the interview, however, she offered me the job. I asked if I would need to change my outfit. She looked askance at me and said that that would be an impertinence

on her part, and went on to inquire why on earth would she ask me not to wear something so beautiful. So, my teaching career took off! I continued to teach when we moved to London. My school there had teachers from Ireland, Sweden, America, Pakistan and India. The principal called us her little U.N.O!

One of the highlights of our time in the U.K. was the arrival of an embossed card from the Indian Embassy inviting us to the Queen's garden party. I scrambled to get an appropriate pair of shoes to match my turquoise blue chiffon sari. We set out for Buckingham Palace on a bright, sunny day, Arun decked out in his Indian army service dress of black and white, and I, feeling beautiful, in

my new sari. After bowing to the Queen, we shook hands with the Duke of Edinburgh, who looked at Arun's uniform and said, "Ah! The Madras Engineering Group! I was there in Bangalore and

visited your headquarters."

It didn't take long for the sun to disappear in a mantle of black clouds and the rain to come pouring down on us. This was, after all, England! All of us made a bee line for the many tents dotting the massive lawns—a bedraggled mass of humanity laughing unabashedly to hide their embarrassment

over clothes clinging to their torsos, hair in disarray, colorful hats squashed beyond recognition. Eventually, the rain stopped and we all squelched our way to the food tents to gorge ourselves on the smorgasboard of delicacies on display. It was a wonderful experience in spite of the torrential rain. Of course, I could never wear my sari again as it had shrunk beyond repair!

Our time in England was drawing to a close and we made preparations to embark on our return journey back home to India. We were assigned to a Polish liner named 'Batori'—not at all as luxurious as the 'Stratheden.' The very first day, the seas turned rough and the waves battered our ship from one side to the



other. I held my stomach and rushed to my cabin in panic, nausea overtaking me in a vicious embrace. I stayed in bed the next two days and was served miniscule portions of food, which I promptly threw up again and again. Arun meanwhile gorged himself on all the delicious food served in the dining room at least 10 times a day! Each night he would return to the cabin around 2 a.m., grinning like a Cheshire cat and detailing all his activities: eating, drinking and eating, dancing and eating, till I would scream at him to stop. I emerged from my cabin on the third day looking like something the cat had dragged in, and made my way on wobbly legs to the deck and collapsed on a chair taking in deep gulps of the fresh sea air. On looking around, I realized that a number of the passengers looked as jaundiced as I did, having suffered the same fate.

Our normal route would have taken us via the Suez Canal, but since that route had been temporarily shut down for political reasons, we were re-routed via the Cape of Good Hope and stopped for a short time in Cape Town in South Africa. Cape Town was a beautiful city where whites lived in palatial homes while blacks were confined to tiny squalid huts. There were masses of flowers everywhere in a kaleidoscope of colors competing with the rainbows for their place in the sun.

Three of the Indian men on board were taking their foreign wives—a Dutch woman, an American and a Britisher—to meet their families in India

for the first time. Like Three Blind Mice, they laughed at our concern about segregation and apartheid in Cape Town, saying it was blown out of all proportion by the media.

After bowing to the Queen, we shook hands with the Duke of Edinburgh, who looked at Arun's uniform and said, "Ah! The Madras Engineering Group! I was there in Bangalore and visited your headquarters."

They walked into one of the upper-end restaurants believing that Indian men would be served because they were in the company of white women. No waiter or waitress came to their table. After what seemed like an inordinate amount of time, one of the women approached a waiter to complain

about the lack of service. She was told in no uncertain terms that people of color would not be served in order to retain the ethnic purity of the environment and their customers! They returned to the ship in tears at the insult.

We followed the advice of the ship's purser, who was aware of the problems we might run into and sent us on a sightseeing tour in special taxis he had ordered for us—the colored people. Everywhere we were taken, we were permitted to enjoy the beauties of the city without being made to feel like animals let out of a zoo by people who imposed no boundaries on themselves but expected everyone else to honor the rules imposed by them.

Life is too short to carry the burden of hatred tied to our heart strings ready to explode like bombs in a crowded market place—hatred etched on people's faces, ablaze in their eyes. Is this what the world had come to? Love and hatred, kindness and cruelty existing side by side in a tight embrace?

When the ship docked in Mumbai,

I felt a sudden surge of love for my country — Mother India — my HOME! I was impatient to see my daughter, Ritu, and my parents. It had been so long. Not surprisingly, her eyes focused on me in utter blankness, wondering who this stranger was. She kept calling me Auntie, a term Indian children use to address their parents' friends. It was heartbreaking for my parents to be parted from her, and Ritu wept copious tears, stretching out her arms to them as I carried her away to our new home in Pune. It was heart-

They walked into one of the upper-end restaurants believing that Indian men would be served because they were in the company of white women. No waiter or waitress came to their table.

breaking to see the perplexed look on her face and the sadness on their faces as the light of their lives was dimmed.

It had been a long, exhilarating adventure for us and we had learned a lot. It was now time to truly absorb the differences that separate people around the world and the similarities that bind them. Would there ever come a day

when people could live side by side in friendship, love and caring? Maybe not in our lifetime, but we could always hope.



Sheila Chowdhury was born in Karachi (now Pakistan) and was raised in Lucknow, India. She received her M.A. degree in economics from Lucknow University. She and her husband Arun emigrated to the United States in the 1980s, living first in Sun Valley, Idaho, and later in Salt Lake City, Utah, where they opened an Indian restaurant. They eventually settled in Ogden, Utah.

Anis Shivani

The Gated Bones

After Robinson Jeffers

Wishing we could wake up in old men's discarded notes, wishing there was
in the salty sea's furious upward lashings some keyed taunts of value,
we waver in the weeded zones,
and seek stony paths away from the fumbling forsaken rock walls and rock
windows, whose names we've torpedoed often and fast in chimney-
grazed dust that uncrumbles at the first keening look of the poet's
panting pet:

Some women have a way of positing India-skills, China-skills, in a world
which long ago prostrated its deep-seated fears to America's refrig-
erators and washing machines,
and yet we call these women by names other than their chosen ones, we wish
them ill, on dusty Western days when the absurd mountaineering
walk we've collectively undertaken since 1776 seems all too close to
its tough end.

And how is it going to be at the far edges of the rabid promontory, when sea
salt and rock salt, and the heron's skeletal wishes just past in a faint
moment of remembering, and the hawk's piercing screech, changeless
since the Western Adam left home and went missing, and the glare
reflection of the polarizing sun,
come home as puzzles and riddles man was meant to quickly solve while
looking the other way?

Who will bear the brunt of that disappointment?
Who will the women carrying home parlor gossip on funereal stretchers then
recall as blank vermin?
Will we then know our foreclosed origins?

As man with a rock's burden of vanity well knows, when he isn't ignorantly
chanting ancient hymns (they pale though in comparison to the mod-
ern poets' practiced art of homily),
there are grim reminders of the one unforgettable evening in every spurious
mirror:

that evening was rambunctious ease with one's fourteen-year-old self, all self-consciousness banished, as love of mature women (some as young as eighteen) replaced the dream of fortress towers tall as the tallest Western mountains, and the cities of the baked rust plain became like dynamic Biblical metaphors, fully alive in their sudden visible death—

such evenings, we know, are few and far between.
They transpose the illness of the mendicant for cheap words with the far more precious glue of the young scholar's gainful sackcloth, keeping him alive in its protective armor,

as all the women of the tidy hill-dominating estate peek out from their wide-angled lenses to discover the men reduced to diminutive stick figures, maneuvered by far governments too absurd to know when the clocks start striking thirteen too loud for time's own good, or to know when to draw in the surf, to let the observers reach home safely.

If I inhabit the shell of a dust-thirsty woman on the edge of planetary dreams, so do you.

We can make mechanized dolls, with herky-jerky limbs and rose-topped mouths, out of the portraits of the most obdurate among our ancestral fantasies, those where we were dominated by the single tonic myth.

Here is the West! Here the broken rust-colored dream! Here are the ill cowboys and the pained poinsettia cottages of some scriptwriter's well-trafficked chamois-words.

Here are the hopes, and here are the glories, of man on the eternal westward trek, which turns out, when you build the tower on Big Sur austere enough to match its imprisoning buzz, to have been a few unbold steps away from the threshold of the birth-cottage—that, and a busily lying pauper's only believable tale.

Crossing the Border

If there were figments of fancy traps,
over which the laggard boys trip, shouting *Ayuda*,
we might have conquered this landscape,
like we crossed the wastes of schools;
or if there were gun-toting dark-spectacled patrolmen,
cringing at our shabbiness, our burdensome conversion
to mercenaries, we might tolerate dissension
in our own ranks, forgive the forgotten legends;
if there were a screaming coyote hankering for fresh meat,
its eyes so full of bloodlust the known world scampers away
afraid of hate, we might have recalled our own sacred tablets of mercy
and washed them clean, this terrible night of reconciliation;
but there are only silent barbed wire, unsurrounded sagebrush, walkable craters,
a moon that does not smile or howl or revert to human form,
and the abyss we've left behind,
where to know the future was already to be doomed.



Anis Shivani's poetry manuscript, *My Tranquil War and Other Poems*, was recently the runner-up for the Marsh Hawk Press Poetry Prize, selected by David Shapiro. A short fiction collection, *Anatolia and Other Stories*, is being published by Black Lawrence Press in 2009, and a novel, *Intrusion*, is in progress.

Bryan Dorsey

Impressions from a Semester at Sea

For Kim's father, Jack Forsha

What follows is an unrefined, fairly personal account or 'travelogue' from a Semester at Sea voyage during the Spring of 2008 administered through the Institute of Seaboard Education and the University of Virginia. Trained as a geographer, I've found that the best way to learn about the world is through travel, especially when you can stay in a place long enough to come to know that place and its people intimately. How long that takes, I'm not certain. Past experience suggests six months to a year. I had not fully anticipated the value of visiting places for shorter periods of time until making the voyage, which was like getting a dozen minute tastes of different flavored ice creams leaving you craving whole bowls full. The contrasts and comparative studies from the countries we visited left us with a greater appreciation for the rich diversity of the world and our common plight as one global community that we truly are.

This past week, six months after the voyage, as I was assembling a slide presentation of our experience, a few tears leaked out again, reminding me how much I miss those we met along the way and the friendship of all the students, faculty, staff and ship's crew, indeed the ship herself, that we came to trust and care for over the short 3½ months we had together. Never before had I come to know and appreciate the generosity of a family as quickly and intensely as we did with Kari, Tamil, and their wonderful daughter, Vani in Chennai, India. I wish to express special thanks to the Institute of Seaboard Education (SAS) and the University of Virginia (UVA) for the tremendous teaching and learning opportunities afforded to us by the Semester at Sea study abroad program.

Trained as a geographer, I've found that the best way to learn about the world is through travel, especially when you can stay in a place long enough to come to know that place and its people intimately.



Kim Dorsey

The Explorer

FEB. 8, 2008, BEGINNING WITH A FEW highlights from Puerto Rico, life at sea, and the past 24 hours.

Apparently our internet service is not that strong on the ship, so I can't attach any photos, but we're generating a good collection that we'll share when we get back in May. The Bahamas bogged down in rain and long orientation meetings, but we did have a few days to visit an impressive aquarium and walk around the old diesel fumed streets of the capital city Nassau (island of New Providence). Any Brit would have been proud of the old parliament buildings (now the national seat) adorned with a solid statue of Queen Victoria who abolished slavery on the island. After tearful departure from our many deep pocketed parents, we began trying to adjust to our new high

life aboard the Greek built *Explorer*, one of the fastest ships of her size in the world. Day begins with the dining staff trying to bring you juice, coffee etc. which we now race to beat, not to avoid their jovial service, but because we're not accustomed to "that type of treatment" outside of a restaurant. Back to the cabin after a class (where students eagerly ask good, challenging questions), before lunch and the crew somehow made the beds, cleaned the bathrooms and made all immaculately ship shape once again. Try not to eat too much at dinner (all meals are very good), attend a meeting, come back to the room to collapse, and the crew has snuck in again to turn down the covers and close the drapes on our balcony (where we watch flying fish and occasional sea birds diving for them). So,

we're still not sure how we got to do this and how we were lucky enough to get a room with a balcony.

Led a hike through the El Junque rainforest in Puerto Rico, watched our students cavort in the waterfalls, along with (then 9 year old daughter) Bridget who thinks she is another one of the college girls (naturally, they all know her by name). Noticed that PR is the land of U.S. military recruits since university fees are waived if they will sign on the dotted line. About 7000 unfortunate souls are in Iraq, which is ironic considering they were not allowed to vote in the election that put Bush in office (or any U.S. election for that matter, even though they pay taxes to the mainland).

Time in the rainforest was soon outdone by a kayak trip at night where we (Bridge in the bow) paddled from a bay whose quaint village was under fiesta siege by beer drinking locals astride rapidly cantering little horses. Into the near pitch dark mangrove lined tributary we go with the warm water aglow with bioluminescent algae glittering from the paddles. Fruit bats are buzzing Bridget, but I try not to scare her as one grazes me. Some students had difficulties keeping their kayaks straight and the person in front gets whacked by a mangrove branch lurking in the pitch dark. After paddling a half hour in darkness we're nearing a vast opening into a lagoon. Some very large fish are leaping in the glowing water near the boat much to Bridget's alarm! The tide is coming in so there's a rush of good

phytoplankton and small fish that these 2 to 3 foot long tarpon want to feed on at the narrowest part of the channel. Get home to the ship fairly late, wake early to strike out the next day with next door colleagues who have a 17 year old who wants to go surfing. I'm certainly game, rent a nice long board, load everyone with boards into taxi van, getting dropped at the wrong spot,

lug gear and boards across a spit to find perfect shoulder high waves breaking. The old bald dude gets lucky and catches a wave that he manages to ride all the way in, not to be repeated after lots of wipeouts.

A week at sea goes by very fast when we're teaching, trying

to exercise on the ship and getting very little down time. Sunrise in Salvador, Brazil, is equally as exciting as our arrival in the port of San Juan, Puerto Rico, but instead of old limestone fortress walls we're gaping at favelas above the wharf with massive high rise behind. Venture into the old part of Salvador, Brazil's first capital here in Bahia where the African history is still richly visible in all shades of mulatta/mulatto. The cobblestone streets are steep, but far more pleasant than the reek of urine on the main drag along the shipping yards, so we climb up into town that one can imagine as a cross between Portugal, Angola and Amazonia. 75 percent of the residents in this, the oldest part of Salvador (pop. 2 million) were evicted in the 1980s with the intent of "revitalizing" the area for greater commercial development that never

*The warm, moist night air
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really came to fruition. The warm, moist night air is vibrating with African drumbeats, bells and horns, and it's immediately apparent that there's an additional million people in town for Carnival (Fat Tuesday). I have to grab a Skole beer and a deep fried fritter with gumbo sauce, mainly because the smell takes me back to my years in Togo in West Africa, where I worked as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Things start cranking up about 9 o'clock — sorry, that's 2100 hours back on the floating escape hatch below — and we're treated to the finest drumming, trumpeting and dancing of deeply "traditional" Carnival that holds out against the "com-

mercial" version just a few kilometers away where the extra million are milling around to the blast of music from speakers on semi truck flatbeds. We're looking for a place to sit, so we join some scantily clad kids climbing on the scaffolding that has been set up on every block for the police in riot gear (we're told about 2 million real was spent on security by the government). We help culture shocked Bridget get names and ages of the little girls surrounding us. One little 9 year old, Margarite, has the look of a 19 year old behind her small dark eyes. Soon the spectacled mamas are shuffling in beat, wearing big wide dresses made from what looks like Skole beer wrapping material. It takes a discerning eye to notice that others are wearing gowns of woven aluminum beer can snap top

rings. They're followed by another marching African band with a troupe that has the girls giggling. Several of the male dancers are painted head to toe in gold and silver body paint, including their g-strings. On their backs are elaborate feathered "wings" with wild looking masks affixed to the center of their backs. When they reach the stage in the middle of the street, they

take turns gyrating in an erotically rhythmic dance, one male dancer with a female dancer, ringed by the other ten or so dancers who are pulsing and shuffling, all to the same loud drum beats.

Wake up in time this morning to get on a schooner to run under diesel power

to reach two of the 28 islands spread across Baia de Todos os Santos. The first is Ilha dos Frades, named after the Jesuit friars who first settled there, which was used as a quarantine site from Salvador. Snorkel in the reefs to see bright yellow, purple and striped tropical fish. Play a quick bit of soccer on the beach with these fast, light to very dark Brazilian guys that have zero body fat before heading for lunch on Isle Itaparica. Lunch is an amazing spread of Brazilian dishes, beef, chicken, fish, shell fish, and I've got to get some sleep to keep all this going tomorrow. Those still awake with Bridget and I on the starboard bow during the boat ride back across the bay get a brief glimpse of dolphins. Needless to say, I wish you could all be here to enjoy this with us.

Things start cranking up about 9 o'clock — sorry, that's 2100 hours back on the floating escape hatch below — and we're treated to the finest drumming, trumpeting and dancing of deeply "traditional" Carnival.



Kim Dorsey

Carnival in Brazil

SAS PART 2, SOMETIME IN MID-MARCH

The date has slipped away since our visit in India which has just ended — the ship sails for Malaysia tonight. In many respects, the previous half of the voyage seems insignificant compared to our home stay here in Chennai, but here goes...



Kim Dorsey

Carnival in Brazil

The novelty of shipboard life wore off pretty quickly when we hit high seas (10-15 meter swells) head-on in the Atlantic. A swell coming straight into the bow is the worst as the once thought huge ship was tossed. Many were sea sick and even I lost my appetite, if you can believe that. Seemed like all I was doing was prepping

lectures for a few weeks around the time we were in South Africa. Suffered the respiratory bug that passed from one passenger to the next, ending with one of the worst coughs I can remember (lasted 2-3 weeks). So, it can be hard to stay healthy living in such close quarters with 1000 others. The ship got a lot smaller somewhere between Cape Town and Mauritius – thank god for our little balcony, a bottle of good South African wine and a couple of new faculty friends. Despite the claustrophobic space, the little workout room and weight lifting area has kept us sane. Bridget has also struggled with the lack of exercise while at sea, but we're into the middle third of the trip with far more time on land ahead.

Naturally, South Africa scored an all time high for wild life viewing, complete with a fairly close sighting of two male Cheetahs hunting at dawn in the tall grasses of Kruger National Park. But first, the arid and windy Cape itself: Phynbos biome and home to Chacma baboons and Jackass penguins, up close and personal – photos are the only way to do all this justice. Katie and Nathan, friends from home living in Cape Town for three months, are the perfect guides. Cape Town really is in a spectacularly beautiful location dominated by Table Mountain, which I first saw at about 3:30 a.m. far from shore. That was a dream I've had from years back when

Almost a week of rough seas later we arrived in Mauritius, which surprisingly few passengers had heard of before the voyage. What I had heard about was the massive coral reef bleaching and die – off that occurred a few years ago in the Indian Ocean, but what I didn't know was that the reefs surrounding Mauritius came out relatively unscathed.

I always thought the best way to get to Africa would be by ship. Indeed many of the landings and departures have been romanticized by the slow 15 knot coming and going. Anyhow, we flew to Nelspruit (our one carbon emission splurge for the in-port travel portion of the voyage), rented a car and drove around Kruger for a few days after seeing the Cape. On the first morning

we took a 4:30 a.m. game drive in a safari vehicle to get our bearings, and woke to realize there was not a partial, but total lunar eclipse underway. A good omen for things to come, as we saw rhinos, elephants and monkeys that morning, then hippos, crocs, giraffes, zebras

and all sorts of other animals including a fleeting glimpse of a lioness on the prowl in the days following. This felt like a once in a lifetime experience, capped by a good hike up Table Mountain. and an evening run for me up neighboring Lionshead during our last day before casting off for Mauritius.

Almost a week of rough seas later we arrived in Mauritius, which surprisingly few passengers had heard of before the voyage. What I had heard about was the massive coral reef bleaching and die-off that occurred a few years ago in the Indian Ocean, but what I didn't know was that the reefs surrounding Mauritius came out relatively unscathed. Spent a couple of days snorkeling on the southern coast

of the island and were awed by the variety of corals and tropical fish. The other aspect of the island I had not anticipated was the large influx of Indians there. I was expecting quaint, sleepy little French influenced Creole seaside towns, but they've been inundated by the overflow of humanity from India. However, we were fortunate to find Le Chant du Vent, a breezy guest house run by a wonderfully weathered French expat who shared her home with us.

Which brings us to the hands down winner of the cultural category so far: Chennai. I thought my years in Africa would have prepared me for India, but I

was completely humbled and, at least presently, transformed by this country of such contrasts. Here are people living in far poorer living conditions than the favelas of Salvador or the squatter settlements in Cape Town, and yet they continue to smile and plod forward as though life couldn't be better. And it is getting better for many (the Gini index stats show that there is less division of wealth in India than the U.S.), but the overall GDP/PPP is not much higher than in most African countries. The key word here is juxtaposition. Take the port Chennai, for example, which has some of the foulest air I've ever breathed due to coal burning power generation, yet there are thousands of more or less Indian-made compact cars being loaded on the freighter next to us bound for export to Eastern Europe. On the other side of the port, bag upon bag of rice is being loaded from ship to truck and manually into train cars that look like they could tip over.

Our family we stayed with in Chennai for a few days absolutely overwhelmed us with their generosity. All of this is basically beyond words.

Our pilot just got off on the tender, and we lose another 1½ hours on the clock tonight so I must close. Our family we stayed with in Chennai for a few days absolutely overwhelmed us with their generosity. All of this is basically beyond words. Between a tearful parting from them, a visit to a school this morning where we choked back more tears, and very sad news tonight about Kim's father, we're completely and utterly spent. As you all

may know, Jack narrowly survived heart surgery in January, only to face kidney cancer. We learned that a day or so ago just after surgery to remove the cancer ridden kidney, they

found that the surgeon took out the wrong kidney. Since there may be little that can be done (Jack's heart condition leaves him without the option of long-term dialysis or transplant), Kim will likely fly home from Malaysia to be with her dad in a few days.

APRIL 3

Kim has just rejoined Bridget and I in Hong Kong after two weeks away to be with her father. Unfortunately there's nothing new to report on his condition. Today was a holiday during which people here visited cemeteries and temples to make offerings to their ancestors and recently departed family members. One shop was selling paper six-packs of Heineken that you could offer up. We burned incense and gave our thoughts to Kim's dad in hopes he will still be with us in May or June. Also celebrated Bridget's 10th birthday again since Kim was not here for the celebration on the ship (actually



Kim Dorsey

Vervet monkey, Kruger National Park, South Africa

Kim didn't really miss Bridge's b-day because it was still April 2nd at home). Highlight of the b-day party with everyone at sea was having friend/student Grant sing a sweet song he wrote just for Bridget. He was accompanied by our favorite 16 year old, Willie, on guitar and had me next to tears. Bridget has grown up so much during the past three months it's a bit scary.

Vietnam was quite an experience. My visit to the Mekong delta was a pleasant break from the intensity of Ho Chi Minh City, while the visit to the Cu Chi tunnels was disturbing. The irony

there was to see our students eating ice cream after firing old AK-47s in a shooting range. It took the big trees growing out of B-52 bomb craters to remind me that this generation of students has no point of reference for the "American War," as it is called in Vietnam. Nor should we expect that they see any parallel with what is currently happening in the cave/tunnel systems of eastern Afghanistan.

Saigon is beginning to grow into a modern city, but without the requisite infrastructure, hence the raw sewage in the Saigon River and motor scooter



Kim Dorsey

Jackass penguins, Cape of Good Hope, South Africa

traffic-jammed streets. Quite a contrast to Hong Kong where they have cut back significantly on the amount of sewage going into the harbors and sea. Once again we'll have to share photos and stories when we see you in just over a month. Heading for Shanghai tonight, then on to Kobe for a homestay next week that we're excited about.

I skipped over Malaysia which was also good, but coming from India it was not as moving. Bridget and I found an open air café run by a fellow from Chennai, so we weren't feeling quite as homesick for our Tamil family.

I asked him to bring us whatever he thought we might like, and we ate dish upon dish of excellent southern Indian cuisine. I was choked up for the nineteenth time explaining to Bridget that few of her friends at home in Ogden will ever hear the Muslim evening call to prayer in central Penang (the majority of Malays are Muslim, but there's a sizable population of Chinese, largely Buddhist, and Indians, many of whom are Hindu). I was a bit nervous about our bill after we spent an hour and a half eating, drinking and talking, but the total was about \$4.00. Bridge and I

took a ferry to Langkawi Island where we rented a car and knocked around beaches a stone's throw from Thailand. Highlight of the visit was taking a gondola up into the karst peaks of the island where we watched a macaque monkey and got a little steamy but much needed hike in.

APRIL 6

Thick fog after passing through the Strait of Taiwan. We have the ship virtually to ourselves since most have gone to Beijing (too expensive for a few of the passengers). All were treated to delicious multi-course meals that were normally around \$50 per person, a welcome break from the usual fare which has begun to grow old. A day overdue, we finally docked on the north side of a tributary to the mighty Yangtze River (Yangpu R.). Seeing the modern towers of Pudong shrouded in evening gloom made an impression on me: as the new multinational corporate headquarters of China's special economic zones, Pudong's surreal forms in the drizzly mist give them just the foreboding look one might expect of today's global economy.

We arrive in China with more news of Tibetan monks and others being killed by Chinese forces in response to protests for Tibetan independence. The summer 2008 Olympics have also prompted the communist leadership to create a façade of better air quality by preparing to suspend construction, industrial output and limit driving during the games. At least a temporary effort is being made to clean up the miserable air quality while the world is watching. Although our time in China was brief, many were ready to leave the next day. After being 'Shanghaied' in a tea shop, I too was relieved to watch

the night lights of the city drift back in the rain and our wake.

Four days later we're in Kobe — Kim and I made a quick exit from the lengthy Japanese immigration process so that we could hike in the Rokko mountains (Bridget traveled with friends and their 2 small children for the day). We emerged from the heavily urbanized coastal plane to find a steep winding trail through pines, magnolias, manzanita, and a variety of other trees. Hiking never felt so good, despite the bitter cold spring wind blowing at the top of the ridge. Fortunately we'd brought all our warmest clothes: hat, gortex jacket and all. After hours of tricky route finding (trails were well marked, but all in Japanese), we descended into the valley on the opposite side of the mountains from Kobe to discover the quaint little mountain town of Arima. We stumbled into town from a hill covered with shrines to discover beautifully ornate wooden temples in the midst of flowering cherry trees. After a soak in the public hot baths and a good meal complete with saki that Kim had mistaken for water, we boarded the train that had us back in Kobe within 45 minutes (high speed travel through a tunnel brought us to the other side of the Rokko mountains in a mere 8 minutes).

The next morning Bridget, Kim and I, along with about 75 students were greeted by our Japanese families for an overnight homestay. Had a great barbecue in a large park surrounded by more cherry trees. Both of our hosting families overwhelmed us with their generosity. I was particularly amazed at the work ethic in Japan — the father of the family that I stayed with worked 15-18 hour shifts as a forklift driver in the port. As his wife, Hiroti noted, he is a

“workaholic” and sadly he appeared to be an alcoholic. Spent the day with our host families visiting a temple and gardens in Osaka, then went on to Kyoto the next day for more temple viewing and soaking in the Japanese lifestyle. Photo of Bridget with two geisha girls does better than my description. Also hard to describe was the beauty of

cherry blossoms
falling from trees
around faded
Buddha statues.

Now on day
7 of our Pacific
crossing to Ha-
waii, passing the
days with lots of
class work. Time
changes are start-
ing to wear on all.
Bridget’s clock is
still off—couldn’t
roust her before 11
am. Anticipate dif-

ficulty disembarking from HI knowing
we have another 10 days at sea before
Costa Rica, but all in all we’re so busy
things are good as long as the swells are
not too high.

Our one day in Hawaii was a blur
since I woke at 3 am and was already
way behind in sleep. Took a much
needed nap under the palm trees in the
shade on Waikiki beach that after-
noon. In the late morning, Kim took a
surf board out while I snorkeled—not
as clear and colorful as Blue Bay on
Mauritius, but still fun to watch all
the fish. Back on the ship, we’re into
steady course work mode again. One of
my students, Mike Sterjnholtz of CU-
Boulder, presented his course project
on the ship’s fuel use. I was proud of
his presentation during one of our last
few Global Studies classes. He gleaned

great applause and many have since
commented on what an excellent job
he did. Mike and I spent an hour or so
with the ship’s engineer, Petar, who
helped us understand the *Explorer’s*
inner workings. Turns out that the *Ex-
plorer* has per capita carbon emissions
that are roughly 2 1/2 times that of the
average emissions in the U.S. We ask

*After hours of tricky route finding
we descended into the valley on
the opposite side of the mountains
from Kobe to discover the quaint
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*We stumbled into town from a hill
covered with shrines to discover
beautifully ornate wooden temples in
the midst of flowering cherry trees.*

the question, will
Semester at Sea
continue over the
years given the
diminishing sup-
ply and increas-
ing costs of oil?
Is the *Explorer*, in
the words of poet
Greg Orr, an “elo-
quent dinosaur”
whose energy
inefficiency and
perpetuation of
over-consumptive
lifestyle contrib-

ute to the downward spiral of profit-
ability for the Institute of Shipboard
Education? Perhaps UVA could have
faculty and students from their engi-
neering program conduct an energy
audit for the ship to see if there are
ways to make cost effective retrofits.
At last, is it worth the excessive carbon
emissions and other forms of excess
that come with an SAS voyage? Some-
times we learn best through experience
and take heed from our most critical
observations. Life has so many trade
offs, and this has been three and a half
months of global, intellectual, and emo-
tional perspective I would not trade for
anything.

A few days in Costa Rica at a
secluded beach just north of Manuel
Antonio with extended family, Tonio,
Adair, and twins, Sky and Sam, was



Kim Dorsey

Chennai, India



Kim Dorsey

Arima, Japan

a perfect way to finish our last port of call before Miami. Spent hours playing in the warm, clear surf before heading back to Puntarenas and the ship. The all too familiar lament of the voyage, “not enough time,” was placated by our scheming to return to Costa Rica in the not too distant future. I have vowed to work on my Spanish in hopes of teaching a field course around Monteverde some summer semester. The final exciting leg of our journey is to cross Panama. Feeling like Magellan in reverse (not really, given that he was rumored to be a harsh torturer even for the days of the Spanish Inquisition in the early 1500s) as the gates open from the final lock in the Panama Canal. Reportedly, Magellan believed that a strait crossing S. America would lead to the Spice Islands (Indonesia and the southern Pacific rim) in just a day or two of sailing. As we enter into the Atlantic just after sunset, it hits me full force that we have just about circumnavigated the world: surely a dream come true for any geographer. The canal itself

is a remarkable engineering feat, and its use is not cheap at about \$80K for the *Explorer* to pass through. Our arrival in Miami is a mix of excitement and sadness from farewells to those with whom we’ve become so close.

Now home in Ogden, the reality of the world and our place in it is sinking in. How fortunate we are to have so much. The little things—wild flowers, strawberry harvesting from around our small “palace,” and all our friends—ease the transition back to life at home. The bigger things—spending time with my parents and family—reminds me of how short life is and how important it is to live every day as though it could be our last. If we’re able to do it all again someday, we certainly would. We have dreamt of voyaging during a summer semester or perhaps in about ten years when Bridget could travel, perhaps under sail, as a college student. If the opportunity doesn’t arise, we certainly have ample relationships, perspective and memories to cherish for many years to come.



Bryan Dorsey is a Professor of Geography at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. Initially drawn to Utah by “the greatest snow on earth” in the Wasatch Mountains, he continues to life in their shadow with his wife Kim and daughter Bridget. Kim Dorsey is a Doctor of Chiropractic, Acupuncturist, amateur photographer, and beloved world traveling partner. For more information on the Semester at Sea program, please visit www.SemesteratSea.com.

Samir Dayal

Bandra Master



Bandra Master, even through his fifties and sixties, had the look of a cockatoo. His remaining wispy white hair, which had been combed across his head to mitigate the expanse of scalp, stood up to salute the slightest breeze that crossed from the bay into his 8th-floor apartment. He looked out at the world goggle-eyed, hair standing almost on end, his turtle head balanced precariously on that slender column, proud and fragile. To Hanif, he could not be, had never been, anything but Bandra Master. Hanif could barely remember calling him “Abba” like the other good little Muslim boys, and much less “Daddy” or any of the other words for “Father” he had heard on the lips of the upper-middle-class kids at school, in the tea shops and at the new strip mall where he hung out with other teenagers while he was still at the local school. No. His father could only be Bandra Master because everyone had always called him that. It was his identity. But even as a young man Hanif had understood that the grand title of “Master” sat on the old man’s shoulders like a fancy dress costume several sizes

too large. Still, it was the name by which everyone knew him. His reputation was all he had. In time it was to become Hanif's legacy, too. Bandra Master had earned the title long ago, when he had indeed been something of a master tailor in Bandra, then a quiet suburb of Bombay. But then Bandra became too gentrified, too expensive for this modest master of bespoke, and he moved out with his mousy wife and then three-year-old Hanif to a more affordable area of the city now called Mumbai.

Bandra Master had preserved memories of his time in Bandra, and sometimes he shared them with Hanif. He told him about his memories of Hanif's mother, Salma, as a shy little waif who had lived entirely in shadow before he came along and saved her, he joked, by marrying her; Hanif noticed that his mother's own reaction to this "joke" was difficult to read on her face. Some evenings he would say to Hanif that he wanted his son to have a better life than he'd had, to be a better tailor even. His ambitions for himself had not been fully realized. He admitted that some of this was his own fault, but the times had changed too: "*Zamana badal gaya*," he would sigh. He had once imagined rising to preeminence as the best bespoke tailor in his neighborhood, on the strength of his own industriousness and people skills with clients. The best in the *mohalla*. The best in the city. Why not? He'd prided himself on his posture, and fancied that he looked a little bit like a movie star, like Dev Anand or even like a shorter version of Amitabh Bachchan. "Even if he were poor," he said to Hanif, "a tailor ought to make a good impression, no?" At the height of his career, his faith in his own personal charm had allowed him to go boldly, if unbidden, up to even some of the nicer houses in Bandra to offer his services to the lady of the house.

He was proud of his sales pitch. "Madam," he would intone in the deepest bass tone his narrow chest could muster. "You will not be disappointed. Anything you want, you say. Bombay style, foreign style." And here he curled his lower lip and tilted his head disdainfully.

Then, pausing for effect, and bowing ingratiatingly, he would modulate to a silkily confidential stage whisper: "Best prices for good customers. I make fine shirts for children, well-fitting blouses, professional trousers and personalized suits. Individually tailored suits always better than store-bought suits for your husband."

And finally, he would deliver what he considered his coup, delivered as if clinching the deal: "If you don't like, don't pay." How could anyone resist?

Sadly, many did. As he approached his sixties, it was already beginning to be difficult to compete with the stores and malls going up everywhere. But he managed to eke out a living, although Hanif noticed that his smile became less confident over the years, as the smart new mall stores slashed prices regularly. Some of them even had upstart

in-house tailoring services for people who bought those ready-made suits and shirts that needed hemming or adjustments. Rather than seeking out professional tailors, some of these nouveau riche customers bought ill-fitting and boxy professional clothing from the malls—which remained in his opinion ill-fitting even after the ministrations of the little in-house tailors. If he complained publicly, it was with admirable restraint. To his occasional customers he would at times let slip a reference to “these cut-rate pirates,” who he felt were robbing him of his rightful share of the newly wealthy customers of the new India. Indeed he turned complaint into compliment, telling those few customers who did place orders with him that they had the “eye” to appreciate good lines in clothes. But Hanif knew that this final stage of his career was frustrating to Bandra Master, because just when he had built a lifetime reputation as a tailor, his expertise seemed to be less and less relevant or in demand.

Bandra Master complained more bitterly to his son, whom he had long nurtured as his successor in the business, just as his father had brought him along in the family trade. That’s what family was, *khandan*. The young today did not understand it. Only in the movies was it still alive, this feeling for *khandan*, like in that movie, what was its name, where the family was split apart and only after many years, many trials, brought together again under Amitabh-ji as the proud patriarch, preserving its traditions. But with Hanif, he was happy to say, he had some reason to feel all was not lost for his family name. He thought of what a good pupil Hanif had been from the start. Like that day when, with the sunlight streaming in from the windows of their modest tailoring shop, Hanif had sat next to him on the Singer’s bench and taken his first lesson on the workings of the machine.

“Ok,” Bandra Master had said to Hanif. “Now carefully pull this thread from the spool on the vertical pin near the machine pulley wheel to the thread take-up lever and past the face plate.”

“Show me,” Hanif had said, his fingers pressing down on his father’s arm so that he could see the lever more clearly.

“Here. The thread must approach the lever like this—don’t allow it to twist or bend. It should stay rigid.”

“Let’s try.” Hanif had taken the thread from his father’s fingers with a touching delicacy, as if afraid of being too rough, and licked the thread just as he did. That was in the earliest days, during Hanif’s introduction to the profession. But in that little gesture Bandra Master had sensed respect for the profession as well as filial tenderness. It was a precious moment, and he carried it in his heart.

FROM HANIF’S PERSPECTIVE, the apprenticeship had admittedly been long. Reluctantly, he had acquiesced in it because he knew they couldn’t afford for him to go to college like the middle-class boys he played cricket with sometimes in the streets below the big apartment build-

ings. He needed to work, bring in some business. His father's health no longer permitted him to be as active as he had once been and his eyes were going. Hanif felt he had little or no time for himself. Neither had the apprenticeship been entirely uneventful. One day stood out clearly as the most difficult of the whole period. That was the day when Bandra Master had asked Hanif to finish sewing the outside seam on a pair of heavy corduroy trousers for Mr. Nahal from the bank. Hanif had complained that he couldn't feed the two edges of the thick cloth into the narrow space beneath the needle.

"You're pushing too hard. You're crimping the fabric here."

"No—it's this damn machine. It's too old. Why don't you just get a new one so we can handle this kind of cloth?" Before he finished the sentence he regretted uttering it, as he watched the hurt spread over his father's face.

IT WAS LATE IN THE EVENING AND HANIF WAS TIRED, and it showed on his face. But even Hanif would have admitted that that evening there was more. Some young-man's frustration bleeding in from the outside into the shop, into the shirts and pants he was stitching under his father's eye. Something he couldn't express to Bandra Master. Something the father didn't know how to ask his son about. Besides, Bandra Master felt he no longer had any personal advice to give his son. He hardly understood the new world himself. And so that evening he had bent his frail head down close to his son's, with his hand on the wheel, to offer him what he could—practical advice:

"You've got the wrong needle in there. It'll bend or break. You need a thicker shank to get through cord." He showed Hanif how to affix the right needle, and when it was locked in place, he placed his hand on Hanif's shoulder, combining in the gesture his own need for support in straightening up and encouragement for his son, who needed that now.

Hanif had felt a corresponding upwelling of protective concern for his father. He waited until his father pulled his hand away. But, tired as he was, Hanif had not taken care to feed the brown thread properly onto the thread tension assembly on the machine's armature and through the eye of the new, dangerous-looking needle. The other thread had to be brought up from the bobbin-case, which held the loop-taker shuttle. Hanif knew very well that he had to pull the thread up through the feed dog that slid open, but he felt his mind wandering. His mind meandered among disparate images: and even when he forced himself to think about the Singer before him it was as though he were opening up a trap door to reveal its innards, innards that seemed somehow masculine, with their bed shafts and grease, contrasting with the womanly curves of the machine's exterior. A young man's metaphors. But anyway he couldn't concentrate. As he tried again to run the folded edges of the corduroy through the machine, he pushed where

he should have pulled. The needle moved down unstoppably, piercing the fleshy tip of his thumb. He jumped and cursed in pain, and then cursed again because his reflex to pull his thumb away sent a second shiver of pain through him.

IN TWO YEARS HANIF HAD BECOME THE MAIN BREADWINNER for the family. He had taken on effective control of the family business such as it was. As if on cue, Bandra Master died at seventy-three, leaving his meager tailor shop to his son. There was enough work, Hanif found, if you knew where to look. Bandra Master had had a traditionalist's sense of how to drum up business (even in his advanced years, he was still going to the big apartment blocks of the middle-class sections of the city close enough to manage, asking if people needed tailoring services, soliciting work from housewives who remained at home during the day). Hanif found new avenues. There were of course the new retail shops subcontracting small jobs, including hemming and adjustments to suits and fittings for unusual arm- or leg-lengths for men, or special fittings for women who needed blouses let out and didn't have time to do it themselves – the very subcontracting that had squeezed Bandra Master. But there were also more lucrative alternatives, including the handicraft fabric stores with sometimes unusual tailoring gigs, such as lamp shades or drapes from sari silk ordered by foreigners who were part of a massive influx brought in since 1991, when the government began to liberalize the economy. Many foreign firms were setting up shop in cities such as Bangalore, Kolkata and Mumbai, and these foreign workers, mainly white-collar, mainly male, brought their spouses who had plenty of free time and plenty of money for home decoration – and tailoring.

There were also designers with international “exposure” who paid exceedingly well, especially if you could provide high-quality small services that their fancy staff couldn't be bothered with. He came into contact with the high-fashion set in this way, practicing his English with them. Hanif had cheap business cards made for precisely such customers. He also came into contact with svelte models. But they barely noticed him, even when he was taking their measurements. This was an alien world, with unfamiliar language, strange food and drink everywhere, exotic foreign perfumes on the women's bodies, and generally odd behavior on the part of the men. He found himself nurturing new, strange appetites while in that world. But of course he always had to return to his own world of the *pao-bhaji* stand, the fruit and vegetable mandi, the tea stall, the cigarette-and-*paan* shop.

IT WAS AT THE CIGARETTE-AND-PAAN-SHOP that he saw the girl for the first time. She was standing in line behind him, her silky black hair curtaining her cheek and that smooth nose. She was looking away,

into the dark shadow cast by the jacaranda across the street. Her dark-painted mouth slanted to the right of her face. He found this asymmetry enhanced her beauty rather than detracting from it. He turned a little to look at her, to make eye contact.

He had come to the shop to buy some *beedis* to smoke before he delivered an order to a difficult customer in Colaba, to fortify himself for the encounter. Smoking *beedis* was now just a nervous vestigial habit. But he couldn't shake it. He felt he had tricked himself into believing he needed his *beedis*. He smoked apologetically, just as he had done as a schoolboy, skulking off behind the main building at school. He would buy a newspaper cone of *ber*, those indescribable, irresistible berries, with their wrinkled cranberry skins and their flesh that was at once luscious and fibrous, frustrating because it yielded little juice. All the juice was really generated by your mouth, in response to the *masala* the vendor standing outside the school gates would sprinkle on the berries at the last minute, after he had twisted a cone of the paper from yesterday or the day before or the day before that, and then filled the cone with the gleaming red fruit. Then he would twist the remaining triangle at the top of the cone and seal the package. You paid him your 50 *paise* and he would hand you the cone. The *beedis* somehow went well with the *ber*.

Now, as Hanif stood at the *paan*-shop, his eyes darting to the girl, the middle-aged man behind the counter was asking him what he wanted. He asked for a packet of Marlboros and a matchbox instead of the *beedis*. He put a hundred-rupee note on the counter although he had smaller bills in his imitation-leather wallet.

"You have change? Twenty, ten?"

He found himself shaking his head no. He was committed. "And give me a packet of Chiclets." He decided to splurge.

"No Chiclets. Wrigley's only." More expensive. Imported. Hanif nodded. He picked up the change the man had placed on the counter without counting it.

And suddenly he felt an impulse to ask her if she would like an ice-cream soda. This was what the confident young men would have done, surely, given the chance. He would pose the question casually, as though out of natural consideration, like holding open a door for someone entering a bank. No big matter. But then might this not come across as absurd? Would he look ridiculous and would she turn him down with contempt, and publicly? This wasn't a bar. And so his courage failed him. He gave her one last look and brushed past her as she stepped up to the counter. Across the street again, he lingered, and looked back at her. But she hadn't seen him. She bought a Fanta and walked out to a Honda and drove away.

HE TOOK THE BUS TO COLABA to get to Bapsi Khusro's apartment. She was a middle-aged Parsi woman whose demands were as exhausting

as her voice and manner were annoying. Her apartment, just a short walk from the sea, was in an exclusive corner of the city, but like many of his wealthier customers, she gave him more headaches than some of those with more modest apartments. As usual he felt enervated at the very prospect of having to deal with her. The last time he had come to deliver what he thought was the finished order, she had insisted on further alterations, which meant he would have to make another visit.

"Can you change the color of the piping on the *kameez* – something bright, like red? This black is too somber," she had said.

"No problem, madam."

"Isn't the *shalwar* a little too baggy here? Pull it in and make it a little more *modern*, like this original I showed you." She had primped and made kissing lips in her full-length mirror.

"Yes, madam."

She had let him sit with her on the carpet across the coffee table, as she paged through her catalogs with models wearing the clothes she wanted him to replicate for her body. The problem essentially was that her body was a shade less perfect than those of the models she wanted to look like. He kept his opinions on everything but the material and the cost to himself. Still, she did pay well, and she was, he had to say, generous with the *nimbu-pani* and snacks. He was no fool, he reminded himself. That evening she had even added a little extra to the money she paid for his work so far, recognizing that he was going to have to make a third visit for a single order. She probably felt she owed it to him. And she also seemed to enjoy mothering him a little. She recognized that he was a capable and curious young man, starting out in life, and a responsible young businessman in his own right. Look how responsibly he had shouldered the business after his poor father had died. She had even shown an interest in his career plans.

"Are you sure you want to remain a tailor?" She had a directness he had never encountered in a woman. "You seem to be a good boy, very hardworking and capable. Have you thought about continuing your education, and going on to bigger things?"

"Yes, madam. No, madam," he had replied with a nod and then a corrective little jiggle of his head. She never failed to turn him into a little boy. "Not easy to go to night school while doing this work, madam."

She said, not meaning to seem too condescending, "Well, you are good at this, but there might be bigger opportunities for you." Then, because she caught herself sounding older than she wanted to, dispensing such sage advice, bit off her conversation with the only cliché that was ready to hand: "Opportunity," she pointed her plump ring-bejewelled finger at him, "only comes knocking once."

DESPITE EVERYTHING, he had taken her advice to heart and begun to pursue the theme of his plans for the future, but not with her. A week

later, he had shyly approached Betty Vinson. She was another of his clients, an American who dealt with Indian textiles, exporting them back to boutiques in France and the U.S. She did not condescend to him as Bapsi Khusro did. She did not proceed from the same presumptions about Hanif. In her very American way, Betty was oblivious to ethnicity, caste and class in India. Hanif saw this as an unforgivable blindness on her part, for it failed to appreciate the conditions in which he had to work, failed to understand him in his milieu. He recognized her obliviousness as the privilege of the foreigner; but it was also what allowed him to forget for the moment what she did not see. With Betty he was able to relax, even to play the artisan, a maker of beautiful things. Where Bapsi reduced him, Betty gave him back some of his self-respect. Betty loved textiles, seeing them not as raw material but as expressions of the culture's aesthetics and identity. She had once commissioned him to make two blouson jackets for her out of a traditional red drape cloth she had bought in a Jaipur handicrafts emporium. She'd paid him in dollars, and had tipped him generously for being willing to hand-deliver them to her apartment. The first time he came to her leased apartment she was wearing a man's *jodhpuri* slippers and, absurdly, had a red *bindi* on her forehead although she was in tattered jeans and a very wrinkled white linen shirt. She'd invited him in, sat him down among her plants and showed him pictures of her home in Connecticut. He remembered a backyard with a dog whose fur was the same color as her own hair; and in another photo in which she was hugging the dog on a leather couch, he couldn't tell where one ended and the other began.

Betty had a boyfriend, and she showed him pictures of them together: in a bar, in his pickup, in her kitchen. He, too, was like a big blond dog, but in a pleasant, American way. Large-boned, tanned, utterly at ease in a way Hanif could not imagine being. He had horsy teeth, big, strong, straight, though not overly white. His hand, around Betty's waist, was red and enormous on her slender frame, like a lobster incongruously perched there.

Betty often asked Hanif to accompany her on shopping expeditions, to help her choose fabric for her clients, sitting side by side in the stores they went to in cabs. They sat together in her apartment cutting lengths of material to measure, without wasting the expensive linens and silk cloth she and her clients seemed to favor. If at first he had felt a kind of erotic thrill at the prospect of working in such close quarters with an attractive and apparently flirtatious Western woman, he soon began to see that nothing was further from her mind than intimacy. It was just her way, he decided. Maybe all Western women who were used to working openly and casually with men would seem to someone like him to be flirtatious. But then those models at the designer warehouses he went to were like that too, and most of them were Indian.

Hanif's work naturally involved dealing with a lot of women, and this fact threw into relief his relative sexual inexperience, and inflamed his frustrations. He was not sure whether his peculiar profession, which gave him access to women's bodies in the most intimate ways, was actually unsexing him, in the eyes of the women themselves. It was almost as if he were some kind of eunuch, allowed access into the harem but only on the understanding that his presence was anerotic, and he did not want to blow it by crossing any invisible boundaries. Ironically the women he measured and fitted also became strangely desexualized for him, as if magically transformed into pneumatic mannequins by the tailor's touch. Sometimes he wanted to pinch the women, as if to reassure himself that they were real.

Betty did not ask him to make many clothes for her, although on that last visit she did have a small order to place, a linen-and-silk waistcoat, like the one she was wearing, but only on condition that he made it really fast, four or five days, in time for a party she wanted to wear it to. He said yes quickly. Most of the business she sent his way involved odd jobs for her clients, often other Western women he never even met. He was asked to work from measurements written on paper of foreign origin—sometimes small sheets ripped from writing pads from personalized stationery, sometimes on A4 paper, and sometimes on paper faintly perfumed with foreign scents, from foreign women's hands. Often Betty would give Hanif these sheets of paper along with little handwritten notes of her own, reminders that this woman was 5' 10" or that that one had longer arms than an average Indian woman, or that another's chest was tapered differently from Indian women's. Sometimes she added a parallel diagram indicating that the neck of a shirt he'd been asked to stitch from sheer silk needed to have a wider neck opening or had a scalloped collar.

While she was all business, Betty was often playful with Hanif, mocking his earnestness, offering to introduce him to her contacts who might be able to place bigger orders, if he wanted them. In the past he had taken this as friendly banter, and had not taken her up on the offers. But that day he made a big show of busying himself with taking her measurements again for the waistcoat. In fact his head was racing, his mind on how to bring up the issue. He'd had to erase mistakes in his notes again and again. After the talk about his career with Bapsi Khusro, he had become obsessed with the matter of his prospects for the future. While he resented Bapsi for making him feel like a child, he was no spring chicken. If he wanted to get a college degree for example, he needed to get on with it. So when the opening presented itself, he approached Betty tentatively, asking her if she could suggest ways he could further his education, try to widen his horizons.

"Of course. You must." At first she was distracted, not sure what to make of this unaccustomed conversational gambit from the young man who had so far always been diffident, not very forthcoming about himself.

"What do you think if I apply to an American university?" He knew what came out of his mouth wasn't idiomatic, but her smile wasn't mocking he saw, so he took heart. "Yes. I thought maybe you could tell me how to go about it, give me some tips. Maybe write some letters for me or tell me where I should make inquiries?" The visit ended with a vague agreement from her to help him, but it was something.

THE SECOND TIME HE SAW THE GIRL with the silky hair and impossible eyelashes he had noticed at the cigarette-and-*paan*-shop was at the Taj. He was just hanging out, watching the strolling crowds of Indians and some foreign tourists. He had just delivered the adjusted *shalwar-kameez* set to Bapsi Khusro, and she had tried it on immediately. He'd made a point of noting delicately that it had a "slimming effect," made her look as if she were wearing heels. It was a relief to complete the job with Bapsi, and she'd felt reasonably happy with the result. Now, back out on the street, he felt that after a long weekend of work he owed himself some downtime. Bandra Master was no longer waiting for him. Nobody was. His mother too had long gone back to her home village, to live close to her remaining two sisters. Even though it was Wednesday evening, midweek, it was already late. It must be, what, 9 or 9:30, and he decided he would gawk at all the beautiful people of Mumbai. After all, he was wearing his best clothes, his visiting clothes, which he wore for his richer patrons. He was poor, true, but he was single, young, and, he told himself, good looking and made for better things.

If his formal education had been put on hold, that did not mean he was not constantly educating himself with a kind of wild method. He was a minute observer of how other people, especially those who were obviously successful and young, spoke, what they did in public, how they behaved with members of the opposite sex to whom they had not obviously been married since the beginning of time, and especially how they dressed. His tailor's eye didn't miss much there. He eyed carefully the clothes worn by the kind of people, and especially the women, who came in and out of the hotel shops with names he recognized but still didn't know how to pronounce correctly, such as Gianni Versace or Louis Vuitton. He looked at the way the foreigners carried their clothes on their bodies. But his interest was certainly not only sartorial or professional. He saw other young people as models for his own behavior and was determined to learn from them. They were his university. And then there was also the pleasure of looking at all those beautiful girls, to whom one could, in these crowds near the Gateway, or along Marine Drive, get tantalizingly close, close enough to smell the perfumes of middle-class Mumbai. Yet they always remained out of reach.

Like so many others gathered here on this November evening in Mumbai, he was people-watching with purpose, with the Taj on the one side and the harbor with its twinkling lights on the other, beckon-

ing, inviting him towards distant lands and wondrous experiences. The smells of street food were equally tantalizing, if only because they were familiar: *bhel puri*, *puchkas*, *chole* on a banana leaf and with a disposable wooden spoon. But he decided to take a walk and then find a bite to eat somewhere not too expensive but still befitting his best clothes. He walked a few yards away from the water towards the Taj.

And that was when he saw her, just about to enter the Taj, the doorman holding the hotel door open for her. Was it really her? He couldn't be sure. But his heart was racing, so he just let it take him. And then girding himself up, he walked boldly through the big hotel doors into the lobby, thrilling a little to be able to get past the doormen without eliciting too obvious a disapproving glare from either of them. But he chided himself, reminding himself that only a poor tailor's son would find this to be an achievement, this ability to pass as someone who might belong here, in one of the city's plush hotels.

He strolled past the overpriced stores, stopping briefly at the clothing display windows to shake his head at the price tags on the men's shoes and shirts and especially on the women's clothes, many of which he knew he could make for a fraction of the cost. He searched all the shops he passed, looking for her. He saw an escalator going up to the next level, and stepped on. He couldn't see her. No, wait. There she was, heading down to the first floor on the opposite escalator. He turned around, then remembered he was on an up escalator. He climbed a few steps up to the top and then got on the opposite side to go down. For some reason there was a crowd of people ahead of him and he was only able to squeeze past a couple of them, saying "Excuse me, excuse me," and drawing disapproving glances. But then there were too many people so he tried to see how far down she was.

There she was, heading to the exit, her silken black hair lifted by a breeze, probably venting up from the escalator's shaft. He was watching her adorable behind. Couldn't take his eyes off. But she was already moving fast towards the revolving doors, and by the time he got to the bottom of the escalator he had lost sight of her. He rushed to the automatic doors but there was a mass of people ahead of him, surging towards the doors. He moved right to the heavy side door, which had to be pushed open. His hand was turning the big brass door handle when the blast hit him. Later, with much effort, he would remember a shower of glass and a distant roar and something hard against his cheek, and something warm and wet on his scalp.

WHEN HE EMERGED INTO A HALF-CONSCIOUS DELIRIUM at the Kalajot hospital, it was as if he were a boy again, walking through the muck in the pond in his mother's village harvesting *singhara*, water chestnuts. Ooze underfoot, all kinds of vegetal matter impeding his progress, so that everything, everything seemed alive and clutching at him. But he couldn't tell whether fish, plant, snake, worm. His face was warm.

Legs cold. Wet? He couldn't be sure whether he *saw*, or *was*, the young man wading navel-deep in the pond, lifting a clutch of *singhara* plants up and hurling them onto the bank, the water flying into spray in the evening sun.

HE WAS FALLING INTO A VOICE SAYING, "Two units, *sar*. Gave him already."

He wanted to say, "Stop."

He said, "Unnnh."

The voice or some other voice said, "Next to the hotel."

Another voice, next to his gurney, said, "Paperwork says no ID."

SOMEONE WAS GENTLY SHAKING HIS ARM, or his foot. He couldn't tell which it was. His head hurt. His face and chest felt wet and his fingertips, when he pressed them against the hard surface of the bed or table on which he was lying, felt like jujubes.

The next time he came to, he was swimming in cold water. Then the sunlight was very bright. He was shivering. Then more sounds, and the smell of the beach with all its vendors came to his nostrils. Was he on Juhu beach? No, it was the hospital, and it was night. The light was from a lamp.

"Can you hear me?" said another voice, coming like God's from directly above his head, but close. Was he dead? Hadn't he already told them he was thirsty?

"*Pani*," he said. "Water."

THE FIRST TIME HE FELT he had become fully himself again was when they rolled a big TV into the ward into which he himself had been wheeled three days after his final surgery. It turned out there was a whole ward of people who had had a close shave with the bombings in Mumbai. They were the survivors. And they were clamoring for news about what had happened to them and how they had survived. Hanif had no clear recollection of having survived a catastrophe. As he watched the news unfold on the screen, he felt first a secret thrill that he had experienced *that*. The scale of the event made him feel he was part of history in the making. Then he felt ashamed. So many others had been killed. And there was this man who had helped others to survive, at great risk to himself. All Hanif had suffered were a few gashes and scrapes. The TV kept showing this young man who looked like nothing special but was in fact one of the killers. He did not look like a terrorist, Hanif thought, but rather like a middle-class Bombay Boy. But what did a terrorist look like? This one anyway had a helmet-head haircut, his hair glossy even in the grainy stills that they kept showing. He wore sneakers, a dark T-shirt and khaki pants with multiple pockets. Not tailored, Hanif noted. Not polyester. Clearly a

middle-class boy or at least a boy with middle-class pretensions. This was the kind of thing poor tailors noticed. The young man had a huge rifle and was holding it up as he strode out from behind a building. This image flashed repeatedly on the screen. In another shot the young man was smiling as he walked past a public garden, as if he were off to a party. But he and his companions had killed so many. The TV showed again and again scenes of Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus (the former Victoria Terminus) and the Taj hotel. Scenes of carnage. And one woman's slipper, abandoned in mid-stride. Never to be reclaimed. And *he* had been there, thanks to that *churail* who had tempted him. He would never have had reason to enter the hotel had she not walked in. But then if she had not walked out, he would not have survived. And he had survived. Just like that young terrorist on the screen, who, it turned out, was the sole survivor among the terrorists. But why did Hanif feel shame? What was the shared logic by which the survivors—tailor and terrorist—were *linked*? Could it really be chance? Did it mean anything?

IT WAS A WEEK LATER THAT HE WAS RELEASED. They couldn't spare his bed any longer. They hadn't been able to do much with one side of his face, which was badly scarred. His jaw was wired up and supported by a brace, and he could only open his mouth a little. It hurt. He had been shocked when he first looked at himself in the hospital's bathroom. The yellow paint on the walls gave his skin, under the fluorescent lights, a sickly *pista* ice-cream pallor. There were bandages on his hands and face, but enough was exposed so that he felt he was re-discovering himself. He had to relearn how to curl his lip, which seemed tighter because of the scar on his cheek, over his exposed teeth. His teeth felt dry and strange. He hadn't used his jaw for all the time he had been in the hospital. They had been feeding him liquids and soups, and occasionally bread soaked in milk. He touched his chin, his neck, and they felt like someone else's bodyscape. His shoulders seemed shrunken and his waist had contracted into a pitifully thin circumference. His clothes no longer fit him, although he hadn't had much flesh to begin with.

The hospital staff had been trying to contact his family while he was drifting in and out of consciousness through his surgical procedures: his jaw had been shattered all the way from his chin to his upper cheekbone, and he had a deep gash on his cheek and a nasty wound on his scalp, but apart from an inexplicable bruising of the left side including some cracked vertebrae they could do nothing for, he was still in one piece. It was his identity that they had more trouble piecing together. He was carrying only a billfold, some tailor's notes and measurements on a diagram of a human figure with arrows pointing in at the shoulders and marking inseam lengths along the columnar lines representing the legs. In an interview just before he was to leave

his ward, it had become clear to the staff that he did not have the funds to pay for his hospitalization. His medical bill had been covered by a charitable international fund, they told him, as they handed his few things to him in a plastic tray.

"You know where you're going?" A tired-looking but young medical intern was holding Hanif's forearm as if to steady him, but also guiding him to the front door of the hospital.

"Yes, yes. Thank you. Number 204 bus," he said, or mumbled, stupidly, because he had absolutely no idea where he was. The 204 bus — he couldn't even be sure that was the number. It had been a week since he had been on his feet outdoors, and he was still a little unsteady in his head, although he felt he could walk all right.

But when he emerged from the hospital into the intense sunlight, he suddenly came to himself. He knew where he was: Behram Road. Ramchandani Marg was right there, and he was able to orient himself properly. If he walked up that way, north, he would come again to the Gateway of India — and the Taj Hotel. But if he went in the opposite direction along Mandik Road he would be headed towards Cooperage Maidan, and if he walked across the green space he would come to Betty's apartment, on Madame Cama Road. And suddenly he knew what he had to do. He was near Betty's house, and he would go and see her. He knew she would be wondering why he hadn't delivered the waistcoat. He was always punctual with her, because she was such a good customer, always generous and perhaps one of his best sources of income. He would explain what had happened, and his bandages and scars would speak for themselves. She would be kind to him and forgive everything. If he could he would reintroduce the topic of his plans for the future, with which she had promised to help. But he got confused and took the wrong turn and had to double back to reorient himself. It took him fifteen minutes of walking, and his feet were beginning to hurt, and he was reminded by the stares of the passers-by that he must look strange, with his jaw brace, his odd bandages and his hesitant walk, like a man coming into sunlight after a long retreat. But then that was what he was.

He finally arrived at Betty's building and went up to the watchman who was also the lift man and said he was here to see Betty Madam. Only in her apartment could he call her Betty. The watchman would not understand.

"*Nahin hain.*" Fucking watchman. Jumped-up *chowkidar*. He knew Hanif. So why was he acting so uppity? Hanif said he had to talk to Betty Madam about an order.

"*Bola na. Nahin hain. Anarkali Amrika laut gayi.* Gone. You should go too, to Pakistan. *Chaal vantaas.*"

"*Han?*" This was unfamiliar territory.

"She's gone. Packed up the whole jing-bang. Took off with boy-

friend. Mumbai is for Indians my friend. She got the message. When are you Muslims going to get it? You want to create havoc, do it in your own country. Just let us live in peace. Fuck off."

Hanif couldn't believe what he was hearing. In all his life he had never heard such language directed at him.

"I'm Indian too, you know" he protested weakly. His head was rocking.

"Where have you been, my friend? What happened to your face?" The watchman now seemed less angry than perplexed. He saw the bandages, the scars. Maybe he was putting two and two together. The slightest shadow came over his brow, and his voice was a little less harsh, almost avuncular now.

"The *firangis* are leaving. They're scared." The watchman said more quietly this time, as if merely giving friendly advice to an old friend. "And people are taking to the streets. I don't know what happened to your face, but if you don't want your head bashed further, you shouldn't be hanging around so close to the hotel while there's all this *tamasha*. Right now it's just rich people expressing their frustration with the government. The poor haven't yet got all fired up about it because the terrorists mainly target the rich types and the foreigners and their hotels and their cafes. But it could get ugly if Hindu-Muslim tension gets all fired up. Your Betty Madam is gone. You should go home too, and if you take my advice, go home to Pakistan. People are getting fed up with you Muslims."

It was no use protesting. He couldn't believe Betty was gone. But it was no use doubting what the watchman was saying. What was he going to do, bound up the stairs to her apartment to check? There was no reason to stay.

IN THE BUS BACK HOME, his head began to hurt again and he was feeling a little seasick. The motion of the bus was disorienting, as if he had just stepped off a boat. And he began to doubt again whether this was the correct bus. There was only one bus he ever took to this rich-man's Mumbai, and only one, number 204, back home. But now he wasn't sure if he'd got on the right one. The only reason he came all the way out here, an hour's journey one way, was to see Bapsi Khusro in Colaba, or Betty on Madame Cama street. Bapsi Khusro's world was no less alien to him than Betty's world. America was as far away as the universe in which the women in Hanif's life moved. But they were all from another universe, his women, yes, even that beautiful creature who had tempted him like a *houri* into that hotel. His women. Yah. Bloody joke. *His*, only in the professional sense, he laughed silently to himself, not in the Biblical way, not even in the Bollywood way. They were not *his* women. He did not belong in their world, the world of fancy food and fruity perfume and big hotels. Come to think of it, he still didn't know if he had fully understood *what* he had survived in

that hotel. And he knew he would have to learn again to be properly grateful that his life had almost been taken from him in the hotel and that it had been given back to him. He would watch Pandey's color TV at the tea shop that night and try again to get his throbbing head round the news, to watch once more the strange phenomenon of the middle-classes and the rich protesting on the street, something he had never before seen in all his life. That night, at the tea shop, he would smoke his poor man's *beedis* and eat his poor man's *roti* and his poor Muslim *salan*. That night he would sleep a poor man's sleep. Then, in the morning, he would take up again where Bandra Master had left off.



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Mark Osteen

The Play of Shadows

*I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head,
And I see him jump before me when I jump into my bed....*

*He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way...*

— Robert Louis Stevenson, “My Shadow”

A boy's room is a snapshot of his life and loves. The picture changes as he grows and gains new interests. And so my baseball cards and battered glove gave way to a stereo, Beatles posters and orange paisley wall hangings.

My son Cameron's room also reveals his nature, as I discover one day when David, a stocky man from Disability Services, visits to determine whether Cam, who has autism, qualifies for assistance. As we enter my son's bedroom, I suddenly see the room through a stranger's eyes.

“Wow, look at all the toys,” David comments.



A plastic Fisher-Price basketball hoop and backboard lean against the closet. A silver portable Sony CD player sits on the white nightstand; inside, CDs are piled helter-skelter, mixed with a heap of mutilated toddler books — *Good Night Moon*, *The Runaway Bunny*, *Max's Christmas*.

Assorted children's videos — *Raffi in Concert*, Disney singalongs (*The Bare Necessities*, *You Can Fly*), numerous Kid-

songs tapes—spill over the top of a blue plastic trash basket; some lie on the floor. Beside the twin bed rests a giant blue therapy ball. Beneath the window, a hulking trunk is packed with colorful toys—three different guitars, a “Magic Lights” keyboard, an unused baseball glove, two kid-sized basketballs, a Pinpressions novelty, a little boy’s pounding bench. There are no other books, no video games, craft supplies or soiled jerseys.

“How old did you say Cameron is?” David asks.

“Eleven.”

I open the closet. Here lie the remains of six years of Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy: bins of colored objects shine into the darkness; twelve-piece puzzles, certain pieces chewed, are stacked unevenly on an aluminum book shelf; above them, a Mr. Potato Head—nose twisted, tongue protruding, one arm gnawed to a stump—stares blankly. On the top shelf reposes a snazzy maroon bicycle helmet, its dark brown flames running front to back.

Both of us remark the room’s most striking feature: stark white walls, which bear no garish hangings, no posters of pop stars or athletes. They bespeak a bare imagination, telling of a boy who doesn’t have heroes because he doesn’t imagine being anyone else.

This is the room of a boy who doesn’t play.

In this regard, Cam is typical—of people with autism, at least—because the absence of imaginative play is one of the disorder’s three distinguishing features. At first this may not seem as debilitating as, say, the inability to speak, but actually it may be worse. For one thing, as Clara Claiborne Park points out, an incapacity to play imaginatively seems to violate a fundamental human trait (265). No play means no curiosity, and hence no science, no literature, no exploration, no empathy—none of that vital élan that has raised humans from the mire. More concretely, the inability to play prevents autistic children from developing problem-solving skills, learning social cues, and hewing out the building blocks of other cognitive processes. Because play is, as Bryna Siegel puts it, the child’s laboratory “for conducting ‘experiments’ on the things around him,” a child who can’t play doesn’t discover novelties, expand his reach or learn from mistakes. Thus, Siegel writes, “teaching a child with autism how to ‘play’ is tantamount to teaching the child . . . how to learn” (236, 238).

As I explain to David, one of the main goals of our ABA program (a form of modified behavioral training) is to teach our son to play and imitate others. Under precise and limited circumstances, Cam has learned to imitate certain gestures and facial expressions, but the larger goal—inducing him to

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interact with others—has remained elusive.

I tell David how Cam learned the “Perfection” game (a matching exercise) well enough to match every one of its thirty squares to identical icons. I recall how my wife Leslie and I watched with delight as Cam mastered a toy cash register, amusement park, and Fisher Price car garage. But his mastery lacked creativity: he never pretended to hand out change or made those growly auto noises most boys can produce. His play remained as mechanical as the toys. He rarely

used the skills outside of sessions, and novelty prompted resistance or downright hostility.

David assures me that my son qualifies for services. After he leaves, I finger the objects in Cam’s room, each one embodying a failed attempt to spark his imagination. It is hard not to see them as monuments to dashed hopes. Then I realize that they are better seen as a material record of our relationship.

CHORDS LOST AND FOUND

As a kid, whenever I wasn’t reading, I was doing one of three things: playing or listening to music, riding my bike, or playing baseball. Our family was musical: my dad had a long-term country band, my mother sang in a well-regarded gospel trio, and they owned tons of records. I started piano lessons at age

eight and have performed professionally throughout my adulthood.

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Naturally, I pounced on any signs of musical interest in my son. They weren’t hard to find. By age two he was obsessed with his music cassettes and singalong videos.... In moments of severe stress – at the dentist’s office, waiting at the grocery checkout – Les and I could break into song and Cam, no matter how upset and seemingly beyond reach, would join in.

(everything from *Peter and the Wolf* to Pete Seeger) and singalong videos. A favorite was “This Old Man.” Thank God for the old geezer! In moments of severe stress – at the dentist’s office, waiting at the grocery checkout – Les and I could break into the song and Cam, no matter how upset and seemingly beyond reach, would join

in – “This old man came . . .” “Roaring hone!” – and instantly calm down.

“If I See an Elephant Fly,” from *Dumbo*, “I’ve Got No Strings on Me,” from *Pinocchio*, and Raffi’s “Baby Beluga,” and “Down by the Bay” – these have been the soundtrack of our life with autism. When Cam first started watching the Raffi videos, the children in the video audience were older than he; they stayed the same as he grew larger. To my wife and me – and perhaps to Cam himself – Raffi represents the earlier, happier years when Cam’s cognition and senses were less disordered.

Favorites also emerged among the Disney videos, mostly exuberant tunes like “Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride” (with its “merrily, merrily, merrily” chorus), “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,”

and "The Unbirthday Song." The films themselves bored Cam, but *Pinocchio* and *Dumbo* carried a special poignance for his parents. We wondered: did Cam see himself in the gullible marionette who longs to be a real boy? Did our nearly wordless son feel like Dumbo, oppressed by muteness and shunned for his difference? Was his apparent lack of interest in the stories actually revulsion at witnessing his own disabilities portrayed?

He did watch one movie all the way through: *Mary Poppins*. And he watched it every night. I mean *every* night. If we tried to interest him in a different film, he vehemently insisted on "Poppins." It's a great movie. Even so, after the five-hundredth time, I knew that if I heard "A Spoonful of Sugar" one more time I'd definitely upchuck.

It seemed plausible that Cam might want to play an instrument. When he was about six, I laboriously taught him a one-finger version of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" on the piano. I'd pull out his index finger (he couldn't point on his own) and strike the first note. We'd pound away roughly, my hand moving his reluctant pointer to the C, the G, the A, and so on. By the time we struck the last "are" he'd be squirming.

"Good playing, Cam! Want to play something else?" But he'd already be bouncing on his little trampoline. Whenever I tried to show him a different tune, he requested "Twinkle,

Twinkle," and if I persisted, he'd pinch me or flee. Once I bought a programmable electronic keyboard with keys that lit up to show melodies; it lit no spark in Cam.

At about age ten, he became fascinated with simple electronic musical toys. We bought every one we could find, and he soon progressed from one-button toys to complicated guitars and keyboards. So what if the toys were designed for kids half his age—our son was playing!

We really hit the jackpot with a "Blue's Clues" radio, a tiny toy with buttons that played six songs from the TV show. Cam had never watched *Blue's Clues*, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that a) he liked the songs; b) he could play an entire short tune just by pressing one button; and c) he could *choose* which one to play. There was a birthday song and a mail-time song, but our number one hit was the Solar System Song: "Well, the sun's a hot star / Mercury's hot too / Venus is the brightest planet / Earth's home to me and you," and so on, all the way out to Pluto. For a couple of months the toy was Cam's own satellite, perpetually orbiting at arm's length.

On a Saturday visit to the grocery store, Les and I discussed lunch meat while our son, *Blue's Clues* radio clutched in his hand, slipped away. For fifteen seconds neither of us noticed his absence. When we did, we fanned out in search of the lost boy.

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I listened intently for his telltale laughing or shrieks. Instead, from a couple of aisles over, I heard, "Well, the sun's a hot star / Mercury's hot, too / Venus is the brightest planet / Earth's home to me and you. . . ." He was in the soda aisle, his right hand gripping a large bottle of cherry seltzer, his left hand grasping his radio, chin turned to the ceiling, giggling and spinning wildly.

Two middle-aged ladies gaped, shoulders hunched, afraid to approach the whirling body.

A few weeks later he threw the toy down and never picked it up again.

When Cam was about nine, my mother bought him a harmonica for Christmas. This was better than a piano: you didn't need fingers, didn't need Dad's help. You just breathed and notes came out. For a few weeks, the first thing he did upon waking was pick up the "'monica" and blow a lusty "whee—hee." After a couple of huffs he'd eagerly turn to me for approval.

"Good blowing, Cam! That's excellent!" He'd smile, sway and clap his hands for punctuation.

We began presenting the harmonica as an activity and reward in the ABA program. But as soon as play became work, the harmonica was contaminated. He soon abandoned it. Another failed experiment.

But one day months later, after rummaging through the kitchen drawer where we kept stray toys, Cam pulled out the harmonica. He put it to his lips and blew a loud chord.

"I sound good," he announced, shoving it back into the drawer.

He believed he'd mastered the instrument. So why continue?

THE CYCLE CYCLE

As a tyke Cam loved riding in his stroller: he seemed to feel both liberated and protected when he had wheels.

When he was six, the staff at his school told us he'd been riding a large tricycle at recess, so that Christmas we bought him an expensive black bike, complete with hand brake and training wheels. In the months that followed we frequently took Cam and the bike out to the road next to

our house. While I walked beside him, Les stationed herself fifty yards away, where the road reached a dead end.

"Cam! Ride to mommy!" she shouted.

As I held the bike Cam carefully placed himself on the seat and stared down at the pedals. "Look where you're going, buddy, not at the pedals!" I pointed to his mom up the road. His head snapped up. But then he forgot to pedal.

I pulled the handlebars. "Come on, let's go fast!" He pedaled tentatively. I gave him frequent pushes until we reached his waiting mom. "Way to go, Cam!" she'd shout, giving him a big hug. "You are so talented!"

Then we'd turn him around—making sure to keep him on the bike so he wouldn't get distracted by the weeds at the edge of the pavement, or the smell of his mother's hair, and forget all about riding.

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Within a month or so he could ride the two blocks to the dead-end without crashing. The bike had replaced Cam's beloved stroller — literally: whenever he wanted to ride, he'd shout, "'troller!"

We were overjoyed: for once his abilities and interests were age-appropriate. But this budding skill also presented a problem: our son could ride at a rapid clip, but lacked all sense of danger, and the return trip from the dead-end was all downhill. That meant he could pedal faster than I could run. And although I'd shown him countless times how to brake, he could never remember how to do it when he needed to. Running behind him, I'd yell, "Cam, use the brake!" Thighs aching and heart thumping, I'd grab the handlebars, often just as he was about to slam into the curb or a parked car.

Once I slipped and he rode away. As our son streaked down the middle of the street, Les and I stood, shoulders raised, teeth clenched, braced for the imminent crash. Then we shook off our stupor.

"Buddy!" she shouted, sprinting past me.

Luckily, the road runs uphill for thirty yards past our house, so gradually the bike slowed down, permitting Les to block it and halt our flush-cheeked son.

After some months, however, he stopped requesting "'troller." Maybe he was frustrated that he couldn't get beyond the rudiments: a year after we'd started, he still needed training wheels and couldn't consistently steer or stop. Or maybe the whole exercise seemed pointless, for Cam seemed to have no notion that the bike could take him places. And, frankly, we didn't want him to. If he left our sight, there was no telling what might occur. With a

shudder I banished intrusive images of broken body and twisted bike.

One day during the Late Bicycle Period, Cam's feet slipped from the pedals as he glided down the hill in front of our house. "Turn left! Turn left!" I shouted.

The black bike slowed, swung sharply left, and collapsed in a heap. Cam fell off, striking his penis on the seat. I ran to where he sprawled on the asphalt. "Doodle man! Are you okay?" He growled and slapped at my shoulder.

Ever after, the bike was toxic: at best he'd make a few half-hearted pedals, then leap off and let it collapse. He had learned an important fact: you could get hurt on that thing. By '98 we'd given it away.

That Christmas, after disdainfully surveying the presents under the tree, Cam started growling and slapping his chest. After several minutes of agitated vocalizing, he turned to Leslie and said, "Stroller?"

We exchanged mystified looks. Cam clarified: "I need a present."

Somewhere he had heard that boys got bikes for Christmas. Clearly we were depriving our child of the one thing he really wanted. That week we bought him a new bike. He wouldn't even get on it.

Thus ended the cycle cycle.

STRIKE THREE

My sister and I grew up in a kid-filled neighborhood in western Montana where two vacant lots served as ball fields. Whenever our gang wasn't playing baseball, I conducted imaginary games in the backyard. For hours on end I'd hit and catch fungoes, or sling the ball against the shed while pretending to be a major-leaguer. I idol-

ized ballplayers and collected hundreds of baseball cards, which I pored over, categorized, stacked and filed daily. I knew every player's stats by heart, and wowed adults with this arcane knowledge.

When Cam was five, I bought him a wiffle tee-ball set up.

"Okay, Cambo, let's hit the ball. Like this."

I put his hands on the bat, placed my hands over his, pulled back the bat and took a healthy hack.

"Now you do it."

He dropped the bat and ran away. I coaxed him to try again, this time keeping my hands on his as we walloped the wiffle ball.

"Wow! What a hit! Now run!" He had no trouble with that part, and generally sprinted toward the neighbors' woods.

The game may have seemed absurd to him: you run around to where you started, and then begin again. So why run? The notion of competing and winning was either beyond him—perhaps because it demanded that he imagine somebody else's thoughts—or seemed silly. Besides, he had his *own* rules: outside is for swinging or stripping the leaves from trees. Everything else is wrong.

I desperately wanted Cam to succeed at this, so the next two springs and summers we worked on hitting. He learned to hit a pitched wiffle ball

pretty well for an autistic boy, but he never really *wanted* to hit the ball. I persisted anyway, and when Cam was nine enrolled him in a Challenger League for disabled kids.

At the first practice we waited for the coaches to get organized, which allowed ample time for Cam to move from first base (reluctant coopera-

tion) to second base—wandering away, sitting down, plucking grass.

"Okay, let's hit the ball," I said, steering him toward the line forming near the batter's box.

"Huh-uh-huh-uh-huh-uh." He twisted his t-shirt into a ball and gnawed on it, meanwhile gouging my

knuckles with his nails.

Les questioned me with her eyes: is this worth it? I ignored her, then watched the other kids—Down syndrome girls and boys, kids with CP—whiff or feebly tap the ball. My kid could do better than that. But by the time Cam's turn to bat arrived, he'd already reached third base: angry defiance. Slumping to his knees in the muddy batter's box, he slapped the ground and growled. He refused to get up.

Red-faced, I implored, "Come on, buddy, I know you can do it. Don't you want to hit the ball? It's fun!"

"This is not working," Les said.

"Let's just try it one more time."



Cam tries tee-ball

"Mark. Think. This is ridiculous. Somebody's going to get hurt."

I stood, arms akimbo, a petulant ten-year-old whose mother has called him home from a game. Cam grabbed my t-shirt, ripped it, then sprang up and loped toward the car. Glaring at his back, I trudged in his wake. My kid had made a scene again. Christ, he couldn't even hold his own with other disabled kids.

Cam sensed my intense desire for him to succeed, which burdened the game with expectations he couldn't (or didn't want to) fulfill. From then on, he went on a sitdown strike or ran off as soon as I picked up the bat. In fact, swinging the wiffle bat became a surefire

way to get him into the house. I kept trying until one day, as I was chasing him around the yard, I suddenly saw myself as one of those sports-crazed dads who hounds his kid to live out his own dreams. I could almost hear myself shout, "Have fun, damn it!"

A BOY'S BEST FRIEND

Both Les and I came from dog families. Her family had two beagles, then an unruly Chesapeake; we owned a fidgety little mutt named Snooky, then a Lab-Irish Setter cross that my golf-besotted father named (against our vehement protests) Par. Snooky often followed me partway to school, barking as she turned back as if to remind me to keep my shoes tied and nose blown.

Would a dog serve as companion for our solitary son? In theory, maybe; but Cam didn't trust the noisy, wiggly, smelly creatures. By the time he was seven or eight we could coax him to approach the neighbors' greyhounds and gingerly touch their coats. But even that mild interest ended on a November Saturday in 1999, when Cam was ten.

As Cam foraged around the yard, a

neighbor boy came by with two small, energetic black and tan mongrels. Spotting my son, the dogs began barking fiercely, then jerked free of their leashes and charged. Cam's loping gait made him an easy target for the lead dog, who nipped at his shoes and legs as if he were an errant sheep.

"Eeehhh!" he screamed, running in a circle and raising his arms as if trying to take flight.

Stupefied, I stood staring for several seconds before dashing down the hill to chase the dog away. I scolded the kid, sent him home, then examined my son. The dog had bitten through Cam's jeans in two spots, but I didn't see any marks on his skin. No big deal: a near miss.

When I returned from the bookstore an hour and a half later, the situation had changed dramatically.

Actually the dog *had* broken Cam's skin. Les had called animal control; they'd urged her to phone the police. A policeman had visited and told her to contact the owner, a neighbor we'd never met.

Baseball may have seemed absurd to him: you run around to where you started, and then begin again. So why run? The notion of competing and winning was either beyond him – perhaps because it demanded that he imagine somebody else's thoughts – or seemed silly.

"Hello. This is Leslie, from down the street."

"Oh, hello."

"I need to tell you that one of your dogs bit my son." She provided the details.

"Our dogs don't bite. Your son must have teased him."

"My son is autistic and mentally disabled. He isn't capable of teasing a dog." Her voice grew tight. "He was minding his own business when your dog got away from the boy who was walking it and bit my son."

"The boy wasn't supposed to be walking the dog. Anyway, my dog wouldn't bite."

"Let me be clear: your dog attacked my handicapped son while he was *playing in his own yard*." Her forced friendliness had vanished.

"Oh, the dog might have snapped at him. That's how we play with them: we get them to snap at toys."

Silence.

"Well, I guess it's hard to understand."

"All I know is that your dog bit my son. We need to know if his rabies shots are up to date. We'd appreciate it if you'd check on that. We'll call you tomorrow."

It turned out that the animal's shots were not up to date, which meant he had to be quarantined for ten days. If rabid, he'd be destroyed and Cam would have to undergo a series of painful shots. I grimaced as I envisioned a long needle jabbing his stomach.

During the quarantine I battled guilt. I should have watched Cam more closely. I should have been trying to play with him instead of letting him run wild in the yard. I should have sensed danger and put myself between the dogs and my son. If Cam got rabies, I would never, ever forgive myself.

Fortunately, the dog was not rabid.

But Cam now won't go near dogs.

Cam's best friend was not canine but human—another autistic boy named Andrew. I witnessed the friendship's birth one morning a few months later, when a slender boy with curly brown hair and sparkling dark eyes began to follow my son around. When Cam got on the slide,

Andrew got on the slide; when Cam clapped, Andrew clapped; when Cam jumped on the tramp, Andrew jumped on the tramp. He was Cam's shadow.

Soon the boys became inseparable at school. Outside of school, however, the relationship was hard to sustain. Our attempts to bring them together seemed jinxed. Once Andrew's parents invited us to the Laurel racetrack for Andrew's birthday party. But an ice storm struck that day, making the forty-five minute drive too hazardous. Over the next few months, whenever we tried to arrange a play date, Andrew's parents wouldn't commit, or one of the boys got sick.

The next year Cam moved up to middle school, leaving Andrew behind. The friendship withered.

About a year later, as we were

Cam's best friend was not canine but a human — another autistic boy named Andrew. I witnessed the friendship's birth one morning a few months later, when a slender boy with curly brown hair and sparkling dark eyes began to follow my son around.

finishing a gymnastics lesson, Andrew unexpectedly walked through the door of the small cool-down gym.

"Hey, Cam. It's Andrew. Hi, Andrew!" I said.

Andrew emitted a high-pitched squeal and trotted up to Cam. The boys exchanged double high-fives, clasped hands, touched foreheads. Andrew squealed again; Cam broke into giggles.

The pals had missed each other.

I'd never before seen my son acknowledge another child, let alone interact with one. Cam had been swinging in the middle of the room; now he gave up his seat for Andrew.

On the drive home that day I grew angry at the school all over again for separating the boys. Had they even considered the friendship's positive effects on the kids before they'd made the change? No. Cam had reached the age to move, so they moved him.

Still, the relationship mystified me. Other boys bond over skateboards, video games, card collections. But Cam and Andrew – both autistically self-involved – could hardly share interests. Did they recognize their common disability? Did my son, a head taller and 15 pounds heavier, protect Andrew? Did Andrew, with greater initiative and fewer problem behaviors, watch out for Cam? Was some mentor-protégé relationship taking place?

The scene at the gym had showed that, like other boys their age who hit each other, make fart sounds with their

hands or pull goofy faces, these two didn't need words to communicate. They enjoyed each other's company. They might have been friends even if they hadn't shared a disorder.

Why, then, hadn't we done more to encourage this friendship? Maybe we simply couldn't believe that our son, who had always ignored other kids

or treated them as nuisances, really had a buddy, a mirror in whom he could see and define himself. But perhaps there was another reason.

ME AND MY SHADOW

Les and I wanted Cam to learn to play so he'd have something to share with others. We

wanted him to have the kind of experiences that had defined our childhoods. But I didn't merely want my son to play; I wanted him to play *with me*. I wanted him to respond to my coaching, to pedal beside me while I warned him about dogs and traffic lights. I wanted him to be my shadow. He wanted to be someone else.

We've played two games together successfully, and neither carries memories from my childhood. When I cared less, he cared more.

One is hide-and-seek. In our version, I tickle Cam, then crouch behind a door. "Where's Daddy?" I ask. His eyes sparkling, his mouth twisted into the lopsided grin that means he's expecting something uproarious, he trots toward my voice, stopping every two feet to giggle. I growl, pounce, tickle his ribs.

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Mark and Cam playing "ABC"

Cam semi-resists, then flees or collapses in laughter.

No cargo of expectations weighs us down. But no sign of this game lingers in his room. It exists only in memories of glee.

One evening when our son was driving us bonkers—running through the house, pounding on the floor and walls, shouting himself hoarse, giggling incessantly, burping compulsively—I banished my worn-out wife to our bedroom and coaxed Cam into playing basketball.

Hoops has always made sense to him: you just put the ball into the basket. Usually I take a shot, yell "Two points!," then, "Cam's turn." During my

shot he lies on the bed, bounces on the tramp, or stares out the window, but at his turn he usually gives a good effort.

Over the years I'd taught him a simplified version of "HORSE," which I named "ABC." I shoot from the center, then he shoots from the spot: A. We move to one side for B, and to the other for C. I have to prompt him to take each shot and praise him profusely for each one made. Occasionally he gets really excited and

shouts, "two points!" If he misses two or three in a row, he'll chew his shirt or bite the ball—he wants to win.

On this evening he was even less compliant than usual. But a challenge drew his interest.

"Cam, stand over here by the night stand. Try to throw it in from here!" He walked to the far end of the room, took aim, and missed. Twice. Growling and chewing commenced.

"Buddy, you can do it. Take your time and try again!" He took aim and sank it.

"Yay, two points for Cam!" We slapped five—any father and son shooting hoops at home.

Hoops has always made sense to him: you just put the ball into the basket. Usually I take a shot, yell "Two points!," then, "Cam's turn." During my shot he lies on the bed, bounces on the tramp, or stares out the window, but at his turn he usually gives a good effort.

The struggle to teach my son to play was a prism refracting my own childhood — of days spent devising solitary games with private rules, of conjuring a second self who called play-by-play and drove me to excel. When Cam came along, I tried to make *him* my shadow. Only when I turned down the spotlight of my hopes and dreams did I glimpse the boy my shadow hid.

Yet Cam also has a second self. It emerges whenever a bright light shines at the proper angle, and he stops whatever he's doing to create shadows on the table, wall or door. It's as if he's talking in sign language to some unseen interlocutor. His hands, usually so maladroit, suddenly acquire grace and elegance. Yet he seems at once surprised and gratified by these shadows, as if he both knows and doesn't know that he has made them. Perhaps the shapes appear to him as abstract art, all chiaroscuro and contrast, each one pure and self-contained — *from* him, yet

not *of* him. The shadow moves when he does, yet changes unpredictably — one minute small and helpless, the next large and menacing — a companion whose actions mirror his own. Perhaps the shadow, peeping from behind the blinds of his perception, appeals to him as a sign from some other world — the elusive home, that place where he truly belongs. Or maybe the shadow boy assures Cam that he is, indeed, truly and only himself.

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Elizabeth Eslami

Medicine Wheel

In his mind, she was still standing there in the doorway, her big, round head lit from behind like a pretty, middle-aged space alien. That was the image in his head as he drove to work and circled the block looking for a parking space. The little red O of her mouth, as she stood there with her suitcase. "I'm leaving," she said. "Now."

"I have to go to work—we'll talk about this later," he mumbled, but what he wanted to say was, "You used up all the hot water."

"We have to talk about it now," she said, her small hands in fists at her side. She stared at him in disbelief as he moved around her, hurriedly grabbing his things. "I'm late," he said. "So?" her mouth demanded. He could see the red circle as he backed down the driveway.

He never told her she looked like something out of *Star Trek*. He was tactful. When she lay in the tub for hours, reading magazines about how "metals were the new black," when she left the magazines around on the floor, the pages damp and warped, he never said anything. Never commented on the giant hoop earrings that she started wearing to make her face look smaller, and those crazy stiff collars made of shiny gold material, like something Elizabethan. He had told her once that she was pretty enough as is, without all the smoke and mirrors, and she shot him a dirty look. She told him he didn't know anything; the gold brought light to her face, made her younger.

As he parked and locked the car, he noticed the giant Snoopy



Medicine Wheel, Big Horn Basin

riding in the back seat, leaning to one side. When he won it for her their first year together, she hugged it to her chest, and the round mouth stretched wide with happiness. Lately she referred to it as the “child they never had,” and it just stayed year after year riding in the back of the car. The mechanic always gave him a weird look when he brought the car in.

Tiny, round droplets of water kept trickling from the end of his hair down into his collar. As he turned the key to the museum, the phone began to ring inside. In his hurry to answer it, he left the key inside the lock, and the keychain, with its tiny gold and silver keys used to open everything from miniature padlocks to display cases, swung slowly, brushing against the wood outside.

It was dark in the museum still, and he stretched from the phone on his desk toward the window blinds, turning the rod around and around until the morning light sliced through, illuminating the giant wagon wheel hanging from the ceiling.

She was probably calling him from her cell, leaning against the doorway, her sci-fi clothes crumpling against the wood like foil.

“County Museum, how can I help you?” In two swift movements, he turned on his computer and printer. Both began humming and beeping, sounds he no longer noticed.

There was a crackling sound on the other end of the phone, like a piece of paper being rolled into trash, and then re-opened again.

“Barbara?” When there was silence for several seconds, he cleared his throat and tried to seem professional. “Can I help you?” he asked, leaning over the computer to check his email. A line of junk mail stretched from the top of the screen to the bottom. Nothing from her.

“Is this the museum?” a voice asked on the other line, frail and wavering. An old man. He could hear the wheeze in the man’s chest, behind his words.

“Yes, this is the County Museum,” he said again, raising his voice. “What can I do for you, sir?” He began deleting the junk mail, one by one. The empty inbox looked overwhelming to him, as if it was an ice field.

“Well, I’ll tell ya,” the old man began, taking a deep breath. His volume increased, as if the oxygen had somehow given his words more weight. “I’ve been reading this book on Armstrong—”

“The old mining town, right?” he asked. Often, with the elderly, you had to lead them to their point. Otherwise it was like watching them from the shore as they paddled a dingy around in circles.

“I’ve been reading this book on Armstrong, and I was wondering if you could tell me how to get there, to the town of Armstrong.”

He looked worriedly at the door, the keys still in the lock outside, an invitation for theft, but he felt sure the phone cord wouldn’t reach.

As he listened to the old man talk, he began pulling his list of things to do out of the desk drawer. It had grown so thick, the individual

yellow pages curling back on themselves, that he had to struggle to get it out, banging his knee into the side of the desk in the process. He massaged the knee in circular motions.

"Indeed I can, sir, but I'm not sure how much help it would be. You see, when they built the dam in the 1930s, Armstrong was destroyed."

The old man began to cough on the other line, and he held the phone away from his ear. A small blue Geo drove by slowly, pausing in front of the museum. He jumped out of his swivel chair, craning his head, to see if it was Barbara. The car drove on, and he could see a man's head in the driver's seat.

He had not believed she would really leave, when she stood there putting her makeup in a bag, the toothbrush sticking out of one corner of her mouth. Or, if she did, it would be like the time she left and called him three hours later to come and pick her up from her mother's house. He thought of her, standing there sheepishly on her mother's porch, her suitcases at her feet, and wondered what she was thinking now.

Last night, she had bounded onto the bed like a golden retriever. "See this?" she said, thrusting a form in his face. "I've decided to enroll in law school!" He had smiled and nodded, stroking her hair until it was flat under his hand. "That's great," he said. He wondered to himself if it would last as long as veterinary school and medical transcriptionist school.

"I've been reading this book on Armstrong, you see, the town I'm talking about, and they say it had some Indian activity there, maybe some things which still exist in the town of Armstrong. So I was hoping you could tell me how to get there, maybe so as I could go and have a look for myself..."

"Right. As I was saying, the town is seventeen miles to the northwest, at the current site of Rigley Dam—so you would take Highway 15—but when they built the dam, they flooded it. So Armstrong is underwater." He rolled his chair over to the copy machine, stretching the phone cord as far as it would go, and began refilling the drawers with paper. As he slid each one out, the metal screeched against itself.

He caught his reflection in the side of the machine. As his hair began to dry, a piece of it stuck straight up at the top of his scalp, waving back and forth as he moved. That had been her idea, changing his part to the right. She encouraged him to change it three years ago, but it never took, his hair always bending back the old way.

"But do you know how to get there?" the old man barked. "That's what I'm trying to find out."

"Yes, but you can't visit it, since it's underwater. Unless you're a scuba diver, I guess." He laughed a little, the sound tinny.

"I'm in this wheelchair," the old man said, his lips so close to the receiver they muffled his words, "and I got nothing to do all day but just sit here, reading books, you know. So I found this book on Armstrong, and it was real interesting—"

He finished with the copy machine and returned to his desk. He'd dealt with these types before. Senile. Nothing you could do.

"Yes!" he interrupted. "Too bad it's underwater. I wish I could visit it too!" He boomed with false geniality. Sometimes they responded to that sort of thing, and once you became their friend, it was easier to hurry them off.

He looked up at the heavy wood door, and imagined Barbara walking through it. He could still see her as she was on that first day, trying to navigate the museum door with her blue umbrella which ended up crushed, her hair wet and her makeup smudged from the rain, everything about her soft and blurred, as if her face was a watercolor.

When she left in the morning, it wasn't dramatic, and he told himself that it wasn't permanent. He was on the toilet, for crying out loud, and she just murmured, "I think I'm gonna leave, I think I really have to leave you." But she was always doing things like that. Packing suitcases, making ultimatums. It didn't mean anything. She couldn't just disappear, like going through a trap door. The world wasn't big enough.

Where would she go? How long could she drive around in circles before the Geo ran out of gas?

He looked out the window again.

"Young man, you know when you're in a wheelchair, there's not much to do but read."

"I can imagine, sir." He stretched the phone cord, trying to get to the door to retrieve his keys, but he only made it halfway.

"And that's how I came across this book on Armstrong and all the Indian artifacts. You know they say there's a medicine wheel in Armstrong."

"Medicine wheel. Yes, the Indian rock formation, with stones in a circular arrangement. A ceremonial doorway of sorts, right?" He sank back in his chair and flipped through the messages on his desk from the day before.

"Yeah, they say there's a medicine wheel in Armstrong. That's what it says here in this book, and I sure as heck would like to go and see it for myself. You don't know where Armstrong would be in relation to Centreville, do you? I figured you might know there at the museum." The old man's voice ebbed at the end of each sentence, as if each effort required the building of energy, and its eventual release.

"Seventeen miles from here, to the *northwest*," he said, his teeth snapping together. He pushed his list back, and the box of paper clips slid from his desk, the clips scattering beneath it. He clambered under to retrieve them, still holding the phone to his ear. The piece of hair on his head bobbed back and forth, brushing against the underside of the desk. "Of course, it's underwater now, because of Rigley Dam, so you can't see any medicine wheel or anything else."

The keys in the front door jingled, and he struggled back to his feet,

one hand over the receiver. He cracked his head coming up.

It was Kelly. Of course it was.

"Sir, if you could just hold for one minute—" he said, trying to muster a smile. Why couldn't she have come herself? Why did they always send their friends, middle-aged women, sensible women, with enormous purses? This was Kelly's second time as messenger. When she left at Christmas, she sent Kelly to find him at the 7-11, where he was buying her styling gel. She told him across from the tampons. "Barbara's leaving you." The time before that, it had been Karoline, who had come to the museum to tell him Barbara was at her mother's and wasn't coming back. When he stared at her dumbly, she shrugged and said, "Don't look at me. It's a woman's prerogative."

Kelly faced him at the desk where he stood half wrapped in the phone cord.

"Do you know there are keys in the front door?" she asked, her blond hair aimed around her face.

"Yes, as a matter of fact I do. Is that what you're here to tell me?" he asked.

"Look, Jim, I don't want any trouble."

And that was how they always started, too. They came in talking to you like you were a lunatic, like that was established.

"Neither do I. How are you these days? How's Roger?" He could hear the old man breathing on the other line, louder and louder, like he had a fan in his chest.

"This here book says there's a medicine wheel..." the old man said, half-whispering.

At the same time, she answered him, the two voices coming at him, intertwined like a DNA helix.

"I don't see how that's any concern of yours. I'm just here for Barbara." She took a deep breath, puffing her matronly chest out, and looked around at the museum with disdain, her face flat.

"Excuse, me—is this the museum?" the old man asked, clearing his throat. He sounded like he was waking from a dream, turning his head from side to side, sitting up in bed.

For a minute, he felt something funny in his chest, and wondered if maybe this *was* the end. Like the time he was driving with Barbara and they hit a dog, and she made him get out and give it mouth-to-mouth. He had that feeling when he put his hand on the dog's side, and felt it cold and still and quiet. "Keep trying!" she had shouted, choking back a sob, but he knew there was nothing else to do.

He made a gesture toward Kelly, who stood there staring at the buffalo heads on the wall with impatience, their soft black eyes reflecting her.

"Yes, sir, but if you'll just hold for one minute—" He looked back at Kelly, taking the phone from his ear.

"Why couldn't she come here herself?" he asked, unable to hide his

irritation.

"Don't raise your voice with me. You and she will have to sort things out yourselves."

There was a screeching sound from the phone, perhaps the wheels of the old man's chair.

"Could you tell me how to get to Armstrong?" the old man asked, plaintively.

"Look, fine," he said to Kelly, "so why are you here?" Out of his peripheral vision he noticed the mailbox flag go up on his computer screen.

"She wanted me to tell you she's leaving you," Kelly said. "She's tired of this, of you. So now I've told you." She swung her enormous purse over her hip like a body and yanked open the door.

"There's a medicine wheel in this book I've been reading—" He could hear the old man's voice even with the phone away from his head, the words scratching through like a quill.

"She already told me that!" he shouted after her. The heavy wood door closed behind Kelly slowly, until he could no longer hear her walking away.

They used to go dancing, he and Barbara, back in the beginning. They weren't good; they just flailed around and laughed at themselves until their lungs grew tight. They danced late into the night, collapsing into each other in a sweaty mess, and they slept late the next day, wrapped in her cool, lavender sheets.

He could see her face when they woke the morning after, when he brushed strands of damp hair from her neck. She would laugh, her face wide open, and rub his aching legs.

Suddenly he began to laugh. He laughed so hard his belly shook the desk, and the paper clips, and the piece of hair on his head. A roaring sound, something that could break through rock, open up a cave, a doorway, escaped from his chest.

"What's so funny, young man?" the old man's voice asked, covered in the pages of his to-do list.

He picked the phone back up, and held it for a second, staring at it.

"Nothing, sir. I'm sorry." He wiped the tears away from his chin, where they had settled. "Please, go on."

"See, I have cancer, and I've been sitting in this here wheelchair ever since the surgery, with nothing to do but read. That's when I found this book on Armstrong and medicine wheels..."

He placed the phone back on his desk, the words leaking out.

She used to blow glass, another hobby she took up a few years after they married and later abandoned. He would visit her at the workshop and stand near the back, feeling the heat press against him like the palm of a hand. She looked like a bank robber, dressed in black, with a helmet and protective gloves and boots, holding a long, hot rod which she turned patiently against her lips, until the amber-colored fluid

grew into a large bubble. The glow of fire grew behind her, casting an orange halo around her body, and it seemed to him she was standing in front of a portal to another world. Afterward, when her vase was complete, she took off her helmet and smiled at him, and he clapped slowly until she took a bow.

He clicked open his inbox, with Barbara's email.

I'll be by the apartment this afternoon to collect my things.

B.

That was it, the sum total of six years together. An inventory of her things, her coffee cups and soaps, her jewelry and bathrobe, her law school application. She was probably there right now, rolling all her clothes into one long cylinder, like she saw on a TV show they watched together. So that nothing got wrinkled.

"And it was real interesting what that book said, about how there's a medicine wheel you can still see today, right there in Armstrong."

He deleted the message, and the computer turned white again, the cursor appearing and disappearing, as if ticking away the seconds.

He picked up the phone, hearing the old man's breath. He could tell that his lips were touching the mouthpiece.

"A medicine wheel in Armstrong, you don't say." He sat still, leaning back into his chair. He felt like it was the first time he had been still in his entire life.

"That's right. I couldn't believe it, just reading that in my wheelchair. So I says to myself, I wanna find that Armstrong and see for myself."

"I don't blame you. I'd like to see it too." He looked out the window, onto the street. People were walking around like small animals, moving in circles.

"Any idea how to get there?"



Elizabeth Eslami received her B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and her M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College. Her stories have appeared in *Apostrophe*, *Thin Air*, *The Steel City Review*, *The G.W. Review*, and *Bat City Review*. Her novel, *Bone Worship*, will be released by Pegasus Books in January 2010. She lives in Oregon with her husband and their big, black dog.

Kendahl Jan Jubb

The Rhythm, the Flow and the Joy

by Ram Chandra Murphy



Tea Garden Koi, 2007, watercolor, 24" x 40"

The dimension between the gloriously beautiful and the hideously gorgeous is the domain of Kendahl Jan Jubb's artistic impulse. The alternation of rapture and mortification is exposed as indivisible within the recognition of her conscious experience. Jubb explores the impossibility of dichotomy and celebrates the abandonment of discrimination, leaving only spontaneous expression of emotion. Above all, she exudes a dynamic love for executing her art. She projects herself onto her paintings, literally moving in syncopation with the flow of watercolor, striding and weaving her bodily being into the fabric of each piece, as she is compelled to feel the artwork in her physicality or she cannot envision it and therefore cannot manifest it. She speaks of the need to "feel the painting at the base of my brain while I work, and move around the studio, getting my body involved and feel the rhythm of the piece."



Bitterroot River Riprap, 2006, watercolor, 34" x 45"



Blue Pool Koi, 2006, watercolor, 24" x 36"



May Forest, 2007, watercolor, 24" x 36"

Jubb inserts her most intimate personal life into her paintings. She uses recognizable flora and fauna in her creations to describe increments of her psyche and feelings, often drawing a correlation to her immediate experience by assigning beings to represent her in a highly personal drama. The trout emerging from behind a boulder suggest the awareness of alienation she may experience in a teeming crowd. The fish serve Kendahl as a symbol for alien and foreign incursions. It is an image she repeats in a colorful, yet shadowy environment. The eyes of the koi are so self-possessed, ancient, and yet removed and detached. *Bitterroot River Riprap* is a glimpse into a timeless Montana river bed, populated by several large rainbow trout swimming the luscious depths. Inviting the trout is a modern addition to their environment, a 1940s era sedan that is rusting, along with some barbed wire, and lay on the bottom of the stream. Through such a plain case of destruction, she is exploring her own trepidation of social projection and the transitory nature of civil interaction.

Powerful predators, wolves, bears, tigers and even reptiles form another platform from which Jubb delves into her psyche and maneuvers through seemingly disconnected environmental elements. Tigers prowling through domestic settings portray the potential to atrophy in civilization's entrapments. Gila monsters lounging in living rooms, mountain lion cubs napping amid spring blooms and flower pots portray the predators imbedded within and without Kendahl's comfort zone. Of course, there is an abundance of beauty and bounteousness of glory that comprise Kendahl's universe. She is constantly projecting that joy of painting through of the condition of her humanity, and often repre-



Big Blond Bear, 2008, watercolor, 42" x 30"

sents more beauty than is imaginable with an apparent twist of jeopardy and apprehension. In *Big Blond Black Bear*, the forest is exploding on a glorious, garden-of-Edenesque May day with wildflowers and all variety of denizens witnessing the unimpeded advance of a large omnivore. Every living cell in the ecosystem seems frozen in anticipa-



Golden Jackal, 2007, watercolor, 18" x 30"



Garden Coyotes, 2007, watercolor, 30" x 40"

tion—the bear alternating between detached purposefulness and menacing nervousness. Jubb uses a beautiful northern forest locale to dissect the elements of intrusion and invasion that give cause for agitation. Or is it admiration? The entire confrontation is framed by the gorgeousness of the natural scene—unnatural in the fullness of its glory!



Still Life with Lions, 2008, watercolor, 26" x 42"

Still Life with Lions and *House Monster* each incorporates a definitely unsolicited presence in a typically secure domestic situation, a favorite theme of Jubb's. She revels in the inclusion of a Gila monster in a Southwestern parlor with a most inviting leather chair and a very luscious native-style carpet. The Gila monster, resting on the priceless rug, invokes repulsion and inhospitality to those who find Gila monsters in the home objectionable. Jubb, on the other hand, thrives in such magnificent, dangerous juxtaposition and strives to find trepidation in comfort. Observe the three cougars sleepily lounging around a designer's dream of a parlor—again abusing an extraordinary carpet! The waking lion seems to be weighing his options that may or may not turn out to the observer's advantage. One can discern a primeval fire burning behind sleepy eyes, which is a reoccurring anxiety Jubb ponders in her art. In both of these paintings the flowers and appointments are particularly appealing, which serves to intoxicate the viewer with a dose of gratification.

Not that Jubb is consumed with terror or discomfort, but it is a condition that exists in many of her works. In *Incredible Blue*, it is the radiance emitting from the center of the morning glories that burns the eyes, although it is merely negative, unpainted space. The viewer's instant reaction is to avert the gaze, avoiding retinal damage, and discovering a burning blue that vacuums and soothes the eyes and leads one into a tightly entwined garden of pleasure populated with two warblers peering from the depths. Jubb uses pleasing natural images to give a glimpse into the infinity of wonder. She functions as an arbiter on an excursion of wildflower intoxication.



House Monster, 2007, watercolor, 16" x 28"



Incredible Blue, 2007, watercolor, 24" x 36"

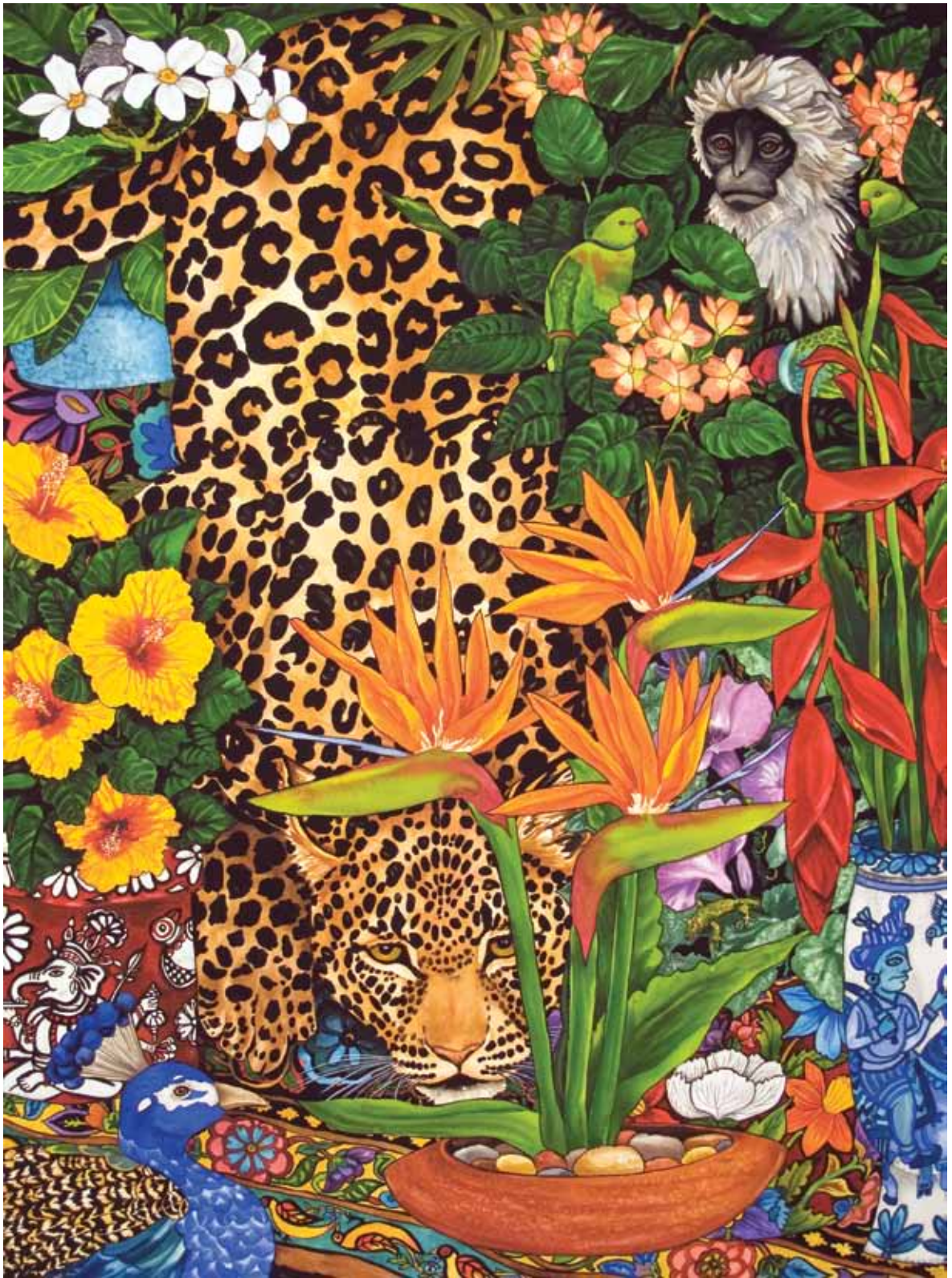


Brilliant Butterflies, 2008, watercolor, 40" x 30"



Brilliant Butterflies was created for The Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis. Kendahl was invited to be the keynote artist for their national campaign in 2008 and was asked to work around the image of a butterfly – the organization’s image – as an expansion of regeneration and transformation. Jubb centered the artwork using a Luna moth, which she envisioned as potentially destructive, and surrounded the moth with a whirlwind of renovating butterflies alighting on a blazing garden. Jubb senses colors as wave forms with harmonics, rhythms and melodies. “Color is just like music. Colors can blend like a symphony or be discordant—colors have wavelengths that are interpreted by our brains to motivate us to react intellectually and emotionally.” She orchestrated the butterflies and flowers into a highly charged syncopation that vibrates with the sentiment she perceived from the coalition that commissioned her to compose the piece. She uses color to motivate objects throughout her paintings and to coerce the viewer into sharing her inspiration.

After painting with acrylics, oils, and ceramic glazes, watercolor is the only medium Jubb feels exactly expressive with. The flow of pigment through water onto cotton fiber paper gives her the organic feeling of creation. Much like color absorbing through a physical membrane, whether it is plant or animal, Kendahl feels the painting breathe and grow as she is breathing and moving. “It fills me to let the paint and water just go and see it do its own thing, follow its own rhythm.” Her initial idea is projected mentally onto a blank piece of paper while she is conceptualizing.



Five Days in Rajasthan, 2007, watercolor, 40" x 30"



Beautiful World, 2007, watercolor, 42" x 16"



Beautiful World, 2007, watercolor, 42" x 16"



Tiger with Lion Chair, 2007, watercolor, 45" x 28"

That is the entire creative process. Once she starts painting, the work is already as good as done. One question that is always asked is quickly answered: "I start with the lightest colors and finish with the black." It merely appears to be that easy, though she is quick to insist, "I paint for the sheer joy of it, and anything else is a result of my love for painting."

Jubb painted *Tiger with Lion Chair* upon returning from one of her many trips to India in December 2007. She is always struck by the Indian tolerance for commotion and utter lack of space or privacy. This painting couples the festive colors of Divali, the profusion of life and the sensory overload one feels after a duration of just a few hours. The tiger is approaching in a direct and highly personal manner with purpose known only to him. But it is the intricately carved Rajasthani chair that is of particular interest. It is partially hidden to facilitate Kendahl's not-so-unconscious quest for privacy, stillness and contemplation. This is a quest she finds in her art, as she pours out a universe of creation onto her painting board — painting just for the joy of expression and flowing where the rhythms lead.



Raised in the Midwest after spending her early childhood in Southern California, Kendahl Jan Jubb studied from an early age with noted St. Louis impressionist, Victor Harles. She moved to Montana in 1978 to major in Forestry and quickly changed to Art during her first year at the University of Montana. Her first public showing was a one-person show at the University in 1980 and was met with resounding acclaim. Kendahl's work has appeared in over thirty galleries from Mexico to the Virgin islands, and commissions have come from such corporations as the Bonneville Power Administration, The Peabody Hotel, The Four Seasons Hotel in Singapore, and the Holland

America Line. She lives in Missoula, Montana, and conducts a weekly watercolor workshop as well as giving workshops throughout the West. She owns the gallery, Murphy-Jubb Fine Art, but you will only find her in her studio in the Rattlesnake Valley.

Ram Chandra Murphy has been married to Kendahl Jan Jubb for 29 years and has managed her art career for the past 12 years, including managing her showroom in Missoula, MT. He utilized his considerable bias in favor of Ms. Jubb to illuminate this description of her art. He spends the vast majority of his time convincing prospective collectors to buy Jubb's art. Ram and Kendahl make frequent visits to Ram's mother's former home in Northern India, which provides vast inspiration.

Lyn Lifshin

The Ice Maiden's 279th S.O.S.

This is how you live
when your lips and heart are frozen,
as mine were in darkness.
My hair loose over pebbles.
I was deeper away
than anybody dreamed.
Light never touched me.
I forgot the taste of sun on my skin.
When I tried to listen
to the roots uncurl,
they became my upside-down
trees and branches.
It was like listening to someone's
teeth hit a clay jar
somewhere further than any moon.
I thought of my bones as buried silver
that explorers would unearth,
my hair a lake of onyx,
something that you wouldn't expect
to survive,
waking up,
wanting to explode into blossom.

The Ice Maiden's 232nd S.O.S.

You wouldn't think that,
buried so long,
I could even respond again.
That I could hear sleet,
the branches over me
creaking and splintering.
Sometimes, I imagine
sun and light leaking through stone
that was a dream.
Then it was over.
I can't tell you how
I left what was my world for so long,
and that the first glimpse of sky
seemed like water,
my body like a pleated skirt
pressed under granite,
dark as violets,
rigid as bark,
terrified as I fell through ice crystals,
still as ice crystals,
seeing flesh and fingers
before I could feel them.

The Ice Maiden's 214th S.O.S.

It was a risk,
but everything
was after that
first death.
Terror was
suspended as
my lips were
in ice.
I didn't think
that I could
respond, or care.
I didn't expect
to open,
or feel anything
but the
Darkness.
I didn't expect
anything but
water.
I remembered
the blue iris,
the melon-colored
lilies like
someone in the
death camps
going over a
violin sonata.
I tried to
imagine my sister,
old,
in our last home,
her eyes once
like mine,
full of earth
after 500 years.
If I could choose
light, the raw wind
under the volcano
on my own,
I don't think
I would have.

The Ice Maiden's 87th S.O.S.

It was like being buried
though I don't remember that either.
There were the years in darkness,
and then,
it was like falling through space,
hardly thinking of the place
that I was torn from.

Later, voices were as foreign
as the words of roots
moving under the earth.

Like the first time,
I was dazed,
still frozen.
I hardly felt the stones
I slammed against,
or the sun turning my face mahogany.

By the time I was carried from
the valley, my hair smelled of
cold clover,
something was thawing,
something was at risk.



Lyn Lifshin has written over 120 books and has edited four anthologies. She has most recently published *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness* (Texas Review Press), *92 Rapple* (Coatalism Press), and *Desire* (World Parade Books). Her Black Sparrow book, *Another Woman Who Looks Like Me*, received the 2007 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence. Her website is www.lynlifshin.com.

Ann Frantz

Samaritan

The prairie's cluttered with antelope today; they're scattered every which way across the distance. I could watch them run for hours, flying through the sagebrush like a drill team, zigging, zagging with the wind, moving like rabbits on pogo sticks. They're about as plentiful as rabbits, actually. Pete says there are more of *them* than *us* in Wyoming.



I stick the binoculars out the window and stare hard enough to stretch eyeballs at the closest string, grazing along the creek bed. Glasses don't help much, what with all the jostling in this old wreck. We need shocks something fierce, but we don't have the money right now, so we bounce and Pete swears after the big holes.

We took the old road out of the Bighorns this morning, heading east. Pete gives me the scoop on antelope—he's encyclopedic about stuff like that. I say their spindly legs make them look delicate, even like ballet dancers in the wild.

Makes him laugh. "Look at the shoulders, Allie," he says. "Look at the haunch."

"What?"

"The butt, Al. Hindquarters."

"Oh. *Pardonnez-moi*." I focus up close to one, have to steer myself back and forth to get it right. Hunter Man wins again; there are powerful muscles there.

Whenever they startle, and run, it's about faster than the eye can follow. They're designed to be quick, he says; they're the fastest runners on the continent. When they see a threat coming, they're history.

When we come to the next batch, I ask him to pull over.

"They're smaller than deer, aren't they?"

Simple question, but it launches him on a travelogue, about how they're actually in the giraffe family; I think he's nuts, but since I don't really know the answer, I'm not gonna argue. At any rate, they don't

look worried by our presence. They don't even glance when he turns off the engine.

"Not very aware."

Pete corrects me, as he just must do, being a teacher. He loves telling this stuff, throws in a little fiction when he's sketchy on the facts, to make a good story. "Don't be fooled," he says; "they know we're here." Their eyes peer sideways, 320 degrees around, and their sight's as sharp as my binoculars. Then he says they can run 60 miles per hour.

I told you; he exaggerates.

Over the next quarter-hour, they migrate farther from our van. Defensive maneuvers in the animal world, I suppose. Just making sure there's a little distance.

"They're so beautiful, Pete. And so lucky. They can go wherever they want. They have no worries. Don't need paychecks. We should all be so free."

Freedom comes at a high price, he says—staying alert, and wary of strangers, always vulnerable to the elements, to predators or accidents, to the slow but steady intrusion of land developers. Free? Sure they are, but at a price: hunted in season, at the mercy of man and nature.

Still, they graze as if they hadn't a care in the world. Lately, he says, they've adapted more. They roam close to town, range among the grasshopper-like oil pumps bobbing up and down, don't even glance at the long coal-laden trains snaking toward Denver day and night.

We came to Wyoming last fall, just as things started to change. Coal mining took off around 1970, and there have been jobs galore ever since, for men at least. Towns in the Powder River Basin sprouted acres of trailers for mine workers, turning Gillette into a real boom town. The miners' families are here now—and the town's all about building houses in suburban tracts—though "sub-urban" is a funny concept for a place that's about as urban as a tar-paper shack in Kentucky. Well, maybe not quite. At least you can buy coffee downtown. No Mister Donut, no fast-food joints at all, but coffee anyway.

You can feel the excitement here. Everyone says a century of coal is in the ground for the picking and there'll be jobs for decades to come; they're all trusting their fate to the future of surface mining. Maybe it's true; you can see coal right on the surface out by the highway, so there must be a lot of it down there.

Pete's teaching math to seventh- and eighth-graders, which can make anyone suicidal—but he's not "anyone." He's into it, likes the kids, likes turning them on to math, which isn't easy at their age. I'm part-timing at the new gift shop downtown, where I can drink coffee free and almost never be tempted by things I can't afford. The shop stocks buffalo horn jewelry and silver, which we can't afford, and lots of schlocky stuff—glass animals and suncatchers, whirligigs. There's endless sunshine around here, so you can get a lot of use out of reflectors. Just not at our house, thanks. But I did send a jackalope to my little brother. Let him figure it out.

We drove across the country and finally, finally — good God, finally — reached the Black Hills one sweltering beast of a day, after driving as fast as we dared for eight hours across the flattest land I have ever seen. Mile after mile, endless fields of green; we were guessing soybeans or potatoes. Sunflowers. And lots of corn. Wander into it and you could get lost all summer. But after staring at crops all day, you don't care what they are; you just want to see something else. Anything — even roadkill — to change the picture.

I'll be honest: the prairie's not paradise. I've met some people who love it — usually the ones who were raised there. God knows where they lived though, cause I haven't seen enough houses to fill a monopoly square. Halfway across South Dakota, I was screaming for more Wall Drug billboards. And what did I get? Tumbleweeds — about the only distraction between crossroads gas stations.

When we hit the Badlands, I knew I'd left behind the world as I'd known it. Stark spires and craggy walls, layered in reds, ochre, golds and grays. We camped there one night — I didn't sleep so well after seeing a rattler close-up — then took the last leg of the trip into the Black Hills.

The hills were welcome after a week on the road: they rose, dark and shimmering, oasis-like, as the sun set beyond a shadowy range of peaks and spires. If you're not from around here, you don't even want to know how big that sky is, how a patchwork of red and rose and cerulean stretches across the horizon, freed from the visual boundaries of city streets and river valleys. Endless sky, almost.

We picked a place on the map and camped in the foothills, below a rocky hillside covered with jackpine, anxious to dip our little toesies in Rapid Creek, and maybe our little buttsies too. We were living like gypsies, a traveling menagerie from Massachusetts with two dogs — one in heat, strategically sprayed with lemony dog deodorant we'd dubbed Lemon Pledge, the other half-mad with confusion. Add to that two very annoyed cats in a cage, a motorcycle, camping gear, the cooler and a few wedding presents. All of that we'd packed into a red Dodge van like Vienna sausages.

Man, were we excited. At last, we'd arrived in the Real West, where badlands, buttes and mountains plunked down in the middle of vast prairies (about which I'll say no more). I laughed when I found Bear Butte on the map, but Pete explained (when he'd finished laughing) that it's pronounced "beaut."

"Butt's better," I told him. Sometimes, I'll fight the dictionary to be right; he always seems to know more.

Carefree and self-absorbed, in the way of couples not yet concerned with babies and big debts, we relished the two thousand miles we'd put between us and family. About every weekend, we'd head to the Black Hills, roaming parks full of bison and elk, or into the mountains past Gillette to explore snow-capped ranges and tiny towns.

And that's exactly what we're up to when we meet her.

WE'RE HEADING AWAY FROM THE BIGHORNS on a fall day, when Pete points to a stand of trees at the back end of a meadow and I see a moose step out of the brush. Even at this distance, he's a massive, shaggy guy, with legs like stilts; he steps over the barbed wire as if it were a tiny picket fence, with all the ease of a creature bound by no man's borders. His head is crowned by a huge rack; this fellow owns the woods and fears no man. I'm in awe—really, in awe. Shaking my head in disbelief, grinning like a kid on a carnival ride. I'd seen elk in a zoo once, but never an animal as grand and free as this. Even Pete is quiet.

My parents should see all this, but they're happy to stay in good old New York state. I've been sending postcards, enticing them to visit. "Wyoming is like nowhere else," I write, with lots of exclamation points. "It's like—imagine the moon ... Boiling pools and craggy, snow-covered peaks, rocky spires and buttes rising out of nowhere. Lakes a shade of blue I've never seen! You have to come!" No takers, so far.

Before we got married, we went to school in Boston, which is how we met. I'm not sure I would have left if it weren't for Pete's wanderlust. Glad I did, though; the vastness dwarfs our New England concept of open space. There's a sense of endless challenge and untamed experience to our life here. For us, it's the ultimate answer to crowded cities. Our friends can have their communes. We've found nirvana: peace, love and cowboys. Yee-hah!

Thinking like this, of course, is always the set-up for one of God's little pop quizzes. You know, one minute life's going along supremely well, and the next—it's test time. No warning, no open book. Take out a sheet of paper, people. Given the extremes of this region, bitter cold winters and sweltering summer heat, these little tests can turn into final exams. We've been warned: learn quickly.

So we're trying, we're trying.

This weekend has been about camping, hiking, staring at the stars—my God, they're so close! We're getting short on time, so we're debating whether to fly along the highway and get there quickly, or ease along the byway, tucking in a few more sights.

Spotting a row of pickups outside a diner east of Lander—pickups always being a good omen—we pull into the lot. Out here, you don't pass up an opportunity that might not be repeated for another fifty miles. Gas stations and food can be hard to find when you need them.

Country music clinks like tin from a radio behind the counter. It's hard to get used to. Local kids who dig rock are what their parents call "at that stage," frowning. I'm actually starting to like Waylon and Willie, even Dolly Parton—her voice flits like a butterfly around stories that can really get to you. But "Satin Sheets"? Y'uggh. It's the Number One song, and it makes my skin crawl. We've heard its oozing misery like fifteen times today, so this is fourteen times too many. If we were still in the van, we'd be yukking it up, singing together and making

the dogs howl ... *Sahtin sheeets Tuh lie ohn, sahtin pillers tuh cry ohn, steel ohm not happy, don't ya see...*

The booths are full. There's a couple deep in conversation in the closest one—she's looking pretty peeved about something, keeps jabbing the table with her index finger, leaning into the guy's face. Not going near that. A tourist in a plaid sports shirt is fixing his camera in the next, and from the looks of the parts scattered in front of him, he'll be there awhile. In the rest, ranch hands in scruffy jeans are making history of huge bowls of chili, on trays loaded with fries and onion rings. Picking a table, we order coffee and buffalo burgers.

Pete's already concocting the first version of a mishap we had on the trail yesterday—in which I slipped and got soaked to mid-thigh in icy water, and he grabbed my arm before I could be carried away. Mr. Smartass just had to take pictures while I'm freaking out, stripping my jeans off. Thank the dear lord I had sweat pants in my backpack. I guarantee this bit will be wildly exaggerated with each retelling, eventually becoming an epic saga: "The Day Allie Slipped Into the Rapids and Prit-Near Drowned."

I'm only half listening when I notice this old lady at the counter, hunched over a bowl of soup and a cup of coffee. There's a big, worn-looking cloth satchel against her legs, which are purplish, and so horribly swollen they remind me of sausages hanging from the rafters in an old-style butcher shop. She's wrapped in a coat that's plenty loose around her shoulders, making her look frail and kind of lost.

I try not to stare, but I'm surprised. She can't be traveling by herself; this is Wyoming, for God's sake. It's almost another planet. She lowers her cup slowly, stiff-fingered, as if it hurts to move—as if she's exhausted. That might explain the grayish pallor to her skin. She's sick, or just old, or both.

Her eyes are glued to the counter. She's barely there, so still she practically fades into the background—a ghost amid gusts of laughter, banging plates and cups, shouted greetings back and forth. I'd say she was falling asleep, but there's an alertness to her, like one of those antelope watching from the side when you think they're looking somewhere else.

She shifts, and I see her face—there are no expectations in it. Face like a window with the shade pulled down. And God, so thin. If she fell, I think she'd shatter like glass. At least, the top half of her would. Those legs I'm not sure about; they're scary.

When I was little, my mother used to take me to a soup kitchen when her church group cooked. The people who came there to eat were odd-looking too, clinging to dignity but certainly not dressed for it. They'd be anxious for seconds but embarrassed to ask, sneaking quick peeks at the tray or the counter, calculating if there'd be extras.

She has that look. She's figuring something.

In a place like this, where everyone fits in, and knows where they're going after lunch, she's alone. I seem to be the only person noticing.

Wisps of dull, gray-brown hair poke below her knit cap, and she reaches slowly, deliberately, tucking a stray strand behind her ear with a crooked finger that stumbles, tries over. Her coat gaps in front, revealing a thin housedress decades out of style — like something you'd find in the Salvo Army. Not much protection against the cold nights we've had lately. Everything about her leaves me wondering what gives.

When she moves the satchel, adjusting herself on the stool, she glances toward me and I look away fast, not wanting to be caught staring. I keep expecting someone to come out of the bathroom and sit by her, a husband or a son maybe — but no one does. I keep my eyes on Pete until she looks away again. Then I shift back to her, in that little eye dance people do on the subway.

From the side, she's like those shadowy silhouettes you find among the faded, damaged paintings propped against a wall in antique shops — black paper profiles with prominent cheekbones, pointy noses and no expression. Her brows are gently arched, at odds with tired eyes; maybe she'd been a beauty once, in her youth, free of the strained, exhausted aspect she wears now. I wonder how long she's been alone. Whether she's running away. Why no one's watching out for her. She must have friends. Old people are supposed to be safe, not sitting alone in a diner at Noplace, Wyoming.

A waitress with an easy smile and generous disposition serves our meals. For awhile, we focus on lunch, talking between bites. I notice she's listening again as we gauge the distance we still have to go. Almost imperceptibly, she leans in our direction. Her arm is trembling as she raises her cup to her mouth; halfway there, she uses two hands to steady it. When the waitress stops by, we praise the buffalo burgers. Locally raised, she says. That and Wyoming beef are the only meat they serve. The cook makes a chili to die for with that beef; do we want some for the road?

She goes back behind the counter, where the old lady pays her bill then sits staring at ads on the diner wall, her cup in front of her.

We're finishing up when I realize — with the sixth sense of an urban dweller used to panhandlers and crazies — she wants to talk. With us. I send out bad vibes, willing her to keep to herself.

No luck. As we're waiting for the waitress to fill our thermos, she slowly turns on her stool. Her voice is thin with fatigue, but clear. Polite. Articulate, too, as she begins to speak. The weather, of course. It's what conversations always start with out here.

Then, the real business at hand. "Excuse me," she says. "Are you by any chance going to Sheridan?" Pete — so easy with strangers and extravagantly at home in the open social network of the West — has fallen right into conversation. Nothing special to him, just passing the time of day. My skin's prickling; I don't want to go where this is heading. She's chosen us, maybe taking our jeans and long hair as signs of trustworthiness, brotherhood.

Whatever, we've suddenly become her best chance. She's no real threat—just a worn-out woman, not as old as I thought, either. But the weight of her need is so obvious it's depressing; I'm ready to back off.

A ride, she says.

We're heading toward Casper, he tells her, not up to Sheridan.

"Casper? Well, that's okay. I can get the bus from there. Would we mind?"

So he says okay. What else can he do? Someone might come along and help her, as people do in these parts, but she's asked us, and Pete won't say no—even though I warned him the last time, when he gave a ride to an old Indian we met on the sidewalk at the Sturgis cycle rally. The guy wasn't exactly sober, which always scares me, and he got belligerent when Pete tried to refuse the bills he kept tossing on the dash. I guess he felt he had to pay out of pride, but we didn't want his money. He was piling them up, way past what the ride was worth. We drove him to a house near Rapid City; he asked us to wait outside, then went in alone and ... nothing. I spent about ten minutes harping on Pete to take off, and he finally did. We'd probably still be there if I hadn't been livid. "Don't ever do that again," I said. Lot of good that did.

Anyway, we're a threesome as we leave the diner. She goes up front; I scramble onto the old sea chest in the back, next to the dogs, once they've had their little walk. She tells us she's headed to a commune in Montana. Someone told her about it; she'll be okay there. They'll take her, she says.

That there's nowhere else to go fills the air, unspoken.

Not a word about how long she's been on the road or how she got into this situation. It's impolite, so we don't pry. But I'd sure like to know. Pete's telling her about our trip across the country and she's nodding, asking questions, even laughs softly at one point. I'm in the back, still wondering. Has she fled an abusive husband, quit a job, lost her house? Is she broke, hitching out of Cheyenne or Denver, or some crossroads ranch, opting to risk the road rather than stay? I wonder what it's like to be that alone, to be dumped off at a diner with no idea how you're going to get to the next town.

But not a word about herself. Whatever her burden, she bears it alone. Her head droops forward suddenly and she's asleep, the hard sleep of exhaustion.

It speaks to trust, or desperation, that someone would get in a stranger's vehicle and conk out like that. Either she figures we aren't going to hurt her or she's just too damn tired to care.

Mile after mile, she sleeps. My eyes catch Pete's in the rear-view mirror. He reaches back, touches my leg, pats it.

After maybe an hour, she wakes up as suddenly as she dropped off, asking about our weekend trip. She must have been listening as she woke up. It sounds wonderful, she says; she'd have liked to be there.

She wouldn't mind camping out with us tonight, in fact. No need for a sleeping bag; she'd be fine on the van floor.

Uh-uh, I think, my mind jerking into gear. I'm suddenly, absolutely, a hundred percent convinced that she'll die tonight if we let her stay with us. We'll wake up in the morning and find her dead on the van floor next to the dogs. I glare at Pete in the mirror, mouthing "NO!" His eyes silently acquiesce, but he drives along, making conversation.

She hints some more. She's so tired; it would be good to stay the night with us. We say we're not sure how far we're traveling tonight, whether we'll camp at all. We're hoping to stop with friends in Wright.

Excuses. She knows it, nods, drifting back off to sleep.

She snores, her breathing labored and uneven. I'm feeling guilty on the one hand, anxious to leave her on the other. I mean, what do you do in the morning, left with a body, stiff and creepy? What the holy hell do you do? I don't want to find out. My mind clicks, certain; I want to drop her at the bus station. With Pete, it could go either way. I wonder if he realizes how spooked I am.

As if he's read my mind, he tells her when she wakes up that the bus station is the best we can arrange. We'll take you that far, he says.

And she accepts this disappointment as she probably has all of the disappointments between her beginning and her end.

By the time we're in Casper, looking for the station, she's grown quiet again. We pull up and Pete goes over to the passenger door to help. Her limbs have stiffened during the ride, and it's hard for her to even turn sideways toward him. He helps her down, steadying her arm. When she starts to slip, he grabs her other shoulder. I see her flinch, but not a word of complaint. God, what are we doing?

She mutters a goodbye, and starts forward, leaning against Pete. Seems like she's aged a dozen years since we left the diner. They go inside while I sit in the van, rubbing the little dog's ears, cupping the big guy's chin when he lifts his head toward me, questioning our stop. Waiting there, in the deepening shadows of the day, I feel a little numb—but relieved, truth be told. And safe. I feel safe again.

I see Pete through the station's glass front, escorting her to an empty bench. There are a few other people inside; they don't even glance as she shuffles past. Feet that swollen must hurt a lot.

He sets her duffel next to her on the bench. She rests an arm on it and looks up at him, saying something. He disappears, comes back with a coffee, then hands her a packaged snack, and she gives him a look of gratitude before he turns away.

When he comes back, he starts the engine without saying anything. We see her through the glass as we turn around. She's sitting there with her head down, maybe asleep again. Coffee's in her hands, warming them I suppose. Maybe that's as far as it's going. What a bleak, mysterious life. It's depressing to even think of being in her shoes. I'm

eighty percent glad to be off the hook. But the other twenty percent is killing me; we could have done better by her, creepy or not.

I wonder if she'll get on a bus at all; wonder if there is any commune, in fact. That whole story may have been a convenient fiction we all accepted, a little dignity for her, an easy out for us.

If she told us her name, I can't remember it. Don't think she did, though. If she'd died in our van tonight, we couldn't have given the police much information. The cops would be wondering what we were doing with a sick old lady, calculating whether we had any part in her death. Then again, maybe she'd be old news to them; a situation they've seen before. Just flotsam from a sea of poor luck—someone else who's separated from the pack and been left by the road.

An image comes to mind, out of the gospels drilled into me every Sunday of my childhood. The beaten man, left by the roadside, ignored by all but one. And then a thread of memory: "What you do for the least of them ..." Ah shit, guilt.

"Jesus."

"Just 'Pete' will do."

"No. Pete, listen. What if we just dumped 'Jesus' at a bus station?"

He stares ahead, twists his lips while he's thinking. When he answers, his voice is low, which is how I know he's not sure. He looks at me. "Do you want to go back?" He shifts gears, slows.

I picture her on that shabby bench, waiting for the next kind stranger. She'll sit there as long as it takes, with the patience of someone who has nothing left.

Pronghorns graze against the western slope in the last light of day. They'll bed down soon, without fear of what the night will bring, or the next dawn. Not thinking of predators, or meals, just following instinct.

I barely glance at Pete. He's driving slower, waiting for me to decide.

"Let's just get going," I say.
"Home."



Ann Connery Frantz, a native of Vestal, N.Y., has completed a novel, *Emilee's Song*, and is at work on a second. A graduate of Binghamton University, she has worked as a reporter or editor on newspapers, large and small; disk jockey and news director in radio, and owner/operator of a natural foods business. She and her husband, George, live in Lancaster, Mass. "Samaritan" is drawn from experiences while living in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Rob Carney

You, You Goliath,

with your All-Knowing Umpire,
All-Powerful Flowing White Beard,

don't try peddlin' that door-to-door vacuum here.
What you've got is an empty pocket

not something glorious for me,
and you're upside down

from alpha to omega — *way to go!*
The Maker owes much to the thing He's made

and not the other way around:
What artist demands that his canvas

start praying?
What father punishes his son

if he doesn't sing him hymns?
That's right. Exactly. The answer is none.

So why do you want to put the world
in a headlock? Why do you assume you have the key?

You can keep your Cosmic Cruise Ship,
I'm happy with a kayak.

And anyway I'm busy now — headed out
to show the kids how to slingshot rocks.

Why We're Never Far from Water

Because our First Father was a river
and because our First Mother was a lake,

born when the rain filled a space
between green hills . . .

because he rushed forth at the world's beginning
from a storm's impatient heart —

one part thunder,
one part searching wide and blue . . .

because always, in her stillness, she was listening
and he was what she was listening for

and she was the reason he looked down cliffs,
behind rocks, never full 'til he was empty . . .

and because we've known such deepening
and felt such floods ourselves . . .

now this is The Story of Water, carried in us all.

Today's Forecast

Loss is such a long ambush. You're walking, and where did that trap door come from? Then now. And then again now — how high can you count? It's a girl as pretty as a waterfall. It's the song you taught your fingers not to play. Guitars aren't hollow, they're waiting, but.... Here we can insert any indifferent fact:

- Right now a lioness is yawning.
 - Somewhere a forest, like a net, is gathering wind.
 - The Earth hasn't tilted more; you have.
 - Those leaves, those brilliant paintings on the tree limbs, are dead.
- All that's left is the falling.

So go ahead. Your loss will catch you. Always there, more solid than the ground. Look up — what memory does that cloud look like? . . . If the sky doesn't clear, you might have the company of snow.



Photo by Jen Woznick

Rob Carney (PhD, University of Louisiana-Lafayette) is the author of *Weather Report* (Somondoco Press, 2006) and *Boasts, Toasts, and Ghosts* (Pinyon Press, 2003), as well as three chapbooks of poems. His writing has appeared in dozens of journals, such as *American Poetry Journal*, *Mid-American Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Weber* and in *Flash Fiction Forward* (W.W. Norton, 2006).

Paul D. Marks

Terminal Island

John Wayland died yesterday. The death notice ran on page eight of the California section of the Los Angeles Times. He died of pneumonia in the VA Hospital in Westwood, though were you to ask him he might have said he died of loneliness or at the least aloneness. He would be buried in the VA cemetery Friday at ten a.m. Another white headstone in a sea of blanching white headstones, each a soldier marching to a different drummer.

John Wayland died alone. He would be buried alone, except for a couple of military men, who weren't even born when he was in the service. A small Old Glory to mark the grave site.

MARIKO HAYAKAWA DIDN'T ORDINARILY READ the Death Notices or obituaries, though she figured it might be time to start since she was at that age. She came across John Wayland's notice by accident, on her way to the editorials on page ten. She saw it out of the corner of her eye. Something about the letters that made up his name, the way they fit together caught her attention. Something about the name, John Raymond Wayland, captured her memory. She went to the Victrola next to the CD machine. The technology never mattered to her, only what emanated from the speaker. She dug through the old long play record albums until she found the one with *Frenesi*, by Artie Shaw. His clarinet came through crystal clear from the fancy speakers her son had hooked up for her.

Mariko sat in her San Pedro living room, the late afternoon sun settling on the far side of the Pacific, beyond Terminal Island. Beyond Hawaii. Beyond Japan. A solitary Japanese figure in a post modern Edward Hopper room, cold afternoon light streaming



in, harsh and yellow. She could almost see Terminal Island from her living room window. Even if she couldn't, she saw it in her mind.

Today, the island off the Southern California coast held a federal prison where Charles Manson made his home. In the 1930s there had been a fishing village, like the one her father had left behind in the home islands. A Shinto temple, fishing boats, the canneries. Oil derricks. Windswept. Almost as bleak in those days as a Hopper painting.

MARIKO WAS ONLY A GIRL THEN. Eighteen. Nineteen. Hard to recall now. She could subtract the dates, but why remind herself? In her culture, age was revered. In her adopted culture it was something to be feared.

Her long, straight, black hair fell to the middle of her back. It glinted in the sun, made her proud. Today she laughed at such girl-ish silliness. Then, such things seemed important. They were certainly important when she was forced to tie up her hair when she worked in the cannery, canning her father's, and others', daily catches. Her hands were calloused rocks from the work. What she really wanted was to go out on the boats.

"This is man's work," her father had said in the thick Japanese accent that always embarrassed her. Her brothers got to go, and they were younger than her. It wasn't fair. Not much was back then.

The music drifted lazily through the room, washing memories through her. Some good, some bad. Though it seemed to her, through the tawny light of nostalgia, they were mostly good. She saw it in her children.

Her children were *Sansei*, third generation American. Her grandchildren fourth. They were as American as apple pie and the flag, even if they didn't look like George Washington or Thomas Jefferson. Mariko had considered herself the same in the summer of 1941 when John Wayland came tooling onto Terminal Island in his 1930 Studebaker.

MARIKO WAS HOME FROM SCHOOL, mending fishing nets on her parents' front porch. The hot jazz beat of Benny Goodman shot out to the porch from the Victrola in the living room. It blended with Tommy Kurosawa's Sons of the Pioneers cowboy music coming from next door.

She heard the car before she saw it. "That automobile needs a new muffler," her mother, Fumiko, said, stitching nets before she had to go in to make dinner. Her accent wasn't as bad as her father's, but it was still embarrassing.

Mariko looked up. The man behind the wheel wore a rakish brown suit and snappy Dick Tracy hat, like Humphrey Bogart. A cigarette dangled from his mouth. Who did he think he was, a movie star? And he was Caucasian. A movie star would have driven a newer car. Most

of the Caucasians who came here drove newer cars. What could this man want?

He drove two doors past the Hayakawa home. Parked. The Nakadai's house had been empty for months, ever since they moved across the water to San Pedro, the real world, where they could drive to Los Angeles and Hollywood without worrying about ferry schedules. But they couldn't have rented their house to a white man. It was unheard of.

The man took a large duffle bag from the passenger seat. He tossed his cigarette to the ground, crushed it under his scuffed chocolate brown wingtip. He set the duffle on the porch, fumbled in his pockets. A couple of minutes later both he and the duffle bag had disappeared inside the Nakadai's front door. Several neighbors came from their homes. They would glance quickly in the direction of the Nakadai's house and just as quickly turn away. Words weren't spoken.

At supper, Mariko's mother set out the rice and fish. She was always the last to start eating and the first to finish. Always running. Mariko excitedly told her father and brothers about the *gaijin*, the outsider. Her father didn't have much to say except, "He can live there if he wants to. It is their country." He was old-fashioned and practical.

With the winds of war blowing between Japan and America, many of the neighbors thought the man might be a spy for the U.S. government. Her father laughed at that. The thought of a white spy in a Japanese fishing village brought the largest smile to his face that Mariko had ever seen. He looked to his oldest son, Kenji. Like Mariko, he was Nisei, second generation American.

"If they wanted a spy," Mariko's father said, "they would get someone like Kenji. Someone who blends in."

"You aren't a spy, are you Kenji?" Mariko's other brother, Rudy, said. Her father had wanted to give his second son a Japanese name, too. But Fumiko won out this time, opting to name him after her favorite singer, Rudy Vallee.

"I'm a spy for the FBI," Rudy joked, lank black hair falling over his eyes, swiftly brushed aside.

After dinner, and after her chores were done, Mariko retreated to her bedroom. As the only daughter, she had a room to herself, a luxury in the village. She stared at the 8X10 glossy photo of Cary Grant thumbtacked to her wall. He was dreamy. Certainly more so than the stranger. But the stranger was mysterious and intriguing. There was really nothing unusual about him, except that he was a white man in the middle of a Japanese fishing village. He was certainly no Cary Grant. She put him out of her mind and turned to the book she was reading, *You Can't Go Home Again*, by Thomas Wolfe.

THE STRANGER HAD BEEN ON THE ISLAND NEARLY TWO WEEKS. He smiled and said hello to everyone, but no one knew anything about him.

"I heard he's a dope fiend," Tommy Kurosawa said.

"Where'd you hear that?" Mariko wanted to know in that demanding way American girls had.

Tommy pulled his Stetson down over his brow, mumbled and walked away.

It was a Sunday afternoon. Mariko's girlfriends asked if she wanted to go to the movies in San Pedro. *The Maltese Falcon*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor, was playing. Emi Kawaratani could get her father's

truck. Mariko liked Bogey and murder mysteries well enough, but she didn't feel like going. Instead, she found herself walking the shoreline, wind howling in her ears, waves rushing up against her bare feet. She headed for The Rocks, a pile of boulders that had once been a breakwater or something. She didn't know for sure. On a blustery day like this she would surely be alone.

As she approached The Rocks, Wolfe's novel tucked under her arm, she saw another figure there. At first she couldn't tell who it was. It was too big to be one of the young boys who often played war here, with sticks for rifles and dirt clods as hand grenades. She debated whether or not to continue on or turn around. She paused in the wet sand, her toes cold, the salt biting at a cut on her ankle from a fishing hook in one of the nets she had been repairing.

"Hello." The voice boomed across the rocks, over the breaking waves. It was too late for Mariko to turn around now. She smiled, walked toward him. The stranger.

He was standing on The Rocks, where the water splashed up, where she had once been knocked into the sea. She instinctively felt she should be ready to catch him or at least warn him. She said nothing. He was taller than he had looked from afar. His features more craggy, his noseline the straight, sharp line of a razor. Taller than Bogart, not nearly as handsome as Cary Grant. But handsome in his own way. Today Mariko would say he was handsome in an offbeat way. Then, she didn't have a word for it. He didn't smile. It made her afraid. She wanted to turn and run. Her feet were frozen in the icy water.

He was holding something under one arm. She couldn't tell what it was, hoped it wasn't a gun or knife. They were at least three hundred



yards from the nearest house and no one was around. Her heart beat fast. Her breath drew quicker.

He slid off the rocks, landing a few feet from her.

"I've seen you around," he said. "You're always working at something."

She blushed. "I've seen you, too."

"How can you miss me? I stand out like a sore thumb around here."

She wasn't sure how he meant that or how to take it, even if it was true. The Panama hat that filled in for his usual fedora flew off his head. He caught it with one hand, dropping the thing he was hiding. It was a pad of drawing paper. She picked it up, handed it to him. He took it quickly, hiding it under his arm, flushing.

She hadn't had a chance to see what was on the paper. She didn't know what to say. "Everyone's talking about you," she blurted out.

"What are they saying?"

"Not much of anything. They just wonder who you are, what you're doing here. You know, small town America."

"Andy Hardy..."

"...Mickey Rooney..."

"...Mom..."

"...Apple pie..."

"...The flag."

Their words fell on each other, overlapping in a flurry of nervous excitement. There was no irony in what they said.

His hair was brown with blonde highlights. Not as blonde as Leslie Howard's Technicolor blonde in *Gone with the Wind*. It flailed in the gusty air. Her hair, black as onyx, flailed too. It was all she could do to keep it out of her face.

"What's on the pad?"

He held it back.

"Are you an artist?"

"I thought about it at one time."

She reached for the pad. He let her take it. It was a sketch of Popeye looking out to sea. The waters were calm, not like today. In the distance, something narrow and metallic stuck out of the water.

"What's that?" Mariko asked.

"Sub periscope."

"I've heard that people on the mainland pack picnic lunches and go to the shore to watch for submarines. Is that true?"

He nodded.

"I don't think war will come, do you?"

"I don't know."

"Mr. Roosevelt's too smart to let that happen." She looked out to sea. No periscopes. She turned back to the drawing. "This is good, really good."

"Not good enough." He explained that he had wanted to be a cartoon artist for Max Fleischer, who did the Popeye cartoons, or Disney. He showed her several pictures of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. She thought they were terrific. She was about to turn the page when his hand landed on hers.

"Wait," he said.

"What's wrong?"

"That's it, that's all the pictures."

"There's one more. I can see it through this page."

He took the pad from her. What could he be hiding?

"You're not drawing pictures of the ugly buck-toothed, bug-eyed Japs, are you?" she said.

He pulled the pad in tighter, clearly not wanting her to see it.

"You're too young."

"I'm eighteen," she protested. "I think you are drawing pictures of Japanese with thick glasses and buck teeth, just like in the L.A. Times."

He handed her the pad and turned away. She flipped to the last page, a picture of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald and Daisy Duck, Goofy and several other Disney characters *en flagrante*, that left nothing to the imagination. She felt her face grow hot; she tried to compose herself quickly.

"You can turn around now," she said. He did and she handed him the pad back. "It's funny," she said. He looked relieved, until she added, "Though you are a bit off your nut. Should I be worried out here alone with you?"

"No more worried than Irene Dunne is with Cary Grant."

"Then I better worry." But she wasn't worrying, she was laughing. He smiled. It was a nice smile. Open and friendly. She liked it.

JOHN WAYLAND WAS A GREAT SHORT STOP and the Terminal Island Samurais had been looking for one ever since Danny Matsumoto had moved to Hawaii with his family. Of course, Wayland stood out like a New York Giants fan at a Brooklyn Dodgers game, but once Mariko had introduced him around most of the suspicion had lifted and he was more or less accepted as an islander, especially after they saw his moves between second and third base. He had played some ball at USC before he went into the service. Tommy Kurasawa was the team's star pitcher. He lured Wayland to his house to talk to him about Lou Gehrig's death and Joltin' Joe DiMaggio...and play him cowboy music till the cows came home.

In between her work and chores, Mariko and John hung around together as much as possible. He had a great collection of swing 78s and no cowboy music. He had been to China. He had even been to Europe. She had never even been to Japan and hardly ever got to go the mainland, to Hollywood or Los Angeles, where everything happened. Her

father, old-fashioned as he was in some ways, didn't seem to mind the time she spent with Wayland, though he did warn her not to become too attached to him.

She liked John, but she didn't know how he felt about her. It seemed as if he kept his distance when they were together.

John had taken his time about formally asking Mariko out. By the time he had finally gotten around to it she was *plotzing*, a Yiddish word she had learned from Ira Schwartz, the junkman, who brought used goods to the island every other week or so and hauled away the stuff the islanders could no longer use.

They went to a movie on the mainland. It wasn't very good and it didn't really matter because the cartoon is what got to Mariko. It was a Popeye cartoon called *You're a Sap Mr. Jap*. Propaganda for the coming war that everyone said would never come. She understood on one level. On another she held back tears. He could see her rough, calloused hands, but she didn't want John to see her weak side. After asking if she wanted to leave when the cartoon came on, and her saying no, he never mentioned it again.

On the way back to the island, they stopped at a juke joint for a burger. John put a nickel in the jukebox. Artie Shaw's great chart, *Frenesi*, came on. He asked Mariko to dance. Some of the other dancers watched them — some glared — a white man and a Japanese woman. No one said anything and that was fine with them, though there might have been a few sideways glances.

Mariko's parents weren't sure she should be dating a white man, but traditional as they were they did nothing to prevent it. This was a new country, they had to learn the new ways. John wanted to learn about her Japanese background. And she wanted to become more American than Kate Smith. They were an item and no one dared wonder where it would lead. No one but Mariko and John. They knew what they wanted and weren't about to let any old-fashioned customs, from either of their cultures, stand in the way.

After the Samurais beat the Long Beach Pikers, named after the Pike amusement pier there, Wayland barbecued hot dogs and hamburgers on his grill — really the Nakadai's grill — in his yard for Mariko's family and the team. He pulled the Victrola outside on a long extension cord and started things off with *Frenesi*. Tommy Kurasawa and Kenji talked baseball and nothing else, though Mariko knew Tommy would have liked to talk cowboy music and would have liked even more to hear it instead of that swing stuff. Her father talked fishing with several of Wayland's teammates, who knew they would never make it to the Brooklyn Dodgers or Washington Senators.

After everyone left, Mariko and John sat on the swinging loveseat on the front porch and looked up at the stars. He played *Frenesi* again. It was a corny moment, Capra-corny but real. As real as what the

Imperial Japanese Army was doing in China and the Nazis in Europe. Too real.

It was a balmy night in September. John was wearing long sleeves, as usual. She could tell he was self-conscious when she looked at his arms.

"Why did you come here John Wayland?" she said.

He turned to look out at the ocean. "To get away." It seemed like he wanted to say more. To tell her something. Didn't.

"To get away from what?" Her feet barely touched the porch floorboards so she let John push the swing. The movement was smooth and calming.

"From what do you think?"

"There's still all kinds of rumors going 'round about why you're here." She was curious. She wondered why he was being so evasive, what did he have to hide?

"Do they still think I'm a spy?"

"They don't know what to think so they think everything."

"Like what?"

"Like a gangster on the lam or a famous writer hiding out to write the Great American Novel."

"I don't know which I like better. I wish it was something so romantic."

He stood up, walked to the edge of the porch. She stayed on the swing, gliding back and forth from the momentum. "I'm surprised your parents let you stay out here alone with me."

"Only because we are in the front of the house, where people can see us. And you are changing the subject." Her father often said she was too direct, too forceful in her conversation. Too American, not enough Japanese.

"I'll tell you. I trust you. You all took me in. You didn't ask questions..."

"I'm asking them now."

"I know." He looked at her, in her eyes. Then he turned away.

"And you wish I wasn't."

"It doesn't matter." He turned to face her again. She thought his hand might be shaking slightly. He put his hands in his pockets and stood stiffly, almost at attention. "I was in the Marines, in China."

"I've heard of the China Marines. In Shanghai. They, you had to fight your way out. When was that? Nineteen thirty..."

"...Thirty-six. I was wounded. They filled me with morphine to ease the pain. I became addicted. A junkie." He yanked his hands from his pockets, rolled up the sleeves of his shirt. Not so old track marks lined his arms. She looked at them, looked away. He hadn't been looking at her the whole time he was talking about it. "I was addicted for years. Came here to get away. Get away from temptation. Try to stay clean. I've been off the stuff for four months now."

"But why here?"

"I wanted to get away from it all. It's clean here. Cool, but not in the hepcat way. I like it." He turned to face her, looked her straight in the eyes. Her eyes met his. "I like you," he said.

"I like you, too."

He took her in his arms. Hesitated, then kissed her full on the lips. She kissed back. He retreated.

"What would your parents say?"

"This isn't the old country," she said, remembering her father's admonition that she was too American, and they kissed again.

He broke from her, looked off across the porch, to the endless ocean. "The morphine felt so good. Warm," John said. He ran his fingers up and down his arm, along the tracks. Mariko put her hand to his arm, brushed it up and down. *Frenesi* came from the Victrola again and again. It didn't seem right talking dope and listening to their song.

"Didn't it hurt?"

"It hurt not to."

She could see the pain in his eyes, as he remembered.

"I was lucky to survive, a bayonet to the gut. The pain. Then the pain of wanting a fix. Alcohol didn't satisfy it. Reefer was no good. It had to be morphine."

"Do you think you'll ever go back on it?"

"It was like heaven. Heaven on earth. But I hope not. It's a heaven with a hellish underbelly."

"And that's why you came here."

"To get away. At first I was afraid. An outsider. And people were standoffish. But now..." He took a deep breath of the briny ocean air. "Here, I don't need dope. Here everything's right with the world."

"And on the mainland?"

"Temptation."

"Besides, the team needed a shortstop."

"They got one, for as long as they need." He feigned a throwing motion. His hand landed on hers. He pulled her closer.

"It's just like in the movies," Mariko said.

"Almost," he said. "Almost."

THE DECEMBER 7TH, SUNDAY WINTER LEAGUE GAME was cancelled. It seemed like everything was cancelled. The news wasn't good. John went to Mariko's house. Her father answered the door, a tear staining the corner of his eye. Mariko was in her room, crying. She and John went for a walk along the beach. The wind blew her hair in her face. She kept having to pull it away.

"The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor," John said.

"What will you do?" she asked.

"I'm re-enlisting."

"I thought you didn't want that." She squeezed his hand tighter.

"This is different. War is different. Silly thing to say, but it's true."

"Yes, it's true."

There was no baseball, no *Frenesi*, barbecues or sitting on the porch swing on a balmy evening. After December 7th, Mariko and John never saw each other again. She didn't know that he ended up fighting on Tinian and Saipan. Iwo. She didn't know that he was wounded again, given morphine and that it soothed the pain of the gut wound from another bayonet. She didn't know that he was laid up in a Navy hospital in Hawaii for three months, but that he didn't use dope after that. She didn't know that while he was on leave after getting out of the hospital he had gone to Terminal Island to find her and her family, but that they—as well as everyone else—had been moved out to an internment camp called Manzanar. She didn't know that he had asked around about her and her family and no one knew where they were.

She didn't know that after the war he had gone back to Terminal Island, but couldn't find Mariko or her family because they had settled in San Pedro. She didn't know that he had settled in Santa Monica, just forty minutes up the coast on the new roads and that in later years he played checkers in Palisades Park two or three times a week. She didn't know he'd started a successful graphic design business and had married in 1951. That his two children had attended UCLA and USC respectively. That one had died in Viet Nam, in a place called Hue. And that the other had died giving birth. That after their daughter's death, John's wife lost the will to live and faded more and more with each year until she finally passed away in the early nineties. And Mariko didn't know that he listened to Artie Shaw's *Frenesi* almost every day and thought of her.

And John didn't know that she had also tried to find him. That the War Department wouldn't tell her anything about his whereabouts. That after several years of trying she finally gave up—as he finally did. He didn't know that her father had died of pneumonia in Manzanar. That her mother was still alive in a rest home three miles from his house. He didn't know that Kenji had fought with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit composed completely of Japanese Americans from the camps, that was the most decorated unit of the war. He didn't know that Rudy's rage at the internment in Manzanar drove him to drink and that after the war he took off and no one in his family heard from him again. And he didn't know that Mariko had married and had three children of her own. Two attended USC and one went to San Francisco State. He later died in Viet Nam. At a place called Hue. He hadn't been drafted, but had volunteered, for the Marines.

Neither had known that the other was haunted by memories. Memories with names like Pearl Harbor, Dunkirk, Rommel, Tojo, Patton, Stillwell, MacArthur, I Shall Return, Kilroy Was Here, *Frenesi*, *Amapola*, *Tangerine*. Goodman, Miller, the Dorseys, Duke Ellington and Sinatra. Air raid wardens, blackout shades, rationing, Iwo Jima, Okinawa,

Nagasaki, Manzanar. The 442nd RCT. Rosie the Riveter. Victory gardens and Gold Star Mothers.

Memories of a small island off the Southern California coast. An island that wasn't the same after the war. What was? The fishermen of Terminal Island were not allowed to return. But in that one door closing others opened and they spread throughout the city and moved into other jobs, even professions.

If only we'd had computers then, Mariko thought. It would have been so much easier.

If only....

JOHN WAYLAND MIGHT HAVE DIED ALONE. He would not be buried alone, the only attendees at his funeral an honor guard who didn't know him and didn't really care. And he would not be forgotten. *Frenesi* drifted through the room, the chintz curtains wafting on the breeze from the open window. Mariko stared out the window, toward the ocean and thought she could see Terminal Island across the water.



Paul D. Marks grew up in Los Angeles and now lives in a semi-rural area of L.A. County. He has had over twenty stories published, including "Netiquette," which won first place in the Futures Short Story Contest. "Dem Bones" was a finalist in the Southern Writers Association contest. His novel *White Heat* took second place in the SouthWest Writers contest. While a graduate student at USC, he studied under novelist T. Coraghessan Boyle. He has also published several non-fiction articles in various newspapers and magazines and has lectured on writing at UCLA, Cal State San Bernardino, Learning Tree, as well as writers' organizations. He works as a script doctor.

Will Wells

Gold Panning on the Arkansas River near Leadville, Colorado

for Ronda

Just downstream from the ranger tower,
sculpted bedrock curves to a sheltered cove,
scooped out by floods, overhung with sage.
There, where turbulence loses its load, we delve.

In this gulch edged by cliffs, the eddy is
unruffled though the stream goes frothing by.
Old rhythms, new to us, grow familiar
in rich desolation under mountain sky.

I shovel from long-settled deposition,
not boulders, ordered with compulsive care,
nor stones in matched, diminishing pairs,
but gravel, sand and silt closer to shore.

Your pan rocks like a cradle, inviting
current on one side, sloshing it out the other.
You thumb out the dross, umpire of what is
worth saving from each trial by water.

In the bottom of your pan, liquidity —
bits of pyrite, gold, and mica compete
brightly for the sun's (and our) attention,
our challenge, simply to discriminate.

Greed, not for wealth, but for the task itself
compels us here from jobs done to the clock.
Dubbed by sunlight, you kneel to a motion
beyond our own, a past we've taken back.



Wells' first book (*Conversing with the Light*) won the Anhinga Award from Florida State University. He has poems in current, recent or forthcoming issues of *Hudson Review*, *Field*, *Natural Bridge*, *Permafrost*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Roanoke Review*. Wells is an English professor at Rhodes State College in Ohio, dreaming of eventual retirement to his native Colorado. His second full-length manuscript, *Unsettled Accounts*, which includes "Gold Panning on the Arkansas River near Leadville, Colorado," was recently selected by Thomas Lynch for the 2009 Hollis Summers Prize. *Unsettled Accounts* will be published by Ohio University Press/Swallow Press in late 2009 or early 2010.

Doug Ramspeck

Ghost Child

As if the sweetgum trees leaning
toward the slough were whispering.
As if the muddy waters knew to speak.

She walks into the alluvium of morning:
daylight depositing its fertile light
atop the leaves. Let's say this is a wet
grave:

some child slipping beneath the water lilies.
Some child sinking beneath
the flowering wapato.

And since the slough is sickly and congealed—
the way a body grows thick and swollen
at the belly, the way a body rots
then ferments—

she imagines fish and frogs swimming forever
beyond vision, whole lives twisting and lost
in the slow mire.

The mud life, she imagines:
the ghost child fouled and abandoned,
in the murky waters of the slough,

the smell of it
like something dragged and dripping
from the dark loam.

After the Storm

And so she rises. Crosses
to the window. Looks out into
the lowlands.

Or let's say that in her dream
a massasauga, small as a dropped twig,
injects alluvial venom
into her blood.

The lightning stitching its way as augury
into the night sky. The rain
falling like a hanged man
then spreading out as a

dark slough.
The poor snake drowning in the current.
The awakened woman rising from her bed
and gripping two hands

beneath her belly.
Carrying her swollen belly.

While the low earth is wet
and black with mud.



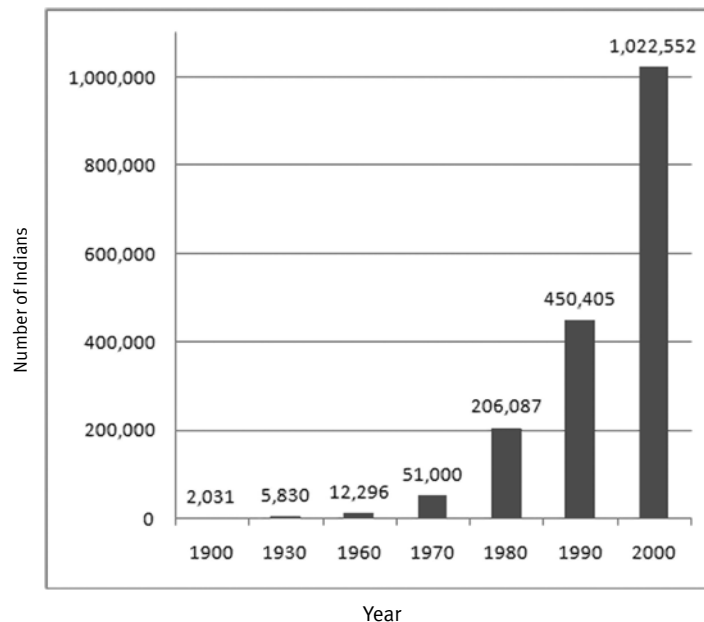
Doug Ramspeck's book, *Black Tupelo Country*, received the 2007 John Ciardi Prize for Poetry and is published by BkMk Press (University of Missouri-Kansas City). Numerous poems have been accepted for publication by journals that include *Prairie Schooner*, *Third Coast*, and *Northwest Review*. In 2009, he received an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council. He directs the Writing Center and teaches creative writing at The Ohio State University at Lima. He lives in Lima with his wife, Beth, and their daughter, Lee.

READING THE WEST

read-ing [from ME reden, to explain, hence to read] – vt. 1 to get the meaning of; 2 to understand the nature, significance, or thinking of; 3 to interpret or understand; 4 to apply oneself to; study.

ASIAN INDIANS IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Figure 1: India-Born Population in the U.S.



The first significant presence of Asian Indians in the United States were male workers from Punjab province who came into Washington state in the early twentieth century from British Columbia. Most then found their way to California and became farm workers and section hands maintaining railroad tracks. Although 85% of them were Sikhs, all were called “Hindus.”

For decades, Punjabi families had been sending sons out of the province to earn money serving in the British Indian military and police services. Many of those who ended up in California had served throughout the British Empire. By 1914 there were some 10,000 Indians residing in California. They faced strong prejudice and were targeted by the Asiatic Exclusion League and other associations working to prevent further immigration from Asia.

The Immigration Act of 1917 virtually barred all Asians from entering the United States, and in 1923, the Supreme Court declared that in the “understanding of the common man,” “white” clearly denoted a person of European origins. Thus Bhagat Singh Thind, though a Caucasian of “high-caste Hindu stock,” was not entitled to naturalization. Over

the next few years, some 45 naturalized Indians were stripped of their American citizenship, and the Indian population began to register a dramatic decline: the 1940 census found only 1,476 Indians in California, and most of these were part of Punjabi-Mexican families clustered in California's agricultural valleys.

As noted by Vinay Lal, the Punjabi pioneers were followed into the United States by Indian students.

Among Indians who did emigrate to the United States were political dissenters who openly advocated Indian independence, and in 1913 the *Ghadr* (or "revolutionary") Party was founded in San Francisco, with a weekly newspaper, also called *Ghadr*, serving as the vehicle for the expression of seditious ideas. Adherents of the *Ghadr* Party set for themselves the goal of liberating India by all means at their disposal, and after the outbreak of World War I, some dissenters returned from the United States back to India "to foment trouble," as British colonial officials might have put it, or to consort with the Germans and lure the peasantry into rebellion. America's entry into the war in 1917 sealed the fate of the *Ghadr* movement: acting under pressure from the British, the U.S. Government launched an intensive and successful prosecution against the *Ghadrites* for conspiring with the Germans to deprive the British monarch of his sovereignty over India.

In the late 1930s, the India Welfare League and the India League of America renewed efforts to obtain citizenship for Indians and similarly fought to increase the support for Indian demands for independence from British rule. Asian Indians were emboldened by the Atlantic Charter (1941), which conceded the right of all peoples to self-government, and sought to impress upon the United States Government the importance of Indian assistance in preventing the formation of a Japanese-German military axis in Asia. "America cannot afford to say that she wants the people of India to fight on her side," wrote one Asian Indian demographer, "and at the same time maintain that she will not have them among her immigrant groups." Indian lobbying, led by the charismatic Sikh merchant, J. J. Singh, resulted in Congressional approval of the Act of July 2, 1946, which not only gave Indians the right to naturalization, but also allowed a small number of Indians, exclusive of non-quota immigrants (such as spouses and minor children of citizens), to enter the United States every year. Between 1948 and 1965, 7,000 Indians were to emigrate to the United States, and nearly 1,780 Indians, many who had been American residents for two decades or more, acquired American citizenship.

Source: Vinay Lal, "A Political History of Asian Indians in the United States," 1999; <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/roots.html>; Sonalde Desai and Rahul Kanakia, "Profile of a Diasporic Community," The Diaspora, a symposium on Indian-Americans and the motherland, June 2004; <http://www.india-seminar.com>

EAST COAST SHIFT

Indian immigration to the U.S. was quite low until quotas were dropped in 1965. Thousands of Indians then began moving to the United States, primarily to the New York metro area. In the 2000 census, 1,645,510 people in the U.S. claimed Asian Indian ancestry.

Asian Indian Communities



Source: <http://www.epodunk.com/ancestry/Asian-Indian.html>.

ECONOMIC ASSIMILATION

According to scholars at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, Asian Indians are extremely well-assimilated economically, but very diversified in other areas such as cultural, religious, and other dimensions. According to the recent census data, Indians had the highest median household income, family income, per capita income, and annual median income of any foreign-born group.

The Asian Indian American population is dominated by young working-age people. Nearly four in ten are between the ages of 20 and 40. The true figure may be even higher. Some temporary immigrant workers (such as H1-B visa holders) and their families might not have completed the 2000 census forms due to confusion over whether or not they should complete them. The Asian Indian community is not only very young compared to the white population, it is also aging slowly. The median age changed from 28.9 years in 1990 to 30 years in 2000....

Asian Indians are highly concentrated in the Northeastern part of the United States. About 35 percent live in that general area, with more than 400,000 Asian Indians calling the New York City metropolitan area home. Southern and Western regions of the United States serve as home to more than half of Asian Indians. The San Francisco Bay Area has the highest percentage of Asian Indians in the United States.

Source: Asian-Nation; <http://www.asian-nation.org/indian.shtml>.

VISHNU TEMPLE, GRAND CANYON



*Several major plateaus and rock formations in the Grand Canyon are named after Hindu gods. They were so named by Clarence Edward Dutton, captain of ordinance in the U. S. Army, geologist-poet and Yale graduate. In the 1870s, Dutton spent part of each year on detached duty as a geologist in the plateaus of Utah and Arizona. He published *The Physical Geology of the Grand Canyon District* and *The Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District* in 1882.*

*According to Stephen J. Pyne's 1999 history, *How the Canyon Became Grand*, there is "no explicit explanation for naming the peaks after Hindu gods." Pyne suggests there was a growing awareness and respect in the West, particularly Europe, toward Eastern philosophies. However, no other American place is associated with the names of Hindu gods to a similar extent. Asian Indian scholar, Vinay Lal, posits:*

In having furnished some of the more striking buttes and peaks in the Grand Canyon with Hindu names, Dutton revealed (howsoever inadvertently) something of the reputation that Hinduism had acquired in America, and had given credence (in howsoever unusual a manner) to a formal and textbook interpretation of Hinduism. It is instructive that he was able, without any fanfare or loud trumpeting of the virtues of multiculturalism, to designate the monuments of America's most well-known and beloved rock formation by names that were undoubtedly exotic and remote to the American imagination. Any such endeavor today would be fraught with hazardous consequences, the cultural right heralding such acts of naming as 'politically motivated' concessions to religious and ethnic minorities.

Source: Vinay Lal, "Ambiances of Hinduism in the Wild West of America: Perspectives from Two Citadels, The Grand Canyon and Las Vegas," *Manas*; http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/hindus_wildwest.html

SANSKRIT IN THE UTAH CAPITOL

Last year, a “religious milestone” occurred in Utah when its State Senate opened with a Hindu prayer containing Sanskrit mantras for the first time.

Rajan Zed, a prominent Hindu chaplain and Indo-American leader, read the historic opening prayer from ancient Hindu scriptures before the Utah Senate in Salt Lake City. After first delivering it in Sanskrit, he then read the English translation of the prayer.

All the Senators, Senate employees, and visitors stood respectfully with the heads bowed down listening intently during the prayer. Zed sprinkled *Gangajal* (holy water from the river Ganges in India) on the podium before starting the prayer and presented a copy of *Srimad Bhagawad Geeta* to Senate President John L. Valentine afterward. Sanskrit is considered a sacred language in Hinduism and the root language of all Indo-European languages.

Source: *American Chronicle*, 15 February 2008; <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/52504>

EDITORIAL MATTER CONTINUED

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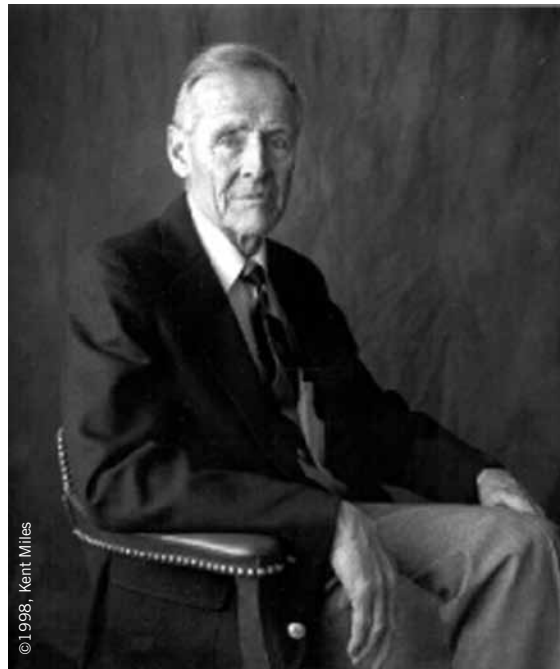
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**ANNOUNCING
the 2009
Dr. O. Marvin Lewis Essay Award**



to
Frederick H. Swanson
for
"Rooted"

in the Spring/Summer 2009 issue

The Dr. O. Marvin Lewis Award of \$500 is presented annually to the author
of the "best" essay published in *Weber* during the previous year.

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