

Central Avenue #17

edited by Cathryn McCracken and Dale Harris

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WITH COVER ART BY KAIA MCCrackEN

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begin

fog birds and the pale grey
rise of furred light
humid in the pines

limestone thick with early longing
i want to float there, spin
in wet desire, feast on
the slow, ripe stream of sounds

a territory of coiled black pipe
is waiting in silence, underneath the porch
mouth upturned

last night, racehorse nervous,
I threw boards, pounded up the boulders
wore out my animal

today, it rises, steam
and greeting, nods to meet
a morning fat with drops

messages from dreamers
pink instructions from a manual
condensed while the goddess
of water slept

Cathryn McCracken

Hardscrabble Mountain

I tend a garden of stones,
keep the old stories,
wrapped in smoke,
warm against my chest.

Years ago I watched the sun rise
from a mountain peak,
having spent an endless night
shivering under the stars.

Today, I descend a long slope
through rock and solitude,
the years heavy upon my back.

Below—
a small fire,
smell of wood smoke and dreams.

*Michael Adams
Lafayette, CO*

Par Avion

Any moment now I will understand this language,
these strange letters like stems of jungle plants,
the yellow of my father's umbrage,
his open mouth into which my name has vanished.
My name, a hurricane of nothing,
a story from a white hole in the earth,
returned in rivulets to the silent iroko.
Elephants blew its nectar into the air,
into our large blue ache of a world.
Where in this garden has he buried my name?

A letter has come into my house,
picked the black lock of shame with loving teeth.
Glued to its skin, stamps speak softly
of princes, hibiscus, and eidolon.
My father sends music through purple air
I don't want to hear, his orchestra
plays for me a name that is not mine.
Maybe it was found on a grey list of words
he drew to make a statue of breath.
Who is the person who wants his gift?

I am looking in the red-lacquered lilikoi
(passionfruit are for Jesus on the cross, not love)
for the truth of a name. That which I cast off
follows, a white feather in the dark.
Neglectful medicine's no good to the dead,
she never was the moon.
Repeat this for the green ears of young elephants.
This loss is my own vesicant danger,
a house full of broken umbrellas.
What is my name? What color the ground?

Any moment now I will understand this language.

*Zoë Dwyer
Santa Fe, NM*

OBITUARY

My father's disease
did not leave him
enough of himself
to be terrified of death.

Death fed my father
ice cream and chocolate cake.
It told him to try to walk home
to where he was born
and ride his bicycle naked
in the moonlight.

Maybe dying for him
was like being a little boy
tired after a birthday party
and getting tucked into bed.

I am remembering for him
and for myself things
that can't be cremated
only misplaced.

His name. My name.
The sight of him
joyfully licking the frosting
off disappearing moments.

*Donna M. Lane
Oakland, CA*

Her Father's Ghost

She met her father
at the Waking Dreams Cafe.

He walked through the closed door
without leaving marks on the scarred wood.

He slow danced up to the counter,
wearing nothing but cowboy boots and a belt.

He held a heavy, white restaurant cup
in a hand turned gray as bistai

badlands clay, his gray hair disheveled,
his invisible western shirt open at the neck.

Girl, he whispered,
here's a quarter for the jukebox.

He stretched and held up his cheek to her:
it was a rose shell glistening with longing.

*Mary McGinnis
Santa Fe, NM*

Seeing My Dad for the First Time in Ten Years

Have you noticed how the mushrooms fold
Themselves up from the ground into the low
Heights of air? Suspended, white and old
As a soft moon. They do not seem to grow
So much as be. My father always had
The luminescence of a God. I feared
Him more than God though. To love my dad
Never occurred to me. I moved and steered
My life away. He came to visit last
Month though. Around the city mushrooms swell
Across yards and fields where, seasons past,
Something has been let go. His socks fell
Into shoes. As he bent his white head down
To pull up, I saw mushrooms all around.

Courtney J. Angermeier

Yesterday's Fantasy Doesn't Last

Perhaps he was a daytripper,
that fine ass man,
not perfect freckled coffee cream,
simply fit.

Seen through yellow sunglasses,
barely green mesquite pulses vibrant spring.

*Rachelle Woods
Santa Fe, NM*

Theme_

My husband always preferred me in _____
Said they made my ass look like round summer apples.

My father always criticized my choice of _____
He paid for all this education, surely I must know something.

I get offers from men for unattached, uncommitted, unthis, unthat

If I'm good enough to fuck then I'm good enough to _____

My brother always _____ in front of my friends.
So one day I ground a lit cigarette into his _____

Uncle Charles liked women, was called a womanizer by my

At fifteen he even made a pass at me, my father _____ it never

An old boyfriend once called me a cunt, his voice razoring across
the _____
Every now and then I hit replay just to feel that sharp reminder.

The men in my life have always _____ me, one way or the other
but isn't this to be _____ from someone who's _____ as I?

*Kim Konopka
Santa Fe, NM*

SONG FOR MY FATHER

How can I sing my father,
pray or chant him,
make a painting of his ruined face?

With terrible force he reached up,
pulled the darkness down,
on himself and on us all.

Water is brief and holds our hope,
wood our grief the longest.
Metal keeps the pain,
stone the memory ongoing.

What is there I can do?
There is no poem or sculpture,
song or gesture,
that can obscure the gun,
stop the sound of it,
in Alabama on a winter Monday.

Angels, were you there
as I had charged you be?
Did you cover the car windows
with your outstretched wings?
Make his aim sure, his pain short?

My screaming prayer to you
perhaps bought him that,
but I had hoped for safety, for more.

It will take so much beauty to soften this.
I sing roses in the snow
my father's blood.

Dale Harris

"Call no man father" Jesus warned
 & it was the first thing his Church ignored
 & I did know some priests who treated their congregants
 (at least the ones they were fond of)
 like the kids they weren't allowed to have
 but Pierre, you never seemed comfortable with the role,
 either the stern or the indulgent side:
 you were a somewhat older friend who had special powers
 you didn't deserve, & it was your job to use them,
 & that was best got over with in a hurry.
 I think I went to confession with you only once
 —it was my take these were things you'd rather not know.
 You were the gardener, the fix-it man in the house
 & seemed softly stunned that you,
 no intellectual, had made it through the Jesuit gauntlet
 all the way to ordination, what you called
 "putting on the iron pants"
 in a tone that said there'd been zero choice in the matter,
 surely no regret. A true back-bayou Cajun,
 you got only far enough above the accent
 to ape it at will. You guessed a touch of irreverence
 is endearing in priests, so sang for me in a mutter
 a lewd French song, so bland it was embarrassing.
 You coldshouldered me when I started dating Karen,
 not your daughter but somehow your charge—
 you had your own candidate, some harmless jock,
 but I knew the real reason was you saw my future
 with your un-Jesuit contempt for reflectiveness,
 saw how it would pull my arms away
 from fruits in earth, from okra slivered in gumbo,
 from wire meeting wire & wood cuddling wood,
 from knowing-how into knowing.

Bob Reeves

DAMIEN HIRST: HIS WORKS

The dealer lets me leaf through the display copy
in the back of his shop:
an autopsy photograph, I study the details,
man propped a shotgun under his chin,
camera side of his head intact,
waxy yellow cheeks marbled with crimson,
scratch of chocolate lines in the upper left
balance the black-edged wound,
lips parted to say something what could they add
the gunshot is the statement
the gunshot removes all doubt
of intention

The autobiographies written and signed
on the shining coils of the intestine,
the intricate puzzle pattern of brain—
The real autopsy begins and never finishes,
the cold and lonely ones wheeled in
twitching under their rubber sheets,
tongues frozen, ears stopped to
our persistent bewilderment or
spitting rage
our bare self-reproaches have become the
mere buzz of flies above their heads—

Think I might have lived easy years
and never, never,
except for my sharp-edged curiosity
stepped into the back room of a shop
and opened a book

Carol Lewis

Noontime At The Olympia Cafe

I watched you come into the
room, dressed in camouflage
but making no attempt to
hide yourself, and
why should you?

You'd only come to eat,
and then your buddy,
wearing similar garb, joined
you. Both of you sat down,
talking the casual talk of
lunchtime conversation.

You are so young in your
trim haircuts and your starched
uniforms, your spit-shined boots.
The embroidered patches
above your left pockets reveal
exotic surnames, your skin tones
display that wide mixture of
ethnic sources that
is now America.

Did you take this road, don
these garments, risk the
ultimate, however distant
you thought it to be,
because we have
failed you with our schools,
failed you with our greedy,
short-sighted policies, failed you with
our inability to discipline our
wants or see beyond our petty
desires?

Or did you believe the advertisements,

simply taking a job with the military
to pay for college or other education
you could obtain no other way? And
there was the lure of adventure, and
that old promise of becoming a man.

Perhaps you are nobler
than my speculations, truly
grateful for being born on
this soil, for being carried here
in your mother's arms, appreciative
of this land's bounty, jealous of its
wellbeing, willing to payback
without questioning
in this extreme way
the gifts
given to you.

And I knew that you are only
one and two of many,
male and female.

Although you are strangers to
me, you are my sons and I wanted
to ask you as tears filled my eyes,
"Are you the blood sacrifice?"

It seems inevitable that you
must march to war now,
the order of an arrogant man.
And you will go
because you swore the
oath and
it is your duty.

And I wanted to tell you that I
would never make so cavalier

a request, I want you to live full
and fruitful lives.

I wanted to tell you that
I would never ask the forfeit
except in the most dire of
circumstances, the kind where
the rest of us stand beside
you having no other choice, all
peaceful paths exhausted
and the threat truly imminent.

I wanted to tell you
I love you that much.

Lou Liberty
Feb. 2003

The Wounded

boyz n grlls from america torture arab youth
in the jail that was Saddam's cold hell
weapons of mass destruct
in wracked souls
slipping chains
howling havoc
this hollow night
of war turned in
on war within
harpies ghosts n goblins
oh my

oh
my

Bill Nevins
4/29/04

Corner of Cornell

two cops on bicycles
both wearing helmets
we grow accustomed to armed security
one cop is writing a ticket
for a barefoot youngster on a skateboard
the kid breaks free
and rolls south toward Zempoaltepec, Mexico
the cops snicker and enter the Frontier Restaurant
their bikes chained up
to the front bumper of my 71 VW van
the ghosts of disappeared friends
sit in disarray
I read in the Journal how we train Iraqis to fight
reminds me of Vietnamizing the war in 1969
let Vietnamese kill Vietnamese as
we pull out the American soldiers
reduce our casualties but keep the war going
am I wacko or are the stripes in our flag
bending to resemble a swastika
it feels like I'm going zigzag
at a spanking pace
there's more info everyday
improved versions of all my programs
quicker illegal downloads
there are too many movies
too many poetry web sites
and way too many soldiers paid a grand bonus
to reenlist
my number appears
can I buy a lottery ticket
with my eggs and chorizo?
I will buy a digital camera
and post jpegs of my fantasies
in this commercial world
I will probably die ordering a book
from amazon.com
I don't want to get fleeced
or victimized in a health insurance scam
I want to croak
while I line my pockets
I want to die cutting a lucrative deal

Joe Speer
Nashville, TN

An Award of Doubtful Magnitude

He's published a thousand conceptual images of God
a brindled tercet collection of chain poems
a flowery funereal ode to the infant life of Jesus
a resurrection of Gandhi in the flesh of the Buddha,
many irksome sonnets all declaiming the death of air,
love sachets made of dead poets' ashes.
He's the living representative of all the representatives
of the dead, the dying, the profuse, the spasmodic
the helter-skelter dumb-dumbs that croak on street corners
more poisons of religious termination. He is the academic God
of the current academic God universities
being president of his own hind end for 20 years.
He's published paranoia in the flesh and been doused in
Queen Juice and knighted Sir Bar None for indeed this
prominent warrior of cowardice publication is Mr.
Deepshit himself, PH Dormant and deaf
PH Deelicious garbage attorney turned author
to be first on the Nude Year Times List
for Murder and Mayhem trivia poop. Twenty-five
dollars a shot.

larry goodell