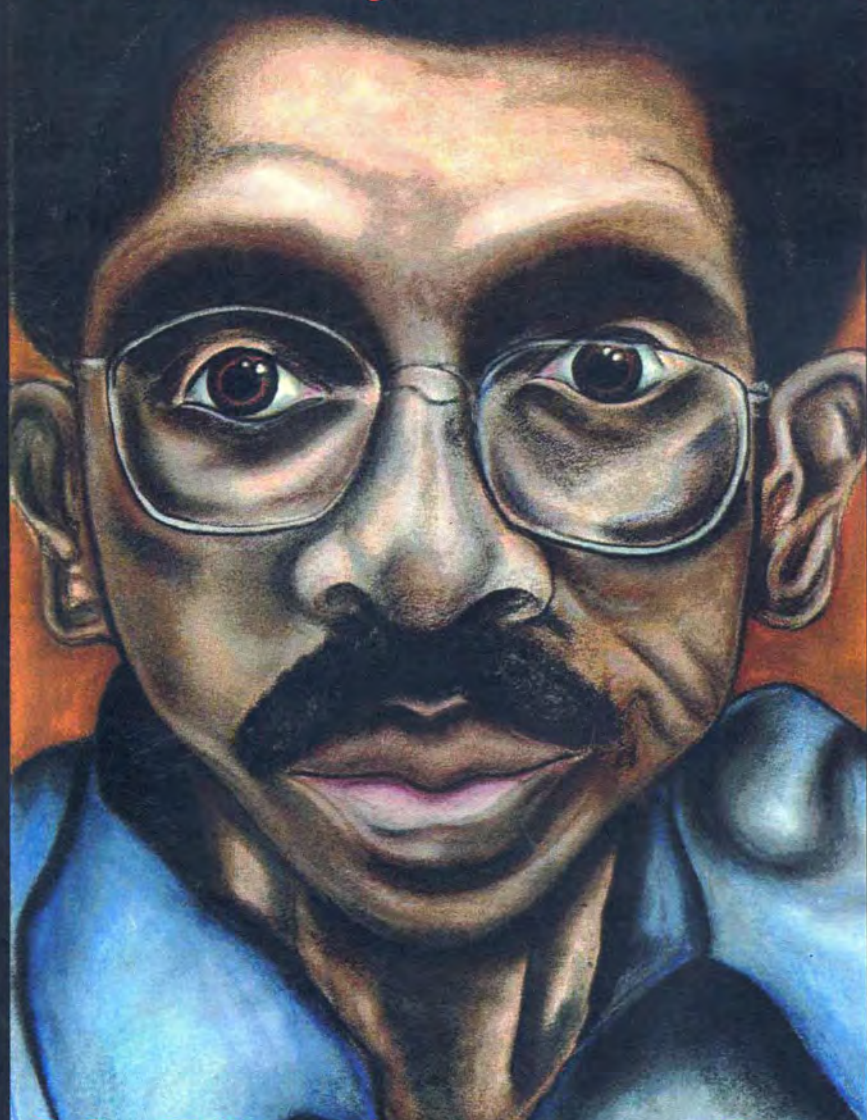


# The Bayou Review



20<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary Issue

# The Bayou Review Spring 2007 Edition

The University of Houston-Downtown  
Visual and Literary Arts journal

Editor  
Denise Satterfield

Editorial Staff  
Jimmy G. Mai  
Stella Adedje

Faculty Advisor  
Dr. Robin Davidson

20th Year Anniversary Issue

# *Dedication*

*Art is human perception of natural beauty. It is also, in its very performance, the unique and miraculous beauty of being human.*

*The experience of art - its making and its enjoyment - is what makes us both human and humane.*

*- Lorenzo Thomas*



*In memory of his extraordinary contribution to the literary world, students, colleagues, beloved friends, and community*

## *Lorenzo Thomas*

*Panama, August 31, 1944 -  
Houston, Texas, July 4, 2005*



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# PREFACE

*The Bayou Review* is a University of Houston-Downtown student produced publication. Its goal is to provide a place for aspiring authors/artists to share their craft with others, and it is dedicated to publishing well written, intelligent creative writing and artwork that reflects our campus and community diversity. We invite others outside the realm of our campus community to make contributions to our publication as well.

This issue celebrates the journal's 20th year anniversary. Many students have helped support the efforts of this publication over the years. We would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them, past and present, without whose continued support this journal would have never survived.

What better way to celebrate this monumental milestone than to dedicate this issue to the memory of one of our own, Lorenzo Thomas, poet and professor of English, who enthusiastically supported *The Bayou Review* and was a driving force behind the literary arts at UHD. We have included a copy of his poem, "The Tears of the Victims," which appeared in our first issue in 1987. I believe that, in reprinting this piece, we continue in the legacy of artistic excellence that Professor Thomas stood for.

Other submissions included were selected by an Editorial Staff, and were chosen to reflect the superior quality which our contributors would expect and Professor Thomas would be proud of. We have also included a selection of dedications made in tribute to Professor Thomas. We hope that you will enjoy reading this dedication issue as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the years, *The Bayou Review* has done nothing but get better and better. It is the efforts of the many talented students at the University of Houston-Downtown that have made it happen, year after year. The dedication to keeping this project alive is remarkable, and I feel a great honor serving as editor and being included in such history within our school. I hope that the selections in this edition thrill you, warm you and inspire you as they have us.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has been instrumental in the preparation and publishing of this anniversary edition. That includes Jimmy G. Mai, Stella Adedje, and Dr. Robin Davidson, who acted as the Editorial Staff for the publication. I could not have accomplished anything without you. I would like to send my sincerest thanks to Dr. Davidson, my faculty advisor, for her endless attention to my every need. I know I must have driven her crazy and yet she never once denied me the time needed to get questions answered, no matter how trivial. With my deepest gratitude, I thank you! And I can't forget the inspiration and patience of my husband Frank, who sat for endless hours listening to me read and re-read submissions aloud and discuss the different talents that each student reflected in their work.

I would also like to send special thanks to the friends of Professor Thomas who so graciously submitted their personal dedications to him for this memorial issue. Your contributions made this issue complete! Thank you!

And last, but not least, I thank you, the student authors and artists that made submissions to this publication. Without you, there would be nothing.

Denise Satterfield  
Editor, Spring 2007



# THE TEARS OF THE VICTIMS

I cried from Goree  
In fever and chains,  
From Durban in the light  
Of a hut wreathed in flames

Do they weep at Robben Island?  
Are there tears in the Sahel?

A starving man's eyes  
Do not wander or tear  
They gimlet the sun  
With a wide open stare  
That augers past life  
And drills deeper than lies  
And the dying don't blink  
At duststorms or flies

If the tears of the victim  
Ever had an effect,  
It is something that science  
Has not defined yet.  
If the tears of the victims  
Were more infectious than art,  
Long ago human suffering  
Would have broken your heart.

by Lorenzo Thomas

*Reprinted from The Bayou Review Spring 1987*



# MANY PATHS ONE DIRECTION



by Floyd Newsom

20th Year Anniversary Issue

---

# POWER

When you slapped the mosquito on your arm,  
that was a statement about importance.  
Its life weighed less than your three drops of blood.

It was the buzzing little paparazzi,  
you were the celebrity, you had the right  
to terminate the relationship.

So much weakness in your life already,  
it feels good to act without a thought  
once in a while, and you can't help liking

being on top, holding your lover down  
when you are having sex, the better to thrust  
into her core.

-- Like steering a car in and out of a  
dangerous curve, or yanking the nameless weeds  
out of your vegetable garden

# POWER

while the sun comes down and pretends to be your friend.  
I have been glad to enter a room at work  
and see someone lower their gaze, -- glad

to be respected enough to be feared.  
And when I lost that job I remember  
how earnestly they shook my hand

and said they wanted to stay in touch;  
I knew what they wanted.  
They wanted what everyone wants. They wanted

to arrange the whole world  
in such a way  
as to never to have to learn from it again.

by **Tony Hoagland**

*Reprinted from The Bayou Review Fall 2006*

*Tony Hoagland's most recent collection of poems is Hard Rain from Hollyridge Press. In 2005 he was winner of the 2005 Mark Twain Award for humor in American poetry. His book of essays about poetry, Real Sofistikashun, is to be released soon from Graywolf Press. He teaches at the University of Houston.*



# MARKETING SAMPLE

A giant hypodermic needle comes through the wall of the shopping mall  
and sucks up the Tuesday shoppers, who were just looking

for eyeglasses and underwear, plastic deck chairs and nonstick frying pa  
It inhales an overweight security guard with his nightstick and walkie-talk

and a fake palm tree, and a couple of kids with headphones on,  
who had probably come to shoplift the new

Weezer CD, (yeah, and some cigarettes too, man-)

But now they themselves are lifted, suctioned up into the hollow shaft

of the big syringe, then whirled up even further  
into the cylindrical glass barrel

where they spin helpless near the 20 cc mark, with all the other stuff:  
some floating candy bars, a porno magazine, a man's silk tie

floating like a sash; a budget-size carton of Cheerios;  
all of this merchandise we once needed

-now just evidence  
of what we did with our lives.

by **Tony Hoagland**

*Reprinted from The Bayou Review Fall 2006*

# LOOKING THROUGH THE BLACK BOX

The shouts of the crowd grew louder as the sun set upon the cold gray stone building with the electric barbed wire fence. The dust from the dry African ground mixed with cries for justice filled the already tense air. The demand for equality and the memories of the father who sat in a gritty urine soaked island jail spurred the crowd on. The shiny glint of the guns appeared but the crowd knew no reason, and their shouts got louder with every step. The man picked up the little one and held him close to his chest with one hand, and raised his other sweaty black arm in the air in protest with his brothers. The guards paused for a minute deciding whether to open the black gate that looked like an iron net. The stubborn crowd undaunted by the appearance of more khaki clad white soldiers broke into song. They started to stomp their feet and wave their hands, and for a minute they sounded like elephants in flight to a watering hole. The gate opened and the soldiers filed out in order. They stood in front of the gate in a horizontal line with their guns pointing straight ahead. A voice spoke out from inside the gray building and said, "Idiots, return to your filthy homes now or we will show you what we can do." The crowd did not proceed further but stood where they were and continued to sing and wave their arms in the air. Suddenly it began. The soldiers started to fire into the crowd, and one by one they began to fall. Each body hit the ground and more dust rose with every fall. Some began to run but they fell into the blood-soaked sand and others on top of other blood soaked bodies. One by one they fell to their hunter's gun, and all that was left was the little one. His faded blue shirt was now a mixture of dust and his father's blood. He tugged at his father's lifeless body hoping that he would wake up from his sleep. He held the body with his two little stained hands and attempted to help him up but he couldn't. He started to cry and say, "Papa, get up so we can go home," but Papa was not going home today. He had gone with his brothers in solidarity to the place where hundreds of our brothers have already gone. Papa was gone, forever, lost in the struggle against Apartheid.

by **Stella Adedje**

# KINDRED SPIRIT

I like this time of night  
when everyone else is asleep or  
    fidgeting  
and I realize my mother liked it too.

She was always awake  
when we drifted off  
in our shoebox of a house,  
my father snorting like  
    a hooked fish  
(the Greatest Generation vs. the  
    unconscious),  
my sister laughing and shifting  
on her narrow bed.

I could hear mother's bathwater running,  
her footsteps in the hall  
her sigh as she lowered  
    into the tub,



# KINDRED SPIRIT

could see a sliver of light beneath  
my door  
before I fell into dreams.  
She's dead now, but wasn't this  
comforting?

And aren't I comforting others too  
as I cruise the house,  
locking doors, wiping countertops,  
putting away the last of the bread  
and the milk,  
trading sleep for a swept floor  
and a few  
minutes among the dozing, like a self-  
conscious apple in the fridge?

These nocturnal gambols  
are a secret I shared with  
my mother  
only in the solitude of memory,  
and now I'm sharing it with you.

by Rich Levy

*Reprinted from The Bayou Review Fall 2006*

# DEDICATION TO LORENZO THOMAS

It's hard to find the right words, absent Lorenzo's immediate voice, though his voice has poured through in various ways in the months since he died. I can always hear him, of course, by willing it—his voice in the hallway at school, his ready greeting, the gracious beat and upbeat rhythms of his genuine interest in how I was, in what was up, in shared work—the teaching, the writing, the *going forward*. His friends, colleagues, students, all of us had this from him, this irreducible respect for us and appetite for our mutual enterprise in the pursuit of knowledge and, really, the beauty that survives this brutalized world.

It's hard to find the right words, given the longing in the ear for the sound of him, for his fierce and soothing phrases, so often soothing because they are fiercely smart about the intimate consequences of history. I love his poetry, love the ways it is immediately available and the ways it is not, always raising that desire to know and be inside the music of it. I'm thinking about the surprise of Lorenzo's poetry, its avenues and edges and finally the thrill of reading it out loud in tribute to him, hearing myself and others find our own voices in the articulation of the remarkable work that survives him. "True civility would show us," he wrote in his introduction to *Chances Are Few*, "how to install intelligence and wisdom in the place now haughtily occupied by destructive sophistication . . . . Writing poems involves that desperate attempt to pass through sophistication into wisdom." I am one of many, many friends who are grateful that Lorenzo Thomas lived his days making that passage, giving us the myriad gifts of his true civility.

by Jane Creighton

# MYTH OF THE BLUE SNAKE



by Floyd Newsum

20th Year Anniversary Issue



# THE MEETING

Jeremy Lyons stood outside the meeting room with his portfolio tucked under his right arm. He fiddled with his tie and cleared his throat, nervous about this, his third meeting but his first to make a presentation. The other attendees were already sitting inside, probably drinking coffee and exchanging shallow pleasantries. Not The Boss, though. The Boss was most likely sitting at the head of the table, fingers steeped in front of him, staring grimly, his steel blue eyes hard and his burnished skull glinting in the phosphorescent light. And Johnson would be there. Johnson with his leering smirk and sarcastic comments. Johnson would be trouble, he could feel it.

He had been warned about Johnson. "Watch out for him," his secretary said, "he won't take it easy on you just because you're new." She chewed the end of her pen for a moment, looking at him dispassionately. "He thinks it makes him look big in The Boss' eyes." He had walked away, getting the distinct impression that she was staring at his ass like a vulture peering at some poor creature about to become food.

He was summoned from his reverie by two men from another department coming down the hall, apparently discussing a hunting trip. He took a deep breath, opened the door of the meeting room and walked in before they got too much closer.

Most of the room fell silent as he walked in, save for Linda Huddel loudly finishing a joke for Bill Henderson.

"... bartender turned to the first guy and said, 'you're a mean drunk, Superman'." She finished the joke by laughing noisily, ignoring Bill, who politely chuckled. She then turned to Jeremy and said cheerfully, "hiya, Jerry!" He hated being called Jerry.

He smiled weakly, waved, and cleared his throat again, glancing first at Johnson (who was smirking at him), then at The Boss who was glaring at nothing.

"Uh, thank you all for coming," he stammered, walking to the end of the room and fumbling with his portfolio, nearly dropping it. He made it to the easel and, with his back to the room, he put

# THE MEETING

his hand on it and took a deep breath. He then opened his portfolio and took out the pages of the presentation. He set them neatly and purposefully on the easel then turned to stand beside it.

“As you all know,” he began, suddenly realizing he had forgotten his pointer. He used his hand to point to the first page of the presentation (an artist’s rendition of the company’s oil machinery in Alaska) and continued, “as you all know, the new pipeline running through Alaska has opened up tremendous opportunities in the oil market. The question is, how do we exploit it?” He flipped to the second page, this one showing a graph, “as you can see here, the price of oil from foreign sources has risen dramatically, angering consumers with the end price.”

Johnson suddenly snorted derisively, slouching in his chair with his arms folded and that infernal smirk on his face stretching his moustache further than previously. All eyes remained on Jeremy. He looked at the graph on the easel, licked his lips and flipped to the next page before continuing.

“The influx of new oil gives us a remarkable opportunity to give a break to the consumer, lowering our prices as we depend more on domestic oil.” Johnson muttered something and the smarmy little asswipe Dick Upton giggled.

PERHAPS YOU’D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR COMMENT WITH EVERYONE, JOHNSON, the boss said calmly.

Johnson paused, his grin showing his perfect teeth. He turned to The Boss and said, “sure.” He turned back around, “I said maybe monkey boy here would like to give out Kewpie dolls for every fifty gallons sold.”

The room erupted in laughter and Jeremy turned red. His collar suddenly felt tight and he had to fight for air for a moment.

“Clearly,” Jeremy said once the laughter had died down, “we have the opportunity to make a gesture...”

“Clearly,” Johnson interrupted, his grin turned feral, “this pup didn’t realize when he stepped in here that this is a big man’s



# THE MEETING

business.”

Jeremy frowned, gathering his roiling thoughts. He hadn't expected it to be this bad.

“Look,” Jeremy said, his heat rising, “PR studies have shown that consumers appreciate...”

“Fuck PR.”

Jeremy narrowed his eyes, looking straight into Johnson's. He'd had enough and he said so. Johnson stood, and as he did, the rest of the room backed their chairs up a bit. “So what?” Johnson said. They stood for moments, glaring at each other for what seemed an eternity to Jeremy. Then, at the same moment, both opponents reached for their swords and leaped onto the table.

“The consumer deserves a break,” Jeremy said as he ducked a swipe from Johnson. As he came back up, his sword followed, slicing up towards Johnson's chin. Johnson leaned back, out of the arc of the swipe. “PR studies have shown that consumers appreciate when the people they do business with look out for them.”

Johnson brought his sword down upon Jeremy's and attempted to thrust, but leaned back, nearly losing his balance. “No one's going to stop buying oil,” Johnson sneered, pursuing his advantage with a flurry of attacks to keep Jeremy off-balance, “there's no need to bring our profits down to keep anyone happy - no one would even notice.”

Jeremy, backed to the edge of the table, turned his fall into a jump down to the floor. Backing off a moment gave him the time to see the other attendees raising their fists and calling out to them, egging them on. It was interesting to see that Linda was rooting for him. His attention turned back to Johnson, who was still on the table and taking advantage of his higher vantage point, just in time to block a chopping motion from Johnson's sword.

Backing away forced Johnson to jump down to the floor and meet Jeremy evenly. Jeremy was sweating from the exertion of fighting his more experienced foe. “More and more,” he panted, “people are

# THE MEETING

looking toward alternative fuels," he moved his sword constantly in defense, unable to find an opening, "how long before they find something?" Johnson got through his defenses to draw a long gash up Jeremy's right arm. Jeremy gasped as the cool liquid swelled from the burning slash up his arm. He felt the strength ebbing away along with the gore as it began to cover his hand, making his grip slippery.

Johnson's grin returned, spreading out into a rictus not even a mother could love. He took a mighty swing at Jeremy. However, as he drew back to strike, Jeremy lurched forward and threw his left fist directly into Johnson's throat. Johnson stumbled back, eyes wide.

Taking his sword in both hands, Jeremy spun his body around and, his sword flashing out from around, decapitated Johnson clean through. Johnson's head dropped to the ground and rolled to Jeremy's feet. His body remained standing for three seconds before toppling backward.

Jeremy stared at the head of his fallen opponent, his blood rushing in his ears. He wiped his sword clean on his jacket and slipped it back in his scabbard. As the adrenaline ran out, he began to tremble ever so slightly. However, as he came down from his battle frenzy, he realized the entire room was applauding for him. Except for The Boss. The Boss sat in his chair, staring holes into Jeremy. When the rest of the room quieted down, The Boss spoke. WELL DONE, LYONS. WE'LL TAKE YOUR SUGGESTIONS INTO SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

Jeremy smiled, a real smile. "Thank you," he said. Calmly he walked to the easel, picked up his presentation, walked back and picked up Johnson's head by the hair. "Have a good day" As Jeremy walked out of the meeting room, the rest of the attendees pulled out their notepads and got down to business.

by **Constantinos Maltezos**

20th Year Anniversary Issue



# REMEMBERING LORENZO

I first met Lorenzo 24 years ago, soon after moving to Houston. I had come here to teach folklore at the University of Houston, and it wasn't long before I learned that Lorenzo was someone I *had* to meet. There was never a sweeter necessity.

The best reason for this remembrance is that we will all leave with the gift of new friends in the place of the friend that we have lost. No matter how well I think I knew my missing friend, there are people here who knew him in ways that I never imagined. Today I've had the honor of meeting many different Lorenzos, similar to the man I knew, and yet still a gift and a surprise to meet. It is not the same as having him back, but it is much more than nothing, and it has to be enough.

For those who didn't know Lorenzo the folklorist: I never heard him claim it, but he was a major scholar in the field. Until recently, Lorenzo was responsible for more than half of the quality scholarship on the subject of zydeco in Houston. He could have written a great book on zydeco, but as we all know, listening to each other, he had numberless other needs and missions and muses to satisfy.

Lorenzo and I first worked together to organize a zydeco symposium at Rice in 1984. The distinguished scholar guest, Nicholas Spitzer, then of the Smithsonian, was more impressed by Lorenzo's contributions than by the other panels and performances combined. Nick told me, "Lorenzo is a MAN OF WORDS"—a term folklorists use to honor the best folk performers, but almost never to honor each other. Lorenzo was a man of words as a poet and as an observer. His observations were poetry.

Lorenzo represented zydeco from a personal perspective found nowhere else in the literature. He had the authority of the scholar-outsider and the intimacy of a lifelong participant, even though he came to the music as a grownup. His dual status made him the obvious choice to serve as master of ceremonies in 1993 for the only "official" tribute that Houston's great zydeco artist Lonnie

# REMEMBERING LORENZO

Mitchell ever received. Again, the man of words spoke his scholar's tones, but also from within the heart of the community.

It was in 1998, the last time that we worked together, that Lorenzo explained to me why zydeco was something inside him. I was interviewing him for a zydeco documentary, and this is what he said:

A friend took me to the Continental Zydeco Ballroom and we listened to Lonnie Mitchell ... and I LOVED THE MUSIC. I also loved the idea of how it was presented and the situations it was presented in. It reminded me of the first dances I went to back in the 1950s, in Harlem, when my brother and I were little kids. They would carry us there along with a big box covered in aluminum foil, and inside ... was all kinds of sandwiches and fried chicken and cakes and pies. And they carried blankets. And they would bring a bottle of Scotch and they would buy sodas and ice and my mom and father would dance with their friends. And [when] we kids got tired, they wrapped my brother and I up in the blankets and stuffed us under the chairs and went on dancing.

There was no demographics about it—no “this is music for pre-pubescent people,” no “this is music for 18-to-34 men.” No. This was music for the community, and the whole community was involved.”

There was no demographics about Lorenzo. Or about his words. I cannot recall his ever talking too long or redundantly, or in any exclusionary way. If you couldn't get to the real experience through Lorenzo's words, there was little chance that any other words would ever get you there.

by **Carl Lindahl**  
*November 2005*

# TEXAS WILDFLOWERS



by **Bea Davies**



# BALL PEEN HAMMER, ON A GOOD DAY (PART ONE)

## I

"The thing about American trucks is, you can buy you a Chevrolet and it will last ten years or better with nothing but engine oil and spark plugs taking money out of your pocket. Heck, I got this one in '68 and what do we have now? It's almost '75," Edward said as Roger Miller began to sing in the background.

The baby blue Chevrolet had Rawson-Koenig tool boxes where the bed should've been and a rusted out fifth wheel. The truck bumped up and down Telephone Road as a girl named Sunshine sat in the cab biting her nails and chewing gum. Edward was going through his routine of talking about trucks and his race car.

"Course, this ain't no regular Chevy. Got a four fifty-four with Edelbrock high rise intake and carburetor under the hood and the exhaust dueled out all the way from the headers. Need all that muscle running the races from Beaumont to Seguin."

Edward grabbed Sunshine around her right shoulder and dragged her body across the bench seat until she was huddled under his arm.

"One of those little Commie things running round, ah, you can't get five years out of. Not to--."

"--shit," Sunshine cried out as the finger that she was biting began to bleed.

"Hey now, Honey. There won't be no cussin' in this truck. You see that Jesus statue staring at you?" He pointed to the dashboard.

A purple and cream colored plastic Jesus sat on an abalone shell with its arms outstretched and a blood red heart superimposed over its chest.

Edward pulled into the gravel parking lot of Mickey Gilley's as Roger Miller sang on the radio.



# BALL PEEN HAMMER, ON A GOOD DAY (PART ONE)

*Dang me, dang me  
They oughta take a rope and hang me  
High from the highest tree  
Woman would you weep for me*

Every spot in the parking lot was filled with dullies covered in cow shit and hay. When he put the truck in park he pressed his mouth against the girl's mouth. She pressed back. When they got inside, Edward pointed at a table for Sunshine to sit at, and he went up to the bar. He walked back to the table with three beers and gave one to her.

"Ain't those two of your buddies over there?" Sunshine pointed. Two men sat at a table with a pregnant woman. One of the men wore a welder's cap on backwards and the other had long brown hair.

"Them sons of-. That's Hank and W.R.. Them rascals owe me six hundred dollars from a race down in Beaumont."

Edward drank the two beers in front of him as he thought about being mean.

"Let's dance," the girl said to no response.

Several minutes passed.

"I'm going to find someone that'll dance."

"You're gonna sit right there and drink that beer I bought you."

The girl sat still and drank from her beer.

"Don't you move," Edward told the girl as he walked over to Hank and W.R.'s table.

Sunshine watched as Edward walked over to the table.

As Edward approached the table he said, "You boys sure got money for beer."

"Our money ain't none of your business," the pregnant woman

# BALL PEEN HAMMER, ON A GOOD DAY (PART ONE)

said to Edward.

“Hank, tell your woman to shut her mouth, or I’ll knock her off that chair.”

“He don’t need to tell me nothing. I know who you are and we ain’t paying you. Supposed to be so big and mean. Got people saying ‘stand clear’ when Edward’s ‘round. Not me. You can’t hit no woman.” The pregnant woman stood up and got into Edward’s face. As she did, W.R. shot up and started running for the door, his welder’s cap falling off as he ran.

Edward shoved the pregnant woman out of his way. Deliberately, and in slow motion, he grabbed the back of Hank’s head with his left hand. On its way to Hank’s face, Edward’s right hand slowed time, passing through the smoky bar air, creating extra time for everyone to think. With passive excitement, Sunshine closed her eyes and heard a noise like a hammer crashing down on concrete.

Hank’s wife struggled up and grabbed a near empty handle of Evan Williams. She brought the bottle over her head and the pale brown liquid fell dizzily into the neck of the bottle. As she brought the bottle down onto Edward’s head, the liquid did a summersault and landed back on the bottom of the bottle.

## II

Freddie Lee wiped her hands on her apron and walked out into the garage where Bubba and Lester were laying on their backs underneath a washing machine. The washing machine was propped up on two cinder blocks stacked one on top of the other. She took a heavy breath and exhaled.

“Well, Edward got himself back in jail. He went down to Gilley’s, saw someone that owed him money, and he wound up fighting again.”

# BALL PEEN HAMMER, ON A GOOD DAY (PART ONE)

“Is he out yet?” Bubba asked.

Freddie Lee took another deep breath and exhaled.

“Well, he really gone and done it this time. Caused some poor lady to have a miscarriage. Lester, you need to get on the phone with Brother Haggard, right now.”

Edward was the oldest one of Freddie Lee and Lester’s children. He was born two weeks after they were married and was an only child until fourteen years later when Bubba was born. Bubba spends half of his time in church with Freddie Lee and Lester and the other half racing cars with Edward.

Lester called Brother Haggard and explained the situation. Brother Haggard told Lester that he would call the Police Department and find out what was happening with Edward. An hour later the phone rang, Lester answered.

“I’ve got good news,” Brother Haggard began. “I talked to the judge. Turns out he is a member of Brother Robertson’s church, and Brother Robertson and I were at Southwestern Bible College together. When I figured that out, the judge agreed to meet with us.”

“We are so thankful, Brother Haggard.”

“It’s not over yet. You gather up Bubba and Freddie Lee and meet me in front of the court house tomorrow at twelve noon.”

Freddie Lee, Lester, and Bubba stood in front of the shaded glass doors of the courthouse. Brother Haggard approached. He gave off a plastic shine as he walked with an immortal, textured smile permanently plastered on his mortal face.

The preacher and the family walked into the courthouse and made their way into the judge’s chambers. The Honorable J.D. Dobson received them warmly and shook their hands. At the end of the greetings, Brother Haggard asked everyone to join hands and bow their heads.



# BALL PEEN HAMMER, ON A GOOD DAY (PART ONE)

“We just want to begin this meeting with a prayer, Lord Jesus. Jesus, we just ask that You give Brother Dobson the sight. Lord Jesus, the sight to see Brother Edward as we see him. Jesus, because we know that Edward is a good boy. We also know Jesus that we cannot know the details of what happened in Gilley’s that night, because Jesus we know that only You can fully know what happened. But, we ask, Jesus, that You give Brother Dobson Your sight, so that he may see Brother Edward as the good Christian that we know him to be. We just ask You to watch over Brother Edward and all of us. In Your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.”

“A beautiful prayer, Brother Haggard. I’m glad y’all were able to come in and talk with me,” said the judge.

Freddie Lee was first to talk, “We wanted you to know that Edward comes from a good Christian family. We know he would fight, but he would never hit a pregnant woman.”

The judge held up his hand, silently asking for a moment or two for thought.

“Y’all coming here got me to thinking along similar lines. Yes sir, it’s not every day that a family comes down here with the preacher, pleading a case. Way I see it, that woman had no business at Gilley’s while she was pregnant, anyhow.”

The next day in court, Edward was charged with fighting and let off on time served.

by Matt Trahan

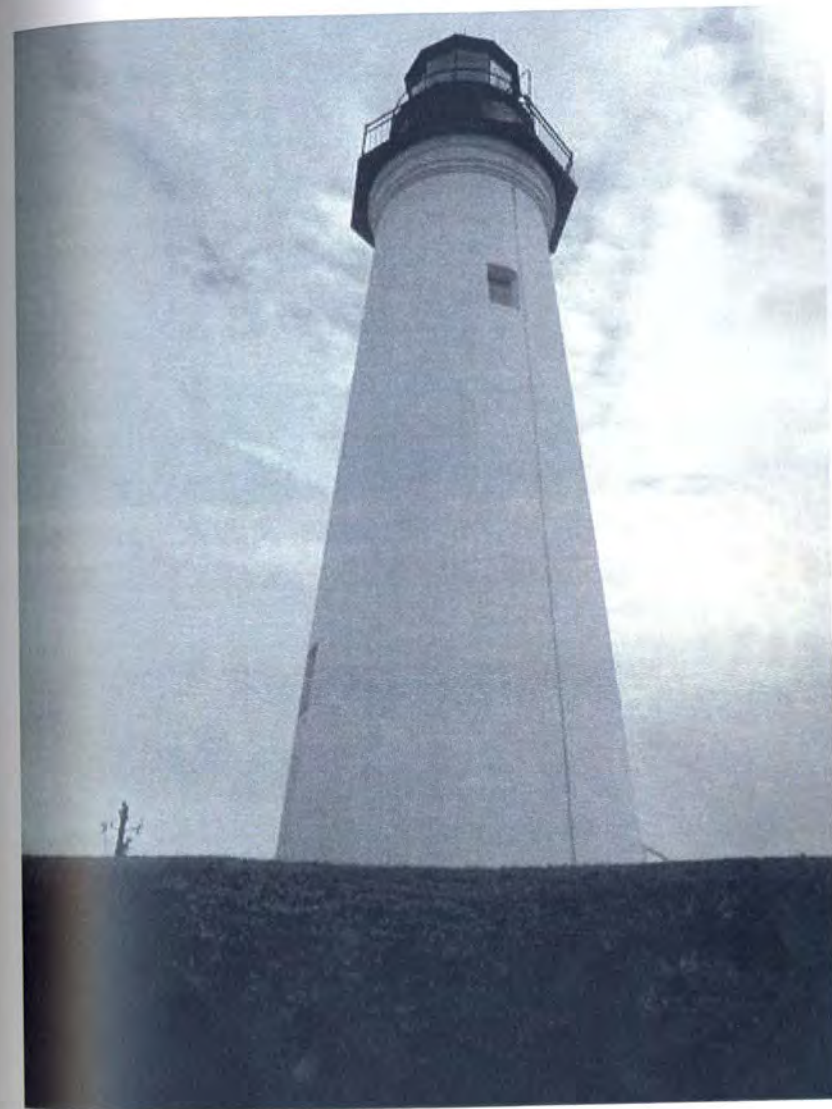


# THE PRESENCE OF YOUR ABSENCE

Today, I came home to empty rooms.  
Stillness and silence lie on the rugs  
Like an old dog reluctant to move,  
And I am reminded  
By the ghost of motion,  
A spirit of sound, some spectral  
Scent that still haunts these rooms,  
As I stand in the presence of  
Of your absence.  
If memory were a ragged couch  
Or worn chair I would carry  
It out and set it by the curb,  
Yet I cannot cast out phantoms  
That possess this place and  
Follow me about from room to room  
Like a loyal dog, unwilling  
To leave me unattended.  
Today, at the door I was greeted  
By your memory and paused  
At the threshold a moment  
To acknowledge you gone,  
Like a happy fixture,  
A friendly furnishing  
That sat in my living room  
For many years, now  
Replaced by empty space,  
As I wait in the presence of your  
Absence, there is nowhere to sit.

by Doug Tanoury

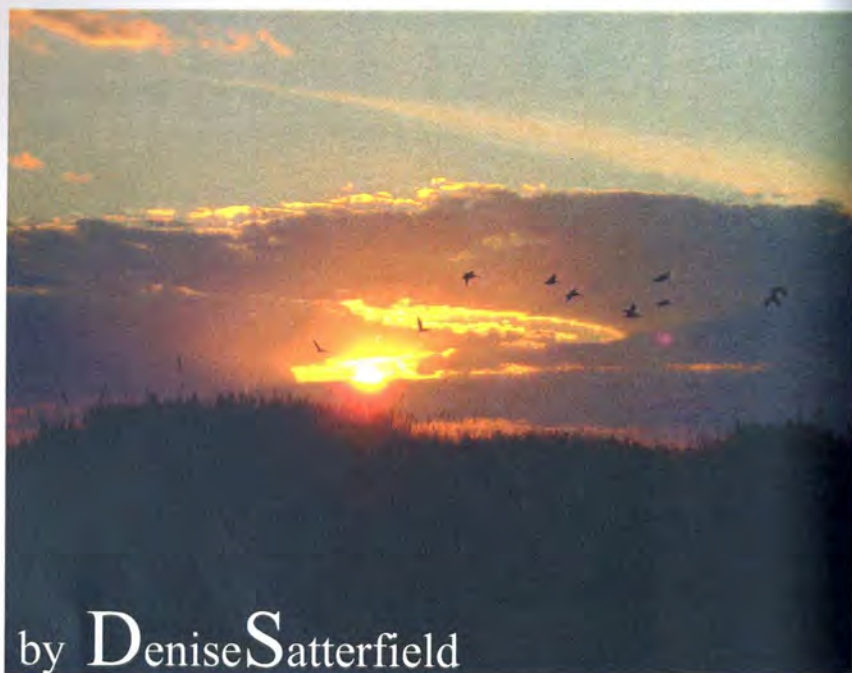
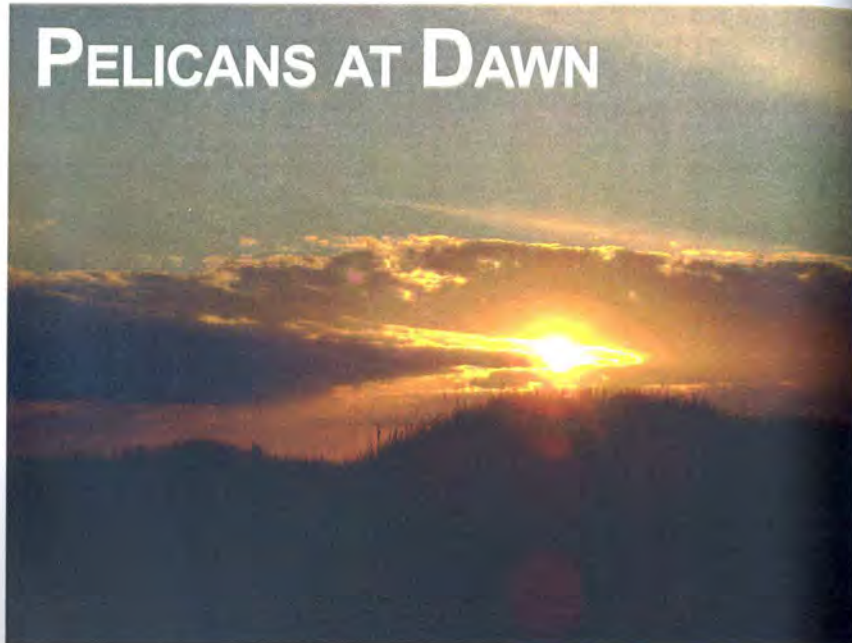
# LOST



by Jon De La Rosa



## PELICANS AT DAWN



by Denise Satterfield

## LOST, NOT FORGOTTEN

As the speaker began his opening remarks, a baby from the audience crawled up to the podium. It seemed only appropriate that an elder, remembering the past and those whose lives ended short and suddenly, would be joined by an infant, signifying the beginning of new life. The dedication provided time for remembrance and closure; however, there will never be total closure, only self acceptance begged for by each Marine standing there that day; begging for forgiveness for living when those, whose names filled a mindless blank sheet of paper died – many in the arms of these men – a vision, a memory they can never escape.

The sky darkened and a blanket of clouds gathered, and the reading of each lost Marine began. As the names ticked off one-by-one, the sky broke open and wept, and with each utterance the rain continued. Not a soul moved. Every foot of every participant in this moment seemed suddenly cemented to the ground, with eyes glued to the Marine delivering his list, his honor to a gathered crowd, some of whom had no first hand knowledge of what these men had seen – and the sky continued to respond to their grief.

As the list became shorter the ground swelled – it'd been months since the last good rain – and then the last name was read. And there was silence.

As the sergeant snapped off “Detail ...Tenhut!” preparing his troops to deliver the highest honor for those lost brethren and as the first note from the bugler shrilled out the beginning of taps, the dark sky was penetrated by the strength of one tiny ray of sunshine. It plowed its way through the gloom to acknowledge the significance of this day, as a day of remembrance. The sun continued to break through the clouds, and the blue sky peeked through, as if to show thankfulness to each survivor in attendance. And the rain ceased as mysteriously as it began and as the rifle shots exploded into the air, the clouds totally dissipated, and when the military salute concluded, the sun was once more ablaze and it was a beautiful day.

by Denise Satterfield



# HOW WILL I BE JUDGED?

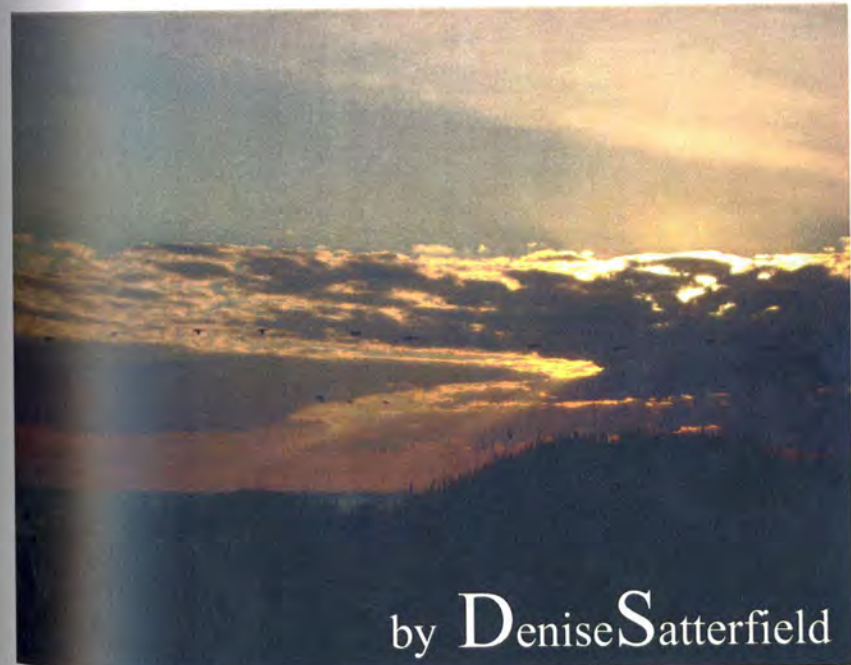
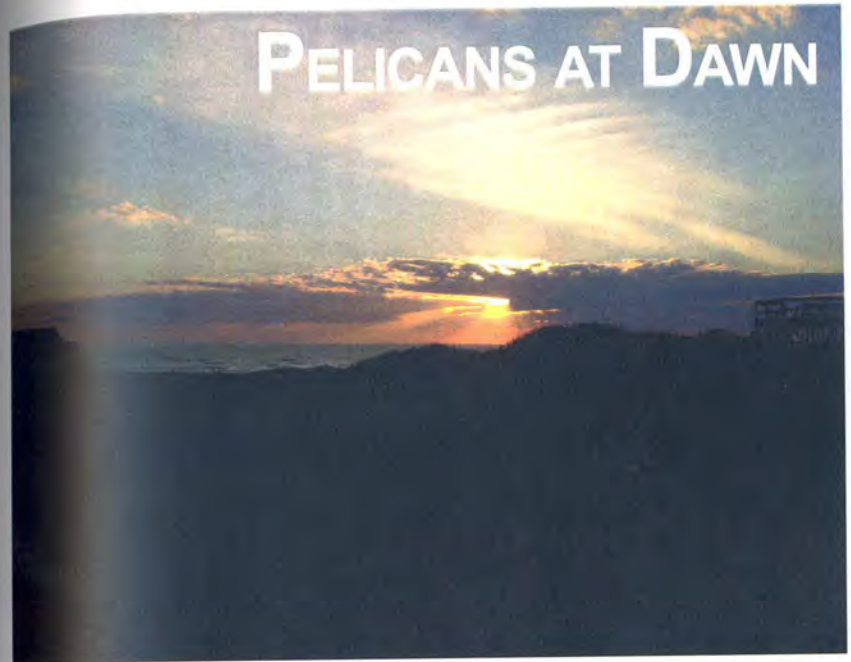
I have been a soldier for almost half my life. I have fought my war. I have fought in many battles and lived through them. I have had to take lives and have seen the results of my actions, the death I have dealt out. I have seen my buddies fall. I have been close to death myself, but survived, with scars to remind me.

I ask myself: How do I match up with soldiers from the past? Would I be considered a true warrior, one deserving of honor and prestige? Am I truly a better soldier than those I've fought and killed? Or am I just lucky? How would I match up to soldiers from other wars? Is there a special place that warriors who have fought and killed and died go when their end comes? Is there a St. Peter for us? Would he ask why I'm deserving of this resting place? Would he say I'm worthy of a warriors' resting place, or would he cast me out? Would he say the people I've killed did not have to be killed and call me a murderer and send me to hell? Would he open the gates and allow me in?

I ask myself these questions because I'm near the end of my life as a soldier. I fear I might have one last hurrah before the end, but only the God of War can determine that. I fear war and all that it entails but accept my duty as a warrior. I respect death and know it lurks with every breath I take when I am at war. I know my day will come and want to know where I stand and how I will be judged in the end.

Anonymous

## PELICANS AT DAWN



by Denise Satterfield

# AFTER THE FUNERAL

I cannot believe you left me here.

The building oppresses me with an abysmal silence  
All souls are gone, save mine.  
Mine, that aches with aloneness  
As I wait

(Ain't I a woman?)

The blue pool adds a shimmer of solitude to the water  
But at least the water has shadows for company.

My cough echoes (and echoes) in the massive silent vestibule.

There. There's a sound. The intermittent clanging of the flagpole clamp  
Outside in the mournful drizzle.

The bright bold red of the exit sign crowns the door.  
Glass doors that look out onto the deserted parking lot.

A white truck passes. A minibus.  
I hear the distant roar of an insistent jackhammer.

# AFTER THE FUNERAL

When it stops, the silence seems even deeper. Deeper.  
As if it sinks to China. Or Australia.

Silence as deep as the end of the world.

As my ears adjust, I hear the gentle scraping of my felt-tipped pen;  
The sotto voce crackle of the paper as I write on the back of a hymn.

A delivery man comes to the locked door.  
I move towards him, but I have become a phantom.  
He cannot see me.

I catch myself before I apologize to the silence for the intrusion of my  
careful steps.

The vestiges of my spirit are not sweet.  
Once, I raged against its souring, but the fight deserts me as I have been  
deserted.

Here. In this profoundly silent building,  
I cannot believe you left me here.

by Yvonne Kendall



# FOUR STRANGE THINGS ABOUT BILL

*"This world is a hospital, and either you are a patient or a nurse..." T. S. Eliot*

The first strange thing about Bill is that when he made a little money, he bought a tombstone for himself. He sent me a picture of himself in front of it with this grin, like he knew something I didn't.

The second strange thing about Bill is he told me that he can't touch cotton. "What are your clothes made out of?" He tells me that it is raw cotton he can't touch. He asks if I've ever seen "Cotton Comes to Harlem," starring Redd Foxx. I tell him no, "But I am a fan of his work."

The third strange thing about Bill is his two cats are named Kramer and Elaine.  
"Big Seinfeld fan, huh?"  
"No idea what you are talking about."

He cheats; says he is only as faithful as his options.

He also cheats at cards.

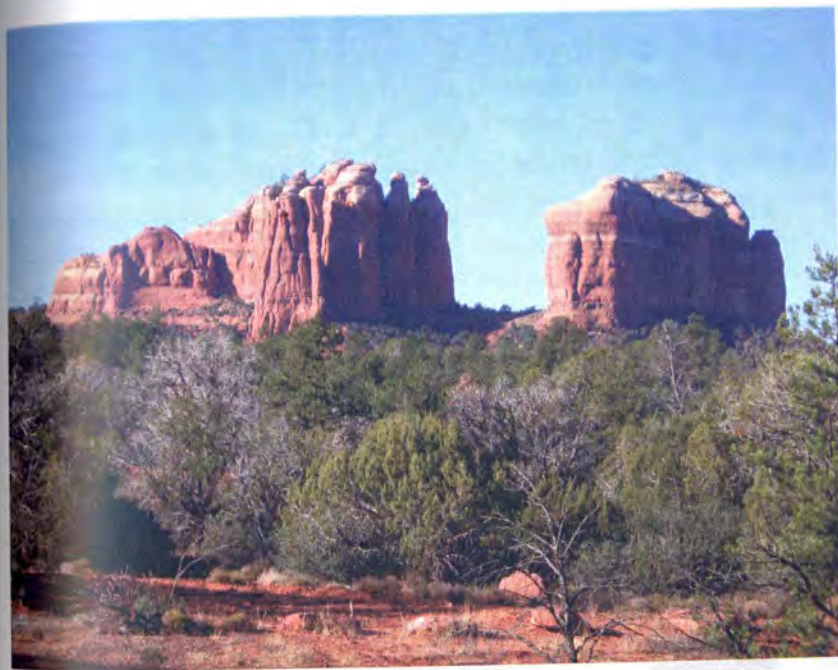
Probably cheats on his taxes.

His therapist wants to turn his hysterical misery into ordinary unhappiness.

The fourth strange thing about Bill is, when he shot himself: his note said "cremate me."

by Daniel Rich

# SEDONA WILD MOUNTAINS



by Bea Davies



# LORENZO THOMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

*Rothko Chapel, November 5, 2005*

Those of us who work at the University of Houston-Downtown received an e-mail from our faculty colleague, Dr. Yvonne Kendall, telling us that Lorenzo had died early on the morning of July 4, 2005. So, I thought, the fourth of July will always remind me of Lorenzo Thomas.

That link between Lorenzo and July 4th brought to mind Frederick Douglass's famous address to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, delivered on July 5, 1852, insisting that his white audience confront the persistent hypocrisy of slavery and racism in the growing republic.

... What, to the American slave, is your 4<sup>th</sup> of July? [asked Douglass] I answer [he went on]: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless. . . .

Two years before Lorenzo died, he published a piece in the July 4, 2003 issue of The Texas Observer called "Countee Cullen and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July." He opened the piece, noting that what he termed Douglass's "magnificently searing oration" had marked its sesquicentennial the year before. "Now, I'm all for celebrating the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the principles of liberty and equality inscribed in that document," wrote Lorenzo. "To my way of thinking, that means also remembering and celebrating those – like Frederick Douglass – who insisted that it is our duty to make the daily reality of American life match the beautiful rhetoric of our national credo."

Lorenzo took the occasion to call to our attention another

# LORENZO THOMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

important historical moment – the centennial of Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen (1903-1946). As Lorenzo notes, Cullen, a gifted lyricist, crafted poems that reflected "a deep spiritual doubt and the soul-tormenting struggle to manage racism's assaults and contradictions." In "The Shroud of Color" (1924), for example, Cullen protests the way racism has foreshortened "his life chances":

Forewilled to that despair  
My color shrouds me in, I am as dirt  
Beneath my brother's heel; there is a hurt  
In all the simple joys which to a child  
Are sweet. . .

... lines that anticipate the case that the Reverend Martin Luther King would later employ, examples that confront white Americans in a segregated society, prodding them to see the price that others pay for the privileges they took for granted. Lorenzo goes on to discuss Cullen's short play The Third Fourth of July, which depicts two families, one black and one white, both with sons serving overseas in World War II. In the play, one of the families – the wrong family, as it turns out – receives the dreaded telegram reporting that their son has been killed in action, a reversal that allows each family to feel the vulnerability and humanity of the other. As Lorenzo points out, the lesson still needs repeating, writing as he was in 2003, shortly after Jessica Lynch, the petite blond private from West Virginia was rescued as a POW in Iraq – and made the centerpiece of media frenzy – while her Panamanian-born African American fellow soldier, Soshana Johnson, who was in fact shot in the ambush, came home to a much quieter welcome.

Lorenzo concluded this piece in the Texas Observer by recalling Frederick Douglass's words that "the conscience of the nation



# LORENZO THOMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

must be raised. . . the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed.”  
“There is still much in our country that needs fixing,” wrote Lorenzo.  
“Bigotry masquerades as patriotism while our political leaders spout  
arrogant non-sequiturs, and a truly ominous level of meanness in  
public discourse moves us closer to mental lockdown. But,” he went  
on, “there is also hope and the power of thoughtful reflection.”

This piece – “Countee Cullen and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July” – strikes me  
as so wonderfully characteristic of Lorenzo. It shows us things that we  
may not have seen before, helps us really see matters that we may have  
thought we understood, and does so with learning, with humor, and with  
an inspiring insistence that we need to know more and, knowing more,  
we need to do better. “Let this Fourth of July . . . [provide] one more  
chance to make the great words of the Declaration of Independence  
mean what they say,” Lorenzo concluded. “As Douglass pointed out,  
there’s no need to slander the Founders. Even if the problem *was*  
Thomas Jefferson or George Washington, they ain’t here now – and  
haven’t been able to do us any damage for a long time. Nor do we  
need to declare them saints to appreciate the importance of the words  
that Jefferson drafted and that Washington fought to defend. But it is  
always worth celebrating the great principles upon which the United  
States was founded and the efforts of those who remind us to never lose  
sight of those principles.”

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have known  
Lorenzo Thomas, to have been his colleague for twenty years, and to  
have his work still. And so, these connections remain: Frederick  
Douglass and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and, as Lorenzo showed me, Countee  
Cullen and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. But also, from now on, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July will  
remind me of Lorenzo Thomas and of his calling us to “our duty to make  
the daily reality of American life match the beautiful rhetoric of our  
national credo.” Thank you, Lorenzo.

by Susan Ahern

# DREAM 1

midnight halcyon  
feathered lexicon

ensconced in the mind  
plumes pure - parturient  
morphemes sublime  
fly free from slumber  
onto the open line

by Jessica Garza

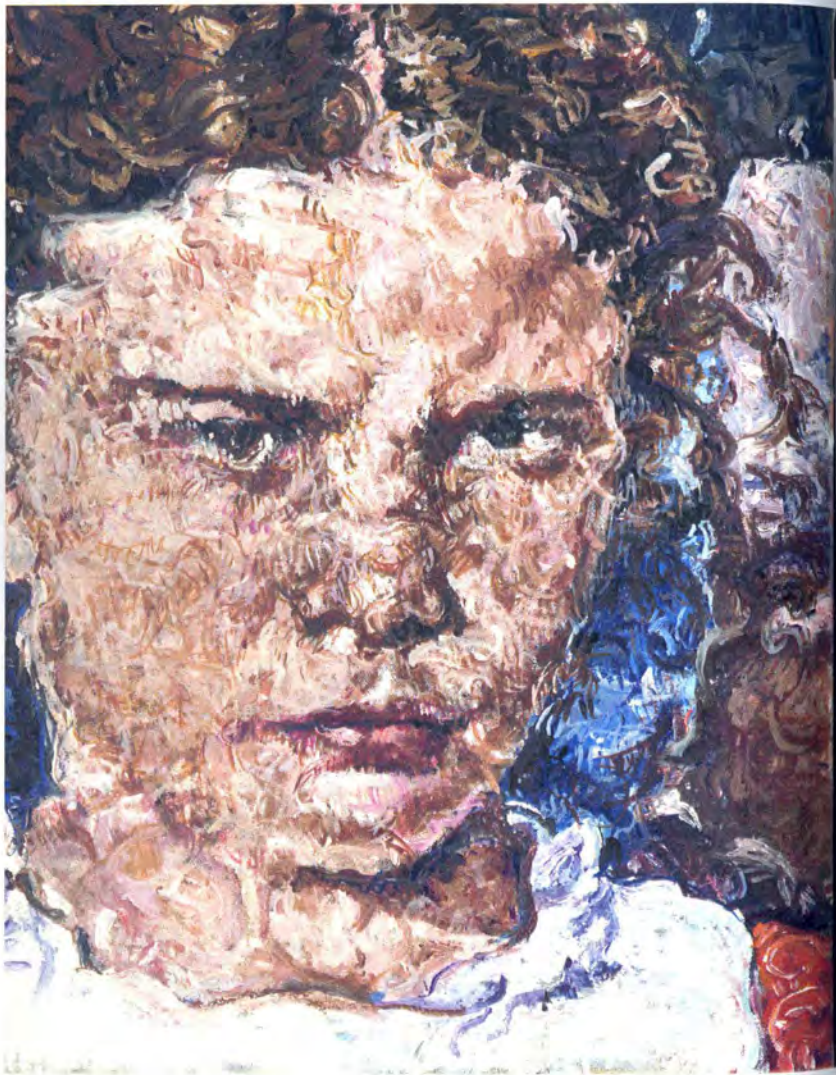
# SIMULACRA

atavistic avatar lovers  
semantemes of flesh  
their prose - ones and zeros  
hum, an ethereal dissonance  
stained, echoes of existence

by Jessica Garza



# JESSE MAGDALENA CHARLETON



by Beth Secor

# DESPAIR

Each year a decade of despair  
Searching the change-purse of hope for one more nickel  
Wishing on stars and wondering where the promise went  
Grasping at straws and every other cliché of longing.

The bright side is too elusive or perhaps  
The eyes of my aging heart can no longer see the light.

by Yvonne Kendall

Apart from the rainbow it begins its flight  
It shoots like a star with pure delight  
Away from the prism that holds its siblings  
It rushes forth to new beginnings

I'm Green and that's all I see  
And I have many shades in my reality

I am the forest, majestic and dark  
I am the tree without the bark  
I am the bird that flies through the sky  
I am the green that looks through your eye

I'm Green and that's all I'll be  
And I have many shades in my reality

I am the prairie with horizons unbound  
I am the flower that grows from the ground  
I am the emerald that sparkles and gleams  
I am the life that shines in your dreams

I'm Green periodically  
And I have many shades in my reality

I am the vaccine for your decay  
I'm aloe-vera that protects all day  
I am the moon that's made out of cheese  
I am the Statue of Liberty

I'm Green and that's all that I see  
And I have many shades in my reality

I soar through the endless night  
And I will make it bright just for your delight  
And now after all that you've seen  
Just think Green, Green, Green  
And you will summon me

It returns to its siblings for a long period of rest  
Until a time when life is not at its best  
And when that time comes, as it knows it will  
It will make its flight with adventurous thrill

by **Leif Behmer**



# A REMINISCENCE OF LORENZO THOMAS

I had the honor of being the department chair to hire Lorenzo Thomas as a fulltime faculty member at UH-Downtown.

We worked together for more than twenty years, most recently as colleagues, professors in the English Department; serving on committees together. When, during his last year, Lorenzo was too ill to attend some department meetings, he and I would exchange e-mail so he could keep up – because he was still vitally interested in his department, his university.

Although he is known for many things, Lorenzo was important to UHD as a mentor for faculty members and students. And he did the university invaluable and lasting service as the Director of the Cultural Enrichment Center. He took as his duty to foster understanding of cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, and religious identities and differences as resources of the Houston community and the university community by sponsoring and arranging dialog and artistic performances.

# A REMINISCENCE OF LORENZO THOMAS

I close with just nine lines from Walt Whitman, a poet for whose work Lorenzo and I shared a deep respect; Lorenzo said that his own poetry and so much of 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry was set free to be what it had become by Walt Whitman. I ask you to think of Lorenzo as speaking through Whitman's words:

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking  
Out of mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight . . .  
Borne hither, ere all else eludes me, hurriedly  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Lorenzo – the man, yet still a little boy – confronting the world  
– chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter – taking all hints  
to use them – but swiftly leaping beyond them – we remember him.

by Michael Dressman



# THE SOAK

water swirls around me  
conducts the beating of my heart  
into my submerged ear  
as I gaze upon white porcelain  
in the shadows

on my side  
my right shoulder is cool  
my left is not  
crying in the tub  
helps

thinking of everything  
and nothing all at once  
sadness consumes me  
and in confusion  
I try to let go

mother is on the phone  
telling me to go for help  
but I drown her out  
as I blow bubbles  
from my pursed lips

blurry eyes  
and my heaving chest  
tell me that I am troubled  
in many ways  
that soap does not wash

# THE SOAK

things that I know  
choices that I've made  
lives that I lead  
with people who are my  
friends  
family

it all dissolves  
into one thing  
one aching  
that is no where in particular  
buried

I don't know how to be free  
from everything  
or how to heal  
when everything seems lost  
and the clock ticks

I try to soak  
I try to let it slip  
but I always end up catching myself  
as rain falls from  
where I cannot see

deep consuming  
empty fullness  
defines my life  
my dreams  
my nightmares

# THE SOAK

to let go  
I would have to mourn  
a part of myself  
that has been the only part  
I have ever known

I hear others  
moving things and talking  
I walk amongst them  
in my memories  
as flashes of life enter my mind

I stare into the water  
the still water  
my hair sticks to my cheek  
my fingers wrinkle  
but I cannot move

stuck floating  
somewhere I cannot find  
stuck imagining  
what it must feel like  
to really smile

I just try to rinse away  
completely  
and hold myself all at once  
swimming in tears  
as my heart floats away

by Jenny Hammond

# A SONNET FOR A SONNET

Announcing the king, his majesty's here  
A sonnet robed in syllables for ears  
To hear to taste, in literary awe  
All the aspiring alliteration  
Ascertain ambiguities out raw  
With your couplet lines of that Sampson's hair  
And iambic pentameters are there  
Your godly shaped body of fourteen lines  
Make me want to break marital confines  
For I am hypnotically compelled  
As you sing your song like Siren so well  
Your breath is like history, epics and  
Cinnamon sweets. I beg you be my man  
Though bound to parchment, I'll write when I can

by Tyanna Pullum-Thompson



# THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

How does one go about the somewhat complex and indeed confusing task of placing any sort of value or worth on one's friendship with another human being? That was the perplexing question I asked myself when preparing to write about my family friend and longtime confidant Steve, who made the fateful decision in May of 2005 to take his own life. As I sat at my desk pondering just that question, it suddenly came to me that I had for a long time continued to place the blame directly on the shoulders of my good friend. Did I still consider myself a trusted friend of this man who made the momentous, yet singularly personal decision, to commit suicide that horrible and distressing day? I have to admit that the question I asked myself was not an easy one to answer. Why had I continued to judge him, and to consider his willful and harmful act as being unworthy of my respect? To answer these questions I had to peer deep into my own soul. I had to confront my own selfish and self-righteous attitude toward what he had done to himself, but more importantly, I had to believe what his own selfish and uncaring actions had done to his family and friends lo those many months ago. I then found it necessary to reevaluate and reconsider the value of this special friendship we had developed over the years.

Our two families have been close for many, many years, and I considered Steve and his two brothers kind of like my family as well. Steve's father Jimmy and my father had also been childhood friends. Although our families saw less and less of each other when we moved to Houston from central Texas in May of 1964, since the mid-80's I would frequently make trips to the Temple-Belton area a number of times each year to visit friends and family that still lived there. Sometimes I would stay with Steve and his family when I visited the area. When I was in the throes of my battle with alcoholism, and had decided to make the famous geographical change that some alcoholics often do when they falsely convince themselves that it will help them stay sober, Steve put

# THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

me up when I had burned all my bridges and had nowhere else to go. His kindness and compassion saw me through six months, but only until I decided to again run away from my troubles, and had landed this time in Baltimore, Maryland in hopes that this change would again solve my problems.

Needless to say, my excursion to Baltimore only hastened the ongoing descent into my own personal Hell. However, unbeknownst to me, Steve had suffered through his own misfortunes as well. When I left, Steve had been in the middle of a difficult lawsuit with a large Dallas construction company, and in the process, coupled with a bitter divorce and child custody battle with his second wife, had himself undergone a mental breakdown, much as I had experienced in my final bouts with the incomparable insanity of compulsive and addictive drinking. Although my friend had not drunk alcoholically as I had, he seemed to have acquired a taste for cocaine, much as others in his circle at the time had done. Luckily for me I guess, my true love had always been booze, although I must admit that throughout the years I probably had smoked perhaps a semi-truck full of marijuana. However, in the end, I had even given that up as well and was left with only this subtle foe to parry with until my final redemption. Sadly to say, Steve was not as lucky, or perhaps one should say, as graced as I when the final tally was taken.

After his death and at the funeral, his mother confided in me that Steve had been diagnosed as suffering from manic-depression after his breakdown and brief hospitalization. However, he made the conscious decision to stop taking his medication prescribed for him, and as a result, would soon return to his former mental state. During my early recovery from alcoholism I had also briefly experienced major anxiety or panic attacks, and for a time was troubled by depression as well, but was greatly relieved to find out that these symptoms were only the result of my withdrawal from the effects of my body being saturated with such a deadly amount of alcohol. I also later learned that people diagnosed with manic-depression often quit taking their medication



# THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP

because they miss the highs and lows that the disease brings about in them, and cannot get used to the steady and calm feeling that the medicine creates. Upon my return to Texas in December of 1989, I heard that Steve had gone through a serious breakdown; however, when I later visited him he assured me that all was now well, and there was nothing to worry about. Unfortunately, such was not the case, and I now know that something was amiss when he told me that he would never again allow himself to be forcefully confined in a *nut ward*. Regrettably, at the time, and because of my then mostly self-induced stupor, I was either unable or perhaps even unwilling to perceive the danger that lay ahead for my good friend. I will never be able to know for sure whether or not I might have been able to see the pain he must have been in.

Did the repressed guilt that I must have somehow foolishly gathered around me serve as a convenient vehicle for placing the effects of my own ill-perceived culpability back upon my sick friend? I now clearly see that it was of my own volition that I proceeded to place all of the blame for this irrational and desperate act on Steve. It was most assuredly, I do now comprehend, that it was neither his, nor for that matter, anyone's false perception of fault that was responsible for the horrible events that occurred that day. Consequently, it might even be possible for me to again restore a little bit of my wounded soul.

by Ray Medford

# SIGEP PAINTING



by Nathaniel Nouri



# PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SLAB

Royce glanced down at the corner of the page.

"Jesus Christ...one hundred and thirty six? Oh well...only nine hundred and forty eight to go. Shit." He thought.

He checked his watch and he still had almost an hour before his class started. His neck seemed stiff as he surveyed the nearby intersection from his seat on the bench where he was lounging. Pigeons fluttered and purred in the grass behind him. Cars buzzed through the light on Main Street with the occasional annoying honk to remind him that there were still assholes in the world.

He watched the entrance of the building across the street as people cycled in and out and up and down the steps. An assortment of strangers wandered up and down the block, mostly students, and they talked out loud about things that didn't seem important to the casual observer. He rubbed the back of his neck in an attempt to relax and then reluctantly returned to his book.

He had covered a few more pages when he noticed a shadow looming in front of him. He could tell by the smell that it was most likely one of Houston's derelicts that seemed to outnumber the regular people at this time of day.

"Excuse me?" the figure paused and then said, "Hey bud?" Royce quickly glanced up at the man and using a quick gesture with his free hand he bluntly said,

"I don't have any money, dude."

As quickly as he looked up he looked back down and pretended to focus on his book. The shadow seemed to stay in place and then Royce heard a voice say,

"Hey asshole, I wasn't gonna ask you for money."

Royce immediately froze. He wasn't cowardly by any means but he had learned some very important lessons on how to pick his battles in the past. As he processed the shadow's reply, his mind raced instantly back to summer of 1993 when he had tangled with one of the most stubborn individuals he had ever met. "Tony Barston..." he thought.

# PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SLAB

"That was one ugly son of a bitch." He said silently to himself.

His mind pictured Tony briefly with his scarred up forehead and a nose that was gnarled from being broken several times before. Tony was missing a whole front row of teeth and to top it off he was sensitive about his looks, which meant that he couldn't take a joke. They had tangled because Tony felt that Royce had gone too far when he started mocking his lisp in front of some of his friends from high school.

Royce quickly reflected on his fight with Tony, his *fight*s with Tony. It wasn't that Tony was tough; it was more like he was super ugly, and his ugliness meant that he really didn't have anything to lose. Royce took a pummeling, but had managed to knock Tony down three different times. Nevertheless, Tony kept getting back up for more. After the fight was finally broken up, Royce felt as if they had been throwing blows for a week.

As quickly as all this had come into Royce's mind, it dissipated. He was still focused on his book and thought to himself, "Yep, you should never fight ugly people, and you should never fight a man that has nothing to lose."

With his own advice in mind, Royce took a deep breath and glanced back up at the man who was standing silently and waiting for a response. Just as Royce had expected, he was rather disgusting. His wiry hair jutted out around the pulled-down rim of his dingy ball cap. The man had a thick gray beard and his moustache was dark orange with nicotine stains. His jeans looked like they could stand up and walk away by themselves and he could tell by the man's odor that he probably hadn't had a bath in a whole month of Sundays.

"OK...what *were* you gonna ask me?" Royce replied.

"I just wanted to see what you're readin'?" the man asked.

"Ahhh...it's just some shit." Royce flipped over his well-worn copy of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and showed it to the man.



# PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SLAB

The man glanced at the cover of the book and with his index finger pointed into the air asked, "So, who *is* John Galt?"

"Wha... Oh, Hell if I know?" Royce replied once he realized the man was alluding to the text. "You've read this?" He asked.

"Unfortunately, I have. The name's Quinn." The man replied and then offered his hand.

Royce hesitated at the sight of Quinn's blackened fingernails and Quinn took the hint and lowered it.

"So what, are you into Rand?" Royce asked.

"Not really. I've read that book along with several of her others. Basically, her philosophy is that the measure of each individual is directly proportionate to their ability to amass wealth. In short, those who die with the most toys... WIN!" Quinn chuckled as he searched in his pocket for a lighter.

"Are you into Rand?" He asked.

"Hell, I can't tell. So far, it seems like a bunch of crap."

Royce said as he set the book on the bench beside him.

Royce glanced at his watch again and realized it was almost time for his class to start. He didn't want to be late, so he sped up their introduction by saying, "Look man, you got some business? I have to go, and I really don't have anything for you, if that's what you're working towards." Royce said with a serious tone.

Quinn stammered a bit and said,

"OK... Look, I wanted to ask if... Well, I want to see if you'll trade me a book?"

"What?" Royce asked.

"Well, I got a book that I want to trade you for your Rand."

Quinn motioned to the book sitting next to Royce. Royce looked at the man for a moment and then asked,

"What book do *you* have?"

Quinn lowered himself on one knee and unbuckled his rather

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large duffle bag. After a few moments of searching he pulled out a small stack of several books that were wrapped in a succession of plastic grocery bags. He shuffled through the stack of books and selected one of the paperbacks and then passed it to Royce. Royce looked at the book closely. The cover was in better shape than he would have imagined. He flipped through the pages; the text was clean and bright with the exception of pencil marks underlining some of the text and several pages that had extensive notes scribbled in the margins. He then closed the book and read the title out loud,

*"No Exit... and Three Other Plays..."* by Jean-Paul

Sh... Sa... Sart-ray? I know the name, but I never can pronounce it."

Royce admitted. He looked back at Quinn who was watching silently.

"You've read this, too?" Royce asked as he held out the book.

"Hell yes!" Quinn said with an animated grin. He then restated himself by saying, "Or better yet, *Hell is other people*, my friend." Quinn had his finger extended again as to punctuate his knowledge of the text. Unbeknownst to Quinn, Royce was in his fourth semester as a philosophy major. He had some familiarity with Sartre, but had not yet read any of his plays. Royce took a second look through the book and made his decision.

"OK, Quinn you've got yourself a deal; I will trade you my Rand for this Sartre." He said as he stood up and handed his book over to Quinn.

Quinn seemed pleased with the arrangement, and began whistling while he repacked his things. He hoisted his pack over his shoulder and tucked the newly acquired copy of *Atlas Shrugged* under his arm. With a brief "Farewell" Quinn proceeded across the park toward the bridge behind them that extended over the bayou.

Quinn added, "You're really gonna dig Sartre. I know I do, and feel free to use my notes." He smiled as he turned and walked away.



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Royce nodded his head without fully realizing what Quinn was saying. He sat looking at his book and then it dawned on him. This man, Quinn, seemed educated and for the entire time they had spent talking about these books, Royce completely forgot that he was talking to a *homeless* person.

“How fucking weird?” he thought.

Royce quickly turned around as Quinn was passing over the hill and called out to him. He stepped towards this strange enigma of a man, and Quinn stopped and turned to look back at Royce.

“You said you’ve read Ayn Rand?” Royce asked.

“Yeah...So?” Quinn replied.

“So why did you want to trade?” Royce asked as he raised his palms to imply his confusion.

Quinn smiled at Royce and then shrugged, “I’ve got to wipe my ass with something.” He said and then continued down the hill.

by Tayvis Dunnahoe

# ONE MAIN



by Jon De La Rosa

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