

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume I, Issue VI

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A Haiku
by
Andrew T. Duncan

Autumn winds seep in
Through the cracks around the door
Scattering my blow

Two Poems
by
Brian Fuggett

At The Nursing Home

Rumor has it,
Mrs. Lapaglia
from room 102
has been ostracized
from the recreation hall
for calling false bingos,
& Dickie Kaplan,
that deaf-mute fella
from room 302
who spends every day
splayed on the floor
imitating the gestures
of inanimate objects,
used to be a mime,
& old Louise
from room 252
is accusing
the orderlies
of trying
to impregnate her
with sperm tainted enemas,
& Mr. Padgit,
the retired
drill instructor
from room 182
thinks his neck brace
is a clerical collar,
so he wanders
the halls
like a faith healer,
slapping the forehead
of every resident
he encounters.

Darwinian Nuns & The Embryo Orphanage

Atheists
disguised
as scientists
are breeding
Darwinian nuns
in the embryo orphanage
while every night
somewhere
in the world
a remarkable 2.7 million
kamikaze moths
perish
as a result
of dive bombing
porch lights
& contrary to popular belief
9 out of 10
laboratory monkeys
prefer to copulate
missionary style
& an astonishing 35%
of all proctologists
moonlight
as puppeteers
& an even more astonishing
73% of all puppeteers
moonlight
as proctologists.

Why Are So Many Poems Boring?
by
Paul Dickey

i.

Poems with nothing but clever line breaks are boring. Poems with no metaphor, freshness, passion, or images, but sort of rhyme are boring.

ii.

Poems with nothing going for them but white space are boring.

iii.

Minimalist poems remove redundant, implied, leave only all that is boring.

Poems like this poem are:

well yes, boring. So are poems that don't listen to themselves or can't walk a beat. Work-chopped poems, you ask? Yeah, boring, like chopped liver.

iv.

Clichés and bad tropes are boring. Poems with too many adverbs are excruciatingly boring.

I guess some poems don't even try to rhyme be fresh make us see anything poems that don't use punctuation properly are boring. Too.

The Velocity of a Clitoris
by
Dave Clapper

"Have you ever considered the velocity of a clitoris?" she asked, as she moved her hips back and forth above me.

"No," I grunted.

"Probably just as well," she said, and continued her motion.

Unfortunately, the question had a similar impact on me that a command not to have thought about rhinoceroses would have--once suggested, I could think of little else. My brows knotted as she rocked, oblivious. She didn't even immediately notice that I'd stopped thrusting. When she noticed, she cocked her head and raised her left eyebrow.

"What?" she said.

"It's not really the velocity that's at issue, is it?" I said. "Isn't friction the more important factor?"

She looked blank. "What are you talking about?"

"You asked me if I'd ever considered the velocity of a clitoris."

She looked genuinely puzzled. "I did?"

"Yes, you did." My penis fell out of her, limp. She looked down at it, her lips a moue. She took it gently in her hand and ran her thumb over the tip.

"Sometimes, words just come out of my mouth when I'm fucking," she said. "I don't really know what I'm saying. Just ignore me if you can. Okay?"

"You're kidding, right?"

"No, really," she said, and started kissing down my chest. "It's sort of like Tourette's. Hell, maybe it is Tourette's. But it only happens when I'm fucking." She took my cock into her mouth and rolled her tongue over the head.

"Seriously?"

She nodded her assent, which, combined with her activity of the moment, had an interesting effect. She murmured her approval, and released me with an audible and very wet pop.

"You ready to go again, big boy?"

Rather than answer, I reached under her armpits and pulled her back up my body. Velocity, friction, whatever--I intended to give her clitoris a bit of stimulation.

Several minutes later, as our breathing became more ragged and our moans more intense, she asked, "Have you ever considered the gestation period of a rhinoceros?"

To Complete The Candidate's Dossier
by
Davis Schneiderman

January 1 2004

To whom it may concern;

I write in enthusiastic support of Jesus Christ for your advertised position of Assistant Professor of Literature with possible emphases in postcolonial literature/fiction writing/interdisciplinary studies/immaculate conception/women and gender studies. I have had the pleasure of knowing Jesus since my early childhood, mostly from the ubiquitous imagery promulgated by the Church as well as from various unrepeatable curses proffered by my friend Jimmy Scanlon's father as he tried to build a tree-house for the neighborhood children, which ended up looking more like a pile of splintered wood.

While this position calls for an individual who takes a broad general view of the Western canon, Jesus, I do not need to tell you, is in many ways a key component in such a tradition. His extensive work with lepers, moneychangers, and whores is well documented, and the sociological insights he draws from everyday experience make Jesus a thinker firmly set in the humanistic tradition. Additionally, he completed one of his field exams in transubstantiation.

Also, he has extensive experience studying overseas, and with your department's interest in international internship opportunities, I have no doubt that Jesus will provide a valuable contact for various organizations in the Middle East. Most American academics, myself included, are more than humbled by his global reach and seemingly transnational influence.

Aside from all of these qualifications, Jesus is also a dynamo in the classroom. While observing a session of his graduate-level workshop, "English 777: Writing Stories to Make You Born Again," Jesus brought in several artifacts from the ancient world. I watched students, many of whom were first-generation attendees at the university level, delight in handling Veronica's Veil, the Shroud of Turin, and assorted pieces of the True Cross. After such a tactile exercise, Jesus asked each student to write a prose poem that would relate these implements to various ideas in the cultural arena; as an exercise in metonymy, such work proved fascinating.

When one doubting student challenged Jesus to prove the authenticity of some of the "True Cross" pieces, Jesus, with great authority, allowed the challenger to poke a finger into some of his most noticeable wounds. The student, clearly impressed by the fleshiness of her professor's argument, as far as I know, did not wash her hands for the rest of the semester. In this way, Jesus is an exemplar for hand's-on learning. It is no exaggeration to say that he performs miracles in the classroom.

I am keenly aware that no colleague, regardless of how skilled a scholar and classroom pedagogue, can escape the grind of committee work and other intangible service responsibilities that mark our greatest professors. Here, I am obliged to write, Jesus is not always the most straightforward associate; he often speaks in riddles and parables. Just the other day, I asked him if he agreed with the Dean's recent pronouncement that raising

the University's endowment must be our biggest priority. His response, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your consolation," will certainly not help us build a new sports center and 5000-seat concert arena.

On another occasion, when a student asked him if he would be interested in purchasing a candy bar for a jazz band fund-raiser, Jesus sternly responded with, "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." Despite the frustration such comments sometimes elicit, Jesus is largely cordial and collegial, and I know from conversations with him that he generally approves of jazz music.

Since most institutions require publication of a book for promotion to tenure, I should inform you that there is considerable academic controversy about the book Jesus claims to have had a hand in writing. He has, at times, argued that he was a ghostwriter working through the pen of various advanced graduate students, and at other instances, that his dissertation direction heavily influenced the production of the text. Other competing academic schools, no doubt motivated by jealousy and lowly post-structuralism, have claimed that the text is more of an amalgamation of many different writers, or, perhaps most egregiously, that the book does not possess an author at all. Such demagogues call Jesus himself a historical fabrication, but even they-when stricken ill or faced with some catastrophe-have been known to waffle on the issue.

While I have not always agreed with Jesus's strong views on particular subjects, particularly his sometimes wavering position on his own divinity, I can say without hesitation that he will be eminently effective in your department-a colleague who will literally walk on water for his institution; I do not hesitate to offer him my highest recommendation.

Please contact me if I can provide further information about his application.

Sincerely and amen,

Phileas T. Mugwumpery
Distinguished Professor of Academic Excellence

Dating by Jim Donadio

I stopped living with Kathleen because she made the apartment smell like fish. I'm not talking about that mother-and-daughter-playing-tennis, not-so-fresh-feeling smell. Kathleen was always taking care of herself with vinegar and oil or whatever, those feminine hygiene things that sound suspiciously like salad dressings. No, that wasn't the problem. It was her unhealthy obsession with tuna fish. She ate it all the goddamned time, ever since that fateful day when I'd mentioned drunkenly that she could stand to lose a few pounds around the hips. She burst into tears, and the next day she joined a gym and went on that crazy carnivore diet where you stop eating bread. She started eating tuna straight from the can because it was low-fat, high-protein, and carb-free. And soon that was all she was eating, breakfast straight through dinner. I found myself living with the Star-Kist poster girl. I started calling her Charlie Tuna. I thought it was a cute pet name. She cried again.

At first, the odor was only prevalent on her breath and in the general kitchen area, but then that stench just crawled though the apartment and got into everything. It hung in the curtains and permeated my clothes. I'd go to work, and people would look at me and turn up their noses like I'd farted. One coworker slipped me the number of a gastrointestinal specialist who'd apparently worked wonders on his uncle's colon. "Great," I'd thought, "they think of me as the gassy tuna guy."

I'd never met anyone past the age of ten who smelled like tuna, except my grandfather. His house smelled like tuna and mothballs, which I didn't mind so much because most old people I'd known in childhood smelled like piss and mothballs, and that new combination was a welcome change. My apartment smelled like tuna and gym socks from Kathleen's experiment in crash dieting. I'm not sure which of these combinations was necessarily the worst. The general aura of that place, of her, began to remind me of my grandfather, which was wrong in a number of ways. Sex became impossible. It felt incestuous and began to arouse what my therapist likes to refer to as "repressed memories."

So I had to leave Kathleen, basically because she felt too much like home. And telling her that I was leaving was another tear-soaked disaster. "Is it me?" she asked. "Be honest." I told her that, yes, it was absolutely and completely her fault. She began sobbing, and begging me to elaborate. I told her that it was because she smelled bad and had gotten fat. She began to twitch and convulse a bit, and then went to the kitchen to get her antidepressants and a bottle of gin. "Oh Christ," I thought, "here she goes with this again." So I grabbed a few suitcases and headed out the door.

After Kathleen, I stumbled from one bad relationship to the next. I began seeing a girl named Florence, who I should have known was trouble from the start because she was from Bangor, Maine. I always associated New England with clam chowder, and Maine with lobsters, so the reminders of Kathleen and the whole fish scene were bound to hang over the relationship. On top of that, I just couldn't see how anything good could come out of a town called Bangor. It sounded so clunky. It didn't roll off the tongue like Burlington or Montpelier, those nice little New England towns in Vermont. Bangor sounded like it should be a name of a character in a Conan the Barbarian movie, not the name of the town my girlfriend was from. The bottom line is, I should have realized we were destined for failure from day one.

I didn't recognize these omens because I was blinded by lust. I'd always had a thing for girls who wore flannel and overstressed syllables like they were deaf. But most girls I'd met who wore flannel on a regular basis were lesbians. Most girls who did the whole overstressed-syllable thing were actually deaf. With the lesbians, sex was out of the question. With the deaf girls, I just couldn't communicate. I had figured that, due to the fact that I had a penis and didn't know sign language, I was doomed to a life of unfulfilled fantasies. But then my little New England girl came along, and I thought my dreams had come true.

There was nothing really wrong with Florence. She was a good girl, slender and attractive, intelligent and funny. In fact, everything was fine until I invited her to Thanksgiving with my family. It all went wrong just as we were about to eat, and my mother was tying a bib around my Uncle Lenny's neck. He'd never been the same since an unfortunate accident a year earlier during his time working for a construction company. The details were fuzzy, but it had involved long overtime hours, a steel extension ladder, and a freak lightning storm. His bones had healed almost completely since the fall, and the doctors said the outlook for Uncle Lenny regaining some of the feeling in his extremities within a few months was pretty good. However, the outlook for the return of ninety to ninety-five percent of his mental faculties was really slim-to-none, so we as a family had to resolve ourselves to dealing with the "new" Lenny, who was kind of the like "old" Lenny except more quiet, less active, and more messy of an eater.

Lenny had gotten a sizable fortune from the settlement, but most of that disappeared along with his wife Susan and his former accident and injury lawyer, a guy named Chuck. Chuck had also acted as Susan's divorce lawyer about a month after the settlement came through, and he and Susan left Lenny paraplegic and penniless. In an effort to save a few bucks, Mom, who had taken Lenny in when he couldn't make mortgage payments and had his house repossessed, lifted extra bibs from Red Lobster when they went out to dinner instead of buying more traditional cloth ones. When Florence saw the picture of the dancing lobster on the bib, she started talking about growing up in Maine and the lobster business there. And then, of course, she had to go and mention Bangor by name.

My senile grandmother overheard "Bangor" as "Bangkok," and launched into an obscenity-laced tirade about not letting any grandson of hers go around banging some Thai whore. She called Florence a "slant-eyed yellow cocksucker" and began hurling flatware at her with one hand while she slapped my grandfather with the other. My grandfather, who had decided to celebrate Thanksgiving in his own special way by downing half a bottle of Wild Turkey before dinner, slapped her back and began shaking her violently. Grandpa started yelling about how she never let him live down the one time he'd visited a bordello in Thailand during the war, and how she'd have never even known about it if not for the chaffing rash he'd developed on his crotch when he returned home. My little nieces and nephews began to weep in fright and confusion. My father declared that he was enjoy his "goddamned turkey" whether we liked it or not, and began to slice the bird and recite grace amidst the chaos.

So I think it goes without saying why I had to end that little love affair right then and there. Really, it was all Florence's fault that Thanksgiving was ruined, and I told her so on the ride home. If she hadn't gone chit-chatting about Bangor, my sister wouldn't have had to explain what "cocksucker," "blowjob," and "VD" mean to her three pre-adolescent children. Thanks to her, those kids would be scarred for life by bad childhood holiday experiences. And I myself was no stranger to how deep such wounds could be.

I had a bad experience with a shopping-mall Santa when I was young. He'd gotten a massive erection when I sat on his lap, and though he'd assured me it was just a candy cane in his pocket which I felt poking into my rear, I was old enough to know better. It was absolutely traumatizing, and everything connected to the whole scene was forever tainted. The scent of peppermint makes me nauseous. I involuntarily jerk the wheel towards fat, bearded old men on the sidewalk when I'm driving. Whenever I see a midget, I think of Santa's elves who stood idly by while some pervert robbed me of my innocence, and it all comes rushing back.

The midget thing is a big problem. I've had to avoid circuses altogether. I've missed out on the enjoyment of classic films such as Snow White, Willy Wonka, and The Wizard of Oz. Every time I see the Seven Dwarves, Oompa Loompas, or Munchkins, I get anxiety attacks. And the problem extends to anything even remotely connected to films like that, because I'm reminded of those troublesome characters. For instance, I can't listen to Elton John's "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" or eat the donut holes at Dunkin Donuts. Furthermore, because of leprechauns, I can't enjoy St. Patrick's Day, so I am deprived the joy of yet another holiday. In fact, because of leprechauns, I hate the Irish in general.

So it was bitterly ironic that the first girl I went out with after Florence was a midget herself, or as she liked to call it, "a little person." A friend set me up on a blind date with her, not knowing of my history with and phobia of those with short stature. Her name was Lillith, which reminded me of Lilliput, that place in Gulliver's Travels with all of those really tiny people. Of course, Lillith was nowhere near as small as that, but all I kept thinking was, if a hundred or so of those little things could tie up and torture Gulliver, there was no telling what sort of damage she was capable of. Compared to them, she was enormous. And of course, after I made this connection, I had to be careful to avoid calling her Lilliput by accident, just in case she caught the reference and got offended.

The date was a disaster. I could barely pay attention as she rambled on throughout the meal. I was too preoccupied with thinking about all the problems dating a midget would pose. Would we ever be able to go on fun rides at amusement parks? Those "You must be this tall to ride" signs seemed to pose a problem. Where would I take her shopping? The only place I could think of was Kids' R' Us. Would I have to buy a booster seat for her to be able to ride in my car? Buying one of those seemed too much like commitment, because it suggested the idea of having children.

Don't get me wrong; I saw the positive sides to it as well. If I put her in pigtails, I might have been able to pass her off as my daughter and get her half-priced meals at restaurants. If we did go all the way with it and tie the knot, then we'd be able to save money by not buying her new clothes once the kids were about five years old or so. Their hand-me-downs would keep her well-dressed for years. Her clothes would always be in fashion, too, because kids these days won't stand for wearing anything but the best name-brand and trendy clothes. And if the occasional cartoon character or something specifically "kiddy" was emblazoned on the front of one of her second-hand shirts, so be it. An adult wearing "kiddy" clothes was considered cool and kitsch, so I'd been told, which meant that she'd be the hippest little midget around. We'd just need to pump those kids out fast, lots of them, so the supply of hand-me-downs wouldn't run out.

I realized quickly that it could never work, though, and began to plot my quick exit from the restaurant. I made up a grotesque lie about having to rush home and put my dog out of its misery. I said that my visible distraction throughout the night had been due to my wrestling

internally over what to do with good old Skipper, my floppy-eared beagle who'd been hit by a large pick-up truck out in front of my apartment, right before my very eyes, just before I was supposed to head out for the date. I told her that I'd left him there to die because I didn't want to show up late and upset her, but that I now realized the only humane thing to do was to rush back and beat him to death with a shovel if he wasn't dead already. She nodded sympathetically and said that she knew exactly where I was coming from. I had no idea what she meant by that, but I was scared and didn't want to find out.

I bolted from the restaurant, laughing to myself that my ad-libbed excuse had worked so well. I was also laughing to myself about the fact that, in the confusion my quick exit had created, I'd been able to stick her with the bill. I didn't feel too bad about it because I knew I'd never see her again, and I was sure that if she couldn't pay it, she'd have an easy time sneaking out of there, seeing as she was a midget and could probably stay under the restaurant staff's line of sight as she ran for the door. But really I was laughing more about my brilliant lie.

What was so absurd to me about the story was that I actually hated dogs, passionately so. I would never have owned one. If I did see one get hit by a pick-up truck, I'd have called off any date or appointment I had and just sat there watching it die. I hated dogs because dogs hated me, and they always had. They always chased me as I rode bikes and jogged through the park. They always left steaming piles of shit where I was most likely to step in them. It was disproportionate, honestly. I'd walk out the front door of my apartment have to tiptoe down the sidewalk like I was walking in a minefield unless I wanted my shoes to reek of dog shit all day. It only seemed to be on my block, and I began to become convinced that all the neighborhood dogs must have been congregating nightly at some underground canine all-you-can-eat buffet and then coming to my doorstep to collectively relieve themselves. I felt conspired against.

And they were always humping my leg. Yes, friends with dogs would laugh and say it was cute as Spot or Lucky took to my leg like a Viagra-bingeing priest on a pre-pubescent boy. I found nothing cute about it. I considered it rape. I mean, if I got all hot and bothered and started going to town on a Chocolate Labrador down at the pet store, I'd be labeled a sicko and locked up for sure. I didn't see how a non-consensual sex act between man and beast could ever be considered acceptable, no matter which species was acting as the aggressor.

Given my hatred for dogs, it was fitting that my next blind date, Betty, was a dog-lover. She had to be, I guess, because she was also literally blind, and she had to have the mangy thing lead her all around town. Of course, I didn't know that she was blind or that she had a dog before we met. When I walked into the trendy little café she'd picked out, I saw her with her shades and figured she was just one of those beatnik writer-types that were always mulling over bad poetry in those places while they sipped their soy milk lattes. I identified her disability pretty quickly, however, after seeing the dog and making a few funny faces at her which she didn't react to.

To my surprise, I found myself liking Betty a lot. She told me that, since she couldn't see, she took advantage of all her other senses. She loved music, whether it was sitting around listening to records or going to the opera. She loved the taste of good food and fine wine. She was apparently also a demon in bed with a fairly insatiable sexual thirst. The fact that she shared this on a first date excited me greatly. I decided to ignore the dog problem and tried to make things work with her.

Betty and I started to get pretty serious after a while. Sure, we had our problems. There were things we couldn't really do because they wouldn't be fun for her, like going to the movies or to art exhibitions. It was hard for us to discuss current fiction, because considering the amount of time it takes a book to move from hardcover to paperback, you can imagine how long it takes until the Braille versions are released. I'd tried playing catch with her once on a beautiful afternoon when we were picnicking in the park, but the results were disastrous. After a quick trip to the hospital and three stitches above her left eye, I realized that most sports were likely not an option for us.

There were a lot of nice things about Betty's lack of sight as well. I didn't need to be as self-conscious about my looks as I'd been with past girlfriends. If my clothes didn't match, she didn't notice or complain. I could buy her fake jewelry and she didn't know the difference. I occasionally got away with taking her to Denny's and telling her it was an upscale bistro or something of the like, amazing her with the speed with which we received seating and the promptness of our service, making her think I must be someone really special to get that type of treatment. It was easy to do, as long as I was careful about how I phrased my order. Bacon-covered cheese fries became "a skillet of sliced and fried potatoes, topped with a cheddar fondue or what have you, and chips of pork." A buck or two slipped to the waitress ensured she would play along. So what I'm saying is, I guess that with Betty, I was able to both appreciate and live by the old adage, "it's the thought that counts."

But eventually, as was always the case with me, my heart began to wander. When thinking about Betty in the long-term sense, I began to doubt her domestic abilities. She left dishes spotty, missed large areas while vacuuming and dusting, left large wrinkles in her ironing, and so on. Sure, Betty couldn't see these errors, and wasn't completely at fault, but I became frustrated with her regardless. The little things began to grate at my nerves. And on top of it all, there was that fucking dog. I didn't know if I could go on living with a dog forever.

Eventually, I found myself attracted to Marge, our regular waitress at Denny's. She was frumpy, not particularly attractive, a little past middle-aged, and questionably literate and educated. But boy, could she clean. I'd watch her in awe as she blew through a table as soon as a party left, making it spic-and-span in less than two minutes, every time. The Formica tabletops shined brilliantly and mirror-like after her graceful hands and her damp rag worked their magic on them. If there was a particularly tough coffee stain left behind, she wasn't afraid to use a little gob of her own spit and some elbow grease to get the job done. It really turned me on to see a woman so competent with her work.

And Marge loved to serve. She did it for a living and she did it well. My coffee cup never sat empty, as she was always there to refill it just as I was about to take my last sip. And damn, was her coffee good. She made a fine cup of coffee, and I like that in a woman. Betty could point out the best cafes around, but Marge, she didn't need to go buy some fancy coffee. She was a coffee artist.

Marge responded well to tips, even when they were insultingly small. Even a handful of change and some pocket lint would get a genuine "thank you" out of her. She was easy to impress, and humble, which I also found attractive.

Last but certainly not least, I was fairly sure Marge was a fellow dog-hater. I was sure I saw utter contempt in her eyes whenever she looked at Betty's mutt sitting in the booth next to her and likely shedding all over the place. If she hadn't been a dog-hater before Betty's dog had become a regular feature of the restaurant, I was sure she'd become one because of it.

So I decided that I needed to leave Betty, and pursue my love for Marge. But I was intimidated by Marge's domestic perfection, and scared by how strongly I'd begun to feel for her. Unable to come right out and ask Marge for a date, I instead began to stalk her. I'd eat all my meals at Denny's, always asking to be seated in her section. Sometimes I'd call in sick to work and just sit there all day, writing little love poems on the napkins and leaving them in mountainous piles for her to read when I left. Other days I would do the same thing, except instead of writing poems I would write my phone number over and over again. But my phone never rang. Marge rejected my advances.

Eventually, Marge began giving my table to other waitresses, and outright refusing to wait on me. At first I was hurt, crushed even. But eventually hurt gave way to anger, and I came just as often as before, if not even more, to spite her. Then, one early weekday morning at about 4am, I was lucky enough to find her as the only waitress working. I knew I had her to myself, through some stroke of luck or perhaps by the Hand of God Himself. But I was too intimidated still to make use of the situation.

Marge took my order coldly and almost unwillingly. Our conversation consisted of the bare essentials.

"Grand Slam, please."

"How do you want your eggs?"

"Break them. Just break them like you've broken me."

"Wheat or rye?"

"Does it matter? Burn it black. Burn it black as your heart, you unfeeling jezebel."

"Want those hash browns doubled?"

"Doubled, covered, and smothered, Marge! Smothered! Can't you see?"

It went something like that. In the end I felt drained and she left to get my breakfast. She returned with it quickly, dismissively, and placed it on the very edge of the table, then walked away. I couldn't eat it. I couldn't even begin to eat. I just sat and stared at the sizzling strips of bacon, the phallic links of sausage, the pile of hash browns covered in melted cheese and a mysterious white sauce which made me think only of the throes of passion. I sipped my black coffee and stared as the large scoop of butter began to melt atop the stack of pancakes, which were stacked and placed so that they were angled towards the floor. The ball of butter began to slide down the stack, gaining momentum, and I was reminded of when my own balls had descended at the late age of seventeen. Yes, things don't always go as planned, but you have to remember that eventually the day will come when the boys in the locker room will stop laughing.

And then the butter fell off the plate completely, landing with a wet plop on the floor. At this same time, I saw Marge round the corner with a steaming pot of fresh coffee to refill my cup. I looked at Marge. I looked at the butter. I looked back at Marge. I envisioned tragedy.

I thought of the many mornings when I'd stepped unthinkingly into a fresh pile of dog shit outside my apartment. I thought how nice it would have been if, on even one of those days, a fellow pedestrian had yelled to me, "Hey buddy! Don't step in that shit! Literally!" I could have been saved a day of stench and embarrassment, which I might tell you is priceless. I saw before me then the chance to be that fellow pedestrian. I saw the chance to prevent calamity.

"Marge! The butter! Ye Gods, watch your step, woman!" That's all it would have taken. And maybe, at that moment, Marge would have realized the depths of my emotion and caring. She might have fallen right into my arms, smothering me with kisses instead of country gravy.

Instead, I said to myself, "Fuck her. The bitch gets what she's got coming." A smile cracked across my face as she stepped directly onto the butter, and stood on it while she refilled my coffee. I couldn't bear to look her in the face. I was afraid I might burst out in cruel laughter. I instead focused my gaze on her shoe. Then I heard the pouring stop and my cup hit the table, and saw her foot move as she walked away.

I turned to watch her then, walking away with a near-full glass pot of piping hot coffee which trailed steam behind her. As she neared the area by the counter where the carpet ended and the linoleum began, I braced myself for the inevitable. And then it happened. As soon as her buttered shoe touched the slick linoleum surface, she bolted forward with the speed of an Olympic speed skater, but without a trace of Olympic grace. Her free arm flailed wildly and gripped for the counter in a desperate attempt to steady herself. Then she fell forward, crashing to the ground on top of the coffee pot she still held.

My ears still ring from the sound she made at that moment. I have never heard anything like it projected from the mouth of man, woman, child, or beast. Not even on the Discovery channel. Shattered glass tore through her flesh as hot coffee seared her skin, and she bellowed in utter agony. I felt thrilled and elated, as if I had just seen some universal justice handed down. I fought the urge to jump out of my seat and scream, "Does it burn, Marge? The sting of karma is harsh, is it not?"

Instead, I took advantage of the commotion and walked quickly out of Denny's, never to return. I didn't pay the check or leave a tip. It was sweet icing on my sticky cake of revenge.

In the two months since the Marge incident, I've stayed single by choice. I don't think I'll be ready to give of myself emotionally for a long time after the way I was hurt. I've even considered joining the clergy, just so I can forget about the whole dating scene forever. The way I figure it, if the whole celibacy thing doesn't work out once I'm in, there's bound to be a nun who went into the service for the same reasons I'm considering, and she'll get lonely too, and we'll get together.

Those nuns, their habits are always smooth and wrinkle-free. And I don't know about you, but every church I've been in has been relatively spotless.

I Hate Jonathan Redhorse (# 1: His Mother's Obstetrician)

By Jonathan Redhorse

I hated the little shit the moment we did the ultrasound.

There he was on the screen, a fuzzy mishmash of molecules dancing about. My head swam with pain and its veins throbbed in rhythmic synchronization with the ultrasound scanner.

My wife and I were having trouble in our marriage. We were destroying each other's nerves. I disdained the manner in which she ate her food. Her mastication of meat created a sickening, squishy sound which made me think she was chewing on sponges.

"Stella," I told her, "You are going to have to stop eating meat or I'm leaving."

Stella, my wife, looked up from her meal with a perplexed mix of surprise and anguish. Her favorite dishes included pork chops, mutton, roast beef, ground beef, and assorted varieties of steak. She was the only woman I'd ever known to be an outright meat enthusiast and her fork hung in the air, a square of pinkish steak pierced on its tines.

"The table?" she asked.

"No. I mean our marriage," I replied.

"Our marriage?"

"Yes, the whole shebang. I'm outta here."

"But you haven't touched your soup," she eyed my bowl of clam chowder with sadness, "and since when are you a vegetarian?"

"This isn't ideological," I explained, making an open-palmed, knife-hand, gesture at her, for emphasis, "It's about the sound you make when you chew."

"What? This?"

Squish, squish, squish.

I shuddered and said:

"Yes, that."

"Well that's certainly nothing I can help."

"Exactly my point. If you can't fix it, then there's obviously no cure for it. And frankly I don't think I can live with that."

"You've never said anything about it before. There has to be something bigger on your mind. Is work alright?"

"I. My work's fine. No I mean, everything is fine. Great, maybe I'd go so far as to say that. But I can't stand the way you eat."

At that moment my pager went off. A waiter glared at me from across the room. He was wearing a tuxedo. A cheap tuxedo. There were some stains on it. I resisted giving him the finger and instead shook my fist. He looked away.

"I've gotta go," I said, looking at my watch.

"I can try to change dear. I'll try. But where am I to get my protein? Tofu's just as squishy."

My mind's focus had switched to delivering babies. I couldn't think about my wife chewing meat. The images contaminated each other.

"I've got to go. Is it okay if you take a taxi?" I asked her.

"Yes, I. I suppose," she said, her steak sitting dejectedly on a bed of lettuce.

The birth was routine. By this time births had become so habitual that my mind often wandered away from the business at hand. I considered the precision of the metric system. My thoughts focused around its unpopularity in mainstream American measuring. In my profession, centimeters, and on occasion, millimeters, were absolutely crucial. As far as I was concerned, the metric system represented the miracle of birth.

So out popped the kid.

He didn't cry. It was eerie. The nurse assisting me said something along the lines of, "I'll get him started." And she made a theatrical gesture of pretending to almost drop him. Crying marks a healthy child who can breathe and survive in the world. When there is nothing but silence in a delivery, we're forced to take drastic measures to ensure that the child can cry. But this infant refused, and appeared absolutely perturbed by the whole matter.

Meanwhile, love blossomed in a taxi cab. Stella had found herself a real stand-up cab driver. No more would she tolerate the pretentious musings of a scientific licensed professional. No, she would instead settle for the gritty street smarts of a transportation licensed professional. One might blame this on me. After all, I had been the one to place the idea of marriage termination into her meat-chewing head. And I'd even gone so far as to suggest she take a cab instead of mass public transportation.

But I know this event occurred because at that moment, a woman somewhere had decided to enter labor and subsequently deliver Jonathan Redhorse into the world.

I could've saved my marriage.

All would've been remedied. Strides were being made in the dental field. Maybe they were making sound absorbent enamel. I could wear earphones to the table. Something.

Jonathan, the name, loosely means:

Gift of God.

In my later, lonely years I've interpreted it to mean:

Hellspawn.

Majorly Fucked-up Assholes
by
Joseph Kim

The black lipstick had been meticulously applied, so had the black nail polish. And that hair, if indeed it was real, was so black as to give the illusion that it was sticky, that it could be used to tar a roof. Her name was Mona. She was a 4th-year MFA student – a poet: “I concentrating on the subliminal sexuality of solipsism within the context of a main-framed universe.” It was not Harold’s thing. He’d read her non-metered, anti-rhyming jabberwocky and had drawn a blank. He knew about things like “subtext,” but “sub-subtext inverted” was an entirely different animal, and so was the word, “meta.” What *did* “meta” mean? Still, he could pretend. After all, he was in love. At least it felt that way. True, when he was a kid he’d always fantasized about dating a cheerleader or any one of those fresh-faced girls with blonde hair and short skirts. But life was weird. You couldn’t always get what you wanted, and sometimes what you didn’t want is what you end up with it. And it turns out to be perfect – okay, maybe not *perfect*, but kind of good, like sort of.

Mona got up from the couch to light another candle, a candle molded from black wax. “Oh, they’ll be here soon,” she said. Her great “End of the Semester Bash” had been scheduled for 7 PM. It was now 9:20.

But just as Harold was looking at the clock, the doorbell rang.

Mona gestured for him to answer it. “I’m not ready,” she said, then began striding towards the bathroom, her long black dress shimmering behind her.

Harold trudged to the door, opened it and saw what looked like a human bowling pin with glasses. It was an MFA student. The man brushed past Harold without a word, then began helping himself to the snacks on the table, loudly eating away. Harold watched him cramming pretzels, sour cream dip and tortillas down his throat.

“Uh...hi?” Harold said.

The guy said nothing.

Then Mona appeared from the bathroom with hands fluttering in the air. “Oh! Hi, James.”

James looked up, his mouth smeared with food and merely nodded.

“James is a genius,” Mona said. “His poetry is more than sublime...it’s-it’s...”

“Miraculous?” said James, not even looking up.

“Yes! That’s it! Miraculous!”

“What’s it about?” Harold asked, standing there between them.

“Oh...” said Mona with a wry smile, “you wouldn’t understand.”

“Yeah,” said James, his mouth full of food. “He wouldn’t understand.”

Mona sat down beside James, gazing at him like he was an art exhibit.

"No, really," Harold said. "What do you write about?"

"Oh, *pleeease*," said Mona, "don't be so droll."

"Huh?"

Then the door-bell rang. Again.

Harold opened it. Again.

An assortment of brown to green haired people came walking in. One of them had a nose-ring like a cow's and wore a metal-studded belt. Another was terribly wall-eyed, even worse than the guy, Jean-Paul Sartre (Mona had a poster of Sartre in her room: "*Ad-Nauseum is to die-for*"). And one girl had teeth so bucked it made Harold think of the prongs on a forklift (his dad had tried to get him into construction, but Harold had protested too much and dad finally gave up). And then there was the green-haired what-ever who wore flannel – *only* flannel and had peach-fuzz on his chin. Harold had met this character before – he was a Fiction major, a regular walking story as in "What *your* story?"

As they milled about, Harold was struck with inspiration, something kooky to shake things up, something that might make him not so "not-with-it." – a chance to make an ingenious *analogy*.

"Anybody seen Star Wars?" he asked. "You know the Cantina scene?"

They stared at him like he was a... freak.

"Uh... never mind," he said.

The music got turned up, conversations began to take root, everyone struck a pose: Ms. Wall-Eyed and Lady Bucktooth over by Mona's bookshelf talking about female poets and "lesbian tendencies"; Kid Nose-Ring and Mr. Green Hair in some heated debate about "Post-Modern Deconstructionism"; Mona fawning over James who kept stuffing his mouth. And Harold – Harold just standing there, silent.

When the doorbell rang for the third time, and he went dutifully to open it. It was a relief to actually do something.

Standing outside was a man, maybe 50-ish, wearing black jeans, a black shirt and dark, wrap-around shades. The man's hair was also black. And outside the sky was pitch-black. The man was holding a bag from McDonald's, splotched with grease stains. Harold could smell a burger and fries. This, surmised Harold, had to be the professor.

"Um, hi...," said Harold, "You, uh, must be the professor?"

There was a long pause as the world stood still and the night sky drifted past and Harold found himself gripping the doorknob tighter, trying to anchor himself. There was an undertow of menace about the man, of homicidal tendencies kept barely in check and when

he finally spoke – it came out just the way Harold thought it would -- quiet and calm, but full of rage:

"I've no time for your impertinence."

Oh yeah, thought Harold, you're definitely the professor.

The man walked in, carrying in the smell of fast food.

Mona became ecstatic, "Professor Strom! You made it! You made it!"

"Yes," said Strom, "I am here."

"What's that?" asked Kid Nose-Ring, pointing at the bag in Strom's hand.

"This..." said Strom, lifting up the greasy bag for all to see, "...is the accumulation of a mass-consumer culture reduced to the size of a paper-bag. It is also my daily ration of protein, carbohydrates, and high-levels of saturated fat."

"That's awesome!" shouted the kid with Green Hair, raising a fist. Soon the others were yelling out the same and gathered around to watch Strom eat a Big Mac with Super-sized fries.

By the time, they got around to discussing Joyce and the fascist elements found on Sesame Street, Harold had retreated to the bedroom, locking the door.

Fucking assholes.

- end -

The Man In Manicure by **Tim Latshaw**

After a rough and rugged day out corralling horses on the range, searing the track in a formula one racer and/or fighting Nazis in search of the Holy Grail, don't you just want to sit back, revel in your machismo, and just moisturize, moisturize, moisturize?

Thanks to the "metrosexual" movement that has swept the nation it has become hip for males to embrace their feminine sides, mostly by worrying excessively about their appearances and how much money can be spent to enhance them. It's true: the "man" has been found in "manicure."

The term "metrosexual" was first coined by a journalist regarding David Beckham, a British soccer player who other soccer players want to "bend it" like, or something—I don't follow soccer. The metrosexual movement gained great momentum from the show "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," in which five homosexual men invade a straight man's house and make him very uncomfortable till he learns how to maintain his hair (something called "shushing" or "jstuzing..." "jujitsuing"?). As the show gained popularity, heterosexual men learned an important fact: heterosexual women love gay men. Unfortunately, most men have misunderstood the reason for this (women are cruel) and have taken it to mean that they need to spend their paychecks on hair care products in order to attract the opposite sex.

How bad is it? Not long ago I read an article in The Buffalo News on the spread of metrosexual culture in the area. In it local men expressed their desire for a decent place to receive a pedicure and to find the perfect shirt in every color. One went so far to admit that he was "not afraid to spend \$45 on a pair of socks."

\$45 for one pair?! You can buy a gross of them for that in Wal-Mart and still have enough left over for Spongebob boxers.

So you have to have money to be a metrosexual. But there's another flaw: you have to live in the city. That's what the "metro--" prefix means.

Or else it means "uterus." Really, look it up.

Even so, I come from the country, where the metrosexual lifestyle is as effective as a lint roller in a nudist colony. Ladies are more impressed with you lifting a full-grown sheep over your head than by whether your shirt is the perfect shade of salmon. I was reassured by the members of every high school gym class I ever attended that I had a definite connection with my feminine side, yet were the girls all up ons? No, they all flocked around the quarterback of the football team like beautiful moths around a dim, helmet-haired bulb.

So let's review the requirements: To be a metrosexual you need 1) enough money to afford both life and beauty products, although I hear cold cream doesn't taste entirely too bad, and 2) to live in a setting urbanely tolerant enough that people won't pull your \$30 Calvin Klein underwear over your head. Odds are that you do not fit into at least one of these categories.

But don't worry. It is perfectly fine and healthy to be sensitive and in touch with your feminine side, but trips to the salon and Pottery Barn have nothing to do with it. Metrosexuality is all style and no substance; the time-honored credo of "be yourself" still shines forth, untarnished and unprimed.

But you may want to start bench-pressing some lambs, just in case.

On The Range
by
Painting by Jeremiah Stansbury (Painting)
and
Luigi Fairbanks (Text)



Jeremiah has once again stunned our occipital lobes with yet another bizarrely gorgeous, and also gorgeously bizarre, oil painting.

Last month I got into the how and why of Jeremiah's painting prowess, but this month I'm going to focus on the what... or rather, the who.

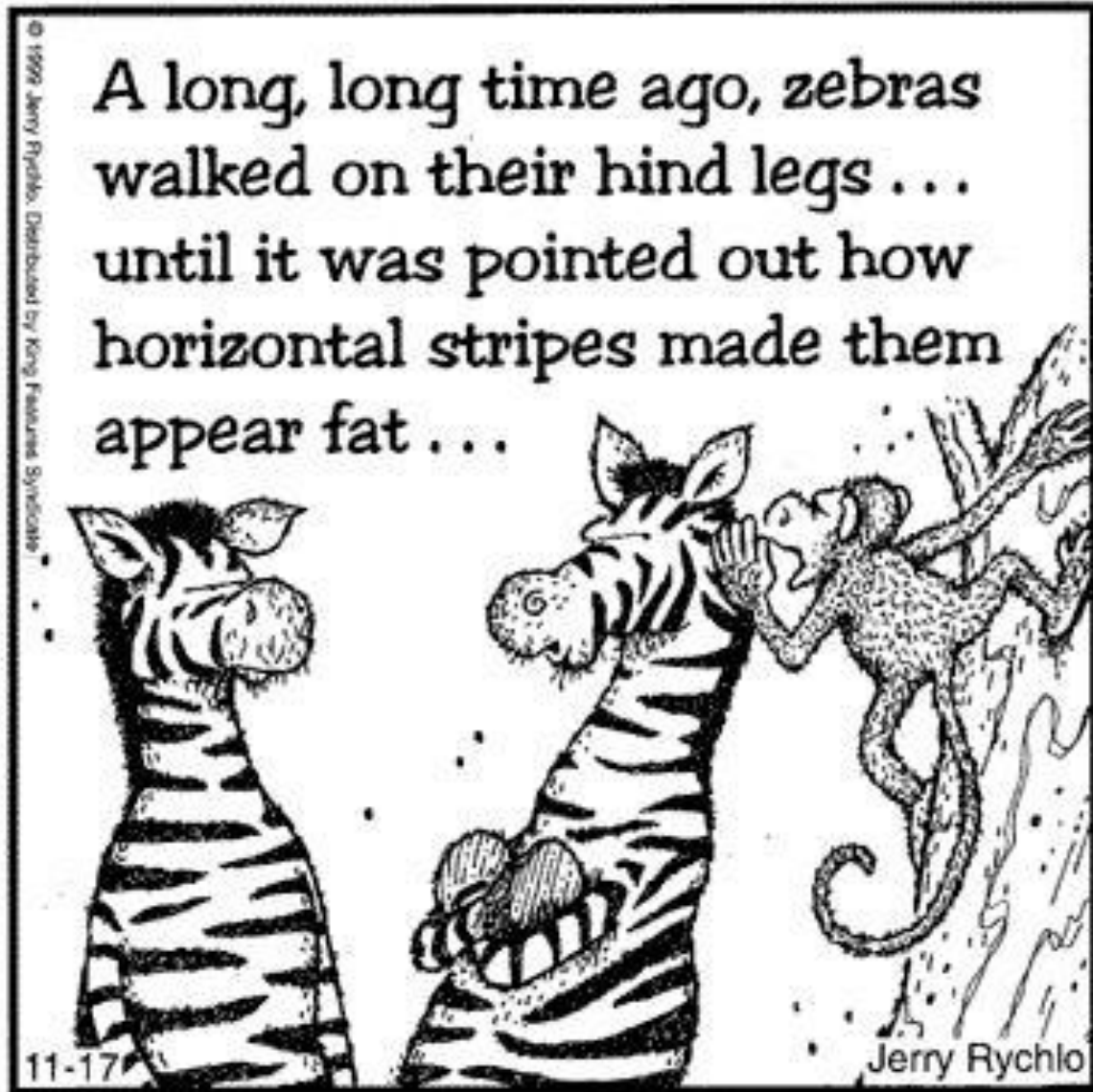
Who is the person in this painting? The question was raised several times by the Defenestration staff, from the lordly editors to the lowly interns. Everyone had a different opinion, a different take on the oily "Mystery Person." So, with a pad of paper and a pen in hand, I went around asking everyone who they thought was in "On The Range."

Eileen came at it with a practical approach. "How am I supposed to tell you who the person is when I can't even identify their gender? And stop stealing my lunches!" Andrew, on the other hand, seemed to know exactly who it was. "Jeff J. Jeffers!" he screamed, "JEFF J. JEFFERS!" then he ran off into his office and started building a fort with cushions.

When I asked resident movie-reviewer Genevieve, she said, "It's obviously Ron Perlman," then stared off into nothingness as she entered what I can only imagine was a highly erotic daydream. Bigfoot insisted that it was Rick Moranis in the painting, giving the completely irrelevant argument that, "Rick Moranis was in 'Strange Brew.' Therefore, it has to be him." And editing monkey #33 said it was "Ook, ook ah ook," whoever the hell that could be.

We may never know who the person in Jeremiah Stansbury's painting really is. But this much is certain: the resulting discussion on the matter gave us something to do that day. It was too cold to go to the water park.

A Comic
by
Jerry Rychlo



Contributor Biographies

Andy D (born **Andrew T. Duncan**), is the illegitimate child of Lee Van Cleef and Punky Brewster. After birth, his mother and father retired to a peaceful suburban manse in Indiana. There he developed a martial art form dedicated to dropkicking all jerks and fools. Now Andy D rocks New York City vomiting forth gold in the ancient Japanese art form called "Haiku," which means "Wind sweeps over the mountain to the place where dinosaurs and unicorns dance forever!" He is also working on his rap career. If you like his poems let him know: Whiteumbrella@lagomorpho.com. To hear music: <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~atd210/rockslow.mp3>

Defenestration believes this is the first time someone's biography was longer than the submitted piece. Only Andrew T. Duncan can claim such greatness!

Brian Fugett is a member of the slacker, fast food generation that has been branded with an "X". He sits in his pad all day consuming more oxygen than he's worth. Eating & screwing are the only things he really knows how to do. To pass the time between meals & sexual conquests, he writes. Some day he hopes to form a support group for people who compulsively swallow gum.

Paul Dickey is a stuffy, cantankerous old man who has published in *Kansas Quarterly*, *Quartet*, *Poet Lore*, *Karamu*, and *Nimrod* before he got old. He recently has published online at ForPoetry.com, *3rd Muse Poetry Journal*, and *Dickey Brown*. He has new work forthcoming in *The Avatar Review*, *Rattle*, and *Sentence, a Journal of Prose Poetics*. Look him up if you can handle it at <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/dickey.htm>. The author of this poem stole Mr. Dickey's personal identity on the Internet. Shhh. Don't say a word. Mr. Dickey has no idea that his work is appearing here.

Dave Clapper, a notorious liar in many circles, clearly has never seen a naked woman before. I mean, a "clitoris?!" What the hell is THAT supposed to be, anyway?!

Davis Schneiderman is Chair of the American Studies Program and an Assistant Professor of English at Lake Forest College. His creative work has accepted by numerous journals including *Fiction International*, *The Iowa Review Web*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Diagram*, *3rd Bed*, *Quarter After Eight*, *The Little Magazine*, *Gargoyle*, and *Happy*. He is co-editor of the forthcoming critical collection *Retaking the Universe: William S. Burroughs in the Age of Globalization* (Pluto Press, 2004). Dr. Schneiderman is currently co-editing an anthology on contemporary uses of the Surrealist *Exquisite Corpse*, as well as co-editing the new literary journal *Potion*.

When **Jim Donadio** was very young, he fell into a vat of saltwater taffy and was stuck inside for the better part of three days. The side effects of such an accident include writing funny stories and horrible nightmares involving carnival folk and sticky-fingered taffy monsters. Hang in there, Jim. You'll be okay.

Jonathan Redhorse is a student at the University of Denver. His name, in certain quarters, is synonymous with quality windshield replacement. In other regions, he is known for his smooth handling of ice dispensers. Other than the occasional mistaken wave he receives in public, he is not very popular and wishes to remain this way. As such, he now scurries about disguised as a giant semicolon to deter well-wishers, wherever they may

lurk. People often mistakenly refer to him as "Melvin" when he wears this disguise. Please send him no postcards. Thank you.

For those keeping track on your patented *Defenestration* scorecards, this is the third time **Joseph Kim** has appeared in the magazine. And in the future, when he's contributed eighty-five more pieces, we'll say "For those keeping track on your patented *Defenestration* scorecards, this is the eighty-eighth time Joseph has appeared in the magazine." We are ruled by our originality.

Tim Latshaw is a junior at Niagara University, NY. His humor frequently appears in the student newspaper, although this may just be because he's the editor. His lifting record is two chickens and a young pig.

Jeremiah Stansbury is a prolific artist who is currently being prolific in art. His artwork has been on display in numerous areas in the Memphis, Tennessee area, and on the internet. Jeremiah's been to Florence, Italy, thus ensuring that all of us here at *Defenestration* are very, very jealous. You can check out more of Jeremiah's artwork—and even buy it—at <http://www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/c/clipinpics>

Luigi Fairbanks taught an octopus to play Dance Dance Revolution.

Jerry Rychlo currently calls London, Ontario home. His day job has nothing to do with drawing cartoons. His cartoons have nothing to do with anything at all. His wife, two kids, cat and dog are glad they're not him. Jerry likes to live life one day at a time, mainly because it's physically impossible to live life two days at a time. He knows the life story of every zebra on the planet.