

# **The Alchemist Review**

**Spring, 1995**





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The editor and board would like to thank all those who submitted manuscripts for publication.

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## **first**

with a firm grip on the stiff back of the  
couch I could feel the  
dust settle, a stinging drizzle in the  
fast forward of this reel life  
before  
long my glasses  
had smudged had  
fogged had broken  
under the sweat weight of it  
all night tearing forward on the spools  
scratching the heads of an unreachable  
machine greased  
geared going  
through the loop of a grainy moment through the  
hoop of a salt-skinned lover through a  
hole pin  
pricked and bleeding  
silently through the  
wires which bind  
the vision blinding  
the speech-  
less  
memory  
more a  
worn preview of the flick  
to come.

**J. Danz**

...and it was cold. The sun was barely up. too damn early. Man, it was cold. even inside the cafe. Wind bit his ears. growelled. chills along his veins.

—and his table was only two from the door. A bitter fan of opening, closing. back and forth. and the door slammed. Each time it was closed. Ice formed and molded between his toes. maybe that's why...

he went to the bathroom. Immediately, he went to the basin. rinsed his hands. steady stream of water

thumped

out the cold tap. Inevitably, his eyes rested on the mirror. at first he didn't notice

—the purse. Of a sudden, he was warm. without checking the stalls. without even locking the door. He was warm. fingers thumbed through everything—wasn't much—I.D., bus pass, Medicare

—two crisp fifties folded together.

he didn't even close the purse. hands shook badly. was halfway out—the cafe—heart thumped wildly—didn't look at anyone

...it was Friday morning.

\*\*\*

...and it was cold.

wind bit

ing, freezing tears. to mascara.

feet

thumped-snowdrifts pushed her  
back, pushed her down—last of  
her money—

heart

thumped wildly—didn't look

at anyone

what can you expect... when  
you're

that...

neglectful...to your environment ...

and...

to...

yourself?

*her heart echoed. hollow. and  
Sylvia cried.*

**Tony Myers**

# The Blues

Take a drink, we ain't got nuthin to lose  
Cept maybe our minds and that ain't much at  
All. In times like these there ain't much to choose

From. Fuck that shit, let's just get some booze  
Flowin. The night is young, we're where it's at  
Take a drink, We ain't got nuthin too. Lose

That coat man we ain't about to cruise  
You know damn well there ain't no work at  
All in times like these. There ain't much to choose

From when you can't afford a pair of shoes  
Or nuthin else. Fuck em, let the fat stay fat  
Take a drink ~~we~~ ain't got nuthin to lose

There ain't no Noah, no animal two by twos  
No boat, no nuthin. We're just floatin, that's  
All. In times like these there ain't much to choose



From. Death. Taxes. The nightly news  
And all that shit. That's it, take off that hat  
Take a drink, we ain't got nuthin to lose  
In all times, like these, there ain't much to choose.

Kevin Engels



---

FAN OF A MINOR POET (*Fragment*)

DROWN ME IN WASTEPAPER DREAMS.  
I WANT TO STAND, COLLECTING PAPER CUTS,  
SWALLOWING YOUR WORDS AND SPITTING FORTH  
NOTHINGNESS.

DOUSE ME IN YOUR CRUMPLED WRECKS,  
LETTERS, LINES, SPARSE PARAGRAPHS WHICH ONCE  
ATTEMPTED TO SAY EVERYTHING, BUT  
SPUTTERED AND SANK—  
ABORTING TOO EARLY  
FOR YOU TO SAVE A CLUTTERED IDEA, SMOOTH FLAT,  
FRAME, AND TITLE PROUDLY:  
"FRAGMENT."

J. DANZ

# Dream Song

## Prologue

An old man walks beside a heavily trafficked road. His graying beard and defeated gait betray the age that he feels. A suit, overcoat and briefcase bespeak a modest prosperity. But his eyes -- grey, rheumy, bloodshot -- they betray his intent.

He approaches a large bridge.

His eyes touch on everything -- steel girders, the mad rush of vehicles, the sun, sky, the speckled water below. A young man toting a bookbag skims around him on a bicycle.

*... and again, on the water below ...*

He reaches mid-bridge, approaches the edge. He stops.

He stares at the water -- flowing, rushing, skimming ... He forces a long breath ...

*He jumps ...*

\*\*\*

*... a black cat ...*

soars, floats, gently dives to the surface of the water. A camera extends his flight into forever. A dozen shots. A shattered sequence.

A last shot from below. The cat descends, his dimensions grow, until finally the scene blackens.

\*\*\*

A three-second silent shot. A silver ball slowly breaks the surface of the water, sending a fountain of droplets rising in its wake.

\*\*\*

A body explodes into the water.

*Down, down ...* air bubbles cling to and obscure the body as they heave to the surface. After several seconds, the man is discernable.

And dead. An eerie blue-green face dissolves into black.

\*\*\*

A panoramic shot: A huge body of water, a myriad landscape--plains, trees, mountains. No cities. Everything rushes in a sweep, soundless. A body lying on a beach is approached by the camera. A soft voice, a narrator, begins to chant:

*An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy  
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down  
All his young days into the harbor where  
His ball went.*

*I would not intrude on him,  
A dime, another ball, is worthless.*

Now

*He senses first responsibility  
In a world of possessions. People will take balls,  
Balls will be lost always, little boy,  
And no one buys a ball back.*

With the last two lines, the screen dissolves into black.

\*\*\*

"Heeeeeiiiiiiyaaaaaaahhh!!!" The man on the beach starts to his feet, naked and cold, and stares at the sand, sky and sea. Birds begin to chatter, crickets begin to protest. The land awakens with the man.

## Golden Pyre

Gather around the fire my brothers and sing  
As spirits of the night. Watch the embers fly  
Bending and breaking in the wooded shadows. Hope  
Not for treasures but for a chance to play  
A part in this game. For now let the wine  
Flow as freely as Nature's beauty to the eye

Let the madmen chase castles, I  
Would much rather dance and sing  
Entangling my limbs with women and wine  
Hitching a ride with an owl as we fly  
Through the firelit forest. Let us play  
Dark music and burn memories of hope

Forgotten, knowing that hope  
Like beauty exists more in the eye  
Than in the soul. The night's branches play  
A rhythmic melody so let us sing  
Like the breezes, golden fire our reward. Fly  
To the end of time and back again on wine

And a feathered song. Soar above the wine  
Coloured forest, waltzing with the clouds. Hope  
And pray to the Spirits as we fly  
To be filled with awe and truth. I  
Know dark secrets of the wood so I sing  
The freedom verses and I play

The hero's role. This tragedy will play  
Its dark conclusion without us so Wine  
I say, Wine! Why can't we sing  
To end the torment? Why can't we hope  
To find a light? Ride the fire I  
Say, rise like a Phoenix and fly

Above the din. Seek the moon. Fly  
Into the sun. Do not play  
The hunt as I  
Fuel your fire, your hope  
Sing I say now, Sing!

Relax now my brothers, the time to sing  
Has passed as a gentle breeze. The time to hope  
Is upon us now so wine I say, wine.

**Kevin Engels**

---

# Flowers In Hell

## A Poem

*Persephone.*

*Lady of the Day.*

*A name synonymous with innocence.*

*Persephone.*

*They tell us, in the lore of the highlands,*

*That she was exquisite.*

*Or as we might say today,*

*She was ignorant.*

*Of her mother's overprotective manner.*

*Of men, and what they thought when they beheld her.*

*Of power bent to evil purpose.*

*Of the world as it is.*

*She never heard the insidious whispers*

*That objectified her,*

*Or knew she was considered*

*A prize.*

*Her father's daughters—and there were*

*Many—were famous for their beauty.*

*She was his third, and a great source*

*For his pride.*

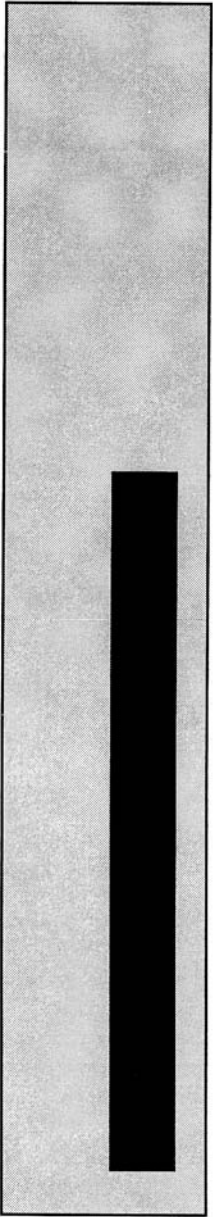
*Persephone.*

*She was Demeter's first*

*And only.*

*Mother loved*

*Her daughter much too*



*Much to have  
Another.*

*But the defenses.  
They weren't up one day.*

*Caught within a dance of flowers, Persephone,  
Dizzy, strayed too far.*

*Caught.*

*Dancing  
The flowers in  
The summer sunlight...*

*Dancing in circles,  
Just  
Beyond  
Sight...*

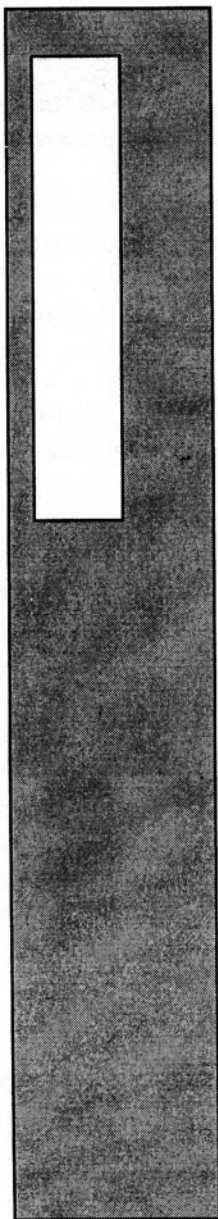
*When Hell came calling with a whisper  
And a groan as the ground split a-  
Sunder  
And  
Persephone  
Tumbled  
Under...*

---

*When she awoke  
From the terrible shock and opened her eyes  
She had this*

*Thought:*





*i'm inside?  
the room is dark?*

*but not dark, really,  
only dim...*

*this  
is  
not  
a  
room  
i'm  
in*

---

*...She didn't see the sun again for several years.*

*Across the heavens, Demeter raged,  
Wept and wailed, floods and hail,  
And everything, everywhere  
Suffered.  
And nowhere, anywhere, did anything  
Grow.*

*The world spun to find Persephone.  
But no living thing knew how or why  
Or most importantly, where.*

---

*The answer was in a marriage.  
In Hell.  
The first and last in history.*



*Persephone,*

*Lady of the Day,  
Wedded to the brutal Knight,  
Hades.*

*Near starved, captured within psychologic  
Chains, she made a fatal  
Mistake.*

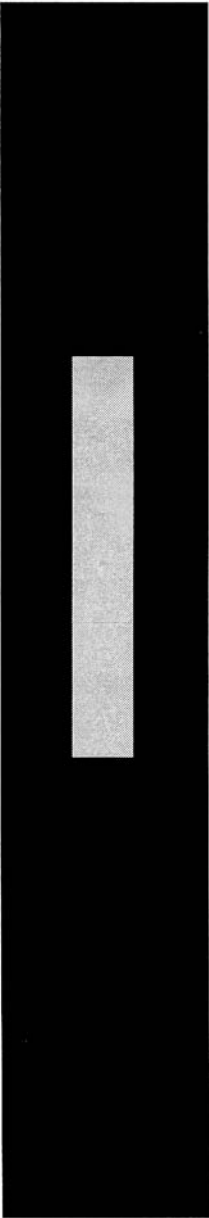
*Six seeds of Hell she ate,  
Six seeds of pomegranate,  
Sealing her to him,  
Sealing her to  
Fate.*

---

*And then it was fait accompli, male victory.  
Or as we might say today,  
Slavery.  
But legitimate enough to the law  
That Hades no longer cared  
Who saw.*

*Words will fly to women's ears.  
Demeter cursed and quaked the earth.  
Hundreds died while giving birth.  
Famine swept city-states in waves.  
Not a human life was saved.*

*Even plants curled up and  
Died.*



*Then Justice with Wisdom came to decide  
How to set the matter right.*

*Or in the language of the court,  
How to cut a deal.*

*As in similar cases today, it wasn't easy.  
The verdict was joint custody.  
Spring and Summer with her mother  
To bring forth life and color.  
Six seeds, six months  
To be a wife  
To Fall and Winter,  
To brutal night.*

*And nowhere in this story  
Does a choice be made or a word be said  
About the fate of Persephone  
By Persephone.*

*Just her one mistake.*

*The underworld is a mixture  
Of dead heroes and villains.  
But it is less a Heaven than it is a Hell.  
And nowhere in Hell can you find a  
Flower.*

*And the lady  
Sitting next to Death...  
She isn't as innocent  
As she looks.*

*Victims never are.*

**Tony Myers**

---

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## Unexpected Visit

I know a place that is both pure and rare  
Along a shed, a row of foxglove grows  
Profuse and lush. The leaves are soft as silk—  
Recall the smooth and fleshy throats of frogs—  
This bed of green infused with bursts of pink.  
One day, in early autumn, Steven led  
Me to the shed. I get a sense of awe  
And so I go. Arriving at the plain  
And simple bed, against the usual scene  
We view a thousand specks of orange and black,  
A regal court of monarch butterflies  
Has paused for rest amid the journey south.  
How many times their dainty wings must beat.  
They flit from bloom to bloom and draw the force.

*Myrna Felix*

---

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## **Double Down**

I drive my Tercel through the receding flood waters  
As the President Casino bobs on the waves  
Swollen perch dot the roadside  
So I crush them with my all-season radials  
I stop at an information booth  
Looking for casino coupons  
There's a hole in my hand  
I can see the world right through it  
No one seems to notice  
Maybe they're just being nice  
I turn to see my car has become a scooter  
I leave it running  
And turn back to the booth  
Someone yells  
"Your bike!"  
As it careens across River Drive  
And crashes into Ace Hardware's window  
Showering glass  
Like silver dollars  
Onto the sidewalk  
It shimmers like the river  
So I turn away towards the darkness  
Towards the casino.

**Kevin Engels**



## On the flip side of a penny

are  
those sheep  
at lincoln's feet  
sunning themselves in  
copper glory relaxing in the  
camera flash of indifference I  
remember lincoln's feat a forced  
proclamation and slaves set free  
to share brown crops with white  
owners blue and grey never  
wanted black to sing  
he sits in that  
chair and  
looks

happy

**Kevin Engels**

## ROOTED

My feet are growing through the floor

Beneath my kitchen

neighbors will tickle my toes  
and laugh, dancing on

plush carpeting

They are young and  
dribble sugar into each other's ears

My teeth have long rotted down  
to nubs

Your ears clogged with  
sprouts

of grey hair

And from this

distance

we can no longer even

spit rock candy

at each other

For you

to the couch  
are firmly  
rooted  
down

J. Danz

## .....Contributor Notes.....

**Ward Campbell:** You asked me for a quote, something profound, perhaps? Well, I thought and thought and thought and came up with. . . nothing. Then I remembered—someone had already said it better: “Silence is more eloquent than words” (Thomas Carlyle).

**Phyllis Coon:** Active ingredients—job burnout, academic stress, brakes that are not lathed properly, rednecks waxing their pick-ups in the carwash stall, and neighbors who leave their clothes in the machine for weeks before they decide to wash or dry them.

**J. Danz:** “If you see my muse, could ‘ja have him give me a call?”

**Michael A. DiFuccia:** I am a 42 year old senior Visual Arts major. Received A. A. in Fine Arts from Glendale Community College in Glendale, AZ. Moved to spfld in 1991 where I began attending SSU while working full time for the state.

**Myrna Felix:** . . . new poetess, graduate student in English, I love a big, black dog named Yoda, and I love a good “bray.”

**Kurt L. Kincaid:** Kurt received both his B.A. and M.A. from SSU. A life-long fan of fantasy, science fiction, and horror literature, Kurt plans on pursuing his Ph.D. in English this fall. He is a member of the Horror Writer’s Association and teaches art and Tai Chi Chuan classes in his spare time.



**Ginny Lee:** I have been a reference librarian, most recently at SSU, and am currently working as a photographer and writer in Springfield. I enjoy working as a photojournalist. I also like to experiment with infra-red film for creative photographs. People are my favorite subject.

**Michael Levine:** "Take it with a grain of salt. . . and a gallon of milk."

**Carol Manley:** This story was written under the influence of Virginia Woolf. After reading her work, I was fascinated with her emphasis on "being" rather than "doing." I wanted to write a story that lets the reader visit an environment.

**Reginald E. Mansfield:** I primarily write poetry as survival therapy throughout relationships. Regarding the "Haiku Calendar," Mike Levine deserves equal credit for the concept.

**Linda McElroy:** Linda hopes to write "the great American novel" or at least finish the one she started in 1983.

**Tony Myers:** Tony would like to quote John Lennon: "If you find yourself standing at the edge of a cliff and wonder whether you should jump off or not . . . try jumping." Mahal kita, Roca.

**Melvin A. Rutan:** *Mr &* was my first attempt at playwrighting. It has greatly increased my appreciation for the genre and my respect for all the stalwart individuals connected to the theatre. Seeing the characters come to life in reader's theatre at Barnes & Noble and with the full production in SSU's Studio Theatre was remarkably gratifying.