

The Alchemist Review

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Attic Memories

My Grandma's attic harbors many treasures.
The secret, sacred stash of memories
Is reached through a low door, turning the old
Iron key, climbing creaky stairs to dusty
Heights where light filters softly on antique
Furniture that can't be given away nor used

And many other things too long unused.
The loot up here is not like queenly treasures
And not what others would call true antiques
Because their richness is in memories.
What others see through normal eyes—dusty,
Filthy junk, weathered, worn, marred, scarred, just old—

We see through another dimension. Past old
Deep scars to gleaming newness; past used
Veneer to see under the thick dusty,
Dirty cover a vestige of the treasures
They once were. We see clearly memories
Of another time. Chipped vases, antique

Now, held flowers at babies' births. The antique
Cradle belonged to Great-grandpa. His old
Black steamer trunk brought by boat holds memories
So dear: Love letters bound in blue, dolls used
By three generations, faded photos—treasures
Of the richest kind—feathered hats, dusty

Olive uniforms, wedding dress, dusty
Yellow newspapers announcing antique
Victories and tragedies. More treasures:
Flowers pressed between magazine pages, old
Christening gown, Dad's war medals. In these used
But cherished items precious memories

Are kept alive. So when my memories
Dim I climb those creaky stairs to dusty
Heights where light filters softly over used
Ball bats, well worn mitts, and antique
Toys once new, found under trees of old
On Christmas morning—children's treasures.

And these treasures rekindle memories.
As I sit among old mementos, dusty
Past swirls around antiques my family used.
—Susan Becker

FUNERAL

-For Rob-

The family, collectively divided, there in morning,

Desperately smiling to veil brimming fears.

Snow, serene, falling, you said it would, like tears,

Effectively affecting souls bared and yearning,

Falling calmly, exclusively in Mass.

M.D., sister, lover, hearts filled pews,

Solace seeking memories, pure, and you

In urn. Lillies and irises lifted,

Midst a soft murmur of wondering voices

Remembering you — smart, funny, gifted.

Daily monotony returned demanding our spirit,

Forcing us back to a comfort of familiarity.

Michael came and led your soul to peace,

And we, left behind, awed with your grace.

—Vicki Crain

Stages of Rejection and Acceptance

I.

Flights

I feel

my strength rising again.

First my toes, then calf and now entire leg.

I revive

enough to recognize the monster
as time worn as Beowulf.

I howl.

rage oozes as

I obsess

at my limitations
dormantly hunted
and advanced upon.
Freedom lost.

He says

I am angelic—

a heavenly creation.

So why do I not enjoy my beauty.

Through my inner magnifying glass

I am taunted

by reflections of hanging flesh.

Me the perfectionist—fat—emphasize
only the negative. Dodging,

I am caught

in the glare of compliments

that are dimmed by untended

areas of me that become camouflage for

that report, that project, that lesson

even this poem is not good enough

because my body is not good enough.

I am self hatred.

II

Self Acceptance

Is that when I say that I give up?

So I can finally ask myself:

What purpose does my body serve ... protection
from exploitation
from rejection.

But I can see where this struggle began.

He is the old man who haunts
the little girl.

Where did he touch you ... on the couch
in the pantry.

Or,

did he just corner your innocence
in some forgotten shadow. Pain
swelling the body shame of yesterday's childhood
into the untrusting rage that whirls
from unformed connections in pseudo
adult-rated-hood.

Now my friend tells me that all touch is not
sexual.

A caress pure affection—for me?—
not some pawing to batter me ageless
sexuality.

I can risk touch, but I am still
that exploited child—silent in rage
I cling to my bulky body. Rationalizing
my way out of desire. Minimizing
my importance to anyone else. My pain.
Blaming me.

—Phyllis Coon

Twelve Seconds Before

Papaito o papacito, no busque para
mi mas. I see clouds and snow and el cielo
and mama y Maria. It's not so hard,
these soft things; they pass through
me, and by me, alado, like
a whitened feathered wind.

God must be
here
because I'm thinking
of Ricardo,
and I even like him
now,
papa,
like I love you, papa,
and I will be
here
to see that

the yellowing ball beside
my bed feels right
within your hands again;
when you learn how to
throw it softly into someone
else's fingers.

I think...I know...
pienso... conozco...
God's most sensitive
spot reaches between touch
and emotion; Dios vive entre
tacto y sensacion.

Liner Notes

Nancy McKinney, Editor: I am a second year graduate student and member of the Friday night poetry group. I live in Taylorville with my husband and daughter and a herd of cats. I plan to continue in school, earn a Ph.D. in English, and teach literature in a University.

Jeremy Anderson is currently studying visual arts and poetry at U.I.S. He is twenty five years of age. Jeremy has been writing poetry for about four years.

Susan Becker: My inspiration comes from my family (especially granddaughter Hailey Rose), Marcellus Leonard and the poets of fall '96 creative writing class, my advisor Ethan Lewis, and Jackie Jackson who got me started writing (and who I want to be when I grow up). Special thanks to my cats for their late night companionship and typing assistance.

Jason Bennett: My greatest hope is never to be taken too seriously. I think we lose our perspective when we forget how to laugh at ourselves.

Anita Stienstra- Buis: My photographs are from a series using images reflected onto a sheet of plexiglas; my poetry deals with the same basic idea as the photos, different perspectives evolving through time and space.

Ward Campbell: There are sweet sensations I perceive—never lasting long
Shimmering mirage massage a beach, then deja vu is gone;
Leaving me reaching for oasis.
And existing as only another's memory . . .

Joseph D. Coffey: I'm a 38 year old state bureaucrat who, out of desperation began writing poetry. I am drawn to poetry by the power of its imagery and economy. "Solstice" was selected for future publication in a National Library of Poetry anthology.

Job C. Conger, IV considers himself a poet first, an essayist second and an advocacy journalist third. Even so, third pays the bills. Today he's a free-lance news and public relations journalist whose articles appear in Springfield Business Journal and Prime Time.

Phyllis Coon: My anger at society led me to explore adjectives that have been thrown at women to objectify their bodies. During my journey I have been able to finally see my strengths and weaknesses in body image and self esteem and to accept them not only as my own, but also the same internal conflicts belonging to a majority of women no matter what their body shape.

Vicki Crain is currently working toward her master's degree in English and is an upper company member of the Springfield Ballet Company. This poem was written in honor and memory of her friend, Robert K. Emmens, M.D., who was claimed by AIDS on January 18, 1996.

Sam Davis: Bio. Degradable instants of incense words, words a mask, a mask of paste and paper, paper filled with words and me, a glob of fat writing for a lean world while Twain's ghost stands in the shadows and guffaws.

Millie Dunn: I am a registered nurse attending UIS to obtain a BS in nursing. I took an English course two semesters ago as a gift to myself, and decided to seek a double major because writing has always been my first love.

Dennis Godar: Farmer at heart, I reside at rural Rochester where I raise pigs, apples, a daughter and three sons. I am not sure why I took to writing but it's a hobby I enjoy and can afford. Humor is what gets many people through life and if I can help, I should. Thanks to Molly for eighteen years shared and survived.

Dency A. Grubbs: I am currently a full-time grad student at UIS.

Ryan Hibbett: I am finishing my undergraduate studies in English at UIS while pursuing graduate school elsewhere. I enjoy reading and 4-track recording (I play guitar and banjo).

Michael Levine: I am an alumnus who seeks to follow a thought, in all its disparities, through to a sense of resolution, drawing together all the parallels that thought has brought to the surface along the way.

Patt Miles: How can I tell you who I am when I don't even know? With every day and every experience I am changed a little into someone a little different than I was before. In my spare time I write. I hike and bike when the weather is good. When it's bad I take to bed and hibernate til spring is come.

Mitch Pugh: "...I'm sorry for my lack of communication. But as I'm staring out this fifth floor window, it seems like the least amount of communication the better. ..." —Vic Chestnutt

Melvin Rutan: I'm an alumni of U.I.S. and a member of the U.I.S. Friday night poetry club. I'm still working on my long poem, which is now titled, "O.C. Simonds' cemetery."

Adam Stevens: Writing is the key to discovering our individual spirituality. We write to discover our own identities, to enjoy it not to obscure it. Peace.

Chad Wester is a second semester junior at UIS. Chad grew up in Virginia IL and joined the U.S. Marines in 1989. A volunteer with the S.B.C. and the Children's Miracle Network, he has enjoyed literature since boyhood and has written poetry since his first year in the Marines.

Wilson Wood: I am working on designing a graduate degree in I.O.P. in which I plan to make a visual Thesaurus. This project is essentially a structuralist approach to studying myths and archetypes, and is very much a mix of my interests in Photography, Art, and Philosophy.