
Aunt Chloe
2010

Aunt Chloe is a journal for people who have reclaimed the spaces denied them by cultural and historical tyranny. She belongs to any of us who have been pushed out of the spotlight, yet through art, literature, and dialogue have re-chosen where we belong.

Aunt Chloe: A Journal of Artful Candor
Spring 2010

Acknowledgments

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Editor's Note

I remember the first time I announced my full name and the names of my ancestors. It was about 4:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 20, 2006, in our beloved Sisters Chapel. I stood wide-eyed in the candlelit sanctuary with 599 young women who silently waited to be inducted into Spelman College. We were instructed to form a circle and state our names and the names of our ancestors. My turn eventually came and I enounced: "Kyrah Kenyaa Brown, descendant of Marcy Lee Steward and Audrey Bevins!" (My maternal and paternal grandmothers). This experience was important to me because I was able to formally recognize my ancestors. I had never met my grandmothers, but I felt that I knew them so well from the stories my family told me. In essence, I know now that calling their names helped me to remain connected to their stories, but, most importantly, to them.

It has been two years since the deliberate naming of *Aunt Chloe*. *Aunt Chloe* claimed her space in this world by calling the names of her ancestors: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Chloe Anthony Wofford. As she moves forward, embracing her new and glorious name, *Aunt Chloe* has come to know that behind every name there is a significant story. Lucille Clifton's *The Lost Women* begins "I need to know their names." *Aunt Chloe* has deemed it necessary that she identify the names of those who share or occupied space in this world. In order to give voice to the disregarded and overlooked, she must first know their names. *The Lost Women* concludes "All the women who could have known me/ Where in the world are their names?" In this issue, *Aunt Chloe* explores this question: What are *their* names and what are the stories of the birthing of those names? *Aunt Chloe* shares some of those names and stories in this issue. St. Germain gives her account of the Haitian oral culture in *Tonton*; in "Memory," H.D. Brown tells of an ancestor's struggle with his Native American identity.

This second issue of *Aunt Chloe* includes a special section on Africa. Here, *Aunt Chloe*, like Lucille Clifton's *two headed woman*, looks backwards and forward. *Aunt Chloe* is honored to present six poems by noted author Anthony Grooms from his manuscript *Minerals from the Sea*. The section also features the compelling voice of Nigerian poet/performance artist, Eseohe Arhebamen in conversation with the works of Nigerian poet A-Gonzaga and Ghanaian poet/educator Annette Quarcoopome. Hayet Rida, a Ghanaian student photographer, and Elizah Turner, an African American artist/activist, share politically charged and socially-conscious images.

In this issue, *Aunt Chloe* remembers the names and records the stories that are both familiar and unfamiliar to us. She illuminates the beauty of stories and the significance of the names that blossom into new identities, new concepts and new perspectives. *Aunt Chloe* encourages us to call someone's name and connect with her story, remembering the African proverb, which tells us that there is no death but forgetting.

I, Kyrah Kenyaa Brown, call on Marcy Lee Steward, Audrey Bevins, Jessie Fauset, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton.....

Kyrah K. Brown
Editor-in-Chief

This journal is dedicated to the memory of Lucille Clifton who shared stories with our ancestors and who continues to share stories with us.

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Call her name

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Niña
Nina
Nina
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Town crier
Drum speaker
Dirge chanter

red onion hoodoo

EBONY N. GOLDEN

see gul
dis how you keep him

muh deah says
gap smiled stirs with one hand holds a bad hip with the other
        winks at paw paw

gotta have three day ol corn bread fo da dressin
                lotsa lotsa butter

chopped gizzards
stewing in broth
all afternoon

collards from da garden
        hocks and some garlic

                see da hoodoo be in da root child

pull a red onion up from the earth
color tween plum and the seed of a peach

take yo time
        dice it right
        dice it fine

so the fragrance
jigs around the house
like chilluns on saturday nights grindin
sweatin holes in da walls

get da smell
in da cracks of da foundation
behind da wallpaper
in da curtains

throw some in da greens
in da dressin

she whirls a wooden spoon
over a thinning white afro
shimmies across buckled
linoleum floor

young thangs
young thangs
don't know how to keep a man home
with one flick of dey wrist
have him tugging apron
strings when da oven door
come down
before the supper bell rings

Sister

After *Litany for Survival* by Audre Lorde

For My Sister

ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

For those of us perplexed by mirrors
who grow up in refractions of light code
crucial crucial crucial is it
we are not alone

for those of us who love in secret
languages
who claim each other's names
like hand me downs
for by this weapon
this invention of safe rest stops in the hurricane
the intuitive carve air into home

for all of us
sistering is triumph
we don't have to do this alone

and when Sunday morning means
hell before breakfast
and Sunday dresses are coordinated corny
and when we diminish hunger
into tiny purse compartments
when we eat from the same waiting plate
and when we love with a seasoned faith
and an untaught courage
and when we trust each other to always remember
what we had to say
eventually

then we remember
it is better
so much better
so much better
so much better
to work this life thing out

together

Tonton

ST. GERMAIN

Before I left Haiti, days before the New Year I had a strange dream. It was one of those dreams that no one wants to have, and those who do, never forget it.

I walked into a beautiful church, the ceiling and floors were trimmed in gold. The pious were shiny and brown. The church was crowded with mournful people. I walked down the center aisle. With every step gravity became stronger, pushing me further into the ground. But with much effort, I continued walking as the decorative box came into view. I leaned into the casket and saw his face, dark as night. My father's hands were resting gently on his chest. He was peaceful and in the most relaxed state I had ever seen him. His calm tormented me.

*****

Waking up the next day I was barely breathing. I rubbed my eyes; they were hot. Just as I was about to tell my mother about the dream, I stopped. She looked like she had been crying all day long. Her hair was still wrapped in her night cap, a night cap that never made it outside of her bedroom. Without taking her eyes off the floor she was sweeping, she tells me that she has some bad news. I immediately knew that someone had died. It wasn't my dad, it was Tonton Zyis.

*****

I liked Zyis better drunk. Not a day went by when he wasn't drunk. He was a lying and functional drunk. He was my drunken uncle.

Almost everything he said was fabricated. The afternoons that I spent with him happened underneath the shade of the coconut trees. And there stories were exchanged. He was much better at them than I was at that point. I listened to him recount myths, Haitian folktales, Krik Kraks and stories of his "youth," my stories sustained.

When I was little, I had a cow named Pouchon. Pouchon and I spent hours together. Listen Ti-Tobia koute, your father wanted to steal my cow so that's when I broke his big toe. I told him that nobody messes with me and stays in one piece. The kids at school were scared for their lives and would give me gifts just so that they can stay on my good side.

This was one of his favorite stories to tell. Actually it was a pre-story to every story he told. Ton was a pathological liar. Here is the truth, when he was younger he owned a goat and had to share it with one of his sisters. My father broke his own toe while trying to fly off one horse onto another. Tonton Zyis didn't have friends in school because he was quiet and shy, that's the real reason no one ever bothered him.

His lies sparked my imagination and interest in story telling. I have adopted his skills. If my uncle could come up with intriguing stories then so could I. If he could find ways to retell the story of his own life through fictional characters then so could I. I no longer cared to hear the truth. I wanted to know and remember the stories he told and shared. It was true that the next day Tonton Zyis wouldn't remember sharing or creating them.

I live alone in those memories of my uncle, in his mind many of them never happened. To him the day's memories were just as foggy as the previous ones or the next one would be.

During the years that my mother and sisters lived in Haiti, we anticipated long breaks from school. We always packed our suitcases and headed southwest of the Island to a place twenty miles away from where my father was born, Cayón. The trip from the city was exciting, but seeing my uncle held more anticipation. I waited in the back of the pick-up truck as the hot brown dust invaded the air around us.

A few miles from Cayón, the driver always stopped to fill up, that was one of the cheapest gas

stations around. While the car consumed the gasoline, I always walked over to the machan who sat by the road. She sold snacks and treats ranging from plantain chips, bonbon sirèt, and Douce Pistach. I always bought two Douce Macos for Tonton Zyis, they were his favorites and the sweets I detested the most. Douce Macos were what he craved when he was drunk and everyone refused to buy it for him. They all said that it only reinforces his "negative" behavior.

Tonton Zyis' house was tin covered and surrounded by fruit trees. When the rain poured it created a music known only to the country-side. The house was multicolored; the walls of the patio were a bright green whilst the columns in the front were pink. The sides were blue and the inside a softer green. This color book home had patches of different colors anywhere the paint started to chip off.

On my last visit before his death, I felt happier then usual to be nearing the house. I jumped out of the pick-up and ran. I ran through the wet grass to the back of the house. He sat under the window of his bedroom with the hens and roosters. His head was covered with a hat made of hay and he held a stick in his mouth. Soft hums escaped his lips as he created tunes in his head. I imagined that his brain was swimming in alcohol, words and music. I wanted the same but minus the alcohol.

From a few feet away I could smell the Bambacourt Rum fighting to get out through his pores. I held out the Douce Macos right in front of his face and he knew who I was. Tonton Zyis got up and I'd have to raise my head. His lanky hands always reached down to hug me.

"Did your mom see you buy this?" he said stuffing the sweets in his pockets.

"No!" I yelled at the thought of what my mom would think or even say.

"Mwen té songé-w, ou kité'm lontan," he squeezed me.

"I know it has been a long time and I missed you too," I said jumping off of his bony shoulders.

A little girl went to collect wood from the forest and found an injured dog. She spent the whole time hidden in the woods trying to heal the dog. Listen Ti-Tobia, kouté; when the sun began to set and she smelled the night through the leaves, she could barely see the injuries on his thigh anymore. But she continued to crush leaves and put in the wound. She picked up the dog and following the tracks she left in the brown mud found her way back home. When she got back home she received a whooping, so much baton, that her whole body was red after her mom finally put the belt down. The dog didn't survive, he died while she was walking back home with him.

His house was small but cozy. Tonton Zyis hated technology and everything else that made life easier. I loved his way of living, no alarm clocks and no constant phones ringing. No electricity, no running water, there was only one kitchen and bathroom and they were both outdoors. There was no stove in the kitchen; he always got his wife wood from the nearby forest.

Everything in Cayón was quiet, other than the music that the birds, trees and pets created added with the sounds of children running. There was no need to create a tree house because we climbed trees and hung from the branches eating our mangoes upside down.

The technology he owned was a radio from my father, which he often listened to when he was hanging out in the front yard. He took great care and handled it with pride. He always made sure to advertise that his little brother gave it to him.

"Ti-Tobia frè-m gave me a gift," he sang this sentence every afternoon when he played music from it.

On my last night in Cayón, we walked up to his parents' grave sight where the coconut trees were ready. Tonton Zyis often mentioned how proud his parents would have been of all his siblings owning their own businesses.

"Why do you always say that Ton?" I said trying to reach for the machète he had tied to his back. We were on our way to his coconut trees.

"It's true," he replied as I stared at him.

"Ti-Tobia, you listen too closely when people talk," he smiled and took a sip of his special juice.

"Ton, for New Year's when we come back I want to go behind those hills, what's there?" I pointed to where the hills seemed to touch the sky.

"I have land there with sugar cane on it, it should be ready soon. When you come back we will eat them right in the field together," he said pulling the machète from his back.

"Can we also go to auntie's mango farm?"

"If we have time, it's far. We can go with a bucket, some water and a change of clothes."

He was looking at the ground, picking up sticks and throwing them ahead of us.

When we reached our destination he picked up the machète and cut off the top part of the coconut so that we could drink the sweet juice. Although it always felt like a heat wave, the clear liquid from the coconut cooled my insides. It was always cool. We then proceeded to eat the meat of the fruit.

The next morning was my last morning with him. The animals and I were the only ones to ever see Tonton Zyis sober. I had convinced myself that if I slept anywhere else in the house I would get eaten up in my sleep. I slept the closest to his bed that was held up only with four cement blocks.

He woke up every morning before the sun would rise from behind the mountains where his parents were buried. I always woke up when he was trying to grab his sandals. Before bed I hid them under my pillow just so that I could be sure that he would wake me up in the morning. He would laugh a laugh that was calmer then his giddy laughs during the day. "A Ti-Tobia, ou pa bon non, you're no good" he'd say and giggle. His laugh sounded more like a giggle then a laugh ought to be. It was weird for such a big man to have the laugh of a teenager.

We stepped outside into the moisture and were greeted by the dog and the hen. It was time to feed the animals. The smell of their different food always created a queasy feeling in me. That morning I just couldn't differentiate if it was the animals' food or the fact that our driver would be returning to pick us up in a few hours. Our bags were packed and waiting by the door.

Ton was reserved in the morning. He was so reserved that I often wondered if he was mad or sad. "Tobia pick up that bowl and pour the corn in there for the rooster," he'd say while his face remained motionless.

Without his Bambacourt Rum, he was a quiet stranger invading the body of my Tonton. A man I couldn't wait to see leave. He wasn't the last person I wanted to see before I left for Port-au-Prince. I counted the minutes down to when he would go into the storage room.

As the sun rose so did the heat, he headed into the storage room and thirty minutes later right before my eyes the stranger left. I was on his back walking through the yard and looking at the familiar places from new heights.

Shah Mat

WILLIAM JOEL

"Shah mat," you cried,
withdrew your hand from play
and eased into your seat
waiting for a gentle tap
to lay my king onto its side.
But I, with arms in fools' embrace
refused to yield.
"Come on," you sighed
"it's just a game.
I'll help you put the board away."
And reaching forward found
your hand grasped in midstride.
"Not yet," I whispered, letting go
to contemplate how many ways
remained for me to lose.

Tension

LESLIE CRAWFORD

Cottonmouth Blues

DERRICK HARRIELL

Ole King Cotton,
Keeps us slavin'
Till we'se dead an' rotten.
- Sterling Brown

As the sun spreads itself
across my slick black back
there's a party happening in Harlem.
Negros doing the free dance
beside Peeping Toms who get off
seeing monkeys blow anguish
through shiny brass
hypnotizing even the bourbon.
BoJack say in the North
Negro preachers' pulpits stand
between prostitutes and nameless curbs
smashing the word into blues verse
while the old hands sing popular songs
in unpopular rooms for unpopular folks.

Last I heard Negros had our own
city to make love to at night
and if it was real good we'd share a smoke
with the black air and giggle prayers
as we dream off to sleep.
There's whispers of a woman
holdin' the voice of God.
When the city real still
you can hear her hollering laments
to knees, hands, backs, shoulders
and legs turned ash,
tongues turned crinkled roses,
mouths turned abandoned wells.

Excessive Force

JOHN LEE CLARK

Feeling my way down the street, if I ever
feel the cold
kiss of a gun or the cold
lick of a blade, I shall
break the law. I'll
inhale the sweet night air and then
explode. I'll
kick the mugger down, my hands
clawing for his throat, all my blind strength
pounding his head. Or else I shall
fall to my death. Please
understand that I don't want to
walk away only to
run smack into a world where every shoe my cane
kisses could be his, every
passing breath could be his, every
leering pair of eyes could be his, for every night would
stalk me with his phantom, and such nights would
consume all my days.

Trial by Fire

Based on a true story

KHADIJAH ROBINSON

My world wasn't America, Ohio, or even my elementary school at that particular moment. It was only composed of that playground and that swing. Up. Down. Up. Down. Up…down.

I was swinging by myself on the playground after school, waiting for my friend Adrian. He and I walked to the middle school everyday where we met our older siblings so that we could all walk home together.

This was when she came up to me and immediately, my world expanded. I hated this girl. Even when my mother had told me that "hate was a strong word" and that I should never say that I hated someone, I hated this girl. In retrospect, I would term it the "Hate that Hate Produced," but as a third-grade black child being called a nigger by a third-grade white child, I, quite simply, without any greater social understanding, hated her.

Crystal. Her name was Crystal. She was a skinny kid, a little smaller than me. Her hair was slightly unkempt and hinted towards a mullet, but you couldn't be sure. I remember she had brown freckles on her face, although by now, I've forgotten most of her other features. They were never that important to me anyhow. I was never one whose hatred focused on its subject relentlessly and for long amounts of time—in contrast, it only washed over me when her obnoxious presence reminded me of it. Perhaps, that's the benefit of being eight.

Here was a reminder of that hatred. She walked up to me as I sat swinging, waiting. I saw her walking across the playground and I tried very hard to focus on her effortlessly. She never came closer to me than necessary, and today was no exception.

"Whatcha doin nigger?"

Now, I did a lot of bold and reckless things at this age, being a child surrounded by a lower-income neighborhood who, despite the interventions of educated and well-intentioned parents, ran with a pack of children who lived in Section 8 housing and stole for the fun of it.

What I did not do, however, was work up the courage to defend myself forcefully or violently against this racist white girl. I wasn't sure why, but something about her cowed me. Maybe it was the previous run-in with her, for which I had been sentenced to three days of detention and she had gotten only one after a heated verbal exchange; I called her a honkey in response to her usual taunt of nigger. I'd learned an age-old truth that day that I didn't fully understand at the time. Perhaps I still don't. However, I did know that if I made a move and she told, the authority, the Principal, would not be on my side. She was white too.

At least my parents hadn't punished me. Usually, if I got in trouble at school, that was just a precursor to the punishment I would get when I got home. In this case, my parents didn't say much of anything to me. Most of their words were exchanged with one another, behind closed doors, later that night. I wasn't very sure how I had miraculously escaped punishment after getting three days of detention in school, but I had. Furthermore, my mom even seemed to be just a little bit nicer to me; inexplicable to my eight year old mind, to say the least.

Still, no matter how much of a dare-devil I was, I was unused to the troubles of being caught, and with this girl being caught was a certainty. My mouth remained shut and my eyes remained on the ground.

"Huh, nigger? I'm talking to you, you dumb nigger!" This, I knew. I wasn't that dumb.

My mouth remained shut. My eyes, however, slowly swept upwards as I looked her directly in the eyes. I didn't say anything. I just stared at her for what seemed like the longest period of my life. Why? Maybe it was for the same reason that she got less detention than me over a fight she picked. Maybe it was because I am black.

She was the first to break the gaze. She remained silent, but she diverted her eyes to a rock that she dutifully began to kick.

My eyes quickly found another object of attention as well. There was a group of kids moving towards us, forming a loose unit. As they got closer, I realized I knew them. They were the distraction needed. I got off of the swing and left Crystal standing there, kicking that rock. I moved toward them. I'm not sure what my face looked like, or if it was any indication of what had happened, but they seemed to know immediately that something bad was in the air. Now that I think back on it and I know myself a little better, I'm sure that my face gave away nothing. The simple fact that I, a black girl, had just been alone in close proximity with Crystal, a known elementary-school racist, was enough of a tip that trouble was abroad.

"What the fuck did that racist bitch say to you? I know her ass said something—she always calling people names and all kinds of shit. She got me in trouble last week. What was she saying to you?" The first girl unabashedly broke the silence.

I shrugged it off, genuinely nonchalant. "Same ole. Whadda I care? Fuck her."

"Hell no. I'm sick of her ass. Let's go over there, yall."

Everyone except for me thought it was a perfect idea. The group of girls, whose names, faces, and identities now escape me, stalked over to where Crystal was sitting in the swing that I had just gotten up from.

"You ready bighead?" I had been focusing so intently on what my school-friends were doing that I hadn't heard Adrian walk up behind me. His playful shove reminded me that it was time to walk over to the middle school to meet our siblings.

"Yeah, let's go." I didn't say anything about Crystal to Adrian. There was no point in breaking my silence—he already knew. Halfway into the walk, I had already forgotten about her.

The next day, Crystal sat across the room. She didn't look my way.

I saw my friends at lunch and they told me that she had, at first, tried to act very big and bad. Nigger, she had called them. We got your "nigger," they warned ominously. She had nothing else to say after that, just looked down and kicked a rock until they walked off.

"We sick of ha ass. We gone do somethin' to fix ha ass for good. She done called me a nigger fa the last time!" One girl admonished. I was silent. This was one street battle that I knew would lead to all bad things.

"I hate her too," I finally agreed, "but my momma always be on me bout gettin' into fights and shit. I'ma have to chill on this one."

"It's all good. We got this one." They knew why I was easing out of the possibility of confrontation. They weren't mad. Despite the "dumb nigger" accusations Crystal casually dropped, I was one of the brighter children in my school and my parents expected much of me, despite my occasional delinquencies. I just wasn't that type of person, and being honest about it made it okay.

"Cool," I said as I quietly edged away from the table.

What happened that weekend, however, was not cool. It didn't come from my friends, this news. It was over the loudspeaker Monday morning. In quiet tones, our Principal announced to the school that Crystal's house had burned down. Her parents, apparently, were just about to go out and a babysitter was arriving. The house caught fire while the father was outside. The babysitter, Crystal, her mother, and her baby brother were inside. Just before smoke engulfed the house, Crystal's mother threw her brother out of the second-story window to her husband. Everyone else died.

The next day we had a fundraising drive for Crystal's father and brother. I picked a few pennies out of my pocket and threw them into the bucket as I marched past it in order to avoid recrimination from the Authority, but that was the extent of my goodwill. I, after all, was only a "dumb nigger."

My feelings changed somewhat with the wink. I, at first, didn't know how to feel about it. It could have meant so many things, except, I knew exactly what it meant. As my class shuffled back in a single-file line towards our classroom, we passed another single-file line. One of my friends was a part of the line. She was the one who had assured me Crystal had called her a nigger for the last time. She glanced sideways as she passed me, at her teacher and at mine, then she smirked and winked. It was crystal clear—this wasn't a playground scuffle. This was a trial by fire.

I never told anyone. I never repeated any part of this story until I had long-since moved down south and forgotten the names of all those involved—except Crystal. I would never forget that name. The police never found out who set the fire to Crystal's house; no one ever told them.

When I think about the incident, I often wonder if I feel guilty or not. My feelings on the matter go up and down, up and down. The humanity that was lost, the sheer destruction of life sometimes makes me fall into a dark silence. The hateful, blind maliciousness of that humanity, which I can only assume was learned from her family, is what kept me silent. Maybe I felt that people never should have the ability to dictate who can live and who cannot; but, as my friend assured me it would be, Crystal never called her—or me—a nigger again. I may have gone up and down, back and forth, but I was always, always, silent.

This wasn't just my playground, my elementary school, or my state. This was **my** America.

Special Section: *AFRICA*

Adabeji

ESEOHE ARHEBAMEN

1.
Shy red and brick castle tumbling into the arms of wait-a-bit bushes; spiders.
stretching for miles, a sea of white stones baking. a white sun.
long grass grows inside the house but all the cows are dead; the goats eaten.

In the heavy afternoons
when everything hides
from the sun or sleeps
the little African girl

July melting into fantastic yellows across the sky. To the east,
ebony trees- a small forest of young arrows planted in the earth.
brown hills rolling like the buttocks of a rich woman; distant bird sounds
but no birds.

steals outside.
sharp cooked stones
cutting her bare feet.
the locked gates
tearing her blue dress-
leaving her blood everywhere!
To the roadside where she eats sand alone.

2.
I haunted the second house as well.
creeping down cold basement stairs,
black from the fire; bare.

Walls peeling back like strips of flesh;
the white paint bubbled from heat.

To the darkness and the freezer
to eat the freezer snow.

Third-world Orphan

ESEOHE ARHEBAMEN

Come from nothing, barefoot bastard
circumcised at age 8 so you remained a
Lonely birdface, bookworm, little heart
you did it all for me I know why you could never
say I love you. For my sake married a vet though you dislike dogs
and cats, pretended cataracts at his infidelities
grit your teeth beneath him so I would have
a brother, a sister and never be alone
scraped your best sold peanuts or pepper
for European baby formula, apple juice
dressed in the same sackcloth, ashes, old maid shoes
to save air, crawled three children to America your hands and knees
Last letter to the promising husband:
where you go I will go, when you wander I will wait.
inch by inch like a black worm pushing up mud for air.
Black worm, how have the star-spangled
inner-city streets treated you these many years?
Or the jaded feet that march them in this first world?
Detroit: a white woman now
Tell you the truth, her dancing could not do
what your kitchen Sunday morning. Here,
an anniversary necklace, it says I'm sorry
she was the movies, who can resist movies
it's real gold and sapphire, blond and blue-eyed
blue sapphire your birthstone; gray hairs, destiny: your birth a coincidence of genitals.

Madre maria, you worked two jobs or three
taught the offspring of black slaves factual Africa in failed public schools.
Saturdays, rolled up Sunday newspapers late into the please hours with the family brigade
bought a truck, sold ice-cream, sold houses,
bought a place on Oregon Trail, a pioneer's dream
the street name another coincidence, coincidence becoming proof that God is a joke.

The house depreciated
since the husband wouldn't help with anything!
Naked walls, angry yard, moldy bathrooms look how the ceiling bulges
buckled and leaned from water damage, the smell! Still you suddenly
splurged on a six-foot grandfather clock,
perhaps wanting a parent that counted you or stayed.
But nothing obeyed so the husband beat the children mercilessly.
Once I begged, screaming. I remember
you walked out. shut the door, you had your ears
enough. Meanwhile, Daddy raped one daughter drove a son to drink and jail,

punched you in the face. yet you were pregnant again, again.
The pyramid family collapsed the lights
went out other unpaid bills you could not stop
crying, crying the raped daughter starved herself, tried to suicide
ran away, stopped. Quietly, the jailed son relocated to a shoebox upstairs-
Here. It was plea bargain or an all white jury, Ypsilanti, Michigan.
A bastard grandchild, a fight, the husband moved out a week
alone once more (whimpering in the corner like a beaten dog)
That week, you wondered what had you won for wilting?
The family dispersed and drowning. Work, wake, work, always
sorrow black bastard worms writhing in pieces
damned the cement on a wet spring day.

Flight

ANTHONY GROOMS

This should be an easy country to love, when I have grown
Sick of every square inch of my own. Red and pocked,
The lunaresque Sahel shades into forests and then a mock-
Mottle of green sea as the landing gear thumps and the wing dips
Toward dream and fear. The pilot must never think of his death, and I
Think too much about mine.

The news in America
Is bad and with good reason, PJ and I have come to Africa,
One to teach in the West and the other, the South. But can we
Escape that which we carry in our blood—our black skins and our mouths
Of white teeth grinding to the blues and swing pips?—but eating all
The while, eating: America, America, your machinery is too much for me.

This bird clanked like a great house in a storm when it rose into the sky.
Many times I dreamt of falling. My thoughts never left the two
People I know who fell—like meteors over Moriches—into the oil smoke
And burning sea. Travel can kill you. But staying home can kill you just
As dead. Then Gabriel meets us at Kotoka, and drives us into the flames
And smoke of the night market and the harmattan red dust.

Moriches: New York town near site of TWA 800 plane crash in 1996.
Kotoka: Ghana's international airport.
Harmattan: Annual wind that blows sand from the Sahara.

Passage to America

ANTHONY GROOMS

We have come to see the slave castle, to see
how a distant and unknown parent was tortured
and shipped to America as chattle. If you
make that connection, that this is my blood in this ground,
my own skin is scraped on these stones, then your heart
swells to breaking.
Kwah, the guide, smiles,
bright teeth in the bright courtyard of the white-
washed castle. "Here is where the female
slaves were kept. Two hundred in this small room.
That one there is the small hole for air and light."
We marvel at past cruelties, and, for a while, forget
about our own.
"And that there is the place where
the officers stood and watched the naked girls come in;
And that is the trap through which she was jacked to the room
when they saw a girl they liked. Some of the girls
were r-r-raped and made to become pregnant and to bear
half-castes with funny names like White and Brown

"This is the cistern into which rain water fell
so that when national enemies besieged our castle,
the governor always had plenty of water. And this place
is the dungeon of the male slaves—mind your head—
and here is where they were made to go onto the ships
through that small door, one by one, to America.
Once through that door that was the end of you."

Weakened from the musk of Kwah's dungeon—this is how deep
the feces rose in the cell as the male slaves clamored for air—we
stumble into sunlight and humidity and boys—a dozen boys—
smiling handsome boys, besiege us, their small hands
tapping our hands, their fingers tugging at our clothes
a dozen small hands rubbing my arms, pulling for attention
"Akwaaba anyemi, Welcome Sister, Welcome home lost
brother." And my own hand, pats on a shoulder,
stokes the bristle of a closely cropped head.
"We are one, you and I, one Africa," they say
PJ, near to tears, fans her hands before her as to embrace them
one by one, but not knowing where to start.
They give us cards on which they have written their names,
"Write to me. Maybe I can come to your place." Kwesi, Kwame,
Roger. Here, beside the castle, death camp of our fathers, One Africa.
"Write to me. Maybe I can come to America to see you."

The Motherland

ANTHONY GROOMS

How many of my kind, suffering the double consciousness,
Love and hate of our home, have journeyed the Atlantic on the passage
Of return to The Mother, and have been "most welcomed"
At the slave prisons, and hustled for dollars? This is the mother
We embrace. Admittedly, I do so uneasily, thinking, this mother gave me
Away more so than lost me.
Others, I think, put on blinders and rhetoric.
They breathe in African air and kiss the soil, while ragged drummers
Beat out a welcome for money—It's happened to me—I look at African
Faces and have seen in them an aunt or cousin, and have been warmly
Called obruni or mzungu—though I am brown,-- black back home--
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee, they look and call me "half-caste."

White fathers sold their children for black, and so the Black Mother
Sold them too. Now, three centuries removed, What is Africa to me?
Spicy grove? Cinnamon tree? I do not speak the language. How do I make
My visit? The words are beautiful, but too much time and water lie in between.

Something Forgotten

ANTHONY GROOMS

They have forgotten, and I have forgiven. Their hearts were stolen,
Given away—and that is what I've come to realize about slavery—how
I came into being—that those who made me were both thieves
And the victims of thieves. For every fat omanhene, a sister
Lay inconsolable at the loss of her sisters; For every King Anthracite
A thousand families mourned without resolution—someone
Disappeared, and that one made me.

Here, slavery is
Not talked about, except to say how cruel the whites were. This is
A history, as the critic says, of mindlessness. Without a heart, the blood
Does not run; Without muscle, the lungs do not draw—Vampire—Zombie—
The nights and days of the walking dead.

Once I walked with Danny Jeffer-
Son, a schoolmate for six years by then. He kept falling behind, and I
Kept waiting, waiting, but he never caught up, not even after I realized
He would not be seen in red-neck Louisa with his nigger friend. "Nigger-
Lover" was a brand too painful for him, and yet I have born "nigger" alone.
I never spoke to him again, but twenty years later, I came to sympathize
He was only a boy, and a human boy, at that. It is better to be
A happy human than an angry one. So, Danny boy, long ago, I said, Let
Bygones be bygones. I will remember that day—you Baltimorean!—it was
December, but the light snow was melting, and the air was more like May.

It is hard not to find a devil in this world of devils. I can dream
Of a new and factual dawn breaking red on the horizon of the sahel: Every person
Shall know his sin, every sin shall be forgiven, and every wound healed. But
These are the long days in rain and sun—flood and drought—all in the same day.
Neither the old slaver nor the old weeping sister can remember the grief; I
Who bear it must remember, alone. I who bear it must breathe.

Rich and White

ANTHONY GROOMS

A child in Franschhoek tells me that I am rich—
he wants five rand for watching my car—
I am rich, but not in the way he thinks.
In that way, there are richer by far, who live
in the countryside here. In Cape Coast, in the West,
a boy, sixteen, says he has befriended other
white men. He looks twelve so I forgive him.
The children at Apewosika
village, ogle at my American dress and
follow me. Rather than a hello, they repeat
"Money, money, money," as if that were my name
or kind. In Tanzania, just off the road to Odupai,
a girl in beaded costume chases down
the car, she pleads in Maa, for us
to take her picture in exchange for a shilling.
In Soweto, the guide, a Zulu, says do not give
our children money, least we teach them to beg,
and the first child I see, slips his palm in mine
and asks me for a rand, and I commit
the crime I had been warned against. My favorite
were the Zanzibari boys, who climbed a co-
conut tree, served us the hot juice, fashioned
a purse, a fan, a tie, a basket from the fronds
and asked for nothing, but sang a song for us
because we were from some place far away and
we were rich, or a least for that moment.

Sons of Dead Mothers

ANTHONY GROOMS

We are men, but we are boys, too. Jan leans over the table
And in a voice softened by the mysteries of life on earth says,
"Our mother made good brun sås." Lars, his brother,
Agrees and I who have never tasted brun sås, but have tasted
Grief that turns the tongue to sand—Yes, Yes, I agree, and I taste
Back a decade to the last time my mother cooked yeast rolls,
The bread of life for me in the days when my world was rimmed.

Jan told me of walking with his mother along the country lanes
Of Tjorn, the island of his childhood. Fru Petersen—
I imagine her voice full of coquettish glee—more a lover than a mother,
Sneaked with him into the neighbor's orchard and stole plums. They
Had plums at home, so running through the high grass, with stains
Of juice and laughter on their white clothes, boy and mother, boy and girl,
They were running from, running to something bigger: Många bäcka små blir

En stor å. The sea crackled, but its winter gloom was, for that moment,
Away. Neither Bergmanian Seventh Seal nor thoughts of suicide, but
Only the summer, the sun, bright and spinning like a top. I, too,
Walked country roads with my mother. Far from the sea, we had the
Trees. The breezes made them roar like an ocean. My last words
To her: "Mama, you will get better." But life went on—I am developing a
Wanderlust. A lust for what I can no longer have on earth, but will travel to.

Många bäcka små blir en stor å: A Swedish proverb—Many small streams have become a big river.

An Interview with Anthony Grooms

AC asked novelist and poet Anthony Grooms to talk about his experiences in Africa, and about the poems that resulted from those experiences. This is what he said:

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***Aunt Chloe*: Your manuscript, *Minerals from the Sea: Travels in Africa* wore a different title when we first read it—*Africa with Tentacles*. We had never thought of Africa as having tentacles. How did that idea occur to you? What made you change it?**

Anthony Grooms: There is a wonderful Herb Ritts photograph called "Djimon with Octopus." It depicts a black African man with an octopus on his head. It is an extraordinary photo and served as a kind of talisman while I wrote the book. But this picture was taken in Hollywood and bears no reality to anything I've experienced in Africa. The idea of tentacles being a central image for the book came long before I adopted the photo. First of all it has to do with a joke, represented in one of the poems, of my friend eating octopus in a restaurant in Cape Coast, Ghana. It was very chewy. But tentacles came to represent both the tangle of the experiences I have had in my Africa travels and the way in which Africa tugs and repels me emotionally. As I drafted the book though, the title grew to emphasize the difficult aspects of the experience—and I wanted to echo what was joyous about the journey, so I chose the title of the poem which I think celebrates that joy.

***AC*: *Minerals of the Sea* is a wonderful first person poetic travelogue of an African American returning to Africa. There's so much longing in that first experience of return, and there's the inevitable disappointment for the long lost child who is, in fact, just a tourist. How did you decide to do this work?**

AG: In 2000, I went to live in Ghana for a few months, teaching in Cape Coast. As I writer, I thought something creative would come out of the experience, but I didn't know what. Then, I learned that due to no fault of my own, I had arrived six weeks early for classes. In fact, the university grounds were relatively empty. Alone—and a bit angry—I started these poems, incorporating some of them into letters to my wife back in Atlanta. The project grew to well over 100 poem drafts, and now for 10 years I've been refining the manuscript.

***AC*: Are these poems the result of a single, pristine "return" experience, or have you traveled extensively in Africa?**

AG: No to both questions. My visit to Cape Coast was my third visit to Africa. To be clear, I've never idealized "returning," but I did think that being black in a black country, I would blend in. I didn't. I made many close Ghanaian friends, but I am still an "obruni"—a white man—in Ghana. What this experience did was to help me see just how much more American the African American is than African. I am blessed to have traveled widely in Africa, though Africa is so large and complex, one can never say "extensively."

***AC*: Many African Americans talk about the pain of touring the slave castles, such as the ones at Elmina or Cape Coast in Ghana. Your poem "Passage to America" captures some of that experience. What feelings or impressions led you to write this poem?**

AG: Touring the slave castles can be an emotional experience for anyone who connects with the historical suffering that went on there. My wife and I did. But leaving the so-called castle, we were solicited by young boys, who in their own way were exploiting us. This is one of the tentacles of Africa. My ancestors were exploited, but now, in a way that is just as complicated, but far more benign, we were exploited again—and I mean emotionally, as the boys played on the fact that we were upset having come from the castle. Once a friend, the same one who ate the octopus, asked if I felt anger about the slave castles. I had to think a while, and I decided that in most ways that experience is abstract—historical. What I feel anger about is the exploitation of Jim Crow because I am old enough to know it first hand and I know how it brutalized my parents and grandparents, people I dearly love.

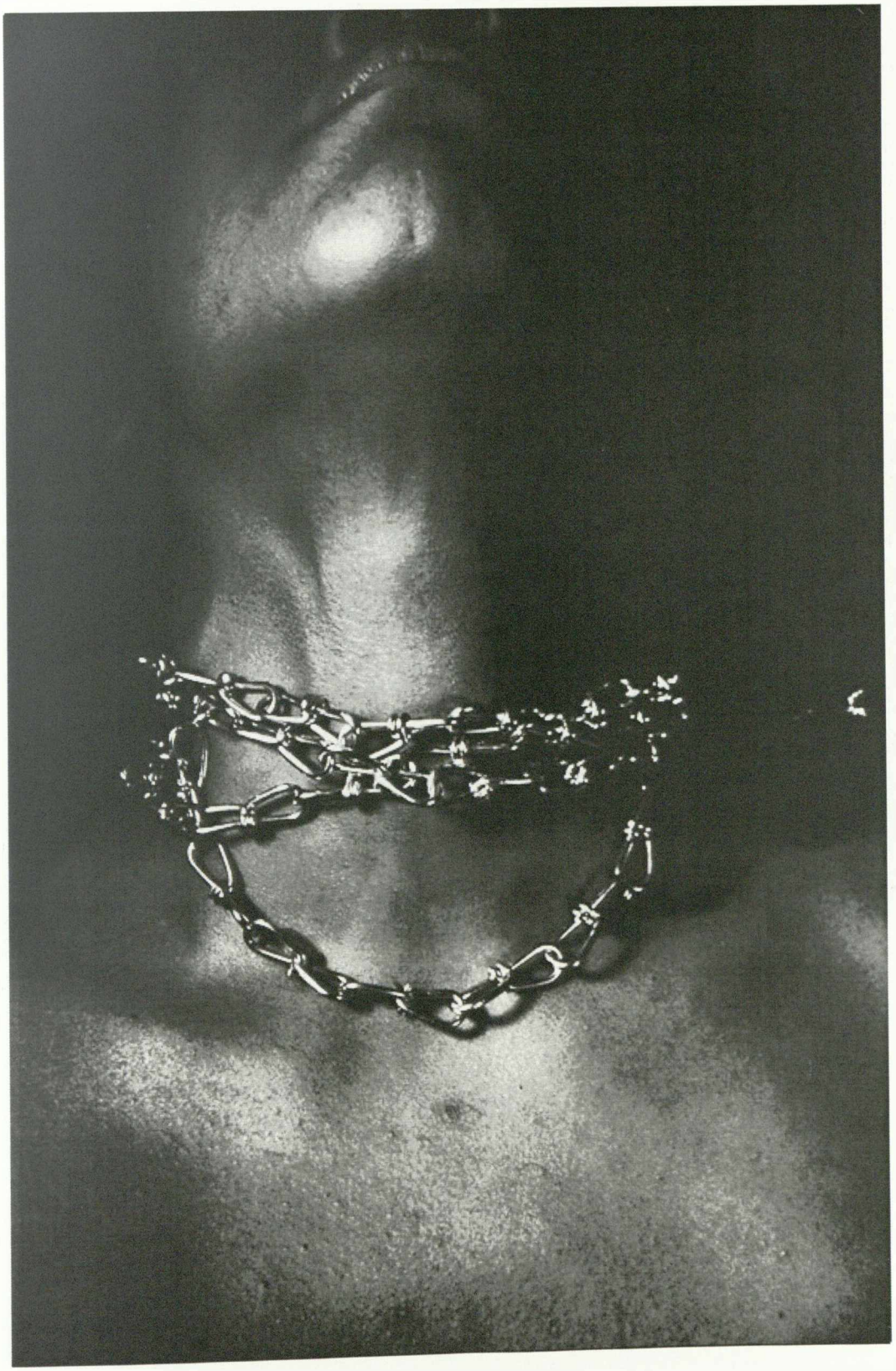
***AC*: You dedicate this work to your own son, Ben, and to your wife, Pamela. Would you talk about the portraits of African boys in this collection? I thought them deft, complex.**

AG: Thank you for your compliment. I did strongly connect [to] boys and young men in Africa. As I said, I was abandoned on the campus for a while, so when I could get to town, I was often approached by curious boys—teenagers, mostly. I met street boys and school boys, and one of the things that this experience emphasized for me was the inequity and lack of balance in the world, that such lovely children suffer. One day, I asked Kwesi if he had eaten lunch. He hadn't. Nor had he eaten any thing the day before. Of course, I bought him lunch. And shoes and clothing. And paid for schooling for a number of years. But I wonder to what good. He's still without a job and hungry.

***AC*: You layer your present day images of Africa, and the self in Africa, with a literary history of writers who have tackled the subject—Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, Robert Hayden, Maya Angelou, and many others. How does the structure of quotes and poets operate for you in this work?**

AG: Historically, few African Americans have visited Africa and many today know too little about it. Like the rest of the world, we black Americans get our news of Africa from CNN and Tarzan movies. So it was important for me to ask Countee Cullen's question from "Heritage"—"What is Africa to me?" I also was aware of other writers who had tried to answer the question. It seemed that, to a large degree, their experiences corroborated mine. Wright, Angelou, Eddy Harris, all found themselves estranged from the motherland at some point. Still Africa is a wonderful and varied place—full of beauty and ugliness, of joy and sorrow. I want in my work to visit both.

***AC:* Tony, it's a privilege to include this work in our pages. Thank you!**



Stained glass window

For Mr. Jamie, who inspires me to stray from time to time unto narrow paths...

ANNETTE QUARCOOPOME

For throwing your ball through the stained glass window you must
Say ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys and
Learn to play the accordion
"The accordion" mummy intoned

Lessons were from five to six, an hour before confession
I wished they had been later so that I too could hear
Confessions of adults who sin, with their bodies and their minds
One hour a week for four weeks Father taught me to play
The accordion like a pro

It was a black and white monster, with teeth and knobs that made it screech
It swung slowly to and fro, by the decree of Father's fingers
The old accordion sat squat in his lap straps hung taught from his shoulders
Father's eyes fixed on mine and the lesson would begin

First the fingers felt for secret places and prodded
Then they groped holy places and pressed
Open close the accordion went bouncing
Up and down on Father's lap
The music played and played
He sweated and groaned
I burn! I burn!
Up and down on Father's lap

At last he wept with ecstasy
At last I wept with shame

This is what it means to be holy, he said before letting me out
Of the secret room that separated him
From the sinners who came to atone

I learned to play the accordion alone in my room
To desire the jarring music my nine-year old fingers could produce

One day my mother heard the music play
She found me in my holy place
Sweating and groaning and playing and playing
No more burning no more burning
"Father taught me the accordion," I confessed

"Father!" mummy cried
And we went to see the archbishop, who must have had his own old accordions
Weak woman do not let your son cast aspersions through our stained glass window
He patted her on the shoulder
For your lack of faith my daughter you must
Say ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys
And you must learn…

Cipher

A-GONZAGA

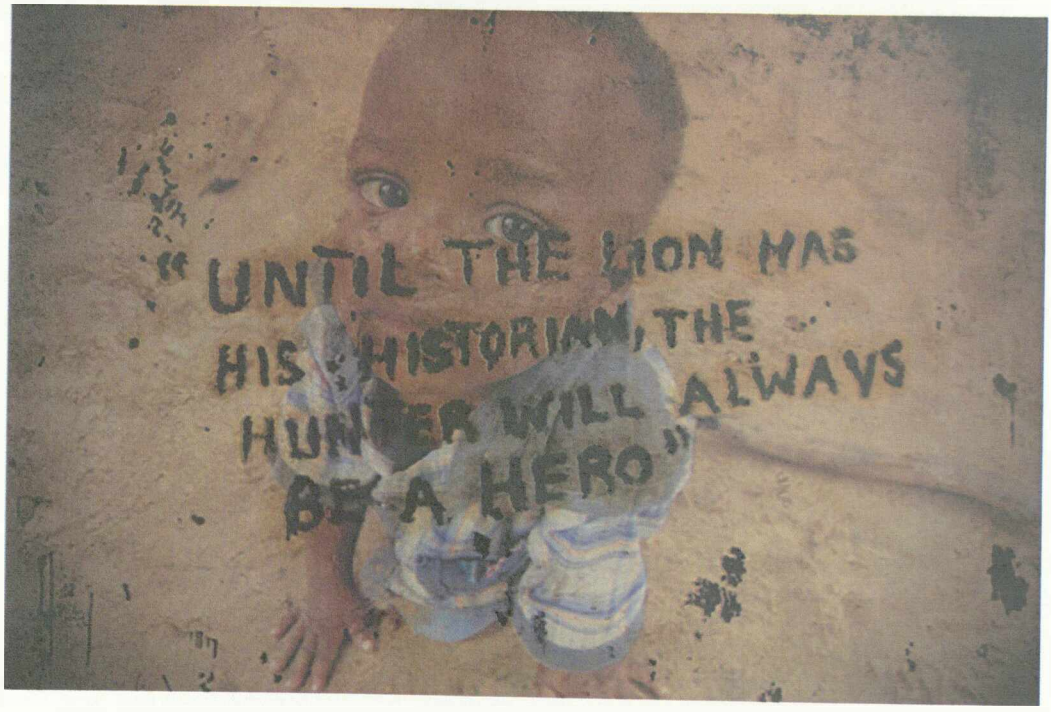
What more am I to say?
The advocate of multiculturalism
Is the cousin of the extreme right wing.
They rally on common ground
And cast in the same ballot box.

The politicized bearers of Jesus' cross
Are the same people who have yet
To cure their skin colour obsession.
Rewriting the Holy Scriptures
To suit their craving.

Everything they sold to me has proved phony.
Ravenous charity workers;
We are still employed with no pay.
To sing *Heaven Shall Reward*
And *Only God Can Judge!*

Proverb

ELIZAH TURNER



Corndance

PATTY SOMLO

The air was icy around her face. Inside the sleeping bag, under a khaki green blanket, two pairs of pants and two stretched-out sweaters, Eva scratched her leg.

She turned on her right side, trying not to edge too far over in the process. Otherwise, she would roll down the steps. She shoved the blanket down to her feet and unzipped the dark blue down bag.

Steadying her body on the flattened, cardboard box, she shifted to the side, anchored her hands and pushed up. The urine started spilling before she bent her cold stiffened legs into a squat. A bit splattered onto her calf.

"It's too late for that," Eva said, when she noticed the blood.

She walked back to the stoop, folded the blanket into a square and rolled the sleeping bag up. Then she stepped over to the bushes and stuffed the sleeping bag and blanket into the metal cart she'd parked there the previous night. A pool of blood-stained urine turned the grass dark.

The next day, the blood refused to stop. Eva tried to reassure herself that everything would be all right. She even whispered to the baby she knew was growing inside. It's all right, little Angel. Angel was the name she'd picked out for what she'd imagined would be a boy, with soft curls, a round face and dark, oval eyes.

Later that morning, Eva was lying in her sleeping bag curled around her big belly, when the garbage truck arrived, all screeches and whines. With her eyes closed, Eva imagined herself rubbing tiny fingers with her thumb. The baby's pudgy hands felt soft as marshmallows, even though the wind slapped her cheeks and stung.

The blood continued to spill and Eva grew weak and dizzy. She tried to console herself with the baby who was to arrive, imagining the soft infant wrapped in her arms, thin as bones.

Janice Adams had grown used to the Native American woman with the flat round face and unkempt hair who slept on the stoop across the street. The neighborhood was close to downtown and the homeless pushed stolen Safeway carts down the middle of the narrow streets, filled with bottles collected from yellow plastic recycling bins. Other Indians, drunks Janice assumed, sat on benches in the park or stood in rumpled groups next to the bus stop.

Janice was surprised, though, to see the sleeping bag spread across the stoop. By this time of the afternoon, when long shadows darkened the north side of the street, the Indian woman had usually cleared out. Janice walked into the house but several minutes later came back to the front window and looked.

Eva tried to force herself up. Each time she rolled on her side and pressed her palms against the cardboard mat, her hands slipped out.

Eva couldn't keep her mind on the task of getting up. Her mind kept drifting. She thought she smelled the smoke of sweet, burning piñon. And the drums. Soon after that, the singing began.

She could tell by the deep blue of the sky and the crisp air that it was October, time for the Corn Dance. The elders were at the front, followed by mothers and fathers and little kids. People stood perfectly straight, moving up and down, everyone so tall and proud. Their feet brushed the dust, some in sneakers and others in traditional suede and beaded moccasins.

Eva held out her hand for the warm flatbread. Her mother filled the bread cavity with honey and Eva took a bite. Golden liquid oozed out the sides. Her mother had told her to eat and rest. Then, she could join the line of dancers.

They would dance all night, taking turns. Eva was only seven, but her mother had promised that she could stay up late and watch.

Blood soaked the two pairs of pants and seeped through the wool blanket. She couldn't remember why she needed to get up. Why she should put her things in the shopping cart.

Eva snuck out of the house to meet Bill. He sat in his old green Ford idling outside the plaza where the people gathered each October to dance. She could spend hours in the back seat of Bill's car, the smell of old leather mixing with the sting of hundred-proof whiskey. They talked of escaping the pueblo for good. She would let Bill drive them away. Neither knew where. All she'd take with her was the hope she'd find a place where a young girl could do something besides sweep dust out the door.

Eva fell in line with the dancers. She listened to the drums and the men singing. Hey ya hey, hey ya hey. Her feet moved to the beat. The dust felt soft under her tennis shoes.

As she danced, she thought about the eagle. His wings were spread, wide as an airplane, and he soared above the pueblo and all the people who danced.

She felt light. She was not alone. She was part of this body of dancing people. She was dust and corn. She was the bread her mother made by slapping dough hard between her palms.

Janice called 9-1-1 after the sky went dark and the streetlights came on. She watched the firemen lift the body onto a stretcher.

"Do you know anything about this woman?" the police officer asked.

"Not really. She's been around the neighborhood for years. She always sleeps on the stoop."

The officer scribbled on a form attached to a dark brown clipboard. Janice stared at the top of his head. His hair was blond, cut spiky and short.

"Did you know she was dead?" the officer asked.

He looked up, his pen poised above the form, waiting.

"Dead? No."

Janice wrapped her arms around her waist, suddenly cold.

The officer swiveled around, gazing toward the end of the block.

"Pregnant," the officer said, as he turned back to face Janice. His eyes found something to focus on behind her head.

He scratched his chin, as if checking to see if he needed to shave. "Miscarriage. The baby's lost."

The singing grew louder as Eva watched the eagle fold its wings and come down. The eagle moved next to her and used its wings to gently lift her up.

In moments, Eva and the majestic bird were soaring. Below them, the sidewalks and shopping carts, noise and blood, passed in a dizzying fog.

The woman and the huge bird gained altitude. She and the eagle were lifting above the clouds. And from this place, higher than Eva had ever been, she looked back at the world as she had known it. She watched it grow smaller and smaller, until it finally disappeared.

Modesty from The Goddesses of the Red Wall Chronicles

SOPHIA M. GRAVES

Man Must Come

After Toni Morrison's *Love*

TORIE MICHELLE ANDERSON

In his cupped palms, swift hips signaled later. Later on top
of a melody seemingly pouring percussion from the crown
molding down the dry wall in this house for brothers boasting
scholarship, service, and other intangibles. Later on repeat.
No one believes in asking when you're providing this service.

Call her Pretty-Fay.
Call her damsel in distress.
Call her sick and seeking.

Call him Romen.
Call him Prince Charming.
Call him savior.

This service of feminine corporeality. Of breasts and buttocks. Nothing more or less: flesh. For ravenous beasts or desiring, dull bullocks. This community service. The music is fresh. The silence, rank.

The smell is under your skin: vegetables and rotten grapes and wet clay. Man must come to reverse the destruction of man. Amen. He'll come but he'll come. Later. When when is by then and the scent is in your blood.

Call her Pretty-Fay.
Call her damsel in distress.
Call her sick and seeking.

Call him Romen.
Call him Prince Charming.
Call him savior.

Call it rape.

Later.

Rachel Sings the Blues

DEIDRE GANTT

For seven years, I watched you
break your back to claim me,
dreaming of the day
I'd knead those weary muscles
like dough beneath my fists
and dry your sweat-stained brow
with the hem of my garment.

Yet too many dusks, I lie
alone in darkness, cursing father,
chasing tears and nightmares
with the few truths that remain:

He will come for me, eventually.
I was here first.
He'll never stop loving me.
He'll always come home.

Yet too many dawns, I rise to strip
unsoiled bed clothes and illusions.
Only the army of tiny feet
that never run to me can stamp out
the fire smoldering in my tent
every time you creep behind their curtains.

How many mothers does a nation need, Jacob?
Three, apparently.

These hands have blistered,
these hemlines sag with dust
from begging that your seed
takes root or death takes hold.

Each month, the god of my father
answers my prayers with an issue of blood.

The World Has Changed: Conversations with Alice Walker

A Book Review

WINDELA MAXWELL

In her new collection of interviews, *The World Has Changed* (The New Press, 2010) renowned poet, author, essayist, activist, professor of thought, mother, sister, and friend, Alice Walker reminds us of where we have been and where we are going. With a black president now serving as the head of state, Americans may be eager to forget the trauma of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, lynch law, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights for all persons. In her own soothing way, Walker reminds us that to forget would be to blaspheme not only our ancestors but ourselves.

While reading this collection, I thought of the mountains that the generations before us have moved, of the barefaced hypocrisies that we, as the incoming generation of activists must obliterate, and the shoes we have to fill. The introduction provides a brief synopsis of Alice Walker and the progression of her ideals and beliefs that are revealed in the collected interviews and conversations, which appear chronologically. The reader will discover that, while she is a student of and believer in the practice of Buddhism, she does not consider herself Buddhist, rather an animist. Animism is the belief that spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, and other natural phenomena from the earth:

> If there is one thing African Americans have retained of their African heritage, it is probably animism: a belief that makes it possible to view all creation as living, as being inhabited by spirit. This belief encourages knowledge perceived intuitively. It does not surprise me, personally, that scientists now are discovering that trees, plants, flowers, have feelings…emotions, that they shrink when yelled at, that they faint when an evil person is about who might hurt them.

Her connection with nature and the spirit world is seen vividly throughout her most famous work, the much beloved *The Color Purple:*

> *The Color Purple* really is a book about learning to believe in your own god or goddess or divinity or whatever is sacred to you. It's not about what other people are telling you. You get rid of the Charlton Heston-type God, you get rid of Yahweh, you get rid of all these people that, while you are worshipping, try to convince you that you are nothing, and you begin instead to be a child of what you actually are, a child of –you are a child of the earth, That is why at the end, Celie understands that if God is anything, God is everything.

Her novel, turned Oscar nominated film, turned award-winning Broadway musical, is a staple in African American literature and a beacon for literature in general. It was the beginning of a transformation in my belief system and ultimately my religious views on the patriarchy that is Christianity.

Alice Walker speaks earnestly of her feelings for Jesus Christ: "I feel a great love for Jesus as a teacher and as a very feminine soul…His tenderness, his caring quality always make me think of someone who was raised by his mother…he's the son of a feminist." Walker makes it clear that she is not discrediting any of the attributes of Christ, rather she explains exactly how she views his purpose and effect on the world.

On her life as a feminist and her creation of the term womanist, which encompasses all women of color, Walker has created an open dialogue on the matter of patriarchy as it persists within feminist beliefs. Because women of color have been oppressed by both white men and women, a separate term is fair and necessary, "womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender," says Walker.

Regarding her involvement in creating a movement against female genital mutilation (which came when she brought a necessary spotlight to that cultural practice in her documentary *Warrior Marks*), she says:

> Imagine if men came from Africa with their penises removed. Believe me we would have many a tale about it…that resistance to tyranny is the secret of joy. It means that the joy is in the struggle against whatever is keeping you from being your true self. You have to fight it. You cannot expect to have happiness in an intolerable situation where you are thoroughly oppressed and violated. There is no greater joy than being who you are, and what you are, and truly that. And to have someone come and say to you: 'Well, you know your body would be okay if you didn't have a vulva. Let me just cut yours off.' It's not acceptable. You really have to fight it.

Walker talks openly about her sexuality and her thoughts on how the patriarchal society in which we live has shaped and carved our definition of woman's sexuality:

> I think of sexuality as something that, like spirit, has been colonized. It's the Bible again, that book that has done so much damage to women's self-image…it says something like, 'Your desire will just be for your husband.' In other words, if you're a woman, you're only supposed to be turned on to men. That's so limiting! It's hard to believe that people would limit themselves to men, or even to people.

Further on, Alice speaks about her bisexuality: "People are naturally bisexual as they are naturally bispiritual. You have a male and a female spirit." These inclusive words and theories are one of the many reasons that Alice Walker is viewed everywhere as a woman of truth and great holistic thinking.

Walker's family has had a tremendous influence on her, especially her mother, Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker. In her essay, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,* Walker speaks about the roles that community and creativity play in the development and sustainability of women. Because women are the center of the universe, there are so many things that are expected and required of them. What is their creative outlet? Walker describes her own mother's outlet as a wondrous garden filled with the most beautiful flowers. These flowers, surrounding a childhood of poverty and hard work, allowed Alice an optimism that ultimately led to her own creative outlet—a passion for writing:

> Writing to me is not about audience actually. It's about living. It's about expanding myself as much as I can and seeing myself in as many roles and situations as possible. Let me put it this way. If I could live as a tree, as a river, as the moon, as the sun, as a star, as the earth, as a rock, I would. Writing permits me to be more than I am. Writing permits me to experience life as any number of strange creations.

Throughout this collection, we are introduced to the evolving Alice. She has remained true to her essential self: she remains the activist, poet, spiritual light. And this is perhaps the most astonishing thing, that she remains as lovely and thoughtful today as the once young unknown poet with a revolutionary spirit.

The World Has Changed

Alice Walker

Wake up & smell

The possibility.

The world

Has changed:

It did not

Change

Without

Your prayers

Without

Your faith

Without

Your determination

To Believe

In liberation

&

Kindness;

Without

Your

Dancing

Through the years

That

Had

No

Beat.

The world has changed:

It did not

Change

Without

Your

Numbers

Your

Fierce

Love

Of self

&

Cosmos

It did not

Change

Without

Your

Strength.

The world has

Changed:

Wake up!

Give yourself

The gift

Of a new

Day.

The world has changed:

This does not mean that

You were never

Hurt.

The world Has changed:

Rise!

Yes

&

Shine!

Resist the siren

Call

Of

Disbelief.

The world has changed:

Don't let

Yourself

Remain

Asleep .

When Aretha Sang "Mary Don't You Weep"

Greater Emmanuel C.O.G.I.C., June 15, 2007, Detroit, MI

SHAYLA HAWKINS

You could hear bones
and the surge of blood and chains
in that music

You could feel the salt spray of the Atlantic,
the rhythmic rocking of slave ships
that held in their putrid holds
shackled tribes of the Duala,
Fulani, Mandinka,
Igbo, Isubu, Ashanti

And when Aretha hit the high note of her climax,
when she said "Lazarus" that third time,
her voice rose and thundered like the Shekinah Glory,
that whirlwind of shadow and fire
that shielded the Israelites from their would-be Egyptian killers;
Aretha's voice unleashed and became the Red Sea
crashing down on Pharaoh's warriors

Anyone who was in that sanctuary that night
could tell you that when Aretha sang,
the floor and the windows shook as if Jesus himself
had hurled the devil back to Hell
for the very last time,
as if the stone holding Lazarus in his grave
was rolling back,
so that Lazarus, hearing his name,
could obey the command of his resurrection
and walk into the miracle and majesty
of his replenished life

Thankful

PATSY LAIN

to be a senior—
sunlight squinting,
gazing through cataract frost,
not seeing how old I really look.

Happy to enjoy fabulous flopping falsies—
fake choppers to chew the fat,
proof that being toothless
at my age can be glam.

Grateful to feel glad for not yet forgetting—
magical moments,
like eating dessert first
as my flame burned out years ago.

Pleased to grasp the humor in life—
laughing at some big old hussy
in a store mirror
then realizing it's me.

Delighted to never miss a chance—
flash, flaunt
my gremlin grandkids,
pass photos in a crowd.

Thrilled to be reminded—
each morning, I'm still alive,
as I hear my creaks crunch
from these achy-aged joints.

Tickled to welcome—
the thought that I soon won't remember
all this old stuff
and I'll be so thankful.

Memory

H.D. BROWN

Bananas

Boys

Glasses

Flour

You know

Apron

You can't

Broom

Bring that

Counter

In here

Sugar

Get that

Yeast

Red nigger

Outta m' store

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

A book review

CHRISTOPHER LINFORTH

Reissued to coincide with Julian Schnabel's film of the same name, Jean-Dominique Bauby's existential narrative, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, receives a second chance to permeate into the American consciousness. Translated beautifully by Jeremy Leggatt, the memoir takes the reader into a state-of-being that conflates the mind into accepting a new form of perception, an inter-zone between text and tangible thought. Described from his hospital bed, Bauby's linguistic and mental processes are anchored between dreams, memories, and fragments that coalesce in small and mundane miscellanea.

Bauby was only 43 when he suffered a stroke in 1995. The clot affected his brain stem, which left him in a state of paralysis. Unable to move anything but his left eyelid, he could only look out onto the world and think. Bauby – the past editor-in-chief of *Elle Magazine* – suffered from locked-in-syndrome, which meant his active mind was trapped in a lifeless body. Previously known as genial and outgoing within the glamorous echelons of high society Paris, Bauby's former persona haunts his immobilized self and the resultant pain becomes part of every page.

The book integrates fragments of his past career with the familial commitments of his wife, and kids Theophile, Celeste, and his new girlfriend Florence. Often alone, he dictates the book to Claude Mendibil, a freelance editor, by blinking as she points to a large copy of the French alphabet set up by the hospital's speech therapist, Sandrine. The alphabet is arranged in terms of letter frequency:

E S A R I N T U L O M D P C F B

V H G J Q Z Y X K W

This visually irregular display becomes a simple move towards efficiency in a place where almost none exists. Meaning comes in letters, then words, then sentences. The book emerges after months of repetition, frustration, and breakthrough. The result: Bauby's prose is lyrical, almost magical as it renders existence into meaning; he delights in the smell of French fries, floor polish, and the memory of a New York bar.

He undertakes the opposite of what Jean-Paul Sartre in *Nausea* attempted to accomplish sixty years before: a purpose for experiential being. Everything is explained with eloquence, even his condition: "My diving bell becomes less oppressive, and my mind takes flight like a butterfly." These flights emerge in anoetic memories, the prose unwrapping into compartmentalized chapters that unify in a series of metaphoric blinks.

However, throughout the narrative, dark spaces of absurdity and existential questioning plague him and often consign his thought processes to the vacuities from which Sartre could not escape. He complains that, "Nothing was missing, except me. I was elsewhere." These darker moments exist in the text as an underside to the hope he carries in his process of recovery.

The narrative, in parts, becomes a memoir of recovery; the process of coping with the loss of the textural nature of existence. Bauby's notion of the "elsewhere" contains a dualism between the effects of his body's complicity in ignoring his mind and the imagination that takes life as he lies trapped. Images appear real. Erogenous zones of perception seep out onto the page, tactile memories that reoccur through dreams and fantasies that take him to the film-sets of *Touch of Evil*, *Stagecoach*, and *Moonfleet*.

These escapes into filmic otherness allow Bauby to continue to exist, to function still in a world that carries on without him. This realization finally occurs as he is transported through the once familiar streetscape of Paris to the hospital. He sees, "The streets were decked out in summer finery, but for me it was still winter, and what I saw through the ambulance windows was just a movie background." This systematic connivance of a hyper-real imagination and its lucid entanglement with reality continues as a process until the end, where a last thrust of hope and possibility establishes itself: "Does the cosmos contain keys for opening up my diving bell?...We must keep looking. I'll be off now." His mild optimism gives us cheer even though we are aware from the biographical note at the beginning that Bauby died just two days after the book's first publication in France.

Contributors

Eseohe Arhebamen or **Edoheart** is a poet, musician, dancer/choreographer, mixed-media visual artist and performance artist. Born in Nigeria, raised in Detroit City and currently residing in New York, Eseohe's artworks reflect a diversity of cultures, a dedication to collaborative improvisation and a deep love of poetry. The words matter. Eseohe has performed and shown work in Africa, America, Europe and Asia.

H.D. Brown lives and works in Chico, California in a house full of poems, books, guitars, home-made wine and projects in various stages of completion. His recent work has explored trout fishing, American music, family, parenting, and the differences and the relationships between "earned" and "forced" states of consciousness.

John Lee Clark was born deaf and became blind in adolescence. His work has appeared in many publications, among them *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *McSweeney's* , and *Poetry*. His chapbook of poems is *Suddenly Slow* (Handtype Press, 2008) and he edited the definitive anthology of *Deaf American Poetry* (Gallaudet University, 2009).

Leslie Crawford is a graphic designer and photographer from Memphis, TN. She received her BFA in Graphic Design from Savannah College of Art and Design; and currently interns for *Upscale* and freelances for the various organizations within Spelman's Women's Center. She resides in Atlanta, GA. Please visit: www.lesliethedesigner.com.

Deidre Gantt is a Washington, DC-based poet. Her work has appeared in several journals and anthologies, including *Brilliant Corners: A Journal of Jazz and Literature* and *Full Moon on K Street: Poems about Washington, DC*. She is a Cave Canem fellow and serves as faculty advisor for *Reflections* Literary and Arts magazine of Prince George's Community College.

Ebony N. Golden is a cultural worker, artist, and creative director of Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative. She earned degrees from New York University (M.A.-Performance Studies), American University (M.F.A. Poetry), and Texas A & M University (B.A. English/Poetry). A 2009 Pushcart Poetry Prize nominee, Ebony has taught, published and performed widely. www.bettysdaughters.com

A-Gonzaga (Oluchukwu Aloysius–Gonzaga Nwikwu) is a Nigerian–born, Scandinavian–educated writer, poet,songwriter, and practicing clinician. His essays and poetry have appeared in various magazines and anthologies across Africa and Europe. He is the author of *Awakening Path*. He is pursuing a degree in Music and Development Studies and splits his time between Finland and Norway.

Sophia Graves was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sophia is a senior studio art major at Spelman College. She hopes to pursue a professional art career and to influence the world. She plans to earn her MFA in painting from Columbia University.

Rachel Eliza Griffiths is a poet, painter, and photographer. She received her MFA in Creative Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. She is the author of two forthcoming collections of poetry, *Miracle Arrhythmia* and *Mule & Pear*, and lives in New York.

Anthony Grooms is the author of *Ice Poems*, a chapbook of poems, *Trouble No More*, a story collection, and *Bombingham*, a novel. His stories and poems have been published in *Callaloo*, *African American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *George Washington Review*, and other literary journals. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, a finalist for the Legacy Award from the Hurston-Wright Foundation, an Arts Administration Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and two Lillian Smith Prizes from the Southern Regional Council. He teaches fiction and poetry writing at Kennesaw State University in Georgia and lives with his wife and son in Atlanta.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs holds a PhD in English, African and African American Studies and Women's Studies at Duke University. Alexis is the founder of BrokenBeautiful Press (www.brokenbeautiful.wordpress.com) and the instigator of the Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind Educational Series. Alexis was named one of UTNE Reader's 50 Visionaries Transforming the World for her work to co-create the Queer Black MobileHomeComing Project, a project amplifying and activating the resilience of Black Queer Women's Community across generations.

Monica A. Hand is a poet and book artist who has made her home in Harlem USA. You can find her work in *Black Renaissance Noire*, *Gathering Ground*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *The Mom Egg* and *Beyond the Frontier: African-American Poetry for the 21st Century*.

Derrick Harriell received an MFA in Creative-Writing from Chicago State University and is currently a dissertator in English at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee where he teaches creative writing. His poetry has appeared in various journals, including *The Cream City Review, Reverie, Lamplighter Review* and forthcoming in *Dark Symphony*. Derrick also works as poetry editor for *The Cream City Review*.

Shayla Hawkins lives in Detroit, Michigan and won The Caribbean Writer's 2008 Canute A. Brodhurst Prize in Short Fiction. She is a graduate of the Cave Canem Workshop/Retreat for African American Poets and has published poetry, interviews, book reviews and essays in, among other publications, *Carolina Quarterly, Poets & Writers, Tongues of the Ocean, Paris/Atlantic, African Voices, Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review* and *Calabash.*

William Joel is an educator, storyteller and writer located in the mid-Hudson region of New York. His works have appeared in such publications as *Concrete Wolf* and *Chronogram,* and for children in *Stories for Children, Wee Ones,* and *Appleseeds.*

Patsy Lain has poetry and short stories published in over ten anthologies and was chosen as one of the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series Adult Student Poets in 2009. She has been a member of the Coastal Poetry Consortium and the NC Poetry Society since 2008. Her desire to write blossomed as a young woman, then laid dormant for years due to life's responsibilities. Her dream now continues and grows like the rush of water running downhill.

Christopher Linforth has work published and forthcoming in *Touchstone, Permafrost, Denver Quarterly,* and *Etchings.*

Torie Michelle is a native of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who lives and writes in Atlanta, Georgia, holds a B.A. in Creative Writing from Emory University, and works as an editor and tutor. Her creative works have appeared in print in *Mythium: The Journal of Contemporary Literature*, in Emory publications (*Alloy, Black Star Magazine,* and *The Emory Wheel*), and online at *a handful of stones*, *Un-Mute.com*, and *The New York Times*.

Annette Quarcoopome is a young Ghanaian woman who teaches high school English and French. She recently graduated from Williams College with a B.A in Comparative Literature.

Hayet Rida is a Junior communications and Studio Art major at the college of Wooster in Ohio. Originally from Accra, Ghana her passion for art began at the age of 16 while in high school. After moving to Ohio for college she fell in love with photographing models in drastic situations. Her works include a series titled "Nia-TouareQ" which was inspired by the Touareg tribe of Mali. She is currently working on an Independent Study which looks at the expression of pain through dance.

Khadijah Ameerah Robinson is a junior English major, Spanish and Political Science double minor who began writing at the age of four. She is the former Opinions editor of the *Maroon Tiger* and has interned with *skirt!* and VIBE magazines. She spent a semester abroad in Lisbon, Portugal, and she plans to return there after graduation to teach and conduct research before attaining her Juris Doctorate and Masters of International Affairs.

Patty Somlo was a finalist in the Tom Howard Short Story Contest and her short story "Bird Women" was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her stories have appeared in numerous journals, including *The Santa Clara Review*, *The Sand Hill Review*, *Under the Sun*, *Switchback*, *Finge Magazine* and *Danse macabre*, and in anthologies, *Voices From the Couch*, *Bombshells: War Stories and Poetry by Women on the Homefront*, and *Voice Catcher*.

St. Germain is a student at Agnes Scott College.

Elizah Turner is an artist for change and believes in putting into the community just as much as we take out of it. She focuses on still and moving images and wants to explore the global realms of social constructs visually. Since embarking on a life-changing study-abroad trip to West Africa, she has realized the effects of sociopolitical environments and the joy of life's simplicities. She is excited about the future and the journey that life will present along the way.

Submissions Guidelines

Aunt Chloe seeks to publish the finest poetry, prose, fiction, nonfiction and visual art by established and emerging writers and artists. We take pride in publishing work that tackles issues of the political, personal, mundane and earth-shattering in artful and candid ways, with the intent of illuminating the overlooked and the disregarded. Please read the following submission guidelines carefully to ensure that your work is considered.

Aunt Chloe will begin accepting submissions September 30, 2010 through January 1, 2011. Please expect decisions by March 2011.

A. *Aunt Chloe* only accepts electronic submissions in the following format:

a. Please include a cover letter in the body of an email with your name, mailing address, email address, phone number and the titles of each piece.

b. Please include a brief biographical statement in the third person written in 50 words or less.

c. All files should be in Microsoft Word .doc format only.

d. Please state within the email how you heard of *Aunt Chloe*.

B. *Aunt Chloe* does not accept work that has already been published.

C. *Aunt Chloe* does not accept simultaneous submissions.

D. Payment for publication is in the form of two copies per contributor.

a. Authors retain all rights to their work.

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a. Poetry: 3-5 poems

b. Fiction: 1,200 word limit

c. Essays, Articles, Reviews: 1,200 word limit

d. Art: All images should be in .jpeg format.

Please send all submissions to: auntchloe@gmail.com

-Aunt Chloe-