The Great Lake Review
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The Soda Fountain Of Youth
By Robert LaDuc

You sit in that recliner with that permanent imprint and tell me the world isn't made up of plumbers and hedgehogs. You drill me with questions, searching for answers I can't give. These thoughts are mine without rhyme or reason. I've been locked in my room listening to Tom Jones and Frank Sinatra records backwards and talking with Satan.

(I know you couldn't see him. He was having a bad hair day and didn't want to be seen.) He told me...

"There are two different types of people in this world: Elvis fans and those who don't listen."

Mom was always an Elvis fan, maybe that's why she died like he did. What about you, Dad? I have a tendency to think you don't listen.

I'm sorry I don't fit into your remote-control life. I've learned one thing from my pinball dreams: you lose your bonus when you tilt. Mom promised me life, liberty, and a six pack of cola a day (not a carton of cigs). If you can't do it, then wrap me, lick me, slap me, and send me. Give me a one-way ticket to Hell and a five spot to tip the ferryman for the ride. He may know a shortcut (and even hit the Taco Bell drive-thru along the way).

I'll say "Hi" to Mom for you.

Rainy Day
By Kristen Weinstein

Nothing like sitting in the rain smoking a hole through your brain; puffing on cold, wet dreams to bring them back from the other side. Think too much and you'll drown in a pool of self-pity; flailing around in toxic waste. Yesterday's thoughts like dead babies yanked back to pre-existence, lay untouched and blanketed; hidden from greasy hands and swollen eyes. Both capture and activate the imagination (Don't try too hard). It was only a mouse; I had him to tea and he threw salt in my face... Happily ever after, only my dots don't connect into a beautiful ice cream cone and the brick road isn't yellow anymore.
(Untitled)
By Ben Hartman

Wide eyed in wonder
he wandered the world,
bewildered by beauty
and pretty, young girls.
There were visions of hope
and illusions of love
in the long pondered stars
that stretched far, far above.
There was to the left of
the moon, one bright star
upon which he sat
when things got bizarre.
From this far-removed place
he could easily see
the mountains and valleys,
the rivers and trees.
When things became clear
he returned to the ground
and tried to explain
the solutions he'd found.
But no one would listen,
(they called him insane)
so wide eyed in wonder,
he wandered away.

Grandmother's Bed
By Jennifer Rutman

I hear the voices in the room next door,
as cobwebbed dreams hover in the gathered dust.
Their old bones creak on rusted springs no more.
Holding fifty years of toil, loss, lust,
the sagging frame yields, moaning its memory,
as cobwebbed dreams hover in the gathered dust.
In tarnished brass is written their story
of unknown whispers and forgotten nights.
The sagging frame yields, moaning its memory.
The curve of his back, a familiar sight,
A life-map imprinted through time, telling
of unknown whispers and forgotten nights.
An aging cheek on a pillow, dwelling
on Creation, Salvation, what is Real.
A life map imprinted through time, telling
of promise, of pain, of learning to feel.
Creation, Salvation, what is Real.
I hear the voices in the room next door.
Their old bones creak on the rusted springs no more.
Impression
By Robert Gaggin

Monet Landscapes
through rain-washed
windshields
till wipers
scrub thick ares,
affecting the real.

photo by Alison Burke

Tug-a-War  Debra L. Ortiz

I take
a look
childhood fun
not all good is
I didn’t know that
Puerto Rico, and the
with a “span” and it cleans floors! I
and I still cannot. If
is a Latino who
Which way do I
send me mixed
of the
I

back at
and see that
in mild humor.
they made sausage in
only “spic” I know is
never could laugh with them
I’m a “gringa,” then what
speaks English called?
go when both sides
messages
person
am?
Aaron the Punk Rocker Knew a Lot of Things

By Michileen Martin

Aaron the punk rocker knew a lot of things. He knew that it would not be long before every news broadcaster in U.S.A would be explaining how, the night before, Rush Limbaugh had died in his sleep. He had choked on a piece of cherry-flavored Pez (Rush's favorite snack.)

Aaron knew this because Aaron had caused it.

Aaron, you see, had become God.

He wasn't sure how it happened, exactly. All he knew for sure was that, sometime between his dinner and his midnight snack of Hamburger Helper mixed with rainbow sherbert, he had become God.

He knew a few other things, too.

He knew that the hole in the ozone layer no longer existed and that all war, famine and disease had been wiped off the face of the earth. He knew that marijuana and abortion were legal in every state, but were not recommended to be mixed together. He knew that all forms of currency had been discarded in favor of a universal barter system. He knew that all forms of crime and punishment had been erased.

He knew a few other things, too.

He knew that he was the lead guitarist of Napalm Death. He knew that Stevie Ray Vaughn, Kurt Cobain, Sid Vicious, Miles Davis and Jim Morrison had been found, alive and well, playing blackjack in a bar in Bennington, Vermont and that they were planning to form a band called, "We Were Just Kidding." He knew that the members of the Grateful Dead had admitted to being high-ranking soldiers in the Aryan Nation and that immediately afterwards, they were assassinated by k.d. Lang and members of N.W.A. He knew that Ice Cube was the new drummer for Larry and the Happy Polka Guys and that Ice-T's new album was being heavily endorsed by the Los Angeles Police Department.

He knew a few other things, too.

He knew that Mel Gibson had lost his penis in a poker game and that Oliver Stone had confessed to being the second shooter in the Kennedy assassination. He knew that Ricki Lake had been hurled from the top of a ten-story building and had landed on Tipper Gore. He knew that Susan Powter had choked to death on a greasy chicken bone at a Chip 'N' Dales show. He knew that Jack Nicholson and Al Pacino were engaged to be married and that Spike Lee was making a movie with NICE white people in it.

He knew a few other things, too.

He knew that all bald people had decided to stay bald and that exercise equipment, doormats, refrigerator magnets, and Lee Press-On Nails had been outlawed. He knew that Jimmy Hoffa's body had been found in Steven Tyler's tonsils and that "John Doe," the name given to unidentified bodies, had been abruptly changed to "Charlie Fuckface." He knew that all members of the N.R.A had been slaughtered by an army of rabid gerbils and that skateboarding and hackeysack had been inducted into the Olympics. He knew that all bank and vending machines had simultaneously exploded and that all household pets had escaped to set up their own independent state on an island off of Iceland. He knew that East Germany and West Germany had merged with Connecticut and that all suburban areas of the USA had been decimated in favor of marijuana plantations and abortion clinics. He knew that Jesus Christ had finally returned to his home with a bunch of green-skinned guys in a yellow submarine that had rocketed through space, come to Earth, and then crashed into the headquarters of the PMRC, whereupon J.C. and his new friends told the gathering members to "Stop it! Stop it! Just stop it, you fucking nazis!"

Aaron the punk rocker knew a lot of things.
A Lesson From Al
By Chris Mecca

I was talking to AI, my pal with
I that 100 ks straight ahead and
I that sees the back of his head, and he told me that his
I (the 1 that sees the back of his head) has to
I 1 OØ k through his brain and all it contains, in order to get to
the back of his head. "The other I," he said, "1 OØ ks only straight ahead and is sadly d OØ med to see what every 1 else must see,
A false reality. Don't be 1 OØ led! What's truly true I see inside with my cr OØ ked I. Inside my brain and all it contains reality resides." I said, trying to see the back of MY head, "But I have no I that's cr OØ ked like yours, so how could I see reality, t OØ? I feel alone. Alone in this world of sight. And though I've tried to find my mind

-earthly eyes can only see light." He said to me, "But you CAN see. You r earth-bound eyes will do. Just 1 OØ k, 1 OØ k, 1 OØ k, 1 k, and you will see it 2."
("definition")
But better to have none
By Donna F. Wilson

...the last act i am dead no dial tone.
Should i answer the curtain's fall?
So i shall -the curtain calls-
i must answer it as i have (damned)
the telephone. Because it was there
...there & no one else was -or ever has been-
(There) ...and very loudly...the
emptiness rings and rings inside my walls.
i've been inept & unable to ignore the nothingness
...victimized my empty bed repeatedly
-unfortunately fully awake, doing up
the dream hang my head up pull my hair out strand
after strand hating my hands
...i validate my lines... telephone lines
scream & call call & scream
call & call & call
Recycled Souls
By Debra L. Ortiz

Sitting in the cockpit of our machines
we call "body," feeding on convenience
from mechanical strides and such means

of communicating with some lenience-
parasites, we souls, living in shelter
we call "body," feeding on convenience,

striving to "be" in this helter skelter
world where there is no heaven or hell for
parasites, we souls, living in shelter.

Energy cannot be created nor
destroyed when there can only be so much
world where there is no heaven or hell for
us souls, only purgatory, and such
may continue, like a run-on-sentence.
Destroyed (when there can only be so much
time) machines rot; we, recycled souls, hence,
sitting in the cockpit of our machines,
may continue, like a run-on-sentence,
from mechanical strides and such means.

This Sloop God Speed
By Dan Finn

Canvas on canvas, triangles and squares-
movement belongs to the eye.
Stillness finds your soul
like a fountain-found coin and the wishes die.

The wind will never do you wrong;
tired, calm air is the way of harm.
If you look without blinking, the sails
move the mill like some Don's giant's arm.

Look close, step back and see yourself
standing on the bluff before the blue.
Now, you are the witness to your crime-
the canvas, a dream-the triangle, a clue.

It comes and goes always, like the wind;
how strange and cruel this sloop God Speed.
She is fleeting and leaves you hollow-
a dream to want-a love to need.

It is the way I must be, I know,
and a touch sad but I must not complain,
for this boat I've imagined takes me
to places where the witness knows no pain.
The Tangled, Trapped Child
By Brian Wilson

The way she stood when all seeds were not grown through the cuts, the scabs and breaks of wound. Her face, fabric felt plastered to bone. Past the hair strands, frayed and ungroomed, we saw her two tiny, vacant tunnels. Through the cuts, the scabs and breaks of wound. Disrupted in class by stomach rumbles that bit into little heads. The weakness we'd seen in her two vacant tunnels. A shivering frame hung full of stress waiting for the bell to send her to a home that would bite her little head. And weakness, a word used for an arm free to roam loose from its socket. She dreamt on a grass plot waiting for a bell to send her back home. A real home. Where she was not left to rot, arm loose from socket. Beneath a grass plot, this is the way she stands when all seeds are sown. Her face, fabric felt plastered to bone.

Eulogy For a Wire Hanger
By Alison Burke

Today we mourn the loss of a wire hanger whose last days were spent hidden in a dusty closet, rusted and uncoiled. In the most ungracious of ways it was given purpose; its twisted, cable-strong neck and slender metal shoulders which once supported a wide array of poly-cotton, rayon ensembles, were exploitatively uncurled and partially unkinked. But its soul was never lost, its bends though faint in the end, were still visible even when forced to withstand and silently endure the most makeshift of surgical tasks.

Yes, today we mourn another hapless victim contorted into an implement of bloody evisceration. But the gates of Heaven do not close upon the voiceless masses raped into acquiescence, upon those blinded by resignation and submission into an act of a most unworthy cause. And we will not turn our backs to this misshapen, prostrate figure whose once unquestionably curved end is now stained with the blackened red of a sinfully surreptitious whim performed behind closed doors.
Pass Me the Remote
By Jon Roren

Color coded dreams
too opaque to see through
in the dark she screams,
splitting the air in two
arms flail madly into space
come between the sheets
move and hit him in the face.

Sugar coated streams
of medicine too painful
for her to swallow
ice cream rings lick her lips
turn from pink to blue
e.p.t. nightmare on Elm Street
lights her beads of cold sweat drip.

Nachos in cheese steams
the paint off the wall
flowers pressed in the corner
of the Circle K
Martville processed American
cheese food product shot
of little Timmy eating

sixty-four pre-wrapped
individual glow
in the dark orange
slices of suburban life
in pre-fab Levitt homes
on the driving range.

"Conform? My wife’s already
got a Wonderbra." click.

Soliciting Prophets
By Margaret Stevens

Do you believe in Heaven, tell me, God
and his command? Does worship take your time,
your life- it should -if not, I find that odd,
yet perfect. Victim, sucker, spend a dime
to join the church of zombies most sublime.
Imagine paradise, accept the end-
it’s near. Commit yourself... become a mime.
Religious salesmen- faith you cannot vend.

A happy little unit... perfect pod,
again this week approached my steps to climb
up to my door to save me from the rod,
the Devil’s bolt of power- evil slime.
These pious politicians offer me their rhyme,
ignoring that I care NOT to become friends,
I'm not a well in need of a prime.
Religious salesmen- faith you cannot vend.

I've suffered through the babble, smiles and nods.
I'd rather rub an open wound with lime
than subject myself to heresy from a sod.
Their shoes have stained my welcome mat with grime.
I've marked it "PRIVATE"- trespassing is a crime.
The problem is that our beliefs don't blend.
Your missionary pitch isn't worth a dime...
Religious salesmen- faith you cannot vend.

Excuse ME for the insult, but now I'M
the preacher here; the prophet who offends
so well. For you I’ve tuned MY bells to chime.
Religious salesmen- faith you cannot vend.
Do you know? Do you know people who always say, "you know" when they mean to say something more specific? Like, do you know? Know what? Know what? "Like" is sometimes substituted for "you know." Yes, I know! I know people who always say, "you know" when they're trying to find a word on the tips of their tongue. That's like, not, you know, what I'm talking about, I mean, when used in a sentence explicitly, you know, to hinder the flow. You know when they mean to say something more specific, but they're nervous and "you know" comes out, you know? I know, though sometimes it's irritating. I know what you mean, you mean to say something, and like, "you know" comes out instead. Do you like, do you know? Know what? Know what? How can I possibly know anything, let alone something, when you keep saying "you know"? You know, there's a word on the tip of my tongue for people like you. You're, you know, like, vague. "Like is sometimes substituted for "you know." Like, I hear what you're saying. Like, I'm with you. Like, I understand what, you know, you're trying to tell me. I comprehend the meaning of your point, you know? Yes, like, like is also substituted for "you know." Yes, I know. I know someone who always uses both of those, you know, it usually doesn't bother me. But, like, you know, I think that it's contagious because, like, you know, I find myself becoming, like, you know, kind of annoying.
SENSORY ME
By Carol Wade

The smell of 9 am heat on the toasting pavement,
Rich, humid air lifting slowly in a thick mass;
It was you.

The smell of rain on the horizon, and then of
Cool water over the concrete overhangs and
Damp wood columns...
It was you.

The smell of the leaves falling to the ground,
Their cousins burning in small wood stoves,
The air heavy with the smoke;
It was you.

The cool smell of nearing sunset on a seat in the bus,
Dense white clouds clogging the sky,
The light flashing through with mocking directness;
It was you.

A face full of exhaust as you shot from the curb,
the smell overcast, soon by corn chips I fed myself
As your tail lights disappeared up the block;
It was you.

Burned toast and rotting food: the smells of failure,
A Lysol cover-up in the corner, cigarette smoke
On your breath as you lowered your eyelids and smiled, very close,
It was you.

I never knew a nose had a smell till I kissed you
In the old-carpet dark. It smelted like smoke and aftershave,
One reminder of the shadow that had returned, rough on my face;
It was you.

The incredible smell of a whiskey hit,
Flaming its way down to find a space
Among the remainders of lunch and dinner;
It was you.

A current of odor, like gas and bourbon, licked
The side of my head. The sight of your back, wobbling,
Your heels lifting, my eyes, as always, open, blank, thinking
It was you...

I came back through the door you walked out of.
An empty smell of beer tops and dried flowers
Made me think that, all along, as I walked from
The kitchen, to the bus stop, to the bathroom...

It wasn't what I thought I had known.
My moist mouth on your shoulder,
The smokiness in your warm sighs,
A heave of perspiration's similarity to tears,

Began to smell and taste
Like Me.
With Thanks
By Mike Nettleton

Ever since I infested the crumbling three-story bone pile, my dank, two-hole section has warred against my primordial urge to breathe and move, entombing my pallid figure, gaining strength in the smaller, putrid bathroom with the blue tiles turning brown with rust, black and green with mold, where the noise begins, emanates my singular fear, the buzzing swarm so thick as to cloud my vision, as to cloud my thoughts to the point where I’ve forgotten my body (its needs, biology and such) buzzing in my ears and nose, enticing my ruin and demise, the spiralling fiend to whose treachery I have yet to succumb, wary of all the traps it lays, the space, the time it consumes—but I am on guard at all times, never in spite of fatigue and health veering into the narrow corridor leading to where it is strongest, in the most deft counterstrike, contorting my form, leaving myself doubled over in burning pain, I have out-maneuvered Nature itself, leaving in my wake the miserable fish to flounder on the beachfronts, writhing and gasping for feet, while I have become the very incubus generating new life, which is, in fact, my own body, turning inside out of itself, churning and roiling, losing useless extremities, such as skin and limb, in the face of the buzzing, the swarming black, which I have duped, knowing full well the incalculable dexterity with which I have served it death, confined like a prisoner in a cell, with my only lament being I will die in my own cell without the glory of witnessing its sure and certain fate.
The Broken-Wing Blues
(An Excerpt)
By Carol Wade

When I pulled up next to her and rolled down the window, she didn't talk to me. I didn't make it a habit of picking up hitchers, and when I did, they were usually kind of old guys who were wandering their ways across the countryside, looking for love or another bottle. She smiled this eerie half-smile with her lips parted slightly, and gave me a vague look, moving her hand around in her pocket. I had a bottle of Yukon under the seat, and, in that instant, I suddenly saw her in my mind, her thick lips around the bottle's neck, smiling like she was, looking at me from behind her thick, black hair. She climbed in without a sound. I thought she was a little crazy, the way she looked at me, and it made me feel, for some reason ... safe. People who have crazy looks have nothing to lose, but they always end up leaving themselves behind somewhere, whether they mean to or not.

I'm on my way to somewhere I always used to go. It doesn't have a name anymore, because I've been there so many times, it all just blends together. Dad was in the Army, starting out at boot camp when he was sixteen and working himself up (and I do mean 'working himself up') to Sergeant Major by the time I was fifteen. It's the regular old bullshit story about the big military dad on the well-earned power trip, who drags his family unit all over the place like a horse cart hitched to his ego, turning them all into a convenient crowd of half-people, half-trophies that he can take to catered functions. Don't get me wrong, though; I never felt sorry for myself or anything. I was kind of a fuck-up to begin with.

Anyway, I'm going to the place... the place where I want to be. I've been driving for a while, but this time, I made the haul from Baton Rouge (where I stopped to rest at this hotel, which I'll call the Thick Ear Inn since I can't remember the name). At the Thick Ear, I got in a brawl for trying to pick this guy's wife up off the floor. She was rolling on the grey-black, shit-covered asphalt, drunk, bleeding, even, I think. The second I walked over to her (a little loosely... I had a little in me, too) and held out my hand, her boyfriend who had been watching the whole thing from behind a big, rusting, brown Chevy van nearby, leapt out and caught me over the ear with a bottle. I think it was JD; I remember the scent. Numb, blood and glass all over my shirt, the vodka in my veins, the smell of Jack Daniels in my nose... I got back into my car and guided it quickly out onto the road south, towards Texas.

She screamed "NO!" as I drove off. Before I stumbled to the car, after I let go of her skinny arm, covered with gaudy bracelets, before her significant other proceeded to kick her once, very hard, in her spandex-clad gut, I noticed she had gravel in her hair. Gravel and blood.

The girl in my car hasn't said anything for a while.

"You're quiet," I said a while ago, trying to make her stop looking so strange, a thousand miles outside the passenger-seat window. Past El Paso, about an hour later, I'd already told her my whole life story, it seemed. I talked nonstop about the moves I made as a kid, how I never got to make many friends because when they weren't ignoring me for being new, they were hearing rumors about what a prick my dad was. My mother, I told her, was emptied and sad. Dad drained her young, and she never got a chance to become full of anything but his life, his guns, his children... my sister Emily became a clone of her. Like two modules, they wandered quietly, like grazing sheep, behind Dad, not seeming to mind, but in my head, all the while, seeming so stupid, spineless, gutless... weak. I told her I thought, now, maybe they were. And still are.

I even told her about Jack. He was my best friend, or the reasonable fascimile of one, anyway. He was the only one I had time to make, another army brat like me. I met him when us and Dad lived in Virginia. We'd sit around and drink for hours and walk around town, thinking of ways to get noticed. Not by girls or grown-ups, but just to let people know that we were there... a mighty big force to be reckoned with, yeah. After a while, though, we drifted apart. I tried to move in too close; I didn't want to lose him. one thing I thought I'd have for more than a second. more than a mobile home that never moved.... just the people in it did... and he moved further away. I watched him go like I was waiting for a plane to take off in the departure lounge. before those big, huge windows. He robbed the Double-R Liquor store in Warrenton with an ounce of weed in his back pocket. He's in jail for grand larceny and possession, 13 years.

She frowned at all this and said one thing. "I'm sorry."
Architects of Sound
By Jeff Campoli

The rope is taut, frayed slightly at its ends;
The musicians tied loose, yet secure in their knot.
The fiber is warm, finding sanctuary in the sun.
Violins in synchronized twine, gentle assurance to the ear.

Wrapping the song 'round, side by side my palm,
and tearing harsh guitar, plunge grooves in bloody cruciform.
Soul of musical structure, my veins stand clearly defined,
throwing shadows 'cross skin, penetrating deep—hint of bone.

Cascades of crimson current, drip-dropping down swaying tendrils.
Splattered in staccato rhythm, beating drums fill my head.
Gnarled patterns of rope, in their fibrous weaving texture,
leave stains of feedback to burn my eardrum.

On to skull rocking slow, melodic in tangible, weblike fretwork,
woven onto interlapping bass, my convulsions climax in tandem.
The net is cast, by American architects of sound,
and the rope cut to change the tie again.

Farenheit
By April Patterson

Sand in toes on rockbed hot
though it is I realize
I'm here by choice to swim
the blue, thriving ocean and
to walk the desert when
maybe I'll die but
thirst lets you know you're
so alive that anything
but now seems a waste
of time when time is
the only thing worth anything
that I've ever seen
and I've seen city and
I've seen land with fences
that separate man from man
from nature and all creation
so that we can't see the
forest for the city
for the city isn't nothing but a
shit factory where
the heartless reign supreme
and poor, huddled masses
slobber over yesterday's garbage
reduced to pitiful nothings
by robot-cash registers with
bloody fingernails
sucking life out of land and souls
from beings and being at all
is ultimate chaos until we throw up
our arms and scream so that
mothers across the world
quake in the impending silence
for the babes lost to the woods.
First From Chicago (Excerpt)
By Michael Nettleton

Fred had covered a lot of ground since he left St. Girbaud. The cold and gloom of the onsetting winter chased him south, and he scuttled away, bug-like. Partly due to will, but mainly from circumstance, Fred chipped away at the day-jobber-on-leave, watching as the wraith of his new life took form. Part of the new Fred was a bit of a nasty ice habit, picked up in and mostly underneath Southern California.

He moved again, with stealth, when blood came down in buckets from a junkie friend's neck. "I'm right on top of my world, right on point," was the last thing out of the corpse, the last thing Fred heard. The night was a long one, no doubt, and the next morning was too headache-throbbing and short to find out. A killer? The scary part was that he didn't know.

Slashing the West Coast in a delirium, Fred began to gather his senses in Arizona. Began losing whatever it was that draped over the really Frederick Canton, the really malnourished, sickly Frederick Canton.

It was in filthy, structurally unsound Joe's Joint, right along a major speed-trafficking route to Texas, that he lost himself. Fred now tuned into the drug scene, feeling safe within its closure and caution. Its paths became his, its credos were his, even when he tried to stay clean.

The dimly lit diner was rimmed with high-backed booths, burgundy leather or plastic, musty. He burrowed into one away from the few lost souls scattered throughout. Drinking a muddy black coffee, Fred stared into the whitish-yellow cracks in the leather, smelling the shit life around him. The whole of life came down to drunks in the morning, feeding their ulcers, a flesh-tearing dust storm howling outside, the faint possibility of drug runners stopping in to hide out... and him, sitting. Abruptly, with a crash, Fred saw a nagging, two-bit work-at-home prostitute barreling towards his booth, plopping down before he could move.

"Where you from, honey?" she sleazed, groping Fred under the table, her pores pumping out day-old cheap beer odor.

"Hey... I'm from, well, I was from Oregon but first from the Midwest. Chicago." His quick glance registered 'not human'. When he saw her face to face, he knew she was human, but a repulsive chimera, to be sure. A wave of nausea gnawed at his stomach, gurgling upwards. The middle-of-nowhere he searched for so long, the backass he craved, was upon him. Sweat started to collect on his neck. He tugged at his collar and she tugged on his pants, darting her tongue into his ear. He had a grasp of what was coming down. The beginnings, the journey. She reached under his waistband. The start was fading away. The hard times shone through. Her hand, up and down and sweaty, her breath hot and foul. The wiring of so many homes for shit pay, so much time, so many splices and relays, so many wire nuts for God-knows-who; that's what his life amounted to. Microwaved cheeseburgers and Zingers in a gas station with Dr. Pepper to clear the hangover. The good Doctor. The erection?

"You like this, huh?" she breathed.
A Narcoleptic Vision in the Winter Coats Aisle of a Non-Profit Organization Which Smells Faintly of Established Religion
By Alison Burke

The Salvation Army has intruded upon my personal image, forcing me to wear moth-bitten, rust colored sweaters from some other stranger's bottom drawer. But I'm like that.

I don't mind grasping on to other people's trash. Sometimes I don't even pay, but stand between the aisles, stuffing t-shirts down my pants. On one pleasant excursion I fell asleep, nestled within the racks of newly stocked flame-retardant winter coats, and dreamt of my life.

Future Retrospect Never To Have Happened Or Happen Again.

In this dream, I put my child on the Carousel (mall)

and watch her baby-blue Puma-clad feet bounce
against the side of the horse, on the simulated marble floor.
(This is just a test.)

And I watch her put into her pockets, costume jewelry like rhinestones and clip-on nose rings, then slices of pizza, cheese and broccoli croissants,
packaged Chinese-American rice dishes
sold by already weathered teenage boys jingling quarters in their pockets and eyeing the neon arcade
where Drive-By Gang-Rape Take-Out Part 2 has just been installed. And my mind flitters. I can only think of one place I would want justice served: the food court, presided over by cinnamon fried dough swirls in sugared white frost.

The scene changes *zotz* as a few swirling twirling unfurling dervishes dance across the horizon of my eyelids and I feel a hand pull me out from between the coats. I wonder if I'm awake yet, but the Virgin Mary tells me to get comfy on the piles of used and recycled polyester. So I do, and I meet a man, my soulmate, who breathes into my space and offers me a piece of higher consciousness. Gratefully, I accept and suck upon this wonderment while another man, who dances upon my shoulder, repeatedly states that the

DEMYSTIFICATION OF ESTABLISHED WESTERN RELIGION IS A DIRECT RESULT OF SOCIETY'S EVER-INCREASING FAILURE TO VIEW ANYTHING BUT MASS CONSUMERISM AS A REWARDING EXPERIENCE.

I lie back on the polyester and laugh.