

THE EXTERNALIST:

A JOURNAL OF PERSPECTIVES

poetry

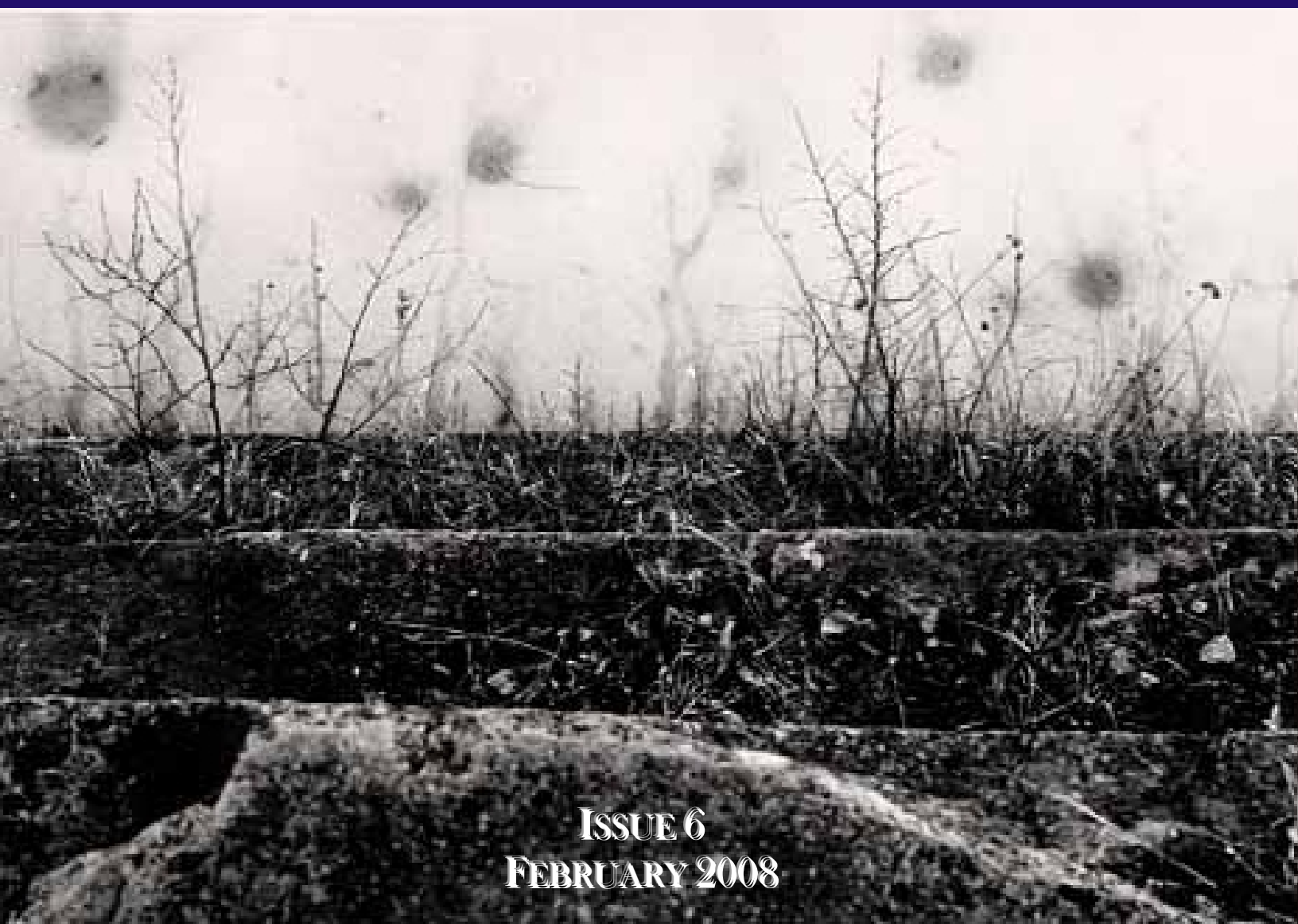
Timothy Martin
J. Brian Long

fiction

Bayard
Lois Shapley Bassen

nonfiction

Adrienne Ross
Mark Hummel



ISSUE 6
FEBRUARY 2008

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives
Issue 6, February 2008

Table of Contents

A Note from the Editor		3
Editor's Choice		
Dissent Couture	<i>Jennifer Westfield</i>	4
Literature		
Eulogy for Miss Eulalie	<i>Lois Shapley Bassen</i>	5
Saving It	<i>Bill Jansen</i>	10
Forgive the Asides	<i>Mark Hummel</i>	11
Green Tricycle	<i>Dave Rowley</i>	15-6
Portrait of Sukie with Green Wash		
Angels	<i>Karl Williams</i>	16
On August Interviews	<i>Matthew Wylie</i>	25
All that Glitters	<i>Adrienne Ross</i>	26
Babel	<i>J. Brian Long</i>	32
Sizzle and Zing	<i>Bayard</i>	33
Freiheit! Freiheit!	<i>Michael Estabrook</i>	42
1953 - Not to Be Forgotten	<i>Persis M. Karim</i>	43
The Church of His Debit-Card Soul	<i>Timothy Martin</i>	46
Contributor's Notes		47

Editor

Larina Warnock

Assistant Editor

Gary Charles Wilkens

Cover Photograph "Tombstone" by Philip Kobylarz

©2007, *The Externalist*. All Rights Reserved.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

A Note from the Editor

As an early spring sweeps over western Oregon, it isn't the sound of the birds returning that has taken over the city. Instead, a modern cacophony of political opinion has seized the air as the promise of *history* assaults our senses with all the subtlety of fighter jets flying over the valley. No matter whose names appear on the 2008 presidential ballot, no matter who wins, we know that the United States will be arriving at a turning point and the uncertainty of the future is at once exciting and frightening.

Not surprisingly, much—if not all—of the work that appears in this issue of *The Externalist* deals with precisely those issues that we'll be voting on, or those social concerns that are playing such a tremendous role in this year's primaries and caucuses. Bayard's story *Sizzle and Zing* takes a rambunctious and experimental approach to religious fervor while Timothy Martin's poem "The Church of His Debit-Card Soul" considers what faith really means in a capitalist society. Adrienne Ross ponders the American concern with gold in her essay *All That Glitters* while this month's Editor's Choice poem, Jennifer Westfield's "Dissent Couture," ponders the nationalist tendencies of two seemingly unlike nations. Mark Hummel's essay *Forgive the Asides* directs its attention at, well, anything and everything that crosses his mind and Bill Jansen gives an alternate view of the environmental struggle in his poem "Saving It." As *The Externalist* continues to publish such work, I hear more and more often how important this kind of literature is today—and I believe this issue reflects that significance wonderfully.

Two announcements of import, then. First, within the next few issues, *The Externalist* will be adding a section to its pages for reader responses to the work that has appeared in past issues. We invite readers to send 50 to 200 word responses to editor@theexternalist.com with "Gut Reaction" in the subject header. A few of these will be published each issue so long as we have noteworthy responses to publish. Second, we wish to congratulate Bill Teitelbaum as his short story *Closure* was one of six chosen for Best of the Net 2007. This story was published in the June 2007 issue of *The Externalist*.

And finally, I succumb to my activist nature and ask that if your state is voting in primaries or caucuses in the coming months, take the time to participate. Your vote is your voice.

L

Editors' Choice

Editor's Appreciation

In her poem "Dissent Couture," Jennifer Westfield builds on the American disposition toward fad and fashion to create an analogy between two countries generally deemed different from one another. As the poem develops, we regularly turn back to the first line and the all-telling word "disgust." Even as a subtle statement is made about the denial of horrific events, we move toward a direct, angry regard for the American tendency to believe that everyone should be and live as we do. The consistency of theme in this poem allows it to speak to us on a level just above (or just below) a more direct anti-war style.

by Jennifer Westfield

Dissent Couture

We've got to give this disgust a face—
wear these platforms out a few times before history
turns the page, be photographed in this outrage,
burning a couple of flags, before seeing the snapshots
and balking at our passion in the first place,
as in, "What in God's name were we wearing?"
Let's set down *Of Grammatology* because the leaders
of this country are more unreliable than language;
they don't care that their prescriptions
come from Plato's Pharmacy, nor about how that is so
last season. What made Stalin excuse his niece
(albeit with fury) and say, "She's young
and makes up rubbish!" when the girl complained
of starved dead bodies littering the runways
on her flight from the Ukraine? It wasn't his moustache,
though it may have been his regard for getting blood
on her fabulous dress—Stalin and everybody
around that table knew he'd ordered the torture of men,
not excluding a few in his own family, for suggesting
a hell of a lot less. No, let's not go valorizing Stalin—
We know communism looks better on the mannequin.
Let's just keep on ripping the clothes off other countries
and outfitting them in shirts tagged American Brand;
freedom is the "it" bag this season.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Eulogy for Miss Eulalie

by Lois Shapley Bassen

*This is the way creators see;
foreground and background
are a trompe d'oeil of time.*

Mark Antony was wrong, I believe, when he said that the evil that men do lives after them and that the good is oft interred with their bones. Or maybe it is that way for men. It is not for women, for Miss Eulalie. I am afraid we may forget her if we remember only what was good. I learned first from Miss Eulalie that what made a lasting image was contrast. And although she created in words and I in photographs, I learned that lesson best from her. I saw how she looked through the camera's eye to see what surrounded every object as clearly as the object itself. This is the way creators see; foreground and background are a trompe d'oeil of time. Space is a matter of shapes that curve about each other, of light and dark. Time provides the dimension of depth. Miss Eulalie talked about these things with me. Well, now that Miss Eulalie is fully in the Spirit at last, I have been asked to speak about her before all of you. When I was called to this honor, I at first felt the sadness we all share and then I thought to myself, they have called me because of what they believe was the special bond between Miss Eulalie and me,

between her people and my people. Because we came from the same small town in Mississippi where she lived for nearly this century. But you know, I've lived most of my nearly half-century up North and around the world, taking pictures. Miss Eulalie was a creature of place -- her place -- and I am not. Then I thought of all we have had in common, and I hit upon what I want to remember about Miss Eulalie with you today. I want to remember with you this good woman, this gentle and strong spirit, and the best way to do this is to tell you about the meanest thing she ever did in her life. Yes, it is the sort of story Miss Eulalie would have liked to tell you herself, and of course she would have done it better than I can. But I think if we all recall her voice, and keep the images sharply in focus, you will be able to imagine it is she telling a last story to all her friends and admirers.

All of us in that small town possess at least one Miss Eulalie story and we recognized them when she retold them in her books that made her famous -- that made us famous. In later years, many of us who lived in that town had fun teasing the graduate students who came to do research for their very important doctorates. How many ladies

pretended to be Miss Eulalie or her sister or her cousin? Yes, we had some fun!

But we all knew that no one was Miss Eulalie but herself. When I was young, she was briefly taller than I, but very quickly it seemed she became that rumped, wrinkled, blue-eyed face surrounded by untamable white curls. She gave my family as she did many other black folks the only photographs of themselves they ever had. It was my Grandfather Aaron's most precious possession, his picture by Miss Eulalie. And she gave me my first camera as a going-away present when I left for college in 1963. I never did know why Wellesley accepted me in those days, whether it was because I was a Miss Black Mississippi or because of the essay I'd written about Miss Eulalie. But I went up there with her blessing and her Eastman Kodak.

And my freshman year roommate was the other person in this tale of the meanest thing Miss Eulalie ever did. Her name was Kathleen C. before she married a very rich New York man. Kathleen wasn't my roommate for very long, of course. She explained her moving out the first week as a matter of the room being too small, but we both understood it wasn't the real reason. I don't remember resenting the prejudice of Kathleen C. Everything up north at Wellesley was strange to me except that. So it made me feel

more at home.

It was possible to become friendly only at a distance with Kathleen. Over four years' time, I saw this was how it was with her with everyone else. She could not keep a friend of any color. Perhaps it was because I had met her first, I was only of the very few still speaking to her Kathleen at the last. By that time, I knew many things about her. I knew about her friendlessness. I knew that her mother, a woman who looked like a Pekinese dog, was in and out of a New York mental hospital. I knew that both Kathleen and her mother, wealthy though they were, often shoplifted in New York department stores. I also knew that Kathleen C. wanted to be a writer; she had typed up all sorts of little notes to herself that she scotch-taped to the wall above her desk. Things like, "Character arises from plot." I knew Kathleen could never understand anything she read. In our freshman year, it was I to whom she brought every poem or short story assigned in English for me to explain so that she could write her essay. Once she discovered that I had grown up in the same town as Miss Eulalie and indeed knew the great Southern writer, Kathleen treated the information as if it were somehow a personal directive to her. That was how Kathleen C. was; the world was her oyster to steal the pearl from.

Almost two decades go by in which Miss Eulalie writes more of her

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

wonderful stories about us. They are made into plays sometimes and sometimes into movies. But most of all, they are books people like to read slowly to remind themselves about how time really moves. I traveled around the world taking pictures of wars, elections, 'movements' -- and Miss Eulalie still managed to win more awards than I did.

It was at one of these award ceremonies last year that our three paths intersected,

-it was a \$300 plate dinner, more than annual income some places in the world-

eyes met, she sat up very straight and waved a small wave.

Miss Eulalie, Kathleen C., and I. It was in New York City where Kathleen and I lived, very differently. The Algonquin Hotel, an illustrious literary landmark, hosted the affair. Although Miss Eulalie had known the Algonquin *literati*, she had never been a member of their cynical set. Nevertheless, she was receiving a lifetime award at the charity dinner. She was seated at a long raised dais covered with a bright white cloth and many bouquets of flowers like these here today. The people who had come to support the charity -- it was a \$300 plate dinner, more than annual income some places in the world -- sat at round tables before us in a large, oak-paneled dining room. Miss Eulalie had asked that I be seated beside her so I was up at the dais as well. We shared a view of the room, and she asked me what did I -- professionally -- see? I looked out at the floor-length gowns and

tuxedos and saw some were worn by people of my color. She nodded her white curly head at me. What else, she asked. I saw waiters balancing heavy trays. I saw the musicians arrange themselves in their intimate, superior way. And then I saw Kathleen C., seated at a table across the room. She was there without her tall husband. She was staring straight at me. As our

Miss Eulalie, you see, had noticed her staring at me, and Miss Eulalie's curiosity was piqued. I explained quickly what I currently knew about Kathleen, who had left a message on my phone machine which I had unfortunately answered. I told Miss Eulalie that Kathleen, still now, after nearly twenty years of busy failure was yet again involved in her pursuit of personal money and fame.

"But she is rich," Miss Eulalie said.

"That's her husband's wealth. It's separate in her mind. Kathleen once said, 'I don't keep a cook, I make my husband a hot gourmet meal at whatever time he arrives home from the office, a trip, or the squash court because I know there are plenty of women who would be happy to make his meals for him.' Another time, she told me, while she was basting a turkey, I recall, that she had not become famous

while I had because my childhood had been so awful and hers so wonderful."

"We were poor," Miss Eulalie said, reciting the wellworn Southern phrase, "but we didn't know we were poor."

I explained to Miss Eulalie that Kathleen was not exactly motivated by charity to attend this dinner that honored her. That Kathleen, true to form, had not written a story of her own whose blessing she wished to secure from Miss Eulalie, but that as Kathleen had told me, she had 'adapted' a novel of Miss Eulalie's into a stage play -- a libretto, in fact -- and that she was working with a second composer and a third lyricist who were writing the songs. She was no better at keeping colleagues than she had been at keeping friends. Kathleen had run into legal problems when her agent -- whose office was in one of the buildings owned by Kathleen's husband -- told her that Miss Eulalie had to approve the use of her novel in this way. Miss Eulalie knew none of this, having been shielded from Kathleen, as from eager others, by her own lawyer, Mr. Marshall Burdett, who remembers with us here today.

Across the dining room, Kathleen C. motioned -- lifted and shook slightly -- a white box. Miss Eulalie looked at me. The musicians began to play. Several couples rose to dance. Kathleen

approached us with the white box. I apologized to Miss Eulalie for my part in Kathleen's plot. I had suggested that Kathleen give her flowers, and I knew Miss Eulalie's favorites as you all see here -- as a means of approaching the great lady with at least apparent generosity.

"Why?" Miss Eulalie said.

"Because Kathleen can never come up with an idea of her own. And I felt sorry for her."

"Why?" Miss Eulalie persisted.

Cornered, I revealed the details of something that Kathleen had confided in me.

So Miss Eulalie accepted the gardenias and black-eyed susans from Kathleen and told her send on her script home to Mississippi so she could read it. Kathleen, slim and elegant in a black gown and diamonds, thanked Miss Eulalie too many times.

But Kathleen never pushed when she could shove. Though her script was a dismal washwater version of Miss Eulalie's novel, Miss Eulalie hardly had the heart to write this in her first letter to Kathleen, nor to add that the novel in question had already been successfully adapted in the 50's into a Broadway play which enjoyed regular revivals around the country. Poor Kathleen was an embarrassment to a Wellesley education; she didn't

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

even know that she should or how to research prior publication and production. I was at home in Mississippi visiting Miss Eulalie for the last time because it was my cousin's child's graduation last June. I might as well have followed Miss Eulalie's letter back up to New York because Kathleen called me right away yet again, and I learned she had hired all sorts of expensive lawyers, whose offices were in buildings her husband owned, to secure the rights to Miss Eulalie's book despite Miss Eulalie's polite refusal. Miss Eulalie had a fight on her hands. It took a long Sunday to get Miss Eulalie -- "tired out" -- as she'd say, but Kathleen C. finally tired Miss Eulalie out.

And she wrote the second letter.

Kathleen sent me a copy of it because she couldn't understand it.

It was cruel.

It was very well written.

It was as unforgiving as it was unforgivable.

Miss Eulalie told Kathleen that she had absolutely no talent. She told her to quit writing, to quit writing to her, to quit bothering Mr. Marshall Burdett, and to quit stealing other people's stories if she wanted to get rich and famous on her own. Miss Eulalie added some choice remarks about the

That, I believe, is the meanest thing that Miss Eulalie ever did in her long, generous, good life.

contrast between art and theft, indicating that Kathleen must have sorely misunderstood T.S. Eliot's remark that amateur poets borrow while professional poets steal. She wrote, "Tell the story of how your mother put a gun in her mouth and shot off the back of her head in a closet in an expensive condominium in Miami, Florida, on your birthday - - and try to find someone you can work with long enough to set that to music."

That, I believe, is the meanest thing that Miss Eulalie ever did in her long, generous, good life. Maybe she knew it wouldn't stop Kathleen who was poor and didn't know she was poor. Kathleen is writing yet another libretto of a still unsuspecting novelist's chief work. Fortunately, I am not acquainted with him.

It is difficult to say goodbye to Miss Eulalie. It is painful for me. Maybe that is the real reason I have told you this particular story. I didn't like what she did -- but I didn't like what Kathleen did, either. It came down to a choice. At least it was a clear contrast, a picture you could keep sharply in focus. Miss Eulalie gave me my first camera, her own. I pass along this final photo to you. I hope we all can now remember her well.



Photo courtesy of Larina Warnock

by Bill Jansen

Saving It

I park in an outside row
at a SAFEWAY
one of a chain of supermarkets
in Oregon.

I am just hanging out
suddenly
calm and crazy
in my 94 Mazda pickup.

There is a fresh crack
exercising
in the glass.

There is an unimportant woman
putting empty cans
into a recycle machine
picking
them out of plastic bags
piled in a shopping cart

as if playing a slot machine
she is busy
with a naive, distracted enthusiasm

I do realize
she is saving the world
one meaningless thing at a time
and I am not

She is saving daylight
She is saving her marriage
She is saving her son from her drugs
and her daughter from electronic pimps

I might be saving darkness
She is saving the planet from me
She is saving the universe from the planet

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

The machine says "thank you"
with each mouth full of aluminum.

I continue to sit in my pickup
with the radio off,
that
fat
bastard
lighting a cigar,
about
to fuckup
their
pristine
world.

Forgive the Asides

by Mark Hummel

Okay, before we even get started, given the nature of lawsuit and slander and the apparently frequent public desire to appear on TV shows primarily focused on contentious debate, name-calling, and finger-pointing, (TV shows hosted by former mayors and former models and former fifteen-minutes-of-fame reality show-cast members-now-out-of-rehab-I'm-reformed-oops-where's-my-baby-and-do-I-know-its-father-forgive-me personalities now famously encircled by their entourages of bodyguards and publicists, hairstylists and biorhythm counselors, TV hosts who, behaving like Don King, entice their guests into dueling philosophic adversaries focused on confrontation, which like the public desire to watch "reality" TV in the hopes of blackened eyes and under-the-covers-fluid swapping is ALL about titillation and image-busting, image-birthing or, that is to say, about air-time) given, that is, this general common public "mood," as they say, in order to avoid initial and unwarranted attack, it is first necessary to offer DISCLOSURES. To air my laundry, as it were. To admit, up front, that, surprise, surprise, I am guilty of hypocrisy.

For you see, I want to talk about things like, here it comes, a newly popular catchword—sustainability—and to do so I must admit, no matter how truthfully I want to employ the word in its pre-popular application, I'm not at all good at practicing it. (Yes, I'm asking for your blind trust here, I really do want to practice a sustainable lifestyle, I just seem to keep turning on the lights at night, finding leftovers in the refrigerator that are conducting chemistry experiments, lingering FAR too long in the shower, etc. etc. etc, to

note a few examples of my inadequacies.) For instance, here I wish to rail a bit against large trucks, you know those dual-wheeled, diesel chugging hulks, like the one straddling all the lines of the parking place next to you the way your uncle Bob's belly hangs, no distends, beyond his belt, well beyond his crotch really—those kinds of trucks. Now, of course, in the spirit of full disclosure, I drive. In fact, guilty me, I drive a four-wheel drive. Does it help that it's a little one, a Jeep Wrangler or that it will be ten years old in January (or is it now, given the way car manufacturers wheel out their line-up of "new" cars while they still sizzle in the summer heat?). Or that I drive only a few miles a week? Or that I live in deep snow country surrounded by mountains? I didn't think so. Nor should it, I suppose.

Or perhaps I wish to complain about some other forms of excess, about too much disposability, about our wasteful habits, about Sam's Clubs and Costcos, or perhaps about our over-large houses. But once again I must first admit that I do live in a house (most of us do [please don't bring up the homeless, for we are all sympathetic, it's just that well, they're so, so what...??? ... that we... we become so uncomfortable when near them???]); anyway, where was I? or yes, I suppose, most of us dwell in a house or apartment, although there is a sizable neighborhood of Yurts near where I live, and my sister-in-law slept in her state-owned office for a number of months, so I suspect we do have options). But in the spirit of full closure I must admit that my house is substantially too large for my family, that, when my college age daughters are away at school (inhabiting other quite expensive housing I must add), this house has three bedrooms, yes three rooms that sit empty. (Which of course, suggests that yes, I have children, three in fact, one more than the number that would "replace" my wife and myself, a clear contribution to excess rather than sustainability.) Again, I could offer the excuses, (here for the house, not the children) like the reality that our daughters do live at home when not in school, or that they bring friends, or that (yes! really!) we have our own friends from afar visit, or we anticipate grandchildren one day, or I could cite the unique market conditions in our locality that makes real estate an important financial investment, (so there is the presence of a desire to have money make money, another clearly non-sustainable belief system). So there it is, I live in a house larger than necessary to sustain me, but really it's small by comparison to so many others; why just today I passed a house (while driving), a rather large house, I might add, where the owner had converted an old grain silo into a telescope turret. Now how cool is that? I saw it and thought "I want my own telescope." Well, no I don't. It would probably gather dust after the newness wore off. How many nights do I let get by me without going outside and looking at the stars (and I can SEE stars here where I live). I want it and I don't. Let's be honest, I see these huge houses with their million dollar views and in-home theaters and their

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Travertine tile (which, what exactly is that anyway?), and, in fleeting moments of weakness, I want to live in them. And I don't. Really. Wouldn't I feel guilty all the time? Besides, I don't like housecleaning much. I want to rant at such homeowners for their excesses and their gluttony. However, I wouldn't mind being invited to spend a night or two, a month tops.

Okay, clearly I am conflicted.

Aren't we all conflicted? OR to use a phrase that seems annoyingly popular and equally vague, we all have "issues". I have issues. You have issues. We all have issues. (But really, wouldn't we be brain dead if we didn't have "issues"? Would it be possible not to, if in fact I understand the typical usage of the term? Aren't our "issues really just complications and contradictions?) I guess that's what I'm getting at: self-contradiction.

Take my opening rant as an example, the aside about TV and its highly annoying, self-promoting, audience-insulting (oops, there I go again) hosts. Clearly I watch some TV or else I wouldn't have a reason to rant in the first place, now would I? Does it confuse things to say that I hate TV? (Of course I may be addicted to "Scrubs".) Does it confuse things all the more to learn that I watch very little TV? Yes, I am one of those annoying people who, in cocktail party conversations, bring up a topic I read about in the New York Times or cite some story from NPR, and who, as the topic invariable turns, at one point states, "I don't really watch TV." (A statement, dependent on the crowd, that leads to a series of blank stares or a gush of declarations that the listener, also, "really doesn't watch much TV," although, of course, it is the "really" that gets really complicated. The safe course among "intellectuals" is to admit only to watching the "Discovery" channel, or channelS as the case may be. Now this is not to say there aren't plenty of additional mind-numbing and time-wasting habits that I also indulge in "a little", like playing ridiculous video games, eating to the point of sugar-induced coma, staring out windows, ...

Now where was I? (Isn't this the classic statement of a TV generation member?) (Oh, and by the way, are all of our children really ADD/ADHD [and what does it say that you will recognize that acronym?]) Oh, yes, contradictions. Which takes us back to the topic of DISCLOSURE. If I admit that I am a vessel containing contradictions (to say nothing of confusion), then in the spirit of openness, I should disclose the presence of said contradictions. (Did I mention that I watch very little TV? I read books. Thick books sometimes. Okay, mostly fiction. Well, almost all fiction, but literary fiction. [I'm not trying to escape anything.] I mean, I'm not a snob,

but I do have taste. Wait. I know. That may sound like a contradiction in itself. But I know, for instance, that the National Book Award winner is almost always better than the Pulitzer Prize winner, except once in a while the Pulitzers get it right, yet neither award committee would ever feature a PEN/Faulkner winner and just to say the title PEN/Faulkner is already revealing and probably labeling and absolutely meaningless to the vast majority of people, including people who prefer books over TV, for most the rest are too busy watching TV, network TV, not the sophisticated cable shows {I must say, shows that look just like the other shows only without commercials and with more profanity, more nudity, and more blood at the scenes of violent, sometimes ironic, deaths} that you talked about at that dinner party last week, {wait, are we still attending dinner parties?}or, ...wait...wait a minute, I was supposed to be talking about disclosures and now I'm just being judgmental]). (Talking? I'm not talking at all but writing. But then do we know the difference any more or do we write like we talk? Unless it's a blog. {of course this isn't a blog because you're not reading this on the Internet, or are you?} And just what exactly is a blog [funny that spell check does not recognize the word blog yet] and why are they so rabidly popular now? Influential even.) Sorry. I've lost track. What is it I am talking (writing) about? Contradictions? Sustainability? I forget.

But then maybe that is part of the point.

How can we help but lose track of ourselves when we are surrounded by so many contradictions (or indeed, simply when we are surrounded by so MUCH [I mean really, as if there wasn't enough coming at us at work and at home and at school, think TVradioCellphonetextmessagevoicemailBlackberry IPodhomephoneofficephoneFAXemailblogDVDBlueraydiscIM, and I haven't gotten beyond electronic communication mediums yet to the STUFF surrounding us or the TOPICS encircling us or the THREATS bombarding us]{what *won't* give us cancer?}). Isn't every element of our lives constantly interrupted?

It's a wonder we can think any more.

I think a lot. But I don't actually know anything. I'm sure most people do. But I don't, I just think. Fractured thoughts (like these). Most of the time I get so busy thinking I forget where I started or where I had hoped to arrive. It's as if I get caught in the spidery strands of a thousand asides.

And randomness. Is it because we live in a chaotic, sound-bite-driven world that we now seem to love randomness? We even love random humor (or I do at least; have I mentioned that I love "Scrubs"? [or maybe I'm just a

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Zack Braff fan, for I also love "Garden State", a movie about randomness if ever there was one; no, that's not right, for really it is a movie about how the world appears full of random coincidental bits if you are just coming off years of anti-depressants, or live with your mother as an adult, or dig graves for a living, or live at the edge of an abyss {in New Jersey} or, well, you get the picture[.]) Randomness. If you are trying to write an essay, say an essay about American culture or about the state of contemporary American thought processes (yes, sweeping generalizations to be sure) (and maybe you are also writing about self-contradiction [while no doubt contradicting the self]), given the sheer scope of the topic and the volume of the input noise that culture creates, I suppose the specific contents are likely to be a bit random, are they not?

Now what was I saying?

by Dave Rowley

Green Tricycle

Of course, the worst part of the story was how they all missed the green tricycle by the roadside, three wheels spinning briskly as the mob ran with cameras towards the fireworks. Thick smoke spiraled through the skyline. The casualties were counted and mourned and flags of all colours were waved as soldiers marched by a ditch, by the road, where one of three wheels still wound lazily and from the oil soaked ground somebody sighed.

Portrait of Sukie with Green Wash

As she ascends, the escalator carries reflected faces in its glass balustrade, while in her mind red diagonals of thought criss-cross, weaving a nest of resentment that bows her head. All the signs [*For Sale*] are there: [*No Interest For Twelve Months*] creeping forward [*He Smelt of Someone Else's Perfume*] as each step ahead of her is eaten. [*Back to School Savings*] The escalator sides swallow [*When I Call His Cell Phone He Never Answers*] sky from the skylights, lick up arcade fluorescents to create [*For Approved Customers Only*] a translucent green mist that cloaks her until she disappears into the throng of shoppers.

Angels

by Karl Williams

When she heard the report... Well, years before, it had taken so much to get even a polite hug - she just couldn't believe it.

"And there's nothing about

'signs of violence'?" Nancy asked again.

Angel? How could something like this happen to Angel? It simply didn't add up.

Angel Whipple had been one of the girls at River View in 1971. We'd been hired to be house-parents in something called a "group home," and we'd agreed to work at River View until a suitable neighborhood could be found in the city. Thirteen

No, Nancy saw immediately that Angel was right there with you, always just on the fringe of what was going on - attentive and very interested.

or fourteen years old when we started, Angel was tall for her age and thin. If you'd seen her briefly on the street, you wouldn't have thought her at all different from anyone else: her angular face was really quite pretty. What set her apart, literally, was that she was very, even extremely, shy. But not - definitely not - "withdrawn," as her records read. No, Nancy saw immediately that Angel was right there with you, always just on the fringe of what was going on -

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

attentive and very interested. You might have said she was skittish, except that Angel's brand of energy was nervous, not playful. Who knew why; she just felt she had to keep some space between herself and the rest of the human part of the world: a safe distance – that's how it struck you.

Nancy began, as she always did, by assuming the best. Angel didn't speak, but Nancy spoke to her as if she would understand everything. She did OK with eating and using the bathroom and getting dressed, so they set to work on bathing, on making a bed, on tying shoes. The difficulty was just getting close enough. But, although Angel seemed to resist Nancy's overtures, still, at the same time she was reticent, she definitely loved the attention. Nancy coaxed her every inch of the way, lavishing praise at each minute success.

All the girls were in their teens, so Nancy paid close attention to appearance. They made and sold potpourris on the grounds, raised forty dollars, and bought a mirror that all but filled the wall at the top of the stairs on that side of the building. An extra dresser, an array of combs, brushes, and make-up and the area became the focal point of the unit. When it was Angel's turn, she and Nancy would stand looking into the mirror while Nancy fixed her short brown hair. And when Nancy told her once again how pretty she was, an

embarrassed smile would appear for just an instant on Angel's face, and a tiny sparkle in her eye. And Angel began, slowly, to come around. But all the while she remained just a bit nervous at Nancy's proximity. That was Angel: generally happy - but jittery.

And before too long, what with Nancy's flattery and friendly persuasion, in addition to the occasional smile something else began to escape, as it seemed, from Angel's mouth.

"Who is that, Angel?" Nancy would ask her when I arrived at the top of the Senior Girls' stairs at the end of our shift.

"Angel, you know who that is..."

And bending slightly at the waist, in pink slippers and a long pink robe, her long thin arms and fingers moving in odd formations, and smiling to herself (I remember she had a charming little chip in one of her front teeth), Angel would do a nervous little shuffle and steal a peek at me - in lieu of what Nancy had asked for.

But soon single-word responses began to premiere on Angel's lips. I heard in detail about Angel's first "Yes," and then, a week or so later, about her "Nan," and then her "Bye" - she even produced a "No," eventually.

And when I saw her in the cafeteria

or outside on one of the paths, I began to make a point of speaking to her myself.

"Hi, Angel! How you doing?"

I remember her looking around for the others.

But after a few more months - a little out of sync perhaps, and with just a moment too much hesitation, and preceded always by that nervous smile and followed then by a giggle and a bashful looking away - Angel began to muster a barely audible response to my greetings. But it was definitely a "Hi": not only was she talking, she was widening her circle, so to speak.

River View asked that parents take their child home for the weekend every other week. When the Whipple's brought Angel back - first thing Sunday afternoon, unwashed and with greasy hair - it took until Tuesday evening or sometimes even Wednesday for Angel to re-take, so to speak, the ground she'd gained with Nancy's help. I remember wondering what had gone into the Whipple's decision to name their daughter "Angel." Had it been a kind of wishful thinking?

That first spring Angel betrayed her fascination with bugs and, since that word too consisted of a single syllable, it was immediately added to Nancy's Ask-Angel-To-Say-It list. We took groups of kids camping in the summer. And one sunny

morning, during the week Angel spent with us, we'd just hiked out of the woods into a field...

"Angel! Look at this!" Nancy said.

When she saw the praying mantis, Angel did her nervous two-step and let loose with another almost silent giggle.

"What is that, Angel?"

Another Angel-jerk and a step and a smile.

"C'mon, Angel..." I said. "We're dying to know. Please tell us what it is..."

Another giggle and then, just barely loud enough for anyone to hear, Angel said - she mumbled it, really - "BuG."

Then she looked down and smiled again: embarrassed - but at the same time pleased that she'd allowed the word to come forth. And her feet and her long, lean, momentarily arched body moved again in a bashful, awkward ballet.

The hard sounds of the "b" and the "g" - that was what she pushed out, from low in her throat. The "u" was all but lost. It was a quiet, a tentative voicing, you might have said - but it increased Angel's meager vocabulary by twenty percent.

Two days later over hamburgers at our campsite, a small voice and a

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

familiar giggle made their quiet way to our ears from the far end of the table.

"Buga-buga-bug..."

It was Angel: a ladybug had lit on her paper plate and she was clearly delighted.

"Buga-buga-bug..."— that's what it sounded like, though, now that I think of it, maybe it was meant to be: "Bug! A bug! A bug!..." — maybe Angel was using her new word in a sentence.

She said my name for the first time on that trip to Virginia.

Several years after we left River View, Angel moved out too. She shared a room with a young woman named Mary on the second floor of a very large house in a once-booming industrial town. Cherise, whom we'd also known at River View, had the room next to theirs. And downstairs in a room off the kitchen lived two young men. By this time, Nancy had an administrative position. This house was one of the few she felt she didn't have to worry about: the Porters had been there for several years; they seemed competent if they weren't dazzling. Molly Porter was pregnant with their second child. Clement, whose physical presence suggested the adjective "Appalachian" to Nancy, also had a job outside the house.

The report came from Tracey Foley. Saturday evening, staying over on the pull-out couch in the living room

Several years after we left River View, Angel moved out too.

after working three-to-eleven, she'd heard the Porters come back late from

a wedding. Their footsteps tapped up the back stairs and down the long hall on the second floor. The door to their room closed, and Tracey went back to sleep. Later she woke to a commotion. Had someone tripped upstairs, or maybe dropped something? She sat listening a moment, but the house was quiet again after that. In the morning, though, she found Clement's cigarettes on the floor in Angel's room - and the sheets needed to be changed again. Tracey and Molly Porter had been wondering about Angel's inexplicable vaginal bleeding for several months.

When the report came, Nancy ordered an investigation. Things happened very quickly. Angel was taken to the hospital and the rape-kit tests all came back positive. Robert Garman, a graduate of an alcohol addiction program who usually helped Molly Porter get everyone up and out the door in the mornings, approached Clement - and almost at once Clement confessed everything. It was common practice, in some cases defined by regulation, for several kinds of log-books to be kept: on medications and health care, on the personal finances of the residents, on unusual incidents. Clement told

Robert Garman that he'd been monitoring the log which kept track of menstrual cycles – and not just for Angel but for the other two girls as well.

The D.A. was called in; charges were filed; and Clement Porter was taken off to jail.

Recognizing what it had taken for Tracey to come forward (Molly Porter was her best friend), Nancy decided that she should speak to all the staff at the house, so that everyone knew exactly what was happening and why - and that they were not under suspicion.

She also went to see each of the girls' parents. Mary Taylor's mom was almost hysterical. After her visit with Cherise's mother, Nancy wondered if Mrs. Black had been trying to make a joke, or if what she'd said was just a kind of nervous reaction to someone in authority.

At the Whipples' prim, suburban house Angel's parents, both of them tall and thin like their daughter, led Nancy into the living room. She'd really never spent time in their presence: they'd never stopped to talk at River View. Now they sat - not stoically, but simply without affect - as Nancy explained what had happened. She was struck by how calm and thoroughly unperturbed the Whipples were throughout, although she'd come to tell them that their daughter had

been sexually abused, maybe even raped.

Nancy went on to say how badly she felt - as the person ultimately in charge, but just as much personally, since she'd known Angel for so long.

And the Whipples - Angel's parents - thanked her. That was it. In fact, their response, their reaction, was almost non-existent: they might as well have said nothing whatsoever.

A week or so later, Nancy and Angel sat near the front of a small hearing room at the local Common Pleas Court. The four or five rows of short benches – the room wasn't even large enough for a center aisle – faced a simple table, un-raised.

Together again now for the first time in maybe ten years, Nancy and Angel fell back into their old ways. Nancy shifted to the right in her seat, complimented Angel on how she looked, and struck up what passed for conversation between them. Angel smiled as she always had and responded with a syllable or two, as always.

For her part Nancy felt that she was championing Angel's welfare. This was pure and uncomplicated, if anything was. Even someone unfamiliar with group homes and job training programs and such for the Angels of the world would have to acknowledge that Nancy was indisputably in the right. "On the side of heaven," that other person might have put it. At the same time

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

And immediately - it came in the same instant as the recognition - Angel smiled.

though, despite the test results and the evidence and Clement's full confession - with that illogical ability we have to believe two contradictory things at one and the same time - in some part of herself Nancy still remained unconvinced that this could have happened to Angel. But, whatever had occurred, Nancy had taken action on Angel's behalf, as well as for the other girls - and the young men too, for that matter: Clement had freely confessed that he had been using his position for his own personal advantage.

Nancy brushed Angel's hair out of her eyes. Later, back at the house, she'd find a pair of scissors and neaten up Angel's bangs - and then suggest to Tracey that they make an appointment with a hairdresser.

She was reaching to Angel's shoulders to straighten her blouse, when a door opened to their right. Nancy looked up past Angel. A uniformed guard came into the room along with Clement Porter, who was wearing an orange prison jumpsuit.

Angel had looked up too. But, most likely not understanding what this room was and why she was here, when Angel saw the door open, she'd had no expectations. And so

for an instant, as she watched along with Nancy, Angel saw only two people entering the room.

It took a fraction of a second...

But then Angel recognized one of the men as Clement Porter.

And immediately - it came in the same instant as the recognition - Angel smiled.

Nancy's heart almost stopped.

Angel...smiled...to see Clement Porter.

And then in the next second, as he passed by with the guard...

"Clement..."

It was quiet, as Angel's utterances had always been. Clement couldn't have, but Nancy heard it plain - and she saw the word form on Angel's lips.

In the same barely audible, innocent way Nancy knew so well...Angel...said...Clement Porter's name.

And Nancy felt the room all but disappear, leaving only Angel and herself and...the question Nancy realized she'd been struggling with all along: What was the truth about Angel and this man, Clement Porter?

A door to their left opened then and

a gentleman in a suit and tie entered. He walked directly to the table; sat down; set about determining that the people necessary to the proceedings were indeed present; and, consulting once more the papers before him on the desk, addressed one of the lawyers.

"All right. Now Mr. Montano, have you met with Mr. Porter?"

"Yes, sir. Uh – yes, Your Honor."

"I'm an officer of the court, Mr. Montano; a hearing officer, not a judge. 'Mr. Timons' will be fine."

"Uh, yes, Mr. Timons. I have met with Mr. Porter."

As the hearing progressed, Nancy was barely able to listen: she was reeling at Angel's reaction to Clement Porter's appearance - and from the rabbit-hole of implications.

Maybe all Angel knew for sure was that Clement had suddenly disappeared a week or so before. After that Angel must have heard people say his name; and surely someone from outside the house must have spoken to her directly about Clement; and that person or someone else must have attempted to ask her questions. But since those people didn't know Angel, they probably hadn't known that Angel would not answer their questions. Nancy was almost certain that no one had attempted to explain to Angel what was going

to happen; in fact she hadn't found a way to begin herself. Nancy imagined that Angel must, on some level, have been wondering where Clement had gone: she'd been used to seeing him every day. And when now suddenly he appeared, in this unfamiliar room in this building that was new to her, it must have startled her. But whatever confusion Angel might have been experiencing was – instantaneously - replaced at seeing him again by this... Well, you couldn't call it anything but pure joy.

Clement!

It happened so quickly, the smile simply transformed Angel's face, and then Clement's name fairly leapt – but quietly, of course - from Angel's mouth.

"Clement!" Here he was again, as if out of nowhere!

How could Angel react like this if she'd been raped, if Clement had forced himself on her? No marks on her anywhere. No loss of appetite. No one had noticed anything at all, except for the mysterious bleeding. But if Clement hadn't forced himself on Angel, then . . . What else could you call it – he must have made love to her.

How had that felt to Angel? What did it mean to her? She'd always been so uneasy about being touched...

But then, how else could he have

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

managed it, just down the hall from his pregnant wife and their first child, and just one floor above the staff person sleeping in the living room? What approach, what tactic would be as quiet as it had to be? Clement had done what he needed to do: he'd seduced Angel, the way any man would seduce a woman - in order to take his pleasure, in order to add to his list of conquests. What other motive could he have had?

No one would ever know what had happened between them. All Nancy knew for sure was that the sight of Clement Porter was something Angel positively rejoiced at. Perhaps Clement's lies had been wordless. Had Angel consented to Clement's attentions? Had she in fact enjoyed. . .

Well, the answers didn't matter; it would not change the course of action that Nancy had initiated. It simply opened things up, so to speak. She'd thought of the situation as, perhaps, a simple, tragic triangle: an utterly vulnerable young woman, a calculating caretaker, and herself as the force of compassionate authority. Now the three of them were transformed into a figure of so many facets as to make Nancy feel she was peering through a kaleidoscope.

Was Angel...in love...with Clement Porter?

That phrase was painful to dwell on - because of what it meant for Angel.

At least the facts were clear. The lawyers and the hearing officer would discuss the case and it would be ruled on here in this room and most likely Clement Porter would be punished. And Nancy had set it all in motion - as she'd had to. But no one understood what was really going on here. These lawyers and this officer of the court (and anyone else who happened to hear of it) had already jumped - or would - to the quick and easy conclusion: Clement Porter's wrongdoing had been, solely and exclusively, that he'd had sexual relations with...one of "them;" he had crossed a line that was simply not to be crossed. But Nancy saw that what Clement had done would, eventually, break Angel's heart. He'd had no intentions, Nancy believed, except to use her. But for Angel that didn't matter. What Clement had done for Angel, no matter his plan, may have been something vital, something essential. Once Clement appeared in the room, Nancy no longer recognized the girl she'd known at River View. To Nancy Angel had always seemed trapped, as it were, between dimensions. Nancy's task had been to enthusiastically encourage Angel to join with the other girls in enjoying as much as possible of what life had to offer. But Angel never did take a real step toward them. However often she allowed herself to smile or to say a

word or two, still she remained cut off by that demon reticence that locked her – or by which she locked herself – away. We'd spent three years at River View. And Angel had come along - inch by inch. But in the fleeting moments of her time with Clement...Nancy had to admit it: Angel had left behind her timidity; she'd stepped out of her childhood. In Angel's response to Clement, Nancy saw a freedom, an ease, a completeness, a rush of emotion she'd never really believed she'd see in Angel. In doing what he'd had no right to do, Clement may have given Angel something she might never have found otherwise.

Perhaps the time Angel spent with Clement would be the single occasion in her life when she would ever be free of the restraints that bound her: her reluctance to be close to people, her "diagnosis." Maybe Angel would never understand what had happened or why. Perhaps all she would ever know was how Clement had made her feel... And that one day he was simply... gone. But what Clement Porter had done to Angel was, at one and the same time – and most likely without his understanding it - something he'd done for her.

Of course he'd been using Angel. But Angel didn't see that. What she knew was something far more important...

In the end Clement Porter was sentenced to serve seven years in prison. Within months the people who replaced the Porters began to hear of Cherise Black's reputation among the boys in the town. You know the girl: she hangs out in the alley – you know the one from "that house" – yeah, man, you gotta go see her . . . But Angel was not at all like Cherise. Angel never went looking for anything. Clement had come to her. And now that he was no longer around, Angel... Well, who could say what might happen? But it was at least highly unlikely that Angel would ever again experience the kind of intimacy - and joy - that she'd known with Clement Porter.

Nancy'd had no choice but to stop Clement. She'd always wanted what was best for Angel; that was all – it was very simple. But in doing what she'd had to do; what she would not change now even if she could; in acting out of pure good will...Nancy had, in fact, also brought to a close what would likely be the happiest time in Angel's life.

*

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

by Matthew Wylie

On August Interviews

Memory

"When did you first arrive here?"

"During the early salt months of the year.
During the times the azaleas appear –
When I could remember what I meant
In my youth and through my tears"

"What made you return wearing
the harlot's blood
and the promise of horses?"

"The songs of children and
the restlessness of my word:
The horses are coming."

"And what will you ask from us,
now that that you have
traveled so far?"

"I will ask for that which falls off of you
unnoticed and impure . . .
which links your amber ghosts
to the sadness and verdure."

"Then we will prepare for you fields of hymn
and the lions that know your
Name."

"And I will stalk your open eyes
like a black moon
on the braided sea."

"Yet when the rice fields are full
and want more than
morning has to offer,
who shall we send?"

"You next to glass and a cut away
stray flower, on top
of water with sounds that recall
the galloping of green horses
in Spring."

All that Glitters

by Adrienne Ross

"We take cash, cash, and cash," the coin dealer said. His smile was lean. He stood behind a waist-high glass case holding silver, nickel, bronze, and copper coins. He seemed little more than skin and bones under a white shirt and blue pinstriped pants, as if he were a latter day King Midas surrounded by wealth that gave no sustenance.

The dealer clasped his hands in front of his chest. I counted out \$440 in \$20 bills so new they cut my fingers.

The dealer disappeared into his back office. He returned to place \$3.41 in my hand and hold out a clear plastic packet. I hesitated before clutching the packet. I felt as if I was crossing over; as if Charon, the underworld ferryman of Greek myth, who took across Hades' river only those dead buried with a coin under their tongue, was paying *me* to cross the rushing waters that separate one life from another. In my hand, an American Eagle, one ounce of pure gold, shone like the elemental dawn that gold (AU) is named after.

It wasn't the first time I'd felt unease at buying gold. I felt, too, that familiar reassurance linking me to thousands of years of pharaohs, kings, captains, crafts people, traders, bankers,

millionaires, merchants, common men and women: *this is gold, this is what money should be*. I have spent 50 years passing Susan B. Anthony \$2 coins, Liberty \$1 coins, JFK half-dollars, quarters, dimes, nickels, pennies. And paper money. All light as air. The American Eagle is solid. It sinks into my palm. On the radiant coin a woman strides forward, a staff in one hand, an olive branch in the other. Behind her blaze the sun's rays. Above her is a single word: LIBERTY.

The dealer smiled and said, "South African Krugerrands arrive tomorrow. "

Solid gold coins. South Africa has long been the world's gold producing powerhouse, and with the word Krugerrand reverberating in my mind, the obvious dawned on me, that gold must have played a role in supporting the former apartheid regime, especially during the 1970's gold bull market. I remembered a summer night some 26 years ago when the South African Springboks came to Albany, N.Y. igniting anti-apartheid demonstrations at the local soccer stadium, and where as a peacekeeper, I had to step between a belligerent woman from the Communist Workers Party bent on a fist fight with an equally belligerent but also drunk soccer fan. Twenty-

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Gold is immortal.

six years ago, I would rather have been belted in the mouth than lurk, as I do now, on listservs where conservatives, libertarians and just plain capitalists recite the lyrics to *Goldfinger* and chortle that dollars aren't worth the cotton woven to print them because soon, very soon, but not soon enough, gold will gleam as it has in every land and era where people held it in their hand, as the only certain money and wealth in uncertain times.

But I am not a conservative, a libertarian, nor much of a capitalist. Why am I opening my hand to my political adversaries' coin of the realm? Why am I buying gold?

###

Once home, I take the American Eagle from my wallet. I close my fingers on the coin. No matter how many gold coins I buy, and no matter my misgivings at buying them, I am awed by gold's otherworldly radiance.

Gold is immortal. Forged in the belly of stars, gold is flung across space by an exploding sun. Gold welds stardust with human history, the basic elements with greed and desire. The sundiscs of Pharaohs, the crowns of Kings come from a metal called noble because it rarely strays to bond with other metals. Gold does not decay. Gold does not

tarnish. Gold does not rust. Gold remains gold, capable of being melted, formed, transformed into new shapes without end, without ever being destroyed. The gold in coins, computer wiring, watches, false teeth, wedding rings or anywhere else it glows is almost equal to all the gold that has ever been pulled from veins in the earth or panned from mountain streams. The American Eagle in my hand might have been a Hittite queen's necklace, a Roman slave dealer's payment, an alchemist's holy grail, a con man's promise.

Later, this American Eagle will join other coins hoarded in my safe deposit box. For now, I switch on my eMac. I sip lemon grass mate tea and prospect Stockcharts for gold's 20 and 50 day moving averages, it's MacD indicators and daily closing price to see if I could have gotten a better deal if I had waited an hour or a day. I'm idling. What I'm really thinking of is King Ferdinand of Spain's command in 1511: "Get gold, humanely if possible, but at all hazard, get gold."

Gold's beauty has always been sought for adornment, while its purity and longevity link gold to the magical and the sacred. Beauty and divinity opened the door to more enduring obsessions of wealth and money. There are few times and places in human history where gold wasn't sought for an Emperor's bathtub, a god-king's obelisk, for

bracelets, anklets, rings revealing power and privilege, or to become the Macedonian *philippeioi* and *alexanders*, the Byzantine *bezant*, the Arab trader's *dinar*, the Venetian *ducat*, the English *soveriegn* along with countless other gold coins. Gold's price has been much the same: environmental destruction, release of deadly toxins, and often, slavery or exploited labor in its mining.

A few examples: Columbus brought Ferdinand's command to the Caribbean, and the Arawak Indians were eliminated from the face of the earth, killed by the Western diseases and slavery that followed a frenzied search for gold and empire. As the Spanish pushed further into Central and South America, the far from peaceable Aztecs, and later the Incas, were destroyed largely for gold and silver. Some 50 years before Columbus, the Portuguese arrived along the West African coast seeking sea access to the Saharan gold trade and routes to Asia. The Portuguese began acquiring gold by trading slaves along their African ports, exchanges that eventually grew into the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Today the cry to get gold comes from China, India, the United States and other lands yearning for gold watches, gold necklaces, gold rings. By now most of the world's gold veins have bled dry. Finding enough gold for a one-ounce ring requires blasting through

mountains, digging up some 30 tons of rock, applying diluted cyanide to separate stone from gold, and then dumping rock or dust contaminated with by-products of mercury, arsenic, cyanide and heavy metals into waste sites, or simply into lakes, rivers, bays, the once abundant ocean. Some 70% of the world's gold mining occurs in developing countries, such as the Philippines, where the New York Times (10/24/05) reported that the Placer Dome mining company was charged with ruining "...a river, bay, and coral reef by dumping enough waste to fill a convoy of trucks that would circle the globe three times."

Gold lasts forever. I can't separate myself or my pretty coins from gold's tarnished history.

###

A few days later, I go to my bank, pull a safe deposit box from its wall niche and open its metal lid. Atop a white scarf, gleaming through bubble wrap, are gold coins. I take out of my sagging rucksack the American Eagle along with 13 newly arrived Kuggerrands, roll the gold in bubblewrap, and slip them into the box.

Twenty-six some years ago, when I was a peacekeeper protesting the apartheid South African government, I knew little of Kuggerrands and less about the gold that made them. In those days, I lived a protester's life in a household dedicated to peace and justice, and

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

thought that money was an unnecessary evil. In the years since then, the money I pursued was largely the millions of dollars I've raised as a grant writer for non-profits restoring rivers, securing legal rights for immigrants and refugees, giving food and shelter to people who have none. Most of my clients don't care where the money comes from — tobacco companies, oil companies, or worse — as long as it goes towards their good ends. I'm not naïve about how hard (if not impossible) it is to find money untainted by how it was produced. Neither do I pretend that money by any means justifies any ends.

For decades, though, I raised money for what I believed were good ends, and invested my personal money in socially

responsible funds. I don't regret those choices. I still pursue them. But I trusted an assumed pact with my government and society: if I educated myself, worked hard, and became self-sufficient, there would be economic prosperity resting on a stable, valuable currency. But these days, I have close relatives who have not had steady, living wage work since September 11, and who for years relied on help from family to pay mortgage, car, legal or electric bills. Half of my savings blew away in the dot.com bubble. The rest is blowing away in the Bush Administration's tax cuts

for the rich and gargantuan debts to pay for wars for oil.

It's axiomatic to say that people turn to gold when times are uncertain, and currencies are weak and inflated. As George Bernard Shaw put it in The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism: "You have to choose...between trusting to the natural stability of gold and the natural stability of the honesty and intelligence of the members of the Government. And, with due respect for these gentlemen, I advise you, as long as the capitalist system lasts, to vote for gold." Shaw's "natural stability" reflected human

The long history of currencies freed from gold or anything else of intrinsic value is to fail and fade away to nothing.

nature: whether for money, wealth, displays of divinity or personal adornment, we want gold. So much

so, that during the gold standard era of the mid-1860's to World War I (a time praised by conservatives, anarchists and others who mistrust government), no nation could print more paper money than it held in gold reserves. Financial constraints were forced on governments; wealth was concentrated in a very few hands; poverty and labor rebellions were widespread; and the money of merchants and millionaires was guaranteed by gold that could be accepted anytime, anywhere, by any one. The massive national debts left from World War I, combined with the Roaring Twenties collapse into the Great Depression, took

most governments off the gold standard. One of FDR's first and most hated acts was forcing Americans to give the federal government their gold coins, bullion or certificates for reimbursement in paper money, although he left the dollar redeemable for gold on the international markets. Decades later, Richard Nixon fully severed the dollar from gold allowing the dollar's value to fluctuate relative to other currencies. Dollars are now backed only by the faith and calculation other nations, international banks, currency traders and ordinary people place in them. The long history of currencies freed from gold or anything else of intrinsic value is to fail and fade away to nothing.

These days, the Bush Administration decreases the dollar's value and increases the nation's debt with every dollar it prints. The more I work, the more I save, the more money I lose to inflation's hidden tax on earnings and savings that hits the poor, the working poor (do we still have a working class?) and the middle class while skirting the wealthy. And in all honesty, I would never trust my life or that of anyone I love to the food banks, shelters and other social services I have raised so much money for over the years.

I thought gold was a Faustian bargain when in March 2003 I bought my first one-ounce gold

coins for \$335 each. Back then the financial advisors who, a few short years earlier, had sold me over-inflated technology stocks as if they were widows and orphans funds minced few words in describing gold as financial ancestor worship, as lucrative as chasing leprechauns, following the rainbow to its end, slashing through jungles for a glimpse of El Dorado. By June 2003, just a few short months after my first traipse through the jungle, the price of gold had risen to \$374 per ounce. It broke \$400 by year's end, jumped by \$9.72 the day I began researching this essay, and then tumbled below \$400, a drop that sent my goldbug investor friends scurrying to get gold, get gold, get more gold. The golden roller coaster continues to rise and fall, rise and fall and rise. By winter 2008, gold is over \$900 an ounce, higher than it has been in 25 years.

With each new coin I bought, I gradually became aware of a reason for buying gold that at heart, for me at least, trumped all others. After decades of trying to alter society's landscape, I wanted to hike into the wilderness of wealth and power, and learn how money and the world operate. While I haven't quite learned that lesson, I have unearthed one hard nugget of truth. Gold brings me to the left and right's anarchistic common ground of economic autonomy and individual self-reliance from government and its control of money. And right now, those values are one I hold high.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Am I selling out? Maybe. But shouldn't I count on money to be as substantial, valuable, and hard as my life? What's money but a moment in a person's life — in my life — passing from hand to hand in the unnoticed instance of buying a mystery novel or the sweetheart's new blue suit? These days, I pay bills using paper checks, purchase blue jeans and books using credit cards, move electronic money as blips across a computer screen. Gold is real. Gold endures. Gold has no life, but gold lives forever in our — in my — love of beauty, respect for usefulness, and need for absolute values in a chaotic world. And gold lives in the greed for that single lucky strike that forgives the missteps of wrong roads taken, wrong jobs, wrong kisses, all the sleepless nights of *what if* and *if only*. My motives are not so very different from the men and women who crossed oceans for the Australian gold rush, froze on snowfields for the Klondike gold rush, panned California stream water through a sieve to find a grain, perhaps a nugget, or who picked, dug, clawed past tree root and rock to stake a claim to a place on earth that was rich, abundant, *mine*.

But for now, I close the lid on my safe deposit box. I return my hoard to its dark, narrow and hidden place. I am wealthy now (a little bit, anyway) and like King Midas, surrounded by gold bread he could not eat, gold water he could not drink, and a gold daughter he could not love, I ponder my wealth's price.



The Glory of Neglect by Philip Kobylarz

by J. Brian Long

Babel

In those days men sometimes saw angels
frowning atop the arches of the upper rooms:
and so I brought bread for them: and a basket
for their preening: and a skin of the best red
the vineyards ever bled for us: and I went that morning

up the empty of the circling stair and the settling
of the lifted sounds: and I found the ceiling
silent before the workmen made their way. But I
found also only dust and feathers (and strangely
a grey sole fish, and a shell, and a weed that grows

only in the salt of the sea): I sat long there
and prayed for them, but never did they come to me;
there was only a tapping of the ropes and the wind
in the casements and somewhere a prayer and
someone's song and the chant of the fearing locust.

Mid-day that day and I descended to the howls of the city:
and to soot shaken from the rafters:
and the tower ringing like the hull of a broken bell:
and fires, fires, all among us in the streets and the temple:
and angels there and thunders and the Voice and Its war.

We do not go to that place any longer.
Each day more sky: each night more star:
it crumbles like all we were. I am still
learning all my childrens' words:
God does not mean the same to us anymore.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Sizzle And Zing

by Bayard

It was as close to nine months to the day as you could get without going over or thereabouts, no one is quite sure, really, that Ophelia Chastity Sincerely, as big as a house, gravid to the max, ready to pop out yet another Sincerely heir, blew her top shrieking, It's all your fault! It's all your fault! Oh God it's all your damn, damn fault!

No great beauty among the greatest beauties but a great beauty among the lesser beauties of her class in the family way Ophelia Chastity Sincerely possessed the greatest beauty a great beauty among the lesser beauties could possess, the beauty of procreation.

Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's husband, the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely, recently defrocked for all his frocking about refusing culpability blamed the devil saying, The devil tempted me and I fell prey to the devil's temptation but since my defrocking I have been down on the floor, down on my knees deep in prayer and other on your knees occupations granted to fathers, friars, ministers and all around frockers of our one true faith formula one religion.

Gentlemen, start your engines!

As the fathers, ministers, friars and all around frockers of the one true faith formula one religion started their engines before starting the great race, the good Reverend down on his knees engaging in so many on your knee activities granted to fathers, friars, ministers and all around frockers piously pouting into camera one emoted, It has been three long, long days, and three longer, longer nights but I am cured. Cured forever. Using a time tried, time released twelve step televised program and putting all my eggs in my one true faith formula one basket, counting highly on my relationship with my one true faith formula one god, I can say with a clear conscience I am cured. Cured forever. I will never, ever, no never ever again engage in the illegal use of illegal drugs while partaking of extra marital relations with prostitutes of my sex unless the god granted opportunity arises.

Ophelia Chastity Sincerely standing as tall and as proud as a woman as big as a house, gravid to the max, ready to pop out yet another Sincerely heir, can beside her enticingly handsome husband during his time of time tried, time released twelve step televised trial by fire smirked, And you will never lead the one true faith formula one flock or collect all those delectable tithes

again. Which leaves you, your family, all our damn beautiful kids, but most especially me up that famous creek without so much as an ugly boy shout of America for a paddle.

Oh! I do so love to be paddled by an ugly shout! cooed the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely falling to his knees, presenting his posterior for paddling and cooing, Oh, Verkoff! Verkoff! Verkoff! Art Verkoff! I've been a bad, bad boy and must be paddled. And paddled but good! Come out, come out wherever you are Art Verkoff and paddle this bad, bad boy.

It's all your fault, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely continued.

For a woman in her time of life and in her state of grace as beautiful as she was possessing the greatest beauty a great beauty among the lesser beauties of her class could possess, the beauty of procreation, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely never looked more beautiful than when she was shrieking, All your fault! All your damn, damn fault! Oh God it's all your damn, damn fault!

You don't think a good paddling could interfere with my time tried, time released twelve step televised cure? the good Reverend queried his wife, asked his time tried, time released twelve step televised support group while begging the live television audience at home to phone in and vote. Probably the best thing for me in my recovery at this moment. The best thing for my time tried, time released twelve step televised cure. A good paddling.

Shouting out for the shout, Verkoff! Verkoff! Verkoff! Art! and pouting terribly when the shout, Art Verkoff did not present himself sighed, There's never a damn ugly shout around when you need a paddling but good.

Oh get up off the floor, off your hands and knees and down off your cross! hissed Ophelia Chastity Sincerely. Someone truly deserving needs the wood.

Moments later Ophelia Chastity Sincerely forced into forced labor as the Sincerely heir she was about to bear was about to bear witness, the heir her good doctors warned her, Is too damnably large for such a lovely little lady to bear and could cause untold damage, humiliation or possibly death, began a long and terrible labor.

What have you got in there woman? Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's bad doctors asked with mock concern as all knew, feared and professed Ophelia Chastity Sincerely was about to give birth to something less an heir and more an ugly disposable shout.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

It's all your fault, shrieked Ophelia Chastity Sincerely. All your damn, damn fault! Oh God it is all your fault!

We're going to need you to get down on the floor, down on your hands and knees, doggy style, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's good doctors instructed. And we're going to need your husband to boil as much water as he possibly can.

It is a far, far better thing not to repeat what Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's bad doctors said as what her bad doctors said is just the kind of thing that makes a good doctor bad but it had something to do with her getting down off her cross cause someone truly deserving needed the wood.

On my hands and knees, doggy style, shrieked Ophelia Chastity Sincerely looking as beautiful as a great beauty among the lesser beauties of her class could look while in possession of the greatest beauty a great beauty of her class could possess, the state of grace of the beauty of procreation and grumbled, Isn't that how I got in this dreadful mess in the first place?

That's what the bad doctors had been saying.

Well, the bad doctors and all the evil gossips.

Actually, the bad doctors, the evil gossips and almost everyone, well not *almost* but everyone else, especially but not restricted to the millions and millions and millions of sinners who had been tuning into her husband, the good Reverend's pain amplified broadcasts of hope, devotion and love on the award winning nationally syndicated One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries Hope, Devotion and Love Hour, on the hour, everyday and twice on Sunday, had been saying all along.

Getting down off her cross, down on the floor on her hands and knees, doggy style, eagerly looking for some wood, with grunts, groans and occasional gasps Ophelia Chastity Sincerely looking as great as a great beauty of her class among the lesser beauties of her class could look, could be heard shrieking, It's all your fault. All your fault! All your damn, damn fault! Oh God it is all your fault!

If Ophelia Chastity Sincerely hadn't been getting down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style, and using the ugly family shout, Art Verkoff's wood as a battering ram, she wouldn't be in this dreadful position, down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style, giving a painfully forced performance of a painfully forced labor, to an all too

regrettably ugly shout, chortled her bad doctors, the evil gossips and almost everyone, well not *almost* but everyone else, especially but not restricted to the millions and millions and millions of sinners who had been tuning into her husband's pain amplified broadcasts of hope, devotion and love on the award winning nationally syndicated One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries Hope, Devotion and Love Hour, on the hour, everyday and twice on Sunday.

Recreational use of shouts by the beautifully beguiling twist aristocracy has never been encouraged but then it has never been outlawed either, prompted the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely before frocking and being defrocked by the highest forces of his one true faith formula one religion, his sponsor, Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing.

**IF THE RECREATIONAL USE OF SHOUTS IS OUTLAWED ONLY
OUTLAWS WILL ENJOY THE RECREATIONAL USE OF SHOUTS,**

read one of the most timely, popular and transcendental bumper stickers of its time and was echoed from the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely's pulpit every chance he got when he wasn't pushing Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing.

And what twist hasn't gotten down off their cross, down on the floor, down on their hands and knees, doggy style, at least once or twice a day and used a handy, dandy ugly shout's sturdy wood as a recreational battering ram, using Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing, the good Reverend, deep in prayer, asked the devotional time tried, time released twelve step televised support group instrumental in his miraculous cure.

If my husband, the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely hissed from down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style, hadn't been recreationally frocking hideously ugly shouts using Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing, he might still be fleecing his flock and his frantic family wouldn't be rammed in the chaotic jam we are presently in. And I don't know if I've said this before but it's all your fault! Oh God it is all your fault!

Hey, confidentially revealed the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely during an in-depth interview with Courtesy Mckenzie Fine, the most beautiful woman in all the world, during an in-depth interview on Courtesy Mckenzie Fine's The Courtesy Mckenzie Fine In-depth Interview Hour, if you close your eyes and think of England it's the best frocking you'll ever get.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Now close your eyes and think of England, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's good doctors instructed her.

Listen! You lot of cloistered losers! If I hadn't gone into this with my eyes closed thinking of England I wouldn't be in the mess I'm in today! Oh God! moaned Ophelia Chastity Sincerely looking as beautiful as a great beauty of her class among the lesser beauties of her class could look in possession of the beauty of procreation. It's all your fault! All your damn, damn fault! Oh God it is all your fault!

Down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style, eyes closed, thinking of England and looking for a good piece of wood, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely's bad doctors giggled along with the evil gossips and almost everyone, well not *almost* but everyone else, especially but not restricted to the millions and millions and millions of sinners who had been tuning into her husband, the good Reverend's pain amplified broadcasts of hope, devotion and love on the award winning nationally syndicated One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries Hope, Devotion and Love Hour, on the hour, everyday and twice on Sunday.

The good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely having been very bad, very bad indeed, was very close, very close indeed, to ruin.

No! I'm ruined! sobbed the good Reverend, deep in prayer to his live televised pain amplified supportive time tried, time released twelve step televised support group taking most if not all credit for his miraculous cure. The devil tempted me and I gave in to the devil's temptation and I am so ruined. Ruined! Ruined! Ruined! Big, big time!

My family and I have been cast out of the One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries forever and it looks like our sponsor who art in heaven Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing is going to drop our option.

But I'll be back! As God is my witness, the illegal use of illegal drugs while partaking of extra marital relations with prostitutes of my sex isn't going to lick me. I'm going to live through this, and when it's over, I'm never going to use illegal drugs while partaking of extra marital relations with prostitutes of my sex again. No, nor any of my folks. If I have to steal or kill – as God is my witness, I'm never going to use illegal drugs while partaking of extra marital relations with prostitutes of my sex again. Unless the god granted opportunity arises again!

I'll be back, bigger, bolder and as bright and shiny as freshly polished wood, promised the good Reverend, as soon as I convince everyone I've been cured. I might still get a book deal out of this and that would help cover out of pocket expenses immeasurably as my copay in this endeavor is breaking my sainted back.

While the good Reverend's huge beautiful family were packing up the possessions their One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries were allowing them to keep, which wasn't more than what they could carry, as they prepared to depart what they had called home for so many exciting, uplifting and pain amplified episodes of the One True Faith Formula One Hope Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries, Hope, Devotion and Love Hour, each and every one of the boundless, uncountable, innumerable exceptionally beautiful Sincerely heirs took their turn, after a good paddling to abase and abuse the hideously ugly shout Art Verkoff by saying, It is clear to me and me alone why you have been condemned a horrible ugly shout. Your mother must have been a baddun. A really, really bad baddun. Some horrible ugly whore of a bad baddun to give birth to such an ugly regrettable shout as you. No wonder she threw you away. Even an ugly, ugly whore of a bad baddun wouldn't want to keep a hideously ugly shout like you around to remind her of how ugly, horrible, whorely and bad a bad baddun she regrettably is. Now paddle me but good cause I've been so very bad, very, very bad indeed. As bad as your mother the bad baddun could be. And don't spare the Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing.

Art Verkoff rolling his ugly shout eyes paddling away, neither spared the rod nor the Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing, aware of his shout responsibilities to his assigned twist family while hopelessly dreaming of a world, or a place in this world, where hideous ugly shouts weren't hideous, ugly, abandoned or unloved.

One of the younger Sincerely heirs...

For the life of me, piously intoned the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely into cameras one, two and possibly three, while down on the floor, down on his hands and knees, doggy style receiving a good paddling from Art Verkoff's wood, I cannot remember her name. But with fatherly love think of her as the littlest Sincerely with the elegant twist to her spine and a divine hump on her back.

... asked, Daddy, what do we do about the ugly shout problem?

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Between his wife, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely, snarling, It's all your fault! It's all your fault! Oh God it is all your fault! And the littlest twist with the twisted spine and the divine hump on her back jumping up and down, clapping her hands shouting, Can we keep it, Mommy? Can we keep it, Daddy? Can we keep the horrible ugly shout, Art Verkoff! Mommy Dearest, oh Daddy Darling, do say yes you beasts! the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely could not get a good word in edgewise.

Not even with a large dose of Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing.

Keep that hideously horrible ugly shout! shrieked Ophelia Chastity Sincerely. If it weren't for that hideously horrible ugly shout I wouldn't be where I am today.

Down on the floor, down on your hands and knees, doggy style, waiting for some wood Mommy Dearest, bleated the littlest twisted twist with the divine hump on her back.

Before suggesting, I say we kill it, roast it and eat it, Ophelia Chastity Sincerely down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style looking for some good wood bellowed, It's all your fault. All your damn, damn fault! Oh God, it is all your fault!

It's not like our good godfearing one true faith formula one miniserial ministries, the One True Faith Formula One Hope, Devotion and Love Miniserial Ministries are feeding us any longer and I don't know what else we're supposed to do for food now that our sponsor who art in heaven Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing has dropped our option.

Now many of you out there in TV land may be wondering what roasted shout tastes like, pontificated the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely making a last gasp effort at keeping his ratings of all things up by adding a cooking segment to his already crammed packed full daily line up of sermons and other devotionally holy things.

Many among the Sincerely clan already knew what shout tasted like, but no one, not no how, knew what roasted shout would and did taste like.

We may eat our children and each other, piously invoked the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely during an in-depth interview with Courtesy Mckenzie Fine, the most beautiful woman in all the world, during an in-depth interview

on Courtesy Mckenzie Fine's The Courtesy Mckenzie Fine In Depth Interview Hour. We may sincerely appear as if cannibals but I condemn any truly pious individual to sincerely brand us cannibals. It just wouldn't play in the provinces.

Some among the flock were salivating, some making beautifully twisted faces, while the good Reverend, wetting his lips with his tongue, fantasized about what part of Art Verhoff he'd like to eat first, foremost and for all time.

The part he's been eating all along! cursed Ophelia Chastity Sincerely down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style looking for sturdy wood and looking as beautiful as a great beauty of her class can look among the lesser beauties of her class in possession of the greatest beauty of all time, the beauty of procreation. And if he hadn't been eating that part all along, I wouldn't be in the position I'm in right now.

Down on the floor, down on your hands and knees, doggy style looking for a good piece of wood, now push! Push! And breath, distractedly instructed her good doctors.

Her bad doctors had gone for drinks, smokes and possibly hookers while making wagers on what the Sincerely's were going to do about the disgusting ugly shout problem.

The shout past, present and the even uglier shout possibly coming.

I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm coming! shouted Ophelia Chastity Sincerely down on the floor, down on her hands and knees, doggy style having given up on ever finding a good piece of wood. And it's all your damn, damn fault! Oh God it's all your fault!

Actually, her good doctors giggled, that's a devotional sentiment you should have been bleating nine long months ago. Here now in the present you should be shouting, It's coming. It's coming! It's coming!

And it came. A horrible, regrettable hideously ugly shout new born. The Sincerely's first.

We can't keep it and we can't eat it, religiously intoned the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely to his family, to his televised miniserial ministry and to his time tried, time released twelve step televised support group.

Which it, Daddy Darling? piously asked the littlest twisted twist with the divine hump on her back.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Either it, condemned the good Reverend Sinclair Silas Sincerely exhaling a breath pungent with fire and brimstone. It's going to have to go back and it can take the new born it with it. Strap it to it's back and send them its on their it way.

Oh God it's all your fault, piously moaned Ophelia Chastity Sincerely reaching for a roll of duct tape. It's all your damn, damn fault!

The Sincerely children held the hideously ugly shout, Art Verkoff, down on the floor, down on his hands and knees, doggy style while Mom and Dad duct taped the hideously ugly new born Sincerely shout to his back. The tiny new born shrieked with new life as Art Verkoff, reassigned, was cast out, back to the outer shout out colony a failure and a disgrace but not before he gave each and every member of the Sincerely clan, and no one knows how large that clan can actually be, one last good paddling, with a fine polished piece of wood, neither sparing the rod nor the Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing.

That last shout paddling was a truly piously good and rewarding experience one I will remember for as long as I can, piously intoned the good Reverend to his one true faith formula one supportive time tried, time released twelve step televised support group. Even if this shout, Art Verkoff, being cast out was a far, far greater disappointment to me and mine than it was to the hideously ugly shout. Having tried my best to do my personal best with this troubled ugly shout in the end no matter how hard we forced Art Verkoff to ram his one true piece of the cross into the deep empty caverns of our dark black twist souls and no matter how much Okay Why personal body lubricant, the personal body lubricant with sizzle and zing Art Verkoff was condemned to use, this boy shout of America Art Verkoff's placement in our one true faith formula one religion was a cross too splintered for us too bear.

by Michael Estabrook

Freiheit! Freiheit!

Copenhagen Airport, on line to check in
when a stocky, older gentleman
with a graying crew-cut and sandals suddenly
begins screaming in German,
"Freiheit! Freiheit!"
waving his passport around over his head.
It takes a minute or two
until he is surrounded by airport security guys
in their tall boots and yellow flak jackets.
They're confused, talking to him calmly,
but he keeps on screaming,
"Freiheit! Freiheit!"
waving his passport around over his head.
Then a woman security agent
enters the scene, talking softly,
(I can barely hear her
and she's right next to me.)
touching his arms gently.
He calms down then,
he's sweating, his eyes bulging wide,
mouth so dry, but he calms down then.
And I think how there's nothing
like a woman's soothing voice
to calm a man down
and that if this were the States
that poor old fellow would've been down
on the ground a long time ago.

1953-Not to Be Forgotten

by Persis M. Karim

When my father came to this country in 1946, he was dazzled by its bright lights and

Baba knew that he could not fulfill his destiny or the destiny of his country with this man in power.

from the Indian soldiers working for their British overlords. Baba hated calling

promise of democracy. Still a young man, he had already lived through the First World War in France and the occupation of Iran by British and Soviet troops for nearly four years. He watched as this occupation squeezed the life out of his country and brought widespread famine to his countrymen. He watched as Iran, bit-by-bit, lost its independence to the growing forces of the Cold War.

Newly minted as an engineer from the first graduating class of Tehran University, Baba had begun working on the Iranian National Railroads which were being constructed for the World War II transport of munitions to the southern front of the Soviet Union. An intelligent and daring young man, Baba found himself in precisely the right place at the right time. While most of his peers were uneducated, fighting on the front lines or both, he was rapidly promoted to Chief Superintendent. He met with Mohammad Reza Shah (the second monarch of the Pahlavi regime, who was deposed in 1979) and gave him a tour of the newly built steam engines and the site where my father was forced to take orders

them "Sahib" and hated the arrogance of the British. He had almost equal disdain for the Shah. Baba looked on him as a mollycoddled playboy who didn't know his count; he'd spent much of his life at Swiss schools, benefiting from his father's tremendous wealth. Baba knew that he could not fulfill his destiny or the destiny of his country with this man in power. He knew that the oil under Iranian soil and the proximity of Iran to the Soviet Union would result in more, not less suffering. He had met a few Americans during the war, and had been deeply influenced by his reading of de Tocqueville, Jefferson, and whatever else he could get his hands on in Persian translation. He craved democracy, craved a place to breathe as an individual, to grow and fulfill his ambitions.

America beckoned to him, and he came. Under the auspices of transforming the war-time Iranian railroads to civilian uses, he was sent to the U.S. in 1946 as a researcher looking for a model to manage the newly established railways. For nine months he rode the American railway system, from

coast to coast, talking to people, collecting data, marveling at the largeness and possibility of this great land. He wrote a report on his findings and sent it home to the Shah's government. He never heard back, and once over his initial frustration, happily accepted his good fortune. Like anyone who lived through the War, he considered America to be the destination of hope. So my father decided to stay and sought work as an engineer. For a time he worked for Westinghouse assembling washing machines in Chicago, then he moved to Wisconsin with his new wife and baby to work on a machine assembly line. In 1951, he landed a job at Kaiser Aluminum in Northern California and was finally able to work as an engineer, earning enough money ultimately to buy a house and grow his family.

In 1952, Baba witnessed his first democratic election. He was not yet a citizen, but longed to vote for Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson was a man my father admired because of his liberal, democratic and international vision. My father saw Stevenson as a counterpart to the newly and democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran: Mohammad Mossadegh. Although Baba couldn't vote in 1952, he named his second son Adlai to honor the American politician and the Arabic word "adl," which means justice.

Adlai Stevenson lost that election, but Baba held out hope that in four years Stevenson would run again,

and he would finally be able to vote for him. Baba registered as a Democrat. But within the next year, he saw the political terrain shift. Mossadegh was declared "Man of the Year" by *TIME Magazine* but it was not a flattering greatness. One year later, Mossadegh, a man who called for the nationalization of Iranian oil, a man my father could envision leading Iran to independence, lost too.

Mossadegh was deposed by a CIA-backed coup d'etat in 1953. Baba never again saw America in the same bright light. Democracy was a good idea, but badly executed, he would say. He became a skeptic, and more certain that he could never survive in the Iran that was born from these events. Three years later he became a naturalized American.

His brother, Georges had stayed in Iran to fight for democracy, fight for the possibility of an independent nation. As a member of the Tudeh party, fighting for an independent socialist system, he found little hope. A year after Mossadegh's demise, my uncle landed in prison. He spent eight long years in the dank cells of Iran. He was beaten, tortured, and rarely saw his family.

One brother was free in America, the other was imprisoned in Iran. Both were deeply disillusioned.

Two months after my father died, as I cleared the books off his bookshelf, I found the copy of the

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

But it was enough for
me to know.

collection of Iranian-American literature, (*A World Between*) I had edited and had given to him as a gift in 1999 shortly after its publication. He had carefully contributed his own addendum to the historical narrative I had provided in the introduction to the book. I had attempted to explain the mass migration of Iranians to North America after the 1979 revolution. Baba had crossed out the words, "over the past two decades" and written in his own hand, "since American-sponsored coup d'etat in Iran in 1953, that led to the revolution of 1979." He initialed it AK (Alexander Karim).

Several weeks after my father's death, I received a letter from my Uncle Georges in Iran. He had started the letter after we spoke on the phone. The crackling connection was made even more surreal and sad by my inability to conjure up the words for "stroke" or "coma" in Persian. He wrote the letter after he finally understood the gravity of my father's condition. In that letter, my uncle spoke about his own boyhood memories of his brother—their hero games of combat with pretend swords and shields made from the pillows in the basement of their childhood home in Paris and then later in Tehran.

"You were the Great Alexander and I was the hero Rostam," he wrote, referring to Alexander the Great and Rostam, the hero of the *Shahnameh*, the Iranian national epic. The letter moved from the nostalgia of their close childhood to a palpable sense of the impending loss. And here, in this letter, where he conveyed his heavy but still premature grief for his younger brother, he also wrote a sentence about the coup, fifty-two years after the event: "In Iran, my brother, we can never forget this coup. Never." And that was all he wrote about it.

But it was enough for me to know.

1953. It shaped my father's life, it shaped my uncle's life, it shaped my cousins' lives. Years before I was born and all these years after. And I can never forget it either.

by Timothy Martin

The Church of His Debit-Card Soul

In the church of his debit-card soul
(to which he faithfully returns every Sunday),
he listens to the earnest preacher preach,
expositions on sin and its twin, salvation,
and it all feels a little stiff to him, like a knee
that took a bullet aimed at someone else once,
and...wait a minute...repositioning...there, better.
Meanwhile of (to his left) his wife, he wonders
if she notices how the new choir director
looks like he should be on a Greek island
working on his tan's tan, and frantically
counts the altos to see if she'd be so inspired.
Of (to his right) his son, he thinks that someday
son will ask for the car keys, and dad will say no,
and the fiasco will end years later in the rest home,
where sonny will switch malarial bilge into his IV,
and grease his wheelchair's wheels while looking for
the building's most freshly polished floor.
He doesn't grasp how each of them
would give anything to dare one clear beatitude
of love, or roll away the stone of the heart
and share with him the remarkable,
small "r" resurrection. Later, he'll rise
for an old tuneful hymn and dream of a backyard chair,
and dozing to the hum of another's mower.
Faith, so difficult to unlearn.
So difficult to learn, faith.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

Contributor Notes

Bayard fleas.

Over the years **Michael Estabrook** has published a few chapbooks and appeared in some terrific poetry magazines, but you are only as good as your next poem and like a surfer looking for that perfect wave, he is a student of poetry prowling incessantly for that next perfect poem. Right now he is looking for that perfect poem in his wife, who just happens to be the most beautiful woman he has ever known. If he finds it anywhere he'll find it in her.

Mark Hummel is a fiction writer and essayist. His work has appeared, among others, in the literary journals *Fugue*, *The Bloomsbury Review*, *Zone 3*, *Matter*, and *Talking River Review*. He has recently completed work on a novel titled *Water Cycle*. After having taught writing at the college level for twenty years, Hummel now writes full time from his home near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He also works as a freelance editor and writing coach (www.thewordwright.net).

Bill Jansen lives in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Persis M. Karim is a poet and aspiring novelist who lives in Berkeley, CA. She teaches literature and creative writing at San Jose State University. She is editor and contributing poet to *Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora* (University of Arkansas Press, 2006) and the co-editor and contributing author to *A World Between: Poems, Short Stories and Essays by Iranian-Americans* (1999). Her poetry has appeared in a number of online and print journals. (more info: <http://www.persiskarim.com>)

Philip Kobylarz is a photographer who lives in Pocatello, Idaho. He has recent work appearing or slated to appear in *The Iconoclast*, *Visions International*, *New American Writing*, *Slab Literary Magazine*, and *Poetry Salzburg Review*.

Columnist and frequent free-lance contributor to the Knoxville News-Sentinel, **J Brian Long** is author of a collection of poems, "The Singing of the Wheels: Poems from Somewhere Not Far" (Wind Publications, 2004) which was nominated for the Kentucky Literary Award. He has also served on the board of directors for the Knoxville Writer's Guild, has been a reader for the Peter Taylor Prize for the Novel. In addition, he also edits the poetry section of a regional print magazine. His work has appeared in various literary magazines and journals.

Timothy Martin is originally from Michigan, and has attended the University of Michigan and the University of Michigan. He resides and works in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His work has appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *Slant*, *The Bryant Literary Review*, and other journals.

Adrienne Ross' essays have appeared in *Fourth River*, *Tikkun*, *Under the Sun*, *EarthLight*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Slow Trains*, *Cezanne's Carrot*, *An Intricate Weave: Women Write on Girls and Girlhood*, the American Nature Writing anthology series and other publications. She received a Seattle Arts Commission literary award and Artist Trust Literature Fellowship.

Dave Rowley is originally from Sydney, Australia. He now lives in Seattle with his wife Tina and their son Finn. Dave's poems have been previously published in *Stirring*, *Juked* and *Mimesis*, a fact that utterly fails to impress Finn.

Lois Shapley Bassen won a Mary Roberts Rinehart Fellowship for an alternative history novel, *German Sabbath*, about the successful assassination of Adolf Hitler on the day after the Night of the Long Knives, June 30, 1934. She has been married for 40 years, has two adult daughters (a doctor and a teacher), and recently moved from New York to Rhode Island. Her most recent release is the memoir she co-authored of a young Scottish nurse in wartime Japan, *Thistle & Chrysanthemum*.

Jennifer Westfield is a Master's Candidate at the Center for Writers at the University of Southern Mississippi. Her work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Cairn*, *Product*, and is forthcoming in *Taiga*. She lives in Tallahassee, Florida.

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

During the 1970s, **Karl Williams** worked with children with cognitive disabilities. His prose and poems have been published in magazines and books and online. His stories and plays have been presented on stage. And songs from his five CDs have been aired on television and radio around the world.

Matthew Wylie is a writer who emigrated to Canada from the United States in 2006. He has taught literature / writing at universities, colleges, and private schools in both the U.S. and Canada. He has been published in various scholarly / writing journals, such as *The Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, *Cinetext: Film and Philosophy*, and other like-minded journals. Wylie currently lives in Toronto with his wife.