

A still life painting of several apples and sliced apples on a white surface. The apples are rendered with realistic shading and highlights, showing various shades of red, green, and yellow. Some are whole, while others are sliced into thin rounds. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white surface.

poetry by

David Chorlton
Santiago del Dardano Turann
KJ Hannah Greenberg

fiction by

J.A. Tyler
Shaul Hendel

nonfiction by

Erin Popelka
Jess Tourtellotte

and Featured Artist
Francois Bardol

The Externalist: *A Journal of Perspectives*

pre-election issue 2008

VOTE

...because the loudest American voice is
the silent voice of millions.

Issue 10
November 2008

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives
Issue 10, November 2008

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Cover Art: "The Golden Apple" by Francois Bardol

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A Note from the Editor

With four days to the presidential election, I cannot shake the feeling that we Americans are on the verge of an historical moment no matter who becomes our next President. This election season has been an emotional one for me. I've sifted through policy analyses, voting records, legislation history, opinion pages, blog comments, poll results and analysis of polling practices, election history, news articles, and books written by the presidential candidates. I've talked with friends and family and neighbors and people I don't know very well trying to get a feel for exactly where we are as a nation, how we got there, and what, if anything, we can or should do about it. I know I'm not alone. The Presidential Election Feature on our blog tripled hits to *The Externalist* and downloads of our .pdf archives have doubled in the last month. So it comes as no surprise to me that a flurry of political writing has filled not only my inbox, but hundreds of other writing web sites and e-zines.

As I looked at the submissions sent for this issue, I looked especially carefully at those that related to where we are today, the issues that have dominated the election season, and the issues that haven't received as much attention as they should. Our Editor's Choice pick for this issue, "Teardrop Trailer" from new poet Yvette Wiley, contemplates the forthcoming or already-here recession (depending on how you view the situation). Erin Popelka's essay "Without the Baby Carriage" reflects subtly on the choice to be or not be a parent in today's society while Jess Tourtellotte's essay "Boundaries of the Disabled Body" explores perceptions of disability and highlights several important issues related to the disability rights movement—an issue that started strong in the primaries and virtually died once the vice presidential candidates were announced.

In fiction, *Externalist* favorite Shaul Hendel explores the Middle East, and Daniel DiPrinzio's flash fiction story "Dancing with Gas" ponders the economy and in a larger way, capitalism. Some former *Externalist* poets return with new insights while new *Externalist* contributors debut in our pages with equally strong statements.

As mentioned above, *The Externalist* started a blog the 1st of October. We intend to continue utilizing that space to highlight literary activism, contributor announcements, and news from our efforts including announcement of our award nominations, calls for submissions, and upcoming features. Recently, we've received emails from readers asking how they can help support *The Externalist*. While we are not set up to accept donations, we greatly appreciate the thought. As an alternative, I am participating in Dzanc Books' Write-a-Thon on November 15th. Dzanc Books is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that exemplifies literary activism and philanthropy while also providing substantial assistance to writers, literary journals (both print and online), and broader communities through their education outreach activities. If you'd like to support *The Externalist* in one small way, please go to their web site at www.dzancbooks.org/writeathon/ and sponsor me with the comment "The Externalist" or better yet, volunteer to participate and gather sponsors of your own.

One final word: whatever your political ideologies, vote. Democracy doesn't work without the voice of the people.

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Editors' Choice

Editor's Appreciation

Yvette Wiley's poem "Teardrop Trailer" combines Native American philosophy with the irony of property as the American dream. Details about the narrator's personal belongings—from cars to coats—overshadow the relationship between narrator and companion, providing a strong contrast within the content of the poem. Wiley's use of internal rhyme moves the poem forward at a quick pace, but the sarcastic tone of the narrator forces the reader to pause and think carefully about his or her values. Not only is this poem timely in the face of a global recession, but the technique of the poet allows an emotional flavor without disrupting the quality of the work.

by Yvette Wiley

Teardrop Trailer

Once this recession or depression
or concession of our American dream
becomes history,
I'm gonna buy me a Volvo, or a Subaru.
Electric powered; maybe a hybrid will do.
I'll hitch up a teardrop trailer;
wood paneled sides; silver alum on top.
It'll sleep two.
Load up the dogs; toss in a fly rod;
pack my 501s; a pair of Keens;
two tank tops; (*spaghetti straps will do*)
three tees, one long sleeved;
and a North Face Jacket. Black.
Multi genres of CDs or MP3s,
so I can sing while I drive
along beach roads, and desert roads,
that'll take me places I've never seen;
drive along dirt roads, and mountain roads,
returning to places I've already been.
That's what I'm gonna do.
Me, the dogs, and a democratic car, pulling
a teardrop trailer full of freedom to roam.
Look for me.
You might see this half-breed drifter by the camp fire glow;
shaking dust from my boots; slapping ash from my jeans,
as I beam with my big fat American dream.

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Dancing with Gas

by Daniel DiPrinzio

The rise in gas prices has taught me one thing—Prius drivers are really condescending.

I'm sick and tired of them looking down their noses at me—and I'd bet that some of them probably aren't even all vegan!

Haughty hybriders aside, we must do something to combat these problems of paying too much at the pump.

I say we do what Americans do best—dig ourselves into an insanely large credit hole that we can't possibly climb out of.

After all, most of us are already well on our way to credit oblivion, and have been in for quite some time. But instead of doing it bit by bit, let's dive in headfirst without shame or reservation! Let's completely unfetter ourselves from the shackles of fiscal responsibility, waving our magic plastic cards to fill up our cars, trucks, and SUVs with DVDs like we've never waved before.

Now, I know what some of you responsible folks are saying: but then we'll owe too much money, and be forever in debt, and they'll come and take our things! Well, that's why after waving your magic plastic cards, you have to do the other thing Americans do best.

Dance.

Hop from one foot to the next like a court jester around creditors and banks. Embrace balance transfers. Become best friends with deferments. Love the sexy minimum payment. You'll never have to pay the full amount for gas. After all, why should you have to be responsible for getting yourself out of debt? The government doesn't worry about paying what they owe. Why should you?

And then, on your deathbed—which is hopefully a mattress, depending on how well you've danced—reflecting on the thousands upon thousands of dollars you've never paid for gasoline that took you up and down the highway of life, you can rest assured that you've done your duty as an American citizen.

Uncle Sam will be so proud.

by David Chorlton

Letter to Wordsworth

Dear William, The first miles north
from Manchester Victoria
ran through a hell of brick and factory smoke.
Trains carried hope to the countryside. By Kendal
I was buoyed by the sight of a clear sky. The local line
to Windermere ran smoothly
through an England that belonged to the world
not to industry, or so I thought
until I bought the book of your poems at Grasmere
and discovered your horror set in verse
at the prospect of a railway
on your most beloved land. *Rash assault* you called it,
and called on us *to share the passion of a just disdain*.
I'm writing now to share some,
to tell you how the ice is warming and the handshakes
of men securing deals
for oil are colder than ever; how hunters
call it sport when they're the only
side that can win; how advertising tells us
how much more we need and the space to grow it
diminishes as we watch; how forests
are chewed up by machines; how rivers
are stolen from their beds; how yellow monsters without hearts
plough the desert open
until nothing remains of it but the howl and the coo
when foxes and doves nest
in our memories. And I know what would sicken you most
is that so little was done, that so few human beings
would demand that we change, that our laws
would be written in smoke. But just watch, William, how quickly
those in power meet to proclaim there is a crisis.
No, not for the planet, William, only
when their money begins to melt away
do they take action. I suppose, to quote you again,
they are *weighing the mischief with the promised gain*.

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by Dennis Greene

Scabs

("They told me how Connolly was shot in the chair"
Dominic Behan "The Patriot Game")

My father never found one decent word to say
about the English. Old Erin's son, but one who
never saw the shores of Ireland, he picked at scabs
until he'd pulled them free and ancient memory

became fresh blood on stones, an endless liturgy
of right and wrong, and us and them, of truth that
lied and lies that looked like truth and sounded just
like hymns, a softly spoken xenophobic rant that

showed its face each time a bomb blew up a Belfast
pub, or tore to shreds some busy street in London.
A small, congratulatory grunting of macabre appreciation--
this from a man whose gentleness was legend.

He passed this on to me though I resist.
God knows what peace I yet may have
if I'd stop picking at my scabs.

Rethink, React, Respond!

Send your "Gut Reaction" to this or any other poem or story in this issue in 200 words or fewer to editor@theexternalist.com and it could appear in a future issue of *The Externalist*! Be sure to include 'Gut Reaction' as the subject header of your email. For more information, see our Submission Guidelines on the web site.

**Boundaries of the Disabled Body:
Crossing of Reality and Fiction**

by Jess Tourtellotte

November 15, 2007: The hospital is definitely not my favorite place in the world, but there is something soothing about sitting in a wheelchair after fourteen years of being in wheelage retirement. The circular bars feel smooth and cool in my hands. An instant rush of physical strength and power flows up my arms and to my biceps as I push myself forward. Could I actually be missing an old prosthetic that I had resented for years? Yes. The nurse takes what little control I have left over my body and pushes me into the back of the ER. It is decided that X-Rays must be taken to see if my toe is broken.

When I return from X-Rays Sierra and Jahla greet me with short, tight, and slightly awkward smiles. My sentiments exactly I think to myself. The tension and unfriendliness in the hospital could be cut with a spork. We wait for the doctor...five minutes...

"Well, your toe isn't broken, but you bent the nail more than halfway back, see?" I glance at the obscure toe on the X-Ray as she continues to explain what will occur in the next couple of minutes.

"I have to cut your toe nail back." I shift uncomfortably.

"Will it hurt?"

"Does it hurt when you cut your hair?" she asks curtly.

"Uh, no" thinking she used a rather harsh tone.

"Well, why would it hurt if I cut your nail? Do nails have feelings? Does it usually hurt when you cut your nails?"

"Yeah, it does sometimes." I've had more problems with this toe than I'd like to think about and I realize she has no idea how much pain I am undergoing, during what she believes to be an easy and painless procedure. Suddenly Jahla asks the doctor, "How is Jess supposed to walk when she's in so much pain?"

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Immediately the doctor looks at me as if to explain why my friend has asked such a ludicrous question. And the only thing I can think to say is, "She's asking because I have CP and I walk differently on my feet." Not only do I perceive my answer to be suitable for Jahla's question, I also believe that the doctor will give us the appropriate advice to aid me. The doctor's next comment, however, shocks me into a surreal reality that forces me to remember not to make assumptions about people regardless of who they are. .

"Well, it's not like we're going to give you an electric powered wheelchair," she responds.

I have no idea of what it means to be fully able-bodied nor will I ever have the "privilege" to live such a life. To live without constraint or to absent-mindedly think about the well being of my body and heart with each step. Crossing the street is always a gamble between life and death, in those few precious seconds before walking across I think about the few individuals I really love and hope to make it for their sake as well as my own. It is not paranoia, but reality. It is the reality of living as a person with a disability. It is the world's--or rather, American society's--interpretation of how I live with a disability and it is their definition of disability that has constructed the way I interact with people and how people have interacted with me since my birth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines disability as follows:

<p>Disability - 1. Want of ability (to discharge any office or function); inability, incapacity, impotence. 2. Incapacity in the eye of the law, or created by the law; a restriction framed to prevent any person or class of persons from sharing in duties or privileges which would otherwise be open to them; legal disqualification.</p>

Looks of sympathy instead of empathy are enough to drive me over the edge, enough to make me scream, cry, give up, or pray to God for the strength to carry on even though I have not prayed in years, to bask in my self pity for days at a time for the sheer agony that I cannot help but feel sometimes when society asks too much of me.

What most people see as their privilege or advantage over me I consider their ignorance and vanity, their inability to perceive another's existence separate from their own interpretation of what it means to live a just and fulfilled life. As children we grow up recognizing that not only our parents, but also that other adults have control over what we can do and say, more specifically what we *can't* do and *can't* say. It is this dynamic of power that interests me most when looking at how the disabled body interrupts and solidifies able-bodied assumptions about the amount of agency they hold over people who are considered different. For instance, the assumption that life with a disability is unbearable seems to be one of the strongest arguments when a couple is considering giving birth to a child with a disability. Some doctors and scholars argue that, it would be a far crueler act to bring them into a world where they lack so many advantages than to end a pregnancy. Therefore the act of terminating or surgically operating on a disabled child, becomes a justifiable answer to relieve everyone of agony and to avoid the possible perceived judgments made on both the parents and the child born with a disability (Parens & Asch, 117). I argue that social barriers are the main problem here, not the disabled.

The fact that I have to validate my presence and explain my story in this world is in and of itself ridiculous, but I realize the necessity of it; if I did not, I would fall prey to the obstacles placed in front of me by society, made to feel that I am less of a person because I do not fit into the norm of what society sees as an acceptable body. There is also the fact that people seem to be confused when defining what it means to be human, or what a human being looks like. For example, legislators can argue that having abortions are against nature unless the fetus happened to be disabled, which would in turn justify any belief that individuals with a disability is a detriment to society. (Parens & Asch, 65). This information clearly shows that disabled individuals do not have a place in society next to the able-bodied. Furthermore, what lessons does it teach about what types of people we should value over others? I challenge the assumptions that the disabled need to be "helped" or "fixed", and this is considered radical—but why? Why is it so radical to want respect from another human being, to be accepted as an individual with a difference? Why is it so radical to ask the medical system or parents why they feel the need to have so much control over the disabled body when the disabled person is the one who has to live in that body, whatever body that may be? Is it because they have to see it? What is so wrong with seeing? I believe most people in the disability community would say that they want to be seen and heard, not ignored or discriminated against like so many other minority groups who has fought and faced any form of oppression either because of their economic background, gender, culture, or ethnicity have done and continue to do on a daily basis. I consider it a privilege that many people have the ability to turn their heads away from the disabled and look

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the other way. Everywhere I turn there are those with the ability to maneuver in a way I can never achieve. The able-bodied can manipulate and construct themselves to fit more into the standards of a perfection that society requires of them. The disabled body, however, cannot be corrected. Is the unfixable what makes the disability community so easily dispensable if the appropriate professionals deem it necessary to improve the overall quality of life? It is important to acknowledge the origins of such stifled thinking about disability.

It is imperative to break down the roles that the disability and able-bodied communities play within society. First, there is the role of the oppressor (the able-bodied) and then there is the role of the oppressed (the disabled). These particular roles have become an ingrained part of our thinking. Individuals who identify as disabled are targeted because they are considered weaker, disadvantaged, and unable—lesser. In addition, the idea exists that being disabled means missing out on “opportunities.” People think that the missed opportunities (for the disabled) often lead to a profound state of happiness and fulfillment (for the able-bodied). This is especially seen in the “medical model of disability” which clearly defines the life of the disabled as negative, rather than positive. In the book *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights* editor, Adrienne Asch, explains in depth the medical model’s viewpoint in regards to the disabled, “Disability must be prevented, because disabled people cannot function within existing society” (Parsons & Asch, 149). What this essentially means is there is only one “right way” to live. There is no room for variation, meaning there is no room for the disabled.

Being disabled has its advantages. I have gained immense insight from keeping my head above the game and picking myself off the ground (at times literally) after oppressive actions and attitudes have been inflicted upon me. Because I am not able-bodied, I have to think more carefully about what it takes just to live. Of course my physical challenges have made me more aware of all the barriers that keep us from loving each other for who we are. But most importantly I’ve learned to appreciate my own life and my own accomplishments on a deeper level—accomplishments that able-bodied persons sometimes take for granted, to their own detriment as well as the detriment of others.

In life you make choices about what you want to accomplish and achieve, what battles are worth being fought, what changes you want to make even if others believe them to be utterly impossible to do. I am holding a mirror up to society, forcing them to become aware of their actions and realize the impact they are having on the disability community. I am making a bold

challenge for others to really see inside of what it means to live with a disability. I want able-bodied people to be able to look at somebody with a disability and not just gawk, but instead to really dissect our society's thinking surrounding the disability community and the treatment which is currently being conducted in attempts to "correct" a minority group that does not need to be fixed, but understood.

In Michel Foucault's book *The History of Sexuality* he hypothesizes, "There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives," (Foucault, 95). This is a rather obvious and simplistic statement, but is it? The fact that Foucault seemed to be a highly liberated man—who faced oppression of a different sort in his everyday life—leads one to conclude that he was more than a one-dimensional theorist. In fact, Foucault goes on to say that there is not one person who creates or targets one particular individual or group, that one person is not capable of formulating social norms. If power dynamics exist, it is because everyone involved has played a certain role allowing the power structures to evolve and expand.

If this is true, then what led to the doctor's rude and unprofessional behavior toward me and how did I "come to feel" like such a victim in her eyes? Was it her career and economic status that proved superior to my own? What about the doctor's ability to make a medical conclusion about my overall health and well-being—or was it simply her ability to be able-bodied? If power does have an agenda and people fall susceptible to both its use and outcome then why are more individuals prone to experience its wrath when they are in the hands of others? What actions need to be taken to switch the power around from the negative and make it a potentially progressive tool that produces a positive result for the world? Better yet, what can be done to breakdown the power structures themselves and the assumptions that arise when power becomes the foundation of oppression?

Most parents, I expect would imagine playing physical games such as soccer or football with their kids. However, most parents probably never openly talk about what could happen if their child "could not" do those physical activities. And if they do think about it, it is not in positives terms. According to Asch and Parens when one woman thinks about the possibility of having a child with a disability she states, "I would have an abortion, because I could never do that," (Parens and Asch, 64). The word abortion is not the most striking aspect of this quotation—rather, it's the fact that the woman says she could never do **that**. What exactly does she mean by using the word that? She means raising a disabled child. Inadvertently this woman has just strengthened stereotypical thinking when it comes to raising children with disabilities. It is assumed that raising a child with a disability always provides more challenges then raising a child who is able-bodied. But is this

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always the case? When I asked my mother if it was far more challenging to raise a child with a disability than it was to raise her two able-bodied sons, she responded "I wouldn't say it is far more challenging, but yes, it is more challenging in the sense that it is financially more stressful and the fact that daycare is really hard to find, because most are not accessible for handicapped children, and then there is physical therapy and counseling." My mother's response is interesting in two respects. One, she talks about the financial burden that comes with raising a child with a disability, which is admittedly true. The second point she makes draws from the inaccessibility found in daycares for children with disabilities and then counseling. It seems the most time consuming aspect in regards to raising a child with a disability is the mental and emotional stress that both the parent and the child have to endure. The parent has to realize that her child is disabled and therefore sacrifices and modifications will have to be made in order to get through the struggles and enjoyments of every day life. Then the child has to realize what having a disability means for her as a person and how she is treated because of it.

My job is not to criticize those who undergo surgical procedures in order correct their bodies or the parents who want to provide the best opportunities in life for their child. In fact I understand the desire to be fully able bodied or at least the desire to be stronger or to have more physical control over the body. I also understand not wanting to watch the ones we love go through trials and tribulations simply because they are different. Rather I seek to point out the disturbing and too often misinformed attitudes of doctors and other able bodied individuals, which leads to the extreme maltreatment of the disabled body.

When looking at how the disabled body has been mistreated, it would be beneficial to look at both the history and current use of prenatal testing and how it is being used to discriminate against and even deny the disability community a place within society. For example, in 1883 a man named Schatz was the first to look at how amniocentesis could help treat hydramnios a condition in which there more amniotic fluid around the fetus than normal. However, it was not until 1955 that amniocentesis became used for more selective purposes, such as determining whether or not a fetus had a type of genetic disorder, or to determine if the fetus was going to be a boy or a girl (Parens & Asch, 44). In addition a major breakthrough of detecting Down Syndrome occurred in 1959 when it was recognized that certain chromosomes were the cause of the disability. With so many potential risks that could occur during pregnancy prenatal testing quickly gained in popularity and accessibility. The new technological power associated with amniotic testing gave even greater access and power for

future mothers to have "options" available to them that did not exist a few years earlier. And by 1960, amniotic testing became even more popular when various chromosome abnormalities could be found in the early stages of pregnancy (Parens & Asch, 45). A mother-to-be describes the encouragement she received from doctors to really think about her obligation as a parent to bring a healthy baby into the world after receiving news that her prenatal test showed signs of the fetus having an abnormality, "It seemed as though every time I turned around another physician was asking me whether or not anyone had discussed my "options" with me. 'Options' has clearly become a euphemism for abortion" (Parens & Asch, 157). Currently prenatal testing is making great strides toward developing ways to prevent abnormalities or disabilities in fetuses. There is even a catalogue available which names 940 conditions that can be caught by prenatal testing alone (Parens & Asch 47). Although knowing that your baby is healthy could be seen as a positive thing, it could also mean progress towards the exclusion of people with disabilities. If disability did not exist it would mean less difference in the world, which could result in less empathy and compassion for other people. This is why it is critically important to look at the positive outcomes of having a child with a disability.

Twenty mothers who have children with down syndrome were interviewed about the experiences they had with their doctors before their babies were born. All of the mothers said that the physicians discussed the difficulties and pains they would endure as parents with disabled children. However the mothers talked not about the predicted difficulties, but about the happiness that their child gave them (Parens & Asch, 158). How much agency do doctors have over their pregnant patients? What is the intended result of these medical interventions?

With the rise of fetal testing also, comes the desire to have and create the perfect child, thus the child has become much more than just a part of a parent's being, but part of a vision, a commodity. Eric Parens, an editor of *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights* explores this theory of children being turned into commodities "It is feared," he argues, "women will soon swamp physicians and genetic counselors with limitless test demands in a quest for "perfect children" or "designer babies" " (Parens & Asch, 95). When Parens uses the phrase designer he means Prada or Gucci. Rather the use of the word designer means to create children who resemble or even transcend their parents, becoming, the perfect product by taking on the most respected, desired, and loved identities in our society such as the athlete, the politician, and the prom queen.

The need to create and consume commodities has been a strong part of American culture for years, so the fact that commodities have evolved from

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being just objects to human bodies is not surprising. What is surprising are the great lengths that some parents and other individuals will go in order to satisfy the societal need to conform to the “ideal” or “normal” standards of living. For example a mother who has a daughter with a severe mental disability writes a letter to her able-bodied son discussing the conferences she is attending about prenatal testing and abortion. She writes to him asking if he believes, as a pre-med student, that it is ok for women to use prenatal testing to decide whether or not to continue with the pregnancy in order to avoid extreme hardship for the whole family. The son tells his mother that he disagrees with the way prenatal testing is currently being used to create a “perfect child” and goes on to explain, “[w]hat I am trying to say is that the family starts to seem more like a club, and less like a family.” (Parens & Asch, 169).

Therefore, what happens when a child born into this world does not fit the normal criteria that other children do? How **long** before parents decide that having an imperfect child means having the authority to subjugate them to pain or unnecessary practices as long as others gain knowledge from using that child’s body like in the case of Ashley X?

Not long...

I tell my Dad about how I want to run a program for troubled youth where they participate in adventure therapy in order to learn team work and stronger communication skills.

“Won’t you have to work behind a desk?”

“No, I can walk..”

“Yeah, you can walk, but you can’t do a lot of physical things, so you’ll have to have a job where you work at a desk for the rest of your life. That’s what welfare told me. You’ve got to face reality girl.”

Five years later, I realize that my Dad’s ideas about the “realities” facing the disabled body are entirely different from the truth. It turns out reality is scarier to acknowledge and accept than fiction.

Just In: *The Times* reports a modern day story of Peter Pan like you've never seen it before...**menstruation, breasts, misfortune, monstrosity, and indignity** (pretty much the female body). Ashley X is, "the little girl who will never grow up" (*The Times*, 1). For many people Ashley X's life is incomprehensible and because "we" (the ignorant) as a society are unable to cope with the stress of the unfamiliar deem Ashley X's life less valuable than our own. However, there is still hope for aiding this young girl to Neverland. The decision has been made to invade Ashley X's body against her free will and consent just like "we" would with any other foreign territory.

In 2004, Ashley's uterus, appendix, and breast buds were taken out and estrogen was injected into her body, making her unable to ever fully-grow into an adult woman (*The Times*, 1). The surgery since completed has raised several ethical and controversial issues for many people within the disability and able-bodied communities. More importantly the X case has raised awareness about the fact that medical professionals and parents are seeking surgical procedures to correct and even mutilate the disabled human body.

- Why? I can only speculate.

In an article written by *The Times* entitled, "Parents Defend Decision to Keep Girl a Child" Ashley X's parents claim the procedure was entirely for Ashley's best interest and would promote a happier and convenient life for her, however the argument of convenience is unsettling. Ashley's parents claim that their daughter could not possibly understand the complications that arise by having a menstrual cycle, or what it would mean if her body had been allowed to develop into a mature adult woman. For Ashley's parents the removal of Ashley's breasts stemmed from the fear of the possible sexual abuse Ashley could have endured, since it was predestined she would have large breasts. Although the parents say it was all for Ashley's benefit, the fact remains Ashley did not choose or consent to have her body reconstructed into a permanent state of pre-adolescence. Therefore, who is really gaining a life-style of convenience? It is my belief that the surgery occurred, in part, not only because of age, but also, because of Ashley's

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inability to verbally communicate with the doctors and her parents. Unfortunately when someone does not have the ability to do something, either physically or mentally, it is assumed that they are unable to do most things. For Ashley, her disability limited her ability greatly, because she could not walk, talk, or care for herself without the aid of others thus Ashley was seen more as an object than as a person. Ashley the object could be experimented on with little consequence to anyone. Ashley the person could not only be pitied, but her body could be controlled and invaded simply because she did not have the ability to protest. In addition Ashley's body is viewed more like an object taking up space than a person who has a bodily presence in the world. Another article entitled "Parents Under Fire for Making Daughter Stay Child Forever" which was posted by Fox News, quotes the director of the Institute for Ethics of Emerging Technologies, named George Dvorsky, and his opinion on the Ashley X case "If the concern has something to do with the girl's dignity being violated, then I have to protest by arguing that the girl lacks the cognitive capacity to experience any sense of indignity" (Fox News, 2-3). This statement is horrifying when looking at the attitudes and perspectives that able-bodied people have towards those with disabilities.

It took three years for this case to become widespread news; this happened only after a mother in the UK asked the medical board to grant her permission to carry out the same procedure for her teenage daughter, Katie, who has Cerebral Palsy. Katie's mother Mrs. Thorpe claims not only will menstruation cause Katie indignity, but Katie can not make decisions for herself even if she wanted to, therefore Katie does not realize what is in her best interest (BBC News, 1). Mrs. Thorpe goes on to describe Katie's disheartening circumstances, the life she lives because of her disability and the bleak future that Katie is most definitely bound to live because of it "She's not going to get married and she's not going to have children...Katie is not going to become a normal adult" (BBC News, 2). The idea of what is "normal" is extremely oppressive, because what is viewed as normal to some will be seen as entirely different to others. For example, people have different variations of walking due to what their body can handle or cannot handle, or just personal preference. Mrs. Thorpe's statement that Katie will miss out on a "normal" life reminds me of the woman who I quoted earlier claimed she "could never do that". The woman's statement not only highlights the assumption that if you are a parent of a disabled child then you are either a hero in the eyes of all who praise and pity your circumstance or that you must have been a bad person or mother for this to be allowed to happen. With these pressures put on parents, especially mothers, who are told to be their child's constant protector and nurturer, it

is no wonder parents are seeking ways to normalize their children for the greater good (society).

Ashley X and Katie face particular disadvantages simply because of the severity of their disabilities, but there other factors coming into play here which are not so obvious. The fact is both of the cases mentioned above happen to be young women. Mrs. Thorpe mentioned that Katie will never be able to be reproductive or become intimately involved with the opposite sex. Apparently, there are only two options for women in this world: to be law abiding wives, who sacrifice their, vaginas, ovaries and uterus all for the sake of satisfying man's need to procreate and leave an heir for the next generation of Tom, Dick, and Harry's in our society. Because of their reproductive capacities women's bodies, whether disabled or able-bodied have always been scrutinized and operated on. This is the main distinction between how the male and female bodies are treated. I have yet to hear of Tom, Dick, and Harry undergoing a similar procedure because they would have to live up to the pressure and indignity of having to become husbands and fathers. Furthermore, why is it so essential for disabled women to become "fixed"? What makes the adult disabled woman, wife, or mother so feared within society? Is there a power, which is unknown that must remain unattainable, or is it the worry of what a disabled woman could do with the power that comes attached to the identities of mother, wife, and lover? More importantly, could the fantasy, of the non-sexual disabled woman be just that—a fantasy?

Just In: A shocking discovery has just been made. It is possible for disabled women to be sexually active! It turns out they have all the same reproductive organs, and hormones that normal women have, including pheromones. Hell, in some cases these women are even **mildly** attractive!

What is beauty? And why doesn't anyone I ask have an answer to this question? I mean if we know what is ugly, shouldn't we also know what is beautiful? Here are some things I know for sure, that beauty and disability are not linked, except insofar as society links them. The view that being disabled somehow means being unattractive has been presented as truth rather than myth. Foucault discusses how labeling yourself or claiming an identity that has been placed upon you by others is a double-edged sword. Once you claim an identity, he reminds us, it in turn claims you. The theory

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of the double-edged sword is pivotal when recognizing how much value society has placed on assumptions, especially the assumptions attributed to the disabled and the elusive “beautiful”.

8th Grade: *I’m thirteen. In the girl’s bathroom my best friend, Jane, is playing with my hair, trying to see what style looks good. All of a sudden she looks at my reflection in the mirror with serious deep wonderment and says the one thing that changes the perspective I have about myself until I am twenty years old.*

“You’re so pretty, it’s a shame you’re disabled.”

For years I struggled severely with a lack of self-esteem because others only saw me as disabled. It’s funny...it was not until adolescence that I realized how much my disability really mattered in the eyes of those who were not but after all, adolescence is the peak of self-discovery and self-loathing. It is when labels begin to matter and identities begin to form (no matter how false they may be). These labels proscribe how we are supposed to function with our peers and superiors. An identity or label gives us a mask, a protection, a strength, a sense of being, but most of all an identity or label gives us a name, something to live up to. This was especially true for a writer by the name of Lucy Grealy.

Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with cancer in her jaw at the age of nine and underwent at least eighty reconstructive facial operations in order to achieve a recognizable feminine face before meeting an untimely death in 2005. Throughout her life, doctors promoted the idea of restoring Lucy’s face to look normal. The surgeries were painful and took several months to heal, only for her cheek and jaw to collapse within months to a year after the initial operation(s). In her book, *Autobiography of a Face* Lucy retells and vividly relives the pain, anger, strength, individuality, and the feelings of loss that she experienced while undergoing the struggles of living with a facial disfigurement. The pressure to live up to an ideal image ate at Lucy for several years until both a drug and bodily addiction wove their presence so intricately into Lucy’s life that she became unable to live separately from them. Lucy’s irrational behavior seemed to be her way of coping with the pain life caused and the reasoning behind her actions.

Towards the end Lucy couldn’t dissociate who she was as a person and the way she was treated by others without her face being the cause and effect of

everything happening in her life. In the very beginning of her book readers see how much Lucy's face claimed her and how it became her identity. Lucy heartbreakingly claimed, "I was my face, I was ugliness" (Grealy, 7). For Lucy her face was her foundation and she mostly saw it as something negative instead of positive.

In the last chapter of her book entitled *Mirrors* Lucy explains the hardship of just simply living in this world and the pressures placed upon individuals to live or look a certain way, because society requires it.

"Most truths are inherently unretainable, that we have to work hard all our lives to remember the most basic things. Society is no help. It tells us again and again that we can most be ourselves by acting and looking like someone, only to leave our original faces behind to turn ghosts that will inevitably resent and haunt us" (Grealy, 222).

In contrast to Lucy Grealy's struggles to overcome her "ugliness" Dana Shapiro and Henry Rubin created a documentary, which defies not only appearances, but also the supposed weaknesses regarding the disabled body. *Murderball*, brings to life the intensity, strength, and courage it takes to live with a disability. The film focuses on the sport of wheel chair rugby (also known as quad rugby since all of the players are quadriplegics) and the men who make the sport possible.

The fact that these guys are just like any other male body is particularly evident when learning about the captain of the wheel chair rugby team, Mark Zupan, who was thrown six feet over a fence and into a canal from the back of his best friend's truck (his friend had also been drinking) at the age of eighteen while sleeping off a night of drinking. Zupan held onto a broken branch for thirteen and a half hours to keep from drowning until someone finally heard his faint cry for help. Mark's determination to get the most out of life and his unwillingness to give into anyone shows when watching him play and hearing him talk, "What your not gonna hit a kid in a chair...hit me. I'll hit ya back." Mark could definitely be perceived as a brazen fellow, but as his friends from high school point out Mark has always been that way, it is not a negative effect from being in a wheel chair like some people could definitely misconstrue as unfortunate outcome from his accident, instead of recognizing it as strength in his personal character which has driven Zupan to accumulate many accomplishments through out his life. Mark could also be perceived as a typical male, because of his tough persona. His girlfriend, Jess, describes Mark as a jock a.k.a. an athlete, which is also one of the

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three loved identities in our society that I mentioned earlier in my paper. The fact that Mark and the other guys in wheel chair rugby are seen as athletes and play in the Paralympic games is an interesting dynamic. Simply because a lot of people do not view disability as a virtue, but for these guys it's all about the physical power of the body and the sport they play. Although they live their lives to the fullest, it was not an easy thing to achieve. This was something Zupan definitely struggled with right after the accident however he never let his disability claim him like Grealy. As Mark clearly states in his autobiography *Gimp: When life deals you a crappy hand, you can either fold—or you can play* he has never let defeat become a part of his life, "Sometimes the fight is all you get. Victory doesn't mean anything if failure isn't a possibility" (Zupan, 125). In this society people in the disability community are given very little space to live and have successes. In order to gain a solid foundation in society individuals with disabilities must push through the social barriers creating pathways not only for themselves, but also for others to follow as well, like Josh Blue has done for me.

Since that fateful day in eighth grade I had never been comfortable with my disability. I decided to pretend that I was not disabled and that maybe if I kept the charade up long enough, one day I might wake up able-bodied, normal. It never happened. In the spring of 2007 I heard about this comedian, who was an alumni of Evergreen and had just won "Last Comic Standing" the previous summer. His name was Josh Blue and he also had Cerebral Palsy like me although it affected different parts of his body than mine did and vice versa. Not to mention he was also on the Paralympic soccer team. Originally, I shrugged off the idea of going to see his show for several reasons. I really hadn't had any exposure to people with disabilities and the idea always made me nervous, because it meant I would have to recognize the fact that I had one. I also wasn't a big fan of comedy and don't find a lot of people funny (even now). Then there was the fact that he had accomplished so much in his life and I had not. In my mind Josh Blue had done everything I had ever wanted to do. In truth, I was very much an ableist thinker, simply because I could not handle the reality of my own disability. On the night I saw Josh's show with my friend (I was too terrified to go alone. I had so much anxiety about being disabled that I remember being nervous walking to my seat). Immediately I fell in love with his comedy skits. I had no idea how much his comedy would directly reference his CP and when he used the word cripple I almost had a heart attack. During the show I literally cried with laughter and nodded my head in acknowledgement and it felt good. That night I realized Josh had done something for me, nobody had ever been able to do he had given me a foundation to accept my Cerebral Palsy.

In an e-mail interview with Josh in the winter of 2008 I asked, What do you hope to accomplish by making your CP the central focus of your comedy sketches and how does it make CP accessible to audience members who would be unaware of it otherwise? His response:

“To the people in the audience with a disability, I'm making it okay for them to have to use "handicap accessible" doors or have unreliable limbs or whatever. For someone without a disability, I'm giving them a 30-minute window into the world of a person who they might have otherwise ignored. It's good both ways. Let's all hug.”

That night Josh not only gave me the knowledge that it was ok to be me, but he also, gave me that “30-minute window” which allowed me to be comfortable with other individuals who have disabilities without my own insecurities getting in the way. It was because of Josh that I began to strip all the layers of false identities and labels that I had been wearing since I was thirteen and claim my sense of identity as a person with a disability. An identity that for years, like Grealy I was haunted by because of the fact people believed they had the right to have agency over me. Josh’s stories and comedy was finally something I could understand physically, emotionally, and intellectually. For the first time I really felt like I was on the inside of something bigger than I even have words for right now instead of on the outside. That feeling came alive again a year later when I saw Josh’s show in Tacoma. I embarrassed and angry at the way the Q and A was going so I impulsively yelled out “Palsy Power Josh!” (I had to yell it twice because of the horrible acoustics in the room) and he responded with a little joke about how nobody realized they had come to a secret meeting to start a revolution and they would all be leaving with canes, etc. At the end of the night Josh exited the stage by saying “Revolution, yeah!” Although me feeling like I was on the inside of something bigger had nothing to do with a revolution for the disabled I would like to think that I am doing something revolutionary by questioning society’s hold and authority over people, especially those who are disabled. After twenty years I finally claimed an identity that people had placed upon me the moment I was born and structured it for my own empowerment. I can’t help but wonder what Foucault would think? Unfortunately Foucault never took disability into account when he wrote his theories about identity. It is my personal belief that when a person is born disabled, an identity and a place within society is already created for that person based off preconceived notions and the categorization of people who have the same disability (however it could

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affect them differently). For those who are born with a disability the assumptions, the negativity, the recognition, the hope, and the fight all occur in the very beginning stages of life.

My Mom's memory of what occurred on January 27th 1987:

I knew the risks and complications of having a baby born prematurely. Especially 10 weeks premature! How the internal organs and weight gain takes place during the last few weeks of gestation. I wanted to keep you inside me as long as I could. However, my body and you had other intentions. God had other plans in the making.

18 hours of intense labor produced a baby girl. You came into this world a fighter from the get go! You were born 2 pounds and 3 ounces. I knew from the first time I saw you that you would make it. The next day the Doctor came into my room and told me that you were hemorrhaging on the right side of your brain and followed that with...

"She has a 50/50 % chance of living. It all depends upon her will to live."

As he spoke my heart sank into the depths of hell! If there was a hell, I had entered it at that very moment. My ears became dull as he spoke, I didn't want to hear anymore bad news, but I HAD to listen. This was my daughter that I had asked god to give me. Tears flowing from my eyes, head shaking and my heart aching in a way that I never felt before and I pray to never feel again. The Doctor left the room and the nurse came in with a sedative. After I calmed down I went and visited my girl. The very first time I saw you I knew you were going to be okay. You are a fighter I thought to myself. My Jessica Amber, God has something very special for you to do in this world and I just knew in my heart of hearts that you were here to stay a while. Not just a while but, a long while, and my fears of you not making it just dissipated! In spite of what the medical profession had told me a few hours earlier. I just KNEW you were going to be ok. Complications or not, you were going to be just fine!

Then my brother came to visit, stopping by to see you before coming into my room. I was wonderfully surprised to see him.

"Hey you!" "Did you stop by and see Jessica?" I asked.

"Yes, I saw her." "You named her?" Jay sounded surprised.

"Of course I named her." "Why wouldn't I name her," I replied.

"Tracy, have you seen her?" Jay questioned me further.

"Yes, I have seen Jessica," I responded.

With concern in his voice he said... "I don't think you should have named her because it's just going to break your heart worse if she doesn't make it," he explained. "What! Of course she is going to make it!" I exclaimed. Then Jay with compassion and hope in his voice asked, "How do you know?"

With great confidence I stated, "Because God promised that we would never go through more than we could bear. After all, I am going through a divorce now, I have no income because I was totally reliant on Charlie, I have no place to live and, my daughter was born prematurely. There is absolutely NO WAY that God would take her from me."

"God Tracy, I hope your right," he said.

"Oh, I AM right Jay," I said with more conviction than I have ever said or believed anything in my life.

I would see you several short visits a day. I couldn't hold you because your nerves were so very sensitive, but I could sing to you. So, that is what I would do. I sang a few songs to you. I wasn't a good singer and I couldn't remember all the lines to all the songs I would attempt to sing but, when I did sing...I could see your eyes darting around and you would move your tiny arms as though you were reaching out for me. Yes, you were a fighter and I knew that you knew that I was your mom and that you were wanted. Yes, that would give you the will to live. Knowing that you were wanted and that would give you the desire to stay here."

And I did stay regardless of what all the medical professionals told my mom. I've fought since the beginning and have continued to fight battles that always seem to be in front of me. Although I may be a fighter I have not always been ready to rumble, to slip on my gloves and walk into the world's ring. I have been afraid and exhausted to the point I thought there would be no return from a knock out round, that at some point I would be unable to evade society's desire to finally dismiss me, the flaw in the master plan of perfection. It is in this moment that I think society will never be able to get rid of my presence, because I refuse to surrender to the social barriers placed upon me and anyone else in the disability community, due to the fact that we are different. It is time to acknowledge my place in society as both

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an individual and an individual with a disability. That I can both receive and give knowledge and life experiences to the able-bodied community in the hopes that a common ground will be created between everyone, even if respect is not. After all this is not a fairy tale ending. It is a realistic conclusion.

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The Path, Francois Bardol

by Steve Bunch

Election

He knows angels
live under the wallpaper.
He hears the singing as it weaves its way
through floral patterns and water stains,
strained hosannas thickening the air.

The ceiling lowers as the sun
rises. Shadows sink
into the worn grain of floorboards.

Boxcars rattle beyond his window.
His windows rattle when he sleeps,
disturbing a spider's spinning
behind tired curtains.
But he seldom sleeps.

If he had a table he would sit there.
If he had a chair.
Instead, he stays in bed,
switching the remote
back and forth between
the candidates' debates
and the quest for monster eels in Canada
or an equally elusive Holy Grail
or the story of a Nazi bunker
converted to a disco.

And tomorrow will be like today,
only later. Yesterday's sandwich
will remain uneaten on the mattress.
He will close his eyes and listen
to the weeds growing
in an abandoned garden
he almost remembers.
In the damp smells rising
from storm sewers,
he will hear the ringing
of church bells.

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by Ed Bennett

Angelus

She confounded the old men
in hand made scarlet dresses
who cannot pray without
the secret words
of fruited wombs adorned
with unseen saviors leaping.

How does one explain the quickening
to theologians unable to bear
the thought of messianic labor pains?
They equivocate when they deny
the moment of a woman's flesh
in this celebrated mystery.

Every woman speaks the gnosis of creation:
a god-man's miracles were wrought
by hands engendered from a woman's flesh –
no man part of this divine consequence.
Let us pray the angel's greeting,
leave the old men to their arid tomes.

He Asked Water, She Gave Him Milk

An Apocalypse

by Shaul Hendel

Nabila entered her dim bedroom, where the exhausted Israeli colonel fell into

He is a good runner, Colonel David, even in his sleep.

many relentless weeks warding off the Syrians, there is not a man left.

tortured sleep, and with a well-aimed mallet blow drove a thick iron tent-stake into the hollow of his right temple.

Between the first blow, which cracked the hard shell around the colonel's brain, and the next, which would sink the sharp metal deep into the folds of his gray matter, Colonel David re-lived his crush in the battle of Jabel-Al-Ras against the Syrian army a few hours earlier that day:

He surveys the battlefield from his foxhole, his defeat as evident as the bloody wounds of his men around him; his devastation as piercing as the unanswered cries of his torn up company. He bellows a hoarse "Retreat! Retreat! Retreat!" into his radio, and embarks on a hasty foot journey toward the officially-neutral Druze village of Qenite, where he hopes to find refuge. The enemy gives a relentless chase; one by one his men fall behind him. He is a good runner, Colonel David, even in his sleep. Of his company, his soldiers with whom he had spent

He stumbles his way east, from the Syrian country toward the barrier that marks the Israeli border, an arbitrary line that splits in half the heart of the village of Qenite. What used to be an insurmountable electric fence is now trampled remains. His sweat tastes like blood, and his eyes are red with blood, and his footsteps drum the end of all days.

In his dream, just as it was, the spent-up colonel arrives at the edge of town. An aquamarine door swings open in a small brick house to his right, and he dives toward it before the young woman at the doorstep has a chance to retreat.

"Don't fear...Don't fear," he says, and slams the door behind. He bends to slide shut the door's lock, and the side of his head brushes against her long dark dress. The touch of the cloth is surprisingly sharp, and it pierces through his skull like a sword. In her silky white head-covering she seems to him a merciful nurse. Colonel David's head splits with pain, but a simultaneous,

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inexplicable relief, invites him to submit to the warm darkness that embraces him like a mother.

His dream continues, and in it he is he, and he is she, and thousands of moments are condensed into seconds of clear knowing:

The Israeli officer's beautiful face brakes into a grimace of pain and threat, and he asks her for water. His defeat is evident in his eyes, in the mere fact that he is here, at her house, a lonely warrior washed with the brine of sweat, stained with blood, needing her protection from the chasing enemy. Can she say no to his gun?

"Water?" the officer repeats in English, a motion of a hand toward his lips.

Nabila nods. She brings a jar of cold milk from her refrigerator, and pores him a tall glass. His eyes narrow, but he accepts her offering.

"Thank you."

She nods again. His beauty is uncommon. There is an old, knowing pain in his green eyes, and his lips are sad. His body is lean and strong, the opposite of Jamal, her husband, who had left for Dubai over a year ago to work with his uncle, and sends her money—no comfort to her fertile twenty-five-year-old body. Delicate black chest hairs peak from the officer's khaki shirt collar.

"What's your name?" His accent is heavy with Hebrew; his voice carries authority, not two minutes in her home, and already her boss.

"Nabila."

"Nabila... Means pretty, no?"

She tightens her head-cover, tucks away stray strands, lowers her gaze. There's mud, and stains of blood on his black boots; his left pant is ripped at the shin.

"You help me, Nabila. Your village always in our side. I must to hide here until the night."

His taut body towers over her, the assault rifle dangles between them.

"Go in my bed. If they come I tell them you my man, I say you sick."

She brings him a long, striped galabiah from the bedroom dresser, and turns her back. When the rustle subsides she turns to face him. His soiled uniform is heaped at his bare feet, Jamal's male-dress only reaches his calves, too tight at the shoulders. A nearby explosion shakes the house's windowpanes.

"Yallah!" she cries.

He follows her into the small bedroom. She motions to the double bed, and he crawls in, and curls up with his gun.

She hides his uniform in the basement, among the folds of the large canvas tent under which her wedding ceremony took place, on top of Mt. Carmel five years ago.

She climbs the stone stairs, sinks into the rocking chair in the front room, and reaches for the remote control. The Syrian TV announcer is ecstatic: *"Syrian, Egyptian, and Jordanian armed forces, backed by Iranian rocket umbrella, and Palestinian insurgent attacks, continue their coordinated advance toward the defeated heart of the Zionist entity. Our occupied land is soon to be fully liberated from the hands of the American-backed Jewish invader. Syrian tanks are rolling down the slopes of the liberated Golan Heights, toward Tiberias, and the Sea of Galilee..."* Nabila switches to CNN. An American ex-general, his silver hair trimly cut, drones in a nasal voice. *"After the election of an American president who's a self-proclaimed Neo-Separatist, and the abrupt termination of American financial and military aid to Israel, coupled with the suspension of peace efforts in the Middle East, what we see today has only been a matter of time. An Israel unsupported by American political and military might, is weak and vulnerable..."*

"Nabila!" A loud whisper.

She tightens her headdress again, and goes to stand at the bedroom's doorway.

He lays the weapon flat beside him. "Better?" His grin is faint, and shy; she fights an urge to brush her hand against his brow.

"If they come for me, you say to them I said I will kill you if you don't help me. You say you hide me because you afraid from me."

"This no good," she points at the low pyramid that his rifle erects in the light blanket. "Give me. I hide."

He lays the weapon flat beside him. "Better?" His grin is faint, and shy; she fights an urge to brush her hand against his brow.

An angry roar sends her bolting to the front window: Syrian tanks roll slowly through the village's main street, heading southeast toward Israel. Back in her bedroom the Israeli officer who wears Jamal's galabiah bites his lower lip. Nabila hands him a white handkerchief, and he wipes the fresh blood off his chin.

"You marry?" she asks.

"Yes." His voice shakes with the vibration of the war machines outside. "Three children."

"Tel Aviv?"

"Haifa."

"I born in Haifa," she says. "Rambam Hospital. My home before

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I marry is Daliat-El-Carmel. Before I marry."

"Me also," he says. "Born Rambam Hospital."

His face is pale now, which deepens the green of his eyes, the old sadness. For reasons beyond her reason he seems to belong in her bed today, on the day of his people's defeat.

"Israel lose war," she says.

"Not so fast. Only lose battle. Don't worry. War still long."

"Television say Syrian in Tiberias."

"Don't worry. Tonight I go home, to fight for my family."

Nabila returns to her rocking chair. The sun is half way down in the west. The Syrian television station continues with feverish victory announcements. She tries the Israeli TV channels. All are dead off the air, but for the government owned Channel One, broadcasting *Simpsons* reruns. She turns the TV off, and realizes that the tanks' roar is gone, replaced by the officer's soft snore.

Nabila thinks of her cousin, Amal, who, like many young Druze men, serves in the Israeli army, and her other cousin, Bashir, from Damascus, who must be fighting with the Syrians now. And she thinks of her childhood on the

Carmel Mountain, in the heart of Israel, and her high school years in the city of Haifa. She remembers Ziv, her Israeli boyfriend, her one true love, whose parents have bribed with a new red convertible, on the condition he's no longer to see her, The Arab Girl. She realizes now that she has never even contemplated sharing her fluent Hebrew with her fugitive houseguest. Unknowingly, she'd already made her choice.

The sun is gone behind the hills. The village is grave-silent. Her neighbors, familiar with the premature boastings of war propaganda, wait deep in their homes for the victor of this round to emerge. But Nabila, whose name does not mean pretty, but noble and excellent, is ready to take sides.

She descends to the basement, and emerges with a large iron stake from her wedding tent, and a heavy mallet. In her darkening bedroom David's green eyes move fast behind his eyelids. She takes in every detail, her senses are as sharp as the stake she grasps, yet she's numb. She watches herself move like a heroine in one of her TV shows.

With the next mallet blow, Nabila drove the iron stake deep into the sleeping Israeli general's brain, in the right temple, out the left, and David's dream was no more.

by Üzeyir Lokman ÇAYCI

Istanbul In My Dreams

Your expectations are carved into my eyes...
Their shapes melt in my dreams
The face seen in your postcards
Is not that of your soul Istanbul...
Living apart does not change your seas
Your waiting landscapes offer themselves
Thoughts do not remain still
Istanbul rests its weight upon my loneliness...
White fish swim in your living past
Seagulls float in your memories
Obliterated friendships stay awake till dawn
Anatolia rises from your horizons Istanbul...

by Uzeyir Lokman CAYCI
Traduit par Yakup YURT en français
French free verse translated into English free verse
by F.J. Bergmann., 2002

Martial Dances

We live in strange times, my brother
men make money
with war dances
and occupation...
Do you not see the bombardments
and the pillaging?
Under the boot
you are worn out,
these days
the sweat of your brow
no longer serves you!
Tanks come from distant lands
passing down your streets
demanding to know
why you were born!
And you can say nothing.
Soon, if this continues,

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it will be the course of progress
to be denied learning.
One speaks of the rights of man
here and there.
Do not believe those rumors!
You see that nothing is in place now!
We live in strange times my brother,
arms dealing,
construction
governing the land.
Is it so difficult to understand?
They sell the merchandise of war!
Come listen to my counsel.
Don't marry, it is unsupportable
to suffer the massacre of your children.
The success of your affairs depends
on producing fictitious enemies
to menace...
In this manner
they take over small countries
one after the other
under the pretext of saving them.
While you fight amongst yourselves
others consume your underground resources.
What should I tell you;
do these times plant sorrow
in your hearts?
Be a little understanding!
Increase the number of fratricidal wars,
divide your people further
to make the lives of the invaders easier.
Do not forget that to destroy love
requires only this:
Live in a society without love
and don't educate anyone...
Live in the clarity of obscurity,
depend only on yourself!
The sun rises and sets on time...
the throats of cocks are cut
that sing before the hour!
We live in strange times my brother,
men make money with war dances
and occupation...

Do you not see the bombardments
and the pillaging?

By Uzeyir Lokman CAYCI
Paris - 17.03.2003
Traduit par by Yakup YURT en français
French free verse translated into English free verse
by Joneve McCormick - 2003

The Hunter Has Become a Guide for the Birds

The hunter has become a guide for the birds,
his two faces
against two wings.

He has chopped down trees
to make a post
with small dried branches
for the birds to roost.

He has broken off flowers
to decorate this small tree
to cheer the birds.

He has put small stones
and large grains of wheat
on plates
so that the birds can eat.

He has constructed
posts with pencils
and towers with posts
from the ruins of the towers
so that the birds can take cover.

He has appended signatures,
each one different,
on dry leaves
with his two faces,
no one noticing.

After some time,
chasing the birds one by one,

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he blows like a wind,
saying that judges and prosecutors
are his friends.

The birds, like many others,
quickly understand
and when the time is ripe
they emigrate
exchanging one thing for another,
finding another country,
agreeable people, trees,
grains of wheat on plates
and flowers of all colors...

while living peacefully there,
the hunter is of two faces
against two wings.

by Uzeyir Lokman CAYCI
Mantes la Ville - 1998

Traduit par by Yakup YURT en français
French free verse translated into English free verse
by Joneve McCormick



La Manege, Francois Bardol

Living in the Blink

by J. A. Tyler

There is a hole in his gut and he wants to paint her out but he can't. He want to paint out all the things that he is thinking and feeling and wanting and needing to get rid of but they come back and back and back. There is a forming something in his inside something and he can't see it but he feels it and it feels like hollow vibrant space.

There is a hole. On his insides. And he can't paint it out.

The gaping. The sensations. The feel.

The girl in the black sweater.

And he is twisting up like the tied end of balloon. Like the dead water on salt lakes. Like crunching broken leaves. Like nothing adding up.

Like a function.

Like a breath.

Like breathing.

And it creeps up in his throat. And he can taste it. The feeling. Loneliness and longing. Long and sour. Growing and rank. And it fills the bottom of his neck. His esophagus. His throat. It fills. It grows. As if he swallowed the moon and it isn't going down. Like an

He has an invisible daughter and she is three and she is giggling in his head and he is laughing and bouncing her on his leg.

aspirin as big as a car and stuck there. Suffocating him.

Gaps in his teeth. Howling spots in his eyes. Wrinkles and lines. And uncontrollable hands.

He has an invisible daughter and she is three and she is giggling in his head and he is laughing and bouncing her on his leg.

And he can't paint her out. That girl in the black sweater.

The one he sees when he blinks. That girl. That woman. She is a black sweater and perfectly formed calves. She is hair greedily pulled and pinned. She is straight teeth and flawless skin and cheeks that bounce when she laughs. She is bright and loathsome. She is untouchable. She is unsinkable. She is eager and dancing. And when he blinks he sees her. Dancing. And it makes his stomach hollow and holey and pale. And he can't stop blinking.

He has an invisible wife who lays at home with sick legs and clean-

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washed brains and she hobbles on crutches and she makes up stories and she butters toast with dirty knives and cuts the crust off and throws it all in the trashcan and then takes a thousand pills and sails away into a paradise that no one else can see.

And he wishes that she would hang herself in the basement. If she hung herself in the basement then he could buy a new car like something convertible and fast and red and drive it on the interstate and be off the hook again. But he is on the hook. He is hooked. And he can't paint it out fast enough. And she won't hang herself in the basement anytime soon because the pills never run out and the bottles are always uncapped and she is in sunsets of peach and cloudless nights and there is nothing to make her leave. Everything is beautiful there.

And that baby girl is a figment of his imagination. A could have been or a was not. A should not have been and a therefore and a wasn't.

But the sinking feeling like a boat going under is for real and he tries to paint it out but he can't. He tries to paint it out but it won't go. He tries to butcher it and stew it and make it a soup but it won't go away. He breathes and he blinks and she dances in a tangle of painted clothes and bourbon but she is still there. Dancing when he blinks.

A cough wretches his chest. His cavities. But he is still alive. He is still there. And his throat is still full. And he wishes it was full of a song. That when he set his lips apart a song would come out like a tune. Like a prayer. Like a poem. Poetic. But he opens them cracked and ashamed and they do nothing but gasp. They gasp and sputter. They wrench and turn. They fail.

He is swimming in an ocean that is red and rubies and worthless. He is dreaming of touching a girl who dances in his blinks and he cannot. He can only touch the sour leg of a piller woman drugged on a sofa hand-me-down and flowered. He purses his lips like to kiss her and there is air. There is air and breathing room. But he suffocates. He suffocates in the unscent of her. This woman who turns pirouettes in his head and won't give her palms to his hands. This girl he cannot touch. This woman.

And the hole in his life is getting there. Coming on. And he tries to paint it out but he can't. And there should be a little girl. A daughter. But there isn't.

His life is white and a canvas. His hole is a brush. It is colors and dragging his body down to the depths of a black and cavernous hole. A hole. Sucking him in. He eats to fill it but it remains. He cries to fill it but it seeps his tears. It sheds his tears. It chugs and guzzles his wake.

He is not awake. He is living but he wishes for death. He is dead but wishes for her again and again and again.

There is a should-be mother of his would-be daughter but she is strung out and toxic. She is frowning. She is foul and lifeless. She is living. And he cuddles her like a safety blanket coddled and charmless. She hasn't shaved her legs. She is breathing but he wishes she was hung and swaying from an i-beam in his basement. Strung up like a fox. Like a thief. Like a penance. Like she is.

He is gaping and holed. He is lost.

Breathing.

Sounds like butterflies or whispers draw him out and stain him. He is scribbles and manic. Yellow and blue

and orange and white. He cannot survive this way. Living in the blink. And he paints it out to let it go but it won't. It won't. Nothing is changing and nothing goes away. He paints to get it out but it won't. It is always. It is a dancing girl on a stretched canvas with hair that bleeds into him.

And there is a hole.

He is holey.

Wronged.

And she dances in between the in-betweens.

And he can't survive this way. Living in the blink.

Living in the blink with the girl in the black sweater.



Apples and Coins, Francois Bardol

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by KJ Hannah Greenberg

All Guns and Smiles

Principle fifiers' feathered gear,
Wilted here and whittled there
In Sunday's parade of pom-pom girls,
Plus footballers

Storm our inner tarmacs,
Where players of pigskin toss
Much khaki-driven caution,
To laughter-filled enemies.

It's insufficient to flay donkeys;
Meat needs homes.
Wasted reserve guards
Draw the worst of flies.

Meanwhile, little boys convey stones
From hands to heads, beating paths
Toward murder, scoring
More points than justice.

Heroes in such children's books
Look like early rebel-
Rousers were wont to appear;
They pose all guns and smiles.

by Santiago del Dardano Turann

FRIENDLY FIRE

On reading Betraying our Troops by Rasor & Bauman

Von Mises coughed and Hayek blushed
To see all of their theories crushed:
Their mantra of □ privatization □
And deadly sins of regulation
Was neither cheaper no efficient
As envisioned by their argument
When tested in the Custer Battle
They were among Iraq □s collateral
Damage; dead in brackish Blackwater
And friendly fire of KBR.
The hidden hand has picked the pockets,
Its finger nails the corporate pirates,
Of a government with dropsy
And nodding over hot lobbyist toddy.
So now that their empirical standard
Has left them with a blighted orchard
In which their fruits are gnawed by frost
They layered balance sheets of lost
Rolls and rolls and piles of number
Of lives and chances drown in dollars
The element that they forgot
Was the greed of moral rot.

Without the Baby Carriage

by Erin Popelka

The older women or colleagues or relatives would mutter something about giving it another ten years, they hadn't wanted children at my age, either.

We sat around the dinner table, food still steaming, and conversation wove its way through the two years since we'd last seen each other: Mark and Jessie had gotten married. We'd visited three continents.

Then Mark looked over at Jessie, and she looked at the two of us, "We've got some other news that we need to tell you. We're going to have a third member of our family!" We scraped back our chairs, and four sets of hugs began. I was careful to embrace only Jessie's shoulders, and to do so gently.

Over the course of Mark and Jessie's three-day visit, the fetus made itself comfortably known. Jessie didn't partake of the generous amount of beer we'd stocked in the fridge. I encouraged her purchase of the very stylish, very comfortable shoes that were going to be her "pregnancy shoes." We always made sure to order dessert. She was eating for two.

I don't want children. I've claimed this stance since the moment I realized I had a choice in the matter. Since middle-school, when I heard, "First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage," and knew it for the simple rhyme that it was, not a cultural absolute. Early on in this personal revelation, I stayed quiet about it. When people would ask, "Do you want kids?" I'd buy myself time, claiming youth or career plans or the lack of a life partner – time would tell. Early on, I was afraid to be bold, afraid that I'd change my mind. As the years passed and I still didn't feel any more of an urge to reproduce, I got stronger in my responses, "Probably not, but I'm still young..." The older women or colleagues or relatives would mutter something about giving it another ten years, they hadn't wanted children at my age, either.

Though I don't want my own, I really do enjoy children. I coach five- to thirteen-year-olds five days a week at our public swimming pool. It's a hoot. I love watching my swimmers truly understand a stroke; the subtle but measurable dropping of their times; those who had been in the middle of the pack working their way up to lead the lanes. I love the daily hugs that one of my seven-year-olds gives me,

though it's less delightful when she does it right *after* practice, dripping everywhere. With all of this, though, I am grateful to give them back after an hour. Working with children, particularly on tough days, acts as my "mental birth control."

Birth control: the technological innovation that makes my choice even possible. I am profoundly grateful for the array of family planning methods at my disposal. For my economic and educational advantage – I am aware and can afford what is available. I cannot ignore that this choice, my internal debate, is exceptionally privileged. One hundred years ago or in another part of the world today, I'd be a mother already.

Now that I'm 27 and my friends and cousins getting pregnant, I'm considering the question of children and birth with more deliberation. Why is it that I am so opposed to having my own children? Why, when people start to talk about their own future families, do I have to fight the wave of anxiety that overtakes my stomach? Why, every time I watch an environmental documentary, do I immediately jump to the conclusion: this is why I don't want kids?

At first I decided I was selfish. After all, isn't having a child the ultimate act of selflessness? I know of no other sacrifice as great as giving

one's time, financial resources, and unbiased focus to another person.

And kids are expensive. I have an idea how much twenty-two years of toys, clothes, sports, and then my college education cost my parents. My father used to joke that my sister and I cost \$5,000 – just to bring us home from the hospital. Just out of curiosity, I did a web search on the cost of raising a child in the United States. It turns out that the US Department of Agriculture tallies this number every year in "Expenditures on Children by Families." Their 2007 publication claimed that, for a family with a before-tax income of \$45,800 to \$77,100, raising a child to 17 will cost \$204,060 (5). The report was very clear that this total is spread over seventeen years, and the first twelve years are more costly than the last five – less childcare expenses.

There are so many other things I can think of to do with that kind of money. My intuitive splurge would be international travel, followed immediately by the more pragmatic concept of buying a solar-powered house with a bit of room for a garden and perhaps some egg-laying ducks. Then I imagine only having to work part-time to sustain my lifestyle and dream of all the other things that would get done – the novels I could write, the weed-free vegetable garden I'd have out back, the quiet evenings on the porch with the song of the cicadas.

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A screaming child in the background doesn't help the image at all.

Past the simple dollar figure, though, is the time and energy required to raise a child. My mother was at every swim meet, softball game, and choir concert. My father scheduled all his vacation time around our family trips, which certainly weren't always relaxing.

As an environmental activist, I think about how much change could come about with those years turned instead to focused effort. Global warming? Sure, piece of cake! I don't have kids.

So I turn the tables; maybe *having* children is the selfish act – parents deciding that their genes are good enough, smart enough, and gosh-darn-it, people better like them. That reproducing our species is worth the time and money and commitment that new humans require. Six billion are not enough to care for.

Six billion: the environmental elephant in the corner of the room. We talk about conservation, sustainability, living "green" – what if there were fewer of us? Jim Merkel, author of *Radical Simplicity*, figures that if, on average, we voluntarily all choose to have one-child families, the world's population would decrease to one billion in one

hundred years. That would allow 80% of our planet to be left wild. It could be an end to poverty as we know it. It's a breathtaking prospect.

I must confess, though, I'm worried. I'm still young, and my reproductive hormones aren't quite in full swing.

...maybe *having* children is the selfish act – parents deciding that their genes are good enough, smart enough, and gosh-darn-it, people better like them.

I'm afraid that even a decade of not wanting children will evaporate over the heat of those future urges. When, as a friend claimed, "Against all logic, nothing else in the

world matters but having your own child."

What happens if all my intellectual defenses melt at the sight of a baby? What do I do if every pregnant woman I see gives me a wave of jealousy? What happens if, after this article is published, I get pregnant? How can I balance my choice against the enlightened accounts of parenting that I read, written by fellow environmentalists enthralled with raising a conscientious child?

Or maybe I have simpler anxieties: what if I gave birth to a horrible child? Or worse, what if I became a parent so bad that people grimaced at me in the grocery checkout line? As a parent, how could I *not* screw up a child in my care, even with the

best of intentions? Or more fundamentally, with the devastating predictions my environmental colleagues are making, wouldn't it be irresponsible to give those burdens to another human, to a baby?

Thankfully, my first ally is my partner. He also doesn't want his own biological children. With that said, we both agree that adoption is a possibility for the two of us. It follows with our environmental commitments, and it would offer relief from potential hormonal urges. I could have my own opportunity to be enlightened by the eyes of a child, raise them with the earth in mind, but not contribute to population growth. This solution still doesn't answer many of my anxieties.

In the midst of all this questioning, I visited the blog of my friend, Connor. He was asked to take photographs at the home birth of his best friends' first child. His description of the event threw all my logic, rationality, and resolve about having children (or not) into question:

I watched Lisa bear her first son and was utterly humbled. Touched. Awed. To see your friend, someone you love, in such pain – but through that pain, demonstrate such clarity and strength (of body and heart), and such blinding love. In those hours, Lisa was perfect – shining with the miraculousness of being alive, of humanity.

Reading his description illuminates more of my doubts: by deliberately choosing not to have children, will I ever have the opportunity to be part of a birth? If I am never pregnant, will I lose a reason to treat myself with deliberate care and consideration? Can't I achieve all of my dreams and have a child in tow? Without being a parent, will I miss the amazing process of watching a child develop, one day at a time? Will I be denying myself a chance to be perfectly human?

Lately, I've been joking with my mother that she should start pressing my sister for grandchildren since she won't get any from me. Then, on a sleepless night a few months ago, my mother wrote me this in an email:

Erin, there's no more complete love than the one you and Sarah show for me. OK, I'll say it now - I hope you have that experience at some point in your life. I don't care what I do in my career, but raising you and Sarah has been the most important part of my life. You are the hope that lives on - of making the world a better place.

What is my hope for the future?
What hope lives on for the childless?

I take courage from the countless people before me who have not had children, by choice or by circumstance. They are certainly no less human. I bow to my aunt, who,

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without her own children, has been deeply involved in my life and the lives of my cousins. I hold fast with the conservationists, who choose to not reproduce to leave enough for others. I thank those who have made the privilege of this choice possible: my Sex-Ed teachers, the women who died using early birth control pills, and those who fought to make all family planning options legal and safe. So, with a deep breath, I follow their lead.

Then I look to the faces of the children I work with five days a week. In them, I see my chance to ensure that, as best as I can, I love this world and give each human being the right to the life that their mother pained to give them – starting with the people that are already here. I don't want to focus all my efforts on a few children that happen to share my DNA.

My partner and I are now in the process of planning our wedding. I'm going to teach our under-12 guests a new song: "First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes everything else you've ever wanted." It doesn't rhyme yet, but I'm still tweaking it. We're also working on our wedding registry. Any suggestions how we go about registering for his vasectomy?



Photograph by Larina Warnock

Contributor Notes

Francois Bardol's artwork can be found at www.francoisbardol.com.

Ed Bennett is a Telecom Engineer living in Las Vegas . He was born and raised in New York City, lived for a time in the New Jersey suburbs, eventually moving to the lush and bucolic Eden of the Mojave Desert . His work has appeared in the *Manhattan Quarterly*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *The New Verse News* and *The Externalist*.

Stephen Bunch's work has appeared in several magazines and anthologies. From 1978 to 1988, he published *Tellus*, a magazine featuring Edward Dorn, Jane Hirshfield, Denise Low, Paul Metcalf, Edward Sanders, and many others. He also has published collections of poems by Victor Contoski (*A Kansas Sequence*) and Donald Levering (*Carpool*).

Üzeyir Lokman ÇAYCI is a poet, a writer, a versatile artist... He was born in 1949 in Bor that is one of the beautiful cities of Turkey. He attended primary and high school there. And then he graduated as an Architect - Designer of Industry from The Fine Arts Academy of State in Istanbul. His important works are, Akşamların Durağı, Karar, he has many poetries, stories and articles as well. It was called every body attention to his fine arts drawing / painting pictures since 14 years old. His poetries were translated into French by Yakup YURT who loves art. The Reward of Eagerness was given by The Radio NPS of Holland in 1999 and The Reward of Palmars was given by The Organization of Les Amis de Thalie in France to him. He placed in a poem competition from the same Organization at the same year too. He works in The Center of Adult Education (AFPA) at present.

David Chorlton was born in Austria and grew up in Manchester, England, home of rain and industry. He moved to Austria in 1971 to live in Vienna, where he developed his work as an artist and began to write poetry. Seven years later, he moved to Phoenix (his wife's home city). He recently had a poem included in the anthology, *BIRDS*, from the British Museum, and won the Ronald Wardall Poetry Prize for his upcoming chapbook *The Lost River*, from Rain Mountain Press.

Santiago del Dardano Turann was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and grew up in rural Butler County. After having moved around, he finally settled [for now] in San Francisco, California. He does not have a college degree and only began writing poetry with the onset of middle age. Since beginning to

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submit compositions in late August 2007, his work has been accepted by 18 journals.

Daniel DiPrinzio lives in the Philadelphia area. His work has appeared in several journals, including *Outsider Ink*, *the Pedestal Magazine*, and *Stick Your Neck Out*. When handicapping pro football games, he specializes in straight-up and against-the-spread home underdog winners.

KJ Hannah (Channie) Greenberg's most recent work has appeared in: *Doorknobs and Bodypaint*, *Fallopian Falafel Zine*, *Joyful! The Clarity of the Night*, and *The Externalist*. More of Channie's writing is forthcoming in: *AlienSkin Magazine*, *AntipodeanSF*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Ken*Again*, *Poetica Magazine*, *The Blue Jew Yorker*, *The Mother Magazine*, and *Unfettered Verse*. In her free time, she dreams about the day when her children will correctly sort the laundry.

Dennis Greene was born in the UK, raised in Zimbabwe and has lived in Western Australia since 1983. His work has appeared in journals and magazines both on and off line, and he has read it on radio and television. In 1999 he was invited to the US to edit "Voices from the Parking Lot" for "The Parkinson Alliance".

Shaul Hendel believes that a robust piece of writing grows from the dirt under one's nails, nourished by the blood of a well-lived life, and blooms under the full-spectrum light of human endeavor. In his time so far he's been a pants-pissing paratrooper, a window cleaner in a holy city, a let's-stay-friends divorcee, a stick-to-the-point acupuncturist, a father to the amazing number one & number two, a silent meditator trapped in a noisy mind, a traveler who forgot to return home, a you-could-have-done-worse husband, and a should-do-better writer. As an act of professional rebellion he is not writing a novel at the present. His work has been published, or is forthcoming in *The Externalist*, *The Pedestal*, *Pindeldyboz*, and *Ghotimag*.

Erin Popelka has spent the last few years exploring. From Washington, DC to McMurdo Station, Antarctica, she now makes her home in Corvallis, Oregon. Her short fiction has been published in *Johnny America* and is forthcoming in *Collective Fallout*.

J. A. Tyler has recent work in *Elimae*, *Lamination Colony*, *Night Train*, *Underground Voices*, & *Word Riot*. His chapbook *The Girl in the Black Sweater* is available now from Trainwreck Press and his debut novella is forthcoming from Ghost Road Press in 2009. He is also founding editor of the

literary review Mud Luscious and a member of the Pindeldyboz editorial team. Read more at www.aboutjatyler.com.

Yvette Wiley lives in her hometown of Tulsa, OK where she shares an old stone house with a Great Dane, a Pitt Bull, and three spoiled cats. She has one daughter who is the prettiest, punk rock drummer in the city. Yvette obtained a B.S. in Biology and works for her tribe, the Muscogee Creek Nation, as an Environmental Specialist, primarily focused on stream ecology. She stays involved in environmental issues which affect Native American Tribes, taking her dogs to the dog park, and has begun reading her poetry with a local artist coalition.