



SERIALS DEPARTMENT

SEP 30 1999

NON-CIRCULATING

SUB TERRANEA

an underground literary magazine

SPRING

1999

Cherished reader.

Thank you for witnessing Subterranea's fourth emergence.

Contained in these few pages are bushels-ful of talent and irreverence,
fire and experimentation.

And, most importantly, evidence of Geneseo's active writing community,
which exists both above-ground and below.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Jeszadiah Eisenberg
Sean Bryant
Brittney Schoonebeek
Julie Sacco
Edric Mesmer
Natalie Lockwood
Mark Gross
Paul Foster Johnson
Hope K. Comerro
Chris Perri
Michele Kemnitzer
Taryn Ballesty
Sara Ortner
Joann Morton

THANK YOU:

David Kelly
Rachel Hall
Monica Welty
Edric Mesmer
Aimee Boyer
George Tsolekas
Maria Helena Lima

COVER ART: EILEEN COUGHLIN

EDITOR: Paul Foster Johnson

older

when we were young
we were loud laughter
skin burned by the sun
egos burned with sarcasm
rubbery bodies
dusty scraped bruised
returned home to
mothers
dinners
sleep

we were space in empty seats
extensions to cigarettes
personalities as drifting and formless
as the smoke
we exhaled breath
words
beauty and strength rejected
words and beauty
we were wanting and lonely

loving desperately longing
growing
as days grew long
grew short
and turned into night
older
and knowing only the moment
before dawn knew
what we would be by sunrise

NATALIE LOCKWOOD

City Sestina

City, a concise, synthetic knife
bleeds Cole Porter
between subway platforms; trenchcoat
soldiers are armed with newspapers,
snorting hot caffeine. Through antique recliner,
City's script once knew a typewriter.

Tuesday, marching mechanical typewriter
commands let City's dull knife
chisel out the week. Visions of musty recliner
ardently creep beneath Cole Porter
rhythms. During Morning's subway newspaper
shuffle, City inquires time behind trenchcoat

sleeve. "How the hell should I know?" trenchcoat
returns, quick with post-typewriter
linguistics; City scans daily newspaper
who-done-who detail while paring knife
cuts Tuesday's juicy apple. City walks off as Cole Porter
keyboards for change beside curbside recliner.

"I was once nice to come home to," sings recliner.
City stutters in waves of unbuttoned trenchcoat
lunch break; colorful smells of a Cole Porter
meal away from non typewriter
at work. Trodding back to office, pocket knife
sees work-for-sale in Tuesday newspaper.

City instinctively furls newspaper
firmly under arm; nearby stale recliner
lifts from moving van. City clutches steel knife
in deep pocket of many-pocketed trenchcoat;
opening office doors unleash taps of non typewriters
singing songs, anything but Cole Porter.

Sun sets Tuesday's shade of Cole Porter;
City swims home, using newspaper
as an oar. Paddling past door, knocking non typewriter
script to floor, City dives into mothball recliner.
who could ask for anything more? Drab trenchcoat
tries to smother but knife

bites last slice of mammoth apple. Without urban knife,
City strips itself, severing layers of trenchcoat.
City sighs, joining Cole Porter, pocket change buried in Grandpa's recliner.

On Seven Months

i countless
times have caught your eye
over the rim of a wineglass
in the dip of a dessert spoon

dinner is where we sit
straight faced love (un)free

where tight lips tell lies
of not knowing yours

MICHELE KEMNITZER

Rough

It's all in the smiles,
the way his head grows and
I've barely got room to take a shot.
Gotta push his hair out of the way,
slide his sweatshirt to the side,
keep my cue from being caught in his ear.
What I wouldn't give for a pin,
something to deflate that guy
and create a little room for motivation
other than his swollen skull.

Buried behind his smile is the
group smile and that feeling of
Fuck you!
Just keep on movin'
mistake after mistake because my
pleasure is tainted by the urge
to prove him wrong
and I missed another shot
just dreaming about its outcome
AND I CAN'T CONCENTRATE
BECAUSE HE'S SMILING LIKE THAT AGAIN

eight ball corner pocket.
yeah, good game.
see ya bye.

SEAN BRYANT

(nonsent x message)s & tim

nothing to do with you
there
on the cliffs of california
you are not david
you aren't david
you not david
you not david

april (se)n(s)ational month
for poetics did papa
pound visit you
santa rimbaud
not filling your stocking (s)

did you get this
COPY
did(n(o)')t you get this
before hurddled into april
over the californian cliffs
over head between your
legs tightly COPY
did you get david
COPY

mimeographed
(do you smell this)
i cannot mimeograph
(one poem)
postcard replications
recopies
sAcR(T)ificial
hand in new york

Days

When it was down to days he found himself prostrate at the foot of his bunk every night. Knowing better than to ever let them hear him cry, he wept silent prayers to the rhythms in his viscera, which would soon, and inevitably, be unnaturally stopped.

His sudden ability to appeal to a higher power had surprised him, as in all his life he'd never turned clenched hands and face upward for action or solace. By his nature he thought himself better than to believe in such things. His words weren't offerings for redemption. He was certain, beyond all his capacity to doubt otherwise, that his sins were his own, heinous and beyond forgiveness. Innocence had been a plastic badge, an absolute lie, carried all his life for the intention of maintaining his worth, salvaging his freedom: the way academics carry books and facts and words, ready to offer them as proof to anyone who may doubt. His culpability was then as certain as his fate. A sorrow, born out of imminence, consumed him.

But still a narcissism of sorts pervaded; his remorse came only after the rendering, and penitence was uttered within his cortex simply to stave off what awaited him. The consequential afterlife held no illusions for him, and he thought it better to wish for miracles than to ask for a deviation from the obvious. If the afterlife were awaiting him, certainly it lay in the center, beyond the concentric circles.

If only, and only if: a power failure, or electrical storm; a riot in one of the other cell blocks; a last minute appeal could be made, if time and money hadn't run out. These and a thousand others filled his mind, stretching the four white walls touched with pink out and out, until a vacuum seemed to be created inside. He was a black hole. All around him was dead air. Time begged for cessation, while he pleaded for its salvation. For an hour a day he was allowed into the yard. If nothing more, the prayers he offered were just to last another day, just to see gray clouds, feel the rain, or squint into the sun just one more time.

Days came and days went, and the last finally arrived. A meal of the highest quality he'd ever seen was shoved down his throat like sand. Stripped of his underclothes and refitted in his old coveralls, his head was shaved and last rites were administered like pain-killers. All the while, shrieking inside himself, a voice, a flame, lancing down his spine. Shackles removed, the pain behind a mirrored wall before him was indeed reflected as his own. Masked and restrained, when the switch was flipped, his crying was stopped only then, when his eyeballs came loose from their sockets, in a slow oozing descending down his cheekbones, the further, all the way down.

exodus from ugliness

see how the cool beauty in me has never felt drunk
the woman must beat the void if the goddess is to shine

i do not manipulate the rain

my purple symphony will sing to the moon on the wind
i whisper a bare moment to eternity

JULIE SACCO

Friday Funeral

on Tuesday morning
Jose's father left his room
walked into the thick tangle of green
behind Jose's house
took off all his clothes
folded them into a neat pile
lay down
and dissolved into the jungle

HOPE K. COMERRO

naturalism in the computer age

yellow red and blue and green
encased in black
wires
across fields, cutting clean in haze
of spore and breath it comes
back digitally, another for
the butterfly board.

child macrobius at play pronounces
two
is a girl number,
contemplating not
spheres but, underneath
slightly, pairs of shoes thrown
over wires.

tenuous,
but become easily festoons.
charge a machine that warms up
with a portamento, beading,
dripping, alive, drowning out
the jostle
 of keys
 and coins

PAUL FOSTER JOHNSON

Untitled #1

She was a woman who counted her life by simple things.
The most commonplace gestures had
for her
their own secret meanings,
and became a flock of winter birds
twittering in her soul.

She was a woman of lack. She
made do.
She counted pennies for yarn and coffee and cat food.
She ate meager lunches.
She did without.
For years, she would wake with the sunrise
to follow a certain path
through woods that reminded her of her homeland
to a pond—softly cluttered with the unswept tidings of the years;
 branches, leaves, and the remnants of a brutal progression
 stopping up its paths of ebb and flow—
where the sun rose, a secret bargain they had made long ago.

She was a woman who loved life
and it scared her.
She would grow small and hide,
or cry in a bedroom
and shuffle under stares and retreat.
She was a woman, nevertheless, who loved
with a quiet, timid, generous love
offering with frightened sparrow movements
her treasures: unevenly sewn woolen socks,
tarnished nickels, bowls of soup.
She asked very little, only breadcrumbs of words, the soft rinds of smiles
to feed her birdsong soul.

Untitled #2

We drove down Rte. 25
while above us
the moon was the thumbprint of a lunatic child who left behind
a trail of chalk smears, glimmery and translucent
across the shifting watercolor sky.
And while we
doll people in toy cars
unknowingly
rode, this mad boy pushed us onward for his own
amusement.
To crash, to drive forever or to stop suddenly abandoned,
believing it was a flat tire or perhaps
low on gas
while our fate scampers off for lunch.

collaborative experiment #4

stunted pest circles
the house five times
crashing the perimeter
entering the abyss
of ingrown nails

entering the abyss
of ingrown nails
cuts quick on
floridity ungainly
it scratches

cuts quick on
floridity ungainly
it scratches
line after line
blank puncture after blank puncture

line after line
blank puncture after blank puncture
in which we saw
controlled randomness
(which we knew he was after)

in which we saw
controlled randomness
(which we knew he was after)
spiced up overtures
of superficial babble

spiced up overtures
of superficial babble
welled up like
so many styrofoam peanuts
and ancient breath

welled up like
so many styrofoam peanuts
and ancient breath
stale pauses
monumental safety

stale pauses
monumental safety
on the landing
our footfalls
asked for more motion

on the landing
our footfalls
asked for more motion
i sank yielded into crimson
he rose into azure

i sank yielded into crimson
he rose into azure
the shred of her
precious filament
hint in the ozone

the shred of her
precious filament
hint in the ozone
existing
between the layers

existing
between the layers
always meso and
finally
violently outward

JOANN MORTON/
PAUL JOHNSON

Cold to the Bone

Women are always cold.
Women in my family,
females on Mother's side, especially.
We are chilled to the bone.

Always frost-bitten,
shivering in summer sun,
cold even when
childbearing grants extra pounds.

Women in my family
like to eat food stripped of flavor.
We munch, much all day,
step on scale; drop plate.

We females watch other women
look for hints of cold,
gaze into pale, staring eyes.
We want long bird bones.

Women in my family
all look, sound, feel like me,
huddled up, rubbing upper arms for warmth.
We are all anemic, clamoring for color.

Women hide, are chased
by ice bone white veils;
sheltering every female
like dark, arctic shrouds of fate.

BRITTNEY SCHOONEBEEK

sometime after spring

beauty crouched
low

 between
 madness and
 myself, and softly
 hid her face. there is
none but i sing, in singing
 i, but
 nothing am. nothing
 canvassing the empty
 sky. the lines of your
 voice
 are truer then, ever
 i might scratch. i
merely scratch until i bleed, and
 merely nothing
 of it.

 beauty lost
his voice in a pile
of fallen leaves, couched

 between
 the nothing and
 the madness. this is nothing
to dance about, nor softly laughing
 evermore. here is
 nothing
 in particular, no song
 to speak of.

 if you hear nothing, hear
 it, and
remember: it is the song of
 lost sparrows
 who never knew
 to sing
 their way)

MARK GROSS

Narcissus

I suspect love is something like this for you:
three words breathlessly mouthed
never spoken
silence in a touch
never meant to speak
fear and doubt
of your manhood
and the sex that served
to reaffirm it.

Even now as you lie beside me I am
the only mirror that makes you real.

Even in the heavy heat of
noon pseudo-late spring May-ish
you find the lung capacity to
suck in cigarettes.

I stand watching drinking
a glass of cool water
breathing in your cabin-fever stink
blown off you by
(what our standards would call)
morning

You drink in the rays of the sun;
into your skin glowing;
this capacity for light that for me
displays itself in little irregular
dots and splotches on my skin

I want you to kiss them
and unify them with the
sensation of your lips
in a way the sun just won't do

You take my glass of water instead
gulping it down thirstily;
quenching satisfaction

I take a cigarette
and inhale deeply exhaling
the breath of tension.

NATALIE LOCKWOOD

Working on Us

i like how you smell now,
after working and after us.
and i like how you tangle the sheets
so i make the bed every time you leave.
i like this, your leaving every time
so the bed is mine
after your smell and working on us.
which is something i like,
working on us that is,
especially on Tuesdays so i can sleep in
after this smell, after working, after leaving, after
noon is gone
until the next time i remember you
by name or face or footsteps in the hall.
this i like the most
because better than the leaving is the forgetting and the remembering
and the deciding who you will be.

TARYN BALLESTY

Chaos

Being confined to an infallible world.
A world of squares, right angles, sharp edges.
Frustrated, I wish for the imperfect.
My hand shatters polished glass.
Blood drips downward,
ruining this perfect world.
I smile as the room turns red.

JESZADIAH EISENBERG

musical saw

gentle metal.
a note not
bent but
melted.
you sound
like a whorl
but do
not mean
like a
whorl.
trapped voice
of a tool.
the idiot
wind-up
toy skitters
off the
table's edge.
finger-traced
ring left
in the
wake of a
sweating
glass.
resistant
fall from
the ion-
osphere
and para-
bolic upward
sweep.
prima donna
screaming
wide vibrato
under layer
and layer
of muslin.
rustle in
the cold
arm of
the in-
stitution
hall. bent
instrument.
sonic ouija.
strobing portal
purrs the laments
of a
dead child.

PAUL FOSTER JOHNSON

Untitled

yeah, i'd bang her,
that girl i've lived with for two years
with the headlight tits that i'd kill for
and the armpit hair we tease her about.
that girl, all five-feet-eight of her,
all of her long belly,
white with speedo tan,
her short legs
that look too good in my bitch boots,
all of the plainness that makes her her
and that makes her beautiful.

i'd bang that in a second,
the red hair,
natural instincts #249,
pinned up (wet) by her pick.
she is standing at the top of the stairs,
speedo/white punctuated by the static between her legs,
waiting, fresh, for the phone.

yes, i'd bang her for sure
and i'd love her without a doubt
and maybe
i'd make love to her,
all banging aside,
but she's dressed from that shower
and marching up the hill
to his house
in my boots
for the night.

TARYN BALLESTY

#

$(\sqrt{-1})(\sqrt{-1})$

#

extensive (imagined)
histories have
requirements

#

i think of the number i
(imaginably) irreducible
from some equation
where the $\sqrt{\quad}$
no-1, V of a (-1)

insists

& persists until imagined

#

said
"you do the math"
saying

#

if i and another i
are multiplicly inseparable
we value one
negatively

this keeps in line with
histories
of wholes and linears
even(s) the odd(s)
non-positive chain

as if We two
count to -1

#'s

requirements for a
numerology: (history:)

- two i(s) counting
- another i for recording
tracing re(un)covering
- one i for listening

these senses dispense
proper reputations/permutations
solving (re-) (dis-)
equations seemingly

irrelevant

#

there is a strange satisfaction
in reductions
to one

imagined narratives go seeking librarians to
dream of a readership that has want & desire
. . . for cousins or oppressors or victims. i
recall the disconnection of the telephone,
computer, the shutting of books; the last
textbook not to be written. all of these are
little wounds. they mean nothing to me any
more. sometime, some one will write down
dreams that will tell you about me and
others and counting and not-counting. i
have always thought counting irreducibly
necessary. before we are one we are other,
and then another . . . worth the quantity of a
missing text/book. things fall apart in
sequences
& we have a
formula
to decount
existences.

#

like all language
dreams were not
counted first
before dreamt

systems will presuppose
imagination
when we are equated
like love into
unrelated narratives

the dreamed structure
i

for jh [~(jane heap)]