Three Men Torturing Another
china marker and varnish

Eric Philpott
An American Haiku: Big Bad Wolf

Julie Nastri

Brushing my mind over your body,
Imagining the curvatures of your hips,
As I descend like an airplane drawn by the gravity of your earthy perfume.
Into the oblivion of your indentations,
I surrender to your creamy, pale, and dimpled fascination.

Coming like spring,
Misty eyed and dewy limbed.
Pulsing with raw nestled in your sweet.
Splintering to bloom under cloud blanketed skies.

Gliding over the sand dunes of your limbs reposing
Over my heaven
Like a lamb curled 'round lion.
You head, damp
Where my legs meet merrily.

Relishing the butterflies wriggling out of my toes,
Cherishing the wet heat of your breath on my calves.
Feeling it rosy my cheeks like a sunburn,
Burning the cobwebs of neglect from my senses.

A Newborn Wish
Michael Semich

Just because I let you stare, meet your eyes, smile seductively
We play a game, you wink, I nod closer, closer
One step, two step
Watch my muscles twitch, my lashes flutter, lips sparkle
This is my territory, manipulate your mind, tug on your hormones like a puppet
I am the master.
Let you touch my silky hair - sweep it away with gentle fingertip kisses
Whisper in my ear - press your rough cheek to scratch my frozen face
In a trance, you lose control -
Never possessed it - leave you wanting, yearning, begging for more
Then I drop the strings and you fall, hard, broken pieces
Scattered and left to wonder
What perfection tastes like.

Shelly Barger
Existence of a Black Man
LaWanka Edwards

His strong hands and dark complexion add to his beauty of strong will and hard times.

Slightly reeded nose and wrinkled forehead reveals his deep thoughts and broken down interior.

Muscles that ripple, Timeline and shoulders, a building detail his hard work and try.

He stands there, if alone or not contemplating over lost time and an unattainable future.

Black pronouncements and deep voice repeating, as if everything is justified but he knows the truth.

His movements are music and his speech is majestic, his actions put me in a trance.

His meaning and existence go unseen by society - truthfully he is ignored. And I - I admire him.

listen

walking past and past walking
flying through encounters
each of us focused on the opposite direction
each of us walking away
so I ask my intentions
i match your approach
i keep your time
until the moment is fine
my aims are around you
and I have something to say
Our Source of Energy

Coming Back to Life

Melissa Leahy

Fourth Grade Art Class

Lucas Antoniak

pen and ink
The Rocky Path

The son of a suicide searches for salvation and reconciliation

Kirk stepped out of his car and started walking down the wooded path to his father's tool shed. Phil, his father, worked hard and slept little. He would often pull Phil down the dirt path to nap. When Kirk saw the Jeep ahead, he thought that was again the case.

At first, there was only the blood. Phil's body was slumped against a post that supported the shed. Kirk could see a pool of blood collecting around his father's stomach and lap. Immediately he imagined a terrible accident with one of the power tools Phil kept in the shed.

Then, Kirk saw the truth. A revolver had caused the wound, a gunshot to the right temple.

Without thinking, he reached to check for a pulse. His hand touched the wound accidentally. Drawing it back in horror, he saw fresh blood. Looking past the hand, he noticed bits of gray matter mixed in with the blood collecting on the ground.

Since the blood had not yet dried, Kirk felt there was hope to save his father. His grandfather had been resuscitated after a shotgun blast to the face and was able to recover; could a small bullet be that different?

Kirk raced back to his car. His sandals slipped off as he ran, and stones on the path tore into his feet. He sped the eighth of an hour to the house. Shouting, "Dad shot himself!" at his mother, he picked up the phone. Over his mother's frantic screams he erratically discussed the situation with a 911 operator.

She told him how to perform CPR.

Kirk rushed back to the shed and laid his father's body flat on the ground. He tried to blow a breath of air into Phil's mouth. The airways were already clogged with clotted blood. No air could pass. The taste of blood overwhelmed Kirk, and he had to stop. He knew that his father was gone.

Perched over the body, Kirk raised his hands into the air and shouted curses at God. His mother cried in the distance. Kirk walked over and hugged her, holding on tighter than he ever had in the area surrounding him. It was the smell of death.

Until recently, I could only look back on the events of March 1996 in third person. It was such a traumatic, angry memory that I had to remove myself from it. Now, I could a leisurely day back into the past had been my experience. To think about it all, it all was close hugs. My father was a small child, and never developed much athletic ability. I have always been pudgy, another weakness in my father's eyes. I remember quite vividly crying almost every day until I was eight or nine years old, probably out of both spite and sadness over my father's anger at my shortcomings.

He always told me he loved me, but he had a way of backing me into a corner, making me feel worthless.

My father measured success by the amount of money a person makes and the status of that person's position. Had he lived, I would most likely have decided to go into law, business or medicine to appease him. I feel guilty that I'm happier with where my life is now because he isn't around.

More anger comes from what my father's action did to others. No 17-year-old should have to tell his grandmother that her son is dead. No young person should have to hear the anguished cries of a young teen sibling. I will never forget my sister crying, "I want my daddy. That's all I want."

Everything made it difficult to forgive my dad, even time. The longer I thought about it, the more the anger festered inside me. In the end, it all came out. And then again a few days later. And countless times after that. Eventually, the anger was replaced by understanding. The search for answers is quelled by the understanding that there are no answers; questioning only tries to add sense to a senseless act.

Only in this way can I learn to forgive.

I recently walked back down the path to the shed. I was surprised to find that my mother had the shed torn down, although I probably shouldn't have been. It was the first time in almost four years that I had been able to go back to that spot.

My dog was by my side, but she stopped as soon as I reached the point where the shed had been. Perhaps she knew that this was a place I needed to go alone. I didn't stay there long, but I explored the area surrounding the spot. I carefully marked where everything had happened and briefly took myself back to that day. I muttered, "Do you know what you did?"

The wind began to blow softly. I sensed, for the first time, a real answer to a question.

I smiled and walked away. More at peace than I had felt in four years, I walked home. Forgiveness had entered my mind for the first time.

I don't know how that has happened, but I am thankful for it. I am thankful for what it has taught me. I have had to experience life in many ways I wouldn't have otherwise. I've wrestled with God and faith; I've learned the true meaning of love, friendship, and forgiveness. It's so easy to sugarcoat those words and never give them any real attention. I've learned their real value at an early age.

I only speak four years after the fact. I still have much recovery left, I'm certain. I still am inspired by the experience and occasionally shout myself off from the world. But every day there is less of that. In knowing that the pain never completely goes away, there is a wonderful thought: all of life's wonders will remain as well.

- Kirk Gipson
Jonathan Trundle

Lunartics
oil on canvas

just after tomato and rice
oil on canvas

breakdown of a li150
oil on canvas

Jonathan Trundle thinks long and hard when he talks about his paintings, answering questions carefully and deliberately.

Looking at his work, it seems obvious. Influenced by such Cubist painters as Picasso, Albers and Klee, Trundle works off a grid.
Some of the cells, or blocks, he paints derive from the mixing of the neighbors which preceded them; other times, he mixes a cell color with white or gray or its complement, to get another hue.

It fascinates Trundle that the colors around a cell change as it is perceived. A chip from one of his paintings looks light green compared to the blues adjacent to it, but covering all the surrounding blocks with stark white paper makes the chip seem yellow.

"I love the geometry behind it," he says, "and the rules it forces you to think about. It gives you a starting point, a place to branch off."

But his paintings go beyond structure and repeating patterns. They explore color harmony, time, craftsmanship, and contrasts.

There's a real meditative zone about it," he says. "If I had all the time I wanted, I could never put it down, because I could always divide one more cell in two."

Although he has painted for eight years, Trundle is majoring in photography. His interest in light and color explains why both art forms appeal to him. The amount of time and focus he puts into both proves his passion for them.

--- Nathalie Hornu

The artist likes to play with contrasts. He paints an irregular grid. He uses both thin washes and thick impastos applied with a palette knife. His strokes vary between looseness and precise edges. He layers paint, or puts none on the canvas.

Painting is therapeutic for him because he can immerse himself in it for hours. He often paints, alone, late into the night.

As the oil paint dries, Trundle adds thin washes of color in areas, while the eye blends into new colors. He deliberately doesn't apply these washes over the entirety of individual cells, so that the viewer can see the process of building up to create colors. In some cells, he unevenly scrapes away at pigment to reveal the layers underneath. This shows the stages the painting has gone through.

"I think [my work] is an extension of me," says Trundle.
Minus the flesh
her hands crossed would be a transit of bone
a pile of fingernails
a hole of tendon
To know that she is alive!
This Ana Ang.
This Lady Light!
This bitter rocket.

Her physical person minus the continuity
would be, what?
Some coercive wind,
some flickering porch light?
Some meter of air peppered with leaves over middle America?
As it goes, she is a silhouette in a window
on my street.
Lady light: “Are you a coy visionary, or just part of my
vision?”
“Lady Light”
I say, “You are an elegant liar.”
I say, “You are filthy, absolutely filthy”
I say, “I’ll go out and leave the radio on”
I say, “I’ll go out and leave some fire”

What are you?
Some little flare, some Chinese toy?
some shavings of magnesium split into the fire,
that phosphoric dance of purple bits
or a whole engine block of magnesium,
ignited in the plain of the night dessert?

Are you our silhouettes dancing across the face
of the mountains in the distance?
Are you part of the negative space?
Are you me, inverted and spun against those rocks?

Minus the flesh
your hands crossed
would be a transit of bone
a pile of fingernails
a hole of tendon.
Mother

he smoothness of
licking myself
the smoothness of
transitions, the smoothness of
home, the smoothness of
covered by blackness, she wanted to cover me with a lid
the smoothness of
French kissing, the smoothness of
licking into my bare toes
those jeans she threw out
covered by blackness in the trash

I thought she wanted to cover me with a lid
now she says nothing
laughing like that
some got me where
in need of comfort

I can wear them everyday
loose around my stomach they
don't press me in
the soft frays touch my skin
comfort
make me clean
brush away the hardness of
new

I think she is pretending

some cars pass by
flimsy dody cars
rugged by miles
and i wonder if they are

comfortable if they have to be
weak to be old
if they are strong and
if the drivers care

I picture myself standing by a car like that
posing
a denim smile parting my lips
are they luscious

are they wind-torn and saying anything
snap the picture

I'll send it to her in a clean envelope and let her decide

I lay with a skiver
running my hand along the seam
cutting around my hips
blonde strands slipping at the moments
where do i end and you begin

the fabric feels comfortable
to sleep in and live in
bought second hand

I can wear them as long as I want

I can't find her phone number and I don't know where she lives
perhaps the
jeans that disappeared in the wash

as he hers
letting go of them i smile halfway
pushing her looks of disapproval
distant and busy

letting go

I think she was my mother

Once Upon A Time...
i write in a disheveled hand
a letter home
a story for class
an ink blot where the

laundry turns around and around

what do i wear now?
It was a dirty apartment. There's no food laying around. There's nowhere that maggots could hide. And the apartment is sealed tight. A window air conditioner is the only way that air gets in. The apartment is on the fourth floor of a similarly sealed building. No other flies have come in. It's been the same fly the whole time. In fact, when I asked around, no one in the building can remember ever having seen a fly here after. Even the superintendant of sixteen years had never seen one. But there's a fly in my room now.

Funny how you won't really notice things like flies. It just buzzed on the edge of my perception for days, never really coming into full view unless it landed on me or my food. A fly in the corner or sitting atop a bedpost hardly calls attention to itself. But I remember seeing the fly land on the sandwich I was eating just after I had watched a particular episode of The Simpsons on a Sunday night two and a half weeks ago. Since then, I've watched one cow episode and missed another because I had a date. So I know it's been here at least two and a half weeks. It's not a slow fly, of course, or it would be dead by now. God knows I've tried to swat it enough times.

The first week I used the newspaper, magazines, my hand, or whatever else was close by, swinging casually whenever the pest flew within reach. One day, after trying to kill it for nearly an hour with an old issue of National Geographic, I broke down and went to the all-night drugstore to pick up a flyswatter. I paid $3.99 for a nice one, even though there was one for only a dollar. I wanted to get that fucker. But all the swatter did was make it more apparent that I wasn't going to kill the bug. It would always fly away just as the plastic Doom was slipping down. I chased it for two more hours that day, then gave up in exhaustion.

After that, the fly started getting to me. I would see it sitting on the nightstand while I lay in bed reading. It would be within swatting range, but when I'd reach for the swatter, which I had begun keeping under my pillow, the thing would buzz across the room to my desk. It would land on my keyboard, leaving its microscopic filth for my fingertips. It would sit there and dare me to get out of bed to come after it. Sometimes I would, and the fly would take flight and buzz in circles around the room, refusing to land on anything for more than a second, just long enough for me to take a step toward it before buzzing past me, coming in the side of my face with its filthy body on its way to the other side of the room. It stayed in the bedroom. I left the door open, hoping that the beast would go to the living room or the kitchen, or somewhere else, so I could sleep without it landing on my face or depositing its bile or buzzing in my ear and invading my dreams. But it would not leave the room.

At three a.m. on the Friday of the second week that I was fully aware of the thing's presence in my apartment, I returned to the all-night drugstore. I had been awakened repeatedly by the insect. I purchased sleeping pills, fly paper, and a can of Raid. I returned to my apartment and promptly took the pill, laid out the paper, and sprayed every corner of my room with the Raid. I couldn't find the fly itself for a direct spraying. I smiled to myself, thinking that I had it.

The next morning I woke up late feeling like I had a hangover. My head throbbed, my body ached, and my stomach churned. The horrid smell of the poison I had sprayed filled my nose. I left my room, closing the door behind me. I called in sick and spent the day curled up in a ball on my loveseat. I had to sleep there for the next few nights, until the smell was gone from my room. I could only go in for a few moments at a time, holding my breath, but I never saw the thing. When I finally returned to my room this Sunday, I thought it would all be over. I expected to see the fly's rigid corpse on the floor, overcome by the deadly gas that had driven me out. At the very least, I thought I would see its diseased little body engulfed by the sticky yellow glue on the flypaper. I gleefully pictured its final struggle for life in the adhesive. But when I examined the room, I found no winged black carcass lying on the carpet. I saw no embalmed insect on the paper I had placed around. As I was lifting my dresser to see if the remains of the pest had fallen behind it, I heard a familiar noise: dinging in my ear. The fly entered my vision right in front of my face and landed squarely on my nose. I let the dresser drop as I swatted at my face. I missed the thing, of course, and the dresser landed on my bare foot, crushing my toes. I screamed in pain and at the creature that had caused my suffering, and then I retreated. I left the room, taking a pillow and as many clothes as I could. I wanted to go back to the living room and slammed the door behind me. That's where I've been staying, in the living room, on the love seat.

A couple of times a day, I look into the room, or at least listen at the door. Just to see if it's still there. It always is, buzzing constantly.

How much longer can one fly live?
Smile. Suck it up. No matter what hits you don't show your pain. Smile. Ignore the poison sneaking through your veins like a snake. Push the rotten words down, eating your stomach lining, but smile.

Starve your brain of knowledge, be all he wants of you try hard and then try harder to push the voice inside that demands him to respect you. Smile bite your tongue and pretend to be "that woman" his one and only the shiniest trophy on the mantle of his ignorance. Smiling do not tell anyone what you are good do not share your hopes and dreams you are not alive to be yourself only exist to smile and be with him when he leaves you and would never leave you.

When you can no longer bear the brunt of his commands and hatred oozes from your every pore, be a good girl, good girl and do what he says, submissively smile. As you kick his ass out the door.

The silence of wind chimes
Susan Maszaros

The wind is absent in a yellow field, and a steady drop of sweat slowly rolls over my tender eyelid, straight into my blue eye, tearing, a river swelling, with water fingers reaching for another lonely shoe.

And in that absence I hear a tornado inside pink walls, a child in a belly, rumbling, waiting to fall through another failing purple palace. Breaking open the murmur, the whisper, the hum, the clack of a voice now smothered by silence.

But I am helpless to pluck the nail from my lips, to pull myself away from the desolation dream. To feel soft words blow like that long lost breeze across my cheek.

I'm still waiting for the wind to tell me that I'm not dreaming alone.
Character Sketch
Tim Enns

Gears spent the last twenty years of his life tinkering with the gears in his arm: maybe gears is too simple a word to describe the whole thing, but there must have been gears in that arm somewhere, and they must have been the only pieces he ever came close to perfecting. The arm was rigid for defense; it reacted to camouflage and attempts at removal.
Imagine being a remnant of a war held in contempt. Imagine being wounded and then melded with the cannon that you had been holding in your own hand only weeks before. Yeah, I'm exaggerating. They didn't really make his arm out of the weapon he carried when he was a foot soldier; I'm saying in essence. Not that Gramps minded it in his youth. You can see it in the pictures, and even a few years ago you could hear it in the stories he managed to keep straight. Sometimes I think that every tug at that arm took a story, took a memory. He never stopped trying to get that damned thing off after his first month in the chair. It was twenty years of torture, and he must have been some kind of masochist to keep trying.

Occasionally, representatives of some firm or agency would come around bringing promises of removal and guarantees of success that they could never fulfill. Even the rusting technology of the former Soviet Union has to have a few shiny surprises worth a quarter (or a quarter-million), right? That's the kind of temptation that Gramps posed to weapons designers and robotics specialists for years. But that was when there were still signs of activity in his arm besides pure self-preservation, and before Gramps retired to the Mount Pleasant Home for Elderly Experiments and Potential Public Hazards.

Someone eventually decided that there was a risk involved in letting Gramps sit out his remaining years on his front porch in full view of anyone who wanted to walk up and tear off the bomb that his arm had become. Obviously, Gramps would have died if someone had just yanked his arm off. As far as I know, the yankers would have died, too. To prevent anything like that from happening, the decision was made to secure him on a porch with a barbed-wire fence and a personal monitoring system. He didn't mind too much; it's not like he was going anywhere.

I look back now on the decades of bionic implants and laugh even harder than I did then at the things people do to themselves. Gramps was one of the pioneer subjects of bionic experimentation, but he didn't have much of a choice. After his arm was blown off in the war, a bunch of eggheads told him he'd be a superman if they were given a man with him. What young stud would say no to that? And then ten years later, all the kids who grew up seeing him on the nightly news were either injecting immunosuppressants and wires into their veins, or else cutting off a limb in the hopes of getting their first prosthetic. But I wasn't one of them.

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American Haiku: at RTB's
(for Razz, Todd, & Brian)

Julie Nastri

Saturday nights do not have safety nets, but your couch will catch me fine.

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The Woman in Brown...

Lindsey Turner

I met her while we measured the mass of the sun and the satellites and she smelled of Figgers and crumpled Marlboros. It was her eyes I noticed first—the greyish crescents carved beneath her lower lids and the peckles tattooed on her neck by the years of self-neglect. At first she seemed a man when I heard the depth of her voice and her profanity but then I saw the worn leather strips that formed sandals on her feet and the chipped, mauve paint of her nails...
Amanda Micheletto has the milky skin and delicate features of a porcelain doll. Silhouetted against a white wall in a dim room, she talks while absent-mindedly smoothing her hair, which is caught up in a bunch at the crown. Then she unclips her barrette, releasing a Medusa’s nest of ropes of hair that erupt up and out in all directions.

Amanda has about a dozen golden-brown dreadlocks. In some spots they’re as slender as a finger, while in other places the matted hair bulges to the size of a golf ball and feels dense, like a fine-grade steel wool. She puts the shoulder-length locks somehow into shape, getting most of them to hang down, and laughs.

“I got sick of old ladies saying, ‘Your hair’s so cute!’” Amanda says, describing the angelic ringlets she had until five months ago.

“No, my dad likes to tell me I’m dreadful.”

Although dreadlocks have commonly been associated with Rastafarians or Indian mystics, lately images of dreads, on both whites and blacks, have appeared with increasing frequency in the media. Members of bands like Korn, Rage Against the Machine and White Zombie parade their dreads on the pages of music magazines. The cover photo of a book on finding internships features a young black man working in an office, wearing a tie and shirt, thin, well-groomed dreadlocks.

A group of hip Asian and African-Americans, one with nearly waist-length dreads, model upscale threads in an ad for Safari clothing. An ad for Zippo lighters shows a dreadlocked black surfer meditating, his board covered with candles. During his tenure on the soap opera “All My Children,” actor Keith Hamilton Cobb sported neat dreads which he says gave his character an exotic appeal.

Once TV and magazines tout a style, mainstream acceptance comes fast, and it seems that dreadlocks have become more common. Hair has always held great significance for humans. A punk mohawk sends out a very different message than a granny-style bun or pigtail. Hair has numerous references in the Bible, the least of which is Samson. In the book of Daniel, the Messiah’s hair is likened to sheep’s wool, which is in part the basis for Rastafarians wearing their hair.

In his book Dread, the Rastafarians of Jamaica, Joseph Owens writes:

“The locks and the beard are the sign of the ancient covenant between God and his people. They symbolize the Rastas’ refusal to depart from the ancient, natural way.”

“I didn’t take into consideration how people give spiritualness to dreads,” says Amanda, who studies fiber arts. She’s only fascinated by the properties of hair that allow it to tangle and become matted. But unlike the pattern involved in weaving, dreads are a sort of textile in which a mass of fibers with no organization becomes a mass greater than its individual parts.

Larry Oliver has always taken pride in his hair, and has groomed it in nearly every style imaginable; he has worn it in braids, an Afro, cropped to the scalp, and a Senegalese twist. He has also used chemicals to straighten his hair. Dreadlocks, he says, run counter to the traditional Western ideal of hair which promotes smoothness and control.

“It seems more natural to let your hair do what it wants to,” he says.

Seven-year-old Kaya Turner has never felt the teeth of a comb rake through her hair. Valerie, her mother, has never spent a half-hour tugging at Kaya’s tender scalp to pull out the tangles of a rough afternoon’s play. Both of the girl’s parents have had dreads for about 10 years.

Valerie says that by dreading her hair she has stopped participating in the torture of preventing her hair from being in its natural state. She scours at the idea of ever doing anything else with her hair that involves styling tools: she’ll either wear it shaved, or let it grow long and dreaded. Dreads are practical, and they’re spiritual because they teach self-acceptance.

“I was born like this,” says Kaya, playing with her sun-streaked ginger spikes. “Dreads are the best things in the whole wide world because they’re so magic.”

Pulling Kaya into her lap, Valerie gently parts the locks to show how she thinks is most magical about her daughter’s hair. It doesn’t look matted. The hair leaves her head in tiny fuzzy spirals that mesh invisibly internally to become fat spiraled dreadlocks. In the heat of the afternoon sun, Kaya’s hair feels warm and soft like felt.

Coarse, kinky hair dreads most readily, and involves little effort, just time.

Amanda simply didn’t shampoo for a week, and twisted her hair vigorously between her palms. Her locks are still loose. Larry’s dreads started at a salon, where his hair got a vigorous washing for 15 minutes to remove its oils, then was grilled and wrapped around a rat-tail comb. After an application of more gel, which acts as an adhesive, the style was set under a drier for an hour. Larry made sure his hair didn’t get wet for several weeks; then he twisted his new hair growth as it came in, to help it mate up into the cemented locks.

Straight hair can be divided and plaited much like a three-strand braid, but with as many strands as there are hairs. Divide a section roughly in half, then bring it back together. Repeat, dividing the section into different halves. Continue until completely snarled.

Dreadlocks quickly take on a mind of their own. Sometimes two bunches will join, or a thicker rope will divide, Larry says he can spend 20 minutes shaping his dreads, but they’ll pop right back to where they want to go.

“I just encourage where they’re going,” says Amanda. “Some of them I had the nerve to split apart, and they grew back together. They have a personality of their own. You just let them do what they want.”

Before Larry cultivated his own two months ago, dreadlocked friends of his had told him that they had favorite locks.

“Now I understand,” he says. “I tend to favor some over others. When I drive, there’s some I like to play with.”

Amanda feels the same way. Without hesitation she grabbing her two favorite locks at their bases, lifting them so it looks like she has horns. She likes these best because they’re bumpy and they have personality.

McQueen Michel’s favorite dreadlock splits into three branches halfway along its length. It also happens to be his longest one, although that wasn’t always the case. He has saved his longest lock, which broke off a while ago, in the hopes of weaving it back in eventually.

McQueen keeps the sides and back of his head shaved in a fade. He let his hair dread three years ago, and most of the hair he’s had since then. He’s got his baby’s hair and dyed them bright red.

“When I first did it, it was like, let’s try a new hairstyle. Some people called me Fashion Dread,” he says. “That’s bad. I did it for me. It doesn’t have to be religious or cultural.

But after getting lots of reactions from people, he realized the style was heavy with associations, so he did some research...
From Mosquito to Frost

Henry School

I would walk from mosquito to frost,
trailing acres of asphalt behind me if it meant we could somehow salvage us.

Rain-stink and moths careening. A hundred thousand panics come to term.
I will walk until I disappear from thirst.
I will vanish. Let it aid you. I will walk,
slowed by the groaning traffic 'til I fade from here.

Pendulum

Ariel Dunham

Numb
and
Silent
she
Hung
in
Perfect
Balance
trying
Hard
to
Break
Free
and
Move
Side
to
Side
to
Side
to
Side
Dreadlocks will always represent a struggle," he says. He has worked hard to maintain his dreadlocks, and kept them despite the criticism he gets. He now educates people against the negative stereotypes of dreadlocks, and the minorities who wear them.

Minorities, he says, have to struggle to overcome oppression. The fight to overcome gives them strength; pushing it a little further, dreadlocks are a physical manifestation of the endurance and power minorities acquire. When he's stressed out, or deep in thought, McQueen habitually twists his locks. His hair symbolically acts as a storage unit for pent-up energy.

Young kids in suburban America may not have the same problems to cope with, but growing up and finding an identity feels like a struggle, and they sometimes emulate the rebellion of minorities. Dreadlocks help to express individuality, says Larry.

"I've never seen two dreads alike, and they look different on different people," he says. "It's an extension of your being free."

Lara Scudder agrees as she swings her head back and forth to enjoy feeling the weight of her newly-forming dreads swinging around.

"It's different," she says. "It makes me stand out from normal girls. Everyone likes attention, and it's not as permanent as a tattoo or a piercing."

Spector, a Nashville-based musician, had dreadlocks for two years. They were a reflection of his bohemian lifestyle, and they amused him because they were different. However, he eventually cut them off out of respect for the religious beliefs of Rastafarians, which he doesn't share.

After a visit to Jamaica, Andy Nuckolls dreaded his hair. He had visited several Rasta communities there, and admires that lifestyle. He says the slow process of dreding hair can result in a slow process toward more natural living: time spent outdoors, a more natural diet, the reading of spiritual books, and contemplation.

He used a commercial beeswax blend to help form the locks.

"It worked, but it didn't look natural at all. They were perfectly cylindrical. It wasn't what I was looking for. I think it looked bad," Andy says about the residue the wax left on his hair and scalp. He shaven everything clean with the intention of starting fresh, and hasn't washed or combed the three inches of growth he has so far.

Rick Wilson (name changed to protect anonymity) cut off his dreadlocks because of legal hassles. With those out of the way, he has started letting his hair do its own thing again.

"I really want to grow them back," Rick says. "I really miss them quite a bit."

At age 14, Daniel Feese had dreads that reached to the middle of his biceps. He topped them off his senior year of high school.

"My head felt lighter, and strangely new. I did miss them, and was waiting for that moment to grow them back," he says. Four years later, he celebrated the rising millennium, and its symbolic new beginning, by once again dreading his hair.

"It wasn't regressing. It was a renaissance. I like having this hair and being considered a freak," he says, passionately explaining his complex political and philosophical beliefs about American culture. Daniel envisions a future where currently radical ideas, through physical exposure such as dreads, become more common, and everyone fits in.

After 10 months, the locks which graze the bottom of Daniel's neck are fully formed and very dense. He credits it to the summer spent in Florida; swimming dried out his hair and salt residues helped it matte tightly. The sun has bleached the tips of his golden brown hair to nearly platinum. He has adorned one lock with a metal ring.

Now that Larry has experienced dreadlocks, he says his days of trying out different hairstyles are over.

"Sometimes I feel this is my last hairstyle," Larry says, "and I'll never cut them off." McQueen thinks it over. His hair is a work in progress, which makes it hard to predict what he'll do with it in the future. But dreads, he says, represent what he's all about. They're a part of his identity.

"I could see this going into old age," he says. "I can't see myself any other way."