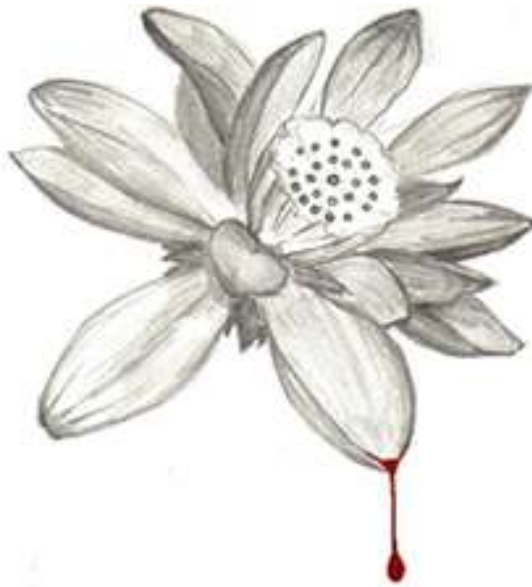




BloodLotus
AN ONLINE LITERARY JOURNAL

Issue #1, February 2006



Lotus with Blood Drop

by Tom Dieffenbach

In This Issue...

Poems

Miranda Barnes	<i>Wrung Hands</i>	1
Dan Nowak	<i>Backseat Delirium</i>	2
	<i>Confessions of a Former Metalhead</i>	3
Lisa Izzi	<i>Let's Be Honest</i>	4
John Dorsey	<i>o harlem revisited</i>	5
Jae Newman	<i>Two Thousand Lilacs</i>	7
Marcus Jackson	<i>Visiting My Great Auntie; Chester, GA</i>	11
Sherris Schwind	<i>Fur Season</i>	12
Aimee Mackovic	<i>Encounter with Priscilla</i>	13
Brien James Dawson	<i>These Small Tragedies</i>	14
Contributor Bios		16

WRUNG HANDS

It sounds like the words are underwater:
a conversation between two girls behind
about the passing of an uncle, a flight
to Detroit, announcements of place—
its not my stop for ten more stops, and the wind
doesn't carry the same rain as this morning,
in fact it doesn't carry rain at all.

What kind of travel will my feet make?
Away from last week's shattered car window,
toward a newer song (the chimes of doors closing
sound in time with music under headphones),
there may be no chorus, but this
refrain — let's not carry rain at all,
let's not carry rain, just let it fall.

BACKSEAT DELIRIUM

I am your dead lover
tonight, lit candles burning
in your old Cadillac. Saturdays
were never this much fun.

Remember my body, my skin –
it hasn't missed you. It's missed
us, our leather and our need
to burn ourselves at the feathers.

We aren't blue jays, just flightless
angels stuck. I'm on my knees behind
the driver's seat and your love.
Please make me work for it –

my wings still need a down payment.
Tonight we are more than ourselves,
than our pasts. We are satellites
carrying our galaxies in our mouths.

CONFESSIONS OF A FORMER METALHEAD

I gave up on listening to people
scream because they hate their parents
and think filtering every emotion
through black is sympathy.
I never wore white or blue or orange
until college; colors couldn't understand
my angst. Why? I forget.
Old trench coats and big baggy pants –
clothes were exterior emotions.
I smiled too much. I was disbarred
from my friends, ostracized from the religion
of Iron Maiden – I refused to own an album.
I shaved this black hair into a Mohawk
and crashed the Clash. I forgot my friends
and their dyed black devil-locks, I am
a traitor to my past. Sometimes I put
my old Deftones records on and scream
the seven words I remember.

LET'S BE HONEST

When a gymnast says, I dance
in my bra and panties,
let's be honest, be real
the bra's *not* necessary
which is scary.

I'll give you an idea.
Imagine two
small flour tortillas
on a wood cutting board
with half olives
in the center.

See what I mean?

I'm not the norm.
Because in high school
full breasts
abound in numbers.
But at the gym I fit in—
we're all flat.

Well, mostly.

You've heard I'm sure
of the Itty-Bitty-Titty Committee?
Guess what.
I'm CEO.

O HARLEM REVISITED

o harlem why do
confederate sons carry gangster
guns into the french
quarter? the dreams
of ignatius j. reilly are
referred to as ghost
stories o harlem jack
micheline was the jewish
prizefighter that prayed for
this hurricane to be
strong like ahab's resolve
cuz america needs a
white whale was he
right to believe in
spirits? are we all
just dead indians like
ghandi and charles olson?
o harlem dorothy left
her dancing shoes in
kansas cuz the wiz
said she was beat
praying to spirits wrapped
up in the heart
of the wichita vortex
charlie plymell what did
you see? a reason
to start fresh o
harlem america stole our
language and called her
wisdom voodoo when is
a blessing a blessing?
when is a curse
a curse? o harlem
if you have to ask
why bob kaufman was
sad you just
don't get it if
you have to ask
why claude mckay was

angry your revolution was
just dumb luck o
harlem haven't we paid
enough for our name
brand revolution? o harlem
can you hear us?
seagulls weeping on the
sands of the modern
age the ghost of
roy orbison is crying
soulfully crying o harlem
the birth of a
nation has murdered our
renaissance portrait of sunlight
o harlem your blues
have simply become bad
juju souring the vine
with your strange fruit
cut that soulful shit
out o harlem sweet
innocent child like
harlem didn't anyone tell
you there's just no room
for your naive brand
of experience? o harlem
do you know any
good war stories that
would fit into a
ninety second sound bite?
cuz i'm getting bored
with your american dreams

5.

Returning to the darkness of our bedroom, I turn away
from you
so I can sleep. I can't face you and forgive myself
for ending a day
so sweet as today. Not touching you, I wander past a
pantheon of faces

only to break their hearts.

I break their hearts

only to show you

that you are my country, my Seoul,
my wreckage.

I remember the way I felt when your shoulders crushed
the sun—
how your lemonade was sour for lacking water,
how that little barefoot boy looked at us,
how wonderful it felt to be lost
in this city, its tiny buildings rumbling in the
distance.

6.

In this darkroom, I hang pictures for you.

I am sorry

that I cannot lead us to heaven—you will have to do
that, but

I will remember

napping under trees,

walking through a park holding hands,

holding centuries of pain

between palms

as we kissed on bridges whose structures could
never hold

the wildness of our love.

I don't know why

this lifetime

is made of molecules of suffering.

I don't know why I handed you the lyre, and

can't say why I ask you to put bandages over all my
cuts, those snakebites.

A snake-bitten bride, I carried you
and your song

Jae Newman

over the gaze of disbelievers
who could not understand how we were tapped by clouds,
draped with affections we neither knew of
or could deal without,
with affections so deep
that I am sure enough I am a man alive
2000 years after The Way was made, 2000 lilacs
enough
to need nothing
but your body over mine.

VISITING MY GREAT AUNTIE; CHESTER, GA

In a car for fifteen hours from Ohio,
I forget my stiffening knees
when the ground begins
spilling red at the road edges.
First time more south than Tennessee
as I pull up to her low roofed house,
set in front of woods whose denseness
is increased by a slight mist.
Our stolen elders died here,
their stomachs ashen fists;
our meal today is grilled pig ribs,
biscuits, baked squash
and peaches soft-edged as dusk sun.
Sitting with Auntie on wooden
porch chairs, I stare at her arm,
brown skin so many summers thicker
than the shallow yellow of mine.
High grass in the distance
jostles with a breeze
and the day creeps away
as crickets, the black shine
of their song, call close
a cobalt-faced night.

FUR SEASON

In the short days of winter
I watched from outside the shed window
shadowed and careful to be quiet on cracking ice
as you flayed fur from foxes
or muskrat, drank beer, and
sang along with the tinny AM transistor
for hours and days and years.
Blood and guts glued your thick fingers
in a sweet sticky steam
that stuck in the back of my throat.
Animal insides warmly wrapped
your hands like my wishes never would
all the times you raised them
like spooked snakes
to strike one of us—
swinging bodies respond to
your expert slices.
Small mammals so much more mute,
yielding and forgiving
than a wife and kids.

ENCOUNTER WITH PRISCILLA
—Priscilla Johnson, a painting by Alice Neel

She asked to bum a cigarette.
For the nerves, she said,
smooth as a sheet of sandpaper.

I had no cigarettes (I don't smoke),
But offered her in return
the waiting room copy of Popular Science.

Petty consolation. Her stringy, emaciated
fingers paused in the air, pondering, then
returned to attending her yellow teeth.

Been here before? she asked, eyes
playing with the second hand of the clock.
No, I said, I'm with a friend.

She gave a nod which seemed to say
You're lucky. She smoothed an imaginary
wrinkle out of her short, emerald dress.

I've been here once before, she said.
It wasn't so bad. I was only seventeen
and it seemed the easy way out.

Was my ear was intruding or not?
My lips teetered on the edge of response
when a woman, crisp and scrubbed,

interrupted. Priscilla, she said, we're ready.
The ground gave her a gentle shove upwards,
her feet started a slow march for her.

Whatever you do, Priscilla said as she
glided by in profile, don't let her name it,
and slipped forever
through the swinging double doors.

THESE SMALL TRAGEDIES

1.

I want to challenge
the cost of carelessness,

send away sordid sentiment
of anniversaries, and

calculate the space between sorrow and regret.

I close my eyes
and attempt to eat fire.

This is how you must have been,
eyes closed, legs slowly spreading,
smell of sterilized instruments and cotton.

How could you lay so still?

2.

My thoughts are maps now
I scan each continent,
looking for forgiveness;
I am absent minded,
I get side tracked somewhere
around Antarctica, I slip
into the mathematics of memories,
the geometry of bodies,
the algebra of longing,

All subjects I failed in school.

3.

I have a mission to trade shoes with you.
I envision the doctor, her warm latex hands
and her exactness, her soporific voice.

Brien James Dawson

*She is telling me to relax.
She is telling me to relax.*

Contributor Bios

Miranda Barnes is a poet recently graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky, and currently living and working in the city of Chicago, Illinois, (ironically, in finance). Her chapbook titled *Between Two Hours*, as of yet unpublished, was completed as her creative thesis while at Spalding. She is actively seeking publication. She gave a reading at the Poetry Factory (www.poetryfactory.com) in St. Joseph, Michigan, with other Chicago poets on Sunday, January 15, 2006, and will also be attending the AWP Conference in Austin, Texas, this coming March.

Brien James Dawson is a pirate and lives in Las Vegas, NV. He was Crazy Horse in a past life. Besides writing, he enjoys sword fighting, re-defining the way we socialize young men, and day-dreaming about fucking Sylvia Plath.

Tom Dieffenbach is an artist and musician living in West Chester, PA.

John Dorsey currently resides in Toledo, OH. He is the author of *harvey keitel, harvey keitel, harvey keitel* with S.A. Griffin and Scott Wannberg, Butcher Shop Press/Rose of Sharon Press/Temple of Man, 2005, and he can be reached at archerevans@yahoo.com

Lisa Izzi is in the MFA Writing program at Spalding University. "Let's Be Honest," is from *Athlete. Girl.*, a novel in verse about a witty and determined teenage gymnast who wants to make the U.S. National Team. One day, she crashes in the gym, which causes her to fear gymnastics.

Marcus Jackson grew up in Toledo, Ohio. He is currently finishing his poetry MFA at New York University.

Aimee Mackovic received her Bachelor of Arts from Wake Forest University and her Master of Fine Arts from Spalding University. She is a screenwriter and poet living in Southern California, and is thrilled to be published in *Blood Lotus*.

Jae Newman works and lives in Rochester, NY, with his wife. He is currently working toward his MFA in poetry at a brief-residency program at Spalding University.

Dan Nowak is a student at Spalding's brief-residency MFA program. He currently lives in Toledo, Ohio, where he counts down the earth-tone days of winter hoping summer comes quicker. That also sums up his only mathematic

ability. Eventually he plans on searching for a PhD program to call home; so if anyone wants to adopt a poet/scholar to their program, let Dan know.

Sherris Schwind is the single mother of two and a freelance writer residing in Toledo, Ohio, where she can be heard performing her poetry at intimate venues and presenting her research in global women's issues at The University of Toledo. She is seeking publication for a poetry collection entitled *The Mourning Galleries* as well as developing children's books in collaboration with Chicago-based artist Kelsey Fernandez.