

uesday, April 11, 1984

.m. Reading
Linda Pastan
Winter Theatre
Dana Fine Arts

10 p.m. Panel Discussion of Student Work
Linda Pastan
Kay G. Stevenson
Gretchen Schulz, Moderator
Winter Theatre
Dana Fine Arts

n. Presentation of Prizes
Reading
Richard Wilbur
Winter Theatre
Dana Fine Arts

estival Committee wishes to thank Dr. Eleanor Hutchens for her support.



Agnes Scott
Writers' Festival 1984

**writers' festival
1984**

Spring 1984

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Arlington House

Drawn in by history
 I wander about your house
 feeling the presence of those
 who in endless repose linger
 on settees of damask
 or stand at windows of frosted lace
 casting shadows
 across walls busy with hunters
 chasing hounds chasing foxes.
 Carved mahogany chairs hold their straight backs
 and face each other in dignity
 at the banquet table.
 Blue china under candlelight
 reflected in shiny brass
 waits only for the lady's hand
 to ring for service.
 Surely Mr. Lee you are here
 in the White Parlor with your guests
 soon to be called,
 the serving tables set.

I slipped into the hall,
 the front door open, and knew
 from this point
 overlooking the gardens you loved
 Mary must have seen you coming
 for miles on horseback, or by way of the river.
 Coming back to Arlington, and back to Arlington,
 "my affections and attachments are more strongly
 here than any other place."

Standing in your bedroom
 under the canopied protection of dreams
 I saw you leaning over the mantel,
 forehead pressed against your hand, eyes closed.
 Embers in the fireplace
 long dead lay gray
 as uniforms on stone.
 Are you there on the window seat now
 drawing homespun across the openness
 to seal the pane of cold away?

The letter on the desk is yet unsigned,
 but the hour ticks away
 in the clock on the mantelpiece
 where time cannot be stopped
 until you open the door
 that covers the face.
 You must leave
 never to return to Arlington,
 never in this life.

Now you walk alone
 these halls in the emptiness
 that once were filled with dreams
 and wonder where they all have gone,
 Mary and the children,
 even George and William.
 Do you still walk the way to the pantry
 and open the walnut cupboard door
 to look for milk,
 or do you go into the garden
 gathering rosebuds
 to place beside their plates?

—*Olivia H. Robinson*

Tilt

Fingertips press glass
 The moist prints linger
 Then melt to velvet traces
 The dime dissolves
 Lights flash once
 Metallic sphere races
 Reflecting in its surface
 The scenes and faces
 Distorted counter-world
 Where Tarzan swings from laces
 Where the only way out
 To Alpha Centauri
 Is a crate on stilts
 And the only way back
 To Atlantic City
 Is . . . tilt.

— *Bruce Zamost*

My Grandmother's Dream

Her whole life, a Christian woman,
and now only a pale kiss
of what she used to be.
She didn't remember getting old,
only waking up one morning and being there.
The grandchildren came and,
thinking she couldn't see,
would make faces at each other
when their mother told them to
give granny a hug.
She could feel their hot, moist breath
on her pastry-thin cheeks.

That night the gypsies came and stole her
from the hospital bed,
dressed her in rags
like a peasant's piecework quilt
and put rings on her toes.
They kept her in a bamboo cage
and fed her breadcrusts and rock candy
thru the bars.
At night they would let her out to dance.
As she danced
her long, gray braids would come undone
and her hair would cover everything
like a fine, morning mist
until she could no longer see
their leathery faces and leering black smiles.
Then with a striped sash
would round her waist
they spun her wildly
until she collapsed in a dizzy heap
at their feet.

And sometime in the night
she woke the night nurse
crying for more sugar.

— Lillian P. Turner

IF/THEN/ELSE

a month ago
i pushed that diskette
with your name
to the back of the stacks
(it hurt so
every time
your picture flashed upon my screen)

because our reunion
is within the week
i called from memory
your file —

i hate to LOAD the disk
because everything ran just fine —
without any errors
(the last time — the first time)

of course —
i'd love to add
some new lines
and SAVE the file
again —

But
i'd have to KILL
your file
If
the program didn't run right —

i wish i knew
which command to use —

— h. bodner

I See You There in the Proud Church Weather

i see you there in the proud church weather
trying on summer's tattoo

& i know you have two secret nipples under
your blouse and you water them every day

but be careful

one night while you're in deep summer dreams
love may curl like a grasshopper's tongue

around your bed and steal your nipples
from their places thinking they are dark

& watery rubies.

— Perry Thompson

i think it was Jane or Jean Something

And it was more like ships that *crash*
(she never really smiled)
in the night — with splintered planks and things
(or looked me in the eye)
bobbing and bumping about on the surface,
(we breathed — tired, close, and warm)
other things deeply sinking,
(she softly whispered, " 'Night'")
sinking.

— Rob Franz

The Third Man Theme

A deep blue procession of limousines
stops traffic, moves through pale slush.
Tires spray streetwater over the curb.
From a front seat I watch
mute faces at intersections
staring through wiper blades,
yielding to the inevitable wait.

The purple tent shudders,
creaks like a pine lean-to
in the loud morning wind.
Soldiers cock stiff arms, freeze
at attention.
Gun mouths rise, open like children's,
to the diminishing sleet and rain.
As the priest begins to speak
the wind slows to nothing.
Rifles report, discharge spent casings.
The bugler's clearly shaped notes
fade into the thunder
of a huddled, collecting storm.

I watch the dim reflection of my hand
glide over wood cut and rubbed
to the smoothness of glass,
reach for what lies beyond
the grain, the hinge, the nail.

All of this week
my father and I drink Crown Royal,
dance and listen to the theme from "The Third Man"
over and over until we break the record,
toast his father who cannot die,
only to find ourselves lying together in dark,
carefully covered with blankets.

This day is for quiet.

I pour the gold-brown whiskey
into large tumblers. No ice.
Soda water hisses from the bottle neck.
I shed the coat and tie
of my new suit and raise my glass in the air,
looking suddenly toward the chair at the table's head
for a toast or some good word.

— Theodore Worozbyt

Backstreet

When Jose does dance he does dance
 like he talks, excited Cuban,
 "Molly, Molly, Molly,
 You're so funny."
 You missed me?
 "You know I do, You know I do."
 He talks faster than a disco beat at Backstreet.
 Oh Jose, I missed you too.
 I rough my hand on his bristle hair,
 See there, he's cut it again.
 I tell him Sam's no good.
 I know, I know.
 So get rid of him.
 You know Molly, Sex Sex Sex.
 Jose dances faster than he thinks
 and his father thinks so too.
 "Jose, you know biology,
 You know that's not right."
 So Jose's got another Don Juan breathing down his neck.
 "Molly, you know Jose, You put him right."
 I wink back to Senor and say,
 "What can I say? I do what I can."
 Jose's got his own way of doing things,
 He's his own man.

— Molly Read

Hard Not To Lose Oneself

Hard not to lose oneself
 to a stand of pines
 and suburban sounds on Sunday afternoon

Difficult
 to think of lines
 of Poles
 in front of empty Warsaw stores,
 balancing diets with courage and faith
 in a folk hero's cries
 and hope that smolders like ruins from yesterday's wars;

Their palates moistened by the flavor of freedom,
 far more satisfying than the smell of barbecue
 that moves across the evenly mowed lawns,
 screened patios,
 poolside cocktails,
 and weekend newspapers

(They stand across page 22, bags in hand,
 waiting for bread,
 waiting,
 but not really waiting now,
 Not really angry faces, not resentful or bitter,
 more a kind forgiveness as they watch
 the transient photographer
 capture their supposed misfortune.
 As though they know they'll end up
 folded beside the eggs-benedict.
 There's a quiet confidence and strength
 in their eyes
 that brings to mind old films
 of Jewish resistors in that city.)

Gathering a moment of pity
 before the steaks are turned.

The pity, though, seems misdirected.
 They are richer who wait for bread
 than those of us who wait for change,
 behind suburban pines.

— Deborah James

Father and Son

Picking up the eyeglasses
 that you left
 upon the television set
 I see the world
 turn into a Turner painting.
 Bridges hold back
 cataracts of water
 and houses burn
 with cooler colors.
 The sun
 has become a
 clouded pool
 painted with a dull knife.
 It matches
 the flood of smoke
 blown from a quiet mouth.

— *Ronald Mancini*

Jumbo

elephant walking
 talking circus

three ring circus
 ring
 ring
 ring
 ing
 telephone
 elephone

walking talking
 saxophone

Mae West walking
 talking sax

— *Stanley Keen*

Tower of London

I
 walk through
 the courtyard
 with my head down
 in the cold. Ravens
 wallow white in the snow.
 The iron bell sounds a long four.

Where
 did red
 princes' blood
 drip? Cold flagstones
 where evening falls. I
 touch steel blades: guillotines,
 axes — the honed thoughts of death.

Here
 alone
 in St. John's
 the low chapel,
 two princes knelt long
 and prayed to a stone girl.
 The walls are warm to my hand.

— *Robyn Perry*

Verbum sat sapienti

"I knew documents can lie, voices can lie,
even tones of voice can lie. But there is
something naked about eyes; they seem the
only organs of the human body that have
never really learned to dissimulate. . . ."

John Fowles, *The Magus*

Your eyes are a backstair;
Waiting, constrained, they allow nothing.
Subdued, then: not cold, just not saying.
You, distracted in the quiet
Systematism that causes you to be,
To do, to decline to say,
Are, like your eyes, ordered
(The shape of laws, postulates,
proximate causes);

I cannot regard you,
Just poorly calculate.

— Susan Stevens

Mangos

Six days they warmed on the windowsill,
their skins effusing musk throughout the house.
Tonight they are done; my pressed thumb
leaves its print. Now the knife:
they melt against the blade, and
juice stains the tablecloth;
the stones at their hearts fall,
whole, syrup washes my hands.
Wet to the wrists,
I say the blessing, taste the wine-meat.
What is fruit?
Flesh of flowers, swollen for our mouths.

— Robyn Perry

ANNIVERSARY

The subway train comes
to my stop, moves east again,
a silver procession of cars,
into the early night of January.
I watch commuters glide on the way,
profiles lodged in the daily news.
I stop and light
a cigarette for the walk.

A green umbrella opens
over a girl, the cloth rippling
in sudden wind.
She struggles with her load,
drops her book from a slim hand.
I want to reach her
soon enough to help,
but only walk to my rented home,
the low grind of an eastbound freight train
fading into dull air.
The rain has not diminished
and there is talk
of sleet tonight.

Grandpa, I cannot call
into my mind today the details
of your fervent life.
Clear shapes of memory
huddle like forgotten umbrellas
in an odd corner of my room.
I remember only
the tastes of certain beers,
the wake of tires spraying slush,
the prospect of inclement weather.

All this week I have waited
for what does not come, the force
of long grieving.
I will sit here this night
and drink, listen
to my tapes of Tchaikovsky,
feel the old thrill in my blood
and pour into early sleep
under worn blankets.

Tonight my father is on the other side
of town at his kitchen table
with his dinner, the three kids
driving him crazy.
My son, the poet, he sometimes says.

— *Theodore Worozbyt*

A Little Bit of Jesus at Hell's Corner

Pepsi Cola was made in Pensacola.

I knew it by instinct or something that grew inside my head and explained everything to me. For example, 7-Up wasn't really green. It was green in the bottle and left the bottle green long after the clear, effervescent liquid had been drunk.

Also, the condoms in the Caloosa River that ran through town and into the Gulf; these strange rubber devices were obviously things men wore when they "did it" to women. Being rubber, they made a squeaking sound that delighted both the man and the woman. They were thrown into the river as a sort of ritual.

There were many mysteries that only later I found out for myself to be other than what my intuitive wisdom wanted them to be.

Those summery days when school was out and the next grade was looming in early September; the brave Julys that headed toward August when it was time to steal the neighbor's goldfish to replenish your own fish pond. When it was time to persuade your blonde cousin, two years younger, into the closet while your mother and her mother, unaware, talked about why so and so drank so much.

In the summer, then, when cardboard furniture boxes were dragged into the empty lot behind the furniture company to become castles and rocket ships among the bamboo and mango trees. The bottoms of the boxes were cut out so we could walk safely on Mars.

I was doubly damned. Even adults joked about how terrible it was to live across the street from the grammar school and, on the other side of it, the First Baptist Church. Two formidable institutions, the dread of most children. The builders of fine boys and girls.

But on the opposite corner, or Hell's Corner as it became known due to the unmitigated violence that took place there as well as the rather celestial whores based there, was a taxi stand.

Panama Red drove the night shift and a judo expert was the radio dispatcher. Late one night, an irate cattleman dispatched the dispatcher with a knife through the heart.

Ike was the oldest cabbie and his four daughters were big and friendly. Shorty had eyes "like two eggs in a shitpot" my mother told me. That described him. He was also short, and drunk most of the time.

These were the superstars at Hell's Corner who, when the rest of town slept, fought off drunken shrimp boat captains just in from Tampico or Campeche; who were besieged by angry wives hunting their husbands; who took the abuse of cattlemen with sharp knives.

There were transient cab drivers, young dudes wandering around, who'd work a while, a week or a few months. Then they'd not show up for work one day or just disappear after a big Saturday night altercation with an outraged shrimper who claimed he was rolled and who proceeded to stomp cabbies and whores through the floor of the cab stand.

This was Hell's Corner. I grew up in a frame house behind it, in the shadow of the church.

of this, the cardboard box and water pistol summer, the cabbies and whores on the night, came a two-week hitch in Vacation Bible School. There I was with my intuitive knowledge.

Teachers were dowdy, sexless creatures, not at all like the young women at the end who held me on their knees and kissed me. These women were old in their ways, who volunteered their services free; that is, their intimate knowledge of the Bible either believed in the Bible or simply believed the Bible.

The Bible itself was a locally-produced work, designed by an unknown Baptist and intended to glorify in the first half the great Jehovah who, by his nefarious deeds and power, scared the shit out of me and, in the second half, Jesus, whom I liked better than His Father.

I was fortunate, I thought, to have Jesus staying at the First Baptist Church. His office in the back.

There was no parish house so church, Sunday School classrooms, and living quarters were housed in one large, white-stuccoed, tall-steeped building that was the pride of the neighborhood. The church had high ceilings that gave a cavernous atmosphere dimly lighted by indirect sunlight through fake, but colorful, stained glass windows ten feet tall along the sides of the building. With a good attendance on either Sunday or a Christmas, the capacity of the structure was 500 hell-scared

people. We were scared only on Sundays, spending the remainder of the week in business, scaring other citizens with lawsuits, expensive bills, and overdue account statements. Then on Sundays and special occasions some of the town's most important people would sing praises of the bearded Man in the back room.

Since I had done quite a few things and was a kindly guy, I learned at Vacation Bible School. By instinct, I knew more about Him than some folks. For example, that He was in the back of the church in a room that connected to His office. Yes, He was there all right, amongst the quiet old maps of the Holy Land and the smell of old and ancient wood that the janitor's broom never swept away. A divine aroma followed Jesus wherever He went. The smell of a 10,000-year-old Judaic heaven. Every morning, we sang hymns and heard about Jesus. He never appeared but I knew He was in the back in His white robes doing important paperwork. Our singing didn't bother Him. After all, we were singing mostly about Him, off key. He knew we were there.

At the end of the week, by age groups, we'd go to classrooms, Bibles under arms, for serious lessons. I didn't own one. No one in my family owned a Bible, so the church saw to it that I bought one of theirs. One of the dowdy ladies wrote my name in it.

I didn't have pictures. There were strange things in there. Leviticus! Who the hell was Leviticus? Deuteronomy sounded like what my cousin and I did in the closet. This was some book. Although I couldn't read, the older Bible students could and they'd be around at recess talking about Jeremiah and Jerusalem and Genesis and other stranger things.

Some of the dedicated Baptist women had a British Bob haircut that gave her the appearance of an elderly simian with half a coconut shell over its head. She gave us instructions on how to find things really fast in the Bible. It was a violent approach to

the study of Holy Writ and children naturally loved it. It was competitive and it worked.

"Hand on sword," she ordered in mock sternness. The kids prepared to open their Bibles.

"Draw swords," meaning to open the book at random.

Then she announced, with an ecclesiastical pucker, the words we eagerly awaited, the assignment that meant to get ready to charge.

"Leviticus 2:10." There was a pause.

"Charge!" This would mean to go after Leviticus 2:10. The finder of the passage would then read to the class or read along with the simian mother who, with stumbling Bible readers, had the patience of somebody named Job.

Leviticus! There was that word again. Something ancient and vinegary about it. I knew, too, that if I sat there long enough, someone would read some verse from Deuteronomy and expose me for fooling around with my cousin in the closet.

After several more explorations of the Holy Word in this manner, we were marched across the street to the grammar school to use its playground.

The VBS day ended before noon the same way, every day, after the playground period, for two weeks.

Approximately 100 sweaty-necked, puffy-faced, and starved Bible Schoolers, ages 4 to 12, returned from the school grounds, crossing the street and sometimes singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," to the church's small patio.

There, waiting for us, were Dixie cups of cherry Kool-Aid and homemade cookies left by Christ. He came out before we arrived and left the cookies and Kool-Aid, returning, robes flowing in the summer breeze, to the church office. There He sat with the minister and shuffled papers and bills that dealt with painting the church or new folding chairs for the downstairs kindergarten room.

It was God's house and these things had to be taken care of. The cookie and Kool-Aid break was just something to do to relax His mind for awhile and let us know He was still there.

We weren't an especially precious group. Jesus didn't have much time for us, a bunch of snot-nosed kids who would go home around noon and be back tomorrow. He would linger on pushing papers and making important telephone calls to lethargic church captains remiss in their duties. He'd chastise businessmen who were always late getting to church and shame those who appeared only once or twice a month.

I expected that one day He would rise from His paperwork, walk down the aisle and out the front door of the First Baptist Church, cross the street to the taxi stand and let loose a homily that would drive the cabbies and young women back into the small building. I expected to see Him one day standing in front of the cab stand, with one hand on a gas pump, His legs casually crossed beneath His white robes, maybe just a sandal showing, having a serious discussion with one or two of the residents of Hell's Corner.

At five, He got into an old car, a sedate teleologic automobile like a faded dark blue '47 DeSoto, and headed down Main Street to have dinner at one of the cafes. We never saw Him but He was there.

Once I didn't go home but ambled around the church, inspecting the empty

al tank and looking at old photos in the dim corridors. Photos of former

d Jesus' office and went in.

were more photos on the paneled walls and a fine Renaissance shot of Christ larger than the others, next to a small hand-carved cross. The desk was not with papers. It was neat, with pencils and paper clips and stapler all in order, Underwood typewriter, one of the old monsters, under a cover.

astor caught me and told me to go home but I had been in Christ's office! suddenly as it started, it stopped. "This is to certify that blank blank, age blank, completed Vacation Bible School." The certificate gave the date of completion a gold star pasted on the upper right corner. A gold star meant something in mys. It meant that the bearer had not missed one day. It also meant that he had a little and, for a few hours a day, was out of the house and his parents' way. s graduation day.

for the group picture on the church steps with the youngest in front and the n back. We each bought a copy for \$1.50 a print. They were postcard size and we took the black and white glossy home with our certificates, we gathered to e who was photogenic and who was not.

e we were. Somebody in back thumbing his nose slyly but you could tell he imbing his nose and not sneezing. Another was scratching his chin. But wait! s actually giving the finger to the cameraman, a decrepit, bad-breathed local rapher who wheezed and thanked us for being still.

ook a position in the middle of the street between the church and the cab stand. ed like hours as we stood perfectly still while he adjusted the camera on its -slipping tripod which, like some three-legged creature, kept trying to waltz om the scene.

across the street were the cabbies and the whores who came out to cheer us nt at one or two of us and smile loose-toothed smiles acquired on forgotten ay nights. I stood down front and endured what could not be cured. One of the s, a young big friendly one, was waving to me. In the photo, I have a smirk on my ic face.

were all there. The minister in his dark somber suit and the VBS teachers in est, which was never in style. And the residents of Hell's Corner on the other acing us. Everyone was there. Except Jesus. Back there making important calls, I guessed.

er saw Him.

turned out, Pepsi Cola wasn't made in Pensacola, 7-Up wasn't green and men 'do it' to women with rubber devices just to hear the squeak. And Jesus didn't the First Baptist Church.

when I see an old, sun-purpled DeSoto passing slowly down a street in a small I think of Him.

— Patrick Kelly

Yakanaka

The screendoor didn't bang, but at the wide squeak and tinsel click Bernhardt glanced down between the leaves. Grandfather, his hands chinking in his pockets, walked toward the black ring of shade beneath the catalpa. His Hushpuppies made no sound on the grass.

Bernhardt had turned eight at 8:35 that morning. He had sat across from his mother at the kitchen table to watch the clock hands move; when the time had come, his mother had gotten up to bring him a square of cake — yellow, still warm, and without the smooth blanket of chocolate which he would peel off and save for last at supper.

Now the sun's slant lit short hairs on the backs of the leaves, and the black batons of catalpa pods rattled. Grandfather stood jingling one pocket, his face blued by the shade; he wore the red and yellow starburst in his string tie. He turned the underbrim of his hat toward Bernhardt and looked at him with burnt eyes — he saw the steak knife stolen to cut initials, the book of poems plugging a fork of red ants. Grandfather grinned, and held up a hand, squeezing the fingers against the palm once, then opening them flat again. He said the word he had taught Bernhardt, "Chugma."

Bernhardt hugged the tree down to a lower branch, sat on it, breathed, and turned a back flip. He left two foot-shaped prints in the bald dirt above the roots.

"Chugma," he answered, and wiping the bark dust from the lines in his palm, he stepped to shake his Grandfather's hand.

"Eight years old." His Grandfather looked down into his face and cupped a hand over the rounded corner of the boy's shoulder. One pocket still rattled. He squeezed Bernhardt's arm and said, "Got a nice present for you, Jay" (Bernhardt's first name, though he never called himself by it). "Let's walk down the tracks."

Bernhardt followed a little behind his Grandfather, past the jungly flowerbed where he and his sister dug for fishing worms, past the silver T of the clothesline prop, where they practiced flips, and through the hole in the back hedge. Grandfather gave a whistle, and the red setter, Blitzen, came loping around the corner of the house.

The boy had a quiet feeling for his Grandfather; though he mostly sat in his new green easychair and read the paper, he was a fullblood. Choctaw. Bernhardt's best friend, sure that his Grandfather lived in a tipi, called Bernhardt Geronimo.

Bernhardt's mother had explained why Grandfather called her White Eyes: Indians, she had pointed out, have yellow eyes. She had said you could always tell Indians apart because their sweat didn't smell worse than rainwater, and they didn't have hair on their bodies. Bernhardt had never seen his Grandfather's legs, but he had seen him in his undershirt. His arms were dark and smooth, and Bernhardt checked and saw that his mother was right; there was no hair under them, either.

This Grandfather was different in other ways. When they passed a skunky place in the road, Grandfather said "Schonka!" and held his nose. One Sunday night, Bernhardt had gone to a potluck supper with his Grandfather at the Indian Baptist and had had to sit back in the pew when the congregation rose for a hymn, because he couldn't read the words in the Choctaw hymnal.

Bernhardt ran ahead of his Grandfather. He flew down the cleared aisle between the waving green boy-high weeds (Blitz licking the back of his heels), and for most of the way down the slope, he took off in a long-jump that landed him on two feet at the bottom.

He was already skittering up the rise of white rocks when Blitz burst from the grass. He tipped off-balance once and skinned the heel of his hand clean on the gravel, then he hopped up and clear onto the tarred railroad ties. He balanced on a rusted rail and used Blitz's head pump as he galloped up the rocks. Blitz came and sat down on the rails and winked at Bernhardt. The boy licked his stinging hand and then he stood on the glossy top of the dog's head for balance.

He saw a hundred black and small birds were flying in a crowd above the telephone wires; they swooped and fell in a school, like fish. Blitz thumped his tail, which was thick as a handle and tangled with stickweeds, and stood up to bark. Bernhardt's heels were off the edge of the rail, but he stepped back onto it again; he raised one hand to his eyes, as his mother liked to do, and saw his Grandfather's gray hat top the

Grandfather came down the slope with his hands still in his pockets, his feet sliding into the front of his shoes; his pockets chinked in a rhythm. Grandfather reached out and broke a tip of grass and stuck it in the corner of his mouth to chew. He hopped up the rocks toward the railroad tracks with his hat tipped back, watching a shimmering wave of birds. Bernhardt followed his eyes. Grandfather took the grass from his mouth and stepped over the rail and said, "Those're *foshi*." "I see 'em, i," Bernhardt nodded.

Grandfather walked down the path between the two rails, not caring whether he was on gravel or wood. Grandfather walked with his toes turned in. Bernhardt was having a hard time walking the slick rail like a balance beam, because he had to wear his heavy green corrective shoes all the time, except when he was in bed, and he was tired from being pigeon-toed.

He tried to keep his feet level by leaning up trying to balance and began leaping from tie to tie along the outside of the tracks. Sometimes the tie would be broken off, or it would be missing altogether, and he would have to break his rhythm and step down into the white gravel. After a while he was very tired, and ran down the middle, and caught up, and walked beside his Grandfather.

Grandfather had nosed away as soon as they had started to walk. They heard him crashing through the brush, first on one side of the tracks and then on the other, keeping up with them without their being able to see him. Once a covey of quail flushed on their heels and they heard the dog's voice, and later a cottontail flashed across the tracks in front of them and Blitz resurfaced to chase it.

Finally they walked and didn't say much. The white rocks dazzled in the distance and they saw washed Coke bottles. When they crossed the trestle, they stopped to look at the houses and cars and horses against the green of the hills, and then they started hopping on lines. Grandfather took off his hat and wiped a line of sweat into his eyes, then set it back on his head.

Grandfather had dropped his grass stalk, when they reached the far side of

the trestle, Bernhardt walked to the edge of the gravel to pluck two more, one for each of them. The stem-juice tasted very sweet and green indeed between his teeth.

Bernhardt turned back toward the tracks, and Grandfather stood close behind him. Grandfather rattled his pockets for much the same reason a rattler shakes his tail; otherwise, you didn't hear him coming.

Grandfather took the grass blade between his thumbs and blew a low birdcall. He showed Bernhardt how to flatten his top lip right up against his knuckle joints, and they walked for a ways in concert.

Bernhardt pointed out a small brown *foshi* whistling back at them from where his two long tails bristled out over a telephone wire. Grandfather held two fingers up to Bernhardt, and grinned to tell him the bird was named Scissortail. He pointed out a brilliant globe, which he called a redbug flower. Leaning closer and squinting, Bernhardt saw the reason for its shimmer: the flower had no petals at all, only a planet of swarming red pinpoints. Bernhardt jumped back; he knew a chigger when he saw one. He itched all over just looking at them. Grandfather laughed, because chiggers never bothered him; he said they didn't like the way Indians taste.

The sun pressed a hot hand on Bernhardt's hair. He stopped occasionally to crouch over and study what caught his eye; his pockets were lumpy with the most glittery of the rock chunks, and between one thumb and finger he pinched the metallic shell of the biggest beetle he had ever seen.

He sprinted ahead to scare a bird sitting on the tracks, but it didn't fly. Bernhardt leaned shade over it, and saw the dotted lines of ants moving in and out of the eye holes. He wanted to take one of the fanned wings for luck, but he heard the patient jingle of pockets, and his Grandfather said, "Got a nice birthday present for you, Jay." Grandfather pointed a knuckle, "Take a right turn up at that redbud tree."

Bernhardt's eye caught no bright knot of flower except the sparks of Indian paintbrush, so he followed in the cool of his Grandfather's shadow, turning to give a long whistle for Blitz.

Grandfather squeezed a hand around the thin trunk of the marker tree, and when Bernhardt passed it, he squeezed it in the same place. He knew trees had rings inside them.

Dusty with heat, the grass drooped silver; the stalks were thick as Bernhardt's fingers, and the tops feathered far above his head. This grass had no alley worn through it, so Grandfather parted it with his hands (Bernhardt saw the branched veins on the backs) and said over his shoulder to the boy, "Walk right in my footprints."

As soon as Grandfather lifted his foot, the shape of his shoe filled with water. Bernhardt walked in the puddles (which sent up a syrupy smell of grass); or rather, he marched, as he had to march in the low waves at the beach, because the ground sucked at his feet.

Grandfather turned his head toward a shuffle in the grass. "Young snake," he said low, "*sinti*." "*Sinti*": Bernhardt breathed the word in through his skin, but he saw no flash of color.

Bernhardt knew his Grandfather wasn't afraid of snakes. At school, he bragged a

of the snake story his mother had told him, whenever he could: "Myther used to catch snakes. Big ones, poison ones: copperheads, rattlers, cottonmouths. Took 'em to the hospital for medicine." Bernhardt didn't anything his Grandfather was afraid of; whenever Grandfather had a blood under a fingernail, he drilled a little hole with his pocketknife and sucked out the pt.

stepped from the high grass as from a room; now the ground was carpeted and rolled, beyond barbed wire, in a low hill. Bernhardt saw the weeds on the w slanted, like hair.

dfather caught the top string of barbed wire down with a thumb, and stepped e fence. Bernhardt slid under the bottom wire. His Grandfather turned back to ne wall of grass (Bernhardt watched it, too), and said, "Guess Blitz's gone on ound him a rabbit."

ardt was already halfway up the hill's side. "Race ya," he yelled, and charged op. His Grandfather waved him on, and stood waiting for the far answer to a orwill call.

ardt paused on the top and let the wind sift through his hair. The ground rose in green dunes toward a dark cloud of trees. Groups of spotted cows bent eads to chew, some in clear sunlight, others in islands of shade. The dark s shifted, and looking up, Bernhardt saw the bottoms of huge clouds that slid e sun; this is what fish see, he told himself, when a boat flies over their heads. dfather stopped at the boy's side and held his hand out to cup the wind above lls. He winnowed the sound of a creek in one pocket. Bernhardt sucked in his to make his mouth water, and drank that.

octaws buried their people here," Grandfather said. "These mounds 're where ed dirt and rocks over their dead, to fool coyotes. And the grass grew in them Good place, after a rain, for birdpoints; rain brings 'em to the top."

hardt nodded. He had spent his share of vacation daybreaks walking rows of , new-plowed fields, poking the clods with a dandelion picker. He had seen of farmers come to unchain the wide gates to their land. He had not yet, er, found a perfect arrowhead; but he saved his chipped, night- and dawn- and colored shards of flint in a Sucrets box, where they rattled like glass.

're heading toward them pecans," his Grandfather nodded toward the wood. ardt aimed himself by his Grandfather's gaze and shot to the botom of the hill, wind burned his cheeks. He crossed toward the woods (his Grandfather would e the crow flies, swooping down the mounds with his arms out, and stalking the es. He never looked back, feeling his Grandfather burn behind him steady as n.

way across the field, he remembered the dead and watched his feet, to keep ustling the grass (white stars pricked against the blades). The black and white rotted away from him; even the smaller ones stared and wouldn't come to his

wind held its breath in the woods; the musty air smelled of old furniture. nes of light hung and crossed beneath the trees, and the freckled ground erved. Bernhardt felt exactly as if he were far under water. Even the bird voices

plashed and spattered.

Bernhardt tipped his hear toward a delicate clink in the electric drone of heat, and turned to meet his Grandfather.

"Look out for ticks," Grandfather said, "jumping into your hair." Bernhardt's head immediately itched from his ears down the back of his shirt collar, and the goose bumps prickled from there; he bent over and shook. Grandfather laughed and hitched up his pants.

The boy and his Grandfather walked with their faces turned up to watch the flicker of birdwing among the branches, as they walked at night to name the stars. Here, the birds were not flying over Bernhardt's world; he was passing under theirs.

A train howled far away (it rang in the deep honeycomb of Bernhardt's ear), but Grandfather's face didn't change. Grandfather stepped as if there were a path through the tangle, and his foot pressed no sound, and the woods tuned up all around him.

"By now I guess you know, Jay," Grandfather said to a huddle of trees, "what you belly button's for."

Bernhardt nodded, because he didn't know what his Grandfather meant.

Grandfather grinned, and pulled at his earlobe to scratch it. "Your dad and his brothers used to call it their old war wound."

Grandfather led Bernhardt right into the cluster of trees — he called them Bodarks — and pressed his palms against the backs of their slender necks.

Bernhardt felt the cool, at the same time that he heard and smelled that the trees crowded around a black spring, and he ran, kicking off his heavy shoes, stripping his socks off into wads, so that his feet pressed against the cool dirt.

He went on his knees to drink. He drank with his mouth pushed into the water (long-legged water bugs skated away from his reflection), so the cold scorched his lips. He drank a long time. Grandfather came and bent down beside him; he cupped his hands as if to splash his face.

Bernhardt didn't wipe his mouth, but sat up and let the cold run down his chin and splatter his shirt. He rested the bottoms of his feet on the top of the water, so they stung; he eased them gradually into the mercury cold, as carefully as into a steaming tub; he had to jerk them out several times and start again.

Grandfather stood with his fists in his pockets and stared into the heart of the spring. Bernhardt wondered did catfish graze there.

Grandfather pinched the creases of his pants, and squatted down on the black moss. He pressed a warm, hard shape into Bernhardt's hand, saying, "Happy birthday, Jay."

Bernhardt unfolded his fingers and found a perfectly etched stipple-gray birdpoint. He scratched the serated edge against the soft side of his arm and smiled at the points of red that pricked in a line.

When Grandfather smiled, his eyes remained sad. "Thank you, Grandfather," the boy said, and made a fist around the flint so its shape printed into his hand.

"Found that here," Grandfather pushed a fingerprint into the damp earth, "setting right on the dirt. Just had to bend over and scoop it up."

Grandfather pressed his kneecaps and grunted to stand. He went to lean against

of a thick tree that threw a net of shadow across the water. He grinned to the
g leaves and cleared his throat.
e's a story in our tribe," Grandfather began, "about Yakanaka, Little People.
t, now! They're tricky fellers. Like to hide behind trees and watch you when
around."
ardt stood very still so the water ruffled around the rolls in his pants. His legs
mb in the icewater; he breathed shallow, looking hard at every tree.
naka whistle to each other in birdcalls (that mockingbird's trying to trick
d you'd never know they was there unless they decide to show themselves.
oose the magicians for the tribe, see."
dfather honked his nose with his handkerchief, refolded it and wiped the back
eck. The leaves around him were salted with light. Bernhardt leaned against
rent.
a Choctaw mom and dad don't worry if their pup don't make it for supper two,
ays. They feel proud. They know the Yakanaka've stole him, and he's in good
y're watching us right now."
hardt turned his eyes too late toward every flinch of leaf, and his Grandfather
l. "But they show themselves to kids they see have the power to be magicians.
ey steal 'em. And they teach 'em all their secrets.
at secrets, Grandfather?" The cool sand rippled around Bernhardt's feet.
rets. The story goes: them that tell Yakanaka secrets die the day after.
l if Yakanaka show themselves to anyone who's afraid or who don't do just
ey tell him, well, the Little People'll hide themselves, and he won't see 'em
he rest of his life.
them that are chosen, who listen and who aren't afraid, have good medicine.
now the secrets, they're magicians in the tribe. And they see Yakanaka playing
the leaves, and laugh at their jokes, when no one else laughs."
ndfather looked up for the sun throught the green and jingled his pockets.
Jay, you gonna scramble up this tree and have a lookout 'fore we head home?
time to get that *pashofa* onto the stove."
hardt's feet felt tender against the shady bank; they were pale as fish jerked
r. He ignored his thick shoes sprawled in the weeds and ran to tag the tree.
re were no branches low enough to jump to, and Bernhardt's arms could not
to hug his way up. But this was not a Bodark; it had grown fat and slanted.
ardt could crouch up it like a steep ramp.
ren your dad was about your age," Grandfather spoke over his jingling pockets,
get a running start, and go right up that tree, like a squirrel."
nhardt clung as high as he could climb, up where the leaves rustled like spiced
. He looked down on the green roof of trees. Grandfather's face was small
d up to him; Bernhardt waved, and bird's red flashed at the corner of hie eye.
dfather raised his arm in return.

— Robyn Perry

PARTICIPANTS

Linda Pastan, poet. Her poems have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *New Republic*, *Nation*, *Poetry*, *Antaeus*, and other periodicals. She has published five books since 1971: *A Perfect Circle of Sun*; *Aspects of Eve*; *Waiting For My life*; and *PM/AM: New and Selected Poems* (1982), which was nominated for the American Book Award. She has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Maryland Arts Council, and she is on the staff of the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference.

Gretchen Schulz, Associate Professor of English at Oxford College of Emory University, heads the freshman writing program and sponsors the student newspaper and INK, Oxford's writing club. She is the recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for work in Shakespeare at Harvard University. This is her second consecutive year as Moderator of the Festival's Panel, and she has long been a supporter of the Festival.

Kay G. Stevenson, Lecturer in Literature, University of Essex, and Visiting Associate Professor of English, Agnes Scott College, where she is teaching courses in Shakespeare and Creative Writing. She has been interested in creative writing since she was an undergraduate at Agnes Scott College and combines this interest with her critical studies in Medieval and Renaissance poetry.

Richard Wilbur, poet, translator, editor, and teacher. Among his many books of poetry are *The Beautiful Changes*, *Ceremony and Other Poems*, *A Bestiary*, *Things of This World*, *Advice to a Prophet*, *Walking to Sleep*, *The Mind-Reader*, and *Seven Poems*. He is translator of Moliere's *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*, *The School for Wives*, and *The Learned Ladies*; and with Lillian Hellman he produced a comic opera of Voltaire's *Candide*. He has edited *The Complete Poems of Poe*, the *Poems of Shakespeare*, and *Selected Poems of Witter Brynner*. He has earned the highest awards for his work, including the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, the National Book Award, the Bollingen Prize for translation, the Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Poetry, the Edna St. Vincent Millay Memorial Award, and the Harriet Monroe Poetry Award. Mr. Wilbur is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Ford Fellow, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and Chancellor of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and of the Academy of American Poets. He was a Professor of English at Wesleyan University for many years, and since 1977 he has been Writer in Residence at Smith College.