

Poetry Series

Theresa Haffner
- poems -

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Theresa Haffner(August 25,1945)

Theresa Haffner is a 30 year veteran of the Los Angeles poetry wars. She has been editor/publisher of two periodicals, THREADBARE Literary Journal and AFTERSHOCK Magazine, and was regional editor for THE NEW PRESS, a nationally distributed literary magazine from New York. She has published two collections of her poetry, ACHERON and Other Poems (1996) and DIFFERENT DRUM (2003) . Currently she is working on a novel titled RIVER. She also performs as a musician and singer/songwriter with a large body of original work to her credit. She is 62.

5: 46 A. M.

A pale swath of blue emerges
between dark rectangles
of buildings on either side
a transparent strip of sky
above ghost silhouettes,
hushed traffic lights
and solitary pedestrians
pushing back the boundaries
of day and night

a rare and fragile moment
of great intimacy
it has always been
my favorite time of day.

in this world of
unwritten messages,
secret codes and
meaningful glances,
the only answers
are questions
which have not
been asked.

Theresa Haffner

A New Place To Live

We need a new place to live.
Alternative environment
new
pad crib lay up
hide out
maybe even
cabin in the rough

You know when those
welfare checks and government pensions
get thin
after all we all get our checks
for mental disabilities emotional disturbances
crazy enough to qualify too fucked up
to pay us off put us on the old
once a month pay day routine
full moon tweaking on an 8 track
hiding in the laundry room
they say it's a progressive condition
tried really tried to be straight upright and true
Section 8 subsidized our ware then got too fucked up
even for Section 8
we need a new kind of place to live

Rent too high to pay so checked out
the communal scene and cooperative forms
of living socialist dialectics lighting
up our Marxist non revisionist eyes

A rooming house room was about the best
share the kitchen and bath

with a hundred other roomies and freaks
and their games and jealousies
and treacheries and betrayals

and their friends of their friends
and opera at 8: 00 in the morning
but oh please

play your synthesizer low

so trying to deal drugs out of the pad
laid us out
pay the rent
pay the connection
the house a public thoroughfare
lost the sound system
lost the color tv
lost the synthesizer
then the homeless bit you know
on the back porch in the back of the
station wagon in the stolen vw

then living for the better part of an extra
month in an abandoned car
parked next to Carl's Junior
and Osco Drugs

without running water or clean clothing

car started but wouldn't drive
broken axle
we finally bought the car for \$60
when the owner came
three weeks later and found us living in it
beer cans and Carl's Junior paper cups
building up around the car
with the stench of urine

Police gave us two days to move the car or else

By then Alpha Beta and Osco Drugs had
gotten plenty tired of us pan handling
change for the telephone and me of course
dollars for short dogs the usual morning
recipe of Night Train or White Port wine
that became a necessity to keep me off the
curb and out of the gutter

and using the rest room at Carl's Jr.
to clean up in

The car ran only two days but it
took us to San Fernando Dept. of Social Services
to get a hotel voucher on General Relief

Finally lost the car after it stranded us
the third time
lost our clothes lost
the tools lost all our provisions of course
lots of layed up food oranges and god knows
what else moldering in plastic bags in the
interior lost everything we had in the car
when it was towed
but it got us to the hotel
on the voucher and we started making it
back up the ladder of success.

got a couple of synthesizers
made a bottle harp from empty Sundance wine coolers
for a jam session
started dealing a little drugs
you know hands on feeling like we were
once more our human selves
get terribly dependent on a welfare hotel
with a voucher
kept renewing the damn thing
dropping out of the program and starting over
just to get the voucher and all that security
NO VISITORS AFTER 10 P.M.
with a roof over our heads
potted palms in the lobby
messages in our message box
thought we would stay on there forever
maybe buy the hotel
invested in the whole fourth floor
thought we owned the place
jam sessions from midnight to dawn
filled the place up with mirrors and syringes
but the hotel kicked us out eventually too
and we had to move
now we need a new kind of place to live

We started hanging around with these two lesbians
who are friends of ours who are prostitutes

Medea writes punk rock lyrics and sings
She used to be with Black Flag
Her going and coming and late night jam sessions
helped get us kicked out of the hotel
And Anne who is very quiet and reserved
underspoken where Medea is outspoken
Medea turns tricks and makes a lot of money
Anne gets SSI and keeps an apartment
Together they make out alright

We began to think in terms of incorporating
them into our radical game plan of unconventional
living arrangements
Teaming up with them so to speak

After we opened up the nailed shut bathroom door
to make adjoining suites at the hotel
hotel kicked us out last week we decided
a little more wide open life style might be in
order

We don't want to pay a lot of rent Section 8
and living in abandoned houses for nothing
has conditioned us to not obligating a great portion
of our meager income for somebody else's landlord
not more than half for rent
not more than 30%
not more than well you guessed it we
want about the lowest rent possible
save our bucks
for expensive motel bills and dealing at a loss

And we don't want a lot of restrictions
We don't want to have to be in by 11 or keep
our synthesizer down after 12 or keep the
number and type of visitors who visit us
on the wrong side of 13 or african or asian
or real long hair

We don't want to be interfered with though there
be a constant stream of single gentlemen all one race
or small groups of long hair obvious street addicts
hanging around at all hours of the night and morning
for whatever purposes we don't like them
to make assumptions We Are Professional People
We have rehearsals recitals Poetry Readings
We don't like anyone to point a finger
We don't point a finger at anyone lest we
in turn be judged

We want to climb in and out the windows
take the doors off the hinges tear out the smoke
detectors make vivid black and white abstract paintings
on the walls and window shades
drag in tons of surplus vegetables and frozen foods
from supermarket dumpsters
and
make loud music
have a continuous party make house repairs hammer nails
do remodeling late at night every night
and not answer the door or telephone on Tuesday
and Wednesday morning all day

We like other people around but we like our privacy
too We like to make love often for hour after hour
sometimes for days before these ghostly mirrored walls
our reflections glistening in the intimate shadows
far into the utopian distances

We can use a little supervision too got used to it
in the county jails and voucher hotels No Visitors
After 11 under penalty of eviction or DEATH works well
on us free hippie spirits too optimistic to say no

We envision a warehouse a store front a live in garage
a mobile home tree house undersea cavern high rise
office or cupboard under the sink

We like to remake our environment into our own
likeness and if this means unconventional
disorderly or outright destructive it is because

we take the shortest course between two straight lines

Our aesthetics are internalized not externalized
We don't judge by appearances We look below
the surface of things

We spend our lives in search for the true nature
of reality and seek to penetrate to the burning
coal within

We seek to get to the heart of each experience as
life unfolds its tapestries before us

We know there is a mystical truth not unlike
Nirvana that gives our lives relevance and meaning

We suffer ecstasies too strong too exquisite
too unbearable to ever gauge ourselves in terms of
any straight person any 9 – 5 corporate worker or
housewife who never takes chances always pays their
bills on time never speeds in traffic and never looks
beyond the hem of their taffeta petticoats

Ours is a simple credo

We do not feel guilty about our various illegalities
only regret that so much unhappiness this way comes
We are culpable for our felonies and our misdemeanors
We realize that we have stepped beyond the boundaries
where

we can make our living within the reins of legality
and that every person is entitled to make a living

The nature of our crimes then is not moral but
political

We recognize that it is money that is behind it
and when there is no longer any money in it
our crimes will become legal

We do not ask for any forgiveness only that you
let us be do not disturb or distract us

and keep your distance from us even as we must
keep our distance from one another

If you do not involve yourself with us
you will not be hurt by us

We know that we did not become the way we have
become
by being timid or by refusing to fight
and that each of us is prone to episodes of violence
and uncontrolled temper

Do not interfere with our self styled barbarism
as we befoul our dwelling places and make our illegal
money

We are the last stanchion of the lost hope of humanity

We looked in the paper this morning An odd
ad in the classified section reads "Hotel/Storage
\$10 a day" We called up It's an old apartment
building but its condition is not good It's not
inhabitable unless you want to do some major repair
for free rent Sounds just like up
our alley

So we move our stuff over to this filthy
plumbing overflowed four story brick walk up
on Vermont Street By now Medea and Anne are at
each other's throats
arguing constantly and we are running
out of dope and out of money

So we pay our \$10 and start filling the place up
Looks like we've found a new place to live

Theresa Haffner

Acheron

'Who listens to classical music, anyway? '

-Bill Bored, 'Urban Contemporary.'

structural dawn, vacant skies
meaningless streets, desolate sidewalks
deserted now in this hour after sunrise
get used to the directionlessness
(drifting aimlessly like a boat with
broken rudder)
get used to the poverty
get used to the filthy clothes and
unshaven faces
(prematurely aged by the sun's
ultraviolet rays)
of those who populate this barren
landscape
of run down hotels and abandoned
buildings
how many days, how many days
days without names, each one like the
others
got to remember who i am
got to remember who i am supposed to
be
got to remember the dreams and visions
of my youth,
the ideals i lived my life for
got to remember my name
always get \$1.25 for beer, the Rx for
alcohol
that helps to forget the hopelessness
helps to forget the dreams that won't
come true
helps to forget who i was and the life i
used to lead
helps to forget where i am and how i got
here
helps to face another day without hope
of change

the stench of urine, the smell of decay
the back alleys of broken glass
plastic bags and bottle caps
the trash strewn in disarray
a symphony of crumpled newspapers
old rags and cardboard boxes
strung like garlands and arabesques
overflowing the dumpster
in cascades like colored streamers

(NOTE: Charon ferried the souls of the dead across the River Acheron to the underworld, but only for a price. Those who could not pay, who had no coin to toss, or who could not afford a proper burial were denied passage and condemned to wander 100 years without a resting place.)

Theresa Haffner

After Images

□

the afternoon tv
became the very real
depiction of a reality
that some had predicted
but none of us wanted
to see.
the verdict
in from the Rodney King Beating Case,
how video telereporting
from the corner of Florence
and Manchester
where a man had been pulled from
his truck and beaten
and the rioting had
begun.
No police on the scene
the reporting from
the circling
newshelicopter the only link
between sanity
and disaster

□

the
esoteric moment
we thought it was just
isolated incidents
the night
raged on
the fires ignited
the orange glow of burning buildings
against the black palm trees
and night sun
orange against black
the harried Washingtonia palms
like gargoyles

the Sack of
Southern
Los Angeles.

III.

"no justice, no peace!
Went the chant outside the
Parker Center Police Headquarters.
We were all on their side
as they leveled a police
guard checkpoint,
a tiny empty shack,
and dismantled it into
splintered pieces, igniting
the kindling
as eggs pelted
the troopers.

the fire.

three fires

thirteen fires.
Orange and black
the tv image flamed
□
IV.

how much is enough
This could go on
for another two or three
days, " i said to judee

the 11 a.m. news report
like a continuation of the
night before
prompting walks to
the corner convenience store
for vodka, malt liquor
I hope it doesn't happen
here, " i said to the frightened

☐brean in the liquor store.

he sold me what i needed from
the door, behind partially closed
☐bn gates. wouldn't let
anyone in the store. Closing soon,
get what you need. Curfew.

No businesses will be open.

☐p.m. the smoke
hung low across the southern sky
☐ver los angeles.

☐

☐urn out...

next day, like waking to a
nightmare -

☐ke a war had been here
while i slept.

☐nvenience store,
burned out.

☐his quiet neighborhood
this peaceful street

☐s nice a business corner
as you could ask

☐ut now the two liquor/food
stores in walking distance were destroyed
and for the first time in memory
☐here were panhandlers on the
sidewalk.

☐took off on the bus to
get my check.

☐.

☐o. box office

closed until tomorrow, no way
to get check. Hollywood Boulevard
blackened by store fires. All my favorite
places. Fredericks, Playmates, two well known
☐ngerie stores,

☐he discount electronics store where
i got my tv adapter, gutted, the Swap Meet

store across the street from Tommies Burgewrs
on Wilcox. You could smell the smoldering
timbers. Some buses not running, I caught
Line 210 down Vine St. to Santa Monica
wanting to take a short cut home.

Ended up getting stranded
at Sta. Monica and Van Ness, because
Sta. Monica bus took a detour out
of the area,
making a quick circuit back downtown
then out of service. and there were no
more buses running.

Had to walk home
from Van Ness all the way on my
crutches, having no money but the dollar
judee gave me for bus fare.

As i walked the sidewalk
beside this battered street, past
the shattered windows and burned out
skeletons that used to be
recognizable as businesses,
a sense of awe fell about me
At the senseless destruction
of what had become more than
3,000 fires

And i said under my
breath,
"Oh, Beirut, this
beautiful city."

Theresa Haffner

Allen Ginsberg Called Me Long Distance From New York

Allen Ginsberg called me long distance from New York..

It woke me from a sound sleep. Groggily I put the receiver to my ear.

"Hello, " I said.

"Hello, " he said. "This is Allen Ginsberg.

I'm calling from New York."

I thought it must be one of my friends playing a joke on me.

Still in a fog, I said, "Oh, you must be putting me on."

"No, I'm not." he said. "I AM Allen Ginsberg. I'm calling long distance from New York."

Gathering my wits, I said,

"Wait a minute. You SOUND like Allen Ginsberg. Maybe you ARE Allen Ginsberg! "

"Look, " he said, "you're embarrassing me and probably yourself, also."

His identity was established. But he wasn't calling for me.

He was trying to reach the woman who had lived in the apartment before I did, who had once been a secretary for him in New York.

He wanted to give her complimentary tickets to his upcoming appearance at McCabe's, an exclusive performance venue here in Southern California.

She had already moved.

I didn't know her well and had no idea how to contact her.

As we chatted we gradually overcame
the awkwardness of our introduction.
"I'm a transsexual, " I told him.
"How charming, " he said.

But no matter what I said
or how hard I tried to persuade him
I was unable to get him
to give the complimentary tickets.
to me instead.

On the night of the concert.
I called the club,
wanting to buy a ticket..

The tickets cost \$62.50
at the door.
It was more money than I had,
so I was unable to attend.

Theresa Haffner

Aluminum Foil

1.

It happens from time to time, usually after a prolonged period of sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

Aluminum foil is a good reflector of light, but not bright enough to reflect much in the way of an image. As it becomes wrinkled, it develops hills and valleys which reflect the light in different directions, forming patterns of light spaces and dark spaces.

Random patterns having no meaning in themselves. Then the images appear.

This is a little like the process Leonardo Da Vinci used to "discover" the statue within the granite. Or the woodcarver lets the grain of the wood suggest the carving.

No two pieces of wood have the same grain and no two pieces of aluminum foil can wrinkle in the same pattern.

But no two people, even looking at the same grain or the same wrinkle, will see the same image.

Foil wrinkles in themselves have no meaning other than that the foil is wrinkled.

Whatever meaning we see, whatever image we interpret, is projected onto the random patterns by our own consciousness, out of our particular life experience. The thoughts and ideas both conscious and unconscious which occupy our minds and the degree to which we have developed our creative imagination.

Then it happens.

A pair of eyes looking at me as if reflecting from two tiny points of light located about ½ inch above the surface of the aluminum foil. An image formed independently of the wrinkle patterns and apparently taking on a life of its own.

It happens from time to time, usually after a period of prolonged sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

I don't have time for this. It is Sunday morning and I have to be worried about

making money. Or trying to figure out a way to jump start my music career.

Real things to do in the real world.

It happens differently each time, sometimes when I least expect it. Still one thing leads to another.

My eye is drawn to the aluminum foil because of its brightness.

Once there my mind begins interpreting in the patterns of light and dark spaces.

Distorted images. Crudely drawn and greatly exaggerated. Cartoon caricatures. Briefly sketched and not completely filled in. Lacking detail, using no more than necessary to suggest an idea. Ambiguity. One eye, A pair of arms. A frowning face. Sexual imagery. Erotic metaphor.

The same process as used in the appreciation of abstract painting.

Then (because I have done this so many times before) the images begin to pull me in a similar direction.

They take on a decidedly medieval flavor. Hooded figures. Cowled heads. The three pointed cockscomb of the fool. Long capes and monk-like robes.

Then it happens. The image forms independently from the pattern of wrinkles and takes on a life of its own.. A crack occurs and a passageway opens between two worlds.

For brief periods over the next two or three days the passage or portal will open and close numerous times, sometimes only allowing a momentary glimpse. Sometimes opening for 15 minutes. Rarely opening for longer than 45 minutes to an hour and a half during which the two worlds are joined.

The opening is not stable, but clearly for the next day or two it will be easier to access or make contact with the non-physical realm.

There they are in their pointed hats, helmet horns, or the long ears of a donkey. The light and dark spaces reversed like a photographic negative, so that their faces are dark, one or two eyes characteristically shining like flashlights from their dark foreheads.

They say nothing. They are just watching. I stare back into their eyes. Freely

associated streams of thoughts, ideas, memories, bits of dreams, unfinished poems, visualizations flood my consciousness as if I am watching a movie about myself.

Because it occurs differently for each person, there is nothing specific, Nothing that can be proven. Nothing concrete, only in the abstract. No geography. No geometry.

The content of each persons image stream is different from every other person's image stream and probably as meaningless in themselves as the aluminum foil wrinkles, indicating nothing more than that the person is experiencing thought..

The entities are capable of direct communication. They can speak. They can write letters in my own handwriting. They can cast the future and deliver esoteric dissertations of a metaphysical nature.

But that is not necessary tonight, so much having been said previously. Tonight it is only necessary that the channel be open and the contact is made.

I don't have time for this. I stopped having time for this fifteen years ago.

The passage has closed. I examine the aluminum foil again, more closely, trying to reopen the channel, for I want to begin writing this poem.

But the channel cannot be opened (or closed for that matter) at our own whim. Instead it seems to depend upon some cosmic or celestial timing.

It happens from time to time, usually after a period of prolonged sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

Sometimes it is necessary to spend a few hours in contemplation of the infinite.

2.

I AM THE ONLY ONE LEFT.
THE ONLY SURVIVOR.
THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS BEEN HERE
SINCE THE BEGINNING.

I don't mean the only one in my age group—
or other people my age I have met only

in the last 15 years.

They haven't been with me since the beginning.
I'm the only one who has been here since the beginning.

All the ones who were with me then are gone.

A.I.D.S., HEPATITIS C, OVERDOSE,
MURDER, THIN THE HERD EACH YEAR.
Life doesn't have a high rate of survivability.

And every time a person dies
(unless they are an artist or writer)
everything they know is lost with them
like a book or hard drive that has crashed—information
that can't be recovered.

Information only they could know.
Our link with the past gradually
being shortened until our only understanding
of it is second hand
because there is no one here who
has experienced it directly.

I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS. I AM
THE BEARER OF TRUTH AND THE ONLY ONE
WHO UNDERSTANDS. I AM THE ONLY
ONE WHO HAS BEEN HERE SINCE THE
BEGINNING.

Introspection is important, isn't it?
If any of this is important.

This is what it's like to be 57 years old
on a Sunday morning at the Alexandria Hotel
in downtown Los Angeles.

My hair is turning white
(but my life is still a work in progress.)

Theresa Haffner

Anthem

"You can't trust anyone under 50."
- the author.

(Dedicated to the psychedelic experience as epitomized by
San Francisco's Haight Ashbury, 1965-69)

Now our Anthem in the Sun
Before our race is finally run
Before our time on Earth is done
Before life's last ounce is wrung
From the anvil press of time.

Sometimes I feel like I'm fixin' to die.
The months, the days, the years go by,
Caught in the Gordian knot we tie.
These are supposed to be the best
~~y~~ears of our lives.
Too stubborn to quit, too tired to try
The many things we've left undone.

There must be a way to make the pieces fit,
To make sense of the puzzle of it.
There must be some closure to this quest
And some time to enjoy the rest
Of our days upon this planet Earth.

They say there are seasons to the life
And now is to reflect and wonder why.
And what's been done, what went awry.
And what can be salvaged yet withall.

I had put my faith in the divine plan.
Make me worthy, I'll do what I can.
There must be something greater than
This insignificant life I'm living.

Rise above and it appeared.
There was a force guiding us here.

Permeating all that is or was
Or has yet to become.
A divine purpose grand
Could be read in seaweed,
In leaves, grains of sand,
In Ching pennies, starry skies,
A mile high over Colorado nights,
The continent criss crossed in cars,
The motors throbbing, speeding far,
Piloted by sleepless eyes,
Fueled by psychedelic highs,
In the swirling madness of the time.

The eyes are windows of the soul.
The spirit cleansed, the eyes behold.
And there it was, you could see it was so.
How perfectly the pieces fit,
And everything a part of it,
Swirling in a cosmic dance.

Undulating particles of form,
Matter's vibratory nature swarmed.
And through it all, a dragon's tail.
Within the helix of its flail,
A serpent coil that unified
The stars, the sea, the sand, the sky.
I saw it with my own two eyes.

And how we felt life had a meaning,
A purpose, destiny
As if this force, this palpable energy
Could be felt and even seen
Merging with infinity,
Unlocked by a chemical key,
Peyote, mescaline, L.S.D.,
Purveyed by prophets of the creed,
Proselytized, given sacramentally,

And yes, it was there. All of it was there.

We were not alone, but a whole generation massed
Lent our energies to the task,

Prepared for some purpose greater than,
A time of miracles began.

The stars a mandala dancing overhead,
The city lights a protoplasmic glyph instead,
Opening like a million eyes
Consciousness linked like myriad lights
Winking on one light at a time.
Enlightenment kindling psychedelic fires
As if our ego having died
Had been reborn to a higher life.
A new soul looking through our eyes,
One capable of love.

But that was so many years ago.
A lifetime, more, when we were young.
To know so little now more than before,
And time has been a bitter reward.
So many of us have already died,
And those of us who have survived,
Dispersed, discredited, despised,
Are scattered to the winds.

A revolution overthrown, repressed,
By a government oppressed
A nation occupied,
A population in denial,
Prohibited, criminalized,
Forced to recant to survive,
Even Bob Dylan Christianized,
Our leaders murdered, jailed, or in disrepute,
Until even the memories become confused,
Until even we are not sure of the truth,
Until even we start to not believe.
Did it really happen, was it real?
Or was it like the truth concealed,
A hallucination of the mind?

There must again be a gathering of the tribes,
To come together at least one more time.
For those of us who can remember,
To discuss, report, symposia,

To compare, to speak, to formulate
a- -gospel- -now
Before it's too late.
At last to know for sure.

Was it a time when God walked with us within?
A time which will never come again?
Or were we mistaken?
Was it just a dream from which
~~w~~e could not awaken?

(If so, was it worth it just to believe?
For that alone has made it worth the while
to me!)

- Theresa Haffner

Theresa Haffner

Betamax

redirect
inset point and counterpoint
all said
the porno tape
waiting wearing
the door knocks
white socks
opaque silence
the telephone quickens
out of attunement
the porno gyrates
flesh tones in the
late night living room
test markers
monarch butterflies
spasmodic migration□
the silence surrounds
enfolds
the tape is rewinding
gray static
the end of all tape
nothing recorded nothing on
automaton hand me
the remote
autocorrect auto summarize
remote hand
playing spades in the chat room
we are cards in a
game of chance
enter space bar captain consistent
open medley of played
single cell mitosis
fun with the camera phone
morphed to deviate
sinister
now it is oprah
the black martha stewart
sea urchins
sea anemone

stellated
striated
strip search
barnes and ignoble
enabler
past depravity
dark schism
search bar engine
cybersex
flesh tones
with the sound turned way down
surreptitious
too much down time
resize crop enlarge
I am you are he is
golden opportunity
she lay on her back
beneath the tableau
naked breasts exposed
eyes closed mouth open
she awaits
porno rain
multiple ejaculations
falling on her breast
and face
corrugated
confiscated
video altered afternoon
clasped hands
closed eyes
the picture tells a
thousand stories
the tape flickers to
its ending and
starts to rewind
gradually picking up speed
until it slams to the beginning
then clicks, switches gear
and turns itself off.
the silence engulfs
remote signal
the emptiness emerges

loneliness
waits...

Theresa Haffner

Blue

sitting in the parked car
in the parking lot outside Pioneer Market at 12: 30 A.M.
writing in my notebook on blue paper
by the dim light of the overhead streetlight
because it was better than being home with you
emotionally tormenting each other like we were
gouging our hearts out with sticks

i have written by flashlight, pen light,
dome light and glove compartment light
until the batteries were worn out
and the beam had diminished to a
faded dull glow
because writing puts me in touch
with my feelings, and that's
something I can't do
while we brutalize
each other
playing heavy duty mind control games
or you just try to manipulate me like a piece of meat
a necessary evil, or
like i had no feelings at all

i have written in the back seat, the front
seat, on the bus stop
bench,
by candle flame,
outdoor floodlights operated remote control on timers,
and the rare streaks of the moon

because frankly i am pretty much of an emotional wreck
i have been
mentally conditioned by repeated episodes
of emotional overkill and self destructive behavior
that I no longer have the belief
in the successful outcome of any project
or the worth of any endeavor

i will sit in all night diners and outdoor donut shops

writing on notebooks, wrapping paper, magazine covers,
paper napkins, or scraps of torn up newspaper,
using worn down pencils or any kind of stylus
that will
engrave an image
illuminated by flashing neon signs,
smudged incandescents
or the light of setting stars

and i will stay here all night long
because home isn't really home
i have been emotionally battered,
undermined in my basic emotional
security, and traumatized to the point i can no longer
believe in myself

and 'til the morning light over
cold coffee cups

i won't have to see your face

Theresa Haffner

Blue Monk

Thelonious Monk played at
the Five Spot Café
in New York City's
Greenwich Village district
during the summer and autumn months
of 1957
The legendary bop pianist
led a quartet of jazz musicians
the ambience
a heady mixture of
mood and texture
the tinkle of
black and white piano keys
discordant left hand
tenor sax
the underpinnings of a way of life
that still echoes down the
mindstream
of long lost summer nights
in the metropolis of NYC
to sit at the bar
nursing a whiskey highball
drifting on a pot induced euphoria
violet clouds of cannabis smoke
blue light illumination
made the music seem to float in midair
and Thelonious himself
was at the piano
right there
where you could touch him
where you could, if you dared
to talk to him,
request the song
"Blue Monk"
a slow blues in Bb that
musicians have improvised on
for untold hours
through untold years
never the same

always new
always different
and "Straight, No Chaser, "
an uptempo blues in F
that implies how musicians like their whiskey
and how the people who listened to them
liked their life
not watered down

Theresa Haffner

Caregivers

□

-of course

my life has become

unmanageable

□ i can't stand to hear the cell phone

□ can't stand to hear the door knock

□ hate visitors because visitors

like inmates cannot

be turned off

□ i don't like anyone or anything

□ am alone in a sea of faces

□ an ocean of personalities

□

they do not abide

□

can't impinge can't penetrate

like a spirit with no

physical attributes i am unable to

bring change have effect

affect or manipulate physical reality

like a physical body with no

spiritual attributes i can□

bring no impact make no

confusion or essence on

spiritual reality

cannot prevent the spiritual

beings around me

from spiraling to their own

Inevitable and
inconsequential demise

The batteries run down in the
flashlights
the camera batteries
drain to two bars

The end is inevitable
and inconsequential

As a physical being i
only await my inevitable
termination

My evacuation

My physical effects swept up
boxed and carried out
having brought about no change
in physical reality

As a spiritual being
unable to endure
I can only
await
obliteration

B]

The days go by fading into
the another

The physical beings around me
gather like vultures hopefully awaiting
the possible early onset
of Alzheimer's
disease

I get forgetful
I care but i am

powerless over my
fellow beings

I am not getting the care to which i am
accustomed or to which
I am entitled

Caregivers glance at conditions
shrug their shoulders
and do nothing

do not impinge
like vultures they await
their pay
give a minimal effort
and complain about the other
caregivers

they do nothing

nothing can reach me
cannot
reach out
I am unreachable

background noise increases
further diminishing my
signal strength
my ability to
communicate

4

uses go unchanged in the
the dishes unwashed in the sink

love and refrigerator

gathering
activity

One day (we don't know when)
this will all be gone

will be remembered only

a moment or two

□

then new paint

new curtains

new fuses

swept away

and to what have i dedicated

my time upon the earth

unable to impinge

on physical reality

unable to infuse

my spirit

none no thing

will be like i

never existed

like i do not exist

can not rise above the

poverty that surrounds me

the cultural impoverishment

cannot help but be

buried by it

and

disposed with it

□

because i experienced
it does not give it
validity

isolated

only joined in
commonality with others of my
species

□

in

□

birth death

procreation

eating and defecation

old age and deterioration

common markers

in between there is

nothing no thing

it doesn't matter

what we did what we felt

who we were

or what our individual experience was

there are too many people

already

there is no one to communicate to

the end remains the same

no one cares

□

Don't forget to turn out the light

(If you don't, someone
else will)

□

Theresa Haffner

Childhod's End

Once the world was larger,
much larger than today.
Time stretched on indefinitely,
as did the horizon.
The 'steady state' universe gradually
re-created itself out of the increments
of its own demise
so that life, like the universe,
had no beginning and no ending.
It had been there forever.
It would last forever.

Knowledge was infinite.
It was more than one person
could know or possibly comprehend.
Time moved slowly
The world of our parents
differed little from the
world of our grandparents
and their parents before them.
Change occurred gradually if at all.

The world was so much larger than us
that we were miniscule.
We didn't have to worry about the world.
It wasn't our responsibility.
All we had to worry about was our home,
our own back yard.
If we got in trouble there
we could always move down the road
far enough and start over.
The world would still be there
when we were ready for it.
Gradually we grew
(and also our knowledge grew) .
Time began to move faster.
The world became smaller.

Then at some point the perspective shifts.

For us I think the defining moment
occurred in July,1969,
when astronauts landed on the moon
and we saw the transmitted image of
the Earth rising above the floor
of the Sea of Tranquility.

Suddenly we are looking down the
wrong end of the telescope..

Now the world is smaller. Fragile.
It's delicate balance easily upset
and impossible to restore.
As if we ourselves, by our knowledge,
have become larger than the world,
and therefore able to destroy it.

Now the Big Bang Theory
has replaced the 'steady state universe'
overturning thousands of years
of ancient wisdom.
Now nothing is everlasting.
Nothing is eternal.
Everything must have a
beginning and an ending.

It is the end of childhood.

The sense of loneliness is
overwhelming.

Theresa Haffner

China White

Cold wind blowing in the junk sick dawn
I remember the first time anybody ever turned me on.
I came back in the living room
Like I was floating on a cloud.
China white could never get me so high.
Made me think that this was paradise.
Couldn't believe how good it felt.
I said if god made anything better
He must have kept it for himself.
I said, "Wow, this is for me.
This is how I want to feel....
.... forever! "

Once I swore I'd never put a needle in my arm
Never put powder up my nose.
Never do anything I couldn't control.
A little wine. A little weed.
That's the only thing I'll ever need.
And if I should take a few pills.
I'm sure they won't do me any ill.
But that was long ago.
Since then I've done so many things
I said I wouldn't do.
I never thought I'd ever be a junky.

Hard to imagine I could
Have ever been so square.
Then began that long eventful journey
That became a road to nowhere.
But then I didn't care.
I thought I was on my way to heaven
And tryin' like hell just to get there.
When you're young you haven't any fears.
No matter how many years have passed
You still believe you'll get there at last.

Then one day you realize
You still have not arrived.
The journey just goes on forever

Only now the price you pay
For every passing day
Has grown so high you think
You'll reach your destination never.
It dawns on you you're not going anywhere
Only now you cannot stop.
You still need the drug that used to take you to the top.
You have to have it. It's what they call a drug habit.
Now you're hooked on smack.
You're using stuff..
You're shooting dope.
You're strung out on junk—
-and it isn't china white..
Now it's Mexican brown—or tar black.
Comes in a balloon.
Looks like a bugger.
Sometimes it's been cut with milk sugar.
Now your nose is running
Like you've caught a cold or flu.
You realize you're getting drug sick
But you can't afford to kick.
Every time you score
You find you still need more
Or you start to withdraw.
That's when it hurts.
The analgesic works
But the pain killer causes pain
When you try to stop.
Withdrawal takes 72 hours.
Three days.
Dilated pupils. Sleepless nights.
Hands shake. Muscles ache..
Then the symptoms subside.
But it's the emotional pain
You just can't abide..

You're alright as long as you've got dope.
As long as you're high you're good to be around.
You've got hope.
The dope makes you feel normal.
It takes \$20 just to make you feel
The way other people feel naturally.

You're relaxed. You're laid back.
You pick up the house. Vacuum the rug.
"Let's play some music, " you say.
You even make plans to quit using some day.
The only way that you can tell
Is when you're in repose.
The conversation lags. Your eyelids close.
Someone would think you just drifted off.
They wouldn't recognize that you were on the nod.
But late at night the heroin
Runs out the hour glass of time
By morning you've got the "heebie jeebies."
The color has drained from your face and eyes.
You make a promise you'll try to keep.
"I've got money in the bank...I'll reimburse you
after the bank opens... Have I ever not
kept my promise? "
That's when it gets hard for anyone
who knows you or cares about you...
...or god forbid, should love you.
Because if they give you money and you
pay it back you will impose on them
again and again for more and more.
Anyone who has any money is at risk
because you know they have it..
You'll cajole, reassure, snivel,
manipulate, threaten, intimidate.
If necessary you'll just take it,
rationalizing that you'll pay them back
and that it's more important for you to score,
because in the end you know they'll
give in anyway.

And of course the danger mounts
because the amount it takes to get you high
is nearly as much as it takes to kill you..

The danger points are when you first begin
or when you've been off dope for a while
when you've been in a program
or just got out of jail..
You don't realize your tolerance is low

You do your regular amount
-“I always do two balloons—it’s
what I need to get off”-
 or if the first shot isn’t enough
and you go back for more.
Or any time you’ve been drinking
alcohol or taking barbiturates,
tranquilizers, sleeping pills.
Then you do your shot..
 You won’t realize it
 But you’ll be going out.
It’s not instantaneous. It might take
fifteen minutes. You’ll speak
a few words, slip into a nod.
Your complexion drains.
You cannot breathe.
You would die there
peacefully and at ease
If someone didn’t care about you.
Make you breathe. Slap your face.
Pick you up and walk you around.
Put you in a cold shower.
Shoot you up with speed
if they’ve got any.
Baby sit you, because for hours it
can be touch and go. If they
stop reviving you, you won’t
Revive, you know?
So they call paramedics.
The ambulance arrives
sirens blaring, and they
run upstairs..
By now they will have dragged
you out in the hall to avoid prosecution.
Because the police come
with every call to 9-1-1.
And if you die they’ll drag you
to the the broom closet on the
second floor. Or roll you up
in a carpet and carry you
to the dumpster. Drive you
to the pier and dropp you off.

But first they'll have to tie
weights to your body.
Lamp bases. Cement blocks..
Tire chains. Because bodies float
and that's not what they want for you.

After a harrowing few hours
you're out of danger. Able to
breathe on your own.
"Thank you, " you will say, "for
keeping me alive." But by then
you're coming down and all
you can think of is you want
to get high again.

I saw you laying on my living room floor
Begging me please go out the door
And borrow some money so you could score.
It's just five dollars. you will say,
But if you can get ten
So I won't be sick
So I won't have to kick
So I can get well again
I can pay you back
When I get my check..
I'll make it up to you.
I won't forget.
You know a good friend is hard to find.
And a good friend is something
I thought I'd never find again.

In conclusion,
If I ever took something
That made me feel so good
That when I didn't have it
It made me feel so bad
And all had to do
Was just not take it
If I ever got straight
I would think long and hard
Before I ever took it again.

That's just me.
But then, I'm not a junky.

Theresa Haffner

Compassion

On the good nights, I could almost discern three fingers on the face of the moon.

I could see a person clear across the parking lot and optimistically mistake their identity for that of my friend.

I could go to the Donut Shop at midnight, and having no money to buy donuts, stand outside for an hour debating the merits of rechargeable batteries for portable televisions.

I could stay up all night long, sitting in Laundromats or the backseats of cars, writing long disjointed poems and figuring out solutions to all the world's problems.

I could fly so high in my mind's imagination that I could understand the nature of the universe and the relation of all things within it.

I could make myself believe, even for that brief moment, that life was a beautiful thing, full of promise and ultimately worth living, instead of the desolate, tawdry, meaningless existence that all common sense and previous experience would dictate.

But on the bad nights, I could go to sleep on the sidewalk and wake a 5: 30 A.M. with dirt on my forehead, my wrists swollen, and my face distorted beyond all recognition, needing only a drink to ease my suffering, and having to wait a half hour for the liquor stores to open.

When I would seek to drown myself in a delirium of intoxication but, drunkenness evading me, drink myself into a stupor instead and obliterate myself briefly in the forgetfulness of sleep.

On the bad nights, which can stretch into days and become weeks, when I would wander the streets begging for money to buy alcohol, without taking a bath or changing my clothes, until I smell so bad they won't let me on public transportation, until I won't go inside a store or restaurant even if they would allow me, until I have driven away friends and loved ones, preferring instead my own solitary aloneness, until I have effectively "X'ed" myself out of the society that I no longer wanted to be part of because it had already failed me.

There will be both good nights and bad nights, but hopefully over the course of a

lifetime, the balance will fall on the side of the good nights.

But even suffering must run its course, and eventually I will come to myself and figure out a way to start putting the pieces of my life back together again.

I realize that no one can tell me what to do, even if I am causing my own suffering, and efforts to coerce me against my will are doomed to failure.

You can't help someone until they are ready to help themselves.

In the meantime, all you can do is have compassion.

Theresa Haffner

Cross Talk

'wow.'

'flutter.'

'did you hear that? '

'i thought i heard wow and flutter.'

'could have been a wah wah peddle. wah wah wah ha ha.'

'have you had your belts checked? loose belts mean wow. flutter means belts too tight.'

'i've had all the belts replaced.'

'leather or rubber? '

'do we have both channels? just jiggle those wires.'

'it was shorting out.'

'twist those wires together. now we've got them both on.'

'what's that? '

'that low buzzing sound? that's 60 cycle hum. you get it when the signal comes too close to house current. 110 A.C.'

'do you know what's wrong with it? '

'not yet.'

'can you read a schematic? '

'we don't need a schematic. we're troubleshooting. just turn it up and see what it sounds like. diagnose and go from there.'

'what's that hissing? it sounds like a waterfall.'

'that's white noise.'

white noise is the sound of a blank tape playing. the background noise of vacuum tubes, transistors, condensers and resistors of an electronic circuit. the sound of a radio playing with nothing on. the signal to noise ratio when the balance dips on the side of noise and the signal tends to break up in clouds of static.

with the microphone turned on and the volume turned way up and listened to through headphones late at night, elements of chance and random occurrence entered the audio environment, some of which defied definition as to origin and meaning.

the high volume amplification makes any sounds in the same room unbearably loud... to speak sounds like a loudspeaker in the headphones. the sounds of fingers tapping or objects being moved take on the sounds of heavy equipment being unloaded... if someone drops an object it sounds like an avalanche. ordinary breathing, even quietly held short inhalations, sounds like the labored gasps of a mammoth beast or hyperborean titan.

through an open window, the otherwise considered quiet night bears traces of much life and movement. the distant sounds near. footsteps. a cat meowing. distant dogs bark. the sound of car motors. distant TV's play the late night news. sometimes events occur in the sound spectrum which are not as they are interpreted to be. thus slamming doors, shouting voices, police sirens, even gun shots may not be as they seem. or are they?

after many hours of late night listening to the high volume sound magnifications of the far reaches of the audio landscape, elements and event scenarios began to appear the origin of which could not be identified as to source or meaning. autonomous perceptions began which could not be attributed or differentiated as to actual physical sound, electronic distortion, the projections of the subconscious on various audio electronic phenomena, imagination, or the actual bleed through of interdimensional reality, psychically perceived, due to the synchronistic and serendipitous nature of our universe.

'you will meet a tall dark stranger.'

'after the 20th of the month will be well inspected for t ravel.'

'do you know where to get fake I.D.? '

'jiggle those wires to see if we've got both channels.'

the sounds of a distant radio station. but what radio station? just a person giving information. truck dispatcher? unknown personification on an unknown frequency.

'let me adjust your gears.'

'keep away from me with that WD-40.'

'my heads don't need to be demagnetized.'

went to the wrong door by mistake, asking for loose screws. gave him a copy of Moby Dick. playing the radio with nothing on. exact change only. good. nobody likes approximate change. went to the wrong door by mistake. met a tall dark stranger.

alternate frequencies over modulated feedback attention deficit hyperactivity narcolepsy all treated by the same medication.

desperately tried to keep her awake, fearing that if she fell asleep she would dream again.

the first time she had dreamed an archon was liberated, an archetype was activated, all the traffic lights turned green on South Parkway, and 20 new transvestites showed up on the next day's Ricki Lake Show.

'don't you believe that dreams are real?' she asked.

'only as long as you continue to dream them,' he had told her.

through some accident of the human collective unconscious, he began to experience her dreams (which according to Jung is not telepathy, but the same dream occurring simultaneously in two people.)

gradually he found himself drawn into her dreams as a reality. at first the damage was minimal. although it could sometimes be a rough ride, all he had to do was wait until it was over and things would revert back to the previous

reality. the time stream that he was from. then he began to notice changes. small things. inconsequential details. bleed through. things that didn't revert back, causing residual erosion of time stream continuity. the gradual disappearance of his own universe and its replacement by another.

her dreams were unstable, able to shift from extreme to extreme. and they were sequential, meaning that one dream began where the previous dream left off. so that events of the previous dream became the reality that was the basis for the next dream.

not only was she unable to control her dreams, in her waking state she had no memory of them at all.

'what did I dream? ' she would ask upon awakening.

he had no way of knowing if the erosion was occurring in all places at the same time, because he still didn't know if all mankind inhabited one universe, or as he strongly suspected, due to the nature of synchronicity, each person inhabits his own universe which is distinctive to him alone. if so he wouldn't be able to contact the other universes, would he?

he had no idea if it was affecting all universes, but he was certainly facing destruction on a universal scale in his own universe.

at the bowling alley, shaking her violently and slapping her face to make her wake up. walking her back and forth back and forth like some kind of a big floppy rag doll from gutter to alley... back and forth between the alley and the gutter amid the thunder of exploding pins...

then finally came to time when she could be no longer awakened, when she would no longer respond to physical stimulation, no matter how violent.

there was nothing to do but wait. the dreams could begin at any moment. an ominous silence fell over the bowling alley.

by now large segments of the population were being lost on a daily basis. as much as half a city disappearing at a time, as if under the influence of a negative archetype (and when they awake the next morning they have no memory whatsoever of the occurrence, or even that anything is different.)

according to C. G. Jung, the eminent psychoanalyst, archetypes exist within the collective consciousness as a powerful grouping of constellated feelings or intense emotions which ordinarily remain inactive, or even unknown, without effect on people's consciousness. sometimes, however, an archetype can be activated inadvertently by encountering an event or association of sufficient intensity.

an activated archetype cannot be perceived directly, but it can be detected because it spawns chains of paranormal and synchronistic phenomena the way a hurricane spawns tornados. akin to a risen kundalini, it is accompanied by a heightened sense of religiosity, feelings of dread and wonder, oneness with a higher power, apparent telepathy between sexual partners, automanous or somnambulistic mediumistic phenomena, precognition and clairvoyance. people who experience an activated archetype become charged with an energy called 'numinosity'.

the archetype functions when material exists in the subconscious which needs to be transferred to the conscious memory. when this is accomplished, the archetype is once more deactivated and the paranormal activity ceases.

typically most people are so repressed concerning the activated archetype influence that the next day they either deny it or don't even remember it at all.

once deactivated, the archetype cannot be reactivated at will. though we long for it, we cannot predict its reoccurrence, but must rely on chance reoccurrence and 'cosmic timing'.

they stood together in the dream devastated landscape in a cabana or beach house constructed on the pylons of a wooden pier extending into the Pacific. at low tide you could walk on the sands and rocks of the ocean bottom and search

for shell fish in the tide pools. but when the tide came back this would be a maelstrom of sea foam and ocean waves breaking against the rocks...

the Earth was going through a disruption of its tidal patterns, the high tide cresting higher each day perhaps due to the gravitational influence of the moon or other planetary body on a near collision course with Earth.

...in the dream their clothing removed itself and their bodies merged into the energy currents of an ancient dance, dissolving into eroticism...

outside you could hear the approach of the waves, the pounding of the demolishing surf. as long as it was out it was out. but when it came back, it was moving right along, at planetary velocity, rising many feet in just a few minutes. the cabana would no longer be safe. every day the tidal tsunami crested higher and washed further inland, flooding the low lying areas and destroying the beach front property. if they didn't leave the cabana now there wouldn't be time for them to make it to higher ground... the dance continued...

now the waves should be all around them. the cabana should be completely submerged. everywhere was the presence of sex and death. through the window they could see the approach of the towering waves. waves like skyscrapers, a mountain cliff, advancing walls of water, steep crested, primordial with foamy white caps, mesas and bluffs, war machines, engines of aggression, laying siege to the shore, great monolithic monsters raised on hind legs like a wandering juggernaut.

illuminated in the numinous glow reflected from the opaque face of the approaching planetoid, disappearing in the thunder of the waves...

playing the radio with nothing on.

it's spooky with the volume up so high. hope nobody hits a note. could break a window. moving about very quietly, very carefully. promise of rattle damaged cones and power blown speakers.

those were days when they used entire apartment buildings as guitar amplifiers. move the power transformers into the manager's office, open up the front windows, and use entire apartments as speaker enclosures.

then crank them up! entire city blocks pumping out megawatts of high voltage rock and roll.

'why are the speakers hissing at me? '

the white noise blending with the noise pollution, the static sound of electronic circuitry, the electromagnetic equivalent of swamp gas, will o' the wisps. ghostly voices materialize for momentary whispers. then what's that? sounds like somebody talking.

must be a radio station. it means the antenna isn't grounded to the chassis. called interference. when the radio station plays through on the speaker wires.

or cross talk, that means that the heads are out of alignment. but then the heads would be talking backward, wouldn't they?

bleed through is where a magnetic image of one layer of magnetic tape is imprinted on the next layer of magnetic tape.

but it was a man-the voice of a man whose universe was being destroyed by another cannibal universe, existing in the dreams of his girl friend. a general distress signal. 'I don't know if destruction is immanent for you as it is for me. but there's no way to know if I'm even talking to anyone or if other universes exist. all I can say is if you can do anything to help me, please do. if you can't, and least you exist, and...'

the words faded out as if from another universe.

'wow, did you hear that? it's some dude whose universe is being destroyed and he's trapped in his girlfriend's dreams'

'wow, that's deep. i wish i'd listened to that more carefully.'

'it's no radio station. it could be the real thing.'

'that's one of the only ways other universes can communicate with us. through radio interference, echoes in water pipes, air conditioners, gas heaters, electric motors, and the wind.'

'do you want to listen to it back? it was recording the whole time.'

they rewound the tape and played it back but the only thing on it was the white noise, the noise pollution, the ghost whispers. the voice that had been speaking to them was not recorded, either because of electronic malfunction, or because the signal was non-magnetic and therefore impossible to record, or because the time stream no longer existed.

and in the morning they would no longer remember it anyway, only a vague sense of numinosity as is common with an activated archetype.

'the trouble with troubleshooting is you have to be careful not to shoot yourself in the foot, '

'whoa, it wasn't my idea to call a phone psychic for technical support to help fix the tape recorder.'

'i think all we need is an oil change and some new upholstery and we can get it up and running and be out of here.'

'press RESTART. Or repress START. i can't remember which.'

'did you ever figure out what was wrong with it? '

'it wasn't on/'

'it wasn't on! '

'you mean the only reason it didn't work is because it wasn't on? '

'd-mn machines are just like women. won't do anything for you unless you turn them on first.'

Theresa Haffner

Cyber Poems

POEM WITH STRING

and so i said take this program of
artificial intelligence insurgency
take this parliament of one
take this un-installable database and
delete it from your memory
cleanse your files
it to a different site
and encrypt it with antivirus software
encode its corrupted commands
purge your megabytes
with hidden strings of BASIC interface
in a cyber language you no longer understand
ABORT FAIL and RETRY
BAD COMMANDS
INVALID PASSWORD
you are in calculator mode
as text editor no longer supports your
file name extensions
your application won't open
in this window
nothing can save your work
to disk if you don't save it now
in the event of a system failure
the resultant crash will be
0 files 0 folders 0 megabytes
close these windows
internet webpage details
properties in web space
information can't be hyper text markup
link to meta-language
alphanumeric ascii
x-files and ladies' chat rooms
eyes bleary at dawn
bloodshot after searching the web
since midnight
your hard drive seizes
your problem device freezes

your system hangs as your irretrievable
document is unprotected

MOUSE TALES

do not sit so close to the monitor
watch out for that mouse
miss modem regrets she's unable
to plead guilty to spousal abuse
espoused to a mouse
all is madness
what you're married to a computer

LOTUS

word star incompatible
incomprehensible
data spreadsheets named after flowers
all absolutely obsolete
going out by email
this one reminds me of you
unprocessed microprocessors
disastrous database
transmitted over telephone lines
intercept the intermittent
irregular electromagnetic signals
interrupt the silent hours of
darkness after 9 pm

VERSION CONFLICT

we need a new computer
hidden mouse tales
realign our print head alibi to the
daisy wheel mentality
urban distance colder than
the arctic snows on main street
printer won't print

scanner can't scan
i can't troubleshoot my
entire life alone
without technical support
probable cause
in the dent of the dangerous
was loneliness

Theresa Haffner

Dark Side Of Town

we came home on the dark side of town

we came home to a deserted rubble of half forgotten memories, children's toys,
fenced yards grown heavy with weeds, and a cold wind blowing

we came home on the wrong side of the tracks

we came home to the industrial miasma of where we used to live and found we
didn't live there anymore

we came home to the cold shoulder of forgotten dreams and forgotten
neighborhoods

we came home to where the unlocked door stood open and the floorboards
flapped in the wind that blew through the empty house

we came home to the unreality of lifetimes that used to be lived by the people
who used to live them

we came home to the midnight of deserted railroad yards, rusted tracks, empty
boxcars, noon whistles and the paper mill once prosperous now deserted but for
the white haired old man in the shipping office

we came home to the vacant lot where our childhood was

we came home to a new land of strangers, commerce, and the implacability of
change

we came home to where our poverty came as inexplicably as other people's
success

we came home on the dark side of loneliness where a forgotten sun rose over the
trancelike horizon of a deserted junkyard

we came home to the inner melancholy where even now the memories lie
dormant

we came home to where a greeting card on valentine's day was the most
meaningful thing to us

we came home to lost pages of forgotten poetry flapping like leaves in the wind
of silent refuse beaches

we came home to where horizons were closer and the radio tower on the hill
beamed concentric rings of our loneliness

we came home to the nocturnal setting of long deserted friends and the surreal
back roads of our youth

we came home to where our grandmother's house was still standing and the city
fountain still stood in the center of town

we came home to where there was no modern jazz or poetry and psychedelia
was still a long lost dream away

we came home to where the fear of sex merged with the fear of death and the
future still lay before us like a carpet of unrealized potential

we came home to the innocence of christmas lights, parental hands held crossing
the street, and the expectation of giving

we came home to where our interment by day in the school was sharply
contrasted to our interment at home by night

we came home to where snowed in by a blizzard gave us our only holiday and
the tiny transmitted voice from the radio station gave us our only hope of
vibraphones and cool jazz

we came home to where we looked for but could not find an avenue of entry into
the esoteric knowledge of an elite inner circle

we came home to where good grades eventually gave way to apathy and
absenteeism

we came home to where we couldn't keep up with the joneses and so started
trying to keep up with ourselves

we came home to where the interstate highway outside our school window
beckoned with our only hope of transcendence

we came home to where 2000 miles of culture shock eventually ended our

concept of home and family

we came home to where the unconscious mind acted out its messages by means of children's games and compulsive behavior

we came home to the enchantment of a child's aquarium and forgotten summer evenings under the tree beside the bank of the river

we came home to where paper dolls offered the only mysterious alternative to Captain Video

we came home to where there was no Devil and Jesus was not yet necessary

we came home to where nobody understood us even as now nobody understands us

we came home to where other children's spankings stirred within us a strange preoccupation and the reality of jail was beyond our comprehension

we came home to where we knew not the meaning of good and evil and neither did we know death

we came home to where we did not ask and we were not answered

we came home to where we had nothing with us no excess baggage of a child's remembrances

we came home to where we carried our reality within us

we came home to where no one knew us yet we knew everyone like the back of our hand

we came home on the dark side of town

Theresa Haffner

Different Drum

distant at first
the sound wavering
in the air
carried on a faint
afternoon breeze
that eddies and shifts
mistaken for sounds
of traffic, obscured
by car horns or children
playing
then once more it clears
and sound waves deliver
what can only be
a distant cadence
on a different street
borne by the wind,
now fading out-
-or do my ears deceive me?

transfixed on the street
lean against my
crutch tips
only a specter of
my former self
a ragged figure
dressed in black
my head tilted to one side
my ears listening
trying to make out the
sound of distant drumming

the breeze blows dirty air
from the overcast street
black folds of my skirt
flapping loosely about my legs
like a flag

What will you say to them
that will make them understand?

What will you tell them
that they will not forget?
How will you convince them
to change their minds?

Teach me, that I may
learn to teach them.
Teach me, so that I will know.

Touch me, that I might
touch you.
Stir my heart, that I might
stir your soul.

Tell me, so that I will remember
that they will remember
that you will not forget.

I cannot tell the branches
to scratch the sky
I cannot tell the trees
to scream.
I cannot tell the rain
to cry.

because I am poor
because I am old
because I am disabled
crippled by emotions
crippled by hopelessness
crippled by love

Teach me that I might know
from the very beginning
what I have always
known in my heart.

There are anthems
on the sidewalk
There are pageants
in the store windows
forgetfulness of things past

taking steps, one foot
before the other,
one after the next
small steps

how have my steps, once fast
become so slow?
Once I took long strides
now only a short distance is left
but it seems so much
harder than before

Late in the day,
the sloping afternoon sun

now all that remains
is this city bus.

myself on crutches, taking too
much time climbing aboard,
taking too much time
paying the fare,
taking too much time
climbing off

still it is only the bus driver
who waits for me

Twilight, I stand outside
as I have done
so many times before
straining my ears
in the urban soundscape
for a distant rat-tat-tat,
a fragment of a street beat,
the drums and cymbal
of a marching band

a tattoo beat out
with sticks and snares
on a remote street,
the rise and fall

of distant footsteps
marching together
of standing alone

For years I believed
that I had heard them
For years I waited for them.
For years I believed
they would come.

But am I the only one
who has heard them?
Is there no one else here
who can say, "Yes,
I heard it. I heard
a marching band
practicing yesterday afternoon
about two blocks away? "
Is the music, then,
for my ears alone?
Is the song not distant
but near?

Is it possible that
no one else has heard it
because in fact
it does not exist?

That there is no crack
drill team or drum corps
practicing just out
of earshot,
waiting for us
to join them even now,
with their uniforms
and instruments,
just around the next corner,
just beyond the next
parking lot
only one block away?

Have I been the only one, then,

refusing to believe
it did not exist,
getting further and further
out of step
responding to the music
of a different drum
that only I could hear?

that I searched for
but could not find?

Theresa Haffner

Distances

1.

cool

moist

cold

cloudy

pale

wet

shaded

rainy

2.

gray

muted

damp

cold

3.

bright

colored

red

orange

heated

hot

dry

4.

dim

dark

quiet

heavy

deep

still

Theresa Haffner

Down The Highway

down the highway
nocturnal vista
setting off the night time
in dots of red and white light
and patches of black
along the curve of the interstate

lunar gray concrete
nodules of hemoglobin
psychedelic pearls on a necklace
of mountains and highways

interstate lights on the off ramp
spins the synaptic neurotransmission
raw holes in the forest
of cartoon emotions
makes for a fine feeling
along the nightmarish
front row of double values
ambiguities of the cruelest
kind
pencil insensitive
cartoon drawing crosshatching
dynamics of night and time

more spokes for the wheel
now is the ideographic
inclination
hope you are having fun
with your friends
drinking
and staying out all night

metered diamond lane
zig zag
motorist contrived
fuel
nightmare exhaust wind
images of night

gone mad

interstate multifaceted high contrast
dot matrix resolution
silver studded motorcycle stallion
midnight chimes the
red and white child psychotic

neon dream web menagerie
visions of orisons
and dream hit medications

avenue highway interstate 94

Theresa Haffner

Dream #1

I dream that I meet my friend S_____ S_____ and Jonny the guitar player.

They both ask to buy product from me, so I say, 'Yes, I'll do it, but first I have to repunctuate (*) all the signs on Hollywood Boulevard.'

'I'd like to see that, ' says Jonny.

'I'd like to write it down, ' says S_____ S_____.

We go to a screened in porch behind where Jonny is living.

They are both tired and lay down to sleep as I begin repunctuating.

The repunctuation was taking a little longer than expected. When they awake they both are impatient with me because I still haven't sold them anything.

I continue repunctuating. They get mad and both leave, swearing at me.

I am in a piano bar in a cocktail lounge that is located in the high school I used to attend in my home town.

It is only open sometimes. It is usually kept secret and only intended for the faculty and a few select students.

It is in a room that opens behind the school library.

They have Michelob and Lowenbrau on draft.

There is a small crowd of rowdy customers. They are all sitting around on those one piece wood and metal high school desks we used to use. Among them is the woman I went there with, who may or may not have been my love interest, and a tall 'Wavy Gravy' type hippie guy with long blonde hair, dressed in buckskins and knee high Indian mocassins.

Some of the customers are shooting pool.

I go into the adjoining room which is still a part of the school library. There are bookshelves with books on them.

I look through the books, then go back to the piano bar.

'There are lots of books in there, ' I told the bartender, 'but most of them need to be repunctuated. I've only repunctuated a few of them.'

The bartender looked at me blankly.

'I know a place that's got a piano bar for songwriters.' I told him.

He didn't say anything.

'Yeah, each one gets a desk with an FM radio, a cassette recorder, and a portable keyboard.'

Nobody was paying any attention.

'So you get your beer, you record a song off the radio and you figure out the music on your portable keyboard.'

'And that's your piano bar.'

Nobody thought it was very funny.

The woman I came with was angry with me. She was getting ready to leave.

When she left I got up and followed her out.

The hippie guy in buckskins got up also and followed out behind me.

The woman had already reached the pavement and was flagging down a car.

The hippie guy asked me, 'Are you two together? I mean are you___?' He made a gesture with his fingers and whistled suggestively.

'I don't know, ' I said.

The car stopped and she got in. It was already speeding away.

The hippie guy and I began walking up the road together, not saying anything.

It was one of those winding mountain roads like Laurel Canyon Boulevard in the Hollywood Hills.

When we came to a narrow gravel driveway leading up a steep incline with woods on either side of it, the hippie turned and began walking up it.

'Oh, do you live up there? ' I asked.

'Yes, ' he said.

'Can I come and visit you sometime? ' I asked.

'No, ' he said.

(*) Repunctuate: To rearrange the punctuation of an existing piece of literature so as to alter its meaning, often with humorous intent.

Theresa Haffner

Dream #2

I dream that I go to a Reality Doctor. He says that to rebuild my inner reality I must first defeat my physical senses.

To do this he recommends a regimen of modern jazz music and abstract expressionist art (1) .

I dream that a dog has come into the burned out beach house where we are sleeping. Its legs and paws wind around my feet and ankles. Then it bites my hand with its sharp teeth. It hurts.

I turn around to face it and instead of a dog it has become a great Bengal tiger. Very huge with black stripes in its orange fur.

The tiger leaps at me and dissolves.

The Reality Doctor tells me I have successfully faced my inner tiger.

The empty swimming pool in front of the burned out beach house where we sleep has become filled to overflowing, full of algae and brackish water, with a thicket of bushes and trees growing around it.

There is a small incline where grass used to grow, now eroded into a small gully of clay and dirt that led down to the water.

I took off my clothes and got down on all fours, assuming animal form. Either a tiger or a black panther. On all fours I ran down to the water's edge and waded in.

It was full of algae, very muddy and slimy, with green growing plants.

It didn't smell good. "Eww.." said someone.

I ignored the smell and looked around. Soon I found a clear stream flowing through the algae.

I followed the clear stream through the algae until I got to where it entered the bog and formed a small pool of clear fresh water.

I paddled around in the dappled sunlight until I heard voices.

Someone was coming.

(1) Two hours daily of modern jazz and abstract expressionism once a week or as often as I could get it.

Theresa Haffner

Erraterra

VOID

settled over the darkness that
came between, and mile high
mindstorm roiled over the
surreptitious subterfugal
subterranean vegetation. melancholy
Excavations of the hollowed-out mind shaft
occurred. nine times the cavity collapsed.
Relax. this little turbulence only proves you can
have the capstan containment with enough of
the cartridge to make even your sinister
mile-high sister to grieve! ! !

rapid onset

rapid ending

Angela bent. blossoms were spent
listlessly. the late night tv

“Well, Better the ERRATERRA than
the Green Hills of Earth, ” Sam the Boldface
Belted Brother with rapidiographic
inversion said, an elephantine smile curving about his
EXEC Business Prospects Report/

the sky ectothermic

subcutaneous plasmatic

poignant

□pregnant

they plunged the plummeted rock
of the grid E R R A T E R R A, the
wild uncharted unclaimed unsanctioned
P L A N E T O I D A L landscape
that had become the exilic home of these round
Ex – chest rest nomads
Bash except Saturday the new land that
was about to be discovered.

NOT THAT IT HAD BEEN

overly built and cast erect
plenile and plenary cost effective
on the overcrowded non-determinant
exact change inconsistent
bard stock rasputin synchro EXTRA CHANGE
ScHoLaStIc `plastic elastic cast rated
hard rock
rendering willow psychosis
shackles of
the bent trees and born again
savage from the velvet underground
of the planet venus

(often enough an oxymoron would forget
to breathe in the plastic bag
over his head leaving only enough
of the post-dated prophylactic
effect to cause dandruff and a whole
generation has grown up fetishistic.)

enamored of the plastic and the latex

well worn phrases like "I don't want to have sex
with my mother" or exact change was paid or
"I do want to have sex with my mother but I don't
want my father to find out" but everybody knows
it's alright if you use a condom and by the end of the day
condoms were no longer to be confused with
condominiums.

"Nonsense is better than No Sense, " she reiterated.

"I have no money."

But then, on ERRATERRA
there would be no need."

It was freedom from the rat race and mistakes
that PLANED the Planet Earth
when it was only third from the sun.

Now it was already fourth and soon there would be
no son at all.

mucous molecules

askanse glance – and given the sex of the real sister,
NO REST

“well, as long as the saul bellows evolve from the
same sex, ” I said
from
somewhere with infrared sunglasses.

a painful gorky’s had set in.
real time, you are neither an ass nor
assorted as very
cost essential
but then
risking the only open playing
fueled by the herbal savage heroin they loved.

“WELL, ” I said, playing my gambit in the
opening moments of the planetary competition.
ERRATERRA was just one of the games that
had to be won in the eventual street removal
DEATH defying limit

because we all know by now that death
is not a beginning only an ending
and you may have lived before,
perhaps in brooklyn or near the dock of the
havelock ellis clandestine elastic bay windows.

starters were closing up the gap
between the head gear and the gear heads
remember to give it a lube job and see if it needs
its belts changed
exact change was no longer considered fare exchange
and I played a large auditorium with no people in it.

listen to me, my little nectarine,
my freestone peach, my macaroni salad,
my pasta bar, my cling peaches in heavy syrup,
my born-again witch
everybody was a born again something
and realizing the criminal possibilities
of multiple personalities
living on exact change

in a cheap hotel
a game lost to begin with

nowadays instead of a fast car, many partners,
long lasting sex, and a vacation at the end
of the year, we want
fast sex, many partners, a slow car, exact change,
enough gas to get to the next exit on the freeway,
and a notice to vacate.

UNDERSTANDING was one thing she lacked, like
wrapping on the surface of a thing
her windows started to steam up eventually.

radically altered in expression,
control top panty hose never alienated the open
cliff dwellers, etc., the sulfite suburbanites

Yes, she said, and they debated the fact whether the most
important technological advance of the 20th Century
was the photocopy machine or the polyurethane dildo

subliminal sex caught sublime jet streams in the skies
over ERRATERRA.

Theresa Haffner

Fire

11: 00 a.m. no money. only three pennies which is enough to cast the 'i ching' oracle but not enough to pay the parking meter.

a week now since the fire. the smell of smoke gradually clearing out from the halls of this cheap hotel where we live.

there are bits and pieces of copper and brass lying around the floor of the hotel room. jewelry parts. no complete articles, just the metal wires and brackets of, say, a bead necklace after the beads have vaporized. or melted into unrecognizable black 'shish-ka-bobs' on their metal spits.

these are steve's things. all that could be salvaged after his room was destroyed by fire. they remind him of terrell—his lover who died.

they are being stored with me because my room wasn't destroyed. he is staying with friends until he can relocate.

this is all he has now. this and the singed pages of a few of his magick books—heavily water damaged.

he will make something out of these pieces. maybe not jewelry, but something that for him at least has magickal power.

not to argue with magick, for magick is as magick does. but I am not attracted to jewelry for magickal purposes.

the only way a piece of jewelry—or metal or stone for that matter—will hold magickal power for me is if it's worth a lot of money.

or at least has a lot of weight, something substantial with some size to it. (unless it belonged to a very special person.)

but it's the idea behind the object—not the object itself—which has power. this is the whole concept of magick.

leave these pieces for steve. humble smoke scarred remnants of copper and brass.

because fire has a power that is neither metaphysical or conceptual.

fire is singular and absolute.

11: 30 a.m. life goes on. have to take these other belongings left by andre and pam over to their new hotel room where they had to move because firemen chopped a hole in their ceiling.

the morning sun is bright and warm. i am ducking the traffic cop to avoid getting a parking ticket, and the stark reality of razed walls and billowing smoke, the level headed thinking of the management that evacuated all the inhabitants, and the prompt response of the fire department that limited the damage to only two rooms of the antiquated hotel—seems like a distant memory.

andre and pam will be all right once they get a pay check.

till then people will give them a break so they can get by.

steve has his mysticism to console him. not only his teachings, but also others who study the principles of higher consciousness and seek to live a more spiritualized existence. who will give him the help that he needs for starting over, so that if he has nothing now, it will not always be so.

funny how those who lead the life of the spirit are subject to the same foibles, jealousies, personal conflicts, and isolation,

unforeseeable natural disasters and acts of god

as those who do not.

the same fate befalls them both.

damn these cheap hotels. we were lucky the whole thing didn't go up like a tinder box.

you can't argue with fire.

-12/15/99

Theresa Haffner

Fresno

I could almost
live here.
It's like a real city.
People think it's
big,
but it still seems
small to me.
I live in L.A.
Someday it will
be like this
everywhere,
with Rite Aid
Drug Stores,
Home Depot
Home
Improvement
Centers,
AM-PM Minimarts,
Starbuck's Coffee Shops,
and Kinko's Copies
in every shopping mall,
in every city,
in every state
and municipality
in every country
on every continent
in the world.

And there will be
no more
unhappiness.

Theresa Haffner

Glimpse

she lays on the bed□
with a young man she shares
night gowns with

who would be her brother
and not her lover

she has eyes that would drive you to
deal and to not be straight

that you would go to
the penitentiary for

you would want to stay but once more
you don't have the keys

they fall from your grasp

outside her window
you are a song worth
remembering

Theresa Haffner

Heartbeat

heartbeat
yes i still have one□
heartbeat
let me know that i'm alive
heartbeat
a primordial rhythm
heartbeat
the pulse of life

heartbeat
ancient tribal music
heartbeat
the cry of the blues
heartbeat
submerged emotion
heartbeat
longing to be true

heartbeat
blood is rushing
heartbeat
hear it in my ears
heartbeat
throb of passion
heartbeat
measuring the years

heartbeat like a drum
heartbeat like a river
heartbeat soft and tender
heartbeat like a whisper

as long as the heart still beats
we are all one
as long as the heart still beats
we are not alone
as long as the heart still beats
we are bound to the same beginning
as long as the heart still beats

we share a common soul

and when the heartbeat ends
and when the heartbeat ends
another heartbeat begins

Theresa Haffner

Hollywood,3 A.M.

□

Bits of newspaper
and the tattered remains
of porno pictures
blow across the pavement
flutter in the 3 a.m. wind
a lonely taxi cruises
empty streets
discarded flyers of
forgotten rock and roll bands
fall to the ground
and cover the sidewalk
like autumn leaves

□

Hollywood,3 AM.
all night diner
a Styrofoam coffee cup
sits on a folded napkin
circular stains round
its bottom
a jelly donut in the
display case
the door is open
and everybody here
the cripple, the beggar,
the homeless, the thief
and even though they
have never met
they still know
one another with the
unerring knowledge of
all late night diners
and people who were
ever too poor to buy a meal
unread newspapers open
to the want ads

wait the dawn

3

Hollywood, 3 AM
walk of fame
stars line the sidewalks
with the names of celebrities
from a bygone era
and those who walk these streets
with worn out shoes
who do not even recognize
many of the names
immortalized beneath their feet
sleep in doorways
or on the sidewalk
covered up with cardboard
or wrapped in blankets
like shrouds
haunt the dark recesses
of alleyways and deserted
buildings
they say, "do you have any
spare change, mister? "
"brother, can you spare
a dime? "

4

Hollywood 3 AM
between buildings
along driveways
and across parking lots
floodlights direct their beams
along light corridors
carefully monitoring
all activity within their radius
and transmit their information
to other vigilantes, agents,
operatives and police organizations
by means of high pitched
variations of the light frequency

phenomena that should be
happening all the time
becomes most pronounced between
between the hours of 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.
observing them in a
red tinted mirror
discovers further activity
otherwise undetectable
when the surveillance
helicopter flies overhead
everything gets crazy
on the roof an unrecognized
figure is seen climbing up
wearing infrared goggles
and carrying a two way radio
he won't be there when
morning comes

☐

Hollywood 3 AM
nobody on the street
just an old alley cat
arching his back
he says "me-ow"
go home you old alley cat!
and two or three guys
on the corner selling cocaine
as we approach, they say
"what do you want? "
"what do you need? "

Theresa Haffner

Inscription

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray
From the straight road and woke to find myself
Alone in a dark wood. How shall I say

What wood that was? I never saw so drear,
So rank, so arduous a wilderness.
Its very memory gives a shape to fear.

I am the way into the City of Woe.
I am the way to a forsaken people.
I am the way into eternal sorrow.

Sacred justice moved my architect.
I was raised by Divine Omnipotence,
Primordial love, and ultimate intellect.

Only those elements time cannot wear.
Before me and beyond time I stand.
Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

These mysteries I read cut into stone,
Above a gate, and turning I said, "Master,
What is the meaning of this Inscription? "

Theresa Haffner

Laser Night

crazed
crazed neath the crazy moon
i wandered
convulsed with a craving
i didn't understand

above the mondrian roof tops
in the chasm of the sky
the stars unfolded in a drama
of living and dying

like the crack of doom
the dawn of disaster

below the tangled
television antennae
and tenement fire escape steps

on the sidewalk
of crashed crystal dreams

the dreamer wept

your eyes were beautiful
sparkling like laser cut
diamond jewels in the
early morning light

Theresa Haffner

Ledger

1. Debits and Credits.

Bringing It All Back Home. The pen stabs the tar-like sheet.
Ink flows like Blood on the Tracks.

We once thought there would be a quote a Bob Dylan song lyric appropriate for every situation in life.

I can't tell you how important he was to us. How much he spoke to our hearts and our souls.

He was our Prophet. Our spokesperson.

Each one of us got something personal and profound from him.

But that was before 'Nashville Skyline'- when he changed - when a lot of things changed - and he no longer spoke for us or to us.

We never listened to him again, or bought his records. He ceased to be our leader.

After that we had no leader.

Stabbing the tar-like sheet. After midnight trying to make sense of the debits and credits in an account book where for years nothing has added up right.

The numbers turning into bits of poetry scrawled between the ledger lines more than twenty years out of date.

How quaint. How low tech.

How many years we lived like that—Exiled on Main Street—effectively x'ed out of a society that no longer recognized our needs or credited our payments-

just blithely kept going on—the money getting higher and higher—turning its back on us as surely as Dylan had—

Going faster and faster, glossing over inconsistencies, while we kept going slower—tied to a principle.

The accounts just didn't add up.

II. Incoherent Universe.

-“Ain't it just like the night to play tricks when you're trying to be so quiet—”
—Bob Dylan, *Visions of Johanna* (*Blonde on Blonde*) .

Because we had seen the world as basically coherent, now incoherent universe didn't hold together but pieces kept getting farther apart.

It was really hard on us to change with the changing trend—as if nothing had ever meant anything—as if we didn't have to add up to zero.

Because debts were successfully executed and our payments were not credited to our accounts.

Even a hundred years difference in our lives would only be glossed over with flair on the radio.

We had seen the universe as coherent—maybe at war with itself but coherent just the same—where there was something to stand for—and something to fight for—and if it was necessary to keep the accounts balanced—something to die for.

Sold out—and never received the payments. The check was in the mail but it was made out to somebody else and never arrived.

There we were waiting for a check that would never come.

III. Spontaneous Remission

-“we're sitting here stranded although trying our best to deny it—”-Bob Dylan
(*Ibid.*)

Suddenly about a year ago things started to add up in this out of balance universe.

We don't know the cause of it, but for the first time in 30 or more years we have

had a year of uninterrupted growth and coherence.

Benefits accrue from energy invested. Benefits from synchronistic and serendipitous coincidences.

Debits and credits. Now the pen stabs the paper. The tar-like ink like blood.

After 35 years of adult life. After 56 birthdays. To try and balance the ledger.

To see what went wrong and what went right

What we owe and what we've got coming

The uncredited deposits

The interest on principle
(if there still is a principle)

and that's our strong point, because we never gave up our principles, even when the current was flowing the other way-

and those principles that used to be liabilities
are now like money in the bank.

IV. Going Back In Time.

I'm immersing myself in the music of the 1960's. The psychedelic rock of the San Francisco bands. Quicksilver Messenger Service. Jefferson Airplane. Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Bought new CD's of the original records. Benefit of hindsight. Have read the books. Studied the history of the period-

-tracing down the origins of a thing-

-going back in time-

Because if you go back far enough you come to a time when the universe wasn't out of balance

when it was coherent

when things made sense.

If you can go back to where it still made sense, then you come back forward, you can see where it got off track, where it got off balance

maybe then you can find out how to fix it-if it can be fixed-

-repair the rift in your life-

As you credit the debits and debit the credits to get a better understanding of what's been received and what's been owed

The totals stack up much better with the re-accounting.

After RFK was assassinated all bets were off.

Somewhere between 1967-Blonde on Blonde-Dylan's motorcycle accident-and 1970-Altamont-

Something went terribly wrong.

.
Have to go back and retrace the origins of the coherent conditions of the world we found when we came of age

Come to find out it has not always been a world averse to our basic needs and desires.

Because there has always been a pitched battle between the forces of restriction and deterioration

and the current of rational and humanitarian thought.

Because a lot has been lost and a lot has been gained at the expense of something more valuable.

We didn't teach our children well.

Because a lot of people were really trying to excuse the fact that all the gains in art and culture grew out of consciousness expansion

at the expense of social unacceptability.

And when we got in the really deep water and out of our depth-

a lot of us were unable to escape.

In L.A.-where the buildings we once lived in are torn down and nothing remains
of the past

it may not be too late
to reinstate the policies based on principles

Because it was a pioneering effort to say it's better to have compassion.

Theresa Haffner

Leeian Algebra

or

RULES OF THE UNDERWORLD ACCORDING TO DICK LEE (d.1991)

If your friend does you a good deed, you must pay him back in kind by doing a good deed for him in return—right?

If, however, he does you a bad turn by getting over on you instead, you must demand that he make it right. If he refuses to make it right, you must pay him back 3X by doing him three bad turns.

If your friend continues to refuse to make it right and decides to get you back 3X instead, he will get you back three times for each bad deed, or 3×3 bad deeds, meaning he will get you back nine times.

Whereupon, according to the rules of Leeian Algebra, you must pay him back in spades. This means not 3 times, but 7 times for each time he has gotten over on you, or 7×9 , amounting to 63 dirty deeds. As this may take some time, you may save them up and use them as you need them.

Unfortunately, if your friend still doesn't make it right and decides to pay you back in spades instead, he will do you 7×63 dirty tricks, meaning he will get you back 441 times.

If he does this, the only thing you can do is pay him back to the n th power, meaning all of his bad deeds times themselves. It's better to threaten him with this before carrying it out. Otherwise you will be faced with the necessity of owing him 441 get backs times 441 get backs (441 squared) or 194,481 evil deeds. And that's a lot of get backs. As this is likely to take most of the rest of your life to complete, you will probably be relatively free of reprisals.

If, however, your friend sees the error of his ways and makes his bad deed right, you must thank him politely. If you would like to, you may pay him back in kind by doing him a good deed in return.

In which case he will owe you a good deed, and you will only have to get back at him 194,480 more times to be even.

Theresa Haffner

Letter To D-

The world has changed a lot.
As a people we've grown and regressed
and grown again.
When I was a child the world belonged
to our parents.
Now it belongs to our children.
In between it belonged to us.
We either wasted it or sold it
or struggled against insurmountable odds.
The condition leaves the appetite unfilled.

Still I suppose the similarities shine through.
Some things haven't changed.
The way the sun shines on your hair
and shoulders
The way lovers cling to each other.
The pathetic emptiness people feel
when they are alone.

It is said that wisdom comes not by
trying out for it
But by waiting for it to come.
That it would not be what we thought
it would be.
That it would lead to calmness of heart.

In truth it comes from accepting your
weaknesses as well as your strengths..
Your faults as well as your virtues.
The good with the bad.

So hurt me all that you can
it makes you feel any better.
I can take it and still accept you back again.
I will be content with small rewards
knowing that in time my rewards will grow
until they are commensurate with my spirit.

And I will still love you..

Theresa Haffner

Light And Shadow

Out of the Darkness-Light!
The forms emerge and move.
The play of light and shadow
brings motion.
Gradations of color bring
shade and hue.
Intersecting lines dance.
The forms emerge and recede
again.
The light returns to darkness.

Between darkness and light
life exists in all its
complexity and
variation.
The interplay of light and
shadow creates patterns
we interpret as meaning.
Here too you and I exist to
perceive these moments
As grains of sand on a windy
beach.
The forms recede and emerge
again.

Out of Light and Shadow—
Life!

Theresa Haffner

Love On The Rocks

From a high cliff above the beach we look down
at the waves crashing against the shore. The image
of love on the rocks.

First I had to decide that I wanted it. Then I made
plans to get it.

She was so beautiful with her red dress and her
long blond hair.

For a moment every thing was right in the universe.

Love on the rocks.

We were different from each other.

I was much older of course.

She was an addict.

She worked as a prostitute.

I loved her without judging her

Love on the rocks

We ran into trouble.

She lied to me.

We argued about drugs.

We argued about money.

Now we can no longer be together

Love on the rocks

Looking back I wonder

Was it worth it to love someone?

Of course it was worth it.

Of course it was worth it.

Love on the rocks.

Love on the rocks.

Theresa Haffner

Lucifer

In the garden,
I saw you.
You were more beautiful by far.
And I walked with you
and talked with you.

In the garden,
I knew you.
You took me by the arm
and put your hand on mine.
I loved you then.

When we were together
in the garden,
So very long ago,
I called you by your name
and you were mine.

Theresa Haffner

Mandala

Unto all things give the opposite.
Unto joy give sorrow. To happiness give regret.
Unto laughter give tears. In time of mourning,
Rejoice.

For what has a beginning also has an ending.
And no thing can exist without its opposite.
For nothing can exist alone and everlasting.

Contemplate each moment with a meditation
Of its opposite.

As surely as light creates shadow,
the one brings forth the other
and each will be followed by the other.
Thus happiness will end in sadness
and the end of suffering is relief.

Surround the old and elderly
with youth and young children.

Death is healed by sex.
When a loved one dies,
celebrate by making love.

Moderate pain with pleasure. Grief with humor.
Piety with insanctimony. Modesty with ribaldry.

In wealth, remember hardship by going without
Luxury.
In poverty, reward yourself with whatever
Luxury you can afford.

On the day of your marriage,
contemplate the price of the divorce.

Thus, on the occasion of moving into her
New apartment,

she wept.

Theresa Haffner

Mars Reflections

cold criminal element
the undeciphered code of the last armed outpost
to see any of the events down along the causeway
where the dried riverbeds meet
the tiny terraformed areas of the planet mars
domed cities, with the mirror sky reflecting
heat and light back against the greenhouse surface
a glittering latticework of delicate spider webs
but mars is a cold mistress
the black sky
the tiny sun 1/2 the diameter of earth's sol
a pinpoint above the rocky horizon
there are very deep scars reminding one
that mars was once very much like earth
in a primeval era of warmer latitudes
dream latitudes
for now all was armed resistance
and the pale monoliths
the monuments on mars of another time
primordial immemorial a time before history began
these outposts
a vague dwelling where man hath carved a bleak existence
a frontier a foothold against
the megacold of the martian night
a winter that turned the ice crystals of carbon dioxide
to sheets of permafrost at the polar ice caps
no one sails the frozen canals
no one treads the martian gobi
but for the tiny terraformed areas
and the domed cities
crystals on a necklace of the bejeweled martian night

we did not come to mars because it beckoned
it did not lure us with its mystery
or welcome us after we were here
it had little to offer other than a convenient
rock for us to aim our interplanetary missiles
developing our space drives for the real prize
alpha centauri

four and one half light years away
a double star system promising
worlds of unparalleled beauty
more distant than one life span
and mars the first stepping stone

we came here not expecting
to be unable to return
not because the distance was too great
or the interstellar sea
too inhospitable
but because the political climate
on earth had changed
they call us criminals because we had
to defend ourselves against
a government not our own
that would devour our lives as
well as our freedoms
they say that life on earth originated
as bacteria on mars propelled to earth
by violent meteor strikes
now deimos and our tiny phobic second moon
rise in the west and set in the east
and mars unable to support life of its own
has become our second home.
exiles in a sky of black and cobalt blue
and when we are old will we still be content to
wander the hydroponic gardens of the tiny
terraformed domed cities
unable to return to the swelling globe
of the planet earth looming orange
in the sky over mars
alpha centauri will have to wait
while mankind reconciles his destiny
in the twenty second century A.D.

Theresa Haffner

Mind Collage

(In collaboration with David Behrens a.k.a. 'Bill Bored')

□

under the slightest spell of the harvest moon
I AM PHYSICALLY NOT WELL.
image of the yellow moon rising full above the city skyline
WATCHING A NEWSPAPER TURN YELLOW IN YOUR WITHERED HANDS
like a transformational yellow peach ripe enough to eat
I SEE YOU SITTING THERE IN YOUR GILDED ELECTRIC CHAIR

□

saw weird abstract paintings in the peeled paint and burned out writing
TONY BENNETT ON THE RADIO
all black, only black, the black negligee i wore about my shoulders
SHADES OF MELANCHOLIA; AN OPIUM DREAM OF ETERNAL INKY PROPORTIONS
an arc of the downtrodden; homeless night of the ancient sun
NARCOTIC NIGHTMARE

□

crazy barbara came in, slowly, languidly
CAN YOU MAKE A NOOSE? ? ? ? ?
she came to the table as if in a dream
DECADES RAN LIKE WATERCOLORS BEFORE HIS EYES
we exchanged phone numbers; mine would never last
WE USED TO GIVE EACHOTHER SHOTS

□

the cluttered dirty second floor hallway
MORTGAGE YOUR SOUL
a world of perpetual night where sunlight never entered
MEN PERCHED ON TOP OF CRYSTALLINE CYLINDERS; STARS
a world of mirrors, light objects and reflections
SHALL I JOIN HER IN THAT DARK ABYSS?

□

finally disappearing in the intractable darkness
IT STARES AT ME LIKE A WATCHFUL EYE
a shriveled phallus transforming into the folds of a v_____.
SEXUAL POLARIZATION BECOMES NONEXISTENT
urgent recovery of all non-combustible parts
A WELL OF LONELINESS
excess of xx and xy chromosomes; about to burst
NATURE IS A CRUEL MISTRESS
"not so, " she cried, as the transmission ended

Theresa Haffner

Mouth

mouth

it has teeth
and i will bite you

like i bit my mother's nipple
when i was only a tiny baby

it can really clamp down
on something it wants
and i would rather
bite your head off
than have you take
anything away from me

mouth
oral cavity
i can suck you
deep
suck the
venom from
a snake

i have a mouth
and it has tasted
many savors

in the female
it is used for
hunting
and i could as easily
kill you as caress you

blood dripping from my teeth
and streaming down my dress
like rubies

mouth
it is an instrument of desire

and i can enflame and fulfill
any that i deem to be
to my benefit

but like a female predator
i must always be on my feet
as if with a litter
of young to protect

it is not for casual use

i take my pleasure at the
other end of the spectrum

where discernible shapes
merge into ambiguity
and the red rays of light
fade to black

it is the gate of self knowledge

Theresa Haffner

Multiverse

1

universes don't collide they interlock

oranges and yellows

the greens and blues

the grays and blacks

ochre and red□

sienna

a universe of color

don't interact

they converge

devour one another

out of the pieces i create

another universe

2

universe of red

curtail detail

last verse universe

last exit before

reverse universe

yellow chroma

universe

aeolian

full spectrum

the spectra don't complete

incomplete universe

war with itself

3

strophe and antistrophe

thought it would be easy

universe of rhyme and meter

get out of my universe

Theresa Haffner

Mushrooms

Have you ever gone out hunting for mushrooms?
Or been on a mushroom hunt
when you were only a child
perhaps with your grandmother or grandfather
out in the country
in a meadow or a woods
in early Spring
just after a rain
where the moss only grows
on the north sides of the trees?

And the mushrooms you find
don't taste the same as
the button mushrooms
from the supermarket shelf
but instead have a kind of
wild "gamy" taste
like venison.

You may not think it's possible
to find wild mushrooms growing
in the middle of a large city
like Los Angeles.

But it is possible to find them.

You just have to know where to
look for them.

Oh, by the way,
the Martians have landed.

Yeah, I was talking to a
Martian just the other day.

Same day I went out
hunting for mushrooms.

Night Wind

When the Night Wind blows
Outside this window,
It is like the sound
Of the Angel of Darkness.

When the rain falls in sheets
Across these rooftops,
It is like the sound
Of the Angel of Destruction.

When I open the door at midnight
Before the gathering storm,
Instead of the modern urban landscape
I hear the marching of the
10,000 Demonic Hordes,

Silence stalks these floors
(Sometimes for weeks)
When love has fled this dwelling
It is like the sound
Of the Angel of Death.

Theresa Haffner

Nights Like Tonight

□ nights like tonight

With the fires of the infinite

Shining through our eyes

An intimate moment shared

As hushed incandescents cast a surreal glow

In the euphoric light

In the bathroom

The interior landscape lengthens and grows

Into dimensions of the far distance

There are long shadows

Mixed with small shadows

Angles of reflection

The mirror into another

Reveal the partial image

Of an unclothed body

The colors dance

We are god's children

We were born

To live these moments

Of The Meaning...

of the meaning of love
thought streams trail loosely
shrill cat screams cut across midnight alley
car horns arabesque in the moonlight

of the purpose of existence
a tangled miasma of dirty laundry
mixed with strands of seaweed
hung from a mermaid's torso

of the understanding of knowledge
cellar mice laugh at the uneaten cheese
trashers pick the dipsy dumpster
clothes pins on a daisy chain clothes line

of the reason we argue
cellophane candy wrappers
rolled into a ball the size
of chicago that ate the planet jupiter

why we stay married
the dog grew too big for the bone
and buried the moon in the
back yard

of the larceny of hatred
the city slenderly leaks
bracelets and necklaces
of toy balloons and
seersucker pajamas

of wealth and poverty
zig zag cigaret papers
left over from last night's
zany after hours office party
the halloween witch
electric broom kazoom

of the acquisition of wisdom

cookie crumbs geomantically divine
the fortune of children's games
with game duck hunters

why we write poetry
a slice of a gone world
we don't stand a chance
before the lunatic fanatic
rhinoceros of eugene ionesco
hopeless understanding

Theresa Haffner

Offering

These things I have to offer.

Some songs that I have written.

A few poems (both published and unpublished)

A love of abstract painting.

Incense. Candles.

Musical instruments.

A guitar. Tambourine.

Homemade things.

Things made of wood.

Some pages of an unbound book.

Memories I have scraped together

My knowledge of many things

But especially music theory.

My ability to play the piano.

Some books of wisdom.

The Tao. The I Ching or Book of Changes.

A few mystic symbols and occult diagrams.

The Kabbalistic Tree of Life. The Hermetic pentagram.

Instrumental music.

Ravi Shankar. John Coltrane.

John Fahey.

Kaddish by Allen Ginsberg. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T. S. Eliot.

Egyptian artifacts as well as artifacts from our own time.

The loves I loved.

The tears I cried.

The years I have lived my life.

An upstairs window

A good pen.

An unabridged dictionary.

A manual typewriter.

An easy chair.

These things I have gathered from my life.

An offering to the oneness.

Theresa Haffner

On Lillian Way

night
cold gray against greenish black
street lamp globes against
rectangle buildings
sitting in a parked car
along the deserted alleyways
off santa monica boulevard
car windows fogged
the cold green street lights
filtered through the prism
of a broken windshield
delicate spiderwebs of
white light diffusion

only in L.A.
a prostitute stands
against the bare wall
under a street light
with traffic going by

on the sidewalk
across the street
cocaine sellers asking
"what do you want? "
"what do you need? "

beside the building
a bottle and can collector
inspects a long low
excuse for a trash barrel

the prostitute
draws a lot of attention
cars pull to the curb
windows unwind

in the car adjacent
derelicts are fixing dope
shooting up in the

luminous twilight

now the whore has a trick
a car door slams
and tires spin away

much like a river
the wind has stirred up the palm leaves
and palmetto shadows
extra currents for a
3 a.m. late night traffic flow

much like my soft core
more than usually hard core
translucent shadows

on the concave street
vertical street signs
body schisms

Theresa Haffner

One Day

one

We are in the last month of the old millennium.

One day was not all it could have been.
One day we could have had a brighter outlook.
No one does what they do without some regret.
We are in a new landscape.

Our entity has been like
a pot of soup on simmer—
Restless bubbles coming to the top
for over a month now.

One day we will have the energy to face
our shortcomings and overcome our difficulties.

One day we will be students of the
inner nature as well as the outer
relationships.

Our garden will grow when we
are once again in the mainstream
of the Human evolutionary current.

We are fraught with uncertainty, inaction,
and inactivity. We are not as we would have
wanted ourselves to be.

One day our principles will hold the
foundations of the world.

We will not be lost as long as we are not
the only light on the path.

One day we will no longer be shackled
by the highs and lows of our individual
existence and be able to live continuously
in the consciousness of the new awareness.

Spiritual energy flows like an electric current.
One need only to be one of the conduits along
which it is passed to be energized as well.

Everywhere the spiritual energy has flowed
the environment will show signs of revivification,
regrowth and renewal.

Whenever two or more people act together
to raise their consciousness, their efforts will
be increased exponentially.

One day our hearts will be touched
by Spirit and our lives will be
transformed.

two

A quickening.

An energizing.

A New Wind is Rising in the Sun.

The Sun, in this case, being the
Human Consciousness.

Theresa Haffner

Oneness

Oneness.

I know there is a oneness

Sense, feel, intuit that

There is a oneness

About which all things evolve.

Ever at the center

Never at the circumference

These things I have been taught

Ingrained, propagandized

Then I experienced for myself

I realized that all things are one thing

And one thing is all things.

It is hard to remember

In the rush of the city

In the maze of technology

In the speed of a microchip

But in the silence

The memories return

And so does the oneness.

Theresa Haffner

Open Reading

Distances.

The L.A. poetry scene is
all about distances.

The distance of the suburbs from
one another, separated by miles of
freeway,

With no real downtown section

And the distances of the people
from each other, too,

Separated by miles of fences they have
built around themselves.

It is hard for any sense of literary
community to develop here.

At the poetry reading
I am wearing black.

I am there to pick up some manuscripts
for publication in THE NEW PRESS, a
poetry magazine for which I am the
regional editor.

There are about 35 people in
attendance, all of them poets
except two.

There are featured readers followed
by an open reading. The features
read first. Then the other poets read
in the order they signed up.

Each poet leaves as soon as he has
finished reading.

The remaining poets talk loudly
among themselves and ignore the
poet who is reading.

Because I signed up last, I am
scheduled to read last.

By the time it is my turn, there
is nobody there but the two
audience members who are not poets.

She is a substitute school teacher
and he is a computer analyst.

It is their first day in California
and they are interested in seeing
some plays.

Outside the street is empty and
we are the only people on the
sidewalk.

I ask them for a ride home.

On the way, I sincerely thank them
for coming out.

"You don't know how important you
are, " I tell them.

"Without an audience, poetry
is nothing! "

Theresa Haffner

Philosophical Attitude

In your eyes
you are yet
forgetful of
your true estate.

Have you forgotten your
heart is not quiet?

the purpose of philosophy is
to quiet the emotions
but how can you be happy
when you know you are alone?
that your plate is not full?

My heart is tied up
up in many knots.
They keep my strings taut
and unyielding..

yes. so there is the
zen of nothing
the algebra of need
one to me is
fame and shame
etc.

study kabala.
the ancient hebrew texts.

they get you close.

they say
the universe
was created
from pure thought
by means of
letters and numbers

only the devil could do that.

the sages say it's as easy
as one...two...three...
and A... B... C...

numbers and letters.

But which ones?
They never reveal
them along the way.

kabala gives number one
through number nine

and twenty two letters
in the hebrew alphabet

you could make anything
in the world
if you could
spell it right

i was a student of
kabala and it was
hard

you must first acquire
the knowledge

kabala is so abstract.

You cannot deny the truth..

because you can make
the universe

it's so subtle

It could make you laugh
and at the same time
feel guilty

but even god had to
start somewhere

if it wasn't A-B-C
it was Aleph-Beth-Gimel
□

and this calls for
a lot of knowledge

a lot of facts

the zen of numerology
is the belief that

only by living
without desire
can you
avoid suffering.

that you are nothing
That you don't exist

how can your
heart be empty?

become
a root of

knowledge

and the word
a thought
atropos

your heart is empty
you become a zealot

a scholar

a man who takes his
knowledge seriously

because you have
experienced
suffering

you could not feel nothing
lack something
be anything

these things i have given you

these things i love

to prove that one does not equal
zero

study astrology
surround yourself with

signs and symbols
of
the stars and planets

weather report of the
known universe

deck of cards
with an ace for a face
□
and a deuce for the other end

tarot

later on astronomy

cast of elephants
and tortoises
of what ever hindu world
is appropriate

the theory of cosmic reality
(that we cite as the only
true religion)
states clearly that
in existence all t's must be crossed
and all i's dotted

that in the cosmic all-there-is

the at-one-ment we think of as
godhead

all details must be taken into consideration
no matter how insignificant
or beside the point they may seem

that this moment can not be real
unless everything is just the way it is.

and that this ultimate reality
can be changed by changing a single detail.

because everything is just as important
as every other thing

and in this way you maintain
an edge on
ultimate reality

i ching is an ancient chinese system
of divination using yin and yang
to study the rise and fall
of light and dark forces
in the universe

in the coin oracle this is
determined by tossing three coins
and recording the pattern of heads and tails

how important is reality if it can
be determined by something

as insignificant as the toss of a coin?

at first I couldn't consult
the oracle because i had
no coins and they don't
accept master charge

then later i got some money

When you are experienced with
thing you know that it is a book
and it has spirits which can talk
to you as if they were human beings

imagine my astonishment
when the coins revealed this hexagram:

No 1 The Creative

```
☰ -  
☰ -  
☰ - ☐  
☰ -  
☐ - - -  
- - -
```

the first hexagram in the series of
64 hexagrams that comprises the
book of changes

i interpreted this as the spirits
telling me i needed to start at
the beginning

I am alone
but my heart is empty

so that i will not suffer
i conceive of myself
as nothing

because zero does not equal one

at a later time someone will come
my heart will not be empty
and philosophy will rise

i realize
if nothing is real
at least i can become
no thing

after i have obliterated suffering
my senses become not
i can assuage this by drinking
wine

a philosophical attitude is cultivated
when one takes a stance against the
merely ordinary

he seeks to understand reality
in terms of its underlying principles

he does not battle with reality
but accepts it with serene resignation

he is not like a leaf to be blown aside
by any breeze or like a tree to be
uprooted by a storm

he knows that time is absolute
and nothing can stand against it
forever

before a person can interpret the
signs and symbols of existence
to predict the future

he must spend many years in devotion
to the me and the not me of
cosmic wisdom

Before he can snap his fingers
and change future events
he must have attained the very
exalted philosophical state

Otherwise known as
peace of mind

Theresa Haffner

Plutonium

The first time the world was destroyed was by water.

The second time was by fire.

The third time the world was destroyed was by megaton nuclear warheads aimed against the world capitals in 'mutually assured destruction.'

The fourth time the world was destroyed was by global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, desertification, deforestation and defoliation of the Amazon rain forests and old growth redwood timberland.

The fifth time the world was destroyed was by man's inhumanity to man, cruelty and suffering caused by greed and indifference.

The sixth time the world was destroyed was by contamination of the atmosphere, pollution of the rivers and streams, and eventually, the ocean itself.

The seventh time the world was destroyed was by epidemic infectious disease released by a bioterrorist attack.

The eighth time the world was destroyed was by the close approach and near collision of a planetoidal body with a gravitational field strong enough to pull the Earth out of its orbit and send it spiraling into the sun.

The ninth time the world was destroyed was by plutonium, the radio active waste product of uranium created from the peace time uses of nuclear energy having a half-life of 24,500 years.

The last time the world was destroyed was by ice

Theresa Haffner

Portrait Of The Artist Richard Juharden As A Young Man

Reflections in the shattered
looking glass

Many faceted multi talented multi dimensional

Like a diamond cut jewel

A teardrop prism

Splintered and fragmented

Reflected and refracted through successive

translucent exposures

each a different surface a different image

A different face

Of the Hall of Mirrors

façade

Each containing a veritable portrait of the

mask and masquerade

Of the real person

RICHARD JUHRDEN

Flashing windows of a stereopticon

like a deck of cards the faces wedded to each other

Kaleidoscopically

Opening like accordianesque

Cubistic paper dolls

like the many cubistic images he draws

Images of a deeper interior and truer identity

Of the person portrayed in the

Cracked and fractured

Shattered glass

Of crushed opal designs

Why must he continue to shatter the glass that

Destroys his image and continues to annihilate

His identity like a crashed windshield

Unrecognizable

Shards of anteroptic broken glass

That remains on the floor?

□

Eros was never so inhumane to Psyche

□ When he said do not cast your glance upon me for then you will know my name.

The identity is only known in the finding

and can only be found when it is
lost
dispersed to the winds
marooned on the sands of time
awaiting death on the crags of
the mountain cliff.

deserted. alone.

in the maniacal throes of
self destruction
the careening cries of self deluding
self abasement
and the sufferings of hell that
raze the walls and bash the hydra – heads of serpents
against the anguish of
the megalomaniac night...

Oh, awash are the bonds
the blood, the brutalities, the self abnegation, the debauches, the
perversions, the sorceries,
the humiliations, the slashed wrists,
the cigaret butts put out on burning coals of
human flesh.

How much do you have to torment yourself
to prove that you have an immortal soul? That you
feel the pain of your afflictions?

When the looking glass is shattered
and the shrieks of hell have come out,
when the demonic hordes have marched forth and all but
devoured you in your flesh,
when you have given yourself up to every violation
and defloration, every succubus and incubus,
like a concubine in the temple
life with the cohabitation of deities
when asaroth and asmoday
have defiled and plundered you to their fill
and still you have not been consumed
in your eternal search for truth
when you have tried every deceit
and betrayal as a new suit of clothes to trash
and then discard
when you have ridden the dragon to

On the very edge of the abyss and the threshold of
Infinity
Then will come the uprising of the spiritual man
like the erecting of the apex of a triangle
from the radices
of the base.

Do not be surprised
Brave pioneer
If you recognize the image that you countenance
there as your own.

Do not feel alone if you find
Another tired soul there
□ tried but not destroyed
Unexhausted and unconsumed
□ upon whom the wages of defeat no longer
have power,
Still recognizable in the light
That glimmers faintly
Secure in the knowledge that
The earthly body may wear away
But the human spirit will remain
Imperishable

Do not be surprised if I call you then
By name
And greet you as my friend.□

Theresa Haffner

Room 203

I woke in the black of night
In the Universe Hotel, Room 203.

I didn't know where I was
Or who I was supposed to be.

I wandered the city streets alone
In the seamier parts of town.

I realized that I had no one to love,
That there was no one who loved me.

These city streets had sold me out.
Sold me cheap. Sold me easy.

Back in the Universe Hotel, Room 203,
The flashing neon sign outside my window.

The empty hallways, deserted doorways,
And a man I did not know.

Might have been a black man
Probably so—
Who made me feel not so alone.

Theresa Haffner

Said They Said

Said they said
there is a plastic
bubble protecting the point
half a blog
big bad profit for
a six year native
no blog at all
yes i think ignorant
people would rather listen
to a juke box

purgatory
plenti pipes pay pal
and plano prisms on ebay
SD sicks georgio

can't stand crushed nuts
please don't crush the
peanuts
don't
stick dynamite to it
Blog
whales know their
blow holes well
it's only for a tooth pick
an avocado
a mulatto a mesquito
right
mississippi
now and then
these high tech water based
ink pens
really liven up the party

Theresa Haffner

Satan's Turnpike

Satan built a highway
Across the United States
And straight up to Alaska
To span the Bering Strait*
Then out across Siberia
Did Satan's Turnpike run
To the coast of Europe
Joining two landmasses as one.
Across three continents distance
That four lane pavement ran
So you could drive your car by land
From New York to Paris, France.

And Satan was an architect
And he built his buildings tall.
And Satan was a builder
And he built his bridges strong.
And Satan was a draftsman
Who designed with arc and pen
And Satan was a teacher
Of the hearts and minds of men.

And Satan was a good man
Who never did nobody wrong.
He said, "I'm not responsible
For what other people have done.
If I did only half the things
For which I take the blame,
It would not be a hundredth
What's been done in the
Other One's Name."

SATAN'S TURNPIKE

(* A suspension bridge across the Bering Strait, once thought to be impossible, is now a thoroughly achievable architectural feat.)

Theresa Haffner

Scrambled Eggs

one egg apiece
she names the eggs before she fries them
she writes the names on the shells
before she drops them into the skillet
that way she knows who's egg is which
anyway some of these days she screams
she screams "I can't stand it any more"
"The problems of everyday life have gotten me down"
"I can't program my VCR."
"I've got carpel tunnel injury
and I can't stand the pain."
But it's you, my husband, who gives me so much stress
more than you realize
you don't know how much it can build
until I am at the breaking point
until I am beyond the breaking point
until I am broken
I have to fight for every square inch of territory
inside this 12' by 16' hotel room we call home
it seems we are fighting too much for people
who are supposed to be on the same team
we are playing different games together
sometimes it seems like we are fighting on a deeper level
than what we are arguing about
could it be we are really arguing about
leaving the refrigerator door open?
where to put the audio tapes? the telephone answering machine?
we argue a lot about the electric fan.
I don't like fans because they blow the papers
and make a lot of noise so you can't enjoy
listening to music or listening to the silence
when I was in jail there was a 50,000 B.T.U. air purifier
on the ceiling of my cell that rumbled loudly day and night
and was never turned off
but of course you've gotten so deaf you can't
hear how loud it really is
so deaf you can only hear every fourth or fifth word I say
so I have to repeat every thing
so I have to shout—and that makes you mad—

and still you didn't hear it, but everybody else in the building did—
and you could have a hearing aid, but you won't get one instead you just accuse me of talking too softly and jumbling my words—until I am so stressed that I stutter or can't speak at all—
until I am getting a speech impediment—
how frustrating to have talked it all out with you expressed my innermost emotions told you just how I feel about things only to realize moments later that you never heard a word I said.
you used to be able to hear if you put your mind to it and we were talking in a quiet room.
you used to hear what you wanted to hear—
but not any more
so now you won't talk on the telephone
I have to make all your calls for you
and of course we argue about my friends you don't like any of them
you think all they want to do is steal from me and waste my time particularly if they are good looking young gay guys then your jealousy verges on violence—
as if I was going to have an affair with the first cute young thing that paid any attention to me—
don't you know if I had an affair it would be with some old man as grizzled and weather beaten as you? ? —
and I am getting older, now, too, and need to become more independent, more self sufficient, able to do things on my own, so when the day comes and there is no one to help me, I can still be able to help myself
have to be stronger and take the initiative even if it means stepping on a few toes or hurting someone's feelings
-so because I had two things he didn't have—
ability to hear and ability to see—
-after all, he is a senior citizen—
I began making telephone calls for him
and filling out applications, writing notes to the landlord, gradually taking up more and more time until now when he comes in the door until he leaves it's "Honey, do this, hold this for me, what does

this say, would you hand me something out of the refrigerator—
be sure to close the door—what do you mean you won't
hold the flashlight? ”
the only time I have to do any of my own work or get on the computer
is after he's gone to sleep—then he wants the lights off and me to
sit there in darkness—
and I just can't abide by that—
it's just a single hotel room
have to stand my ground no matter how miserable he gets
he's going to be 70
he's still strong, vibrant, active,
still able to carry boxes up the stair and
move furniture with the strength of several horses
but time has more meaning, now,
and there is no one who can help us with our troubles—
young people come to us for help with their troubles—
and depend on us for wisdom and understanding
who can help us if we can't help ourselves?
it's been so long and we've been through so much
surely the best time is ahead of us now
we know it won't last forever
his children are grown
and I have no children of my own
once I depended on him when I had no place to go and
no one to turn to
when I couldn't make it on my own
when I was homeless and had nothing, he was there to help me
I have to practice the piano. I have a performance Saturday night
she names the eggs before dropping them in the skillet
then she scrambles the eggs
the outgoing messages on her answering machine
are quotes from Bob Dylan songs 30 years out of date
the phone rings the answer phone says:

“All along the watchtower / The princes kept the view /
While all the women came and went / Their footservants too /
Meanwhile in the cold distance / A wild cat did growl /
Two riders were approaching / The wind began to howl”

☞August 20,2001

(Dedicated to Douglas D. Carlyon, my common law husband

of eighteen years, who died April 18,2002, less than eight months after this poem was written. So long, Doug.)

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Theresa Haffner

Self Discovery Doa

Self discovery in a park
frequented by senior citizens

self discovery in a car where i have driven
to be away from you

try to remember
who i am

try to remember
who i used to be
try to remember who i can be

without you

i used to be somebody
i could have been someone
i want to be somebody
got to be away from you

self discovery on a page
that i have written

self discovery in a rose

self discovery in the smoke
of a hit of rock cocaine

sad eyed lady of the lowlands

she writes poetry

she wants to be free

she dreams of
a different life
away from me

reborn

i am living a virtual life
every day om line
in front of my computer

bathed in the light of the
computer screen

a world of screen names
and passwords- -administrative
and subordinate accounts

a cyber world
that is being created
i am a digital personality
roughly formed
to live in it

every day
i log in multiple hours
serene motionless static
almost catatonic

i exist as data – multiple keystrokes and code
hypertext markup

in my house there is
neither pen nor pencil

for recreation i play
a computer game

when i look back
i can see only your face

when i look forward i
see you there with me

in the morning i must plot my escape
in the evening i must get away

mid life crisis closing in

it gets closer every day
gets more dangerous with every curve

bad angel heading my direction

there is no sign of the good angel

the demon subduer is
only an elf
an imp concealed on a shelf
for the world to control

house of cards
we are living in

captured in a jar
in a glass in a hospital
in a room full of roses

and i am not alone
no longer think of myself as i
think of myself only as we
because i am no longer here

i do not exist

once we were two—
the two become one

because love exists
we unite
become the same person

now we think the same thoughts
finish eachother's sentences

with the unity comes assimilation
the new person takes part of my soul
the part i need to continue
the part i need to combine
the new soul carries on

leaving me unable to complete

only

i wish i could be alive

but i am never without you
till death do us part

i think i will die
today

there is a rose

she lives in these urban hills
where she reproduces
she procreates others like herself
she passes down a way of life
based on herself

a value system
for others to revere and emulate

caught in the mirror
no longer a search light soul

the love exists
it is too strong
blinded by the light

love bliss fusion

two souls become one

i wander in a trance

a double star

one nucleus
the other revolves around it

i can't get out of this room

there is no way out

there is no
escape

there can only be
acceptance

surrender

and death

we two are one

open fire two guitars

she is too strong to confront
i would not survive

i can still run

i turn the key in the ignition
the car shudders to life

i ease into the traffic
i will go as far as i can
as fast as i can

i am running for my life

i turn the cell phone off
i head away from downtown
on the freeway i gather speed
blending with the traffic
heading toward the beach

street signs mark the exits
now coming to the outskirts
of the city
abruptly i turn inland
away from civilization

up a mountain cliff

as i gain elevation
my headlights penetrate
the hairpin turns

near the summit i gaze
out across the city lights

if i die today she would probably have
a state funeral for me

she would honor me
with testimonials and
multiple gun salutes

she will attribute me
with making it possible
for her to love

she will know i've gone
to a better place

but i still live on
inside of her

in her memory

i have gone as far as i can

when she finds me
and she will find me

she will find the car abandoned

self discovery DOA.....

Theresa Haffner

Seven Hells Have I

Devil may care
What seals my fate.
What others would share
The Devil may take.
The future forbear
Now lies in wait.
Seven Hells have I.

Power was mine
I tried to keep.
Ambition tried
Horizons to sweep.
Now love lies
Beyond my reach.
Seven Hells have I.

Pleasure sought I
More than I should.
Knowledge sought I
None others would.
Now evil gives rise
From seeds of good.
Seven Hells have I.

Seven colors.
Seven tones.
Seven paths to find.
Seven oceans.
Seven levels.
Seven hills incline.
Dark Angelic
Solemn lessons.
Seven Hells have I.

Theresa Haffner

Silent Spring

I woke in the morning to the raucous "caw-cawing" of a crow.

He was perched on the electric wires above my sidewalk bed, swaying back and forth in the breeze to keep his balance as he cried.

I was concerned that he might go to the bathroom on me and I pulled the blanket back over my head.

It was already 7: 00 AM and soon the heat of the sun would make it impossible to remain where I was, let alone sleep.

I heard the "caw-cawing" again. Then it was quiet.

I listened, but I heard nothing.

In a world that should be teeming with birdsong, I heard nothing. No sound of other birds.

Oh my God, I thought, Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'* has come at last.

I waited. Eventually I heard a sparrow. Then other birds. Nuisance birds, Rachel had called them. All that we have in the city.

I got up from the surprisingly comfortable bed I had made from three airline cushions. I surveyed my surroundings. From where I stood I could look across the parking lot and see people going in and out of Circuit City. A place where I would be able to panhandle.

A block the other way I could see the rooftop of Von's Supermarket, where I would be able to purchase alcohol.

Down the hill I could see the traffic and city buses going down Virgil Ave.

At least I would be centrally located.

Life goes on. Another day had begun.

* 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson was the first great book to alert the public to the danger of chemical pesticides and helped to spark interest in environmental concerns that would characterize the decade of the 1960's.

Theresa Haffner

So You Want To Be A Poet?

(for Suzanne Lummis)

So you want to be a poet?

Not, I guess, if all you want is to write something
sugary for your boyfriend
and say, "Oh, these are my innermost feelings, "
Certainly not if you want to make money,
because almost anything you could write that isn't poetry
would make more money
but
if you want to be taken seriously
it takes a lifetime of preparation and hard work
just to get something published
in some obscure literary magazine
that nobody ever heard of and nobody reads

So you want to be a poet?

Most people never make the commitment
but once you make the decision
to call yourself a poet
it really gets tough
because you start to take yourself seriously
and you've got to put up or shut up

So you want to be a poet?

Because nobody's ever heard of you
or ever read what you published in a
magazine with circulation ZERO
you want a bigger audience.
So you go to an open poetry reading
attended only by other poets
total non-poets in the audience ZERO.

So you want to be a poet?

Especially if you want to express yourself
or 'Tell the Truth'
Sometimes the truth isn't politically correct.
You have to put your ass on the line
and people tell you, "Oh, you shouldn't write that."

Your personal feelings make them feel uncomfortable.

So you want to be a poet?

Especially because poets don't get paid
so unless you are independently wealthy
you have to work a day job.

When you put down "Occupation: Poet"
they say "No you aren't.

You're a word processor. Or a copy editor.

Or a security guard.

Poetry is your hobby."

Damned time consuming hobby. I could have collected stamps
or recycled bottles and cans.

So you want to be a poet?

You seek to gain recognition
so you ask a particularly well-known poet
in your vicinity for advice.

She says, "Why don't you enroll in my workshop?

It only costs \$260 for 8 weeks
and I will give you recognition."

So you want to be a poet?

After four years in a workshop
surrounded by more or less untalented poets
who write endlessly about their childhood
or the intimate details of their love affairs
at last you understand why it makes people uncomfortable
to tell the truth or express your personal feelings.

They also teach you that all that off the wall
experimental stuff, the flashy catch phrases,
the florid vocabulary and inside jokes
just make your poetry sound foolish
and that takes a lot of the fun out of it
but at last you think you're ready

So you want to be a poet?

you want to find your own voice
and that means reading all the poetry you can get
your hands on

modern stuff, contemporary stuff, classical stuff,
boring stuff in obscure literary magazines
nobody's ever heard of,
learning all the styles and all the rules
and all the schools
just to know what's out there and who's who.
Then you throw it all out
and just write the way you would have written anyway.

So you want to be a poet?
For those of us not teaching college writing classes
on university campuses
and living in ivory towers
it can be downright disheartening.

So you want to be a poet?
Your friend tells you not to worry.
"Great poets are never recognized during
their own lifetimes. You'll be famous
after you're dead."

So you want to be a poet?
It takes a lifetime of work and preparation.
Then suddenly you're 54 years old,
you're no longer a word processor,
you're on crutches and living on disability
and all the stuff you've written but never published
because there aren't enough obscure literary magazines
that nobody ever heard of
is in envelopes in a file drawer.
Then you get evicted and guess what?
Hah, hah, hah! Your files are accidently destroyed.
So much for immortality. How are you going
to be famous after you're dead if there's
nothing for anybody to read?

So you want to be a poet?
In lieu of fame, you settle for being part of
a literary community, a circle of friends who
are creative artists, who read each other's work
and inspire each other.
So you dress in black and go to the poetry reading

attended only by other poets
and you find most of them to be egotistical,
arrogant, desperately covering up their own inferiority,
unwilling to associate with "bohemian types"
dressed all in black, or else they don't know a
damned thing about poetry.

Anyway, everyone has to leave to go home
right after they read because they've got to get up
early in the morning to go to work.
So there isn't anybody to stay around afterward
to chat, to get acquainted, to inspire each other.

After all, this isn't the 1950's and we're not in
San Francisco in a North Beach coffee house
extemporizing incomprehensible hour long poems
to the accompaniment of bongo drums or modern jazz
till all hours of the morning while insomniac customers
sip coffee and play chess, now are we?

So at last you're on your deathbed, your last breaths
rattling in your chest, and the nurse says, "Aren't you
a poet? Haven't I heard of you someplace, somewhere,
a long time ago?"

But it's a case of mistaken identity. She has you confused
with somebody else and has never heard of you at all.

So you want to be a poet?
Which brings us back around to where we started.
If you're going to write it you have to love it.
The hours of writing, most of which nobody will ever see,
the rewriting, the editing,
the number of bad poems for every good one
And if you're lucky the occasional flash of glory
that comes when you know you've written something
that touches an inner core,
that releases something indescribable
and makes it all worth while

It has to be a part of the fabric
of your being,

the way you see life
and your position within it.
the way you think,
how you respond to situations,
solve your problems, resolve your conflicts,
epitomize your happiness,

You have to go for broke and write
as if your life depended on it
not because you want to
but because you have to,
because without it you would not exist

And the poet said, "Without poetry, I am nothing."

So you want to be a poet?
It's not easy and it takes a lot of courage
But it's rewarding when you find somebody who
has not given up, who makes a contribution
to the art, who makes a difference.

Thankfully, there are still enough poets
and the people who love them (or at least tolerate them)
that there will continue to be poetry for now and for the
foreseeable future, despite the hardships.

Theresa Haffner

Solar

To find a spiritual center
by listening within
by shutting out external sensation
by discontinuing the
internal dialog

To find the sensuality
in the exclusion of the senses
To find the emptiness within
and enter into it
to become one

A seed soul
A soul atom
Begin then to generate a current
emanate a vibration
a stream of energy
flowing in a direction

Hopefully this stream will
attract others to it
and be attuned to
others like it

So that the stream becomes a river
To divide the night

Theresa Haffner

Sometimes

Sometimes my spirit weeps

Sometimes my heart cries out in agony

Sometimes my feet are washed
in the blood of my tears

My reward is not here.

Consciousness gradually returned to me.
Something about a game of chess..

It was a Friday evening and
I was in my apartment,
but I had the overpowering feeling
that I did not live there.

I had been trying to enjoy a game of
chess
with a friend, but the usual round
of weekend callers kept interrupting
our meditative state of mind,

each with their own agenda
of self motivated wants and desires,
preoccupations and intoxications,
demanding my time and my attention
as if I owed it to them,

languishing in anger, relishing threats
of ass-kickings and get-backs,
worshipping violence and mean
spiritedness
as if it were a religion.

I glanced helplessly at my friend,
who put his index finger
to the side of his head
as if it were a gun

and pulled the trigger.

I knew that I wanted to leave

but simply going to another place
was not the answer, because anywhere
I went
I would only take with me
the same frustrations and confinements,

the same conflicts over spiritual energy
bothersome grosser
conduct
each one chained to his or her own
personal desires
the appetites of the flesh,
the acquisitiveness for possessions
I knew that if I wanted to be someplace
else,
I must first not be here.

that I could not escape this world
and still be in it.

I realized I must make the transition to the higher
world,
the more spiritualized existence
if I am to escape the longings
and desires that cause suffering
I must become not,
no thing.

The Journey must begin today.
I must seek to embrace the void,
to understand the meaning of non
existence
the annihilation of the self
to achieve Nirvana.

Because I had seen that
I have been fighting a battle

that I cannot win
that if I hadn't overcome
the same stumbling blocks,
the same struggles
which had always tripped me up,
held me back,
kept me from succeeding,
after this much time, half a century,
that I was jiving myself
to think I could overcome them
in the time I had left

That I was exiled in a land
where worth was made of gold
and measured by its inert properties,
a world of matter in conflict with itself
at war with all other matter
seeking its self existence above all other
condemned to continue its
aggrandizement
until the realization that
awakening cannot come from victory
that peace cannot come from anger
that awareness of the infinite
is the only cure, the only course
the only way to escape
the round of death and rebirth

it is the knowledge I have been seeking
it is the only relief from the
universal roller coaster
of peak experiences,
highs and lows
which by repetition
can ultimately
only remind you that death can not be
denied.
we want to feel the peace of mind
that sees death as liberation
and annihilation as
relief from suffering.

And with this realization,
it began to preoccupy my mind
I began to long for it
as one longs for a distant lover
and desire to hasten its occurrence

and with the knowledge
of its inevitability

I began to feel solace.

Theresa Haffner

Sonnet

There is a deeper meaning to be found
Within a poem not defined by words
For it's not the meaning but the sound
That speaks unspoken to be heard.

For there is a deeper level still
Than the interpretation by the mind.
A deeper silence that cannot be filled
By phrases turned with artifice of rhyme.

Like a river hidden from the sight
The truth remains submerged and unknown
Confused and obfuscated by the mind
Communicating clearly, soul to soul.

For are we not ships passing in the night,
Enclosed in darkness, emanating light?

□

Theresa Haffner

Teachers

They were teachers

Those colossal masters of the saxophone
Taking us from the center of the universe
To the ends of space and time
□ and back again
To teach us the meaning of existence

Existential obbligatos
Cascading colors like splinters of light
Shifting tapestries of tone and rhythm

Harmonic structures hypnotically layered
Over tonal centers like sheets of sound
That pierced the night with the cry of the blues
And taught us the meaning of spirit

Agony and ecstasy
The music taught us both
Of happiness and of sadness
Of sin as well as salvation
That you have to be brave
That you have to be tender

Like a mantra from the East
Like a wise and holy man
John Coltrane took the music all the way
From the nightclub to the ashram
Proving the universality of the form
And transforming jazz into the
Art of transcendental improvisation

Though I never met the man
When I say that John Coltrane was my father
It is because he taught me of life as well as music

He taught us all that there is something greater
Beyond just ourselves to live for

That one man no matter how humble
By the process of purification and
Dedication to an ideal

Can find his way from the confusion
Of hopelessness and dereliction

To the cosmic.

They were teachers.

Theresa Haffner

Text

as poets we are externally
no different from any other persons.
we have the same conflicts
the same joys and sorrows

yet we use the elements of our life
to create works of art
opening our personal experience to public scrutiny
laying bare the secrets of our soul

transforming our fears and shortcomings
to somehow give other people hope and courage
reaching out with human kindness
to touch another

person to person
without assumptions without dogma
not to preach but to share
divulging things that have never been revealed

putting our hearts and our reputations on the line
that other people be better able
to understand their lives
that they will know they are not alone

many times a poet is said
to be a spokesperson for a certain
segment of the population
we are often very lost

and feel very much alone
we are very insecure in our feelings
we don't know if anyone has ever
felt this way before

we hope that by shedding light
on our inner feelings
another soul also lost
will find the courage

to seek
his own way to the dawn

Theresa Haffner

The Ancient Race

and who am i to tell?
and what am i to say?
and who am i to tell?
and what am i to say?
we are an old people
an ancient race
our ways have been forgotten
our artifacts have rusted
our civilization crumbled to dust
now we face extinction
an old people
and when we are gone
and when we are gone
who will be here?
and what will remain?

and who am i to tell?
and what am i to say?
and who am i to tell?
and what am i to say?
we are an old people
our ancestors once stood
before sod huts
beneath the desert sky
and worshiped pagan gods
now the lineage has been broken
we did not keep the ancient rituals.
or practice the ancient rites.
now time has passed us by
and what did we live for?
and what have we learned?
and what has been accomplished?
and what do we leave behind?

we shall go off this planet
leaving no trace of our existence
and who am i to tell?
and what am i to say?
and who will be there

to know if it makes any difference?

we are an old people
the wages of time and age
are visible in the lines of our faces
we are slow. we no longer
have the resilience of our youth
once we were many
now we are few
our hearts still beat with passion
but we no longer have
the desire we once had
nor the belief in unobtainable goals
we know that we won't live forever

we shall die with the same beliefs
we lived our lives for

we saw the best minds of our
generation
starving, homeless, wandering the stark
streets
pushing a shopping cart
but crazy and talking to themselves
unwashed and uncared for
without family or friends

aware of our own mortality
aware of how little time we have left
aware of how little we can do
by ourselves alone
elders of a mighty race
no longer recognized the
possibility of change

given time to write a poem,
some will come to say
'why did you write? '
why did I write?
only to prove to myself
that i was here

The Black Stars

I.

along the highway
we passed the black holes
of burned out stars

black stars

holes in the universe
where love has gone wrong

and even the light can't escape
and even the light can't escape

and even the time is running backward
and even the time is running backward

and even the time slips away

negative universe
a storm within your eyes
where the weight of dying stars
accumulates

along the highway
we saw the black holes
of burned out stars

black stars

the light of dying suns

II.

beyond the event horizon
lies a world we can never know

beyond the event horizon
lies a world of beginnings and endings

that we can see but can never enter into

for we are trapped by the gravity
of a dead star collapsing on itself
in an orbit growing ever smaller

a world so tormented it can not
escape even from itself

a world that has already become invisible
and soon will cease to exist

beyond the boundary
we passed contaminated
oil; refineries

illuminated by the orange flare
of petroleum fires

near a deserted train yard
the rusted tracks bear witness
to a world that has never been

our car headlights speed
through pitch blackness
searching for survivors

refugees from a world that cannot be seen
though it be only a few feet away

a world of singularity
undetected but by its influence
on surrounding bodies

their orbits distorted by the
massive gravity field

III.

on our way to the city
we saw the black holes
of burned out stars

black stars

the light of dying suns

Theresa Haffner

The Book Of Vladimir

Book One

These are the words received in a dream
which I wrote in a book when I
woke up.

These are the symbols of death and
Eternal life.

Cross. Triangle. Pentagram. Hexagram.
Inverted pentagram.

These are the words of darkness
and light.

The words of Vladimir.

Proceed only if you dare to read.

These are the words of darkness.

Slowly I came to consciousness
in the mind of a dream
behind the steering wheel of a car
wrapped in a blanket.

Slowly I drove the car
looking for an escape
but there was no way out.

The road continued on forever.

I was pursued but the gates would
not open for me.

These are the words of darkness
and light.

These are the symbols of Eternal life.

The rose. The cross. The inverted triangle.

These are the numbers:

1,3,5,7,9,11.

These are the sigils of witchcraft.

These are the metals of alchemy.

Iron. Copper. Lead. Tin. Mercury.

These are the names of the demons:

Astaroth, Asmodeus, Lilith, Baal, Belial.

I return to darkness to dream again.

These are the words which I, Vladimir,
received in a dream.

The words of evil.

Book Two

I record these words now that I may give
them to you.

In them are found the secrets of magick
and witchcraft
that have been learned at the greatest cost.

Proceed only if you dare for they not
for the faint of heart.

They can enflame your mind with madness
and provoke your heart to acts of violence
and self-destruction.

But in them also is found the secret of
Immortality,
such as it is.

These are the words of darkness and light.

The symbols are the cross, pentagram,
hexagram, inverse pentagram.

The point within the circle is the symbol
of the universe.

The numbers are 1,3,5,7,9,11.

The planets are the Moon, Venus, Mercury,
Mars, Saturn, Jupiter.

The metals are Iron, Copper, Lead, Tin, Antimony.

The Angels are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael.

The Demons are Astaroth, Asmodeus, Lilith, Belial.

The colors are Red for sacrifice and
Black for destruction.

The wages of sin are death.

The wage of knowledge is lost innocence.

The symbols of Eternal life are also
the symbols of death.

The answer is veiled in secrecy
and hidden in darkness.

These are the words I, Vladimir,
received in a dream.

The words of evil.

Book Three.

Book Three is not yet written.

These are the words that I, Vladimir,
received in a dream.

The words of evil.

Theresa Haffner

The Case For Wisdom At 5: 00 A.M.

death

that old grim reaper that's been
following us for so long
that ultimate tax collector that
just keeps on
sending us his notices
until he finally collects his bill
the final rent that goes unpaid
because there's
no one there to pay it
that ultimate seducer making
his ultimate seduction
leveler of all hills and levels of
elevation
as well as equalizer of
income brackets
waiting for us at the end of the line
working with his old friend time
the one we spend most of
our lives outrunning
trying to sidestep the man at the end
but so few get away with it
certainly not for very long
and he just waits there patiently
knowing that
we'll come to him eventually
of our own accord
each of us in our own way
and submit ourselves
like ladies in waiting
to life's greatest mystery
the one that begins
"whither thou goest"

death

will i meet it straight in the eye
or will i lie there winking
waiting for him to take me off to
some last surgeon's scalpel

or nurse's sedative needle
or lying on some bathroom floor
waiting for some paramedics
that didn't come because nobody
called them
or unconscious waiting for
somebody to pull the plug
will i be alone or with a loved one
or with somebody i don't even know

death
you old deceiver you
you do not have to wait for us
most of us will catch up to you
soon as we can
having run through our entire lives
in a frantic search
for your dark sweet narcotic
to rejoin you in the home where
we have come from
and life reveals itself a long
eventful journey
that ends at its beginning and
begins at its ending
with our embrace
time running backward down a
railroad track
the days connected to one another
like successive frames of a
stereopticon
the scenes depicting old age
transforming into youth
and childhood transforming into
old age
curving along the line of the
wheel
finally disappearing at its distant
beginning
 now its ending
which is where our journey begins
proving that time is like a circle
and the circle now is joined

the end connected to the beginning
in its completion like the shape of
a "torus"

we know not "whither thou goest"
we know that death is our
ultimate destiny and our true
home

we are in life but as visitors
traveling the days like tourists on
a tour bus

buying souvenirs sending
postcards

reading books repeating
quotations

knowing that this is not our home
there is nothing lasting here
all of it is borrowed

all of it has to be paid back
we cannot stay a single day
without the hotel bill

moving on we have only a limited
time

the meter will run out the visa
will expire

the tariff is too high we will
never get through customs
there is nothing we can purchase
and we have only time to spend

all the time in our lives
like a weekend vacation

compared to eternity is but a
moment

the briefest wink of an eye
life is not our home

for when our journey ends we stay
in death forever it is our home
everlasting

we shall never have to
leave nor be evicted
nor have to pay the traffic tolls
for in death we are eternal

it is the cause and creation of
this house of cards
we have been living in

yes we live we die so what
nothing special to it it happens to
everybody
no big deal about it
it is life's great equalizer
when we have gone through the
gate
there is no one greater lesser taller
smaller than anyone else
the clothes come off also the
family name
in death no one is treated any
differently than anybody else
it could be said death is for the
living
the way we think about death
the funeral the casket
the after death state the religious
doctrines
of resurrection redemption
reincarnation salvation
heaven hell or purgatorio
all have meaning to the living
but catholic protestant hindu
moslem jew
all are the same in the eyes of
death
which are the eyes of god
no one knows for certain "whither
thou goest"
but one thing i know for certain
the journey is the same for
all of us
each has the same destination and
reward
none are coming back none will
become angels
none will suffer the punishments

of hell
of this i can assure you
in death there will be no
remembrance
life is over finis that is that
there is peace to be found in this

the ancients seemed to have a
better understanding of the basic
nature of life and death
even with their magic, their
rituals, and their demonology
the egyptians believed that the
human soul consisted of several
different spirits
each of which were part of the
whole
yet existed separately and were a
able to act independently
this was taken from the observation
of actual phenomena
each had their purpose and
reason for being
but only one part of this soul
personality went to heaven and
became eternal
this was the conscious identity of
the person who had lived
the others became active at the
time of the person's death
and afterward they were able to
communicate with the living
partook of the funerary offerings
participated in rituals
went in and out of the tomb at
will and traveled widely
they could eat the food pictured
on the walls of the mausoleum
but they were in no way to be
confused with the actual person
who lived and who had died
that consciousness was held in

great reverence
it was not to be disturbed and
could not be communicated with
the rest were like spirits
shades artificial entities
that were not in themselves alive
this is why there were pictures of
them painted on the walls of the
tomb
and why there were statues and
likenesses of the person
who had died for by means of the
likenesses they could be invoked
by the people who came to the
tomb
they existed for as long as the
likenesses existed
for as long as there were pictures
of food painted on the walls
but people stay dead a very long
time
and when the likenesses were
gone they could no longer be
invoked
for without the likenesses there
could be no remembrance
it was very sad the fate of these
strange spirit beings
pictured as little birds with
human faces
who were able to turn
themselves into other animals

another strange doctrine of the
egyptians
involved the journey of the
deceased through the underworld
of the dead to reunite with his
beginnings
bringing to completion the circle
of life
this controversial doctrine was

little known
probably kept secret and quite
possibly illegal
as it was thought to contain
highly dangerous forms of magic
it involved those unfortunate
souls who were dissatisfied
had left unfinished business or
wanted to change events or deeds
they did during their lifetime
in the land of the living the
egyptians observed the sun
to come up in the morning in the east
and every day make its journey
across the sky to the west where
it disappeared below the horizon
on the western bank of the
nile river
as if it had died and
would be gone forever
yet each morning as if by a
miracle it would be reborn again
in the east and once more
make its journey across the sky
where it had come from they
did not know, but they perceived that
at night it must go beneath the
earth and journey to the east
back across the sky of the underworld
which was populated by
the souls of the dead
thus the souls of those deceased
who were unlucky enough
to want to choose this kind of
afterlife
who were lucky enough to have
the huge amount of money necessary
to pay for the magic to bring this
about
made their way to the western
bank of the Nile river where they
climbed down the steps below the

horizon and entered the land of
the dead
in the underworld the night sun
rose in the west and set in the east
so that for the dead time
actually moved backwards
and each day in the underworld
marked one day off in the life of
the deceased during which he
could relive and alter the events
as he would have preferred
as days went by and he lived
his life in reverse he became
younger and younger
until he became a child
then a tiny infant
finally as the sun set in the east
he became unborn
as such like the sun he became a
baby in the egg from which unborn
potential it was conceivable that
he could be reborn
again as an infant in the land of
the living
such a miracle however was
not only highly unlikely
as far as i know it had never been
known to have happened
of course anything is possible but
i wouldn't
bet any money on it

death
why this subject
going over and over the same
morbid thoughts in my head
at 5 a.m. i look at my
reflection in the bathroom mirror
i'm getting older now
my face shows the definite signs of aging
notice the thickening of the
neck and the lower jaw

my hair definitely streaked with gray
the skin of my face now not only
shows the signs of wrinkling
i have irreversible lines of age
around my mouth
the whole texture of my skin
has become coarser
thicker less fluid less supple
like i've gotten frozen in my ways
like the bark of a tree the wages
of time and age are showing on my face
i need to get these teeth pulled
what's left of them
dentures would help fill out my jaw line
but look how much weight i've put on
it's natural for your waistline
to fill out but these pounds
don't come off the way they used to
a couple of inches but i've
never been this heavy
no doubt about it i've definitely
lost the flower of my youth
i'll never see 20 again
i'm not yet fifty people live like
there's no tomorrow
like they've got all the time in the world
but face it i'm starting to get up there
the years mounting up and it's
too late to start back now
if only i'd taken that dancing class
or had a picture of dorian grey in my closet
all this thinking about death has
got me thinking more seriously about life
not that i'm going to die right away
but face it
40 something and 40 something
adds up to ninety something and it's
probably safe to assume that more
than half of my life is
behind me
and still it's going by so fast that
six weeks goes by in the time it used

to take two weeks
a week can go by in as little as
two days thanks to the
miracle of television
but it's clear that the process of aging
does something recondite to the
relative elapse of time
never thought this through but one way
to slow the process of aging might be
to slow the relative elapse of time
it's hard to tell how
much time i've got left
some people have a long time
some are here a short time
some are already gone some
go in their fifties
(i'll never live to 60) (but how many
people thought they'd never live till 30)
but even if i live to 65 which is a
popular age to go
that's only 20 more years
(compared to the 40 something
i've lived already)
and going as fast as it is now that's
not very long to get done some of the
things i want to get done
it would be nice to live to 100
or 85 (even that sounds
awfully young to go)
a bible scholar friend of mine told me
we are allotted three score
and ten years in life
as he was 70 when he told me
he said everything else he got
was free time
my other friend told me
"when you're our age
we really don't know how much time
we've got left maybe five years
maybe more"
a year later we was dead at 53
my mother died at 47 of cancer

my father at 36 in an automobile
accident
god i need more time than that
i've got to have ten years at least
ten years at least and i can finish up
but that's really pushing it
i've got a few things i set out to
accomplish in this life and i'm already
way behind schedule in
accomplishing them
and the ravages of a lifetime of
drug addiction and alcoholism are
already taking their toll
particularly in recent years the
alcoholism which gives me such
painful heartburn that it's almost
impossible
for me to continue drinking
and my liver has become a major
cause for concern cirrhosis is no joke
and i don't think Medi-Cal pays
for transplants
it could be an unwelcome way
to cut short an already too brief
journey
the life of a poet is not all
glamour and glory
neither is it grit and gravy
it's not everything you would think
it might be (but of course
it's everything to me)
it's been a struggle my whole life through
and it might still pay off
but i can't just do anything i want
here i sit in a rented hotel room
waiting for my disability check to
come

as i think about it though there
are certain advantages to being older
it's easier to handle the problems
of day to day living

when crises arrive (as they always do)
we have lots of experience to
know what to do
it's easier to get a seat on a bus
or in a theater
no one asks our age in a nightclub or
adult entertainment
the streaks of gray in our hair
make children mind us better
cause younger people to look upon us
with a reverence of respect in spite
of themselves and the dignity
of our age gives us the right to address
younger persons of either sex
as "sweetheart"
"darling" or "dear"
we don't have to be afraid of
losing our composure because
we've lost it so many times before
we're sure to find it again before
it gets lost for good
we know much more who we are
and what we're about in the world
we're more financially secure
because we don't take the chances
we took when we were young,
and the secrets of life accrue
to where we have insights into
the better buys
and where to get them
we don't fall prey to the hysteria
or the stress that youth endures
we know that if the check
is in the mail
if it doesn't come today it will
probably come tomorrow
we're not usually good enough
to fend off every criminal by
 dint of our physical prowess
but we have the cunning not to
take up with them in the first place
young fools are not asking us

out all the time
we don't have all the glamour
of the young and beautiful or the
handsome young plaything
but being secure in our identity
makes us secure in our sexuality
and with our years of repeated
experience our sexual lives
couldn't be more satisfying
compared to the tentative
experiments of youth and the
insecurities and conflicts they
engender we speak without envy
we know that we can't be all things
to all people
we know that if we can just be
one thing to a few people
or a few things to one person it is more
than enough to accomplish
we have a more philosophical
outlook on life
it takes year after year of
dedicated study just to get some
idea of what's going on
it's impossible to understand the
meaning of knowledge until you
become proficient in at
least two disciplines
after that the barrage of
information no longer overpowers
us and you have a framework to
categorize knowledge
the expanding cognitive universe
opens like a flower of
understanding
the wisdom of the ancients
merges with the discoveries of the
modern world to give a
unified meaning to existence
it's a pity that it takes so long
to learn and gives us so little time
to do anything with it

it takes thirty-five years just to
learn that you need to know something
another ten to get a basic understanding
of what it is you need to know
when you are young the world
opens before you like an unlimited potential
could do anything might even
become president
but as childhood wears on each
decision shuts off an entire area
of accomplishment
makes you take aim on
your ultimate destiny your
final resting place when
death makes you eternal
in youth there is time
many hours after hours to drift
aimlessly gathering life's experiences
before deciding what to become
but when you are older life has
made the decisions for you that
you haven't made for yourself
you know what you must do
and how much time you have to do it
if you have a longing to leave
your footprints on the sands of time
you had better get to stepping

by virtue of all this useless and
pointless knowledge we have been
gathering
over so many years we begin to feel
we have an obligation to right
some of the wrongs of the
world
it is no longer worth it to live
just for our own benefit alone
but for the rest of humanity as well
and our posterity
that we must take responsibility
for improving the situation
because there is no one else who will

do it
and if we don't it won't get done
we don't think the world will
remain unchanged
or always wallow in the sight of
self indulgent bureaucrats
and dishonest auto mechanics
but not having children of my own
the longing for immortality reasserts itself
i want to leave something of myself behind
something of worth that will be
here after i'm gone
the love song if j. alfred prufrock
and the kaddish of allen ginsberg
replay themselves endlessly inside
my mind like an unwinding spool of
recording tape
i keep hoping that life cycle
will ease the anxiety of oncoming age
naturally
lead my head to some peace of
mind
i have a fear of being cremated
please don't let me be cremated
or worse like so toe tagged
pauper's funeral just burned up
i want to be buried in the ground
like my mother
and her mother before her
that i may become one with the earth
that a willow tree may spread its
branches above me head
and grasses grow
and somewhere sometime
someone might visit my grave
it's not too much to ask

last exit to dreams
when you are at last able to look
death in the eye
look at life as a sower of seed
and a cultivator of the soil

as you sow `ere shall you reap
provided you have ample water
for your crops to grow
apples are apples and oranges
are oranges and never will
one become the other
but cultivate your crops with discretion
and a fruitful harvest will be yours
look at life as the captain of a
ship
as you chart your course across
uncharted waters
learn to hold the rudder and steer
the course
if you steer the course long enough
eventually you will cross
to the other side
if you change your course you will
drift aimlessly forever
don't invest in unsecured second mortgages
never store your goods in an
unlocked storage garage
don't trust your money
or your mate to your best friend
for the trust of time is your truest friend
the voyage is never over
till you meet the final destination
"whither thou goest"

Theresa Haffner

The Death Of Billie Holiday

When Billie Holiday died
(for all our sins)
all she had was \$500
taped to the inside of her thigh

she had no condos, no real estate,
no expensive cars, no elegant furniture
no swiss bank accounts

had she lived
all those things
would have been hers

but she died in 1959
before any of them
were possible

never in her wildest dreams
could she imagine the extent of her fame
or how many lives would be touched by her

she had lived a life
of dizzying highs
and treacherous lows

and all she had to
to show for it

was an understanding
of life

and how to communicate it

through words
and music

Theresa Haffner

The Death Of Poetry

Poetry is dead and God is alive.
I heard these words and began to cry.
Without poetry what would become of me,
Drowning in a sea of Christianity?

Poetry is dead and long let it lie
With its Thee and its Thy and its Thou and its Thine
May we never see another line
Of iambic pentameter with end-stopped rhymes.

Poetry is dead, and so it shall lay,
Mouldering at the pit of its shallow grave.
And no longer will they give a hoot
For the quatrain stanzas or the metered foot!

Poetry is dead at the bottom of the sea
With its anapests, dithyrambs, dactyls and spondees.
And also eight to sixteen lines
On your innermost feelings or the meaning of life.

Poetry is dead but how long will it stay
Before they resurrect it for another day?
Has it not been just a few years time
Since they said it was God who was dead—
-and poetry alive?

Theresa Haffner

The Devil's Country

'We go by a secret path along the rim
of the dark city between the wall and the torments.
My master leads me and I follow him.'
- Dante, THE INFERNO

There are two streams, by virtue kept separate from one another, the streams of darkness and the light. And within each stream is contained its opposite. The light within the darkness, and the darkness in the light.

Paradise wasn't lost, nor our passage from the Dark Kingdoms regained, in a single day.

No sooner had we made our descent along the steep cliffs above the walled city than the paths above us were barred for our return.

My master leads me and I follow him.

How long we lived as captives in the walled city. How many years? How many seasons in Hell?

And though we were not condemned, our indoctrination begun.

My master speaks and I listen.

The gates to the Dark Kingdoms are the physical senses, one each the sight and hearing, one the sense of smell, one the taste, one the touch, and the openings of impregnation and elimination.

My master teaches and I learn from him.

Seven Kingdoms, ruled by seven princes, each more powerful than the one before.

And the more powerful the dominion, the stronger my restraints.

The princes are Archons, powerful archangels who rule with might and impunity.

Our gods are meant to act as figureheads, to remain aloof. Not to interact in the affairs of their subjects.

That responsibility was left to the demons, who were given the authority to enforce judgments and impose sentences.

They held the keys to the captivity and ruled the affairs of the governed arbitrarily and for their own gain.

My master commands and I obey.

By day I lived the life of an ordinary human being, average of appearance, moderate in every way.

By night, in dreams, I served the Dark Lord as a member of the Corporal Guard.

I lived in the Devil's Country.

I was educated in the Devil's schools.

I was apprenticed in the Devil's workshop and dined in the Devil's Kitchen.

I was trained as a horseman, and acted as an escort for those souls who had lost their way, helping them across the abyss and guiding them to the capitol city.

The inhabitants of the Dark Kingdoms are the Archons, the demons, elemental spirits, the souls of the dead, astral projections of mystics and occult masters during out of the body experiences, and ordinary people who access the Dark Kingdoms at night during dreams.

I was instructed in the Black Arts and became skilled in the practice of magic.

But although my magic was powerful, the higher teachings were forbidden to me.

Then one day, for the love of a woman, I disobeyed my master.

I learned that my master had lied to me.

So I murdered him.

I could no longer stay in the Dark Kingdoms. The Corporal Guard would hunt me down as a criminal and kill me.

Yet I knew if I crossed the abyss, I would never be allowed to return.

I did not want to leave the woman behind.

'You must fly on the Wings of Darkness, ' she told me. 'I will follow when I can.'

The Souls of the Dead[i] are imprisoned in the Dark Kingdoms by the love of the people who knew them during life.

They are prevented from leaving by the very love that wants them to be free.

I broke free of my leather restraints and crashed through the bars that confined them.

'I set you free, Daphne, [ii]' I cried as I broke open the bars of her cage. 'You are free! '

'Joe Albany, [iii] I set you free! ' I cried as I broke the cell door of the great pianist.

'Walter Lacey, [iv]' I cried to the poet/performer, 'You do not have to be confined! ' I broke through the bars and chopped through the ice that was frozen up to his waist.

'Douglas Carlyon, [v]' the most special, 'You are released. You are free to leave. Go. Fly. Flee the Dark Kingdom.'

'My mother and father, [vi] I am sorry for imprisoning you. I am so sorry. Please forgive me.'

Tears welled in my eyes. I continued opening cells until all the Souls of the Dead were released.

I donned the black hooded cloak that I wore. Then I mounted my trusty steed and took to the sky. I beat a line above the rooftops and minarets of the walled city, beneath the low clouds, across the hills, toward the distant horizon.

The Corporal Guard was hot in my pursuit. I could hear the pounding of their horses' hooves, feel the hot breath in their nostrils. I could see the hooded riders, their blazing red eyes.

I heard the woman's voice at my inner ear.

'You were born in the Devil's Country, but you're not the Devil's Child, ' she told me.

'So journey until tomorrow, and never come back, ' she told me as I neared the Abyss, 'until the morning's light! '

Theresa Haffner

The Game Of Chess

The real meaning of things is not usually at first perceived.

Temporary objectives may assume exaggerated importance that will quickly subside once its purpose has been fulfilled and the real purpose behind the purpose emerges.

Whether you play on the board or off the board, every chess player knows you have to think two moves ahead and you have to protect your pieces.

Because chess is mortal combat.

The King, who is yourself, male or female, rich or poor, each of us is a king in our own right—

is the master of this game we are playing.

His pawns are his friends and supporters. They are vicious attackers and able defenders.

Do not underestimate their power, because a single pawn can bring about his opponent's checkmate when the rest of his pieces are gone.

Group them in flanks about your king for safety.

His horses go out in pairs. They can maraud and defend. They are called knights, but their true nature is more that of a knave, a jack, a ne'er do well.

They are the independent contractors
who for their own purposes will do the
King's dirty work.

They are the burglars and thieves of the
dope dealer's company that act as
backup, the enforcers who answer the
door and screen his clients, sometimes
called lieutenants.

Every property owner has more than
his share of them.

They may be sincere or insincere. They
may be loyal or talk behind his back,
but when their destruction is through,
they will be the first to be sacrificed.

The Bishops are his spiritual advisors.
One White, one Black. One good, the
other evil. They battle like the right
and left hand paths.

Eventually, however, they too will fall.

The Queen is his wife. The love of his
life, whom he would do anything for.
Who means everything to him.

Most powerful of pieces, she operates
the household, controls the finances,
and in the flash of an eyelid can cross the
entire board and meet the opposing
queen in her own parlor, on her own
terms, and can back her down.

He loves her, but when the opposition
brings in their big guns to check and
counter check, he will sacrifice her, too.

Then the King will be left alone,
surrounded by the passel of what

pawns remain, and the lateral attacks of
the distant Rooks, lifeless castles,

the empty real estate left around when
the queen is gone.

□

Theresa Haffner

The Human Kind

We are all children
Lost on horizons
That compass our dreams

Once there was laughing
And singing and dancing
On beaches that beckoned

We were all young then
And faultless of fear
With our whole lives before us

With hope for the Human Kind.

Oh my people, my children
My brothers and sisters
What has become of you?

We were a people
Who held a great promise
Now troubles surround us

And worries enfold us
And devils entreat us
And poverty breeds avarice

Remember the Human Kind

We once were a city
Become a great nation
With the world all around us

Now trials' tribulation
And heart's deprivation
On the eve of millennium

Ask the unanswered question
Of this generation
Has this great city fallen?

Come, join the Human Kind

Theresa Haffner

The Journey

On our way to the city
We encountered the remains of other travelers
Whose journeys once traversed our same terrain

On a hillside grown thick with brambles
Was the wreckage of those souls
Love had left behind

One was

STRUNG

Like a bead
Pierced by a needle
Run through the heart
By a thread
And suspended from the trees on a string

Some were

HUNG

Like desiccated fruit
Withered drying in the wind
Hanging from the twisted branches
Barren of a leaf

The rest were

ELUNG

Their hearts

WRUNG

dry of emotions

like grains of sand to the far reaches
of the cosmos where sand and sea unite in the
infinity of space

beside the road

□ where the silence of the inner ear

makes images from the wilderness of familiar things,

□

i make the pilgrimage being once more in pursuit
of that which brings transformation

□the priestess

□the prophetess

Survey the wasted efforts of those whose
paths had been turned away

and seek to perform the sacrament

□ on the high hilltop

where wildflowers

queen anne's lace, flowering dill, purple dock, ragweed and goldenrod,
yellow daisies and tiger lilies grow

along the mighty highway

□ we saw mile after mile

of broken glass

["It is relatively common for experienced (marijuana users) to feel themselves to be more... open and filled with wonder at the universe, to find sexual love to be a union of souls as well as bodies, to feel nonphysical kinds of energy flowing in the body, to feel at one with the world, and to feel that time comes to a stop. Not quite as common, but still frequent, are experiences of mind-to-mind contact with others (telepathy) and feeling in touch with a higher power or god."]

- Transpersonal Psychologies by Charles T. Tart.]

Theresa Haffner

The Longer Now

i.

the will to survive

is

so it goes

test

not to say

they are growing

tickle

styrofoam

testicle soup

strange fruit

back in the wood

not to mention

great stew

so far so good

the v.

behind the wood shed

we had a meltdown

from the empty places

from the barren places

rock hot

sun born

ii.

Rx

against the wind

clash of socks

red and green

Soledad sucks

fourteen days

in the sock drawer

pastiche

room for one

Agamemnon

literary minds

immobile

lives behind

I'm mobile
then you flew by
fly on swift wings
the longer now

iii.

big six
catcher's rye
sand of son
broken wings
boys in the band
so i am
cheese on rye
sunflower
numbers
thirty
ten
fifty
in the glass
time remembered
so am i

Theresa Haffner

The Mariner

He sails the sea
in a boat with a broken oar
the tattered sail at half mast
the untended rudder
drifting this way and that.
there is no destination
for the sea goes on forever.
there is no shore.
the ocean has no other side
the current is deep
and the water impenetrable
obscuring the mystery
of it's depths
underwater rivers like
submerged emotions
hiding the end as well as the
beginning
He doesn't know how long
he has been drifting,
perhaps forever
for as long as he has
had memory.
he doesn't know how long
it will continue
The mist and fog
obscure the stars and sky.
The clouds obscure the moon.
There is no way to chart a course
no way to hold direction
out of the endless darkness
without hope of dawn.
He does not feel despair.
he does not feel.. anything.
The wind, usually becalmed
sometimes gathers storms
to whip the waves to frenzy
white capped, cresting, primordial,
breaking all about him
threatening to capsize the

little boat, breaking it to pieces
and strewing its wreckage
across the uncharted reefs.
And when the storm is exhausted
and the sea is calm again
he is left to himself
on the deck, alone, silent,
but for the cries of sea birds.
His food is brought to him,
spare bounty of the sea,
by whales and porpoises,
and at other times by mermaids
dressed in scales and seaweed.
They are his only company
other than his dreams.

But this is not the only
life he had lived.
Once, before he was a mariner,
before he had been born to this life,
long before he could even remember
he was a sojourner riding
in a camel caravan of one.
crossing the vast desert
from sand dune to sand dune
searching the parched oases
where he could pitch his camp
beneath the arid palm trees,
a merchant with his goods
he hoped one day to sell
but there was no one there
to buy them yet.
The sand storms,
crescent moon and stars.
The colored silk of his tent
The spices and perfumes of
The women who came to see him then
that were actually figments of his
dream imagination.

loneliness and endless desert
the desert with no end.

Do you participate in your own dreams?
For that would make them more real.

Then he remembered he had
lived many lives before,
living many lives within
the one life

Many times before, to a new life,
a new set of circumstances
a new identity, so vivid that
it wiped out all memories
and in each one he must set about
the work of rediscovering his true identity
until at last the memories would return.

Difficult to talk about the past,
as if it wasn't really real at all.
Only a function of the imagination,
sometimes expounded in a dream
which upon awakening could not be
distinguished from reality.

Always the sense of a journey with
uncertain beginnings and no ending.
Always the loneliness and the isolation,
longing for permanence in a life without meaning.

Once he drove Colorado highways from
mountain peak to mountain peak,
his entourage with him, as a prophet dealing
psychedelic drugs, as a priest spreading
enlightenment from high to high,
from love affair to love affair, from
religion to religion.

Once when he was a Black Magician
he was burned at the stake as a witch.

He had also lived as a musician
on a tour of one night stands

and two week engagements,
traveling from town to town
and city to city, leaving behind a network
of hastily formed relationships,
first names and changing faces,
having only his instrument
and the music to assuage his loneliness,
and later the addicted drugs.

He had lived as a pauper, a beggar on the streets,
a convict and a thief, and also as a holy man,
seeking wisdom on the mountain top
and dispensing it to his acolytes.
He had lived as a rich man
and also as a beautiful woman,
a priestess, a courtesan skilled in the
experience and creation of beauty.

Of them all, the life of the rich man
was by far the loneliest,
for no one gave him
true friendship, only what
they wanted from him.
He became a miser
and later he gave freely,
but he knew only after he
no longer had the riches
could he find true
happiness or friendship.

His life as a woman was briefest,
for being a woman made him aware of time.
For a woman's life is divided
into seasons, each of which is fleeting,
until she finds herself longing
for her youthful beauty
which has gone irretrievably from her.

But each lifetime, which seemed forever,
would also come to its ending,
sometimes through violent means.
Through crime, sickness, loss, theft.

or sometimes just through broken dreams.

Time was the one thing he had
which would one day run out
as the mariner drifted
the trackless ocean currents
from treacherous reef
to mysterious deep.

He could not know
how much time he had left, or
how many more times
he would be reborn
For life was not like an hour glass
which runs out and is tipped up again

but like sand which sifts
through the fingers very slowly,
a little bit at a time,
every day of his life, until
at last he slipped into a sleep from
which he would not awaken.

He didn't know when that day
would be.

Until then the mariner sat
on the deck of his tiny wooden craft
with the comical broken oar,
tattered sail at half mast,
the rudder drifting aimlessly,
no longer flattering himself
that he could chart a course,
the submerged ocean currents obscured,
staring ahead into the mist and fog.
The journey has no destination.
The ocean has no other side.
The sea he sails goes on forever.
The sea without a shore.

The Meaning Of Love

At first love makes you blind,
But in the end it teaches you to see.
What is the meaning of love?
It will not be what you expected.

At first love makes you a fool,
But in the end it will make you wise.
What is the meaning of love?
Love is a mystery.

At first love makes you crazy
But in the end it will make you sane.
What is the meaning of love?
Love is not what it appears to be.

At first love makes you a slave.
But in the end it will set you free.
What is the meaning of love?
Love is a contradiction.

At first love makes you confused
But in the end it will make you understand.
What is the meaning of love?
Love is a voyage of discovery.

At first love makes you forget who you are.
But in the end it will teach you who you can be.
What is the meaning of love?
The answer is not easy to see.

At first love will hurt your heart'
But in the end it will heal your soul.
What is the meaning of love?
Love is a work in progress.

Theresa Haffner

The Message

THE MESSAGE...

is in the wires
telephone wires
telegraph wires

THE MESSAGE...

is coming closer
you can hear it humming
across the mountains
across the desert
across the valleys
across the alley-ways
into the people

THE MESSAGE...

is getting stronger
it's coming longer
you can almost hear it
you can almost see it
it's in the air
it's everywhere
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's on the TV
it's in the news
it's on the front page
it's in the headlines
it's in the gossip columns
it's on the late night talk shows

THE MESSAGE...

is on the airwaves
it's on the radio
it's beaming everywhere
from the broadcast tower
it's on the short wave
wireless transmission
satellite transmission
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's on the highway
it's in the fast lane
it's in the horsepower
it's in the octane

it's in the motorcars
it's in the diesel truck
it's in the station wagon
it's on the transit lines
it's on the interstate
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's in the airways
it's on the railways
it's in the locomotive engine
you can hear them throbbing
you can hear them turning
it's a mass vibration
it's a thunderous occasion
spinning out the message
THE MESSAGE..
it's on the phonograph
it's in the autograph
it's 3-D sensational
it's in pornography
it's on the movie screen
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's loud and clear
it's in the air raid shelter
it's on the launching pad
it's in the rocket blast
it's in the message
it's in the message
it's THE MESSAGE...
it now is being heard
you can listen for it
hear the message
you can almost feel it
you can almost touch it
soon it will be understood
across the oceans
across the continents
city to city
person to person
the message is being heard
THE MESSAGE..
it's a vibration
mass communication

it's in the space age
it's in the brain waves
electron microscope
digital microchip
interplanetary rocket ship
a lunar landing
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's in the people
hear it in their voices
see it in their faces
it's in their laughter
their tears and smiles
it's coming by land and sea
a thousand miles
THE MESSAGE...
will it be heard by you?
will it come to see us through?
can it still reach us yet?
can it get through to us yet?
it's THE MESSAGE...
it shall be known by all
it shall be told by all
it shall bring the truth
to everyone great and small
it's THE MESSAGE...
the starry night
the icy dynamo
the whirling whirlwind
the volcanic lava flow
a distant aeon's time
get ready for it
ready to receive it
across your synapse
in your own hometown
calling out your first name
can you hear THE MESSAGE?
can you see THE MESSAGE?
telephone wire
telegraph wire
it's calling for you
it's THE MESSAGE...
it's THE MESSAGE...

it's THE MESSAGE...
it's THE MESSAGE...

it's THE MESSAGE!

Theresa Haffner

The New Land

quadrille matrix□database traces
non repro blue graphline
across pale green geometric grid
vibrating crystals
transmission of electromagnetic energy
different wavelengths□
varying frequency patterns
radiotelescope reception□ stellar microwaves
doppler red doppler blue
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,
ONE OF PURITY AND NOBILITY
where the material reality
does not interfere
with the work of the imagination
WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH
FOR THE NEW LAND

clouds of tonalities
come and go
within the music
timbres of single notes
hang suspended in temporal space
articulated clarinet and oboe
gain resolution then disperse into the
geometries of the symphonic ensemble
atmospheric cadence and dissonance
drift cloudlike
cacophonic dodecaphonic
a mobile of spires and spheroids
on the beach of the infinite
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,
ONE WITHOUT HATRED OR RANCOR
where the pettiness
of human jealousy and infidelity
does not enter
WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH
FOR THE NEW LAND

intransigent airships

delineate absolute trajectories
morning dreams
midmorning mind schemes
silent thought streams
astral communication
on the morning of the new awareness
drifting continents geographic shift
planetary tectonics
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,
ONE OF PURITY AND NOBILITY
where the material reality
does not interfere
with the work of the imagination
WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH
FOR THE NEW LAND

Theresa Haffner

The New Paradigm

"As direct opposites converge on 0°polarity,
then the poles will shift." -'Zero Polarity' by the author.

Between boredom and indifference lies the new paradigm.
Between the climax and the anticlimax lies the new paradigm.
Between the beginning and the ending lies the new paradigm.
Between the back and the front lies the new paradigm.
Between the list of the lost and the lost list lies the new paradigm.

If you can't see this you are probably too far away and need to wear glasses.
If you can't hear this you are probably making too much noise and need to take
the earplugs out of your ears.
If you can't feel this you have lost touch sensitivity.
You who have ears, listen.
You who have eyes, see.

More and more our days are spent driving down this synonym for an information
super highway called the Internet,
where virtuous and virtual are not synonymous.

Between the back brace and the head injury lies the new paradigm.
Between the microcosm and the macrocosm lies the new paradigm.
Between the Vision and the Voice lies the new paradigm.
Between the clutch and the power brake lies the new paradigm.

Who controls the past controls the future. More and more our time was spent in
serious exploration of our own past.
Come down in time. The past is always with us because the past becomes our
present.
We change the past by diligent excavation, re-remembering, and redefining our
understanding of it.

Between the golf on Sunday and the all sports weekend lies the new paradigm.
Between the side dish entrée and the box lunch lies the new paradigm.
Between the couch and the cushion.
Between the chest and the drawers.
Between the headboard and the bed.
Between the lamp and the lampshade lies the new paradigm.

Urban legend? A child locked in his bedroom without human contact since birth was raised entirely on the Internet with technical support by .

Between the mainframe and the motherboard lies the new paradigm.
Between the Mountain Crest and the Timberline lies the new paradigm.
Between the land of the free and the home of the brave lies the new paradigm.

Between the watermelon seeds and the cantaloupe rinds,
between the organ donor and the transplant,
between the book and its cover,
between the Sumerian Sunrise and the Artifacts on Mars lies the new paradigm.

For anyone who ever wanted everything,
for anyone who ever wanted nothing,
for anyone who ever wanted to be with somebody,
for anyone who ever wanted to be alone,
in the hours before dawn, between the silences of 3 a.m., lies the new paradigm.

Between the mouse and the click,
between the chasm and the mist,
between the mystery and the rose,
between the hours of parking and no parking,
between nothing and no thing,
between zero polarity and the insertion point
lies the beginning of understanding.

The new paradigm.

Theresa Haffner

The Next Generation

(STARDATE 45122.3. The sensors aboard the Starship Enterprise have detected a subspace anomaly. The nature of the anomaly is as yet unknown, but Commander Data has reported a slight drain on the warp core generator. Captain Jean Luc Picard has alerted the senior crew members to keep him informed of any changes and meanwhile continue on course to the colony on Aldebaran III)

"It must mean we're really getting old when the only thing we talk about is television," I say to Bobby. He sits across from me, the flickering colors from the TV screen playing across his face, the dim light illuminating the room like a lunar landscape.

We are watching episode #232 of 'Star Trek: The Next Generation.' There are no more new episodes. We have seen this episode before, but we are watching it because it's better than not watching it. We watch it at the same time every night. We are watching it because we are addicted to its predictable action, its monotone dialog, its hypnotic cinematography. We watch it because we have seen so many episodes that we know all the characters, their life histories, their personal characteristics, their predilections and idiosyncrasies, better than we know some of our own family members.

(Commander Data has been experimenting with oil painting. All of his subjects appear to be meticulously drawn but do not express feeling. Ship's Counselor Deanna Troi suggests that he attempt abstract art to explore his subjective experience.

Their conversation is interrupted, however, by a message from the bridge. The subspace anomaly has greatly increased in both its size and intensity. If it continues to grow at its present rate the Enterprise will soon be in danger of being drawn into it and being destroyed.)

I feel that my life is slipping away, that I am trapped, helpless, in a void of television shows, TV dinners, and a routine of daily activity, doing the same thing at the same time each day, that makes the days go by as quickly and painlessly as possible. I feel that each week that passes is a week that I will never have again. That I am dying, slowly, the life energy being sucked out of me, a little

bit each hour, each day, in a plethora of 'Seinfeld, ' 'Friends', 'The X-Files, " and 'Star Trek: The Next Generation.' That I am caught in a time warp and slowly and inexorably being drawn into its vortex.

{The subspace anomaly continues to grow and to draw energy from the Starship's warp core generator.

"Shields at 14 per cent, " says Commander Worf.

"At this rate the Enterprise will be destroyed in 13 hours,28 minutes, and 32 seconds, " says Data.)

Somehow I've got to escape from this, to rejoin the flow of humanity, to begin my life once more. If only I could meet the person, write the poem, sing the song, paint the painting. If only I could break the cycle. But it's too safe remaining here. And I use television like a drug, insulating me from my own feelings, insulating me from my own sense of loss, substituting instead the fictitious emotions of fictitious characters, lived vicariously at the same time each day, with a standardized format designed to keep the self distant, removed, safe, anaesthetized from the pain of indirect living.

Bobby says, "You really know you've been watching too much television when everything on the cable is a re-run."

(Captain's Log Supplemental: The Enterprise has escaped from the subspace anomaly with 1.4 seconds to spare. The senior officers on the bridge look at each other with a sigh of relief.

"Ensign, lay in a course for Star Base 67, bearing 6571, mark 82, warp six, " says Picard.

"Engage! ")

Theresa Haffner

The War Begins

DAY ONE:

No more protests—no more discussion pro or con—no more dissent—the war is on as cruise missiles bombard Baghdad and marine forces cross Kuwaiti border into Iraq.

The ghostly green infrared night vision images.

The orange blasts of the exploding cruise missiles.

The U.S. tanks and armored troop carriers painted the same deadly slate gray of the Iraqi desert.

Periodic Kuwaiti air raid sirens signaling citizens and U.S. personnel to don gas masks and enter shelters until the all clear. The Iraqi missiles intercepted or landing harmlessly in the desert with no trace of chemical or biological warheads.

The typical information, disinformation, and misinformation from the usually unreliable sources.

After the all clear, the streets of Baghdad and Kuwait City—empty—deserted—still. Businesses closed. No traffic on the streets. Nobody out. Frozen in silence. Waiting for the morning and the second wave.

#

The game of chess. Coalition forces open with cruise missile to government bunker in Baghdad.

Saddam counters by setting fire to oil fields near Kuwaiti border. A defensive move to interfere with coalition communications and night vision devices to slow the progress of the land invasion.

U.S. marines cross Iraqi border and begin the march on Baghdad.

#

The first gulf war was a comedy of errors. the bungling inept Iraqi soldiers falling over themselves trying to surrender. The erratic ineffectual Scuds lobbed hodge podge at random targets. The inept Iraqi military.

Not so 12 years later. Both Coalition and Iraqi forces exhibit a cold precise professionalism. Both sides exhibit deadly restraint.

DAY TWO:

1000 antiwar protesters jailed in San Francisco.

Coalition helicopter crashes killing 16.

Turkish forces ready to cross north Iraqi border to secure Kirkuk oil fields and occupy Kurdish lands.

11: 38 A.M. Baghdad. Clear sky. Traffic on the streets. Buses running. Private cars. Station wagons. Sedans. Four lane divided highway. Tree lined urban streets.

#

8: 30 P.M. Baghdad. Night. The streets now empty. British aircraft bombers left Britain 2 ½ hours ago. For 2 ½ hours Baghdad has known the air attack is coming. Now the first anti aircraft artillery fire. The green night vision. The expectancy of high ordnance bombs.

Anti aircraft fire. Incoming bombers. Explosions on the outskirts of the city.

Saddam has offered a \$14,000 reward for each Coalition soldier killed. \$28,000 for each prisoner captured.

The anti-aircraft subsidies.

One U.S. officer has been killed by hostile fire. 14 accidental deaths in helicopter crash.

30,000 soldiers advance on the Iraqi desert.

Vast expanses of empty desert—flat—gray brown—empty. Endless flat horizon.
Local dust storms.

Along the Tigris River—oases-palm trees—canals-cultivated areas. Paved roads.
Railroads. Power lines.

'Shock and Awe' has begun.

#

Over 50 presidential palaces in the vicinity of Baghdad. The digital virtual
computer imaging like a sophisticated video game.

Seven oil wells afire. A second U.S. marine killed.

Scattered vehicles on Baghdad's night time streets.

American Armored division moving toward Baghdad.

DAY_THREE:

9: 45 A.M. PST. Friday.

The night desert dreamscape like the surface of the moon.

Cruise missiles launched against Baghdad.

Islamic call to evening prayer.

Air attack on Mosul-the second largest city—near the Kirkuk oil fields in Northern
Iraq.

Shock and awe.

#

A - Day. The northern war seems to have started..

Smoke rising among the palm trees and high rise office buildings. Orange fireballs. Bombs falling across Baghdad.

Incendiary fire balls. Baghdad under heavy bombardment.

This beautiful city.

'LIVE LONG, IRAQ AND PALESTINE. GOD IS GREAT! '-Saddam Hussein.

Baghdad, population 5,000,000.

General Tommy Franks, Commander of U.S. forces.

#

Saturday Morning, Iraqi time.

After the most punishing bombardment of the war destroyed the presidential palace-the military headquarters- the secret police - the offices of security-government TV and radio-leaving the high rise buildings in flames—

Dawn found the streets deserted and smoke rising over the ruins.

Shortly later there were vehicles on the street, public transportation, Saturday Morning, first day of the week after Friday, the Islamic day of rest.

Power still on. Reservoirs not flooded. Streets still open. Civilian businesses could conceivably open.

Coalition smart missiles precision piloted by laser guidance or Global Satellite Positioning.

U.S. intelligence believes Saddam to be injured since preliminary bunker busting attack on the Hussein family compound.

The massive troop movements—column of combat vehicles—moving north over the desert moonscape.

U.S. television returns to normal programming, periodically breaking away for news from the Gulf—

Preparing the way for the Academy Awards broadcast on Saturday night.

#

One day all this will be a memory.

In the first Gulf War I found many images that reminded me of the images in the Biblical Battle of Armageddon.

But it was not Armageddon.

This war is much larger. 300,000 almost numerating the grains of sand on an ocean beach. Gog and Magog.

But it is not the final battle. It will soon be Day Four.

Theresa Haffner

Tiresias

I am Tiresias, the blind poet of Thebes. But
it is not for my poetry that I will be remembered.

I am old, now. But I was not always so.
Neither was I always blind.

As a young boy exploring in the wild
I accidentally came upon two serpents
who were copulating.

Surprised as much as were the serpents,
I stared directly at them.

I was innocent of intent, and neither could
the serpents be blamed, for sexual
intercourse is an obligation from which
no species is excused if they want to
continue their kind.

Because of this, the Gods changed me
into a woman.

A cruel fate, to be sure, but one which
forever altered my life.

At a later time I was changed back
into a man. But anyone who has ever been
a woman cannot fully become a man again,
for the knowledge remains.

So it is, even now in old age,
I bear the characteristics of both sexes.
The sagging breasts, the withered
vagina, the graying beard, the heavy brow.

Good and evil are values which mankind
is supposed to obey. But they do not
apply to the Gods, who make and
break the rules according to their

whim, usually with mortals caught
in the twain.

Zeus and Hera argued. What about?
About who has the greater pleasure
during sexual intercourse, the man
or the woman.

They summoned me to answer
the question for them. Why? Because
I had been both a man and a woman.

Given the opportunity to change my
answer, I would have been reluctant to
divulge the truth. But deception has
never been my strength, and the truth
has been my undoing.

I told them the woman's pleasure
is greater. How much greater?
Nine times greater.

Hera was furious. In a fit of anger
she blinded me. In return for this
Zeus gave me second sight, the
gift of prophecy. Hera imposed the
condition that my prophecy
never be believed.

It was over in a matter of seconds.

So it was that I became The
Blind Seer. My lot has been to
wander the dusts of the earth,
guided always by a small child
who leads me by the hand.

I have gone many places
and seen many things.

But prophecy does not bring
happiness. Nor has it been

able to improve the lot of those who
seek my counsel. For my warnings
are never heeded, but scorned.

Such joyless triumph, when my
prophecy is proved true, only to
the destruction of those I tried to help.

Now I dance the Rites of Dionysus
with the Maenads. Anyone who has ever
been a woman knows that no gift is
without a price, and no happiness
forever lasting. And the joys of youth
and beauty but small reward for a life
of hardship and servitude.

To be a Blind Seer, one must learn to see
with his heart and not his eyes.

I have seen the heart to be a contradiction,
for my eyes are sealed to the world
of the senses.

It does one no good to know the future,
although none can resist the temptation
to ask. For if anyone foresaw what awaits
them, not only would they not choose it,
they would do everything possible to
avert it. For it would seem the worst
that fate had to offer.

Take this wisdom to heart. It is better
to live life as it comes, day by day,
and take your rewards where you find
them. For you can't know the goodness
or the badness of a thing until it befalls you.
And to tamper with your destiny is
only to tempt the caprice of the Gods.

Even now I cannot look forward to a
peaceful death. For the warrior Odysseus
will journey to the underworld to

summon my counsel. What am I to tell him?
The dead do not like to be disturbed,
and have no interest in the preoccupations
of the living.

If there is a place in the Underworld
where great poets are rewarded,
there must be a place for bad poets
as well.

I prefer to go to my resting place
with a quiet heart.

Theresa Haffner

Two Blocks East, Three Blocks West

(for Eddie Villanueva)

Two blocks east, three blocks west,
These city streets are all that I have left.
They never miss me when I go.
They don't get mad when I don't come home.
These city streets have become my only friend.

Three blocks west, two blocks east.
I get everything I need.
I see everyone I want to see..
And every day is like the one before.
Nothing less and nothing more.
First you get some money
Then you find someplace to score.

Everything I own
I carry in my pocket.
My telephone numbers
And a photograph in a locket.

Two blocks east, three blocks west.
That's the width and breadth of it, my friend.
A world without color, a world of gray.
A world where sunlight goes and comes
to mark another day.

A world where nothing is permanent
A world where nothing lasts.
I don't think about the future.
I don't think about my past..
A world without religion
Without family or friends
A world without patriotism
A world without regret.

A world of first names and changing faces
Like gray smoke that rises and drifts

without leaving any traces.

Once my world had color.
Once it had life.
It had a tiny baby.
It had my wife.
A house in a neighborhood
With a garage and a lawn.
But I didn't do right.
Things went wrong.
It was my own fault.
Now they are gone.
Instead these city streets of gray.
The concrete sidewalks
of cement and brick.
Are all that pave each break of day.

To make a living on these mean streets
You either have to steal,
Become a prostitute
Or else you have to deal.
Some people loan money.
I've tried my hand at all of them.
The only thing that's certain,
One day it will end.

They say I'm an opportunist.
To tell the truth
Most people here
Are only passing through.
They don't know me.
They don't care about you.

They're just here for
Something they can get.
They are hustlers, users,
They are not friends.
When push comes to shove
They'll be on their way.
What harm if I get the opportunity
To make them pay?
I lay my traps and snares

To catch them unaware.
I provide them goods and services
At inflated prices.
And after 7 PM it doubles.
It's more expensive at night.
It's not my fault
If they didn't see me coming.
They don't call me Fast Eddie
For nothing.

Come, look at this street corner
Only one year from today.
The streets will have the same names
But everything else will have changed.
If you want to find somebody
There's no guarantee they'll be here.
But if you want to pick up something
Someone will take you there

See these marks on my arm?
This is my house. This is my car.
This is my swimming pool.
To me they're just scars.

The future is uncertain
No one knows how long
the shadows cast.
One only hopes the memories
Will be enough to last.

Because if I don't love
I will not be hurt.
Because if I don't hope
I won't be disappointed.
Because if I do not try
I will not fail.
Because life comes with only
one guarantee.
One day you'll die.

Two Blocks East.
Three blocks West.

Theresa Haffner

Unknown Agent

I am an unknown
agent
the operative
with no name
No one knows
my identity
without guilt
and without shame
I take my orders
from newspapers
and TV
I am guided by the
headlines, bits of
paper, and
debris.

I uphold the power
to which I have sworn,
and enforce the code of justice
without malice or reward
I am the servitor of God and Satan
and the governments of
men,
unknown to other operatives
and by the countries,
disavowed by them.

The House of Love
will cause you sorrow
Your safe home
will be cracked.
Everything I give you
the Cosmic will take back.
I represent the Hierarchy
and act on their advice

Sacrifice, O Lord
this darkness
in our soul.

Banish to the dark
the hatred that
we hold.
Cast out from us
the demons, their
evil and their lies
Forgive our thoughts
of treacheries
which confine our lives
I care not for either side,
have no ideology
or creed,
and about the organizations
I have nothing to reveal.

I am the Keeper of the Scales
and all lost car keys
are in my hand
I keep my abode in the
barren spaces
And the place where
all roads end.

No one ever
sees me coming
When I materialize
as if out of smoke
No one ever sees me leaving
disappearing as I go.

I have no soul to lose
and by none to
be suspect
Nothing in my life
to prevent me
from my task

And when he lays me down
in death
I will utter
no remorse
Only pride

That with no emotion
performed

By no one will my
identity be guessed

My storage locker is not full
of bounty of the quest

What the Cosmic bestows
the radio can't deny.

By toiling into the matter
neither answers
of their questions
will they find.

Theresa Haffner

Untitled

many days have come and gone
and still i linger here
climactic times have been and passed
and still my mind's not clear
the sun has gone behind the moon
the piper sucks a silver spoon
no rhyme is real no chime is true
for me there is no you
for you i cannot be seen
the puzzle has a missing piece
the sky with broken pieces strewn

Theresa Haffner

Waiting To Be Discovered

i am waiting to be discovered at this stage of my life at this point in time as a voice to stir the awakening of the hearts and minds of man to a rebirth of freedom

i am waiting to be discovered as a survivor of the sixties who will pick up the scepter of the beat generation and reassume the battle they once waged

i am waiting to be discovered after this many years as a poet who words will not be misunderstood

i am waiting to be discovered crying out to the people to be courageous, do not give up the battle, for the tide will soon be turning against those who tolerate injustice

i am waiting to be discovered as a living verification that dreams which don't come true overnight can be achieved over time, and that dreams which seem impossible could never be achieved at all unless they are dared to be dreamed

i am waiting to be discovered on a page in a book on a shelf by a person as a voice of hope where no hope had existed before

i am waiting to be discovered as a new american patriot who will strike a blow against the hypocrisy of modern america that says one thing and means another

i am waiting to be discovered telling frightened white america to cut out their senseless yelling they have nothing to be afraid of

i am waiting to be discovered as one who can help a nation rediscover its identity and redefine its basic concept of freedom

i am waiting to be discovered as a force for good in a world that does not know good from evil

i am waiting to be discovered on a park bench seated next to you with a wild look in my eyes and pigeons at our feet with sheaves of paper in my hands gesturing wildly shouting "the rebirth of freedom"

i am waiting to be discovered as a voice which will reassert the basic principles of "love" and "peace" once held sacred by a generation to a nation that has

trivialized them and a government that has stated that such principles lead to moral degeneration, street crime, and violence

i am waiting to be discovered as one whose life has been immersed in revolution, dedicated to building a new way of life, and pioneering the exploration of consciousness

i am waiting to be discovered as a voice of the present informed by the past and speaking for the future

i am waiting to be discovered as an artist who took a stand on the issues of her time before it was too late

i am waiting to be discovered as the homeless person with no shoes that exists inside all of us

i am waiting to be discovered as a poet whose poems were not about mowing the lawn, dishes in the sink, or the names of vegetables

i am waiting to be discovered as one person no better or worse than any other whose personal journey echoed that of as generation, embraced each direction with courage and responsibility, and still in not completed

i am waiting to be discovered as a poet who cried real tears over the state of the brothers and sisters of her generation

i am waiting to be discovered as a person who embraces the ideals of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Anwar Sadat, yet knows that only by putting them into practice in our daily lives can they be realized completely

i am waiting to be discovered as one who is proud of the accomplishments of the last half century that have come so far, yet knows how much farther we have to go

i am waiting to be discovered

Theresa Haffner

War

to fight the bitter fight

to wage the bitter war

a war waged for freedom
by small bands of misfits
with the wide eyes of inspiration and holy sacrament

a war waged with the weapons of poetry, music, drama,
painting and modern dance

a war waged with spoken word, computers, paintbrushes, video cameras,
typewriters, guitars, and keyboard synthesizers

a war waged with Jack Daniels, Old English '800', Budweiser, Magnum,
King Cobra, Cisco, and Thunderbird wine

a war waged with psilocybin, mescaline, marijuana, cocaine,
methamphetamine, and heroin

a war waged with deviant sex, bisexuality, homosexuality, transvestism, bondage
and dominance, sadomasochism, fetishism, masturbation, and heterosexual love

a war waged with mysticism, candle burning, wicca, meditation, tarot cards,
Satanism, shamanism, and magic invocation

a war waged in the tradition of the masters who came before:

Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary
Snyder, Gregory Corso, and Charles Olson

Percy Shelley, John Keats, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles
Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, e.e.
cummings, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, and Eugen Gomringer

Charles Ives, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Edgard Varese,
Eliot Carter, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, and Philip Glass

Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollack, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Piet Mondrian,

Mark Chagall, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Cézanne

John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy, Miles Davis, Charles Parker, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, and Pharoah Sanders

John Cippolina, Jerry Garcia, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Ray Manzarek, Paul Butterfield, Lou Reed, David Bowie, and Bob Dylan

Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Darby Crash, Keith Morris, Il Deuce, Greg Ginn, Henry Rollins, and Mike Watt

a war waged by prostitutes, drug dealers, drag queens, compulsive gamblers, alcoholics, convicts, criminals, homeless people, and poor people everywhere

a war waged with word and ideology, and those who lend their bodies to be the weapons of the war

a war waged with the common bond of humanity shared by all people

a war waged by those who fell prey to their own devices, in mental institutions, jails, prisons, asylums, halfway houses, missions, and board and care homes

a war waged by all the faceless unknown contributors and seekers of truth who did not achieve fame, who may be judged by society and by themselves as failures, who may live in economic ruin, having given everything for the struggle, whose names have not been recorded by history, but whose courageous deeds have not been without effect.

a war waged in the name of all those who gave their lives through o.d. deaths, suicide, murder, and a.i.d.s.

a war waged by everyone who ever went for broke and committed themselves wholly and totally to a cause or an ideal

a war of liberation as serious as any revolutionary insurgency against any South American third world dictatorship

a war fought without generals, without commanders, without military, without strategy, and without guns

a war fought in the name of freedom by such unlikely candidates as S.A. Griffin,

Rafael F. J. Alvarez, Scott Wannberg, Saint Teresa Stone, Katie Soljak, M. Mollet, Doug Knott, and also those writers who have all too often struggled in isolation

a war fought to overthrow world religions, multinational corporations, criminal justice systems, television evangelists, old money accumulated by southern plantation owners on the slave trade, and any doctrine that insists that it and only it is the right way and denies the right of any other to exist

a war waged against the ideology that allowed a government to wage Desert Storm against an unprepared, under equipped and disorganized Iraqi people, killing and estimated 150,000, mostly civilians, while sustaining only light casualties, some by friendly fire or accidental death

a war waged against superstition, supernaturalism, fundamentalism, ignorance, and bigotry

a war waged against murder, violence, dehumanization, oppression, intolerance, victimization, discrimination, censorship, and the execution of criminals

a war fought that our world be safe for poetry, for music, for painting, for independent thinking, for minorities, and for our posterity

a war that each of us must wage within ourselves and one day must take up in the world about us

a war for brotherhood

Theresa Haffner

Wounds

I am turning the dial on the radio—switching stations looking for some music to listen to. It is late at night and the lamplight in my hotel room casts steep shadows.

I listen to each station for a few seconds before deciding to change it. I have been reading Rimbaud and the mood hangs heavy in the room, the images still lingering in my mind.

I am naked and my legs in the thick lamp light are like a latticework of tiny red dots, needle marks, puncture wounds, and tiny hair follicles where I have shaved my legs, imposed over the drifting clouds of bruises where injections have missed the veins, and old scars of abscesses that have healed, the ravages of my soul. And still below that the Cimmerian and disappearing network of blue veins deep within the skin, receding, hidden, obscure, like deep rivers. The suggestions of blue the only clue to their location, very hard to hit.

It is a pity that I don't have any veins closer to the surface, easier to see. But I have used them so many times, injecting them with my mania, that they are no longer in evidence.

So I have to use the deep ones, and they are very difficult to hit, so that I miss more times than I hit, and bruises emerge and migrate like ornate tattoos.

I don't lament what I have done to my body. It is mine and I can do with it as I please. Only that it is so much harder to inject than it used to be, as I have come to love it more. It has become like a religion to me.

I have been taking amphetamine, and I want to inject some more. Which is why I have taken a break from Rimbaud.

The room is deep and the city whispers outside my second story window.

I begin exploring the flesh of my thighs and my hips, searching for a place to inject. There are no obvious places. Many places have been used two or more times and are unusable.

Flesh tones in the lamplight. As I examine the latticework of puncture wounds, bruises, and scars superimposed over my skin, my eyes begin to swim, and I begin to hallucinate.

Lines intersect and rearrange themselves across my naked flesh into words that I can read. They are rapidly changing, only in existence a moment before changing into something else, so that it is difficult to tell what they mean.

So I began to read my legs:

Velvet skies / none of the above / felt pink / pride of love / felt the
night / pistils of thirst / it shed light in time / futile / ray of thought /
entry / King of Poetry / make dim mask / denials / ergot of love / the
one I dare / thine own heart / thrash the halls / chemise / the hand of
daffodils / herds Rev. the rose / chant of goat / medicine of rye / faults
I have some / lady of love / religion of light / my boat / my daily need /
then one day he died / faith / bottom of the vault / effects as yet
unknown but unintentional / phantom of self / but then I can / take ships
to the other shore / other flames other loves / the flesh tones impale /
listen to the chrysanthemums / the vile pigeons / Ode to Endymias /
Absu Syrta Sq. / ancillary / new dictionaries / I said synaptic / old
fisherman under the bridge / henbane root / Atropine / anabolic /
triplicate /

At last I give up on finding a place to inject and decide to take a break, the blood running down my leg. I will try again later.

Once again I begin turning the dial on the radio. The music. The static between stations. The place between stations where two stations come in at once. Once more I pick up Rimbaud. I will be awake long past the dawn.

□

Theresa Haffner

Yellow Daisies

i hate flowers

more precisely, i hate the feeling
that thinking flowers are beautiful engenders

that kind of vulnerability
that i have come to see as weakness

that i despise as

i also hate love songs
as something overly sentimental, outright corny or
in bad taste

the kind of feeling in a relationship
that makes you feel like a fourteen year old girl

alright for fourteen year old girls but not for adults
who have too much dignity
who have been hurt too much already

i
hate
love

not because i don't love you

not because i haven't
felt the pangs of love's
blood red intensity

but because of the abusive love relationships
that strip us of our dignity
rob us of our freedom
and make slaves out of us to one another

rob us of our sensibilities
as surely as any intoxicating substance
as dependence forming as any drug addiction

better our pain than our innocence

mine instead the
scream of the inner city
the cry of the desolate pavement at night
the cracked cement
the
broken glass

mine the cry of desperation

and violent loneliness
where human beings like stunted flowers
grow to a weird distorted blossom

better my pain
than to be caught one more time
in foolishness

where love hurts

Theresa Haffner