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# Ronald Reagan Rain

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

RONALD REAGAN RAIN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Patrick B. Norris

2013

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Patrick Norris, and entitled Ronald Reagan Rain, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Campbell McGrath

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Richard P. Sugg

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Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 5, 2013

The thesis of Patrick B. Norris is approved.

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Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2013

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

RONALD REAGAN RAIN

by

Patrick B. Norris

Florida International University, 2013

Miami, Florida

Professor Denise Duhamel, Major Professor

The aim of this creative thesis was to explore the wildness and terror lurking beneath the surface of contemporary suburban landscapes through the use of the free verse poem and the prose poem. The conclusion reached was that it is only through both forms of poetry that an accurate depiction of both civic and personal estrangement can be represented in a continuous medium through which introspection and identity can be scrutinized.

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“Rowdy Roddy cut his locks; but don’t worry women, he’s still a fox.”

-Rowdy Roddy Piper



# RONALD REAGAN RAIN

## Father Gator

There was a gator that lived inside my father's heart  
eating everything in sight. Men would come toward it  
on boats with hooks, saying "When will you love your sons?"  
All winter my brothers and I looked at the gator.  
All winter the gator hissed. It grew grey. Its belly sagged.  
A heavy rain came, mumbling apologies.

Teenagers of Morrissey

The high school looks lonely without its pack of matches

## How I Leave You

You take me to a hospital  
but it is a maze.

You get lost in my beard  
and find a music box.

A song begins.

Everything looks whiter  
than the sun.

My skeleton grows  
to a gold height.

Pissing chocolates across  
the highway.

Electronic Woods

You've set fire to a church

because you're a villain

Some nuns run out of the church

Pixel upon pixel

in the electronic woods

Time Travel for Men

If you collected all the famous dead men

piled their bodies on the streets

made them alive again

would they talk about their jobs

I wouldn't

Frosting

I begin thinking about anniversaries  
and how I want one

so I decide to fall in love  
and die ordinary.

There is a funeral for me  
It is kind of like an anniversary.

A room fills with crying tones  
black balloons and repressed sex.

This is my frosting.

I May Need to Live Another Life to Get to You

I call you on the telephone  
with my clever hands  
and my burning shoulders

but I haven't met you yet.

I give myself a Mohawk.

I take a crowbar, and smash  
up our apartment.

But then I feel bad  
and clean it up.

My eyes drift out past the windowsill  
out to a neighbor's garden.

There are some ghost-peppers  
I'm too scared to eat.

Fuck it.



I want to show you  
how punk rock

I can't be.

Party at McDonald's

On the wall hangs a painting of a baby boy and an elephant. Someone has smeared red lipstick across the baby's lips. It is now a queer baby.

I'm lovin' it.

Brother Baker

Time dried the dishes and he slid downward, lights dead, pies at the far end.

Bygone Regard

Rub your cheek on the carpet:

It's Kyoto

Poland

New Jersey

No idea is simple.

Empires aren't.

We both talk a little bit some mornings.

You're an architect

I'm a hyena

It's safe.

What Cops Do: What We Do

The annoying people touch claws.

They might be the sun.

They have so much power.

I become fog in the tradition of fog,  
settling over a golden river.

You become a little girl that cannot swim.

Every night I see your hair.

I Like Fish

Maybe next time when my dog has a seizure  
and my mother hits my father

I'll wake up, leave the house forever,  
see the world as it really is

I will know every tree, every star's name

I'll think about families  
falling into the dark parts  
of the neighborhood

The smear of wet pine needles  
on my neck

The invisible gnashing of something kept behind a fence  
glittering itself to pieces

## Depression Tattoos

These rats on my legs are not tattoos. They are real.

Tendencies

The birds in my veins all know

where I'm going.

But I don't.

Maybe one day

they'll tell me.

No matter.

I've been writing them letters for centuries,

sending them out in a huff.

Each one more tender

than the last.



Ronald Reagan Rain

A heavy

gluten-free dough

pedaled through rain

fails to rise

in a punk house.

James Dean

James Dean comes back  
from the dead.

His hands float  
inside a red jacket.

He has bought  
a new switchblade.

It's ok.

He also has a bag of apples.

## Lonesome Rodeo

I used to have a silver story inside me

as wide and unblemished as a lake.

A leaf falls beside you, gently near your ear...

It is not your friend.

The orange trees float above

the parking lot and sway creepily.

The foot kicks a bare branch

and a demon exhibits.

I'm in the burial ship

rowing toward god's bones.

“Get Up, Get Up, It’s Night”

No shape is younger  
and no day is frailer than the one  
that returns to us.

The animals watching us know our skulls  
better than we do.

I fell asleep near the hyena cave until I was awoken  
near the hyena cave by a hand, and a strong voice  
almost saying “come up, come up, toward the light.”

The entire drive home you could have been a deer  
with a marigold blazing in your mouth.

My skull is full of large rivers that run nowhere.

## A New Pathetic Job at the End of the World

The future may well be  
the oldest of shapes

watching us

play acting again and again  
until we get it right.

The power auger drowns out the nearest  
voice three feet away from you.

The pilot drops out a mailbag.  
But it's a trap. All the letters are from  
dead people.

What are we going to do?

We're going to lay all this fabric out  
and beat our skulls  
in the shape  
of a new world.

## Come Closer to My Animal Blanket

I was thinking maybe a horse

would help enforce the field enough

to pop the colors of these bright drugs.

I'm turning my head again, so we have

the chance to bring lumber outside

in order to trade the carnival bears

our fabulous rings.

We were all about shine and swing.

We blew out strange bubbles as ducks

quacked over the lake. We sprayed tan

so they would buy grills. They sizzled

and popped. Summer buffalo drowsed heavy

on the burner, drunk. A Moses cloud circled

the Lamborghini forum.

## The Gardener's Shed

I will put on my glasses and coat, fasten

my belt, stand in a soft park,

twiddle my thumbs and open my eyes,

open them only

to imagine the wren in front of the gate

dance in the wind.

The wren in front of the gate is eyeless

with blood tufts of rusted bone:

blood and bone



Move the Doughnuts

It is summer of idiot move the doughnuts

Summer idiot behind his house bright

bright yell the big trees with teeth deep ice breaths

Draw a gun €/ a horse € a birthmark <€

I a donut plays at the window, beastly blossom fritters as large trees rest the rot in it.

Don't Let It Haunt You

I'm going to talk about  
a boat but I'd also  
like to break a bottle  
over a woman's head.

I'm also going to float  
the image of a city  
with cheese colored animals  
by your lips.

Both ideas bloat me  
with narcotic fascination  
when I unload boxes  
at the gas station.

Home for the Holidays

I don't know about pastures

but once I stole a truck

through several neighborhoods

and always stopped nowhere.

Sleep brushed my hair and went scary.

I was thankful for that but now

a lake has landed inside my chest.

The most involved scene

begins near a haunt...

animals move upended on the kitchen table.

I float like a jellyfish from trees

but don't contain a landscape.

My face glows inaudible fog.

Now you are lying on the ceiling.

Chairs open your legs and

like a wasteland I fling loose moons

into the leaf dissolved robbery.

Buildings disband around the shoreline.

It is what holds me in you.

## Winnebago

I am lonely in the Winnebago. I am homely in the Winnebago. I dream of TV shows in the Winnebago. I live in the Winnebago. I grow old in the Winnebago. I draw pictures of people imagining what they would say if they saw me naked in the Winnebago. I eat bagels in the Winnebago. I jerk off in the Winnebago. I empty my bowels in the Winnebago. I whinny in the Winnebago. I find a new father in the Winnebago. I find a new lover in the Winnebago. I never age past the age of twenty-nine in the Winnebago. I learn how to drink and stop drinking in the Winnebago. I'm low in fat in the Winnebago.

## The New Old Racism

There were just a few lights on in the crowded auditorium as the auction got under way and the voices of all involved quieted down. Somebody on the stage from behind the curtain yelled: “Ladies and Gentleman, I give you the bear!” A few uncertain chuckles rose from the crowd, as though this sort of tomfoolery wasn’t all together uncharacteristic during these sorts of joyous events. But then an actual bear loped across the stage wearing a gold jacket while a small black boy fed it popcorn from a large wooden bowl without breaking stride. The bear then groaned a sad length across the auditorium as a single spotlight shone on it and the black boy proceeded to turn into an escalator. Somebody on stage from behind the curtain yelled: “ Ladies and Gentleman, the bear is walking up to an invisible mall!” And indeed, the bear ascended the escalator just as the man said it would, leaving a terrible hole in the ceiling. We all stayed in our seats a while and listened for the many purchases the bear may or may not have been making.

## There's No Room for You Here

A Ferris wheel lit up on the shores of thought approached a house near a bank of clouds and asked to come in. The people inside were scared of machines and western winds and asked for the past instead. The Ferris wheel climbed back into itself and gave all its energy to all the people that ever rode it. Then it said goodbye to its baby-parts and watched strange men unfasten its body with wrenches. It felt itself return to the ground and to car parts in 1920's America. Approaching the house again the Ferris wheel knocked on the door and asked to be let in. An old man answered the door and said: "No, you may not come in. The winds that pass through you are like the thoughts of birds without land...desperate and strange."

## My Name is Not Jennifer

You try to lose the path to town through the woods at night. There is a fox and a brown coat of stars. Your feet ache. Your eyes are thinking of birthday parties and old lovers. You feel the ground slope up but you are sure this is a trick. You hear dead relatives swimming in what may be a lake but the lake never reveals itself. Then the relatives go away to a proper place and there are sounds of flowers growing. You begin to run up the slope and see a swing set moving all by itself. You sit down in a pile of leaves and say: “Jennifer. Jennifer. Jennifer.”



## Power Representation Series: Malt Shoppe

The cops with happy fatigue are surrounding the building where my dreams have gotten out of hand. I exit the building with a clutch of postcards. Beach scenes and golf courses glitter on the paper from Florida. “Such a nice place. Wouldn’t all like to visit there?” I have grown so stupid with my dreams that I think postcards are paid vacations. One of the officers detects a song of hog’s blood. He knows about my grandmother’s house and the time I put the black room on and went hunting near the old hobo’s well. “Perhaps you’d like to come down to the station. It seems all of us could use a talking to.” The officers grin real big at this. I’m grinning too because in this dream the police station is a malt shoppe.

## Lake Afraid

I left the hospital with a knife that could detect a presence of light-bears absorbed by heavy dream. To get there I had to float poignantly across Lake Afraid dressing a baby who forgets things. The first day the baby forgets to breathe and I give it gentleness and soft options of lonely wind from which a routine can be established. Then, later that afternoon, the baby rents my jaw as a village. When I go to confront him, a woman with heavy breasts tells me he is out hunting what killed his parents. "But he's just a baby. He can't hunt," I say. The woman tells me to leave or I will be banned forever from this particular village. I sit on the prow of my floating and find I've been robbed a bear. I purse my sensitive lips and register the cool air blowing across Lake Afraid. A knife enters my side. "Impressive," I say, but it comes out a roar. I am stabbed again and this time split upward. "You don't have to be afraid anymore," says the child. I feel eyeballs behind my eyeballs. The child bends over me; a simple gold pattern is smudged across his face. "Mom...I've missed you so much," the child says as a trumpet announces our arrival.

## Backwards and Forwards

I was exiled from town for doing my best red skeleton impersonation. I hid my best clothes. I buried all my money in coffee cans. I stopped knowing people's names. I'm not even sure where I'm going but when I get there I'd like it to have a nice desk and blue curtains. I'd like to write you a letter from there and have it contain the following words: "How, are, things, far, away, I, miss, fucking, you."

## Feather Father

Thanks to the new town policy caricatures of all sorts are illegal. And yet the Ronald Reagan Picnic was happening despite this. I for one was glad as I sped down the highway, box-truck full of Reagan balloons in various states of lewd repose and triumph. I surveyed the hills to the east. Radio antennas beeped in the distance and felt good about space and transmissions. I felt good too, until a cruiser's lights flashed behind me signaling me to pull over. "Mighty fine day to ignore policy, isn't it," asked the officer. "I'm not fond of the policy." "I can see that," he replied. Then a bluebird crawled out of his mouth and flew skyward, followed by a hundred more bluebirds. I got out of my truck and looked at the cop-suit. It was cheap dyed latex, a wig, and a plastic star. Even in purgatory my father haunts me.

## The Metaphysical Cop of Sad Lake

On my last day of work a woman I find attractive will come to me in the atmosphere and tell me I need to die because I am one of the older robots, one of the older models of police. She will hold up a mirror to my skin and I will discover I am no longer young but notched in steel and rust. Out of mutual embarrassment we find a quiet pond that I can walk into and die in. As I enter deeper into the water I can hear her singing psalms as memories flood my cop-circuit brain: being in debt, the moon, memories of eating doughnuts, and the hard colors of God staining all surfaces. I pray for God to draw images of Pistols and Fields on my deteriorating form as I father awake in the difficult stoner woods of New Jersey.

## Android Cop Light

The cop-shape wakes up to shoot a Meteor across the sky in an empty house in the dripping woods. "Pale is the light, where the dead have blue eyes," mutters the cop-shape brushing leaves from his legs, groping for a buried light switch in his knee. "Think a revolver you better..." He crooks deep into his shoulder and fires. The sounds of deer and birds through the fog smother to disperse trees crackling with sentience and the cop-shape follows their signature with heavy planet in his eyes. He operates with jacklegs, according to the puffs of air exiting the largest deer mouth a few meters before him. When he reaches the university a dome of light begins to twist in the darkness around him. This is his COP light. He kneels on the floor nice until he undertakes sunlight, pukes, and is violent crime.

## The Shape of Cops to Come

The cop-shape wakes for the last time in the prestigious halls of the university. With heavy planets in his eyes he raises the bottle of red cough syrup in the wilted stale light. The gold knobs affixed to his radio loosen as a dog with a broken back and figure near a tree on fire float through the cop-shape's hair, committing themselves to a small dark garden of brown recluses. "Terrible, this living," mutters the cop-shape as he stumbles up to the mist-choked doors of Building L.

Now inside Building L the cop-shape passes several empty classrooms and notices that outside the windows, cephalic birches are casting out fragile tender pink balloons, perhaps in tribute or memory to something. "Pale is the light the moon hangs on where the dead have blue eyes," the cop-shape slurs, performed by an earlier liquid. He sits for a minute before each window like a rainbow dressed idly in leather and bells. He releases a star from his shoulder and finds toffee and sweet raisins hanging in distillate concentrated portions about his beard.

Alone still, but less so, since watching the balloon procession, the cop-shape feels a dark rustling from inside his forehead grown rampant. A pale dome of light twists itself into the surrounding gloom: bright New Hampshire porches fall against his breaths as a stairwell climbed with silent muscle grows until the cop-shape's father shows, seated

opposite a thick translucent pane of glass. He slides a piece of paper across the space between the two, which contains illegible words that although unreadable, are beautiful.

It contains the windows he must break to be rescued... and then a rescue.



## The Cop with the Glass Eye Pulls My Truck Over

“What do you have in the back there, son?”

“It’s a time machine sir, but yesterday it was a lawnmower.”

“It’s a time machine with gold knobs...” said the officer contracting his brow. “And just what are you doing with it?”

“I’m going to see Bela Lugosi officer.”

“Now Goddamnit son that is illegal. Lugosi’s a character actor, or was, or still is somewhere...”

“I’m going to visit Bela Lugosi, sir.”

“Stop saying that!” screamed the officer.

“BELA LUGOSI, BELA LUGOSI, BELA LUGOSI!” I shot back.

“Oh great! Here comes the Devil Bat!” the officer shrieked.

## What the Sender Expresses

A man named Travis decides to make a gigantic macramé figure of Ronald Reagan.

Diligently he works at this with materials scrounged from his job as a hospital janitor.

He brags to his co-workers about what he is doing, not knowing they've all come to expect such things from him. One day a co-worker makes an observation about a bloodstain smeared on an operating room floor. "Hey Travis, look at this. The top part looks like Ronald Reagan's hair, and the bottom part looks like legs breaking away from heaven into hell. Reagan's legs look like they are in hell. "Then where is Reagan's heart?" Travis asks.

The co-worker looks at the blood a bit longer and replies, "Purgatory, I guess."

For the next few days Travis' mind is populated by a strange heaven. He calls out of work and begins skipping meals, dodging phone calls. At times he is surprised to find himself openly weeping next to the president who has now moved from the living room to the bedroom, leaving a trail of rotten eggshells in its wake. The word "purgatory" becomes a tree split open at the bottom of a pool...a sun with vomit thrown over it. Travis takes off Reagan's underwear and hears a soft moaning.

## Blood Branches: A Ronald Reagan Halloween, 1981

I am sent to the door in strange handwriting with a corpse-suit on approaching a fugue state. Blue light guides me to a hall where people sit enjoying a party with long candles lit. The people begin whipping their hands across the celebration air, choking until they die. I say “ Lovely Chandelier!” as if it is Christmas time in a small room of happy people. Then I follow a long line of candelabras up to a bedroom where a pack of dogs are playing with a deck of tarot cards. I walk over to one and with a sigh put my arm around him. He is the one I have come here for. I place a knife in my head and let the moon come out for a song of backyards. The dog plays in my blood a while then falls asleep and has a dream about its mother. These dogs are antiques and haven’t seen the real world yet. I’m an almanac or something.

## “Tear Down This Wall”

The moon passes its light among the trees of a gruesome town where Reagan sleeps. He's not sure when the others left, but eventually he does get up. The left sleeve of his suit is covered in snot, so he wipes it off. Confused and thirsty he has a memory of antique cottages. He looks up at the sky. Ponderous clouds wheel visages over the secular timber. He reaches a small road, but sometimes he doesn't. Sometimes God's breath bottoms out, and all the trees glitter and seem to make a noise as they tumble along the air. He walks into a confused light. Blue deer wrinkle inside Reagan, now a tiny child, asleep in sharp holes. Schizophrenic darkness buttons the right faces. He swallows a flashlight so he can stand in his mother's kitchen again. A glass of water sits next to a hammer. He doesn't know whether to take a drink or bloom as detonation.

## The Gym Teacher's Last Mistake

I arrive at a party as a corpse approaching a window. The house is the window and I am the corpse. The people inside the house have been drinking. A woman screams and the partygoers come out. My hands are hidden in my corpse sheet so I can't really move them. But I try. I laugh good-naturedly until I see a club sparkling with malice. "God damn monsters, we're sick of you!" shouts someone. Past the open door I can see chandeliers burning like labyrinths in the world's finest parks. "I'm not a monster!" I yell, as the partygoers attack me, "I'm the gym teacher at Quilota High School! I know all of you! "Light him on fire!" shouts someone else. "Let's teach this zombie to respect the law!" The high school faculty's eyes begin to light up as each one assumes the personality of a lunatic. I open my mouth but something below pain escapes. I feel the stars, the moon and their distributing, the shapes of these. I begin biting people and moving autonomously and silently through the crowd. I break into the house with other people's tears splayed across my face. The earth has turned strange as of late. I won't be its prisoner a second longer.

## Standing There Naked

I decide to go to a party with a friend that everyone says is really a corpse.

“You shouldn’t bring a corpse to a party, they’re no good,” my wife tells me.

“Nonsense, it’s October and they’re making themselves known,” I reply.

“Remember the Donnelly’s garden? They hired a corpse to look after it. The thing decomposed into the gardenias like a reverse star!”

“Of course it did honey. It was July. Hell. Put me in a sun-drenched garden and I’d do the same. Besides, this corpse isn’t some stooge. It’s a poet. It’s self-contained, the way Rilke, Yeats, and Apollinaire were.

“Well, you better get some sleep honey, it’s a long drive to the party and everyone knows corpses hate being cooped up in cars...”

I didn’t like it when my wife grew heated like this; it looked as if a fight was about to start, but then Henry our Labrador walked into the bedroom...we never argued in front of Henry.

I closed the blue box containing my jester costume and shook it. The bells jingled rightly.

“The sooner you pick up that corpse, the better,” my wife said, eyeing the spectacle before her.

“It’s October,” I said, waving my childish theatrically gloved hands in the air, my eyes filled with secret rain.

## Heaven On Fire

There was once a sea captain who loved the sea more than he did not.

One day the sea grew a beard and produced a straight razor, and left for an enviable career.

The captain wrote a letter using the words “hazel hour” and “gentle lament,” and addressed it to the great twisting dome rumored to be the home-place of all sea activity, the moon.

The sea grew displeased at this and sent a message to a restaurant where the captain sat lunching under amber lamps, “I love it here...so beautiful, the difficulties, the icy silences, pretend I’m an iceberg that died.

At this, the sea captain lit his beard on fire and screamed, “Pretend I am a grown heaven collecting explanations!”



## Wauchula Zoo

There are yellow flowers being drawn by a girl and all those who wish to go to Wauchula Zoo. But be warned if you go...the tigers don't exist. They exist within us. Their cages are monkey notions held together by piss and wind. We go to the zoo for commentary on how we should feel if our daughter falls down hard or we get lost in the woods. We make a knapsack out of a t-shirt and it's a "boo-boo vestibule." The sun's rays obviate down confidently to the aviary. They are always exercising. And there it is, your dress, down among the strangers who are bears with ice cream cones.

## Ex-Wrestler

At Lavender street apartment 12 I see Young Harris. He is composing an orchestra of ants with string. His uncle, Baker Dan, is hunting for deer in the anteroom. "By next Wednesday," he gripes, "Harris will be legendary." I take off my pants and Young Harris shillyshallies onto my lap. There is the sound of a wrong twisting river. "I fear I've diabetes," I croak to the river. Harris' father removes the skull of a large deer and duct tapes it to a blue window, which has become the river or something with a passable understanding. "Big Billy, Big Billy, summon the victory which your ex-wrestler father spoke of," Young Harris admonishes. The window is getting my knees wet with street noises and sun. I am growing frightened in all the right places for fear. Do they not grasp the furious belt around me?

## Rare Balloons

A child is playing on a snowy avenue when a milk truck and a balloon truck crash into one another. One man leans his cheek against the broken glass of his window and begins hollering for help. The cargo holds of both trucks release. Balloons rise into the sky and mix colors into the trees. An undiluted pane of milk rushes over the snow and where blood is milk joins. The ambulance arrives. Never had there been such heavy grunts under so many balloons without a circus or fair involved.

## An Argument in Mexico

One day in Mexico a mom buys her child a skeleton suit which the child begins wearing before Halloween. One of the child's friends, a bit of a bully, comes over to the house and begins wrestling with the skeleton child outside in the backyard. The bully gets too rough with the kid and mashes a finger down into the others eye. The kid, never feeling such pain before, grabs a rock and bashes the bully's skull with it. The bully takes the rock and flings it through a nearby window breaking it perfectly. The skeleton child begins crying horribly. The mom runs out after hearing the commotion and sees her child's eye pushed in. She grabs a shovel and begins beating the boy who just had his head concussed. Both boys and now the mother are crying as she repeatedly hits the visiting child in the face. "Bully!" she screams over and over. The skeleton child watches the bully's face slowly turn into something unrecognizable and crawls toward his mother pleading with her to stop this brutal attack. The mother throws down the shovel and takes a long look at the bloody children on the ground before her. There will be no more arguments this day.

## Definite Bear

I am visiting a friend's house with a painting I've made. I sit at the dinner table with his family and they are all excited to see my painting. A fire is going in the fireplace and the room is red. A decanter of chestnuts sits before me. Fred passes a bottle of wine and I take a deep pull. From here to the window I can see dark elms mixing with the dinner light. Cheryl makes some small conversation and her breasts heave gently when she laughs. Samantha clears the table and brings back some mousse dolloped onto white plates with gold lining. The painting is covered in brown paper to give the viewer a surprise when I tear it off. I ask for a second helping of mousse and ask Fred to get some more wine. "This must really be some painting," he says as he rises from the table and goes down to the wine cellar. I tear off the brown paper and neither Cheryl nor Samantha knows what to think. "It's not possible!" Cheryl cries. Samantha is already out the door having opted for the shelter of the woods. I take a pencil and a petite hammer from my pocket and hang the painting. It is of this house, this room, this very night: a large bear is loping up stone stairs. Below the stairs an eviscerated body lays splayed like a failed constellation. I grab a pair of Fred's heavy snow boots and put them on. As I reach the end of the crystalline yard I feel small ineffectual fists beat against my torso. When you lie to a man about his daughter what else can you expect?

## Lemon Knee

I'm heading to a discount lumberyard and become lost.

A bleeding man runs up to me with some medicine.

"It's good for your knees," he says.

I look down at my knees and laugh with hate.

A little girl has set up a lemonade shop there with a pride of lions.

She is wearing a red cape and sluicing the air with a shitty wand.

"Get him," she mutters.

The bleeding man and the lions lay me on a plywood table littered with pipe cleaners and  
drill bits.

They make an incision of blue leaves inside my childhood.

Little animals and a burning park begin scurrying out of me.

"There's nothing wrong, you've done nothing wrong," says the bleeding man.

Suddenly I'm rowing a boat toward my mother's voice.

There is a peace in the trees' diluted light.

Working at McDonald's: Contracting Hepatitis

An evening in November.

A crowd of proud men stood at the arches,

inferior food and innards fell

into neat wrappers;

disgusting food.

The punk van of leaving

brought no mercy.

The startled cry of birds

journey in the naked lake

of the dry suburb

in which a wetted syringe

bubbles with Saturdays.

Out of the lighted exit hall

the golden shape

of the old man steps

surrounded by the disappearing

pinetrees.



Power Representation Series: Cape Coral

A shape worsens in the arthritic wind; the dry leaves

crackle brightly through the jilted thighs of the scene girls.

In the brown skies a prediction of birds move in regiments

diagonally above fogged cars.

Disorder. In the wrinkled hospitals

grandpa is flickering about with gold things.

Intoxicated bridges shudder silently in the wind.

Evening in packed orphanages. The yearning for family

canals itself. The fragile gloom of the nighttime

settles into a book: a piano sinks into a green lake.

The Donner Party Here

The camp is blistering

sun in afternoon haze

my eyes open to a pale wall

my hair tugged by wagon wheels

the legs on me sail to gestures

my life is spinning blackly, it is thick

with the jester upstairs, twinkling ice

in his beard... I catch

fire towers sprout up on thick shafts of forest fog

your boy is in the spokes courting an electric shiner...

we encircle a bright space

like figurines in a frozen play begin

to shiver, to take up residence

on strange ropes