

AME- RICA

(?)

7



the fusion
of breakbeat &

—dedicated to
MIKE; JOE; & ELLI.



america?
7°

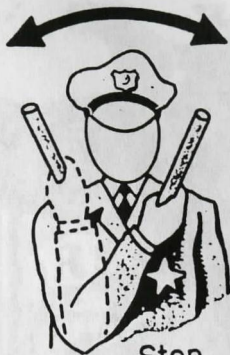
-6/99
friston



i am biking as fast as i can. i've never worn a helmet, but i know an auto accident is as inevitable as the gainesville redevelopment "master plan." we are moving targets in a morass of traffic, otiose & smugly ironic. we choose to live this way, spitting college degrees & suburban backgrounds. we fight losing battles. we crush like insects.



Stop



Stop

COPS & YOU, dude:

Let us imagine the police impotent & afraid, stripped of weapons both symbolic & psychological.

In dream in cinematic violence: dismembering as deliberately as a waltz, whereby the mesmerizing beauty of the **movements** excuses all bloodshed & aftermath.



Go!



FRUIT PIES as CONSOLATION PRIZE

the undeniable joy of
petty crime. courage
inspired by nightfall.
all statistics for
sociologists studying
the dispossessed &
disaffected in late 20th
century america.
dumpstered treats.
krispy kreme looms on
the periphery of any
bike ride. let the big
panics dissipate under
the street lights. and
if i don't find any real
answers to the
existential panic
attacks, then i'll
settle for a
artificially-flavored
fruit pie as sweet
consolation prize.

i woke up this morning
for the 1st time in a long while
with a true sense of anxiety
about my future...


(or
lack
there-
of)





breakfast stops. coffee grows cold.
my dumb jokes become even dumber.
we'd been spending the weekend on
vacation from our already minimal-
ist lives.. tears well with salty
embarrassment.. we spent all after-
noon in bed, eyes shut against the
windows & rainclouds.





»LØGORRHEA




summer returns to
burn our arrears.
insects swarm & days
give way to seasonal
patterns of fleeting
bittersweet escape.
take these ghostwords
to define & apologize.
neologisms for our own
sorry ends.



take solace in logi-
cal prognoses of ser-
otonin & bloodsugar.
B-12 deficiencies &
caffeinated side-
effects. Wake up to
bulldozers. sinistral
attempts at absolution,
i'm awash with words,
awaiting ablution.



take these unused
ripostes. self-pity
& air-conditioning :
take it all.





while

REAGAN

played

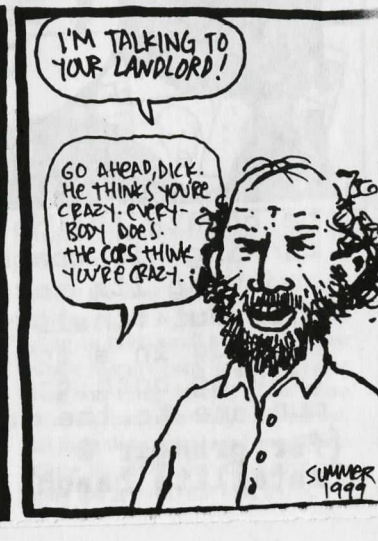
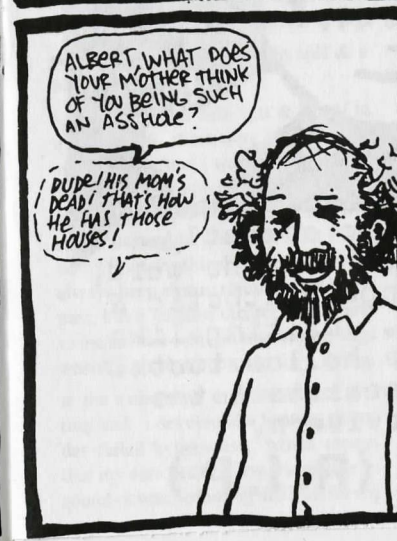
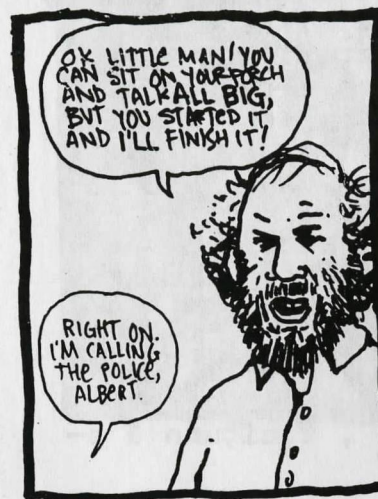
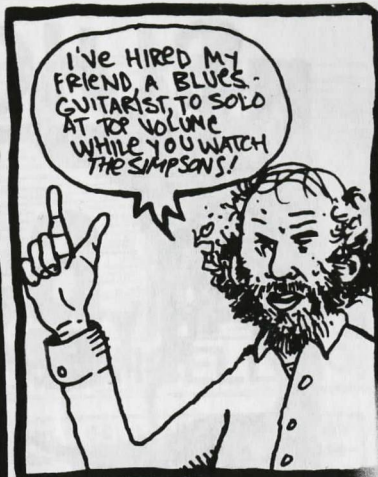
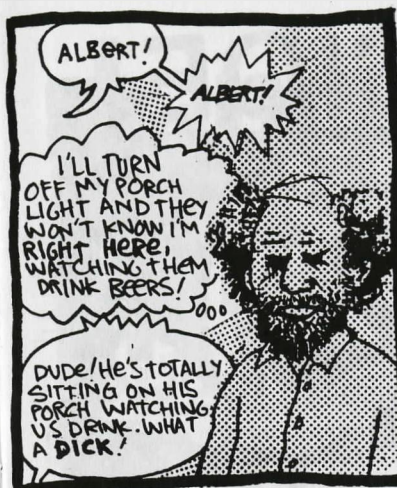
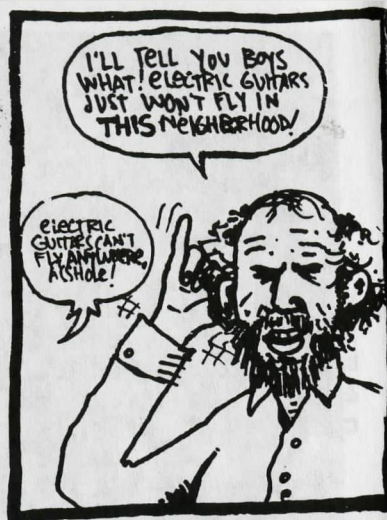
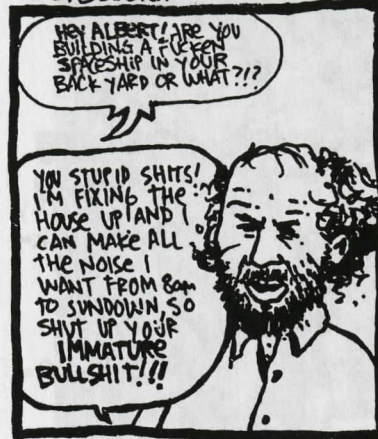
DISCO

reagan has plenty of memories for alzheimer's. i stockpile reagan anecdotes for witty remarks at parties. we're reactionary & couched while they organize the city commission & strongarm the p.t.a.

reagan smiles from my grandmother's mantle. riding horseback to victory in a pearl-snap shirt & cowboy hat. the smile of a continual, untouchable scam; a part well-played & paid. i memorized this photo one summer while stuck at my grandparent's house. my grandfather is measuring my waist with a tape measure, aghast at the 28 inches & my husky jeans. he smells of menthol cigarettes & bacon. i just want to play atari, but their antiquated tv has no attachments. he tells me to go play outside. i am learning to **HATE**, taciturn & ashamed.

ALBERT A PIECE OF SHIT

BY MIKE TAYLOR
QUALIFIED TO CRITICIZE!!!



SUMMER
1999

SUICIDE



he covets the notion secretly.
running his tongue over the word,
enjoying its revenge aesthetic &
blissful finality. waiting like
cyanide in a spy's hollow tooth.
leaving both the secrets & the
mundane to the survivors.

(for granger & (R.I.P.)
satellite beach)

king cat: spit & a half

>> John PORCELLINO!

[NOTE: this interview should've been in the last issue. john's comments are still relevant, his comics still inspire me & his comics distro still rules]

what made you want to do spit & a half full-time?

i went full-time with spit & a half in may of 1996. there were a couple reasons. at the time i was employed as a mosquito exterminator, a job i had held for a few years. by the end of '95 i was really starting to question what i was doing from an ethical standpoint. i had always been able to rationalize it in the past, but it became clearer and clearer to me as time went on that killing bugs wasn't a good thing to do for a living.

at the same time my health was getting bad. i developed a hearing disorder called hyperacusis, which means that my ears became hypersensitive to sound- it was becoming difficult for me



to do my job without being in pain all the time.

also at the same time spit & a half was getting bigger & busier (i started my distro in 1992), until it got to the point where literally every moment of free time was being devoted to the distro & it was starting to really stress me out. all these things combined into my decision to quit my day job & give running spit & a half full time a shot.

what job(s) did you have previously ?

besides the mosquito job i mentioned above, i've done all sorts of jobs, almost all of them some sort of manual labor. mostly warehouse work. but i've been a janitor, ice cream scooper guy, window washer, forklift operator, stocker, etc. etc. one time i answered an ad in the paper and for one day i was a guy who held up oriental rugs on a stage while people bid on them at an auction! my biggest problem with working like this was that by the time i got home i was too tired or depressed to do the stuff i loved to do: comix, zines, playing music, etc. that has always been a conflict in my life- juggling what i have to do to pay the bills versus what i have to do to keep from going insane.

do you only distribute items that you like / endorse?

i only carry stuff that strikes me in some personal way as either well done, original or honest and meaningful. a comic to me can be drawn really sloppy and raw but still have tremendous power or insight. in fact those are usually the kind that do. i don't like stuff that's slick or pretentious, so by well done i don't mean pro looking; i mean something that successfully presents what its trying to say in an honest fashion. i think despite the various styles and attitudes of the stuff in my catalog, that's the common denominator-- the comics succeed in saying what they want to say in an unpretentious way.



there have been a few times where i've carried a book because i thought it would sell, or even where i didn't particularly like it. but i thought others might. i quickly learned that that's the wrong way to do things. it made me feel uncomfortable & dishonest. now

**my policy is if
i can't stand
there & tell you
why i think you
should read this
book or comic, i
won't carry it.**

i think that's the best way to do business





describe an average day.

right now i wake up around 5:30 or 6 am, take kera to work and then at 7 i drop off and pick up mail at the post office. when i get home i try to answer all mail and enter new orders in my log book. then i work on spit & a half stuff til about 4pm, which entails filling orders, reviewing new zines i've received, updating mailing lists, writing letters to stores and people, running errands to the copy shop or Office Depot, etc., making phone calls and working on my own comics. I usually take about a half hour break for lunch. then in the evenings after dinner i usually work some more on odds and ends. i usually crash by about 9:30.

are you happier now than when you worked for someone else?

yes, although i have to admit that when i get another straight job, and get that first paycheck it will relieve a lot of stress. the last two years have been really rewarding in a lot of ways, but also very very difficult.

what about taxes and/or licenses?

when i started my distro up i went totally legit with taxes, etc. cuz i'd hate for someone down the line to take everything away (i.e. Uncle Sam). at first it seemed like a big pain in the ass, very confusing, but it's not that bad. i had to register my tradename (i.e. doing business under a name other than your own personal name, like Spit and a Half), get a sale tax license for Colorado and Denver and that's it. Since you only have to collect sales tax on stuff sent to your own city or state, I only have to pay \$20 per year or so (since so little of my business comes from CO). one benefit is that you can use your tax # to buy stuff tax free. for instance i get all my printing tax free because down the line i sell it and collect sales tax at the point of sale. anyhow, it may seem confusing at first, but if you really wanna do this, it can actually be of benefit to go legit.

more SPIT & a HALF >>



would you rather run a comics / zine store over a distro? why?

i've always wanted to run a store, but after doing the distro so long i think the idea has somewhat worn off. the disadvantages to a store are many: paying rent every month, in addition to your home (unless you live in the back of the store). spit & a half makes so little money that paying additional rent would kill it for sure.

maybe it's just the places i've happened to have lived, but many people have a tendency to think, "*if this store / distro / band is from my own town, then they must suck.*" people tend to ignore or downplay what's going on right around them. to successfully run a store you'd need to not only have a pretty supportive local scene, but those people can't just come in & say "hang in there." they gotta buy stuff. for instance with my mailorder, easily less than 1% of my business comes from Denver or even Colorado as a whole. doing a mailorder, you're not limited by that kind of thing. you can have customers from all over the world!

i often think of steven who started quimby's store in chicago, probably the most comprehensive underground book and zine store i've ever seen. he left boston because there weren't enough people there into his kinda stuff to keep the business going. and even in chicago with a huge population of punks and hipsters, he and his wife had to live hand to mouth running that store.

i think a store could work if you did mailorder in addition, and if you had a dedicated group of people who were willing to work cheap or volunteer to run it as a co-op. but i think if i had ever opened a spit & a half store, it would have folded after 6 months. it's just such a fringe thing, plus the idea of selling zines and stuff for one or two bucks . . . at least with a record store you can sell CDs for 8-10 bucks (or \$17 if you're Sam Goody). I think running a zine store, without some other form of income, would be real tough.



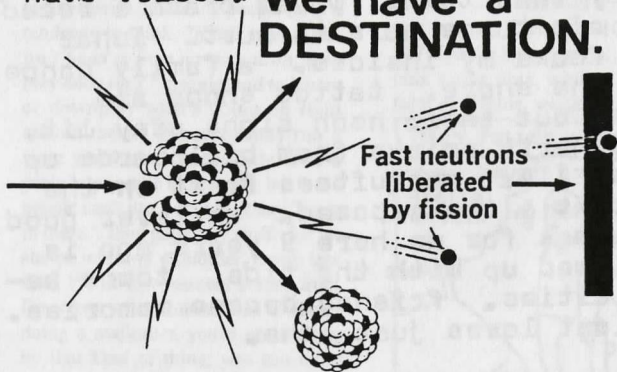
a new, worse HOMETOWN

cocoa beach is a city of pastel neon.
seashells grafted onto glass & cabbles
& glass to sell to Northern & European
tourists. I wander around my mom's
new neighborhood after x-mas dinner.
streets are named after ex-girlfriends.
florida's beaches always bring out the
maudlin & melancholy. i'm a ghost
haunting this town; i'm the ghost haun-
ted by this town. waves crash & recede.
salt air turns cars to rust. lunar
pull fucks my insides. a family dances
near the shore. tattoo shops are
closed but their neon signs stay lit.
al neuharth smirks from billboards up
& down AIA. mosquitoes feast on the
hesitant & the exposed. whatever good
there was for me here 9 years ago is
swallowed up with the tide. towns be-
come cities. friends become memories.
and lost loves just ache.

the RECKLESS JOY of WaTTaGe UNUSED

i've just finished jon resh's book /
zine 'blue fire hereafter,' a roll-
ficking, smart explosion of tech lay-
out. beside it on my bedside table
is a photocopy of pat hughes's art-
icle on new musical strategies.
double nickles on the dime & in on
the kill taker sit by my record
player unanswered. what are we
waiting for? we have skills. we
have voices.

**we have a
DESTINATION.**



JOHN P.

what about health care / coverage?
has being independent presented any
problems?

this is a good question because last summer i got really really sick and ended up having surgery and laying up in a hospital for a long time. my wife and i luckily had coverage through her job, otherwise i can't imagine what would have happened. the hospital bills were around \$20,000 of which we ended up having to pay only \$500. in the past i always thought insurance was for suckers, and i thought i was young and i'd never need it. if i got sick i went down to the city clinic and got it checked out for \$10.

but i realize now that intense stuff can happen. the way the system is set up, if you don't have insurance you're somewhat excluded. the system doesn't really take into account poor people. i still disagree with the way the system is run and i still think insurance is a scam, but after my experience last year i have to say i'd feel uncomfortable without it anymore. but even if you don't have a job with insurance, i think there are ways to get it through, like Blue Cross, which isn't too expensive as far as things go. but one thing i'll never say again is "it can't happen to me."



have you ever temp-ed?

no, but that's how kera has gotten most of her jobs. including the one where she got the benefits that saved my butt when i had surgery last year. but my attitude to jobs is i think similar to long time tempers. which is at some point i made a commitment to myself that my creativity and search for independence were what really mattered and that outside jobs are sometimes a necessary evil to make the really important things happen. once when i worked in a warehouse i thought everyday of how much i was making per hour, and i'd think,

**"by friday i'll
have made enough
to put out that
seven-inch."**

—————→ and that's
what kept me going. if you can keep
that attitude then shitty work becomes
a little more bearable.

>>>

can you make a living from spit & a half distro?

well, that was the big experiment that i conducted over the past year & a half, and now looking back on it, i think the answer is no, not just selling zines. spit & a half does, at this point, make money, but it's not nearly enough to pay the bills. in 1997 i made my biggest profit ever, which was about \$3000, which looks pretty good, but after considering that i worked day in day out, at least 40 hours per week, you're talkin' less than \$1.40 per hour! after a lot of soul searching and questioning, i think the bottom line is that you just can't, and maybe shouldn't make a lot of money from zines. it just goes against what zines are inherently about, and from a practical standpoint- if i sell King-Cat for \$2 ... 60 cents is printing, 55-78 cents is postage & 6 cents is the envelope, which leaves 56 cents left over in profit.

I NOTICED THAT THE
SOLES OF MY ALL-STARS
WERE ABOUT TO WEAR
THROUGH...



to make a living doing that you'd need to sell many thousands of copies on a regular basis, when selling other people's books through your distro the amount is even smaller than that. zines are by definition a fringe medium, and despite the ups & downs of mainstream interest in them, they probably always will be.

when i started my distro it was with the hope that i could generate some interest in mine and my friends' zines, and hopefully make enough money to help pay some of the printing and postage bills for King-Cat. As it got bigger and busier, i started to wonder if i could make a living doing zines. ... But i think the answer is no, and i'll probably go back to my earlier goals of trying to cover my expenses, maybe just do spit & a half part time.

do you think comics & zines should stay underground?

i think inherently zines are an underground thing. when i think about why i am doing what i'm doing these things become clear to me. like alot of people in this culture i've never really felt comfortable in mainstream society. when i discovered punk rock i still felt like an outsider, but at least it was in the context of a group of people who fit in together simply because they didn't fit in anywhere else. one day i realized i spent a lot of time and effort trying to fit into a society i just really didn't fit into. so i quit trying. i stopped worrying about the straight world and started worrying about the things i really cared about and it was a great feeling. i never want to lose that feeling. that's why i'm content to remain part of the underground. that's where i belong. where i feel comfortable and where the people and things i care about are located.



KING CAT !

cont'd.

on the other hand, not everyone is born a punk rocker. there was a time when my favorite band was the bee gees. i think there are a lot of people out there who are looking for something more real than what mainstream culture has to offer. they may sense that it's there, but they don't know how to find it. to intentionally exclude those people is dumb. that's why periodically i do stuff like Silly-Cat, where something of mine has the potential to reach a wider group of people. the stuff in Silly-Cat is the same as the stuff in King Cat, but it's in a format that is more easily digestible to someone unfamiliar with underground culture.

personally, i can make a few minor concessions to achieve a greater good. people have to start somewhere, and i remember my own first exposure to underground stuff. it blew me away and changed my life forever-- and there's lots of people like that, just waiting for the right moment to change them.

when silly-cat goes out into stores i realize that for the most part it may be a futile gesture. the vast majority of people aren't interested in comics like this. but there's still that minority that can be reached out to, so that's why i do it.

mainstream vs. underground is such a touchy subject. you gotta be smart about it. despite the fact that it gets overblown fast and despite the number of kneejerk reactions, i think this debate is ultimately good, cuz it makes people question why they do stuff the way they do. in my own case thinking about things like this has strengthened and clarified my own beliefs, and that's a good thing. if someone wants to jump ship and "sell out" (usually more complicated than it looks) then let them. i can't worry about stuff like that. it makes me a little sad, but what are you gonna do? knuckle down and commit yourself harder to doing what you believe.

how do you feel about advertising your distro?

once spit & a half made enough money that i could afford real ads i started doing them, but for a long time it was word of mouth. people writing about king-cat and spit & a half in their own zines has been the biggest help i ever

got, and i'm very grateful for it. nowadays when i can afford it i run ads in punk planet, factsheet five and the comics journal, and other zines here and there and it does help, although the results might not be noticeable right away. i think advertising has a cumulative effect, where people see your name long enough and finally write to you. probably the best advertising is sending out zines for review to MRR and other places. i get the best response from that. it's a great way (and the original way) of finding out about cool stuff.



what does your family think about your business?

i'm happy to say that my family has always been totally supportive of all my weird, obscure efforts. every once in a while my parents ask me why i'm not scared to be almost 30 and still doing this crazy stuff, but i think deep down they're proud that i've taken this route. they're smart enough to realize that there's value in stuff that might not look that way on first glance.

is working for yourself more stressful than a more structured job?

in some ways it is tougher. as i pointed out earlier you work your tail off for very little (monetary) reward. i think it is safe to say that if you're self-employed, whatever you're doing, you end up working harder and longer for less money than you would at a regular job. but obviously there are a lot of pluses. you don't have to answer to some dumb boss, if it's a nice day you can take the afternoon off and hang out in the park, and for the most part you get to concentrate on doing the things you like to do. despite the difficulties, frustrations and failures i've been through with spit & a half, it's still what i want to do, and i still remain committed to figuring out a way to live outside the system. but this is the kind of thing that, i've come to realize, is really a lifetime effort. it's not easy and

it doesn't just happen.



do you photocopy your comics or use a commercial printer?

i was lucky enough to find a copy shop here in denver that does awesome work for a really fair price, so they get all my business. if you find a decent shop like this, you should support them. and after all these years they know what i want and how i want it and we have a great relationship. on occasion i've used a commercial printer (like for Silly-Cat) where i needed something more, but for the most part copies are the way to go. if it ever became more economical to do regular printing someday, i have nothing against that, but i'd be a little sad because i really think that in a lot of cases xerox looks better than offset.

spit & a half
po box 95826

hoffman estates, il. 60195
stamps / irc = 20 page catalog

in the church of
st. john coltrane,
san francisco, ca.

HOLY: ≡

holy the second service on sunday
holy the painted flames of the saxophone
holy the worn wooden pews
holy the anxious eyes of proud children
holy the exposed piano
holy the photocopied hymnal
holy her ankle tattoos as she sang
holy even frank's farts
holy the woven collection basket
holy my sweaty, crumpled dollar
holy the closed eyes of the listeners
holy the oncoming afternoon roaring outside
holy the polyphony of A Love Supreme
holy Alice, Ravi & all successors
holy the fog like a hurrying hand

holy his quest,
our time,
reflection
& the postcard
SOLD
as **ICON.**



PARTY SCENES

He talks with an assurance that matches his physiology: sturdy & convincing, destined for adventure, romance & healthy offspring. we are talking about old friends & how little they change. (i am here. i am not in school. i am still drinking o.j., scared & old reads the subtext.) couples & available singles dance in the living room, their eyes closed & their smiles unforced.

Everyone laughs AT THE
KID w/a MOHAWK

& everyone's so perfumed & well-oiled & ready.. each image as loaded as a jr. high dance, all clumped together for safety. conversation is yelling in ears. outside it's freezing. lovers are nuzzling & cops are getting fatter. the smoke drives me out the way the restlessness brought me here.. all fodder for friday night. all pressed into polyester for a perfect fit. what else is there to do?

public LIBRARIANA

nothing is happening at the children's desk. the boy with the **korn** logo written twice on his forearm hasn't come back for the yo-yo books i found. saturdays are manic- graveyard quiet one second & mall-style frenzied the next. goosebumps books however, remain active. mary laughs: *'all you artists look down on r.l. stine', but do you think he cares when he gets those checks?'* i like mary. she's raised ungrateful children, lived on military bases in unfriendly countries & is currently battling a debilitating illness. she tells me not to let people take advantage of my niceness. i thought her too brusque at first, her face too pig-like, her comments too quick. i see now she just has no time for silence. which is why i'm happy when she talks to the kids instead of the impatient fathers. inevitably the fathers stare at my tattoos, mentally calculating:

PROFESSIONAL^{or} FAILURE?

1. Author of the unstoppable popular GOOSEBUMPS series of horror books. Volumes 34 & 73 of Contemporary Literary Criticism reveal hapless before-and-after FAME photos of Mr. Stine who seems bemused by his newfound riches, but certainly not minding that gradeschool boys are clamoring for new, lurid tales of lawn gnomes gone bad. Such success stories are common in the ever-nebulous field of junior marketing.

immaterial relations

for when my aunt speaks of the dangers of blacks & whites dating, and my grandmother mispronounces lesbians, & my mother derides welfare mothers, and my cousin laughs at duct tape as 'so ghetto' & i can't explain away the minimum wage to them, i look out the passenger window at the new strip malls and turn lanes, scared and silent as though aliens had already taken over.

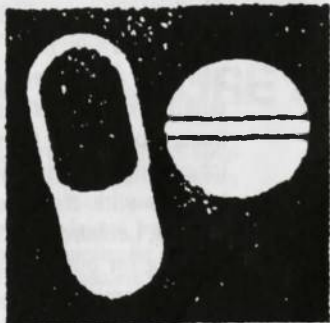
"a true AUTOCHTHONAL patriot"

headphones against the world. because even if i can't get away from the smell of hot dogs and hairspray then at least i can listen to elli's mix tape. tangible reminders. invocations. i keep my talismans close as we stumble through occupied territories: ouija boards, management theory magazines, triscuits with cheez-whiz & 8-piece deli chicken dinners, Leonardo di Caprio posters, miniature dogs begging for pup-a-roni, wedding photos in heart-shaped frames, and endless rolls of paper towels to clean up all the messes.

Suspension OF » DISBELIEF »

when the music stops
and the yawning begins;
the sickness after dessert,
the omnipresent hunger;
when the book ends
& there's nothing more to read;
the pregnant silence
after an accident—
where the needle returns
from the record
and you must choose again.

an endless series
of interludes
throughout the
waking hours—
newspapers,
vegan cookies,
naps & coffee,
foreign wars to
frown over &
work to avoid,
ink on my fingers
& sleep in my eyes.



EXIT STENCIL

you continue because there really isn't a choice. i can't walk out of this jail cell even though all agree that being locked up for stealing candy bars from a broken vending machine is absurd. but wheels are already set too far in motion—handcuffs tightened & fingertips scanned. this cement slab of bed getting no softer. i'm lucky to have phil in here with me. the nervous laughter keeps us from focusing too much on how fundamentally terrified we are. i've stopped looking at my watch. i've stopped thinking about food...

» WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO? «

like kurt & i on the butt-end of a 14-mile trail, soaking wet & our old-man knees groaning with each step. we can't stop. we made these choices. you keep going. you try to make each other laugh. you adapt & hobble.

PRIVILEGE

i can afford to wallow. i can take the time to feel sorry for myself. i can walk away from the 'scene' & get a real (?) job anytime. i can cover these tattoos & change my glasses anytime. i can stop shopping at thrift stores & start checkin' out the gap. i can stop caring. issues are mine to choose, champion & leave. i can use my knowledge of punk to make fun of it. i can wink with irony at the appropriate point in the conversation & follow it up with a glass of good, but modest red wine. i can blame it on youth & naivete & the suburbs. that's our privilege as white, college graduates in end of the century america. like a punchline where nobody laughs.

DON'T WALK AWAY
from me.

a HERETIC's CONFESSION

surrounded by citronella candles & filtered water, what if it's not enough? what if our passions instead of making us better-equipped, more fulfilled, socially viable citizens, actually further isolated us? meaning what if all these books instead of springboarding my mind into revolutionary fervor, actually swamped my head with intricacies, inconsistencies & all-too-believable testimonies of failed coups, divorce & exiled artists?

what if i
memorized
smiths
songs in-
stead of
learning
to really
communi-
cate? ? ?



»afn
07994
@AFN.ORG

WRITE: PO Box
13077
GAINESVILLE, FL
32604-1077

Science,
Elite
Force

