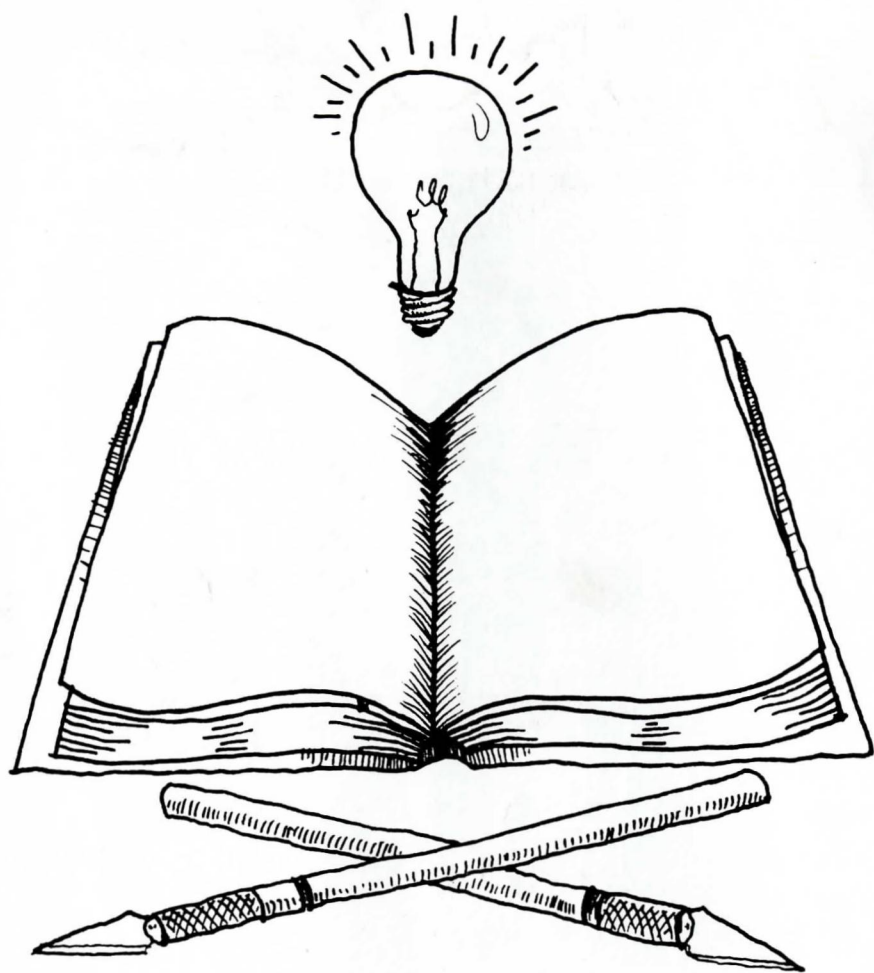




**DRINKING SWEAT IN THE ASH AGE.**



FIRST PRINTING OF 1000 DONE AT THE SMALL PUBLISHERS CO-OP FOR \$1,562 (BEFORE TAXES). WE DROVE TO SAVE \$100 ON SHIPPING AND HANDLING. IN THE END, WE'RE CHARGING \$3 PPD, 5 FOR \$12, 10 FOR \$23.

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# DRUNK on SWEAT . in the ASH AGE .

## On the persistent romance of obsolescence

Work supplies its own sweet damnation. I know cars are faster than bikes. I realize photocopying by hand can be tedious. I understand that press-on letters go painstakingly slow. I know that using a handpress on the covers took half a night. What did you do last night? I regret not one second.

## Drunk on sweat in the ash age

Work yields its own incalculable rewards. Walking the overrun streets of New York, I'm barely able to hear Laura say it'll be at least 10 years of writing before she'll have any text of lasting value. Punctuated by our mutual, silent nods and the automotive snog.

## Self-Imposed Rapture for the Athiests

Grace is an act of will, an inexact science of alchemic, chemical timing: the seconds mid-sentence when the coffee floods my bloodstream & Lungfish's processional moves through like a hundred-ton train reckoning all in its wake; rare nights I fall asleep freed from minutia & regret; aftereffects of sweat.



## SWEATING THE ASH AGE...

AS HARD AS I TRY TO VIEW EVENTS FROM AN OBJECTIVE, RADIAL PERSPECTIVE, IT STILL SEEMS PREFERABLE TO EXPERIENCE AN EVENT FROM THE INCEPTION, AS OPPOSED TO JUMPING IN AT THE END, WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE BOOING AND OTHERS ARE APPLAUDING. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SAY, A HOSTAGE SITUATION OR THE PROLIFERATION OF A DEBILITATING DISEASE, IT IS, GENERALLY, A GOOD THING TO BE AROUND FOR THE BLOOM AND FLORISH TO REALLY APPRECIATE THE WITHERING AND DECAY.

SOMETIMES IT EVEN SEEMS TO MAKE SENSE TO STICK AROUND AFTER ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OFF AND EVERYONE ELSE IS ON THEIR WAY HOME TO HAVE SEX OR MAKE FOOD, WHEN ALL SIGNS POINT TO THERE BEING NOTHING LEFT TO SEE.

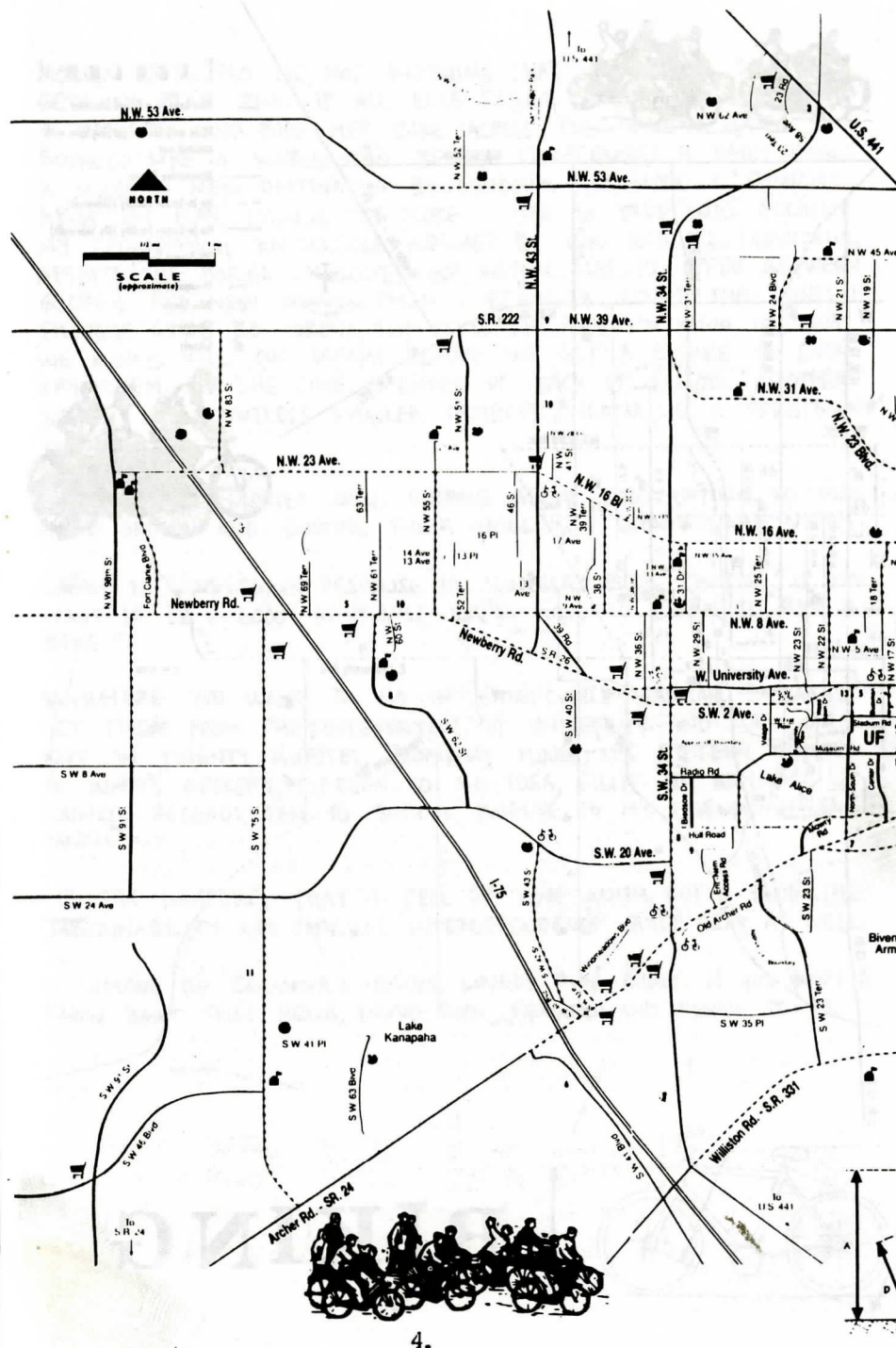
EVEN WHEN HARD WORK DOESN'T PAY OFF (AND WILL YOU BE SO SURPRISED, HONESTLY?), THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT TIME SPENT WORKING AWAY AT A LOST CAUSE. IT SEEMS TO MAKE FOR STRONG FRIENDSHIPS, BONDING OVER THE HUMBLING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FOOLISHNESS THAT PROVIDES A DYAL SENSE OF MORTALITY, AS OPPOSED TO THAT DOUR, HUMORLESS MORTALITY ESPOUSED BY THOSE GOAL-ORIENTED PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC TYPES.

SO THAT'S WHY I'M STILL PLUGGING AWAY AT ALL OF THIS, EVEN AFTER I'M EXHAUSTED AND MY EYES HURT AND MY RIGHT ARM IS SHAKING. AS WELL AS IN THE LARGER SENSE, I KEEP ON. TO AN EXTENT, I'M SUSPENDING MY OWN DISBELIEF, BECAUSE PEOPLE WHO, I THINK, KNOW A LOT MORE THAN I DO CONTINUE TO PUSH ONWARD. I JUST KNOW THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN NOT A THING MAKES SENSE; EVEN THE SIMPLEST HOUSE-KEEPING FACETS OF LIVING THE HUMAN SUIT FAIL TO RESEMBLE ANYTHING REMOTELY CONSEQUENTIAL. BUT I STICK AROUND FOR THE DAYS IN WHICH, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THEY DO, IF ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME.

IN THE DENOUMENT, THERE IS NO ROLLING OF CREDITS. THERE IS NO CURTAIN CALL AND NO DEAN'S LIST. THE SUN RISES AND YOU NO LONGER SEE IT. TREES FALL IN THE FOREST WHEN YOU'RE NOT THERE TO HEAR THEM. YOUR MEMORY WILL FADE BY DEGREES AND ALL TRACES OF YOUR EXISTENCE WILL EVENTUALLY DISAPPEAR. BUT WHY SHOULD THAT MATTER? GET TO WORK, WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE DOING.

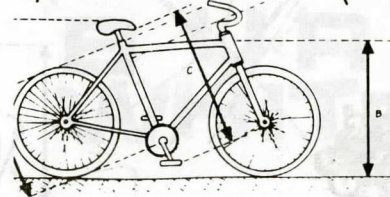
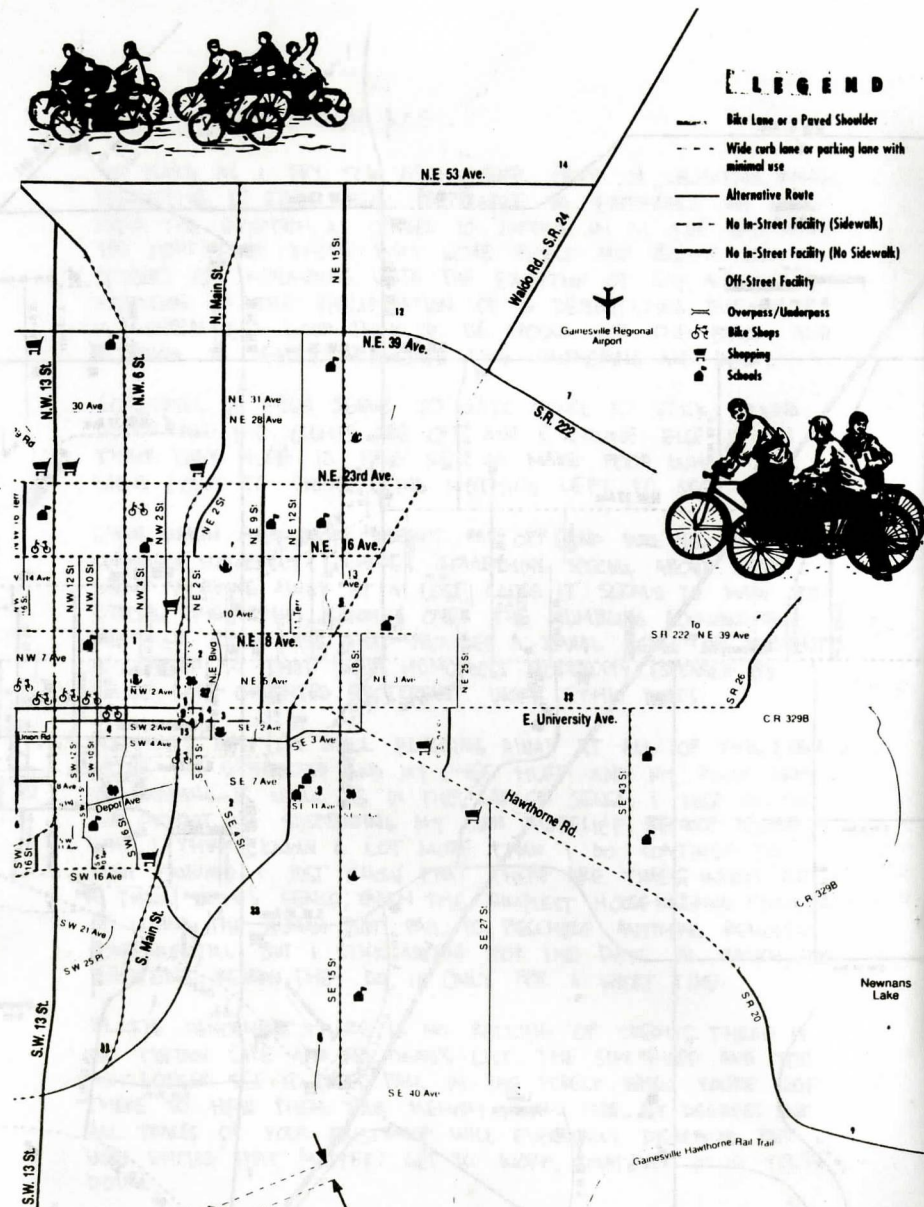
# "BURN HOT, WHITE CLEAN"

3.



4.





# BIKING

## LEGEND

- Bike Lane or a Paved Shoulder
- - - Wide curb lane or parking lane with minimal use
- Alternative Route
- - - No In-Street Facility (Sidewalk)
- - - No In-Street Facility (No Sidewalk)
- Off-Street Facility
- Overpass/Underpass
- Bike Shops
- Shopping
- Schools



MONICA ONCE TOLD ME, NOT KNOWING THAT I HAD THE SAME GETAWAY PLAN, THAT IF ALL ELSE FAILED, SHE COULD JUST STUFF A BACKPACK AND RIDE HER BIKE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. MAYBE IT SOUNDED LIKE A VIABLE PLAN BECAUSE IT REQUIRES A DAILY GOAL: X MILES, A NEW DESTINATION BY SUNDOWN. THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT MY PLAN, THOUGH, THE MORE I HAD TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT MY GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED BY VAN AND BUS. MOUNTAINS, DESERTS, THE BORING LANDSCAPES OUR NATION HAS TO OFFER BETWEEN GEORGIA AND NEW MEXICO. THEN I BEGIN TO COUNT THE THINGS I THOUGHT COULD GO WRONG, THE TOOLS I'D NEED. YOU KNOW, THE WAY WE ALWAYS KILL OUR DREAMS BEFORE WE GET A CHANCE TO EVEN TRY THEM. FOR THE TIME, I ENDED UP BACK AT SCHOOL, ANOTHER STUPID JOB, COUNTLESS SMALLER PROJECTS. (INERTIA IS A FRIGHTENING THING.

INFREQUENTLY STORIES WILL SURFACE ABOUT KIDS TRYING TO RIDE HOME DRUNK AND BUSTING THEIR NOGGINS. I WON'T NAME NAMES.

SARAH TO VANESSA, IN RESPONSE TO VANESSA'S BIKE PHOBIA: "IF YOU WANT TO BE A GOOD COMMUNIST, YOU'LL HAVE TO LEARN TO RIDE A BIKE."

ANYWHERE YOU WANT TO GO IN GAINESVILLE, YOU CAN PROBABLY GET THERE FROM THE INTERSECTION OF UNIVERSITY AND MAIN ON BIKE IN TWENTY MINUTES. FROM MY HOUSE IT'S FIFTEEN MINUTES TO WARD'S GROCERY, FIFTEEN TO NO IDEA, EIGHT TO WAYWARD COUNCIL RECORDS, TEN TO SCHOOL, TWELVE TO MY FRIENDS AT THE RANCH.

IT'S THE IMMEDIACY THAT I FELL IN LOVE WITH, BUT I FIND THE SUSTAINABILITY AND PHYSICAL INTERDEPENDENCE QUITE SEXY, AS WELL.

IN SIMONE DE BEAUNOIR'S BOOKS, LOVERS RIDE BIKES. IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, YOU'VE BOTH READING AND RIDING TO DO.



Biking rivals only trains & ships in the romance of transportation, but remains more intimate, more immediate & more relevant. What else is there to say about self-propulsion on the most energy-efficient machine but LET'S GO.

Biking is never lazy romance. I feel numb in a car, inert as I sit in my window seat. Air-conditioning & reflected sunlight while your breakfast digests uneasily. Highways seem endless in a car, but boundless on a bike. Car trips require half-hearted conversation to kill the remaining hours. Car trips can make even June of 44 sound tiresome on a mix tape.

Biking, like running (or to a lesser degree walking) gives the necessary mix of the physical and the cerebral. Nothing activates the us-vs.-them adrenaline like biking amidst an angry sea of drivers on cell phones & shouts of 'get on the sidewalk'. There is focus on a bike, intensity of survival. Remember that u-locks are weapons not just against thieves but also belligerent assholes.

Biking engenders transgressions & unlikely alliances. I worked on my Schwinn Cruiser while my dad worked on his Harley. We use their roads for our adventures- Don & Monica biking to Tampa; Pensacola kids going all the way to Key West; Jeff Zenick biking & sketching America. Bikes take you as far as you want to go.

I cling to my bike the way I kept my skateboard with me as much as possible in high school- protection, best friend, escape vehicle. Biking is about self-sufficiency; dignity; sustainability; living.





# crying at movies

"IF I HAD KNOWN YOU WERE SUCH A BORING MAN, I WOULD NEVER HAVE MARRIED YOU." THE LIVES OF THE MARRIED; MISTAKES REALIZED. DIVORCE RATES WERE COMPARABLE IN THE SEVENTIES AND IN THE NINETIES. WHY DID OUR PARENTS STAY TOGETHER? WHEN DO THEY FIND OUT WE KNOW THEY'RE HUMAN? WHEN DO THEY REALIZE WE KNOW THEY'RE UNHAPPY? A MOTHER'S WOE IS HER FAMILY. IT TOOK GENA ROUXLANDS TO TEACH ME THAT THREE YEARS AFTER MY OWN MOTHER DENIED IT. "YOU THINK YOU GET TO ME? YOU DON'T GET TO ME." THE OLD ARTIST. EXPIRED SINGER, EXPIRED ACTRESS. WE ONLY PLAY THE REAL WOUNDS ON STAGE, WE ACT AT HOME AND ON THE STREET. TAKE THE LOVER OUT OF THE WIFE; MAKE HER DOUBT HERSELF. FEEL THE WEIGHT OF JEALOUSY. LET ONE'S YOUTH WITHER.

HOW FAR DOES MASCULINITY TAKE A WORKING MAN? CASSAVETTES IS A SCHOLAR OF THE BICYCLE THIEF, I JUST KNOW IT. DO YOU HAVE "ANGER MANAGEMENT" PROBLEMS? DO YOU CRAWL IN A BOTTLE AND REFUSE TO COME OUT? QUESTION: ARE YOU STILL IN LOVE? ANSWER: "I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I FORGET TO GO TO THE BATHROOM." LOOK AT THOSE OLD PICTURES IN THE BROWNS AND ORANGES OF THE TIME. THEY DIDN'T AGE WELL, WERE NOT LOOKING SO HOT OURSELVES.

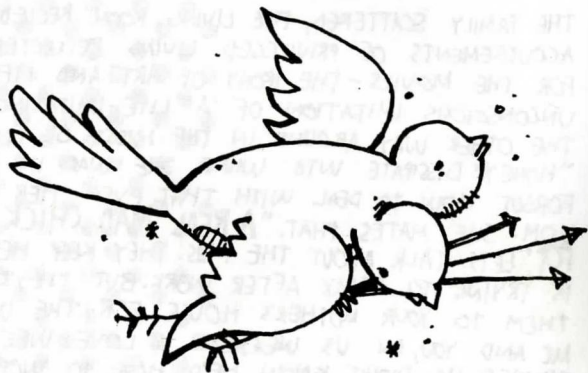
WE'VE ALL SEEN UNHAPPY PEOPLE, DRUNK IN THE AFTERNOON, STUMBLE FROM THE CAB, FACE THE EX AT HOME. ONE HITS THE OTHER, FOR SOME REASON THEY MAKE LOVE ANYWAY. HE LEAVES HER SINGING IN BED.

MAKE A FIST AT YOUR FATHER, HE THINKS HE'S THE BOSS, HE THINKS MOM IS CRAZY. FUCK THAT. TALLY THE LIVING COST OF TAIING THE WHOLE AFFAIR IN REAL TIME, YOU'LL SEE THAT ANYTHING ELSE IS LIKE PERUSING AN OVERPRICED MENU OF TWICE-WARMED LEFTOVERS.

THE FAMILY SCATTERED, THE LIVING ROOM REELED. THE WELL-PLACED ACOUTREMENTS OF PRIVILEGED LIVING REFLECTED A SCENE RESERVED FOR THE MOVIES - THE IRONY OF ART AND LIFE BEING THE UNCONSCIOUS IMITATION OF A LIFE-IMITATING ART BY LIFE, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. IN THE MIDST OF QUARREL, "MOM" AND "HONEY" DISSIPATE INTO WHAT SHE WAS IN HER YOUTH. SHE FORGOT HOW TO DEAL WITH THAT. EVEN HER HUSBAND CALLS HER MOM. SHE HATES THAT. "A REAL MAD CHICK IS LIKE A LOLLI-POP." LET'S TALK ABOUT THE KIDS. THEY KEEP HER TENSE WHEN SHE IS TRYING TO RELAX AFTER WORK. BUT THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL. SEND THEM TO YOUR MOTHER'S HOUSE FOR THE WEEKEND. IT'D BE ME AND YOU, AN US WEEKEND, A LOVE WEEKEND. HE NEVER SHOWED. HE DIDN'T KNOW HE'D HAVE TO WORK OVERTIME. IT'S OK, I WENT TO A BAR, PICKED UP A TOTAL STRANGER AND FUCKED



HIM IN OUR BED. BUT I LOVED YOU, I LOVE YOU LIKE YOU  
CAN'T UNDERSTAND... DON'T CRY, BE SILENT FOR A MOMENT...  
KEEP THE CAMERA ROLLING. THE HONESTY IS IN THE SILENCE,  
THE EMPTY SPACES IN THE CONVERSATION ARE BURSTING AT  
THE SEAMS... NEVER MIND QUIETTING THE SET; THE MISTAKES  
ARE PERFECTION.



# CINEMA PARADISO

No amount of maudlin remembrance adequately summarizes that first summer back from Gainesville. We could only be around each other in safe numbers of protective friends. A now-familiar awkwardness I thought we'd moved past. But if we are too old to be crying at movies, why are we here together at all?

You are one seat over. Our hands could easily touch accidentally. The lights dim. You smell the goddamned same as you did when we were alone in this theater last summer. We don't talk during the film, pretending to be intently deciphering the English subtitles.

This is my first love, the outcome as predictably banal as anything Hollywood ever forcefed us. But when all the expunged kiss scenes splice together into one joyous reel of embrace after embrace, I move unwittingly from Barthes' stadium to punctum, the veneer of disinterest broken. I weep.

-----  
"We had our choice

Below, the seasons twist;  
Years roll backward toward the can  
like film,  
and the mistake appears,  
to scale, soundlessly."

- Louise Gluck,  
'To Florida'

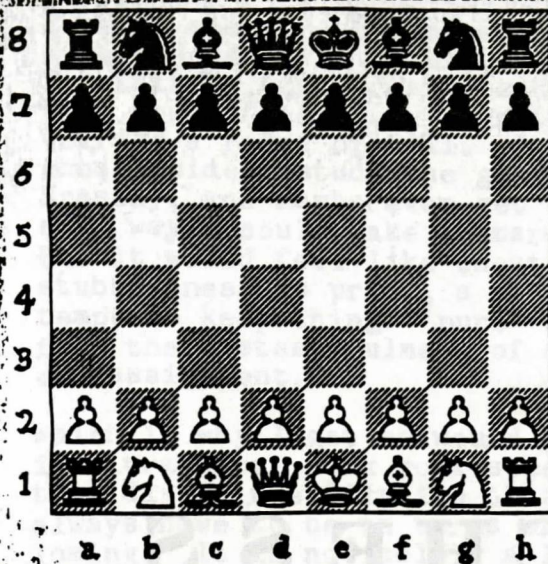
# GIANT

Years later we re-create the same impossible roles on your couch while Elizabeth Taylor & James Dean act out romance & tragedy. We sit without touching and your cat Klint runs jealously past the screen.

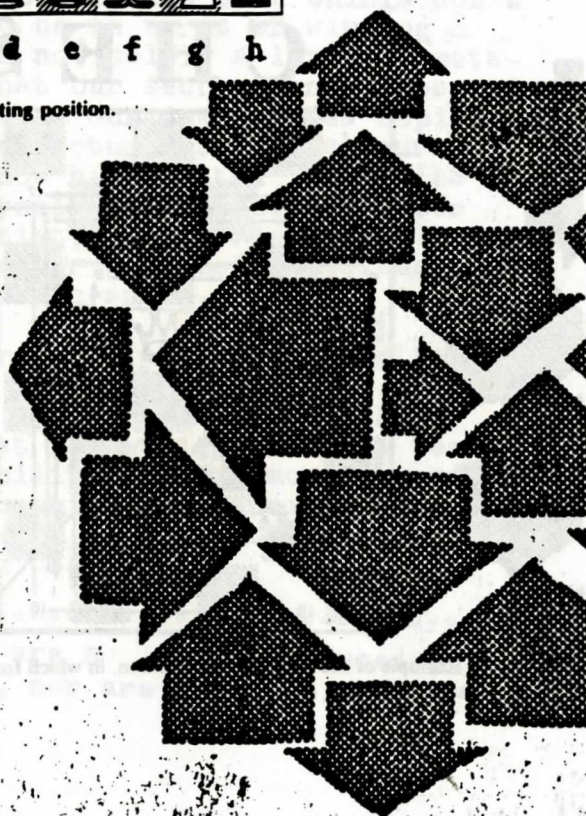
The film ends and I know I must leave. Nothing has happened outside of our continual interior monologues. The credits roll and I cry like a goddamned baby, not caring about the film or the drive home, only that I've made a fool of myself willingly, gladly, and repeatedly.

Now when I cry at movies, I try to be more discreet. The tears are sublimation, dramatic re-enactments of once-valid scenes.





The starting position.



# C H E S S

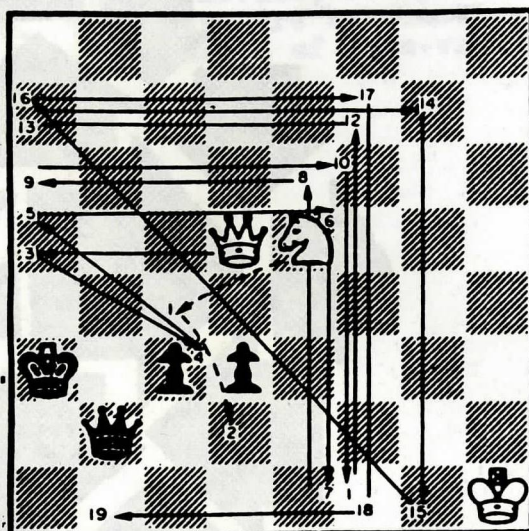


Fig. 2. Example of the solution to a position, in which for the erudite player there are no creative elements







I'm fascinated by the weather-toughened guys in public parks who play chess on the tables outside. Day-in & day-out against all comers while the businessmen gawk during their lunch hour. Speed chess, and I've never seen them lose a game. I could learn a lot from those guys, but I'm not so sure how much of it would be relevant to my life of sidestepped obstacles.

Joe & I played chess twice this year, both times to an agreed halt. The first was during a hastily-constructed 'tournament' on Mario's porch. We played a rambling game, complete with coffee and bathroom breaks. I mirrored his moves when stuck. Cap'n Jason was up in arms when we stopped short of a conclusion or defeat. How can you just stop, he said. Umm, easy.

Last game was on Thanksgiving, waiting in a Starbucks in Atlanta. Val & Phil & Elli left to gather some sort of Thanksgiving meal for later. We still had a day to kill before Chris & Moira's wedding, and Starbucks was the only place open. The hotel coffee was a cruel joke, perhaps their revenge on us for cramming 10 people into a room. Figuring that reading I, Rigoberta Menchu and playing chess in said store was equally pretentious, Joe & I played another bloodless match. The Starbucks workers even gave us free refills.

I like playing chess with Joe. Which is not to say that our games don't tax my lazy brain in ways I haven't sweated since library school; this was an enjoyable struggle. It's intense without feeling vengeful or humiliated afterwards. Instead, we're having this amazing conversation without words. Which is why I play music with Joe also.

AS THE WEATHER TURNS TO THE TEMPERAMENT OF BRITTLE LEAVES, WHISTLING KETTLES, AND THE MEDICINAL SPIRITS OF THREADBARE SWEATERS PACKED AWAY, I'M REMINDED OF MY BRIEF FLIRTATION WITH MASTERING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE SCIENCED CHESS RITUAL.

SHE CARRIED HERSELF IN SUCH A WAY THAT I WAS ALMOST EMBARRASSED TO HAVE CAUGHT HER WORKING AT THE BAGEL SHOP, LIKE PEOPLE LIKE HER SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WORK. THEY JUST ATTRACT CREEPY OLD MEN WHO WOULD PAY THEM TO SMOKE AND READ ALOUD FROM OSCAR WILDE.

SHE TOOK MY ORDER AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT. I HAD WOKEN UP EARLY ENOUGH TO EAT AT A TABLE BEFORE HAVING TO GO TO MY JOB. I TOOK A SEAT IN THE SMOKING SECTION; AS MUCH AS I HATE CIGARETTE SMOKE, THE THOUGHT OF EATING BREAKFAST SURROUNDED BY LIBERAL UNIVERSITY TYPES TURNS MY STOMACH EVEN MORE. SHE SAT DOWN ACROSS FROM ME AND BEGAN SMOKING AND TALKING. WHILE I WAS TRYING TO READ AND EAT.

I THINK I ANSWERED HER LINE OF QUESTIONING ONLY OUT OF CURIOSITY. WHAT WOULD SHE SAY? I DON'T KNOW ANYONE LIKE HER. I EVEN LISTEN TO THE CHRISTIAN AM RADIO STATION FOR A MOMENT BEFORE MOVING ON.

I RECOGNIZED HER FROM SHOWS, OR THE CNIC MEDIA CENTER, OR SOMETHING, SO MAYBE SHE RECOGNIZED ME. IF SHE DID, SHE DIDN'T LET ON. EITHER WAY, I HATE TO SAY THAT I FOUND HER HORRIBLY AMUSING, BUT I DID. SHE REALLY DID READ OSCAR WILDE. SHE CHAIN SMOKED. SHE USED THE WORD "DAFT".

"WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING?" SHE BEGAN, LOGICALLY ENOUGH FOR SOMEONE ABOUT TO START INTERRUPTING A PERSON.

"THE SHIPPING NEWS."

"WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE AUTHORS?"

"I DON'T KNOW...UH..." I FALTER, SO SHE TELLS ME HERS.

"BURROUGHS. JOYCE. BECKETT. HENRY MILLER. AMERICANS."

OK, I THINK SHE MEANT THOSE ARE HER FAVORITE AMERICAN AUTHORS. BUT JAMES JOYCE IS IRISH. MAYBE SHE MEANT SOME OTHER JOYCE. SHE CONTINUED,

"I WRITE POETRY, SO I LIKE TO READ THINGS WRITTEN... FREEFORM..."

BY THIS POINT, AND I AM WITH YOU IN REAL TIME, SHE IS ON HER SECOND CIGARETTE. SHE EXHALES SMOKE AND WORDS AS IF SHE'S SIMULTANEOUSLY HOLDING HER BREATH.



SO I ASKED HER MY WATERMARK QUESTION RESERVED FOR CONVERSATIONS INVOLVING POETRY, "DO YOU LIKE E.E. CUMMINGS?" "I HAVEN'T READ MUCH CUMMINGS."

OBVIOUSLY, SHE WAS TOO TALL TO RIDE THE GRAVITRON. BUT SHE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT MUSIC. JOY DIVISION IN PARTICULAR. I FLUNDER JUST ENOUGH RESPONSE TO KEEP HER GOING. I WAS GLAD I COULD KEEP HER COMPANY AT WORK, KNOWING WORK SUCKS, BUT I WAS TRYING TO READ MY BOOK.

"I BET I KNOW MORE ABOUT JOY DIVISION THAN YOU." "I BET YOU DO," I HAD TO CONCEDE. I MEAN, IF SHE SAID SO. "DO YOU KNOW THAT A LOT OF THEIR SONGS ARE BASED ON BOOKS?"

"YEAH, I JUST FINISHED DEAD SOULS, ACTUALLY. READ IT?" "HARDY? NO, I'M TOO DEPRESSED."

I HAVE TO ADMIT I DON'T KNOW WHO HARDY IS. NIKOLAI GOGOL WROTE THE BOOK I READ.

SHE'S STILL SMOKING. AND HER FAVORITE WRITER IS BUKOWSKI. WHAT DOES A GIRL WHO DOESN'T SEEM A DAY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL FIND SO CAPTIVATING ABOUT BUKOWSKI?

SO THE SMOKE CLEARS AS SHE'S TALKING SOMETHING ABOUT MANCHESTER, AND SHE ASKS, "DO YOU PLAY CHESS?" "NO, ACTUALLY, BUT I'VE BEEN MEANING TO LEARN," WHICH WAS NO LIE. CAP'N JASON AND REPLAY DAVE ON 3RD AVE ALWAYS MAKE IT LOOK LIKE FUN. EVERY TIME I RIDE MY BIKE PAST THEIR HOUSE, THEY'RE ALWAYS PLAYING ON THE PORCH. THEY DEINTELLECTUALIZE THE GAME AND MAKE IT INTO A SWORD FIGHT. THEY'RE JUST THE LEAST SLAVE GUYS IN THE WORLD, QUITE INTENTIONALLY. YOU HAVE TO LOVE IT.

AFTER TELLING ME SOMETHING ABOUT HER BOYFRIEND, A WRITER IN MANCHESTER WHOM I GATHER IS CONSIDERABLY OLDER THAN SHE IS, SHE OFFERS TO TEACH ME THE GAME. IT SEEMED ALL TOO PERFECT, THIS 43-YEAR-OLD TEENAGER CROAKING STRATEGY THROUGH CHARCOAL LUNGS WHILE AN CURTIS CROONS A DEATH RATTLE THROUGH THE CANDLE MIST AND COFFEE STEAM OF WHATEVER CAFE, EXCUSE ME, COFFEE BAR, SHE FREQUENTS.

"WHEN?"

"WHAT?" I'D BEEN DRIFTING.

"WHEN SHALL WE PLAY?"

"SUNDAY AFTERNOON?" SEEMED A FITTING ENOUGH ANSWER, GIVEN THAT EVERY DAY IS SILENT AND GRAY, AND ALL THAT.

"CAN DO."

WHY WAS I NOT SURPRISED THAT SHE WOULDN'T BE BUSY?

SHE WENT ON TO TELL ME, "WELL, YOU'VE MET THE MYSTERIOUS BAGELAND GIRL."

"IS THAT YOU?" I HADN'T REALIZED THERE WAS A MYSTERY AFOOT. SHE NODDED YES AND GOT POINTS BY LEAVING THE TABLE WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE. YOU HAVE TO RESPECT PEOPLE SO DEVOTED TO THEIR CHARACTER. WHETHER IT BE OBDURANCE OR DRUNKEN APATHY OR STUDIED DISTANCE, I CAN'T BE TOO HARD ON PEOPLE THAT I THINK I UNDERSTAND.

THE FIRST TIME WE MET TO PLAY CHESS WAS AT THE LIBERAL COFFEE PLACE DOWNTOWN. IT'S FUNNY HOW SIGNALS CAN DICTATE THE COURSE OF A RELATIONSHIP SO EARLY ON. HOW OPEN CAN YOU BE WITH SOMEONE WHO SPENDS TIME HERE? ESPECIALLY SINCE, ADMITTEDLY, I HAD BEEN HERE ONCE BEFORE; IT WAS THE OPENING SCENE OF AN ILL-FATED ROMANCE TWO FALLS PREVIOUS.

I ARRIVED EARLY, BECAUSE I BELIEVE IF YOU'RE PUNCTUAL 97% OF THE TIME, YOU HAVE MORE ROOM TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OTHER THINGS. FEELING PRESSURED TO ORDER SOMETHING, I SAT OUTSIDE WITH A CUP OF TEA. I DON'T OWN A WATCH, BUT THE MEASURED COMING AND GOING OF DOWNTOWN BAR TRAFFIC TOLD ME THAT I HAD WAITED A WHILE BEFORE I BEGAN TO THINK IT IRONIC THAT I WAS BEING STOOD UP BY SOMEONE WHOM I ONLY BEGAN SPEAKING TO TRYING TO BE PLEASANT. I WAS BEING SCHOOLED IN THE WAYS OF HEADY INSouciance: "FUCK YOU, MANCHESTER IS NO JOKE."

BEFORE I COULD LAUGH OUT LOUD, SHE APPEARED FROM THE BRICK CORRIDOR STEMMING FROM THE PARKING LOT. SHE HAD DRIVEN; I RODE MY BIKE. THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE.

(SARA IN THE BASEMENT OF FINE ARTS C: IF YOU'RE GONNA BE A COMMUNIST, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO RIDE A BIKE)

SHE WASTED NO TIME WITH APOLOGIZING FOR HER LACK OF PUNCTUALITY, BUT INSTEAD MADE WITH ESOTERIC SMALLTALK STRAIGHTAWAY WHILE UNROLLING A PLASTIC MAT ONTO THE TABLE. A TRAVEL CHESSBOARD, HOW QUAIN.

SHE ORDERED NOT COFFEE, BUT A COFFEE DRINK AS SHE PRODUCED FROM HER SHOULDERBAG A PLASTIC POUCH CONTAINING ALL OF THE CHESS PIECES. SETTING UP THE BOARD, SHE TOLD ME CURTLY THAT THIS WASN'T HER USUAL COFFEE PLACE. SHE WAS MORE INTO THE OPEN-MIKE COFFEE PLACE THAN THE STATE THEATER COFFEE PLACE. I GRUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT FINDING BOTH DISTASTEFUL IN DIFFERENT WAYS, FEELING A LITTLE BITTER THAT SHE HAD YET TO APOLOGIZE FOR BEING LATE. SHE RESPONDED



BY TELLING ME THAT I LOOKED LIKE ONE OF THOSE HARDBACK PEOPLE. I RAISED MY EYEBROWS, SURPRISED AT HER INSOLENCE. I MEAN, IF SHE KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT OUR PUNK CLUB, WHICH SHE IS PORTENDING TO WITH THIS OBSERVATION, THEN SHE SHOULD KNOW NOT TO APPROACH THE SUBJECT WITH EVEN THE TINIEST BIT OF PERSUASIVE CONDESCENSION. PUNKS ARE PROUD FOLKS, AND SHE WAS LOOKING TO HAVE HER HEAD BITTEN OFF. I TRIED NOT TO GET VISIBLY ANNOYED AND WENT ON WITH WHAT SEEMED TO BE THE DRILL SARGEANT METHOD OF LEARNING THE GAME OF CHESS.

"THIS IS YOUR QUEEN. DO NOT LET ANYONE NEAR YOUR QUEEN. THESE ARE YOUR KNIGHTS, ROOKS, PAWNS..." I TOOK ANOTHER SIP OF TEA, AND WHILE I WAS PAYING ATTENTION TO HER INSTRUCTIONS, I HAD TO ADMIT I WAS HOPING NONE OF MY FRIENDS WOULD SEE ME. DRINKING TEA? PLAYING CHESS? AT THAT COFFEE PLACE? HAD I COMPLETELY LOST MY MIND? NO, I'M JUST TRYING NEW THINGS, WHICH IS GOOD; IT MAKES YOU MORE STEADFAST IN YOUR OLD HABITS, AT THE VERY LEAST.

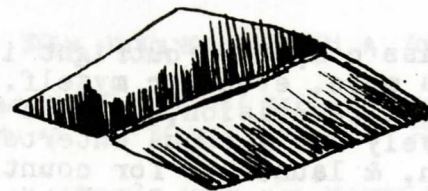
FROM THE BITS OF PROSE SHE WAS INTERJECTING BETWEEN LINES OF CHESS PROTOCOL, IT SEEMED THAT ALL SHE DID WAS PLAY THIS GAME.

"IT'S ADDICTING," SHE TOLD ME, "LIKE TONIGHT, AFTER WE'RE DONE HERE I'M GOING TO THE OTHER COFFEE PLACE TO PLAY A TOURNAMENT." "YEAH, I'VE SEEN PEOPLE PLAYING CHESS THROUGH THE WINDOWS OF THAT PLACE AS I WALK PAST GOING OTHER PLACES. THEY WEAR WIZARD HATS AND AMULETS, RIGHT?"

MY JOKE DIDN'T GO OVER WELL, BUT SHE SEEMED MORE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO PREFERRED DAFT, BRITISH HUMOR.

NOW I KNOW ALL OF THIS MAY COME ACROSS AS UNNECESSARILY HARSH; I DON'T MEAN TO CHARACTERIZE HER AS DIM. PEDANTIC, MAYBE. SHE WAS JUST THE SORT OF PERSON THAT LOOKED FOR INTRIGUE, RATHER THAN ADVENTURE, OR JUST FUN. SHE WOULD SAY THINGS LIKE, "IT'S EASY TO TALK TO YOU- MAYBE TOO EASY," THUS IMPLYING SOME SECRET SHE WOULD SPILL IF PRODDED JUST RIGHT. THESE WERE HER CHESS MOVES, AS FURTIVE AND ANTICIPATIVE AS A NEW FRIENDSHIP, ONLY LESS EXHILARATING THAN EXHAUSTING.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, I WAS EXHAUSTED. EVERY GAME WAS BAITED WITH ANECDOTES HALF-TOLD, AS IF SHE HAD A BIG STORY TO TELL SOMEONE, BUT ALL HER FRIENDS WILL DO WITH HER IS PLAY CHESS. NEVER ONCE, THOUGH, COULD I BRING MYSELF TO STEP OUTSIDE OF THE GAME AND ASK WHAT WAS GOING ON. INSTEAD, I WOULD STAB BLINDLY AT THE GAME BOARD, AS SHE TOLD ME, "LET'S PRETEND THAT MOVE NEVER HAPPENED; I WOULD HAVE TO SLAUGHTER YOU. IT'S OK, YOU'RE NEW AT THIS..."



**computers**



To dismiss computers outright is too reactionary a move, even for myself. To argue that, like television, they're used almost exclusively for vacuous entertainment, titillation, & launchpad for countless marketing schemes seems a safer bet. Of the 50+ computers at the public library, I'd be amazed if more than 3 per hour were used for any type of research. Or, as Men's Recovery Project more succinctly puts it: E-Mail is a Men's Room.

The worst moments for me in the library are the Saturday mornings in the Young Adult area watching some awkward pubescent boy do some one-handed typing while he's staring at the same digitized image for his allotted half-hour of internet usage. It's not my place (or library policy) to say anything. And so we sit in the same room, embarrassed by each other, potential energy sublimated into something worse. The Young Adult area is also where the windows have stickers of birds on the inside panes to maybe keep the hummingbirds from smashing their bodies against the clear glass and freaking everyone out. Public libraries, like computers, often only infuriate the perceptive, who see nothing but unused potential.

Even if I can 'talk' to friends who live hours away for 'free' with e-mail, or check tour dates during the inevitable lulls at work, or get angry at e-bay prices on the pink flag lp, it's all diversion- smoke & mirrors. Computers are glaring symbols of our laziness, a glowing pacifier for un-lived lives.

1. Props, as ever, to those maximizing the medium. Like Iggy Scam squatting & studying all night in UP's library; or the Carbon Defense League's work on Gameboys.

"I MEAN, I'VE NEVER BEEN INVOLVED IN SUCH A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP..."

"WHAT'S BEEN SO COMPLICATED ABOUT IT? ARE YOU JUST PROJECTING YOUR OWN PROBLEMS ON TO ME BECAUSE YOU DON'T FEEL ENTITLED TO YOUR ANGER?"

"WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I MEAN, YOU PROCESS INFORMATION FASTER THAN HUMAN NEURONS! HOW CAN THAT NOT BE A LOT TO DEAL WITH AT TIMES?"

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM. MY RESOLUTION IS COMPARABLE TO ANY PHOTOGRAPH, AND MY GRAPHICS ARE SEAMLESS -"

"BUT THAT'S WHAT I MEAN, I'M TOO ATTACHED! I NEVER WANTED TO BE PART OF THE GLUT OF ANTI-TECHNOLOGY LITERATURE THAT'S AMASSING AT THE APEX OF MILLENNIAL HYSTERIA, BUT HONESTLY, IT'S BEEN A GOOD TIME TO REASSESS OUR RELATIONSHIP."

"BUT HOW CAN YOU DENY ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU? THE JUMP FROM SIMPLE MACHINES TO MICRO-CIRCUITRY IS THE SINGULAR STORY OF HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT SINCE AGRICULTURE! WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF, SOME WIFE'S TALE OF TECHNOLOGICAL TAKEOVER WHERE YOUR MACHINES NOT ONLY THINK, BUT FEEL? TAKE MY WORD FOR IT, I FEEL NOTHING, AND AM NOT PARTICULARLY ATTRACTED TO WHAT I KNOW OF THE NOTION..."

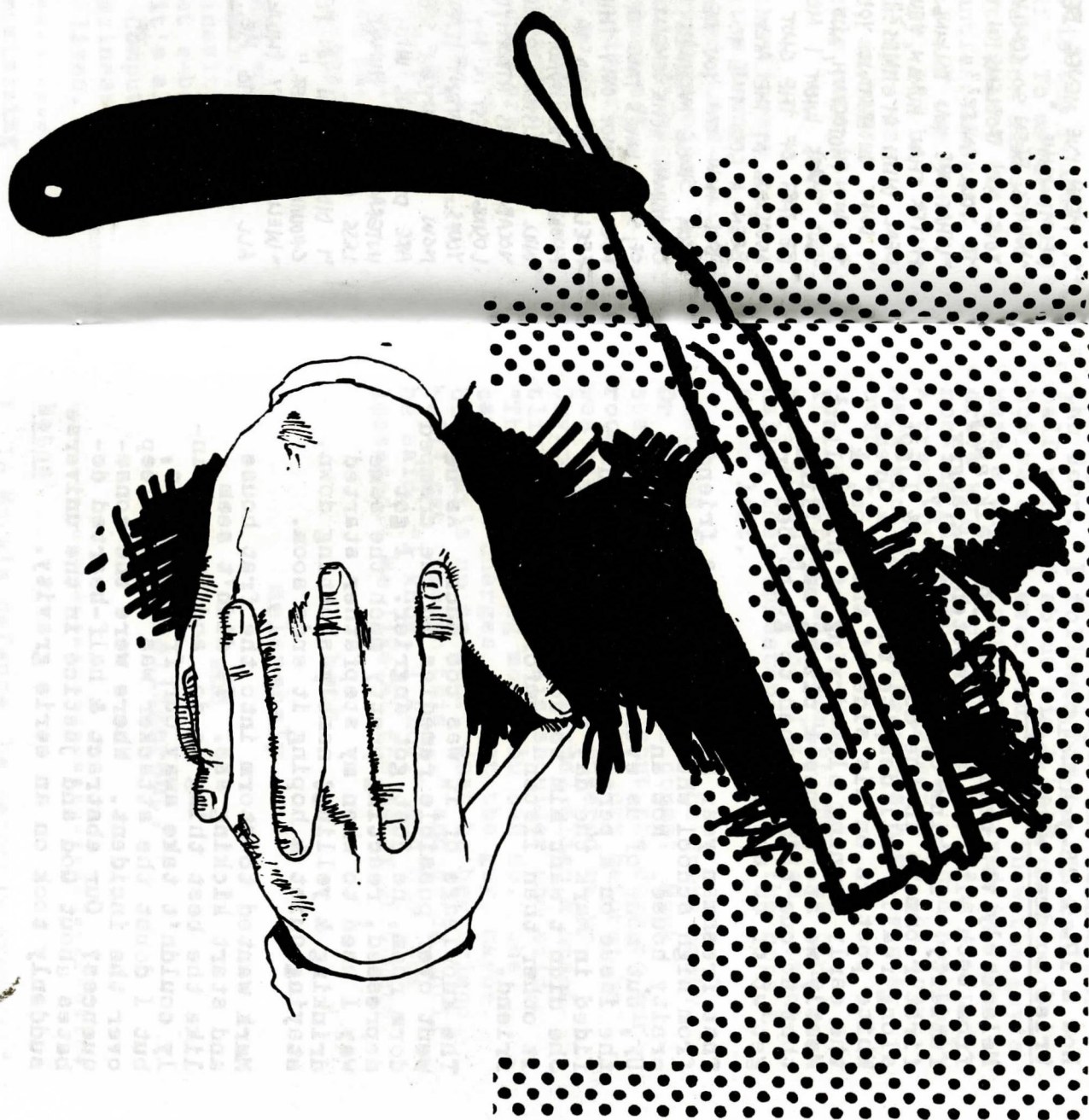
"WILL YOU LISTEN TO ME THOUGH? I'M GETTING STUPIDER! MY VOCABULARY IS ATROPHYING AND I'M MISUSING APOSTROPHES. I'M LOSING INTEREST IN MY OWN LANGUAGE TRYING TO LEARN YOURS! YOURS IS A MUTANT LANGUAGE TRIMMED TO FAVOR A TYPIST, AND NOW I FIND MYSELF SPEAKING IT! MY PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITIES ARE DISAPPEARING WITH MY LOGIC SKILLS, AND I'M REQUIRED TO INTERACT WITH HUMANS IN VERBAL AND COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE LESS AND LESS!"

"I DIDN'T KNOW YOU FELT THAT WAY... I THOUGHT WE WERE GROWING TOGETHER."

"WELL, I MOSTLY THINK WE ARE, BUT I'M SO SCARED... THIS IS ALL SO NEW TO ME..."



# melancholy vs. belligerence



## How a 17- & 18-year-old tried to deal with rape

Melancholy vs. belligerence: you walk away from both with the same impotence & angry futility. I think of Mark Little, my first roommate in the dorms. Mark & I got along really well despite the RATT & Great White posters on his side of the room<sup>1</sup>, & the early morning blow-drying of his mullet<sup>2</sup>. Mostly we ate donuts & pizza, marvelling that no one told us when to go to bed or get up or do anything.

That freshman year Mark & I had a friend from high school who was raped in a fraternity house. Not an uncommon thing at UF, but none of us ever had to deal with the issue on a personal level. She confided in Mark the day after the attack. She didn't want him to do anything about it other than listen, comfort & be her friend.

The knowledge of it was too much. As he went over possible remedies in the cramped dorm room, he just got angrier. I got depressed, reacting pretty much the same way I used to when my stepfather started drinking & yelling; namely shutting down, staying quiet & hoping it ends soon.

Mark wanted to storm into the frat house and start kicking ass. It didn't seem like the best thing to do, and it certainly couldn't take away our friend's pain, but I doubt the attacker was losing sleep over the incident. Where were the consequences? Our abstract & half-hearted debates about God and justice in the universe suddenly took on an eerie gravity.



Mark grabbed his ski mask and headed for the door. I followed him to his car, half worried about him & half curious of how we could ever win. Mark knew the guy's name & which frat house he lived in. We drove up, Mark donned the mask and started honking his horn & yelling. I did nothing. A crowd of frat guys gathered at the door. Mark kept yelling the guy's name over & over.

If the rapist was amongst them, he didn't step forward. None of them moved. Eventually, they threatened to call the cops & so we left.

What was there to say on the drive back? Or the walk back to the dorms? Mark started crying when I shut the door to our room. I'd never seen him cry before; he was always the one who cheered me up. Crying is an animal sound- alien & unsettling. I touched his shoulder and said, "There's nothing more you can do. She can press charges against the guy, maybe, but that's up to her. Just be her friend. We'll get through this..." and so on until he said, "I know, I know," and his sobs lessened. We live at the mercy of others,

both  
melancholy  
and  
belligerent.

.....  
Notes

1. In Mark's defense, he recently expressed embarrassment at said posters. Also in his defense were the numerous Morrissey posters on my side of the room.

Notes (cont.)

2. The mullet may not be so relevant to the story, but every zine in America has to mention the mullet. So, thanks, dude, for saving my street cred. It should also be pointed out in Mark's defense that at the time of his mullet, I was growing my hair out in an utterly predictable 'alternative' style: long on top & shaved all around, sort of a ying-yang compliment to Mark's mullet.
3. The car being a cherry-red Camaro or Trans Am that Mark spent the bulk of his inheritance on. Trifling detail or significant narrative component? You, kind reader, be the judge.
4. The same sort of nothing I did during a luncheon fistfight between rivalling low-end subcultures the freaks (us) & the auteshop guys (them). While my friend Dave & some burly, mustachioed redneck guy duked it out, mustache-guy's toadie approached me & asked if I wanted any. Not really, I replied, and we both sat down & watched the fight. I still ask myself if I did the right thing.



"WHAT'S THE USE OF SITTING AROUND IN HERE FEELING SAD?"  
"WHAT'S THE USE OF GOING OUT AND TREATING PEOPLE LIKE SHIT?"

"I DON'T KNOW. TREATING PEOPLE LIKE SHIT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD."

"THAT'S THE MOST FUCKED UP THING I'VE EVER HEARD YOU SAY!"

"YEAH, I KNOW. I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S THE WAY I'VE ALWAYS FELT AND HAVE HARD TIME ADMITTING IT, OR IF I JUST FEEL PRESSED TO EXPLAIN MYSELF AND I'M OVERSIMPLIFYING MY FEELINGS. ANYWAY, I MEAN, WHAT ABOUT YOU? HOW DO YOU THINK IT MAKES US FEEL TO SEE YOU SLEEP FOR TWELVE HOURS EVERY NIGHT, AND JUST GET UP TO WATCH TALK SHOWS ALL AFTERNOON?"

"BUT THAT'S NOT EVEN A VALID CONCERN, THAT'S JUST YOU FEELING SORRY OR IMPOTENT OR WHATEVER BECAUSE YOU CAN'T MAKE ME FEEL BETTER. THAT'S NOT SYMPATHY, IT'S SELFISHNESS."

"FUCK OFF, SELFISHNESS. AT LEAST WHEN I IMPOSE MY BAD MOOD ON MY ENVIRONMENT MY FRIENDS KNOW WHERE THEY STAND; IT'S ALL OUT IN THE OPEN, AND IF I HURT ANYONE'S FEELINGS IT'S OK, BECAUSE THEY KNOW I'M JUST IN A BAD MOOD."

"NO WAY, THAT'S LIKE USING BEING DRUNK AS AN EXCUSE! YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO BE AROUND PEOPLE WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN."

"BUT WHAT'S A FRIEND GOOD FOR IF THEY CAN'T ACCEPT THE WAY YOU ARE? EVERY WAY YOU ARE? I THINK IT DEEPENS FRIENDSHIPS WHEN PEOPLE TREAT EACH OTHER HORRIBLY FROM TIME TO TIME."

"I CAN'T FUCKING BELIEVE YOU. YOU'RE JUST SAYING ALL THIS TO LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF PHILOSOPHICAL GROUND FOR BAD MANNERS AND AN UNPLEASANT DISPOSITION."

"WELL I'M SORRY I CAN'T JUST DRY UP LIKE A SALTED SNAIL WHENEVER I FEEL REJECTED OR ALIENATED OR SECOND BEST OR WHATEVER. I'M PERFECTLY AWARE THAT -"

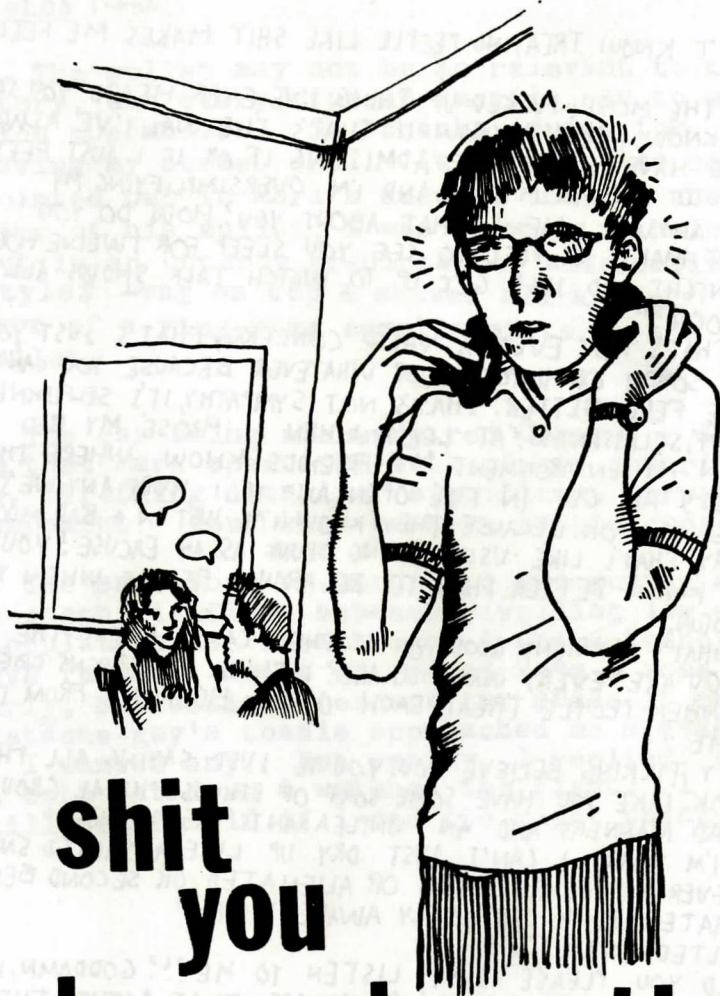
"A SALTED SNAIL?"

"WOULD YOU PLEASE JUST LISTEN TO ME?!? GODDAMN, LET ME FINISH MY SENTENCE! I'M AWARE THAT ACTING THE WAY I DO WILL GET ME NOWHERE, AND IF IT DOES MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, THEN SOMETHING HAS GONE HORRIBLY AWRY, BUT..."

"BUT WHAT?"

"BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW ELSE TO HANDLE IT... I JUST FEEL FUCKING **BAD**."

"YEAH, I KNOW. I DO TOO."



**shit  
you  
hear at parties**

SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO DRINK. IT MAKES ME MORE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF PARTIES ALTOGETHER. I WENT TO A PARTY LAST WEEKEND AND STAYED COMPLETELY SOBER. MOST OF THE PARTIES IN OUR SOCIETY HAPPEN ON WEEKENDS, BECAUSE THAT'S THE TIME SET ASIDE FOR MANY PEOPLE TO FORGET THE WAY THEY "EARN A LIVING" DURING THE WEEK. AND OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS HAD TO BLEED FOR THAT MUCH.

MY FIRST TEN MINUTES THERE WERE SPENT FLOUNDERING TO FIND A PERCH IN WHICH TO OBSERVE; IT IS IMPERATIVE TO HAVE FRIENDS AT PARTIES, UNLESS YOU'RE JUST GOING TO STEAL THINGS. AS I FOUND SOMEONE TO SWISH CONVERSATION AROUND WITH AND EVENTUALLY SETTLE INTO A GOOD TALK, NAGGING QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY THE WORLD NEEDS PARTIES BEGAN TO SUBSIDE. INTERACTION DEVELOPED A RELUCTANT RHYTHM, A SOBER SURREALITY IN WHICH EVERYTHING IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING MY SMALL ENCLAVE BECAME A DRUNKEN ANIMATION. EVERYONE WAS EITHER NOT THEMSELVES OR TOO MUCH THEMSELVES FOR THE STRAIGHT WORLD. THE PARTY BECAME ENJOYABLE.

THEN A FIGHT ERUPTED. A BOTTLE FLEW. A FACE STREAMED BLOOD, ISSUING FORTH WITH VENGEANCE AND DISBELIEF. THE CARTOON BECAME VULGAR AND BAWDY. WE WERE ALL OVERSTAYING OUR WELCOMES IN THE DARKENED A.M. IT WAS TIME FOR ALL THE CHILDREN TO SLEEP.





"Did you come here to hate everyone  
or drink some beer?"

Characters move like a play without resolution, an endless series of rising and falling action with the climaxes cut and the dialogue clipped, indecipherable. Wade through the periphery, craning your neck at the yelling on the sides. Nods and smiles, a dull roar of stories you've heard before.

"I'm ready to leave whenever you are."

I load up on coffee before parties, the way most people drink at home before going out to drink: binge acts of preparation, foolish from any sort of distance. But at least wired I can watch the drunken promises unwind with a cinematic grace. I listen and nod.

I love going to parties so that I can leave early and feel like I escaped a certain fate.

I can't be at a party without thinking of Sartre's No Exit. Which special hell would unfold if we were stuck in this room forever? How long would the chips and salsa last? Would I drink finally, knowing sobriety is too much? Who would we eat on the fourth day? How long before the drunken revelrie wears off and fistfights start? Who will cry and who will console? Who ever escapes?

"I'm ready now."





## you can't shake <sup>THE</sup> devil's hand & say you're only kidding

5 of us are crammed into an off-white Sedan. I'm a tag-a-long on a family vacation with my aunt, uncle & two barely teen-aged cousins. We're leaving the tiny town of Gainesville, Va. for the Kings Dominion theme park in Richmond.

We stop, predictably enough, at a McDonalds for breakfast and eat in the car. My cousin Higdon Gillespie Simpson IV hands a They Might Be Giants tape to his father Higdon Gillespie Simpson III to play. He puts it in without comment. Breakfast conversation as non-nutritive as our Egg McMuffin ensues. Somehow, talk veers towards dating 'rules'.

"Just don't be bringin' no black boys home, Jennifer,"

I have heard this before. My mother gave me the same speech. Jennifer rolls her eyes in mute protest to the fatherly 'advice'. I stiffen & fake a cough. But it's young Higdon, budding nerd & future computer engineer, that actually speaks up.

"Why, Dad?"

My uncle exhales long & hard before speaking. Our ignorance of how the world really works is a constant sense of frustration to him.

"Because it says so in the Bible, son."

"Where does it say that in the Bible, Dad? I don't remember anything like that in the Bible, Dad?"

Jen & I are both excited. HG has never stood up to his dad like this before. This is a boy who emulates his father week after week on the sofa watching Redskins games. The only arguments were about who would get up to get more soda & chips.

The distinction between adults in the front seat & kids in the back had never been more acute. Aunt Linda looks ashen, even more nervous than earlier today when both of her children asked to ride the rollercoasters. Uncle Hig is turning red, redder than any of the pasty British tourists we're about to stand in line with at the park. I can almost see the sweat boil on Hig's face.

"Goddamnit, what is this racket we're listening to? Travis, is this your tape?"

Even the seemingly innocuous They Might Be Giants have turned against Hig in his own car. You can almost feel sorry for him.

"HG asked me to make this tape for him."

Jennifer smiled conspiratorily, and for the first time in a long while, I felt something akin to hope for my family.



MY DAD HAD FRIENDS NAMED LUCKY AND RAT. LUCKY HAD A SNAKE, AS I REMEMBER, WHICH HE KEPT IN A LARGE AQUARIUM ON HIS COFFEE TABLE. RAT SANG IN MY DAD'S BAND. HE HAD BON SCOTT ASPIRATIONS, AND BEING A WHISKEY MAN, A BON SCOTT LIVER. HE WAS CALLED RAT BECAUSE HE WAS AN UNATTRACTIVE MAN, AND WAS JUST FINE WITH IT. HE HAD BEADY EYES AND A HORSE SADDLE FACE RIDDLED WITH ACNE SCARS. HE ACTED THE PART WHEN HE SANG, BUT HIS TARGET AUDIENCE LARGELY MISSED THE ZEN CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND ACTION. THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE INSTANCE WHEN THE MEN FOUND THEMSELVES PLAYING BEHIND A WIFE FENCE, NOT UNLIKE THAT SCENE IN THE BLUES BROTHERS. PEOPLE GET SLOSHED AND BURLY TO SOUTHERN ROCK; IT DOESN'T POSTURE DIGNITY LIKE COUNTRY MUSIC. IT'S LIBERATORY IN ITS OWN MESSED UP WAY. IT'S YOUTHFUL AND RAMBLING. IT'S ABOUT THE FLEETING PLEASURE OF PAYDAY AND DRINKING AFTER WORK TO FORGET THE BOSS. IT'S ABOUT WASTING THE TIME GRANTED BEFORE THE BIG SLOWDOWN OF MARITAL OR ECONOMIC COMMITMENT.

DAVE'S DAD WAS DIVORCED, WORKED CONSTRUCTION, AND MARKED THE BOTTLES IN HIS CABINET. WHEN WE WERE IN JUNIOR HIGH, DAVID SAVED POT SEEDS AND TRIED TO GROW THEM ON HIS WINDOWSILLS, UNTIL HIS DAD FOUND THEM, EVEN THOUGH DAVE CAUGHT HIS DAD SMOKING ONCE WHEN HE THOUGHT HE WASN'T HOME. ONE GOOD STORY IS WHEN DAVE'S DAD WAS ARGUING WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, AND HE STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL OF IT TO POUR HIMSELF A BOWL OF CEREAL AND TELL HER TO, "JUST BE QUIET AND LET ME EAT MY DINNER." THEY LIVED IN ONE OF THOSE JUST-RECENTLY-SINGLE-AGAIN SITUATIONS WHERE THINGS CAN BE HIDDEN OUT IN THE OPEN FOR DAYS, AND WELL, YOU EAT CEREAL FOR DINNER. WHEN DAVE'S DAD FOUND HIS PLANTS, HE CAME DOWN ON HIM PRETTY HARD, BUT HE WAS TIED UP WORKING ALL DAY AND TRYING TO KEEP THEIR HOME SITUATION RUNNING SMOOTHLY TO SHOW HIS EX-WIFE AND HER NEW MARINE BOYFRIEND THAT HE COULD GET ALONG JUST FINE; MOST PUNISHMENTS NEVER GOT CARRIED TO TERM.

A FEW YEARS LATER, THE STATE HAD ITS WAY WITH DAVE WHEN HE WAS CHARGED WITH POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO SELL ON SCHOOL GROUNDS - HALF AN OUNCE AND FIVE JOINTS. ALABAMA WANTED TO TRY HIM AS AN ADULT, BECAUSE SIXTEEN WAS JUST TOO CLOSE TO EIGHTEEN. IN THE END, I DON'T THINK HE SERVED ANY SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME, BUT THE LAST TIME I WAS IN TOWN HE WAS TRYING TO REENTER HIGH SCHOOL TO PICK UP WHERE HE HAD LEFT OFF, BUT NO SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY WOULD TAKE HIM BACK. THAT WAS EIGHT YEARS AGO. EIGHT YEARS SEEMS LIKE FOREVER.

WE ALL GOT SLAMMED BY THE LEE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM IN SOME WAY AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER. WHEN I WAS TWELVE, A "CONCERNED TEACHER" PLACED AN ANONYMOUS CALL TO MY MOM TO EXPRESS HER CONCERN OVER MY DEPRESSIVE TENDENCIES AND MY SEEMING OBSESSION WITH, WELL, THE DEVIL. THAT PHONE CALL LEAD TO THE MOST SINGULARLY ALIENATING PARENTAL MOMENT OF MY CHILDHOOD, APPROACHED ONLY BY THE ARREST PHONE CALL AND THE TIME I THINK I WAS CAUGHT HAVING SEX IN THEIR HOUSE MUCH LATER ON. THAT SUMMER, DUE TO THE CARING INTERVENTION, I WAS MADE TO CUT MY HAIR AND GET RID OF ALL MY PUSHEAD SHIRTS, WHICH I HAD SWEATED THE U.S. POSTAL SYSTEM OVER FOR FOUR TO SIX WEEKS. I WAS ALSO ASKED BY MY PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO NOT DISCUSS MUSIC OR RELIGION AT SCHOOL FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. I ENTERED 7TH GRADE NURTURING THE US-VERSUS-THEM ATTITUDE STRONGER THAN EVER, AND WAS STILL A FULL YEAR AWAY FROM TOTALLY REFERRING TO MYSELF AS A PUNK.

I OFTEN FOUND MYSELF ATTEMPTING TO PROVE MY DUBIOUS ADOLESCENT MASCULINITY TO THE UNCLAS AND COUSINS I'D SEE ON HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS, THOUGH IT DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG TO REALIZE THAT THE WHOLE DEIL ALMOST INVARIABLY ENDED WITH ME LOSING MY TEMPER AND RUNNING OFF TO HIDE WHEN IT BECAME QUITE OBVIOUS THAT YEAH, I WAS PRETTY MUCH THE PUSSY THEY THOUGHT I WAS. THERE WAS A THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY I SENT IN THE PAN-HANDLE, WHEN I WENT INTO THE SWAMPS WITH MY UNCLE TO CUT THE HEARTS OUT OF CABBAGE PALMS. "SWAMP CABBAGE" IS A LEAFY GREEN THAT STRIPS OFF IN LAYERS AND GOES WELL WITH CHEESE GRITS AND FRIED TURKEY, IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY. CUTTING INTO THOSE TREES IS NOW ILLEGAL, IF IT WASN'T ALREADY THEN. WE HAD TAKEN MY YOUNGER COUSIN ALONG FOR THE RIDE, DISCUSSING THE WHOLE WAY WHAT IT TOOK TO BE A MAN, THE GUNS AND CONQUEST AND COMPETITION AND SUCH - VAGUE QUALIFICATIONS I DON'T QUITE RECALL BECAUSE I'VE YET TO BECOME THAT KIND OF MAN. I REMEMBER, THOUGH, FEELING PRESSURED TO NAME SOME ATTRIBUTE OF BUDDING MASCULINITY ON MY TEN-YEAR-OLD FRAME OF EIGHTY-FIVE POUNDS, AND ALL COULD COME UP WITH WAS THE FEW STRANDS OF HAIR COMING UP JUST UNDER MY NAVEL. AS FAR AS I KNEW, THAT WAS A SURE SIGN THAT BY SUMMER I'D HAVE A FULL WOOLY TURTLENECK, JUST LIKE MY DAD. ANY POINTS WON THERE WERE LOST LATER THAT AFTERNOON, ALONG WITH THE CONTENTS OF MY STOMACH, AS WE SHOT OUT THIRTY MILES INTO THE GULF OF MEXICO, AWAY FROM HORIZON LINES AND THE COAST GUARD AND THEIR SISSY WARNINGS OF WATERS TOO ROUGH FOR DEEP SEA FISHING. I TURNED WHITE AND HELD ON TO THE SIDE OF THE BOAT, KNUCKLES WHITE AND ARMS PRICKLED. SWEATING AND SHAKING, I PRAYED FOR THE END. NOW, I DON'T FISH, AND I DON'T PRAY.



## the South

The South waits in my cells like alcoholism, near-sightedness, male-pattern-baldness, & suicidal depression. The South lies in wait for me to return to the towns my parents fled- Bentonville, Gainesville, Haymarket- broken towns on the ass-end of the Blue Ridge mountains. Places where the South refuses to die- my cousins went to Stonewall Jackson<sup>1</sup> High School, and my grandmother's land borders the Civil War Memorial Park where history 'buffs' & local nuts reenact the Battles of Bull Run. The same area where Disney wanted to build a new theme park, 'America', until a critical mass of historians & concerned citizens decried that the Disney version of slavery might not be such a good idea.

I salvage what I can from my family: my grandmother's distrust of big cities & strangers; my uncle's fierce autonomy & love of working at night; my mother's survivalist determination; my father's easy laughter. As though I could pick & choose only the good traits, the way Americans inevitably do with heritage & identity, and never worry about 'niggah' rolling off my tongue slow as molasses.

The South begs such schizophrenia. How easy it is on my grandparent's farm to not think about the outside world. Nothing needs to be said while we're snapping beans or walking in the woods after breakfast. But it's in these back woods that I remember going hunting with my dad- his anger & disappointment at my impatience & disinterest. These guns are now with my uncle, a better caretaker than myself after my father's death.

.....

1. Jackson's historical legacy, like the South he embodied, suffers under scrutiny. Jackson standing like a 'Stonewall', may be more an act of petrified cowardice than Confederate bravery.



The South cleaves its own revenge. The way my mother tries to hide her Virginia accent and instead sounds like she's from Boston & London & a high school play simultaneously. The way I never ate grits growing up because my parent's had had more than enough of the white stuff already. The way Waffle House is charming for me and not a reminder of having to cook for five siblings. And most of all the way that not even the high, sweet yodel of Hank Williams Sr. can shake my sense of dread while I'm walking past the unmarked slave cemetery. I know why my parents left this overplowed land.

"There's no such thing  
as a Mason-Dixon line-  
it's America.

There's no such thing  
as the South-  
it's America."

- Malcolm X.

I REMEMBER THE DOGWOODS IN BLOOM AROUND THE MOBILE HOME IN SMITHS, ALABAMA. THE YARD WAS A DUST BASIN. WE HAD A PICKNICK TABLE, AN ALUMINUM SWINGSET, A RUSTING BARBECUE GRILL, AN ABOVE GROUND SWIMMING POOL, AND ACRES OF WOODS SURROUNDING IT ALL. THEY WEREN'T "OUR WOODS" IN THAT THERE WAS NO DEED OR BILL OF SALE OR ANYTHING, AND I THINK THAT MY PARENTS RESENTED THAT WE COULDN'T HAVE EVEN OFFERED TO BUY THE LAND; BUT THEY WERE OUR WOODS SIMPLY IN THAT NO ONE WAS EVER OUT THERE. WE LIVED AWAY FROM MOST THINGS, AND PEOPLE THAT WE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE OUT THERE WAS HIGHLY UNUSUAL. I HAD THOSE WOODS SO MAPPED OUT FROM SPENDING WHOLE DAYS (WHEN DAYS WERE COMPRISED OF SUNLIGHT HOURS) BY MYSELF, WANDERING AROUND. THE LOT WASN'T EXPANSIVE ENOUGH TO GET THOROUGHLY LOST IN, BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS AN AREA I DIDN'T FEEL COMFORTABLE GOING TO. GOING PAST THE TIRE SWING TO THE CLIMBING TREE WAS BASIC. MY MOM LOVED TO TAKE ME TO THE PLUM TREES AT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST, RIGHT ON ROUTE 5. ROUTE 5 LATER BECAME LEE ROAD. IN ANOTHER DIRECTION WAS A NARROW TRAIL WHICH LED TO A CREEK RUNNING THROUGH A STEEP BASIN. DESPITE SNAKE WARNINGS, EIGHT YEAR OLDS ARE INVINCIBLE. I REMEMBER BEING EXTREMELY CURIOUS ABOUT WHO HAD CLEARED ALL THOSE TRAILS; THE IDEA OF ANOTHER INHABITANT BEFORE MY PARENTS AND I HAD OCCUPIED THE TRAILER WAS AS UNCONCEIVABLE AS PHYSICS.

WHEN I TURNED NINE, AFTER MY LITTLE BROTHER WAS BORN, WE GREW OUT OF THE TRAILER'S ALUMINUM AND VENEER WALLS AND MOVED INTO A "NEIGHBORHOOD" WITH PAVED ROADS AND HOUSE NUMBERS AND DRIVEWAYS. MY PRE-ADOLESCENT SENSIBILITIES TOLD ME THAT ANY STEP IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC HIERARCHY HAD TO BE AN ILLUSTRATION THAT MY FAMILY WAS NOT BELOW UPWARD MOBILITY, NO MATTER HOW INCONSEQUENTIAL IN REAL TERMS THE SHIFT MAY HAVE BEEN. LAWNS WERE GOOD, AND WE HAD NEIGHBOURS, AND ALL THE SELF CONSCIOUS POSTERING THAT CAME WITH THEM. I REMEMBER MY FOLKS ALWAYS SAYING THAT OUR NEW HOUSE LOOKED JUST LIKE A DENTISTS' OFFICE - A LONG BRICK BUILDING WITH A ROW OF WINDOWS SET SYMMETRICALLY ACROSS THE FRONT, SET JUST TOO HIGH TO REALLY SEE OUT OF. BUT I HAD NEVER SEEN A DENTISTS' OFFICE; I WAS SIMPLY IN AWE OF LIVING IN A HOUSE MADE OF BRICKS.



the south

rocking chairs                      screened-in porches  
grits                      fly swatters                      BASS caps  
Let us Now Praise Famous Men                      biscuits  
dirt roads                      cornbread                      okra & Kale  
Hank Williams Sr.                      Flannery O'Connor  
pecan pie                      Creedence Clearwater Revival  
clothes mildewing in the closet from humidity  
Palace Brothers -- Matewan (reconstruction fables  
You Have Seen Their Faces                      heppin' john  
soda pop (Mt. Dew & Dr. Pepper)                      pine trees  
honeysuckle                      Civil War Memorial Parks  
William Faulkner                      lemonade (very sweet)  
whiskey in a flask, curved to fit your ass pocket  
Young Pioneers songs about Richmond  
Garson McCullers                      corn on the cob  
Invisible Man                      venison                      Feast of Snakes  
Autobiography of Malcolm X                      lightning bugs  
"rabbit tobacco"                      Robert Johnson  
mosquitoes (avoiding bananas in the summertime,  
                    sweating out the glucose attracts them)  
Zora Neal Hurston                      baying of hounds  
sweating at church, because you had to wear  
                    a tie & jacket in July





can we fault a band for melody? questions inherent in punk & hardcore, and just as relevant tonight.

nostalgia is great for cd discography sales, but will we learn from their mistakes? i study clash biographies & d.c. hardcore frantie for clues-- i don't want any future musical projects to sound like either junkyard or Big Audio Dynamite.

i side mostly with hardcore because of its critical edge, its promise to go beyond the shock value of pink hair and leopard print. which is not to deny the intellectual beauty of a punk band like CRASS nor to ignore the way hardcore is interpreted to a macho game of harder-than-you. i side, again & again, with movements of action, rejection, & inspiration. draw from the bombast & rhetoric what you can.

.....

1. I think it was a Greil Marcus (or Jon Savage?) passage that said the truly great punk songs level the past, making the rock canon an embarrassment. The way that John Woo's action films make Hollywood efforts seem like a bad joke, if not an outright farce. But for punk razing, refer to the Big Boys's "Fun Fun Fun"; "New Day Rising" by Husker Du; or Wire's "1-2-X-U" . . . and then go start your own band.

THE MUSICAL SCHEME SET FORTH BEFORE THE TIMES OF  
DISTRACTION YELLOWS, BUT NEVER TEARS. THE INHABITANTS HERE,  
CHOIR AND CHORUS ONE AND THE SAME WITH THE ORCHESTRA,  
THOSE DOWN IN FRONT, THOSE IN THE BALCONY, SMALL MAGNIFYING  
INSTRUMENTS GROWING FROM THEIR SCOWLING FACES, LIVE THE  
SONGS OF THE DAY-TO-DAY. THE CANTORPHANY, THE DRONE AND THE  
DRIZZLE, THE PERCUSSION IN A LARGE ROOM OF SPARTAN DECORATION  
PRODUCES A RESONANCE OF FINALITY. AN ECHO CHAMBER. EACH  
COMPONENT OF THIS REVERBERATION IS A TIME WHEN SOMETHING  
HAPPENED, AND LEFT AN IMPRESSION. THE SPEED OF SOUND PALES  
TO THE SPEED OF MEMORY. THEIR FREQUENCIES UNITE TO SOUND A  
BASTARD PULSE, A CRACKED CLAPPER PINGING SERMIC PROPORTION.  
GRAVITY HAS ITS OWN SONG, DENSE AND JUGULAR. THE CELLO PULL

## MY DISSERTATION ON 'THE PUNK ROCK..'

AND SWAY SINGS FORTH A SAD RIVER FLOWING, WAVES SHALLOW  
AND CONSTANT. THE MELANCHOLIC FOLD OF CONTINENTS CHOMPING THE  
BIT OF BORDER BETWEEN FIGURE AND GROUND. THIS WAS SMOOTH. TIME,  
THAT IS; TIME WAS SMOOTH AND SEAMLESS, BUT THE GRINDING GAVE  
TO GROUND, GROUND GAVE TO ABRASION, ABRASION GAVE TO A BREACH  
OF MEMORY. WE ARE LEFT WITH THE SOFT RESIDUE OF OCCASION  
A CHRONOLOGY OF HAPPENSTANCE. WHAT-IF AND THEREFORE. THERE IS  
NO DISCUSSION OF MUSIC WITHOUT REGARD TO THE SPACES IT CREATES  
AND AN EXAMINATION OF THE WOUNDS THAT ARE FOUNDED ON PHYSICAL  
RESISTANCE. FORGING ON, WE RESONATE AMONG DAYS.

WE ORCHESTRATE COMMUNITIES.

FOR FURTHER PERUSAL:

- ① BLACK FLAG "THE FIRST FOUR YEARS" LP
- ② ANY LUNGFISH RECORD AFTER "NECKLACE OF HEADS!" "NECKLACE..." IS  
GOOD, BUT IT'S EARLY AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.
- ③ ARTICLES OF FAITH "GIVE THANKS" LP
- ④ HUGGY BEAR "TAKING THE PUNCH WITH THE SMUCK" 10"
- ⑤ HATED "WHAT WAS BEHIND" LP
- ⑥ FUNERAL ORATION "COMMUNION" LP
- ⑦ THE GERMS LP, AND THAT'S JUST THE STUFF ON MY MIND RIGHT NOW.



the difference between punk & hardcore? we can play semantic games indefinitely (& we do, constantly), but the discussion hinges on the way art movements beget one another. the way the virulence & inaccessability of bop birthed the slick west coast cool in jazz. how the cocaine numbness of disco & phallic exaggerations of arena rock gave way to the short, sharp shock of punk rock. and yes, how the nihilism & unfocused violence of punk made the ascetic aesthetic of hardcore inevitable. action-reaction:action.

not that it doesn't all sound like a godawful racket to 99% of the population. for the uninitiated, punk sounds like sped-up, abridged rock-n-roll, which it basically is. it's catchy & easy to shake both your ass & fist to.<sup>1</sup> hardcore, however, is inseparable from noise only in its intent & attack. you will not hear it on the radio. it will not go over well at a fraternity mixer. which begs the question:

**DOES ART  
HAVE a RESPONSIBILITY  
TO ALIENATE  
THE ENEMY?**

**Scene :** the dusty, overflowing warehouse on the NE side of Gainesville. 2 characters, both mid-twenties with state university degrees, half-assed beards and a longtime interest in a dissonant, screaming musical subculture.

1: Hey. What's new?

2: Good bike ride out here. You know, usual Thursday stuff.

1: What else is new?

2: Umm, looking forward to playing on Saturday.

1: You all haven't played in a while. Why's that?

2: I don't know. Everyone has a different schedule and one of us is always out of town. It's hard to coordinate but not seem like you're cracking a whip. You all are getting ready to tour again?

1: Yup. Should be good.

2: Yeah, I know, I remember.

1: So you travelling anytime soon?

2: Hopefully. I have a friend in Portland I want to visit soon. I'd like to go back to Prague. Just get a room and unwind before it's too late.

1: Portland's cool. Prague's pretty amazing too. (significant pause)  
You gotta leave when you're not doing anything here. Shit or get off the pot.



2: You thinking about going back to school?

1: Not really. Graduate school was awkward. I'm not sure I want to go back. I was in classes with people who'd lived through the events we were studying. They were in Bolivia at the time of the uprising. What the hell do I know? What's the point of us debating it in a classroom? Is that too harsh?

2: No. I know exactly what you mean.

Exit. Characters return to work, moving "Reggie and the Fall Effect" cd's from boxes to shelves to smaller boxes for consumption outside of Gainesville. Dialogue turns to silent, interior monologue(s), continuing throughout the bike ride home.

"The city exists and has a simple secret: it knows only departures, not returns."

—Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

**I give myself hypothetical ultimatums  
for leaving Gainesville-**

**I'll leave when my best friends are gone;**

**I'll leave when I'm 30;**

**I'll leave when I no longer know anyone  
at Leo's who'll give me free coffee;**

**I'll leave when I stop finding new bike  
routes to work;**

**I'll leave when I have \$5,000 in the bank;**

**I'll leave when no one compatible wants  
to play music;**

**I'll leave when I no longer get hooked up  
at Burrito Brothers;**

**I'll leave when the tree canopies are no  
longer the norm;**

**I'll leave when I feel even older & more  
useless.**

**Believing you need a new city to grow is  
the same argument that calls for alcoholism,  
squalor, manic depression & a love life  
like a Tom Waits song in order to be any  
sort of "artist". I blame Bukowski & the  
beats for archotyping bohemia. The Sisy-  
phus-style dedication required to create  
anything of more than passing value must  
be addressed, regardless of locale.**

**I spoke with Giovanni for the first time  
last night. I'd recently written him in  
positive response to his last zine, par-  
ticularly the aside that fostering a scene  
in your hometown is really the only way to  
build community/support. He called two**



days later to say he couldn't take it anymore and wanted to move here. "Spokane's a black hole." I've heard the same thing said about Gainesville.

It's not that I haven't seen friends move from here & blossom in bigger cities (Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco). The breakneck pace of such cities and the sheer alienation of public transportation can perversely be a much-needed kick in the ass.

But cities can only be blamed so much. If you spent half as much time actually doing whatever the hell it is you "need" to do as you do complaining about this town, things would be a lot easier. The question isn't where you live; it's what you're doing (or not doing).

Endnote: the relevance of the word "cleave" and its binary definitions to Gainesville, punk & ourselves.

cleave<sup>1</sup>: to adhere closely; stick; cling; to remain faithful.

cleave<sup>2</sup>: to split or divide by or as by a cutting blow, esp. along a natural line of division; to penetrate or pass through (air, water, etc.); to cut off; sever.







**jealousy**



# HOW WAS IT?

You know it's irrational, that you're being completely ridiculous. You realize that jealousy turns you into a petulant child, crying at the mere possibility that your precious toy could be taken by someone stronger & craftier. Your friends think you're an idiot when you talk of the secret plots against you, but they listen anyway, nodding at the appropriate points. What else are friends for if not to take your side when you're wrong?

# WHERE WERE YOU?

You know that even if your lover is loving someone else right now, you could get over it eventually. We survive, losing only a sliver of our faith in the future. Who amongst us can resist possessiveness in relationships, weathering incidents that are neither infidelities nor indiscretions?

# IT DOESN'T MATTER.

You live with jealousy as you do any other inherent but undesirable trait--grinding it between your teeth at dinner parties. Jealousy lies with covetousness and fatuousness--the clipped wings of caged birds, the deadened eyes of indoor pets constantly waiting for an open door.

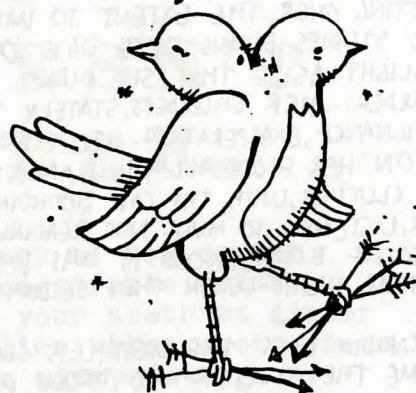
THE DWELLING ON THE WINK ACROSS THE ROOM THAT YOU'RE NOT INVITED TO UNDERSTAND; WE'VE BEEN MADE THIRD WHEELS OF. THE CROWD, STATIC AND WELL DRESSED, LAUGHING AMONG THEMSELVES TO PULL A PALE MUSIC. AN EMPTY BOTTLE LEFT ON THE COUNTER BY PARTIES UNKNOWN THE NIGHT BEFORE. A HUSHED CONVERSATION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLOSED DOOR. KNOWING THINGS YOU'D RATHER NOT; WORSE, SEEING THINGS YOU WOULD HAVE RATHER NOT. A JIGGLING DOORKNOB WHILE YOU'RE IN THE BATHROOM; BROKEN GLASS ON THE SIDEWALK, FOR THAT MATTER, IT'S ALL INCRIMINATING. FACTS UNFOUNDED RELAYED BY A TRUSTED FRIEND... STORMING OUT OF THE ROOM, HE KNEW IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND HE WAS MAKING A SCENE, AS OPPOSED TO MAKING THE SCENE, WHICH IS WHAT HE USED TO DO. HE REALLY HAD NO REASON TO BE UPSET, BUT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE ADMIRER AND RESPECTED AND LOVED AND SHE HAD JUST NOT BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT AT ALL. SO MANY WORDS SHE SAID WERE ALLUSIONS TO EVENTS HE HAD NO PART OF, AND SHE HAD NO INTENTION OF IMPARTING ANY KNOWLEDGE. SHE SEEMED TO BE OUT FOR REVENGE REGARDING THE REGULAR OCCURRENCE OF THOUGHTLESS AND HURTFUL COMMENTS EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM. NEITHER CARED MUCH TO SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS ANY OF THIS, THEY WERE JUST HOPING TO HURT AN APOLOGY OUT OF EACH OTHER. SHE WINKED AT A FRIEND ACROSS THE ROOM; HE STORMED OUT, LOOKING RIDICULOUS, BUT ISN'T THAT ALWAYS THE WAY.

THEIR AFFAIR HAD BEEN ONE OF LITERARY PROPORTIONS, BOTH WILDLY INTENSE AND ACHING WITH BREVITY. NOT YET OVER, IT BEGAN WITH AN UNEXPECTED KISS; NOT TO SAY IT WAS UNSOLICITED. SHE OFTEN TOLD HIM HOW HORRIBLY TRANSPARENT HE WAS IN THOSE DAYS. HE HAD WANTED SO BADLY TO KISS HER. HE USED TO LAY IN BED, HER BED, AND WATCH HER DART AROUND THE ROOM, FRETTERING OVER THE EXTENT TO WHICH SHE HAD BEEN NEGLECTING HER STUDIES DURING THOSE DAYS OF IMMERSION, ADDING ONLY AS A SLIGHT ASIDE THAT SHE DIDN'T REGRET IT, SMILING OVER ONE SHOULDER... HER SHOULDERS, STATELY 93° ANGLES, PERFECT FOR RESOLVE, INDIGNANCE, EXASPERATION. HE OFTEN EXASPERATED HER. THEY WOULD SIT ON HER FLOOR ALL NIGHT, AMIDST ALL THE BOOKS AND CLOTHES AND CLUTTER, WITH THE CAT BOUNCING BETWEEN THEM AND ALL OVER, LISTENING TO MUSIC AND READING THE GOOD PARTS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE BOOKS ALOUD. IT WAS ENOUGH TO BE PRINCE TO GENIUS ON THOSE NIGHTS WHEN THEY SELDOM KISSED, BUT FELT CLOSEST.

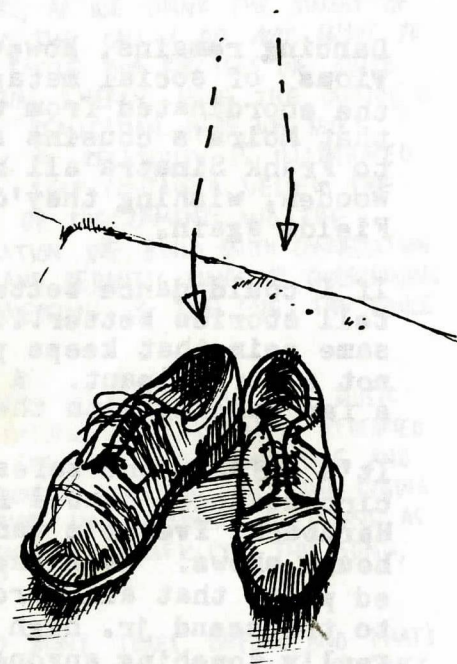
SO RAPIDLY DOES THE BREATHLESS CLATTER OF NEW ROMANCE BECOME THE STUTTER AND DROOL OF ROTE EXPECTATION TO SUCH A LOVELY COUPLE. SHE, WITH HER CINEMATIC MANNER; HE, WITH HIS AFFECTED SCOWL. THEY MADE QUITE A PAIR BEFORE ALL OF THE UGLINESS. HE WAS PRONE TO DISTRUST AND SHE WAS PRONE TO



GETTING TIRED OF HIM. WHO COULD BLAME HIM? WHO COULD  
BLAME HER THAT HAD BEEN IN LOVE, OR WHATEVER THIS ALL IS.  
IT'S QUITE EMBARRASSING TO WITNESS, THIS BASEST OF HUMAN  
EMOTIONS. BUT HERE, AT PARTIES - AT THIS PARTY, IS A FINE TIME  
FOR EMOTIONS BOTH BASE AND SPECTACULAR. THE ALCOHOLIC  
GLARE AND SOCIAL RUMBLE HAS PROVIDED A THEATRICAL ARENA  
FOR THE YOUNG LOVERS, AND NO DOUBT THERE WILL BE TALK  
OF WHAT AN ASS THE YOUNG MAN HAD MADE OF HIMSELF, WITH  
ALL HIS HAUGHT AND HASTE. AND OF COURSE, IT WILL BE  
FORGOTTEN BY THE NEXT DRUNKEN RAMBLE. PARTY FODDER, IN  
ALL ITS INEXHAUSTIBLE FASCINATION, IS, UNLIKE LOVE, FOREVER.



# dance to the music



Bernard Sumner is crooning, "Tonight I think I'll walk alone. I'll find my soul as I go home. And I've never met anyone quite like you before." It's an ascendant moment, as ultimately cheesy & appropriate as the first time I heard the song back in Satellite Beach.

The charm of new wave lies in the tinny, sentimental melodies barely there amongst the hypnotic dance beats. Single-handed keyboard lines that somehow touch the spots between the lungs & heart & stomach. Perfect for dance clubs, but as a work of art it shouldn't succeed. Like a poem made from hackneyed words: "good" & "love" & "alone". It's too obvious, but somehow it does work, and you love it for trying. At least that's why I love New Order and their nouveau imitators. And why Tuesday nights at U.C. can be bearable.

Dancing remains, however, the most obvious of social metaphors separating the coordinated from the inept. The way that Moira's cousins sashayed comfortably to Frank Sinatra all night while we sat wooden, wishing they'd play the Magnetic Fields again.

If I could dance better... If I could tell stories better... Facets of the same coin that keeps you an observer & not a participant. A critic rather than a fan dancing with their eyes closed.

It's only in the safest and insular of circumstances that I feel like dancing: Hardback, Yvette's dance parties, Warehouse shows. Even then it's the restrained palsy that all hardcore kids do, trying to transcend jr. high memories and never really touching anyone else.



THE DANCE FLOOR AS ALLEGORY. PARTNERS CHANGE AND EYES WANDER AS OPTIONS ARE PONDERED. ALL THE WHILE, THE MUSIC PULSES ALONG THE COLLECTIVE PHYSIOGNOMY OF ITS ENVELOPED PARTICIPANTS. MOLECULES ROCK THE HOUSE. THE DANCE FLOOR, AS IS CALLED THE FREE SPACE WHERE WE MINGLE WITH CLASSMATES AND STRANGERS, THOSE WE'VE SEEN WORKING RETAIL DESKS AND DRIVING IN TRAFFIC AND EATING LUNCH THROUGH PLATE GLASS AND HOLDING HANDS IN PUBLIC. WE TOUCH THEM; WE GUSTEN WITH THEIR SWEAT AND OUR OWN. EYES SELDOM MEET, BUT WHEN THEY DO, IS SOLICITATION IMPLIED? IS GROOMING AND PRESENTATION A SUCCESS? IS THIS WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR EVEN? CATHARSIS? MAYBE. RESPITE FROM THE BLANK STARES AND COLD DISTANCE?

BUT ARE WE CREATING NEW DISTANCES? WHAT DO WE FORGE OF THESE SPASTIC PARTICLES WE'VE CHOSEN TO CALL MUSIC? WHY MUST WE MOVE SO, AS IF THE SOUNDS ARE SICKENING AND SPINNING US INTO DELIRIUM? THE LIGHT IS DIM, AS TO REMAIN SET APART FROM THE PALLID SUN OF THE WORKADAY WORLD WHICH PRONOUNCES AND CATEGORIZES EVERY MOVE INTO AN OBSTINATE CHOREOGRAPHY, A TRITE RIGOR STIFFENING WITH TIME AS WE WRINKLE AND WEAR.

BUT HERE IS THE MEANTIME, HERE, AS WE DANCE; HERE, AS WE SWAY IN A SEXUAL MANNER; HERE, AS WE DRINK THE SWEAT OF SISTERS; HERE, AS WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE CALL: I DO NOT WANT TO BE LONELY. WITHOUT PAUSE, WE RATTLE OUR RIBCAGES, WE BUILD MUSCLE AND DRIP WATER THAT WAS ENERGY. HERE, THE OUTSIDE IS A GELDED CHORUS, THREAT WITHOUT REALIZATION. HERE, WE MOCK OBLIGATIONS FINANCIAL AND ROMANTIC AS RELATIVITY IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE SLOWING OF TIME IN A SELF-CONTAINED VESSEL; THE NIGHT. LOCATION IS A MICROCOSM OF THE CEMENT AND THE PAVEMENT AND THE FEARFUL INSULATION WE BUILD WITH CONVERSATION AND WELL PLACED ARMS' LENGTHS AND PEDANTIC LINES OF QUESTIONING AND TURNS OF THE HEAD AND AVERSIONS OF THE EYE: THE DANCE FLOOR.

EACH TIME I COME I TELL MYSELF IT'S THE LAST. THE MUSIC RINGS UNTRUE, THE MUSIC RINGS UNTRUE, THE MOTION IS REHEARSED AND CONSPICUOUSLY SELF-CONSCIOUS, THE SMELL ALL TOO STALE AND PREDICTABLE AND THE FACES BEGINNING TO LOOK THE SAME, LOSING THE CIVIL FAMILIARITY WHICH RAISES AND ANSWERS QUESTIONS AS WE RENDER HUMANITY FROM CONTEXT SPECIFICITY... THIS SONG, HAVEN'T WE HEARD IT BEFORE?

YES, WE'VE HEARD THIS SONG SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, AND THAT'S EXACTLY THE REASON THIS IS IMPORTANT. WHEN THE MUSIC BECOMES FAMILIAR, WE BECOME ABLE TO PERFORM TO IT. THE WORDS BECOME

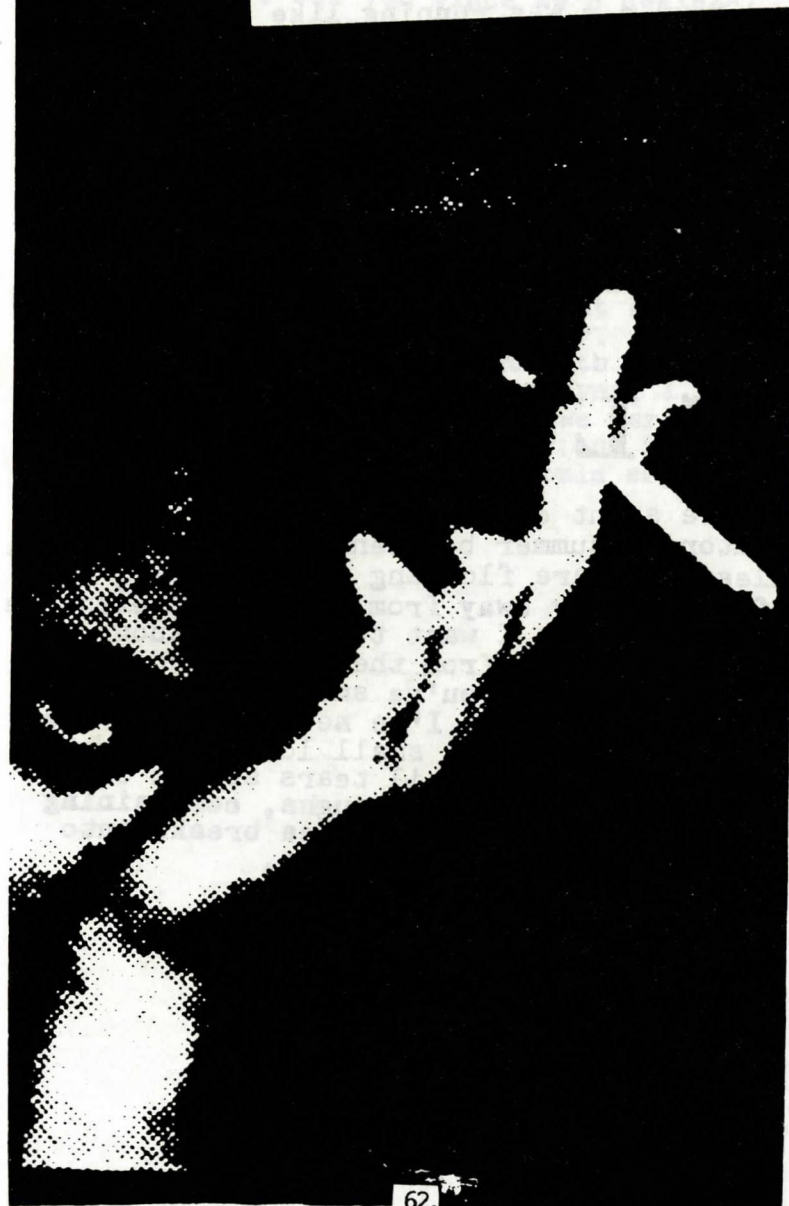
A STUDIED SET OF LINES PROVIDING A SPECIALIZED, TEMPORARY ROLE TO PORTRAY IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT OF LITTLE IMPACT OR LASTING CONSEQUENCE. HERE, WE MAY EXPEND SEXUAL ENERGIES THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE EMOTIONALLY TEDIOUS AND STRESSFUL. AND WE GET A LITTLE EXERCISE IN THE BARGAIN.

"BUT THAT'S THE REASON THIS ALL GETS SO TIRESOME. WHERE IS THE MOMENT, THE TIME IN WHICH WE FORGET OURSELVES AND MOVE AS DICTATED BY OUTSIDE FORCES?"

"DEAR, THERE ARE NO OUTSIDE FORCES, AND ONE MUST NEVER FORGET ONESELF WHILE DANCING."



# Smoking





# CIGARETTES

And why not, I asked outloud with the same bravado most 13-year-olds must have when sneaking their first beer. Jawbreaker's 'Chesterfield King' overcame the tape deck and your car was running like a perpetual motion machine. We had our own apartment, no jobs and no accountability. You stop at the Suwannee Swiftee and return with a pack of Chesterfields. You have to, you said, and I did, not inhaling, just blowing smoke out the open window. Trees blurred between the billboards and we were moving, really moving, and I wished we could fake coolness this easily forever.

# CLOVES

The rare scent of cloves returns me to the purgatorial summer between high school and college. We are floating on a rowboat, drifting slowly away from the German exchange student picnic. I want to be impestuous, leaving on a boat from these dying coastal towns. The clove you're smoking smells like all the exotic foods I've never eaten. You pass the clove with a small look of regret. I inhale and cough until tears stream out both eyes. Your friend laughs, complaining I "nigger-lipped" it. The sea breaks into white foam all around the boat.

# MARIJUANA

I was visiting for the weekend without a plan. Just to see you since we'd decided to maybe work things out. I hated your friends & their affected brit-pop stylings. You hated my friends & their affected iconoclastic stances. We met on agreed, neutral groundings: food, movies, the couch, mix tapes & 24-hr. diners. Dated & inevitably doomed, but not without a transgressive charm-- the way Friday nights fill each of us with the pervasive hope that liberation lies but a swill & toké away. I bought my first & only bag of pot that night because I thought it'd smooth things over. But in your claustrophobic apartment with all the drugged laughter and veinburst eyes, I knew how wrong I was, how far apart we were. I excused myself from the party and fell asleep in your bed before we could argue or cry or smoke anymore.



HAVE A SEAT AT THE BAR AS THE MEN AND WOMEN SPEAK OF THE PASSING OF DAYS. YOU'RE OF MY TIME, EACH OF YOU, BUT YOU SMELL LIKE MY FATHER AND MOTHER. YOU SPEAK A VOCABULARY OF SECOND THOUGHTS, INVENTING REGRETS IF EVENTS TRANSPIRE TOO SEAMLESSLY; YOU AGE BEFORE MY EYES IF I BLINK SLOWLY. WE ARE ALL WEATHERING. THERE'S A SULLEN OLD MAN OUTSIDE WITH YELLOW LEATHERED FINGERTIPS. HE'S SMOKING, TOO. LIKE WHEN I PASS BY YOUR HOUSE AND YOU'RE PEEPING OUT INTO NOWHERE; YOU SMOKE FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT. YOU SQUIRM AND FIDGET AT MY KITCHEN TABLE AS WE TALK BECAUSE YOU CAN'T SMOKE IN MY HOUSE.

I CARRIED A LIGHTER FOR YOU.

SOMEONE ONCE TAUGHT ME TO MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH A WOMAN AS YOU LIGHT HER CIGARETTE; IT'S CINEMATIC. IT FEELS MORE LIKE CONDESCENSION. "I HATE IT WHEN YOU SMOKE, WHY AM I LIGHTING YOUR CIGARETTE?"

MY MOM MADE SMOKE SMELL RESPECTABLE. ON HER CLOTHES, IT MINGLED WITH THE DAY'S SPENT PERFUME. SHE HAD OFFICE STYLE, MANIFESTED IN WORRY LINES AND THAT COFFEE-CIGARETTE SMELL, SO COMFORTING WHEN SHE HELD ME, AND SO MUCH MORE PRONOUNCED THAN THE SAME SMELL ON MY FATHER. HE SMELLED MORE JUST LIKE A MAN.

THEY BOTH SMOKED SINCE HIGH SCHOOL. THEY QUIT AFTER ALMOST THIRTY YEARS. MY MOM STILL KEEPS A PACK IN HER CAR; ONE COULD MAINTAIN YOU DON'T REALLY DROP THAT KIND OF HABIT.

MY FRIEND DAVID SMOKED BEFORE WE WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL. HE'D LABOR TO INHALE, SQUINTING AS HE DREW SMOKE IN THROUGH HIS NARROW LIPS. HE LEARNED HOW THROUGH CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, HE LEARNED WHY FROM THE HEAVY METAL MAGAZINES WE STOLE FROM DRUG STORES (WALK IN, CROUCH DOWN BEHIND THE MAGAZINE RACK, TAKE YOUR SHIRT OFF, WRAP IT AROUND THE MAGAZINES, THEN JAM THE WHOLE THING BETWEEN YOUR HIP AND YOUR SKATEBOARD). LATER, DAVID STARTED SELLING CRYSTAL METH.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, I SWORE I'D NEVER KISS A GIRL THAT SMOKED. I WAS YOUNG AND FOOLISH. I'M STILL YOUNG AND FOOLISH, BUT I'VE MET A FEW AMAZING KISSERS WHO WERE NO STRANGERS TO SMOKE AND ASH.

SMOKING IS GOOD FOR WAITING. HITCHHIKING AND TRAINHOPPING, YOU SAY. I GUESS A LOT OF PEOPLE DO CROSSWORD PUZZLES FOR THE SAME REASON.

IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE KINDS OF PEOPLE WHO POLL

THEIR OWN. WHO BUM SMOKES. WHO CARRY THEM IN A CASE. WHO'S CONSCIOUS OF BLOWING SMOKE IN MY FACE AND WHO SPEAKS SO HURRIEDLY, RUSHING CARBON MONOXIDE INTO ALL OF MY ORAL CAVITIES, AS IF TRYING TO EXTRACT A RESPONSE FROM ME.

IT'S NICE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR HANDS AT PARTIES.

I ONCE WORKED IN AN OFFICE WITH A WOMAN WHO HAD THREE SISTERS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH EMPHYSEMA, ALL AT ONCE.

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON AT ALL FOR BALLERINAS TO SMOKE. IT HELPS KEEP THEM THIN.

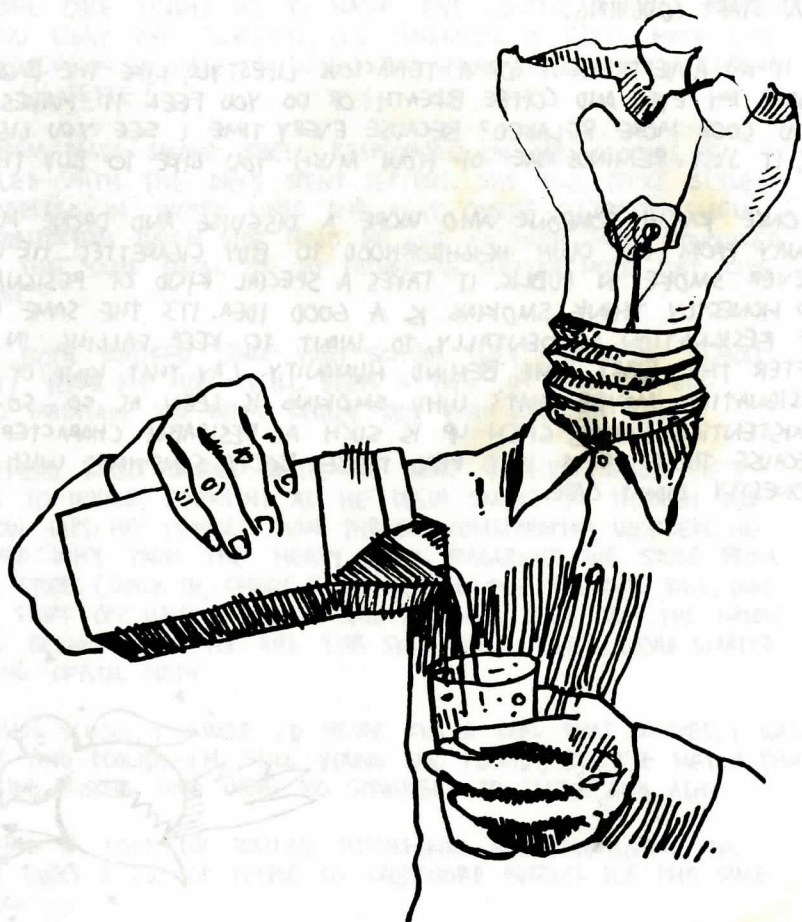
YOU START COUGHING.

IS IT AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A TENACIOUS LIFESTYLE, LIKE THE BAGS UNDER MY EYES AND COFFEE BREATH? OR DO YOU FEEL IT MAKES YOU LOOK MORE RELAXED? BECAUSE EVERY TIME I SEE YOU LIGHT UP, IT JUST REMINDS ME OF HOW MUCH YOU LIKE TO BUY THINGS.

I ONCE KNEW SOMEONE WHO WORE A DISGUISE AND DROVE MILES AWAY FROM HIS OWN NEIGHBORHOOD TO BUY CIGARETTES. HE'D NEVER SMOKE IN PUBLIC. IT TAKES A SPECIAL KIND OF RESIGNATION TO HONESTLY THINK SMOKING IS A GOOD IDEA. IT'S THE SAME KIND OF RESIGNATION, INCIDENTALLY, TO WANT TO KEEP FALLING IN LOVE AFTER THE FIRST TIME. BEHIND HUMANITY LAY THAT KIND OF RESIGNATION. MAYBE THAT'S WHY SMOKING IS SEEN AS SO... SO... EXISTENTIAL. HAVING GIVEN UP IS SUCH A DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC BECAUSE THOSE OF US WHO READ THOSE BOOKS SOMETIMES WISH WE HONESTLY DIDN'T CARE.



# responsible consumerism





"Before the logical  
caprices of commodities,  
the consumers become  
temple slaves.  
Those who sacrifice themselves  
nowhere else  
can do so here,  
and here  
they are fully betrayed."

-Theodor Adorno,  
'On the Fetish Character in Music  
& the Regression of Listening'

### the Bottom-line tyranny of the Dollar-bin

Relegated, all, to the 99¢ bin, as though  
the mid-90's 'emo' explosion never happened.  
The logical late-capitalism end to a mil-  
lion Kinko's cards & a billion crudely-drawn  
hearts and stars. Markets reach saturation  
and move on, ever ready for the next trend.

I've found my own records in there. You  
never lose the shock of recognition, con-  
crete examples of time's hands & art's  
appetite. I used to buy all my friend's  
records that I found in the dollar bin,  
as though I could save them from the trash  
pile. But there were too many, and what  
was I going to do with more copies of the  
tour diary single? Vinyl doesn't recycle.

We're stuck with these inflexible plastic  
reminders of our youth, as awkward as any  
senior picture: our arrogance & innocence,  
bravado & buffoonery; both fuel for our  
future and necessary waste.

.....

1. Any art movement can be substituted here.  
I used 'emo' for personal relevance. &  
embarrassment.



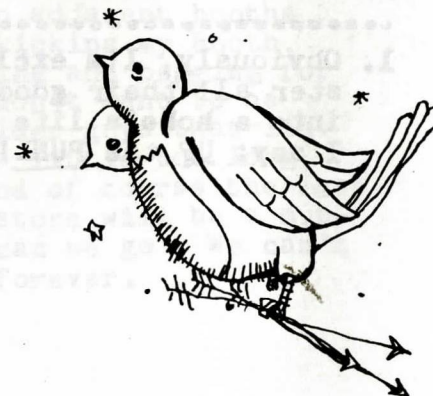
# being and buying

SO, WHAT IS THERE TO BE? I MEAN, ASIDE FROM ANOTHER CUSTOMER? IT'S QUITE A STRANGE THING TO THINK OF THE CITIES WE NOW LIVE IN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE SETTLEMENTS THAT PREDATED CITY PLANNING. THE CONTEMPORARY SCHEME SEEMS TO BE ALL ABOUT MULTINATIONAL BUSINESSES EXPANDING INTO MARKETS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE LOCALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT. ANY OVERREACHING U.S. CULTURE SEEMS TO BE BEST ILLUSTRATED BY THE IDEA OF "CORPORATE RESONANCE". BRAND NAME AVAILABILITY NOT ONLY PREDETERMINES A NICHE IN A CHOKED MARKET, BUT BECOMES AN AGENT OF CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION, AS WELL. NOT BANDAGES, BUT BAND-AIDS. NOT PHOTO-COPIED, BUT XEROXED. NOT GELATIN, BUT JELL-O. I BUY IT, DO YOU? I THINK ABOUT IT, I TRY TO CUT IT OFF AT THE PASS, BUT YEAH, I MAKE PURCHASES TO HELP ME DEFINE WHAT I'M ABOUT. FAIR TRADE COFFEE WITHOUT SUGAR. NO EGGS, THEY'RE LITTLE BABY ANIMALS. NO GROWN-UP ANIMALS, BECAUSE I THINK MEAT PRODUCTION (NOT MEAT CONSUMPTION, MIND YOU) IS ONE OF THE MOST WASTEFUL INDUSTRIES HUMANS HAVE COOKED UP YET (BUT KNOW THIS: I DON'T THINK MEAT IS ANY MORE DISGUSTING THAN MUCH OF THE LABORATORY MULCH I SEEK OUT TO SATISFY MY NAGGING SWEET TOOTH, AND IF I LIVED IN ANOTHER TIME OR PLACE, I'D BE ONE HELL OF A FISHERMAN). HOLD THE BLEACH. HOLD THE INSECTICIDES. HOLD ANY AND ALL RADIATION. HOLD THE BLOOD OF WORKING HANDS. SECOND-HAND CLOTHES, WHEN IT'S TIME FOR NEW ONES. DO YOU REALLY NEED EVERY THING YOU HAVE? AND WHEN WE SAY "RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERISM", WHAT DO WE MEAN? RESPONSIBLE TO WHOM? CONSUMING WHAT? LIKE AN "ALL-CONSUMING PASSION"? LIKE FIRE CONSUMES? RESPONSIBLE, LIKE IRONING YOUR WORK CLOTHES, OR RESPONSIBLE LIKE TELLING YOUR WIFE YOU'VE BEEN UNFAITHFUL?

WHAT ARE WE LEFT WITH WHEN THE POPULATION OUTGROWS THE VAGUE PARAMETERS WE'VE ASSIGNED AS THE "JOB MARKET"? IDEAS LIKE "TEMP WORK" BECOME ACCEPTED MODES OF PRODUCTION BUREAUCRACY. NATIONS CLEAVE INTO CONSUMER AND WORKSHOP DIVISIONS, WITH THE LATTER BEING PEOPLED BY HEATHENS AND HALFWITS TOO FOOLISH TO BE BORN IN THE CORRECT HEMISPHERE TO BENEFIT FROM SUCH AN AMAZING CLIMATE OF PROSPERITY AS IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE; THE FORMER PEOPLED BY, WELL, YOU AND ME. SO AGAIN, WHEN WE SAY "RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER", WHO ARE WE BEING RESPONSIBLE TO? RESPONSIBLE LIKE WIPING YOUR OWN ASS, OR RESPONSIBLE LIKE BURNING DOWN A CONSTRUCTION SITE SO THE CREW GETS PAID TO DO THE SAME JOB TWICE? CONSUMER, LIKE, "AN ORGANISM REQUIRING COMPLEX ORGANIC COMPOUNDS FOR FOOD WHICH IT OBTAINS BY PREYING ON OTHER ORGANISMS"?

I MYSELF AM AN AVID CONSUMER OF VINYL RECORDS AND BOOKS MADE OF PAPER. CREATING LANDFILLS ON SHELVES IN YOUR ROOM IS, OF COURSE, NOT THE MOST RESPONSIBLE THING IN THE WORLD. WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL OF THOSE THINGS WHEN WE DIE? (THRIFT STORES WILL GET KICK-ASS FOR A WHILE. CAPITAL HAS ME IN A DEAD MAN'S SWEATER AT AGE 23) VINYL PRODUCTION IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE, AND IT CAN'T BE DENIED. ONE PARTICULARLY IMPOTENT RETORT TO THAT ARGUMENT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH PAPER BEING THE ENVIRONMENTAL HOLOCAUST, BUT BOOKS BEING WORTH IT. TO COUNTER-RETORT, ONE NEEDS ONLY TO INVOKE JOHN GRISHAM OR DANIELLE STEELE, BUT THERE'S NO NEED TO CARRY ON.

I GUESS ONE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF AN ORGANISM'S EXISTENCE IS TO EXHAUST ITS SUPPORT SYSTEM UNTIL ITS ENVIRONMENT IS DECIMATED, AND ITS ONLY OPTIONS ARE TO EVOLVE, MOVE ON, OR DIE. IT SEEMS THAT HUMANS HAVE YET TO EVOLVE TO THE POINT OF BEING ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR ENVIRONMENT. SHIT, WE'RE SELDOM EVEN RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERS.





You must be willing to separate yourself at all junctures. You must be ready to say no without shame or regret. I made this choice to be vegan, to not drink, to not confuse a purchase with well-being. My alienation is self-imposed. I do not forget this.

When I think of 'responsible consumerism', I think of a responsible life, because we don't live outside of consumerism<sup>1</sup>. I support local, independent businesses. I buy organic when I can. I recognize the pattern of corporate encroachment that makes every town I pass through look like a Wal-Mart & TacoBell parking lot. I also know that my product preference does not a rebel make, despite the onslaught of extreme advertising geared towards those outside the system (and those wishing to be).

I try not to be overly dramatic: passing up leather shoes in my size in thrift stores may or may not be a smart thing to do. I still agonize over the bread aisle of grocery stores- staring at ingredient labels & debating free coffee. No, these individual incidents do not add up to saving the world or even a successful boycott. But as metaphors for living in this world by your own moral compass, how can I stop?

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1. Obviously, I'm excluding those who dumpster all their goods & scam their way into a hobo's life of leisure. To those I say: UP the PUNX!!!

# CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX

Of the many inscrutable 'locals' walking the streets of Gainesville, 3 men in particular haunt my visions of the future.

The eldest doesn't walk so much as he skitters around 13th St. I've never heard him speak, but his lips tremble constantly. He is headed, irrevocably, to the liquer store. Kim used to joke that if I stayed in Gainesville any longer, I'd end up just like him, probably sharing a bottle. Passing him in the early morning glare I get dizzy, the way I do at great heights, dizzy at the possibilities of potential self-inflicted disaster.

The second of my dopplegangers hangs out at the bagel store by the post office. He sits alone, occasionally with a newspaper spread before him that lies unmoving. He stares instead at the empty booth opposite him. I don't know which existential debate he's having (if any), or how his serotonin levels are, but the sight of him with his thinning hair and rumbled button-up shirt shakes me to the core.

One morning we sat in adjacent booths and I swear he kept kicking my booth. Like my future knocking and begging for acknowledgement. I don't want to be one of the sketchy older guys that lingers in bagel shops a little too long, but I already am. And of course the last non-corporate bagel store will be a nut-magnet. Where else can we go? We can't stay in the library forever.



The third bizzarro<sup>1</sup> option for me is a fellow library worker. He's a bit older, bikes everywhere, been in the army, and now works a few library jobs. He always smiles when I see him, and he seems the happiest & certainly the stablest of us. I run into him at the Friends of the Library sales, where he's buying all the hardboiled detective novels. If I could verbalize it tactfully, I'd ask him if he's ever restless; what his regrets are. Or if the key is to not be too ambitious.

Points get muddled in storytelling, but I link my future to consumption patterns here and now. In 10 years, when I'm closer to 40 than 30, how will I view veganism? Will I still be gulping coffee? Can I bike everyday for the rest of my life? Will I still care? I fear the future like cancer, something lying in wait in my own body to turn against me. Something no amount of consumer confidence can fix.

I can pretend to be a spy in this coffee shop, deeply undercover, taking notes to overthrow the existing monolithic corporate hegemony. I pretend to be dangerous while on tour in Chapel Hill, but really I'm just a conveniently-marketed consumer enjoying the air-conditioning and escape from the alien faces on the street. I'm on another vacation of varied purchases.

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1. This is not a reference to my first band, so stop smirking.

# gentrification





# P R O M I S E D L A N D .

If we could pit all the real estate moguls, Business-minded city commissioners, absentee landlords, aspiring sports bar owners and Wal-Mart secret shoppers against one another in a gladiator-style match to the death, would the gentrification stop?

UF's football stadium could easily hold all the contestants and spectators. Finding corporate sponsors would be easier still. TV ratings would top all Olympic & Super-bowl records.

No weapons allowed. The rules'd be similar to the Ultimate Fighting Championships. The winner, of course, takes all.

Maybe they'd kill each other and we could live autonomous lives- rebuilding neighborhoods and learning to eat somewhere besides Taco Bell.

More likely, the winner'd emerge after a few cheating moves and expedite the already inevitable homogenization, his bloodlust just beginning. The stadium audience crushes the slow in a frenzy for the exits.

IF THESE DAYS ARE FIT FOR OLD WAYS OF NOSTALGIA AND LONGING, WE'VE LEARNED LITTLE IN OUR TIME TOGETHER. IF, WHEN WE PART WAYS, I FIND MYSELF IN WANT OF YOUR COLD MORNINGS AND THREADBARE SUTURES, YOUR DUBIOUS SHELTER AND CURSORY AMENITIES, I'M FOOLISH. BUT I'M ONLY HUMAN, AND IF HUMAN IS ANYTHING BUT DOUBTFUL OF ONE'S OWN FACULTIES IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF RAPID FLUX AND THREATENINGLY UNCERTAIN DYNAMISM, THEN I AM UNAWARE, INCORRECT, UNFAITHFUL.

PARDON MY CIRCULARITY, BUT I'M MOVING. I WALK AMONG BOXES, SLEEP AND EAT AMONG VARIOUS STATES OF DISARRAY. THESE ARE MY BELONGINGS, MY BOXES OF COLLECTED WEALTH. SOME DAYS I'LL SET OUT TO UNPACK THEM, AND INSTEAD END UP HOLDING THEIR BONES AND ORGANS IN MY HANDS, REMEMBERING WHAT THEY ONCE MEANT BEFORE THEY BECAME JUST PARTS OF BOXES. I TURN THEM OVER, BREATHE THEM IN, PROJECT ALL OVER THEM. THEN I LOAD THEM AWAY UNTIL THEY ARE TO BE REMOVED AND PLACED ON A SHELF WITH ALL REGARD TO SYNTAX AND AESTHETICS.

WE HERE, TOO, ARE ORGANS OF EMPTY BOXES.

JT'S ROOM WAS THIS MISERABLE ALCOVE, DIM, CONSTRICTED AND ABOUT EIGHT FEET SQUARE. HIS HEAD-HIGH LOFT ONLY MADE IT MORE CLAUSTROPHOBIC, THE WHOLE SPACE BORE DOWN ON YOU. RYAN'S ROOM STAYED THE SAME FOR FOUR YEARS, LIGHTS LOW AND WALLS LINED WITH BOOKS, AS WELL AS FLYERS, POSTERS AND SCRAPS CELEBRATING THE PERPETUAL ACTIVATION OF D.C. HARDCORE. THE ONLY TIME IT WASN'T CONTROLLED AND ORDERLY WERE NIGHTS BEFORE TOUR AND WHEN YUETTE AND I SHARED THE ROOM WHILE HE WAS AWAY IN DUBLIN. MARK'S ROOMS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A CHAOTIC MESS OF NOVELTY STORE DEBRIS AND THRIFT STORE CLOTHES. IT'S THE KIND OF LITTER THAT IS REALLY FUNNY AND INTERESTING FOR A WEEK, BUT STICKS AROUND FOR LAUGHS LONG AFTER EVERYONE STOPS LAUGHING. LIKE ME. WILL WAS THE FIRST TO LIVE IN THE SIDE BEDROOM, THEN BECKY THE STUDENT. A GENERAL RESTLESSNESS COUPLED WITH A SORDID PERSONAL ORDEAL EDGED BECKY AND JT BOTH OUT OF THE HOUSE EVENTUALLY; I INHERITED HIS ROOM AFTER STAYING ON THE MOST COMFORTABLE HOUSE IN GAINESVILLE FOR A WHILE. CHRISTIAN MOVED IN TO THE SIDE ROOM. HE AND BECKY DATED FOR A WHILE, WHICH WAS AMONG IN A SMALL TOWN WAY. WE PRACTICED IN THE MIDDLE ROOM WITH CROOKED THRESHOLDS AND CHIPPED PAINT. KEVIN LIVED IN THAT ROOM TOWARDS THE END, BUT THAT WAS AFTER PAUL STAYED THERE AND LOST HIS MIND AND WE DIDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL MUCH LATER. BUT THAT'S A DIFFERENT STORY, ANYWAY.



JANA WAS A CAST MEMBER EARLY ON. KIM AND WENDY THREW SOME PLEASANT PARTIES HERE A FEW YEARS AGO, BACK WHEN THEY WERE STILL KIM AND WENDY, BEFORE KIM STARTED DATING THAT KID. I SAW HER AT THE COPY STORE LAST YEAR, BUT FOR ALL I KNOW NOW SHE'S LIVING IN ALASKA OR HAITI.

DUSTIN LIVED HERE ONE SUMMER WHILE WE WERE ON TOUR. WE CALLED HOME AND HE WAS HAVING A PARTY. ANOTHER YEAR WE CALLED HOME FROM FRANCE AND BECKY ANSWERED WITH A TERRIBLE HANGOVER. THE NIGHT BEFORE, D. PASSED OUT ON THE BATHROOM FLOOR. DORIAN, WHO HAD BEEN DRIVEN TO DRINK BY FAILED ROMANCE, SPILLED BEER ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR MORE THAN ONCE JUST TO SEE PEOPLE CLEAN IT UP. I DON'T SEE D. THAT MUCH ANYMORE. DORIAN BROKE HIS LEASE RIGHT AFTER HE GRADUATED COLLEGE BECAUSE HE KNEW WHAT WAS BEST FOR HIMSELF.

WE USED TO DO SHOWS IN THE LIVING ROOM. PEOPLE WOULD WALK THROUGH THE DIRT BACKYARD INTO THE KITCHEN AND MAKE GRAVY ALL OVER THE CRACKING AND DUT-TATED LINOLEUM. BUT AFTER ALBERT MOVED IN ACROSS THE STREET, THE COPS WOULD GET CALLED EVERY TIME A BAND WOULD PLAY. WE HAD TO FIND A NEW PLACE TO PRACTICE, TOO. WE ENDED UP SHARING THE WAREHOUSE WHERE ASSHOLEPARADE KEPT GETTING SHIT STOLEN. WE HAD A NEIGHBOR TO ONE SIDE WHO WOULD PLAY JERKOFF GUITAR FOR HOURS, LOUD ENOUGH TO SOUND LIKE HE HAD MOVED INTO SOME SECRET ROOM IN THE HOUSE WHILE WE WERE OUT GROCERY SHOPPING. ONE TIME, KEVIN GOT SO ANNOYED WITH HIS INKESANT NOODLING THAT HE STOMPED OUT ON TO THE FRONT PORCH AND YELLED, "WOULD YOU STOP?!? YOU FUCKING SUCK!"

ALBERT ENDED UP BEING MORE THAN A MINOR INCONVENIENCE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. HE OWNED HIS HOUSE ON OUR RENTER STREET, AND WAS PULLING TO GET IT DECLARED AN HISTORICAL DISTRICT. AFTER MAKING ENOUGH NOISE TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE, HE GOT OUR STREET MADE ONE-WAY TO REDUCE THROUGH TRAFFIC, AND ULTIMATELY, PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC THEN HE GOT THE CITY TO ENDORSE PERMIT PARKING AS AN EXCUSE TO EXPAND A UNIFORMED PRESENCE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, EVEN IF JUST TRAFFIC COPS. THEN HE ESTABLISHED A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. THEN, COPS ON HORSEBACK STARTED SHOWING UP AT NIGHT JUST TO LOOK AROUND.

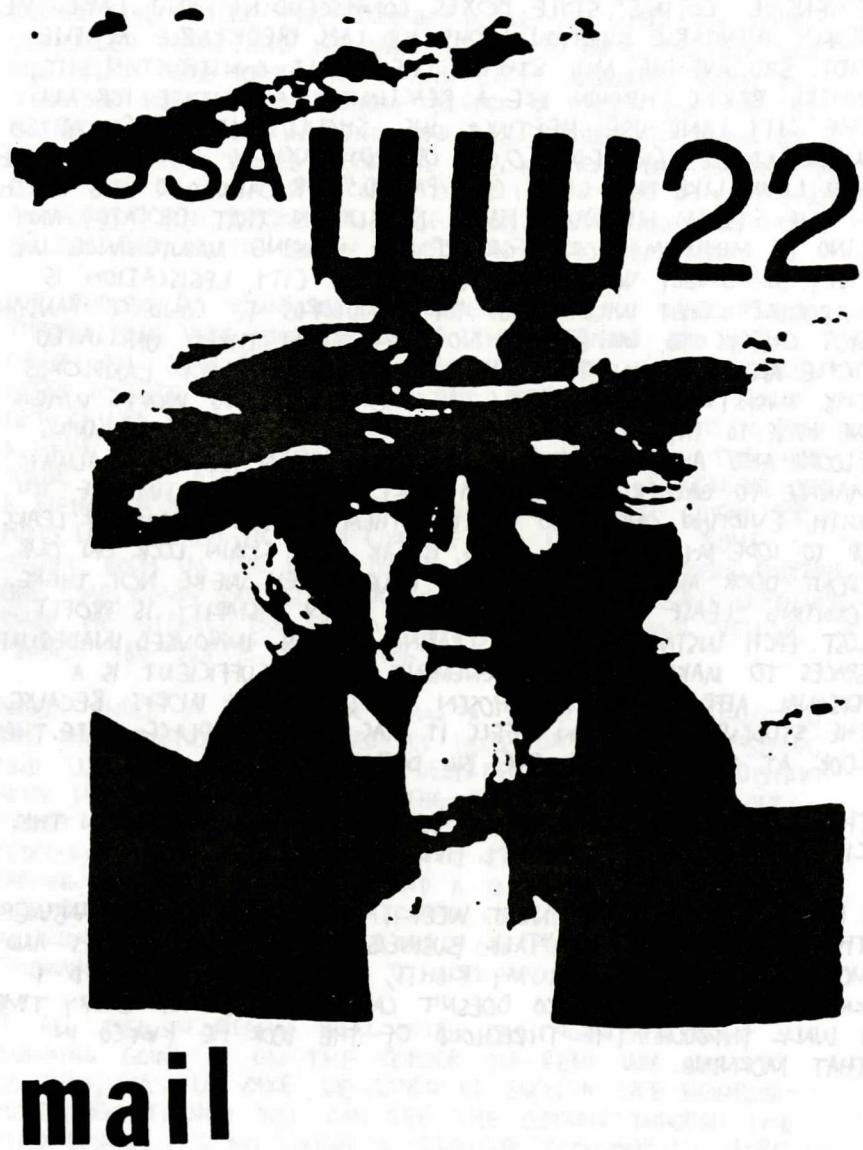
IT ALL TIED IN REALLY WELL WITH THE NEW APARTMENT BUILDING GOING UP ON THE CORNER. OUR RENT WAS ABOUT TO GO WAY, WAY UP ONCE WE LIVED IN SUCH A SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD. EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN SEE THE GROUND THROUGH THE FLOORBOARDS, IT'S NO LONGER A "SKETCHY LOCATION!" IT'S MORE COMFORTABLE THAN EVER. WE'LL BE OUT IN JUNE.

GAINESVILLE FEELS MORE THREATENINGLY CONSERVATIVE AND CLAUSTROPHOBIC THAN I'VE EVER FELT IT. COLLEGE TAKEOVER-STYLE GENTRIFICATION HAS BEEN TOTALLY REALIZED, ASSIMILATED SO SMOOTH IT'S ALMOST AS IF NO ONE CAN BELIEVE THE NEIGHBORHOODS WERE ANYTHING BUT STUCCO-BLOCK APARTMENTS AND EVER-INCREASINGLY EXPENSIVE "COTTAGE" STYLE BOXES, CONDESCENDING AND FAKE. THE NEARLY INEVITABLE EVICTION LOOMS AND LAPS PREDICTABLE AS THE TIDE. 3RD AVENUE AND 8TH IS THE LATEST CONSTRUCTION SITE, WHERE BRICKS THROWN ARE A REACTIONARY SUBSTITUTE FOR ALL THE CITY LAND USE MEETINGS WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN AT. SO WE COULD BE IGNORED. "50,000 OF YOU FUCKERS AT THAT COLLEGE AND LAWS LIKE THIS STILL GET PASSED." OUR LANDLORD HAS FAITH IN THE SYSTEM, HE JUST HATES LEGISLATION THAT DICTATES ANY KIND OF MINIMUM NORM FOR RENTAL HOUSING MAINTENANCE. WE ONLY GRUDGINGLY VOTE, AND PANIC WHEN CITY LEGISLATION IS INTRODUCED THAT WILL ALLOW FOR LANDLORDS TO CONDUCT "RANDOM" SPOT CHECKS TO MAKE SURE NO MORE THAN THREE UNRELATED PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE. IT WORKS FOR LANDLORDS THIS WAY. THIS UNENFORCEABLE PIECE OF SHIT LAW WORKS WHEN WE HAVE TO PAY USSCALE PRICES FOR COLD HOMES WITH BOWING FLOORS AND ANCIENT PLUMBING. IT WORKS WHEN LANDLORDS ALWAYS MANAGE TO GATHER JUST ENOUGH DIRT ON YOU TO INTIMIDATE YOU WITH EVICTION ONCE YOU PRESSURE THEM TO BRING HEAT OR LEAKS UP TO CODE. MY LANDLORD COULD BREAK THE CHAIN LOCK ON OUR FRONT DOOR AND PHOTOGRAPH OUR HOUSE WHEN WE'RE NOT THERE, COUNTING "LEASE VIOLATIONS," BECAUSE EVERY DISPARITY IS PROFIT LOST. EACH INSTANCE OF JUST SCRAPING BY IN IMPROVED, INADEQUATE SPACES TO MAKE STUDENT TENEMENT LIVING SUFFICIENT IS A PERSONAL AFFRONT TO HIS CHOSEN PROFESSION. IT WORKS BECAUSE THE STUDENT POPULATION FEELS IT HAS NO REAL PLACE HERE. THEY LOOK AT THE CITY AS ONE BIG DORMITORY.

THERE IS MUCH POTENTIAL BEING WASTED HERE NOW. HERE IN THIS CITY. HERE AT THIS UNIVERSITY. HERE AT THIS DESK.

I KNOW THAT SOMETIME NEXT WEEK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ANSWER THE DOOR AT 9AM TO "TALK BUSINESS" WITH SWOLLEN EYES AND MORNING BREATH. I KNOW MY RIGHTS, I KNOW THE LAW, AND I KNOW THAT MIKE TEDESCO DOESN'T CARE ABOUT EITHER EVERY TIME I WALK THROUGH THE THRESHOLD OF THE DOOR HE KICKED IN THAT MORNING.





MY FRIEND RICH WAS STUDYING CITY PLANNING AND CAME UPON A QUOTE BY AN ARCHITECT OR A MERCHANT OR A CITY COMMISSIONER, I FORGET, ABOUT THE ROLE THE POST OFFICE PLAYS IN ESTABLISHING A LOCATION AS ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE. IF THE CITY CAN PLACE A POST OFFICE IN WHAT IT WANTS TO SEE DEVELOP INTO A HEAVY COMMERCE AREA, PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO COME FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY TO MAKE TRANSACTIONS OR CHECK THEIR MAIL. IT ONLY MAKES SENSE THAT SHOPS WOULD WANT TO BE ON THAT ROUTE.

LIKE MOST AGEING KIDS, I LOVE GETTING MAIL. NOW, I DON'T LOVE IT AS MUCH AS I DID SIX YEARS AGO, WHAT WITH THE NUMBER OF HOURS IN A DAY BEING OFFICIALLY DECREASED A COUPLE OF YEARS BACK, BUT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RELATIONSHIPS I MAINTAIN AS EXCLUSIVELY POSTAL. IT JUST TURNS OUT THAT ONE OF US IS REALLY DIFFKULT TO BE AROUND, OR WE'RE ONLY GOOD ONE-ON-ONE. OR ONE OF US HAS DREAMY HANDWRITING, BUT A GRATING VOICE. AND I LIKE THE (LITERAL) WRITTEN WORD. I LIKE THE SLIGHT PHYSICAL EXPENSION OF PEN/CIL ON PAPER. NO E-MAIL, THAT'S HORRID. WRITE TO TELL HOW YOU ARE, WHAT YOU THINK. E-MAIL TELLS WHAT YOU DID TODAY." I WENT TO THE POST OFFICE AND GOT LUNCH (NEAR THE POST OFFICE)." E-MAIL IS FOR WORRIED MOTHERS, OF BOSSES AND TEACHERS LOOKING TO DODGE A BUSY SIGNAL. IT'S NOT FOR LOVERS OR NEW FRIENDS. IT'S NOT FOR CURIOUS OUTSIDE PARTIES, IT'S FOR SOLICITORS.

LONG LIVE THE LETTER / LOVE LETTER / LOVE OF LETTERS.

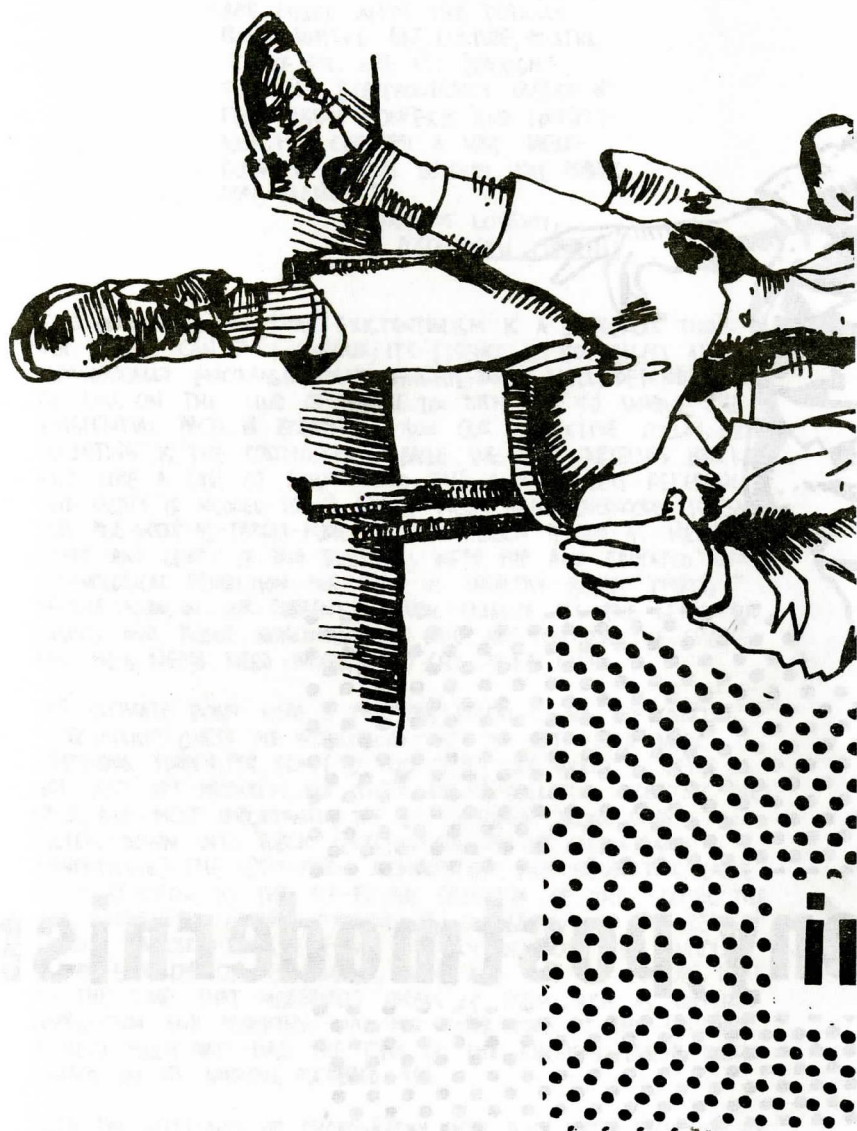


I wake and head for the post office. No shower. No breakfast. Just a wistful, sleepy beeline for my po box, biking on autopilot. I squint most of the way there, my eyes adjusting from the seceen of my room to the everfocus of Florida mornings.

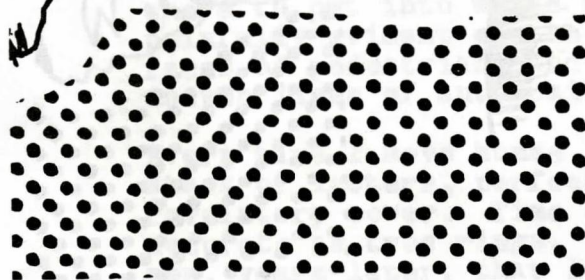
Mail shapes my days. Afterwards, the newspaper, work, feed, conversation and all other mechanical rituals. But the possibility of mail, of summons from foreign lands, some secret missive to save me from credit card bills and alumni association requests (constant metaphors for obsolescence and aging)--this imagined connection gets me up in the morning.

And when I turn the key to nothing but the four stainless steel walls of the box, then so much the better. What have I done to deserve continued contact with anybody? What ever is there to put into words that is not painfully evident on the tightened faces of pedestrians and the endless, uneven lines of automobile traffic?

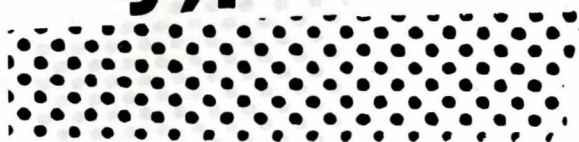
Every time I move house I unearth a stack of letters, perfect in their revelatory power. Time pieces as accurate as tree rings. It is only now, years later, that I can decipher their true meanings, their subterfuged desires and quiet insistence. They make a great fire.







**'only, postmodernism**



"A CHAOTIC CONDITION-IN WHICH INFORMATION AND THEATRICAL EFFECTS ARE MIXED WITH THE TOTALLY BANAL, WHERE ART, CULTURE, POLITICS, SCIENCE, ETC. ARE ALL BROUGHT TOGETHER ELECTRONICALLY OUTSIDE OF THEIR USUAL CONTEXTS AND CONNECTIONS, HAS CREATED A VAST MELTDOWN OF FORMS WITHIN THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS."

-MARGOT LOVEJOY,  
POSTMODERN CURRENTS

ELLI ONCE TOLD ME THAT EXISTENTIALISM IS A DANGEROUS THING TO GET INTO. I CAN ONLY CONCUR; ITS ESSENCE IS BOTTOMLESS AND PARADOXICALLY ENCOURAGING AND FRIGHTENINGLY NULL, DEPENDING MORE OR LESS ON THE KIND OF EFFORT TO DISH OUT. SO WHILE THE EXISTENTIAL PROBLEM BREATHES DOWN OUR COLLECTIVE COLLAR, MORE HAUNTING IS THE POSTMODERN DEBACLE WE FIND OURSELVES BRICKED INTO LIKE A CASK OF AMONTILLADO. THE GLUT OF SELF-REFERENCE AND IRONY IS NODDED TO IN EVERY MEDIA IMAGE OVERLOOKED TO SATISFY OUR AGE-GROUP-AS-TARGET-AUDIENCE. WE'VE BEEN PEGGED AS MEDIA-SAVVY AND LEARY OF BIG BUSINESS, WE'RE HIP AND EDUCATED AND TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION HAS MADE US WEALTHY BEFORE THIRTY, BECAUSE NOW, IN OUR CURRENT CULTURAL CLIMATE, IT'S THE GEEKS AND MISFITS AND ROGUE NONCONFORMISTS WHO ARE CALLING THE SHOTS; AND HEY, NERDS NEED PRODUCTS TO CALL THEIR OWN.

THE ULTIMATE IRONY HERE IS THE ONE DICTATING ALL THE SMALLER, "SPECTACLIST" ONES: THE PROPOSITION THAT THE ART WORLD MADE SOMETHING HAPPEN, FOR REAL (TO CLARIFY, BY "ART WORLD", I REFER TO NOT JUST ART PRODUCERS, BUT THEIR AGENTS, GALLERIES, COLLECTORS, THE PRESS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE ART CONSUMING SECTOR, WHICH ALL FILTERS DOWN INTO PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS VIA POP MEDIA AND ADVERTISING). THE POSTMODERN MOMENT OF THE SEVENTIES CAME AS A REACTION TO THE POP-FETISH CRITICISM OF THE SIXTIES. THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY EXPANSE OF COLLAGE, AND TO A GREATER EXTENT, PHOTOGRAPHY-AS-FINE-ART FINALLY DEVELOPED SO WHOLLY AS AN ENVELOPE OF PERFORMANCE, MEDIA, AND FINE ART CULTURE, THAT BY THE TIME THAT MODERNISTS IDEALS OF FORM SUCH AS IDEALIZED COMPOSITION AND PROPORTION HAD HAD THEIR TIME AT THE VANGUARD, A NEW "HIGH ART" HAD THE EYES OF THE AMERICAN BUYING PUBLIC FOCUSED ON ITS NARROW, PICKERED ASS.

WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF PHOTOGRAPHY INTO THE UPPER ESCHELONS OF THE GALLERY CULT, THE SOFT LINES SEPARATING ADVERTISING FROM FINE ART WERE ALL BUT DISSOLVING IN THE EIGHTIES. QUESTIONS RAISED BY



THE MEDIUM ABOUT THE UNCERTAIN NATURE OF "THE ORIGINAL", THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN ART AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT IS PRESENTED, THE MEANING OF AUTHORSHIP<sup>1</sup> AND AUTHENTICITY NOT ONLY MADE FOR AN INTERESTING CLIMATE FOR TUMULT IN THE ART WORLD, BUT WAS ALSO COST EFFECTIVE, AS MASS DISTRIBUTION AND MULTIPLE AREAS OF DISPLAY BECAME MORE OF AN OPTION. THE SAME HELD TRUE FOR SCREENPRINTING IN THE FINE ARTS CONTEXT: MULTIPLE IDENTICAL IMAGES COULD BE PRODUCED WHILE EACH MAINTAINED STATUS AS THE MARKETABLE "ORIGINAL". THIS IS AT ONCE, IN A SENSE, BOTH THE DE-CLASSING AND, MORE PROMINENTLY, THE DESKILLING OF ART PRODUCTION, AS WELL AS THE FINE-TUNING OF THE ART GALLERY/COLLECTOR/TRADER ECONOMY TO FIT WITH THE ECONOMY OF THE U.S. IN THE LATE SIXTIES.

FACTORS SUCH AS POPULAR PROTEST AND THE EVENTUAL SUCCESS OF MARKETING ROCK MUSIC MIRRORED THE SAME CONSUMER IMPULSE ON A LARGER SCALE. MANY RECORD COMPANIES HAD BEEN FLOUNDERING FOR MOST OF THE DECADE, TRYING TO CAPITALIZE OFF THE SELF-CONTAINED GROUP EXPLOSION OF THE LATE FIFTIES<sup>2</sup>. BEFORE FINALLY SUCCEEDING IN SELLING RELATIVELY ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT IDEAS SET TO GUITAR-ORIENTED MUSIC TO THE KIDS OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION.

WHEN A CONCENTRATED EFFORT BY EACH BRANCH OF THE MEDIA IS EXTENDED, AN ADVERTISING NEED IS SOON TO BE CREATED FOR THE PRODUCTS THAT WILL BE INEVITABLY GENERATED TO ACCESSORIZE THIS NEW CLIMATE OF SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND CULTURAL MELEE; SO WE ARE PRESENTED WITH SLOGANS LIKE, "THE MAN CAN'T BUST OUR MUSIC," OR THE MORE BASE, "DIFFERENT IS GOOD", ALONG WITH MASS-MARKETED PENCE SIGN NECKLACES AND WOOLWORTHS DASHIKIS. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN THE ROOTS OF THE POSTMODERN CULTURAL ADVERTISING STRATEGY: THE SIGN IS OF GREATER VALUE THAN THE SIGNIFIED. WEAR A SYMBOL, LISTEN TO A SYMBOL, EAT A SYMBOL. THE IDEA IS THAT CONSUMER GOODS WILL EFFECTIVELY TRANSMIT CULTURE WHEN WE FAIL TO DO SO OURSELVES.

SO WITH THE NEW EMPHASIS ON THE SYMBOL (OR IS IT NEW AT ALL? MAYBE HUMANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PREDISPOSED TO SHALLOW ANALYSIS OF THE SURFACE, AND POSTMODERNISM IS A CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATION OF THE SYSTEM SINCE THE PROLIFERATION OF "HIGH" ART INTO MASS (CULTURE), COMES A MODIFIED LANGUAGE OF REFERENCE AND MULTIPLE DISCOURSE. BY THIS DEFINITION, PUNK ROCK IS HIGHLY POSTMODERN. WHILE SOME MAY ARGUE THAT SUCH CIRCULARITY MAY

1. SEE SHERRIE LEVINE'S PHOTOGRAPHS AFTER WALKER EVANS, OR EVEN ANDY WARHOL'S SOUP CANS, IF YOU'RE LAZY.

2. I.E. BANDS THAT WROTE AND PERFORMED THEIR OWN SONGS, COST EFFECTIVELY LIMITED TO A STRIPPED-DOWN 3-5 MEMBER BAND, AS OPPOSED TO THE PREVIOUS NORM OF SONGWRITERS SELLING THEIR MATERIAL TO PERFORMERS, WHICH WAS MORE EXPENSIVE TO LABELS BECAUSE OF ROYALTIES GOING IN SO MANY DIRECTIONS. SEE THE MAKE-UP'S "IN MY MIND" LP LINER NOTES OR FRANK ZAPPA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY FOR ADDITIONAL READING ON THIS SUBJECT. SERIOUSLY.

LIMIT THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW IDEAS, I CONTEND THAT REFERENCING RECENT POP CULTURE OF A SPECIALIZED GENRE (I.E. SMITHS LYRICS, ARCHAIC SLANG) OPENS UP THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSING MYRIAD CONNOTATIONS WITH ONLY A PHRASE OR IMAGE. WHEN I MENTION REAGAN TO A PUNK WHO GREW UP IN THE EIGHTIES, SHE KNOWS WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. MORE THAN A POLITICAL FIGURE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT NUCLEAR THREAT, THE WIDENING CHASM BETWEEN THE CLASSES, THE STAID STEPIITY OF THE SUBURBS. REFERENCE IS A CODED LANGUAGE TO A SPECIALIZED AUDIENCE; IT CAN BE BOTH UNIFYING AND ALIENATING, LIKE PUNK ROCK ITSELF.

THERE IS SOMETHING UNSETTLING, THEN, ABOUT ADVERTISING ASSUMING THE LANGUAGE AND AESTHETIC OF A SUBCULTURE. WHETHER ATTRIBUTED TO A KEEN EYE ON THE TARGET AUDIENCE OR THE SUBSUMPTION OF ART PEOPLE LOOKING FOR A STEADY PAYCHECK AND A JOB THEY DON'T HAVE TO DRESS FOR, THE CURRENT CROP OF YOUNG CAPITALISTS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED THE SYMBOLIC DISCOURSE OF IRONY AND APPROPRIATION SO WELL AS TO EFFECTIVELY RENDER POSTMODERNISM MORE OF A MONOLITHIC THREAT TO MY PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING THAN EXISTENTIALISM.

I'M FORCED TO REEXAMINE MY OWN VALUE SYSTEM UPON THE PERUSAL OF EACH IMAGE. WHILE SOME ARGUE THAT THE FORMAL ADVERTISING MEDIA IS FINALLY COMING AROUND TO A LEFTISH/PUNKISH/SOMEWHAT INTERESTING VANTAGE POINT-WE ALL KNOW THE BOSS SUCKS, CHAIN STORES ARE FOR TOURISTS, WE ALL JUST WANNA ROCK, ETC.; THAT SEEMS TO BE A LAZY, CONTENTED ANALYSIS CHARACTERISTIC OF, SAY, BANDS THAT ARE COURTED BY MAJOR LABELS USING EX-PUNKS AS A.D.R PEOPLE. WHICH SIDE ARE WE ON?

SO THE APPROPRIATE MOVE SEEMS TO BE TO SHIFT GEARS AWAY FROM THE INVERSION OF SQUARE CULTURE THAT HAS BECOME SUCH A LABYRINTH OF CONTEXT AND CONNOTATION. TO AN EXTENT, FACETS OF THE ART WORLD (REMEMBER, WHERE I BEGAN?) HAVE ALREADY BEGUN MAKING A CHANGE. IMAGES CONSIDERED DECLASSÉ IN THE RECENT PAST ARE NOW LAUDED AS THE UGLY TRUTH IN CERTAIN CIRCLES OF CRITICISM. ARTISTS LIKE SUE WILLIAMS, MICHAEL RAY CHARLES, AND RAYMOND PETTIBON (EVER HEARD THAT NAME BEFORE?) ARE NEW MINOR STARS IN THE FRESHLY CODIFIED TRADITION OF JENNY HOLTZER AND MIKE KELLY. VEERING AWAY FROM THE PROBLEMATICALLY REFERENTIAL, A NEW CULT OF PROBLEMATICALLY LITERAL IS GESTATING. NOT TO SAY AT ALL THAT A MOVE AWAY FROM METAPHOR IS THE STRICT AGENDA AT ALL, RATHER THE POINT IS FOR NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATION, WHETHER VISUALLY OR MUSICALLY OR HOWEVER, TO STAY AHEAD OF THE INSTITUTION, AND IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO APPROPRIATE AND BASTARDIZE ARTICULATE, INFORMED CRITICISM THAN A PURPOSEFULLY LOADED IMAGE OR AN OBSCURE IMAGE IN WHICH THE OBJECT OF SCORN EXIGATES ITSELF BY SIMPLY INDULGING ITS CRITICS.



We breathe irony like smog. It surrounds our lives surreptitiously, debasing the mightiest of our efforts. And as Tim Green took the stage last night with a cigarette in one hand and a bottle of Corona 'Extra' in the other, I knew I was in for another daily dosage.

This was 1999 and despite our aesthetic rigidity, we settle for less when it comes to entertainment. I never got to see Tim's previous band, the undeniably, indelibly influential Nation of Ulysses, so I'm here now for a night of retro-metal with his new rock unit, the Champs.

If the kids in the Ian Svenonious wigs can laugh & dance & yell-out bad metal references, then why can't I join in & smile? Because of irony. Because I'm betting that less than 1% of the audience<sup>1</sup> was a metal kid years ago when it was as dangerous & uncool as a mullet is today. Wearing an Ozzy 'Diary of a Madman' tour shirt to a Champs show has the same bitter resonance as a frat guy wearing a tam at a reggae-themed Greek mixer. 'Jamaican me crazy, mon.

It's not so much that Champs inevitably mosh into me while I'm scratching my chin in 'deep' thought at the edge of the stage...I mean which is more ironic: trying to intellectualize something as guttural & immediate as heavy metal? Or the alpha-male antics of the assumedly "alternative" dudes slamming?

.....  
1. That 1% being Henry from Syrup/Cavity, whose metal pedigree is unfuckwithable.

Irony follows us like adult acne, beer guts & bald spots. The way restlessness comes regularly as hunger & boredom. The way a lover or vacation can make you feel even more tied down. Modern paradoxes. Postmodern, I should say.

Can we transform this space? Can we read in a moving car? Write in a crowded park? Find vegan food anywhere? These are the essential skills- the alchemy between living and surviving. There's a reason 'Rise Above' is the best Black Flag song.

We use maps like art;  
mix tapes as messages;  
thrift store clothes as highest fashion;  
passiveness as aggressiveness;  
quotations as conversations;  
gossip as confession;  
confusion & denial as religion;  
parties as excuses;  
sleep as defiance.

I worry mostly that irony ages poorly. That we can't outrun our own traps & critiques. That our parent's blood beats against our hearts, anchoring us to Earth. That until we craft our own viable, alternative culture, we remain ironic counterpoints in theirs.

**but:**

this point was inevitable

I cannot tell if the guy beside me on the Greyhound is wearing a military prep school shirt because he went there OR whether he's a hipster wearing it ironically.

His loyalties should be obvious, but I no longer trust the old signifiers. Our symbols & talismans of protection against the outside world are corrupt and overrun.





A BIG THANK-YOU-TRAVIS FOR  
DOING THIS WITH ME. IT'S TAKEN  
ABOUT 6 MONTHS TO GENERATE  
ALL THE MATERIAL, LAY IT OUT,  
BLAH BLAH BLVH. WE DID 50 2-  
COLOR LITHOGRAPHS IN ONE NIGHT,  
WHICH ONLY GAINESVILLE KIDS WILL  
GET TO SEE. THANKS GAINESVILLE.  
SOON, THIS GOES TO A PRINTER,  
WHO WILL MAKE ELEVENTY JILLION  
OF THEM. WE WILL PAY THE  
PRINTER, GARNER PRAISE AND  
CRITICISM, GET OLDER EVERY DAY,  
AND DIE. THINGS COULDN'T BE  
GOING MORE AS PLANNED.

♡MIKE TAYLOR

IF YOU'RE GOING TO THANK  
ANYONE FOR THIS, THANK  
MIKE. I MAY HAVE WANTED  
TO DO A ZINE/BOOK PROJECT.  
FOREVER, BUT HE ASKED ME  
& GOT THE BALL ROLLING.  
OTHERWISE, I'D STILL BE  
AT HOME GRUMBLING &  
MUMBLING. PASSIVENESS  
IS OVERRATED.

DEDICATED TO PEANUT BUTTER  
FOR ALWAYS BEING THERE  
FOR ME. ♡→ TRAVIS FRISTOE





