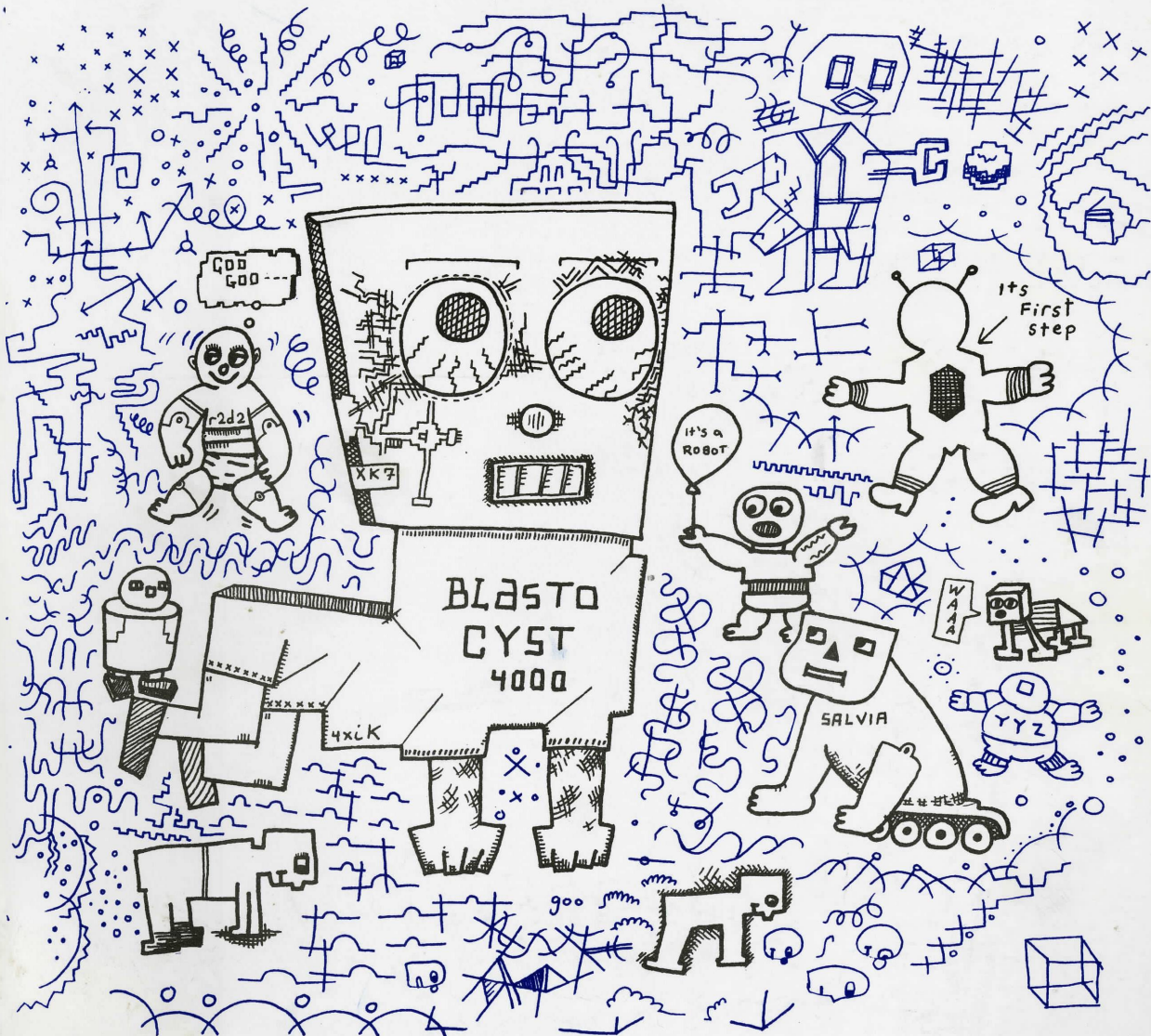
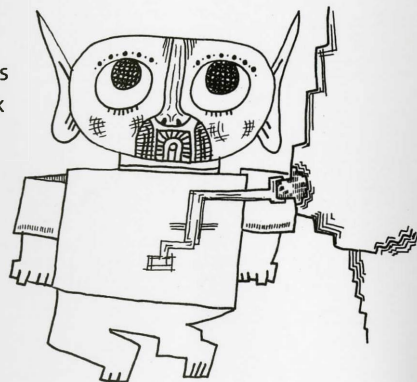


# Wesley Machine



## Cover Artist: Mark Connery

Kiss Machine's creators have devoutly followed the fantastic world of Mark Connery for the past decade. His aesthetic sensibility has been consistent, as have the sparks. Connery is a master craftsman in his use of cast-away objects. In a show in a car garage down a Toronto alley in the mid 1990's, a Connery collage cost \$25 and it included an image of Keanu Reeves and an actual pink plastic troll, set upon a cardboard-backed image of the American frontier right out of a 1950's Western films sensibility. On another occasion, for \$1, Mark sold us an understated work that included Lucifer as a character. Lucifer had a huge penis and he was housed in a pastel green cover-lined notebook like the kind used in elementary schools in the 1970's. Recently, Mark has been creating brilliant bottle cap sculptures that possess the energy, commitment and attention of a Pollock. Furthermore, Mark's unstoppable doodles are paradoxically flamboyant and shy. They have the push/pull qualities that invite you to immerse and lose yourself completely in a playful, magical world. Kiss Machine's cover is no exception. Thanks Mr. Connery!



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# KISS MACHINE ~ OPERATORS

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## Columnists

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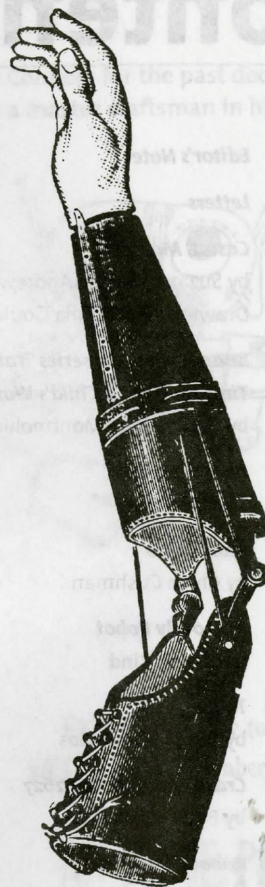
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du Canada



## Editor's Note

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**Emily Pohl-Weary**

.....

In this issue of *Kiss Machine*, we have explored babies and robots, because they occupy close places in a woman's mind. There comes a time in our lives when friends are procreating and responsibilities grow. Wouldn't it be nice to have a little robot helper who would follow you around, doing favours, cooking dinner, making the bed, reminding you to call your mother because it's been two weeks...

Having a little non-human helper is certainly not inconceivable. We live in a world of convenience, of technological immediacy. Thinking machines are the next big thing, right? Hunks of metal are much more efficient than humans. If you believe science fiction writers, one day we might even be replaced by Matrix-like droids who feed on light and excrete only heat.

Perhaps the only remaining refuge from high speed is birth and the awkwardness of life during our first few years. Before we gain fine motor control and an awareness of how to use things like keyboards, we're stuck in an awkward, altogether human reality.

My lovely niece, Alexandra Emöke Violet Ann Pohl-Weary, was just born. She's the first of her generation and a delight to everyone around her. It's also been funny to watch her parents devolve

from chef and master's student to beings who sleep, eat, and cuddle the baby. Life is boiled down to its essence for an infant (and its parents): the most important things like love and security become clear again.

For the time being, it seems my own babies are projects. Often, I complain that my body is simply an extension of this computer I sit in front of for ten hours a day. Damn it, I'm already a cyborg! But look at the result of my sacrifice to the God of Technology: a wonderful new issue of *Kiss Machine*! Dancing through its pages are violent children, art star babes, sulky boyfriends, music-playing robots, drooling babies and even horses.

We have playful fiction by regulars Alan Reed, Paul Hong and Phil Quinn as well as work by newbies (to us) Suzanne Alyssa Andrew, Teri Vlassopoulos, Mark Medley and Mike Dempsey. There's poetry by Anthony Easton and Casey Kohl. Our columnists Tamara Faith Berger, Jesse Hirsh, Zoe Whittall and Mr. Well Hung weigh in on good advice for baby robots, writerly babe Greg Kearney, the myth of artificial intelligence and the circle of births.

To conclude my ramblings, it was a pleasure to have worked with robobaby/cover artist Mark Connery, a guy whose work I have admired for a long time. Merci aussi to our talented designer Matthew Blackett, who put these pages together.

Next issue (#9), *Love and Stars*, will feature original art by Ms Lisa Smolkin on the cover. Deadline is July 15, 2004. Yay! It's a whole issue about my two favourite subjects. By the way, I hope you've all seen *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Johnny Depp is sooo hot!

## Notes on the Art

Paola Poletto

\*\*\*\*\*

You have to be connected to make a baby. Wired. Powered by + and - ... I'm trying to wrap my head around the eclectic group of artists gathered in this issue. They're all different and the wires connecting them are practically invisible.

Debbie Carlos reinterprets the photogram technique by flattening space to the thickness of a plasma screen. We know there's dimensionality in the objects strewn across the picture plane, but it is a world for little hands developing motor skills and object consciousness. Barbara Greczny flattens the baby itself by highlighting its relationship to X-ray images, so we see beneath the baby, and in a grim way, the potential for it to become de-skinned.

Often the best sparks come from lithe lines on screen or paper. Cynthia Gould's cutie robots are so

simple they really are cute, and they capture the spirit of a kid's drawing, minus the unsteady lines. My three-year-old nephew has mastered the mouse and cursor better than me and with each new drawing he gives me, I realize the lines in my own art have become way too stiff. Gould's drawings straddle our two worlds. As do the cover images made of ink by Mark Connery, and the whimsical macaroni and paint can sculptures produced by Jennifer Matotek.

Helena Kvarnström's long electrical cable umbilical chord reminds me how badly I want to catch that kid spark. Sometimes it's clear that the umbilical chord we hang onto as adults causes us to carry around a lot of baggage, and my perpetual state of burn out doesn't seem so bad. Or, I begin to think about making and having babies...until Chloe Cushman reminds me that babies are still very, very human. In *Drool*, my age-old question is: Will babies rule robots or will robots control humans?

Gabrielle de Montmollin creates the most complex images in this issue. I still haven't made up my mind whether they are under- or over-stated. One is an alien babyscape, and the other is a big brother baby head that takes us into a primitive cave setting. They are familiar yet disturbing, in that the baby figures create a deliberate backdrop of uncertainty. **KM<sup>8</sup>**



# Letters

## words from the physical and virtual mailbox

**December 19/03**

Damn you Ms Emily Pohl-Weary,  
Creative insight aside, I think you're evil.  
You've given me dreams that would make  
my mother sick:  
last night I'm making love to Gort, we are  
saving a race  
we are breeding metallic babies for the future  
I'm sheepish and beautiful in his shiny arms.

No, that's not the worst:  
there's the Transformers orgy  
a disgusting homage to my lover's Jenna Jameson  
collection (marked hockey finals 1998-2000).

There is the shameful one where baby Jesus  
rises up with iron fists and kicks the shit out  
of all my enemies  
in the style of Chuck Norris, seeking sweet revenge.

Kissy-Kissy my ass.  
I am holding you responsible,  
along with your partner in crime Ms Paola Poletto,  
for every filthy blaspheming thought I have this year.

**Evie Christie**

. . . .

**To:** info@kissmachine.org

**Subject:** Submission for issue 8 robots and babies

Dear Emily,

First of all, I'd like to say thanks for running my poem "Why Even Try?" in issue 7. I'm not sure if you are willing to consider another submission by someone

who has just published in your magazine, but I'm going to take the chance anyway...

Dear R3CMe,

*I was out getting a tune-up the other day, and I ran into this hot little number, this cyborg goddess, on the robotmover. I recorded what I said to this bronze bombshell, so maybe you can check out my approach and tell me what went wrong...*

*So I said to this android angel, I said, "BABY! Why don't you come over to my internet cafe for some fun and games? You know, babycakes, I could show you my nuts and bolts, and you could play with my joystick, sugar. It'd be just you and me, my bionic babe, and we could take our time, babydoll. I have a big battery pack, if you know what I mean. I'm electronic, automatic, and anything but static! We could oil each other up, and then I could check out your software while you check out my hardware. No floppy disks here, if you know what I mean. You could be my little mama, my chick, my bird, my crumpet, my dame. What do you think?"*

*She just swiveled the other way and motored off. Can you tell me what I did wrong?*

*Depressed and confused,*

*C4PO*

Dear C4PO:

*When you went for the tune-up the other day, did you upgrade your THESAURUS by any chance? Just a thought...*

*R3Cme*

**Chuck Baker**

. . . .

# Letters to Kiss Machine

Zebra by Tyler Clark Burke



**To:** Kiss Machine

**Subject:** New Exhibits at the Inflatable Museum

Hi. You need this book (you can get it for \$5 at Amazon): *The Inflatable Moment: Pneumatics and Protest in '68*. I have it and it is amazing.

See you,

**Adad Hannah**

(former *Human Faux Pas*)

• • • •

**To:** info@kissmachine.org

**Subject:** km

thanks for the kiss machine. i'm really enjoying it so far.

read tamara's, jesse's and andrew daley's. andrew's made me want to find brandy and offer her an acting job. anyway, thanks again.

**darren o'donnell**

(playwright)

• • • •

**To:** <KISS MACHINE> info@kissmachine.org

Hey KISS MACHINE,

I am obsessed with feral children. Language corrupts experience. I am fascinated by the idea of living without an inner monologue, looking human with nothing to

Letters continued on next page »



# Letters to Kiss Machine

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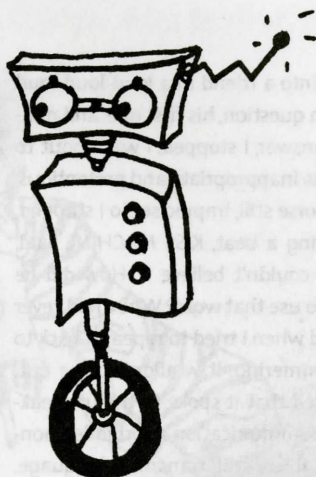
say. Recently, I ran into a friend in a loud-loud-loud club. He asked me a question, his first one, and midway through my answer, I stopped. I was about to use a word that was inappropriate and pretentious, far too long and worse still, imprecise. So I stopped, and without missing a beat, KISS MACHINE said, "circuitous." And I couldn't believe it. How did he know I was going to use that word? When had I ever used it before? And when I tried to repeat it back to him, I started stammering. It wouldn't come out. And I loved it. I loved that it spoke to the unspeakable: unconscious communication, a forbidden non-verbal language which still transmits language. Animalism? Emotion? Passion? Well, sort of.

I was somewhat relieved when planes started flying into buildings. It somehow made sense. My 96-year old grandfather had died months prior and I began to see the impermanence of things. The cycle was complete. He, who had lived and lived and lived, really died. He died a few years after my grandmother. In her reclining years, Edith was miserable and vocal about how she had spent her life. Everything was dyed to match and soon, in simple symmetry, died to match. For whatever reason, it wasn't till the judge died that I felt like I could walk through walls without, of course, really believing I could. Nothing mattered, but then nothing started to matter: nothing itself possessed me. How could anyone give a fuck about money or their careers or manners or even love. Why were people having kids anyway? Why had I already thought of some maybe-baby names? What is an atheist who's terrified of ghosts supposed to believe in? I wanted to stop being scared. I wanted to know that nothing existed and that it

was beautiful and that there was nothing wrong with dying or even killing someone (ostensibly, but not really) because death was the same as life and everyone had it wrong. Now, the planes started flying into the same buildings, on the same property that history has said was sold from beneath the Indians for a song. A few years ago, someone pointed out (to me) that the Indians knew that it was impossible to really own land, that nobody could, and that the Crackers were really crackers.

At the same time, the U.S. television stations were trying to sell every last minute of airtime, graphic banners and slogans in under ten, when soon everyone might be under six. Money wouldn't exist, or the even better scoop would be if everyone perished, but the networks didn't seem to notice. They were scared to stop filming. Celebrity can't cheat the stars. All the strangers are alive on the planet right now (which is cool, I mean rad without being radical); everyone who is alive will be dead at the same time at one time, and then almost mid-sentence like right now I reminisce about all the best run-on sentences I've ever written, like someone is reading it and it is alive and so are they and, punctuation long-forgotten, I remember that we are social beings and we do share things like fantasies about the Unabomber and Henry Darger-dirges and that there could be righter ways to die, like this great dog story I know where the dog has been lying near-dead for days and suddenly bolts from his basket to run around in a field for hours and then comes back to go to the real sleep.

**Tyler Clark Burke**



# Casual Monsters

by Suzanne Alyssa Andrew  
drawings by Cynthia Gould

• • • •

"Throw away the lights, the definitions, and say of what you see in the dark." I remember that quote from a Wallace Stevens poem no one will let me recite yet again. The plight of the English Major: everyone's words sound good except your own.

Freezing rain is at war with the windows, the roof. Bright light hurts our eyes so the three of us lounge, dark splotches on the futon in the dim. I am falling off the edge and shushing my churning stomach. Sean is all limbs, scuffling but

silent. Tom hasn't moved in over an hour, but his jaw flaps theoretically.

Tom talks constantly about changing the world, but has recently exchanged anarchism for nihilism. He uses big words for a high school dropout. He reads a lot when he isn't playing video games.

I'm cold, so I toy with my giant velvet scarf and wrap up my head like a babushka, then a mummy. I love theatrics. Tom makes fun of me until Sean speaks. "Stop. I can't see your face and it's freaking me out."

I unwrap my head and see sparkles around the fringes of the room. The shadows are crinkling computer animation. Good thing I'm still sitting down. Fidgeting, Sean scratches his nose raw, grabs Tom's shoulders and shakes him vigorously.

Robotman. Why. Won't. You. Stop. Talking.



Tom's head tilts. His pale face glows strangely and his choppy hair puffs outward like gills as his head goes back. You can't see colours in the dark, but his hair is blue today. Always the good girlfriend, I'd purchased the dye. He'd been too busy meeting with dealers. Scoring in a dry market is one of his few true talents.

For a while, the only sounds in the room are the rustle of Tom's shirt against the rhythmic screech of a Japanese noise band on the stereo. Sound sculpture.

I recite Stevens silently: "Nothing must stand between you and the shapes you take when the crust of shape has been destroyed." I think about what the end of the world according to Tom might be like. Loud and explosive, probably. Mine would be quiet, cold and scientific, like a failed lab experiment.

The shaking continues. I stare hard until Tom blurs. His face looks pale and plastic. I imagine his head rolling right off his shoulders, like a doll's. It would drop onto the floor and weave its way into the dustiest corner, picking up debris.

"Cut it out!" I say three times until I realize I am talking on the inside. "Cut it out!"

Sean turns his head to look at me absently, then drops Tom like a tired toy. Tom moans. "Eeeerh."

Released, his face falls forward into Sean's lap. Then his shoulder sprockets pop softly as he rolls onto the floor.

"So I was thinking." Tom

says, breathing rapidly. "If there's no true meaning, then nothing really matters, and I can do whatever I want to whomever I want."

Twitching, Sean leans over and grabs the back of Tom's collar, lifting his head up and putting it down again, as though looking under a rock.

"No meaning."

I mull over Wallace Stevens' poem, "Throw away the lights." He was a scoundrel. The candles flicker. Theory hurts me. I try to focus on fact. On object.

"Anyone want more alcohol?" I ask. "Cigarettes? Socks? Vicks Vapor Rub? Tabs? Rolling papers? Anything."

"Got any money?" Tom is plaintive.

"Nope. Next question."

"Food?"

"My fridge contains one apple and a rainbow of condiments. Go nuts."

I roll to the floor to avoid Sean, who is falling backwards onto the futon, limbs sprawling. I turn and am suddenly nose to nose with Tom.

"Hi, comrade Angela. How are you?" Mock affection.

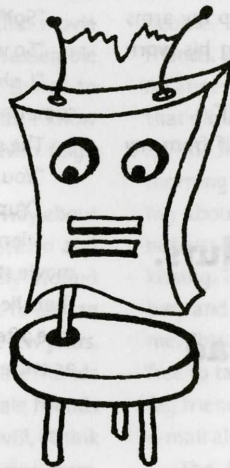
"Monotonous."

I shiver, stand up too quickly and knock someone's glass over, soaking Tom's pants with rye and cola.

Sean cuts through Tom's swath of expletives: "I'm going home."

Sean the bard.

"To sleep. Perchance to dream. Or I shall fail me Chemistry examinations. And



there's no nourishment in E's and F's for me starving, penniless wreck."

I stop wadding tissue on the soiled carpet and look up at him.

"What? No!" I wheedle. "Don't go yet, wreck!"

I step up to the door. Tom presses a towel against his wet pants.

"Yeah, don't be an idiot. It's pissing sleet out there and you'll never get a cab."

Sean puts toque to head and works his way down, adding a scarf and boots. He turns at the door, waves, then cackles softly. "Goodbye my pretties!"

Vicious wind blows the screen door open to reveal a startled paperboy in mid-delivery. "Eeaaaack!"

"Good morning."

"Oh, sorry."

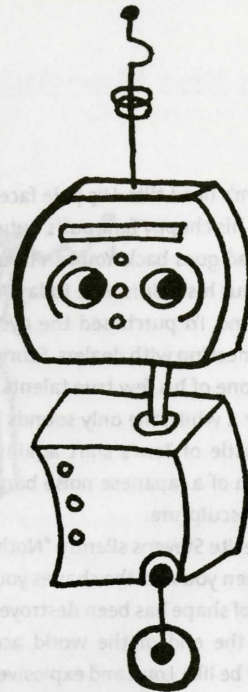
Sean is eloquent, but the newspaper drops. The delivery boy disappears into the morning light.

I grab Sean's arm, pat his gnarled hair then sink to gesticulate at his feet. I wrap my arms around his heavy black boots, loving his worn soles like they are my brothers.

"Don't leave me, my dreadly fiend!"

"It is time." He extricates himself from my grip. "For me to go. Sayonara!"

**"I stare hard until Tom blurs.  
His face looks pale and  
plastic. I imagine his head  
rolling right off his  
shoulders, like a doll's."**



He flaps into the wind, black trench coat billowing.

I close the door. There is Tom. Alone in the mess of my tiny apartment.

"So?" I speak without looking him in the eye.

"So what?" Tom stares up at the ceiling.

"I should write my Renaissance lit paper sometime this century..."

The stereo skips and stops. The power is off.

"You pay the hydro bill?"

"Yup. This place is haunted."

Silence. Tom tickles me and I fake a horror movie struggle, cough up a laugh for his benefit, then lie there flummoxed. In my mind's eye I race after Sean, reciting, for once, my own poems as entreaties. **KM\***

# TAKE YOUR PASSION MAKE IT HAPPEN

Zoe Whittall interviews people she obsesses about

This issue: **GREG KEARNEY**



If I were to talk to you about robots for an entire column, I'd be reaching. I really liked that movie *Short Circuit* when I was a kid. "No Disassemble Johnny Five!" is one of my favourite things to scream in bed. OK, so other than that, I know nothing about robots, and cannot even feign interest.

Up until a year ago, I felt the same way about babies. Now I'm on the look-out for sperm and have been found wandering aimlessly around Toys 'R Us on more than one occasion. I'd love to have a little pup of my own in the next few years.

I'm actually auditioning my gay male friends starting in 2005. I have a lot of gay male friends because I'm a fag hag. Say what you will, I think of it as a satisfying, non-self-deprecating term.

Hag is not a sexist moniker to me, it is a gracious spot in queer culture that is too-often undervalued in our misogynist rainbow-blah world.

I also have many dyke hag boys in my life, but "dyke hag" just doesn't have the same ring and I'm soooo not down with "byke." These guys come to my parties, they bring good pot, they're always surrounded by cute queer girls and they don't whine about never getting a girlfriend, because this is a cozy place for them. For whatever reason, being around dykes makes sense to them and I can totally respect that. We're fun people. Sometimes I even kiss my dyke-hag friends. I'm a non gender-discriminating kisser: All kisses are good, except when they're not, but that's another column.

The first time I kissed a fag, it was four in the morning and my friend Vince and I were whining about not having been picked up yet. Why not kiss each other? It was my first lesson in fag-kissing. They kiss like they're fucking: fast, slobbery and darting. Those are all bad adjectives for me. This is a massive generalization and you're free to take me to task, but before you do, kiss a fag friend and see for yourself. Then write me an e-mail about it ([zoe@kissmachine.org](mailto:zoe@kissmachine.org)).

The fag friend I have never successfully



planted one on, despite many attempts, is Toronto writer, playwright and beloved humour columnist Greg Kearney. Greg is so witty and handsome that he's blinding to look at, hence is the perfect person to obsess about. I asked him all about babies, robots and the writerly life over e-mail.

**Z:** What were you like as a baby?

**G:** Narcoleptic. Obese. Mincing. I was the lead, day-in and -out, in "The Drama of the Gifted Child," and I got terrible reviews.

**Z:** What's the secret to your incredible good looks?

**G:** Were you just released from prison? I'm a lupine tragedy. I'm a less aquiline version of an Easter Island head. That I've had more than one sex partner just goes to show that gay men still really hate themselves.

**Z:** You've written the following "Writers, at least the good ones, are among the stupidest people in the world. The childlike wonder at life's minutiae that a writer has to sustain for vivacity's sake might make for a pretty haiku, but it robs them of every other kind of cognitive capacity. Street smarts, for example. I'll never forget the time when I was a prostitute and a customer put crack up my bum and said it was part of the Celestine Prophecy. Can you believe I believed him?" Can you explain the truth behind this quip? What experiences have you had trying to relate to other writers?

**G:** A certain kind of sleek autism is essential to make the kind of lit I love. Even, for vitality's sake, within language itself: I've only recently stopped pronouncing diva "dive-ah." Of course, there are other, more strenuous and worldly kinds of writing. But the writers who write that kind of writing are gross and boring and ugly. As far as relating to other writers, my life can be neatly sawed in half. There's the half where I

derided anyone who dared to write and wished them metastatic cancer. And the half where I'm just a meek housewife who rah-rahs everybody. I credit knowing Ken Sparling and Derek McCormack for that transformation. They're both sweet, sheepish, magnanimous men who shovel snow and are geniuses. I've learned that there's never any need for snide operatics. Just do the work, have some laughs, and don't project beyond the next round of groceries. I sound so Liza.

**Z:** Ever written a fan letter?

**G:** Olivia Newton-John, three times, at her zenith in the early '80s. And now she plays bingo halls and writes to me, asking me to write to her. Sunrise, sunset.

**Z:** What's the weirdest one you've ever received?

**G:** An elderly man in Quebec sent a letter, saying that I lit up his otherwise maudlin life. And he enclosed several pictures of his stained, distended asshole. That isn't weird, necessarily; my CV is basically comprised of similar things. But there's something about reading "rien de rien" in shivery longhand and then looking at a stained asshole that makes me feel like I know what Edith Piaf looked like, dead and nude and spread open.

**Z:** What's the worst you've ever screwed someone over?

**G:** Once I set up a sex date with someone with whom I had no intention of having sex. I went to his hideous apartment, told him to lie on his couch while I left and came back, in the name of break-and-enter role-play. Then I walked home, watched an episode of "Ordinary People" and went to bed.

**Z:** What's the best compliment you've ever received?

**G:** My dad, last year on the phone, said:

"Christ, you're a wacko. Don't wind up in a welfare jackpot." But in a really breezy, Sam 'n' Diane kind of way.

**Z:** What's your new play about?

**G:** It's about halfway through Toronto's sewage system. I was writing a play about the healing power of scatology, but then Glenn Sumi ripped my last play to shreds and even questioned my intellect. Now I can barely wipe my own ass, let alone write stage directions for how actors should go about wiping theirs. I have finished a li'l book entitled Mommy Daddy Baby that's filled with stories about the healing power of consensual incest. We'll see what goes down (on Daddy) with that.

**Z:** I was going to ask you why you write, and what the process is like for you, when I came across this quote in one of your columns: "I've never been the kind of person who says, 'Writing chose me,' as if I was some sock hop wallflower fatty dragged to the dance floor by art. I'd never abdicate responsibility for leading a self-indulgent life. Booze chose me, sure, and repeated bouts of genital, rectal, optical and nasal gonorrhoea. But writing? That was all my fault." So what is it like for you, how do you come up with such consistently funny writing every month?

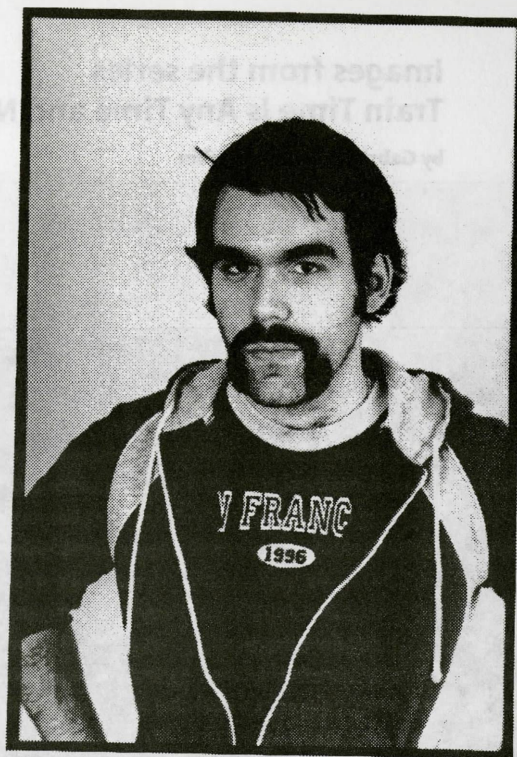
**G:** I have absolutely no memory of writing that. I think I stole it from Diana Ross' Secrets of a Sparrow. Comedy is the terminal end of any scenario. Pick a topic, then let it rot.

**Z:** What are you working on now?

**G:** My delts and my insomnia.

**Z:** You recently got your boyfriend's name tattooed on your arm. Does this cut-in on your action when you're cruising for boys? What made you do something so devoted?

**G:** Actually, the tat has been a real help in



**Babe Greg Kearney**

scoring ass. Guys see it and think: "He's really lived! He's like a Waylon Jennings song! He's so real and I'm so fake. Maybe that will change if I sit on his face." My Rob tat is just a bit of sexy redundancy. I'm with him for life; it follows that his name should take its place alongside my various scars and stretch marks.

**Z:** If you could have a robot built for you, what would it do?

**G:** All the Sandy Dennis mannerisms I've assimilated that turn men off: the nodding maniacally, the blinking, the stuttering, the smiling for no reason, the wiping of imaginary snot from one's nose. I'd slough off all of that on the robot. And then I could be still. Like a robot. **KM<sup>9</sup>**



## Images from the series Train Time Is Any Time and Not a Child's World

by Gabrielle de Montmollin

.....



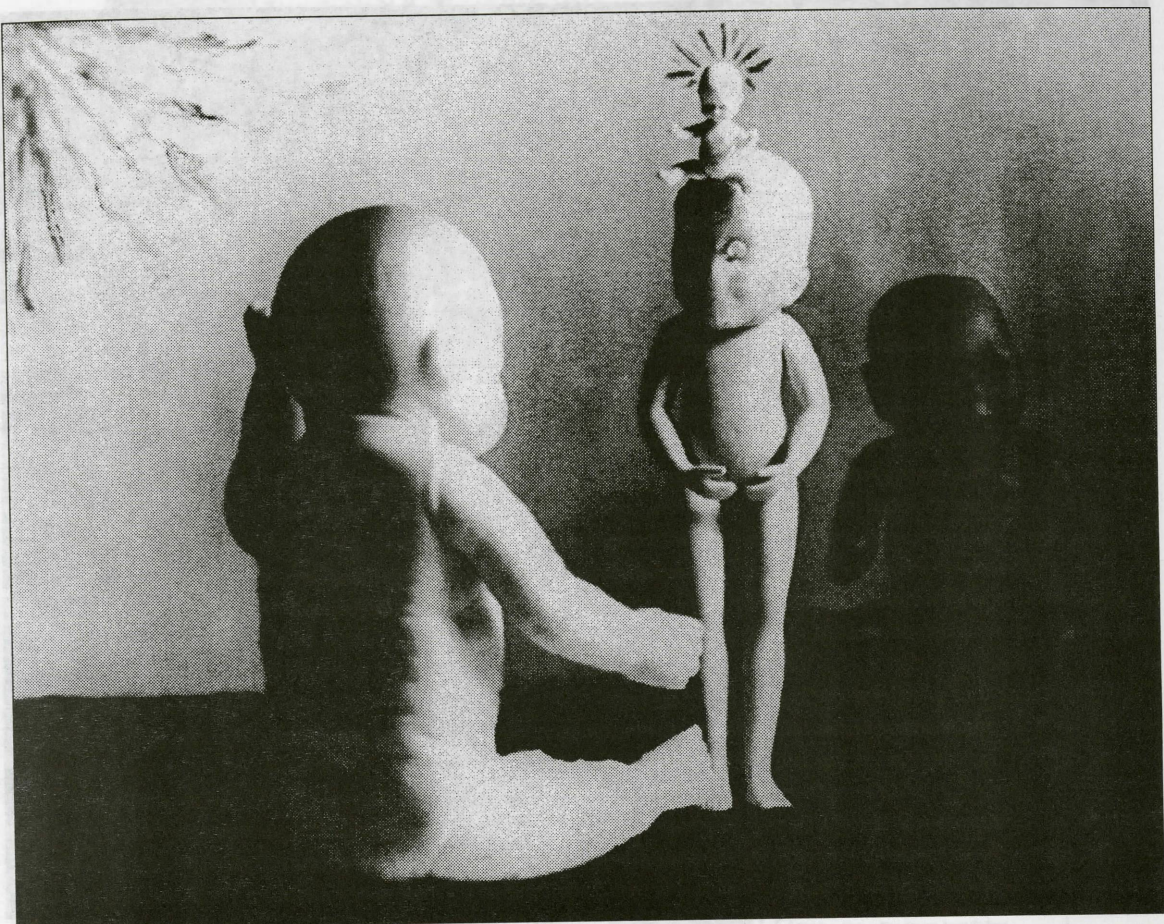


# The Conundrum vs. The Big "O"

CONTRIBUTOR

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Art by Jane O'Connell

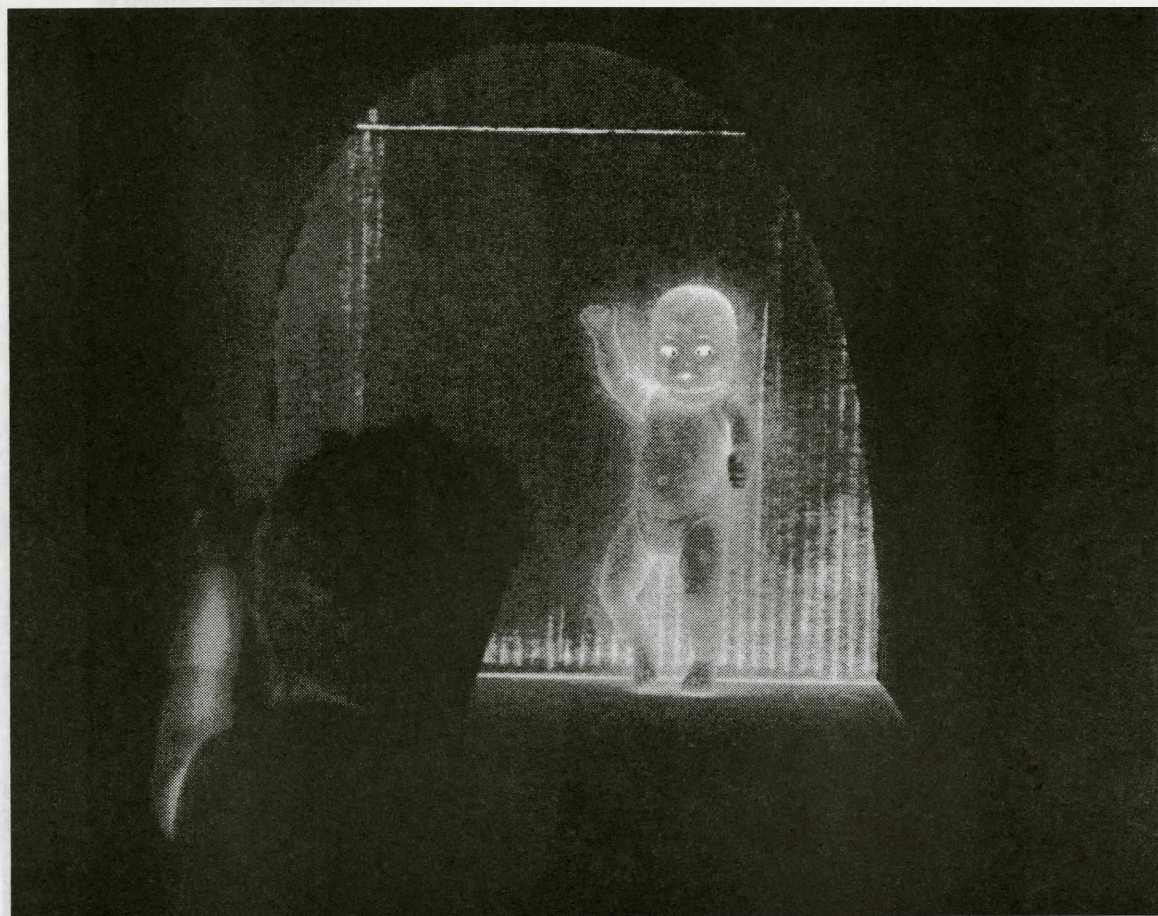


Conundrum: Artist: Peter for my friend Robert  
 Date: March 1980  
 Size: 10x10x10  
 Materials: Wood, metal, glass, paper, fabric, etc.  
 Description: A sculpture of a person's head and shoulders, made of various materials, including wood, metal, glass, paper, and fabric. The head is made of wood and has a spiky, sun-like headpiece. The shoulders are made of metal and have a textured, metallic finish. The neck is made of glass and has a smooth, curved shape. The overall effect is a complex, multi-layered sculpture that combines different materials and textures.

Get a head of... towards the...  
 This is a head of... towards the...  
 This is a head of... towards the...  
 This is a head of... towards the...  
 This is a head of... towards the...

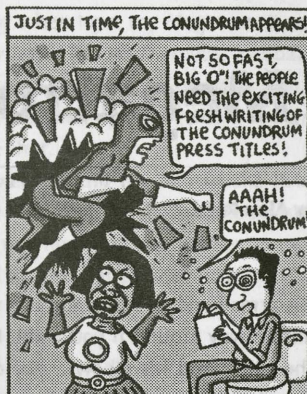
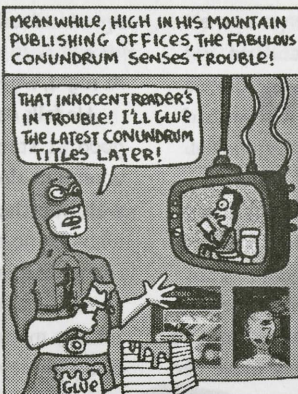
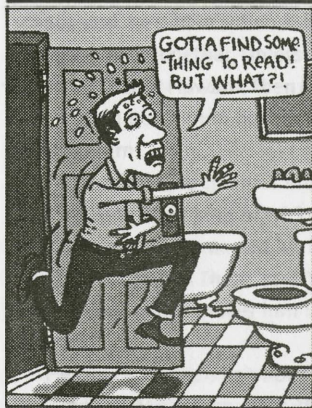


Images from the series  
Train Time Is Any Time and Not a Child's World





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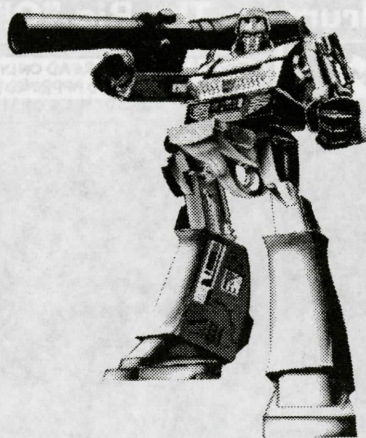
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Art by Joe Ollmann





# My Megatron

by Alan Reed

• • • •

His arms bend, like this. You can make them go all the way around if you want. But not out to the sides. And his elbows, they only move like this. And his head goes all the way around. You can make it go around and around and around and it just makes the same clicking sound, no matter how many times you turn it round.

His legs move forward and backwards a bit, and his knees bend a little. You can make it like he's standing all kinds of different ways but he only really stands up on his own if he's standing up straight.

And his hands are just fists. They don't do anything at all. I've had him for a long time now. He's my Megatron.

At night, when I'm asleep, he stands here.

He falls down, sometimes, he's really not very good at standing. That's why I put him here when I'm sleeping. I can lean him against the wall, into the corner, and then he can stand up all night, no problem.

In the morning I get up and I get dressed and I go downstairs for breakfast and I take him with me. My mom doesn't like it. She tells me I can't bring my toys to the table. I don't listen to her and she tells me again. I still don't listen.

My brother usually starts crying right about then and she has to go off and do something for him to make him stop.

I hate the sound he makes when he cries. He makes it sound like he's so completely helpless and then Mom and Dad will do anything for him. I think he should just figure out how to do things for himself. I mean, I can make my own sandwiches now, when mom gets the peanut butter down for me. I can use the knife and everything. My brother should learn to do that too.

I put him back here, in my room, when I go to school and he's here when I get home. That's when we play together. Unless I'm playing with Dylan, or Gus, or Howard. Then I change him into a gun and I put him in here, where nobody else will find him.

He does that, he changes into a gun.

It's like this. It's kind of tricky, you have to be sure to lineup his arms and his legs just right so they click together. There, see? You can pull the trigger now, and it makes him light up, like he's shooting.

He can do it when he's not a gun, too. Except it's not the trigger then, it's just a button on his back. And it doesn't look like he shoots. His eyes light up instead. I can push the button like this and make his eyes flash.

It's not really scary. You'd have to be a baby to be afraid of it. Like my brother is.

I like scaring him. Sometimes, when he's cry-

ing at night and he wakes me up, I get mad at him. I wait until Mom or Dad has gotten up and gotten him out of bed and walked around with him for a while and he's stopped crying and they've put him back to bed and he's just about to fall asleep again. Then I go into his room and I flash my Megatron's eyes at him in the dark. And he starts crying again.

I really hate how it sounds. It makes me just want to hit him. He's so useless and I want him to stop.

• • • • •

He was crying when I got my Megatron. It was my birthday and he was crying, probably because it was my birthday, and he was crying so bad my mom took him upstairs to hold him and do things like that.

Then it was me and my dad in the living room and he said that maybe we should stop and wait for my mom and my brother to come back. I picked up another present instead of lis-



tening to him. My brother is always messing things up and I wasn't going to let him ruin my birthday, too. I opened it and it was my Megatron inside.

I took him out of the box and I looked at the back and I read how to turn him into a gun. I did it by myself, my dad didn't help. When my mom came back with my brother, I pointed my Megatron-gun at him and I could have shot him. Just like that.

I didn't. I could, though. I could.

. . . .

If my brother was smart then he'd know that I could shoot him. Anytime. He'd cry when I come into his room at night because he'd know that I could shoot him. But he's not smart. He just always cries.

. . . .

I showed him to Howard once. Howard saw him on my shelf, where I put him at night, and he said my Megatron looked neat. I'd just got him. So I took him off the shelf and I showed Howard how he turned into a gun. Howard thought that was neat, too, and he took Megatron and tried to turn him back.

He didn't know how to and he was being really rough when he wasn't supposed to be. He might have broken my Megatron. So I took him back before he did get broken and then I hit Howard. Right here, where it hurts a lot, and he cried after.

I'm not supposed to hit my friends, though. My mom told me to say I was sorry when she heard him crying and she asked him what had happened. I tried to tell her but she didn't listen

and she still made me say I was sorry.

That was when I started putting my Megatron in here whenever Howard or Dylan or Gus came over to play.

. . . .

I don't take my Megatron outside either. I don't want him to get dirty. So when I go outside I leave him in my bedroom. When I can't go outside, because it's raining, or because my mom says I can't, then I get my Megatron out and I sit in my bedroom window with him. I make him into a gun and I point him at anyone I see outside. I point him and then I squeeze one eye shut and I aim and I pull the trigger, and his barrel lights up, and I say, "pakow."

I don't really shoot those people. I'm just pretending. I don't want to shoot strangers. Or the postman. Or Mrs. Barnum, who lives next door and comes over to see my mom sometimes.

. . . .

I'm going to shoot my brother. I am. One of these nights, when mom and dad are asleep, I'm going to go into his room with my Megatron. I'll close the door behind me and I'll make Megatron into a gun. I'm really good at it now. I can do it in the dark, so I wouldn't have to turn the light on to do it. My brother wouldn't know what I was doing. He wouldn't even know I was there.

Then, I'd walk in the dark up to his crib and I'd stand on my toes, so I could reach over the edge of the crib, and I'd point Megatron at him and he'd still be asleep. I'd pull the trigger and I'd say, "pakow" and that would be it.

My brother would be shot, just like that. **KM**





## Mom 3000

by Chloe Cushman

....



## My Lovely Robot

by Lemon Rind

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦











# Talking Cars

by Teri Vlassopoulos

• • • •

Joel's car was in the garage again, so he had borrowed his father's, a new SUV with a Global Positioning System. Before pulling out of my apartment parking lot he made a big show of inputting our final destination so that I could watch the shifting maps on the tiny LCD screen as he drove. He turned on the vocal component, and every so often a robotic female voice would say things like, "Turn right at next intersection." It was interesting, but I wondered if Joel actually thought I would be impressed by a talking car. I wasn't seven years old anymore, and he wasn't David Hasselhoff.

We were going to Joel's company Christmas party, a dinner and dance at a hotel downtown. We were going to get drunk and stay at the hotel for the evening: a one-night vacation in our own city. It was only the first weekend of December, but the company always held their party early to avoid the holiday rush. This was Joel's third time in attendance, and my second time as his date. We were dressed up. I felt shiny, but not overwhelmingly so, like a muted Christmas tree ornament. It had snowed for the first time a few days ago, lightly, bitterly.

At the first red light, I watched the woman in the next lane sing along to her stereo. She bopped her head from side to side, tapping her hands on the steering wheel, her mouth opening and closing. She must have known I was watching because when the light turned green, she turned and gave me a thumbs-up.

"Did you see that?" I asked Joel.

"See what?"



"That woman was singing in her car. She gave me a thumbs-up."

"Are you sure it wasn't her middle finger?"

"Ha ha."

I fiddled with the radio, but couldn't find anything worth listening to. I preferred the intermittent sounds of the robot woman.

There was construction on Avenue. We sat in traffic for ten minutes before Joel got frustrated and turned into the opposite lane.

"Illegal U-Turn," the robot woman told us.

"We're going to be late," Joel said, gripping the steering wheel with both hands.

"No one will notice."

I looked out my window at the cars sitting in the opposite lane, still stuck in traffic. When I was younger I used to try getting the attention of people in other cars, but whenever they smiled or waved back, I would shrink down in my seat, suddenly shy.

It was dark now, and I could only make out

shadowy shapes. I noticed that there were many tinted windows.

"I thought you wanted to go to this," Joel said.

"I do."

"You don't seem very excited."

"I am excited," I told him. I patted his hand, the one that was now resting on the gear stick, hoping the action would reassure him of my excitement. His skin was cold. I had just painted my nails red, and the polish on my index finger was already chipped. "As excited as I can be about a company Christmas party."

"We don't have to go if you don't want to."

"Joel," I said "I want to go."

"Good."

We were quiet, and the robot woman commanded, "Turn left." Joel sighed. He changed lanes and signaled, and I watched the oncoming cars stream by as he waited for a break in the traffic to make his turn. **KM<sup>8</sup>**





# Crash Landing Bug 2627

---

by Philip Quinn

• • • •

My worst nightmare has come true: something dangles from me in an obscene place.

I'm afraid it will slip out and show people how truly revolting I have become.

Zoloft makes my mouth too dry. I stop the anti-depressant and try herbal teas and St. John's Wort instead.

I am buried alive in this office. The robots working the computers and phones grind me down with their whispers and speculations about whether I wear woman's underwear and if I dye my hair. All I can do is open the window, bring in a fresh flow of urban poisons.

I'm sent down to the HR department where I'm given a muscle relaxant.

When I do eat, I usually swallow soft food that requires no chewing, old yogurt and decayed fruit left behind in the office refrigerator.

In my cubicle, my interrogators search for me but can't seem to find me, or if they see me, they pretend they don't.

This question troubles me all day: Am I about to be fired or fixed?

I stare out the window at the blood red sky where the sun sinks. How did that battle begin?

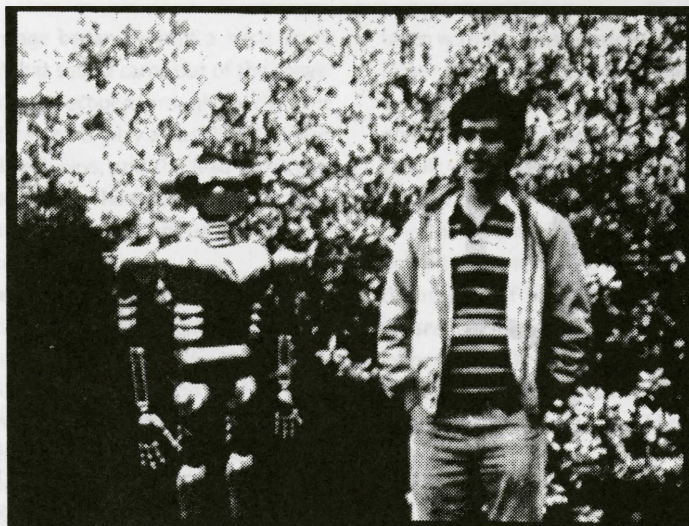
I take off up north and rent a small cabin with a mini-refrigerator. There's not much food, and the pitcher of milk has gone sour. The cabin backs onto a pasture where donkeys graze.

They come right up to the fence to have their noses rubbed. I feed them raw carrots, handfuls of grass, and the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, the 16th century's most brilliant mind.

Where do I fit? Am I a random bounce and kick of sub-atomic particles dancing on a string?

I chew on clumps of petroleum jelly. I'm crazy for weeks but my words seem clearer.

One morning, I wake up alone in an alleyway, my hands and face badly scraped, my clothes



torn and dirty. I smash a window and crawl in.

Upstairs, I find a bank complete with red velvet ropes and counter windows with metal bars for the tellers.

There are mannequins behind the counter acting as employees and others lined up as customers. I truly enjoy the friendly and engaging dialogue.

"I would like to cash this paycheck so I can purchase some Prada pumps," says the pretty, twenty-something customer. "Can you help me?"

"Yes I can, but I will require some identification, preferably your driver's license and social insurance number," replies the slightly embittered graying-haired woman who has spent too many years behind the teller window with no hope of advancement.

"No problem. Has anyone ever told you your skin is lovely? What creams do you use?"

"Just a light touch of Vaseline, especially in the winter. I hope you enjoy your new shoes."

I accidentally cut one of the women with a steak knife. She bleeds out onto the wooden floor. I supervise while another woman mops up the blood. I hold a gun on her. Even artificial life doesn't like to face its own mortality. I shoot her and a male mortgage lender as a lesson for the others. I try to run an operation free of any organic waste.

When I add up the day's transactions, something jumps from my tongue and puts the bank into insolvency.

If the mannequin depositors realize I have misplaced their funds, they might wake up from their mannequin sleep and kill me. I mean the excuse of my madness will only take me so far.

I position myself in front of the main doors and scream at the top of my lungs about money, power and class. The robot police arrest me. They'll hide me away, my crash landing covered up like all the others, but I will not be charged with murder. **KM<sup>8</sup>**





# Robots of Harlem

by Mark Medley

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The club was a dive. Hidden away below street level in the basement of an old hotel, it was 23 steps from the sidewalk to the entrance. The owner once remarked that it was like descending to the first ring of Hell, because people never really left. Only the most desperate drunks went there anymore and there were even plans to shut it down. The owner was considering reopening it as a pool hall or a restaurant.

It was really just one big room, rectangular like a shoebox. The ceiling hung low and the floor was sticky. The rusted bot-tender behind the bar was a vintage late-21st century model. Half the time it would serve you rum and coke when you asked for rye and ginger.

At the front of the room, a stage was elevated

a couple of feet above the floor. The band stood up there from opening till closing. A faded yellow banner hung across the back wall, half hidden by cases of beer, announcing the world famous Robots of Harlem. They were wonders of modern technology, once upon a time.

The owner explained to a man who was that particular day's only customer: "I got them second-hand from a dealer in the valley. Saved 'em from scrap metal. They're nothing more than jukeboxes, really. Programmed to play mid-20th century stuff. Not my cup of tea, but they were top of the line at one time. Go ahead, make a request."

The man hopped off his barstool and walked over to the stage. As he approached, all four robots turned their square heads toward him.

"Yes, Sir, do you have a request for the band this evening?" said the robot standing in centre stage.

The man smiled. "What is this, an R-24?"

"Even earlier," said the owner. "It's a 22. Should be in a museum."

"No kidding."

The robot repeated itself politely: "Yes, Sir, do you have a request for the band this evening?"

"Ah, I don't know. Just play some drinking music."

As he returned to his stool, the robot near the

back of the stage began to emit a basic drum beat. The high hat sound came out of the speaker in his mouth and echoed through the club. The second robot started to play a bass line, the next one followed with keys, and the lead robot produced the sound of a slide guitar, turning from left to right and moving its arms up and down in a crude dance.

Before the owner went home at night, he put the bar stools on the tables and extinguished the lights. The robots shuffled, soldier-like, off the stage, one after the other, and into the backstage storage room. There, they each plugged into wall outlets to recharge until morning. Sometimes, before the owner left, he would come in to wish the robots goodnight.

"Good job today, guys. You played well."

"Thank you, Sir," they would say in unison.

And then they just stood there, locked in the storage room. They would talk or stand silently, and sometimes one of them would begin to play the trumpet or the saxophone or any of the other 80 instruments programmed into their circuits. It would launch into a solo. When the horn peaked in crescendo, the sound threatened to break out of the room, out of the club, to climb the front stairs and escape into the night.

Sometimes the others would join in and they would jam until the early morning, playing for the empty club, enjoying the music because that's what they had been designed to do.

Fresh from the assembly line and state of the art, the robots' first gig was as the house band in a Montreal night club. Christened the Robots of Harlem by the manager (he thought it was catchy), they became instant celebrities. Movie stars swarmed the club to have their pictures

taken with the bots. Tourists came to the city just to see the band. The first of their kind in robot entertainment, they were the great great great grandsons of the jukebox. No longer were robots simply workers; now they were jesters, too.

And then? The market flooded. The price to own them came down and eventually every bar bought its own robotic band. No longer unique, the novelty of being first soon wore off. Years passed and new models were developed: no longer robot-like, but more and more humanoid. The band became outdated. The club was long past its heyday. They were sold to a scrap dealer.

. . . .

The robots were in his junkyard for about a week when the scrap dealer decided how they could be salvaged. Those heads will make fine speakers, he thought. He got out his laser saw and searched for them amidst the skeletons of cars, old television sets, hovercrafts and teleporters.

As he approached, one of the robots turned its head towards him. "Yes, Sir, do you have a request for the band this evening?"

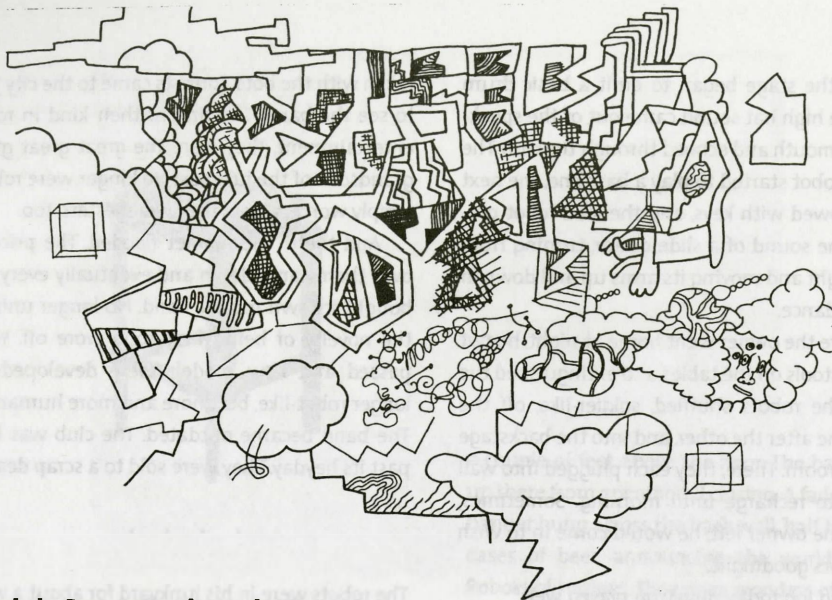
The scrap dealer stopped: he hadn't actually heard them play yet.

"Why not play some working music?" said the man.

He powered up the saw, but couldn't bring himself to dismember the robots. They were antiques. Maybe they'll be worth something someday, he thought. "Why don't you guys come back to the house with me," said the man. "My wife would love to watch you perform."

So they followed the scrap dealer back to his house. His wife loved the robots. She would clap along with the rhythm, sing along to songs that had been forgotten by the world. The man's wife was sick and it had been a long time since she





### Robobaby Dreamscape by Mark Connery

had appeared happy, so the scrap dealer decided the robots could stay with them in the house.

The robots became fixtures. They acted as alarm clocks, waking up the scrap dealer and his wife each morning with trumpet blasts that would have been right at place in the cavalry. While the woman cooked dinner, the robots would take requests. Some evenings, they would stand on the veranda and serenade the couple while they danced under the stars.

One April morning, the trumpet blast woke up the scrap dealer. He climbed out of bed, put on his socks and reached for his pants. But his wife did not move.

The scrap dealer didn't have much money and he couldn't afford a cemetery plot. His only choice was to bury his wife in the scrap yard. He struggled to hold back tears as he dug the hole. Her body was only covered by bed sheets he had roughly sewn together. The robots watched him work from the veranda. As he dug, one began to

play a low, melancholic melody, and the others soon joined in. The scrap dealer started to cry. When he was done, and a wooden cross marked her grave, he hauled the robots back out to the depths of the scrap yard. He didn't want to hear their music anymore.

There they languished for years, rusting in the rain, paint peeling off in the sun, singing songs to one another, surrounded by other junk. They rigged up a recharge system using the battery of an old car and though their power grew low, they were able to keep functioning. They never saw the scrap dealer, though sometimes they heard him rummaging about in the yard, on the other side of one of the junk hills, whistling the tune they had played while he buried his wife.

One day the scrap dealer came walking towards them, accompanied by a man they had never seen before.

"It's for a club," the man said. "I'm going for a retro theme."

"I have a few robot musicians," said the scrap dealer. "Rusted pretty bad, but they still work. I hear them playing at night sometimes."

"Are they any good?"

The scrap dealer thought back to the day he buried his wife. "Yeah. Yeah, they're pretty good."

The two men stood in front of the robots.

"Yes, Sir, do you have a request for the band this evening?" asked one of the robots.

The man considered. "What kind of work do you do?"

"I was designed for entertainment purposes. I can sing in seven different voices, emulate 82 different instruments."

"What about them?" he said, pointing at the others.

"My band mates are programmed identically."

The man turned to the scrap dealer. "I'll take 'em."

. . . .

The club never got off the ground. On good nights, during those first few months, the band played to a half-empty room, but few customers ever paid much attention to the robots on stage. However, for the robots, it was like the beginning all over again.

Eventually, when the owner stopped bothering to open the club every day, the robots remained locked in the storage room, discussing the future.

"I believe this establishment is closing."

"It appears so."

"We will be sent back for recycling."

"Or refurbishment."

"Perhaps."

Silence.

"Play an E. Alto saxophone."

The note flooded the room. Steady. Full. It could be held indefinitely.

. . . .

They had been in the storage room for a week. When the owner finally unlocked the door to let the four robots out, they saw that the club was almost bare. Other robots, new models that could be mistaken for men from a distance, carried tables and chairs up the stairs.

The Robots of Harlem processed this information and understood.

"Play something upbeat," the owner said as the robots took the stage.

The Robots of Harlem launched into song while the mover-bots cleared out the remaining furniture. The owner stood at the bar and ordered scotch on the rocks from the bot-tender, but received a glass of ice instead. He chewed the cubes one at a time. When the last barstool had been hauled up the stairs, the owner told the robots to go back to the storage room.

"I'll come get you guys tomorrow," he said, before closing the door. "I'm going to bring you back to my place. You can sing for the wife."

"Thank you, Sir," they said in unison.

That night, the owner came in while the robots were recharging. One at a time, he put his hand on the back of their heads and flicked the switch that shut them off for good. Their inner circuits and mechanisms wound down like songs. **KM\***



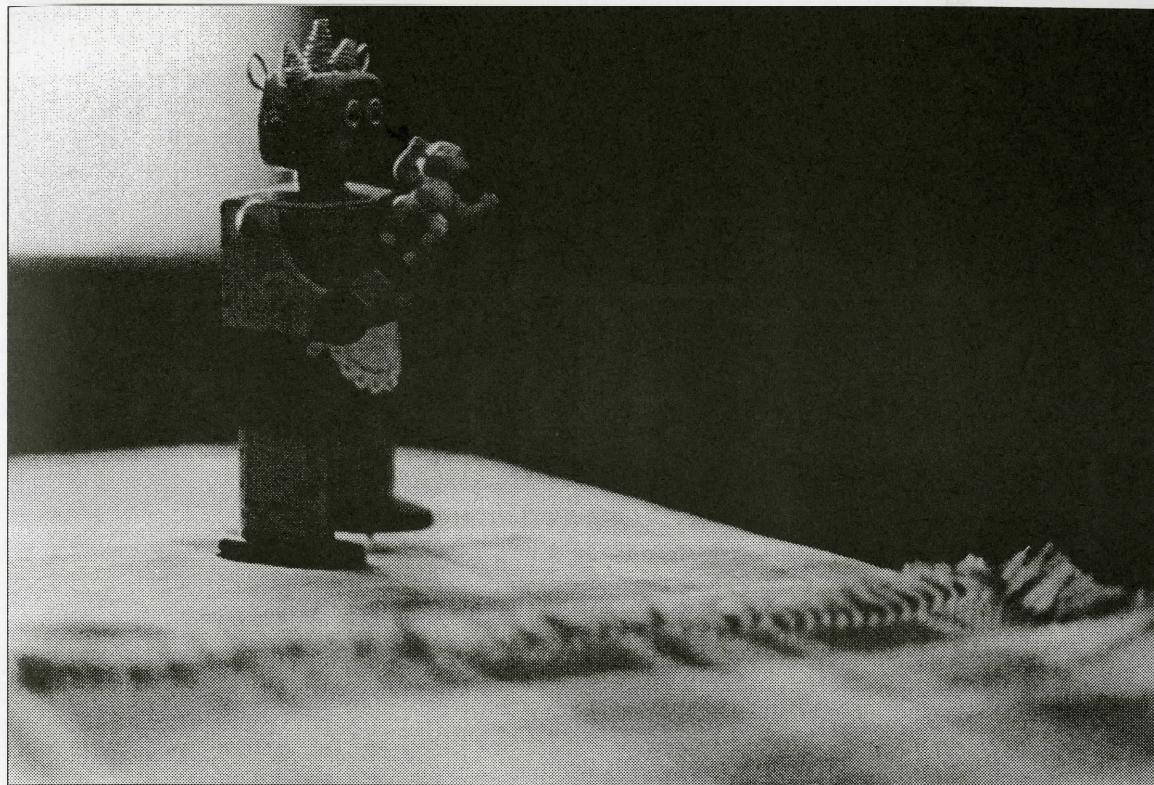
# Drool

by Paola Poletto

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## Her Amphibian

---

Monday morning accompanies the vomit kiss, the amphibian  
grows in the belly; the ring constricts the ring finger  
as the finger grows thick and the lungfish plumps  
into legfish, into mammal, growing larger in the amniotic bath.

It began with a kiss, the amphibian, in a flask, in a rush  
of haemoglobin mixed with whiskey-soured spit, it began  
without the usual precautions, and until the decision was made  
to let it live, she could not think of it except as amphibian.

Evolution replays itself in miniature, from blastula to brain  
until, at last, the thing is born—pink, human, whole—  
and even then she fears she cannot love or that she'll shudder  
at the thought of her own child's new tongue flicking at her milk.

She fears the disco balls, like Earth, have ceased their spinning,  
that her champagne has thickened to pabulum; she does not want  
the collapse of her youth that slept in her womb to wake  
coughing in the nursery filled with flowers and bears.

• • • •

by Paul Vermeersch



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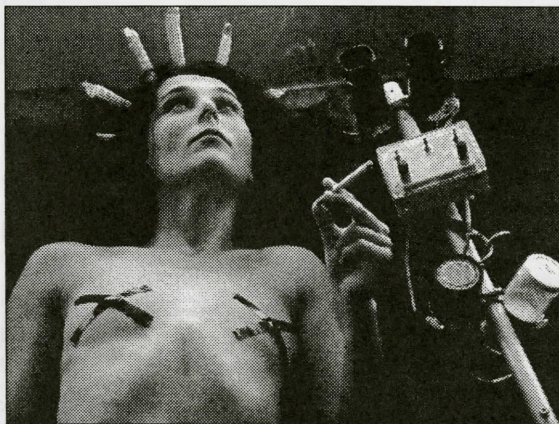
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digifest





# Baby Descending

by Paul Hong

• • • •

The baby is out in the front, rolling around from one end of the lawn to the other. Trudy, the next door neighbour's dog, is watching the baby from the end of her leash, which is lashed around the cherry tree on their lawn, as usual.

The phone is in my hand and I've forgotten what I am doing here.

"You were saying?"

I look at the phone. "I mean... my life is so... so empty right now," I say into it.

"The baby will fill it up."

"Okay... if you say so."

The baby has stopped. Trudy has managed to

break free. At close range, Trudy and the baby are staring at each other. The baby rubs the dog's nose.

"I have to go. A terrible thing is about to occur."

But it doesn't. Nothing happens. Trudy is a dog who cares and the baby is a baby.

Into the phone, I say, "The baby is like a nude descending the staircase, except in this case the staircase is the lawn and the baby is wearing a toga."

"A toga?"

"I don't know what you call it."

"A jumper?"

"A jumper," I say.

The baby's things are in a U-Haul and I have to lug it all up to the baby's room. Everything smells like talcum powder. A box full of baby's stuff leaps out of my arms and onto the floor. Amongst the stuff littered around the crib, I see a picture. I pick it up. It is a picture of my wife with a strange man.

The wife is feeding the baby.

"Who is this?"

The wife glances at the photograph. She sets the baby down next to her on the couch. She stands, takes my elbow and leads me to the kitchen where the lights are all off. There is no sound except the buzz of the microwave oven.

"Where did you find that?"

"Who is this? Why is his hand on your ass?"

"It's not. Besides, how could you tell?"

"Name and why he was significant enough to be photographed in extremely close proximity to you."

She begins to answer and the baby starts crying in the other room. The microwave beeps

twice and shuts down.

"Later," I say, brushing past her to see what is so damn hot and steaming in the microwave oven.

Later, in tears, she tells me he is the father of the baby.

"This baby?" I shout, pointing.

"Yes," she sobs.

I am staring at the baby asleep on the couch. Then I am staring into the bowl of what was once hot cereal. I take a step and I am staring at the baby again.

The baby knows who's the real papa.

"It's you," my wife says.

"What?"

"The stranger in the picture is you but you took a header off the viaduct bridge and we rebuilt you."

"What are you saying?"

She looks away momentarily before explaining. "We salvaged your brain. You're a robot with a brain. You're the baby's father but you were reborn as a robot. I identified your body at the morgue. Now your programming is starting to degrade and become corrupt, so you're lapsing into old habits and patterns... That's why you sometimes find yourself in strange places and situations. That's why—"

"You mean my penis, this thing, isn't really mine?"

"The doctors were afraid that your programming might degrade, that you might lapse into—"

"But this thing was based on...it's a scale model of my real—"

"Listen!" she yells and then glances over at

the baby. She steps closer to me and whispers: "Flesh is weak and you're not well."

"Funny," I say. The baby is grimacing. "Very funny."

"That's why I keep finding the toaster in the bathroom. That's why you keep giving away all your stuff to your friends. That's why I keep having to throw away the ropes you buy every week." She closes her eyes for a moment and reopens them. Stepping closer, she reaches forward and opens my shirt and there is a panel on my chest. "You see?" she asks, opening the panel door.

I count the 24 D batteries inside a cavity in my chest.

"Wow," I manage.

My wife sighs and I gaze up at her and she is staring at nothing and something far away.

The baby is riding the dog and the dog is pulling the lawnmower.

The wife is inside preparing the free-range organic grain-fed chicken but I also know she is keeping an eye on me. The expensive meat is wasted on me.

I am in an enormous hammock. Above me, under the listless clouds, the leaves of the birch and maple touch.

The charcoal is still fiery bright in the Hibachi. Another fifteen minutes, probably.

I close my eyes. Everyone knows I am a fool. The baby is laughing? I reopen my eyes and the baby is watching me. I roll onto my side to wave to her.

The hammock will break under me and I will fall to the ground, knocking the Hibachi over ruining everything. **KM®**



## Horses

Have you seen children on leashes?

Wide eyes focused on static.

Wars run on what?

Dinosaurs?

A production of plastics?

Can we grow babies?

Trade people for paper?

Why'd you paint over my favorite graffiti?

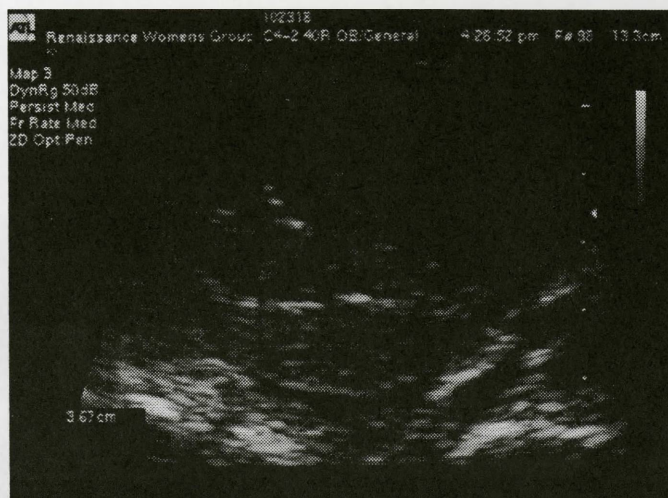
Metallic beasts surround a slave.

"Don't worry, it's got blinders on," says the driver.

"You wanna ride?"

....

by Casey Kohl



## **intercessors of elaborate technologies**

slick conductive gel  
skin bone uterus foetus  
of a new mother  
and through the hair  
of a patient

the web cap over the skin  
over the skull over the quivering mass  
that provides every wave  
of every brain

showing on digital screens  
broadcast  
fibre optic telephone lines  
a primary matrix of object-related signals

• • • •

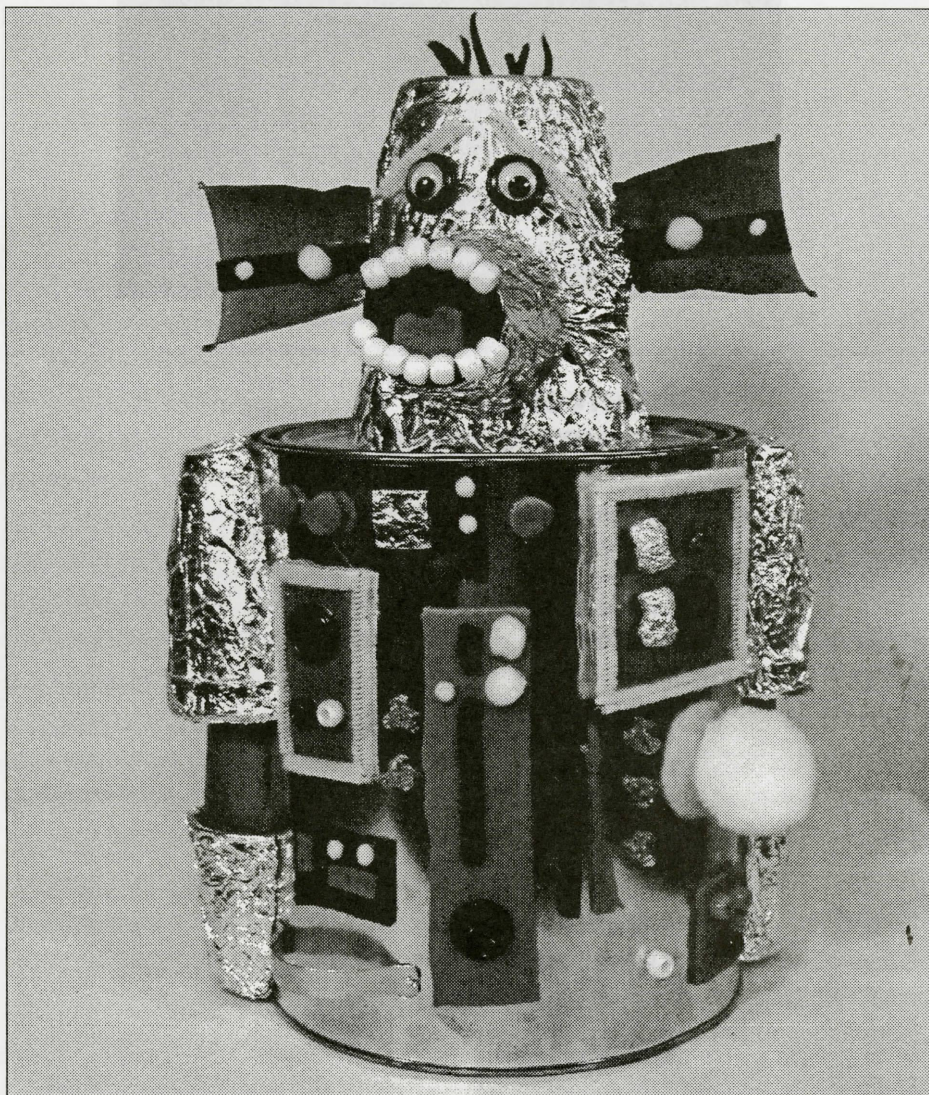
**by Anthony Easton**



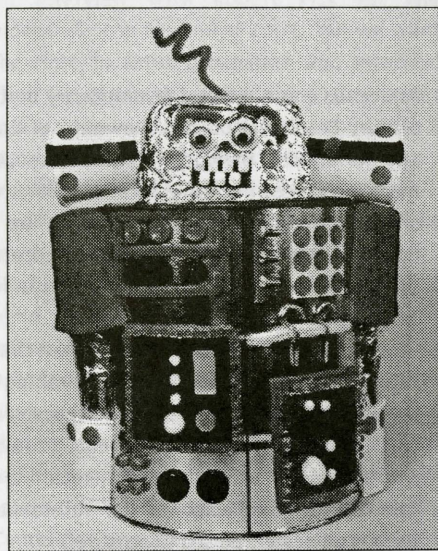
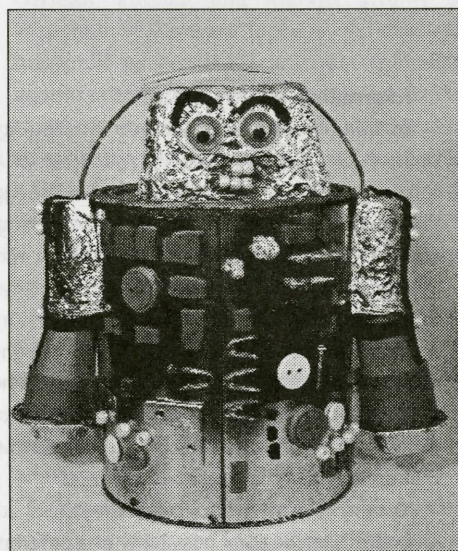
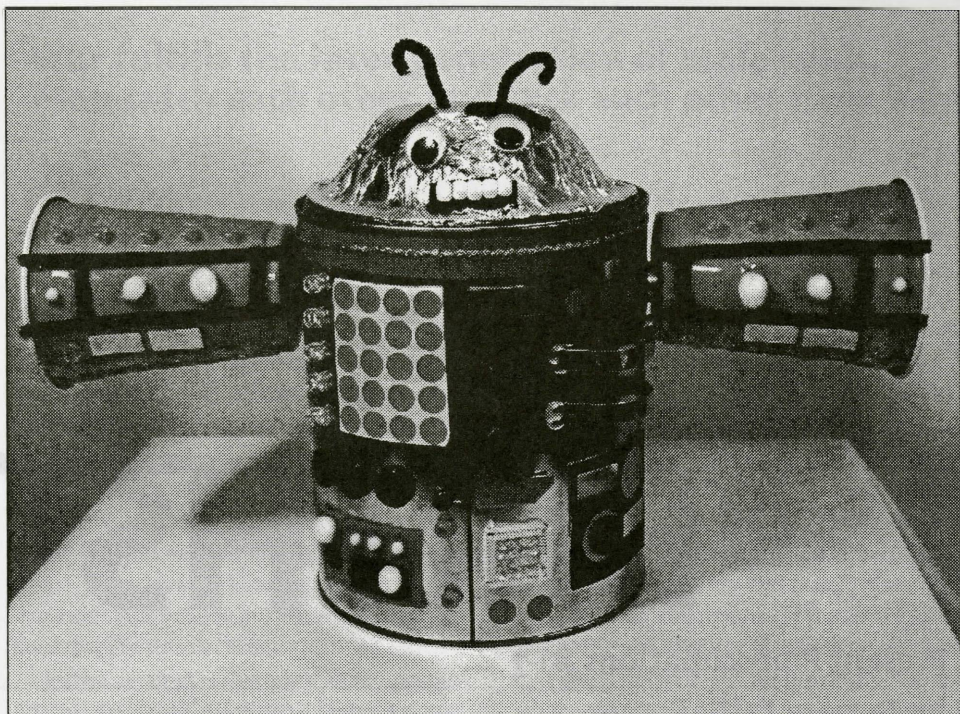
## Paint Can Robots

by Jennifer Matotek

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# CIRCLE *of* BIRTHS

## Present Preoccupations #1-7

by Tamara Faith Berger

Paracelsus was a medical revolutionary in 16th-century Basel who burned the works of Galen and introduced mercury into the arsenal of medicine. Forced into exile because of his study of necromancy, Paracelsus ended up in Constantinople where it is said that he learned the supreme secret of the alkahest—the universal solvent—from an Arabian adept.

"Know that air is nothing other than chaos," Paracelsus wrote in 1530, "and chaos nothing but the white of an egg, and the egg is heaven and earth." If chaos is the white of an egg, it could be understood that chaos is viscous—meaning discord/disorder connected to the substance of itself is ultimately poised to nurture...

### I. Rereading

In *Story of the Eye* by Georges Bataille (City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1987), the eye of a corpse at the end of the story is linked to the egg that was used in a sexual game at the beginning. The character Simone wants to play with this eye/egg, and in due time puts the dead man's eye inside her pussy. After the narrator of the story orgasms, he carefully draws Simone's thighs apart. His eyes bulge "erectile with horror" as he stares at the eye/egg in her cunt. "Streaks of come in the steaming hair," he says, "helped give that dreamy vision a disastrous sadness."

*Comment:* Each mutually erectile sexual act embodies the chemical possibility of a different

## **“War fulfills the inter-penetration of male souls. Men catch each other and fuck each other from behind.”**

vision. Birth happens when birth equals this exchange.

### **II. Zionist History**

Since its inception, the Zionist movement has been split into two distinct camps: revisionist vs. socialist. Head of the revisionists from 1925-48, Zev Jabotinsky was inspired by the Polish nationalist general, Josef Pilsudski, who wrote: “I fight and I die only because I cannot live in this shithouse that is our life. It is an insult—do you hear? It insults me as a dignified, unenslaved human being.” (See [www.arts.monash.edu.au/history/events/genidwar/papers/shindler.html](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/history/events/genidwar/papers/shindler.html))

Pitted against Jabotinsky was socialist Chaim Arlosoroff (1916-1933), who bridged German, Russian and Marxist strains of thought in his Zionism. “To the revolutionaries,” Arlosoroff wrote, “the Jew is the capitalist, against whom pogroms are instigated; to the capitalist, on the other hand, he is the revolutionary, who should not be allowed to see the light of day” (Arlosoroff, Shlomo Avineri. Grove/Atlantic Inc. New York: 1991).

Arlosoroff was gunned down at close range on a dark beach in Tel Aviv in 1933. His murder is believed to have been committed by Jabotinsky's followers. One theory, however, posits that Josef Goebbels organized his assassination when he found out that Arlosoroff had had a passionate love affair with Magda Friedlander (the woman who later became Magda Goebbels).

*Comment:* Every redemption-seeking political movement is the story of fratricide, whose

origin implies the shedding of familial blood. Young men go to war and lose their virginity while bonding with—and killing—other young men. In this way, war fulfills the inter-penetration of male souls. Men catch each other and fuck each other from behind.

### **III. The Dirty Earth**

Dr. Hanan Ashwari, the Palestinian lawmaker and former political spokeswoman for Arafat, often speaks to western audiences despite heckling, jeers and smug placards jutting up after her every sentence that read: “I disagree.”

Dr. Ashwari's acceptance of the 2003 Sydney Peace Prize was disputed by groups who believe that she is an apologist for terrorism. “We are not fond of mass suicide,” Ashwari explained in an interview with Robert Fisk for *The Independent* in November 2003, “but we want the right to resist occupation and injustice. Then the moment we say ‘resist,’ the Israelis pull out the word ‘terrorist’—so a child with a stone becomes the ‘legitimate’ target for Israeli sniper fire and a high-velocity bullet.”

*Comment:* “The black man hates the white man's need to pull himself up from the earth... The black man sees in the white man's need the blind arrogance of one who thinks himself immortal. But he who brings civilization cannot help but feel immortal. This is why he smells like a corpse: he is constituted by the return of that repressed ‘remnant of earth’ which clings to him as much as to any man...” —Dominique Laporte, *The History of Shit*, MIT Press, Cambridge: 2000.





fig. 1

#### IV. Self-Consciousness After Dying

"All the sounds that a person has heard during his life continue to vibrate within his soul following his death, like clanging coins in a gourd... In order to rid the soul of this 'dust,' it is shaken in the Catapult. The sages say that 'two angels stand at each end of the world and toss the soul from one to the other.' It is almost as if the angels try to rid the soul of its accumulated psychic dust by putting it through a cosmic centrifuge until only pure soul remains. Were this treatment not administered to the soul, however, it would be unable to silence all the sense images and noises that were carried with it from this world and would have to wander in the world of Confusion and Emptiness for ages." —Zalman Schachter Shalomi, "Life in the Hereafter: A Tour of What's to Come" ([www.elevated.fsnet.co.uk/index-page13.html](http://www.elevated.fsnet.co.uk/index-page13.html)).

*Comment:* "What is she going to tell them? That she left her country as a decent woman and came back after prostituting herself for months? That she was being sexually, physically and mentally abused by her pimp and some of her customers? I know this for a fact as I saw marks of abuse on their bodies. I don't know what I would do in a situation like this but I let

you think about it." —Arabic Man Observing, from *The Natashas*, Victor Malarek. Viking Canada, 2003.

#### V. Omniscient Insanity

"I have fallen under the power of the terrible thoughts of a magician," Unica Zurn (1916-1970) wrote in her novel *The House of Illnesses* (Atlas Press, London: 1993). "He has received neither a hair, nor scarcely a handshake or a kiss from me, but still he manages to pummel, to press his way through and finally devour me." Zurn believed that black magic could not be eradicated.

Her idea of black magic is similar to Freud's in *Totem and Taboo* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1950) which he named "The Omnipotence of Thoughts," wherein a subject's neurotic beliefs are thought to influence the outside world. An example of this is primitive man's dread that his prohibited sexual behaviour would cause a failure of the crops.

*Comment:* Clearly, sex, paranoia and creation are close partners. We feel like someone is looking at us, not in a way that will make us fertile or give us visions, but in the mode of a sinister, reverse longing that can immediately affect our capabilities. Note that while for

Freud, artistic invention stems from the essential sexual inquiries we made as children (e.g. where do I come from? which sex am I?), for Bataille, artistic invention liberates our libidinal instincts, instincts that are sadistic. "One can say that the sadist sets out to substitute for the human organism the image of machinery," elaborates Walter Benjamin. (See Hal Foster, *Convulsive Beauty*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993.)

#### VI. Possible Liberation

"She beats the chair against the door with all her might, whereupon the warder appears with the same compassionate face and takes her to another cell, a large one which is completely empty. She tears up the last of her paper handkerchiefs, rolls them into small white balls and forms them into the letters of the word "Liberation." (See figure 1) —Unica Zurn, *The Man of Jasmine*, written 1957-67, Atlas Press, London: 1994.

Comment: a. Freud is a novelist. b. Black magic is as easy as extracting a hair from a glass of milk. (See figure 2)

#### VII. Babies

"I do not forgive myself for being born. It is as if, creeping into this world, I had profaned a mystery, betrayed some momentous pledge, committed a fault of nameless gravity. Yet, in a less assured mood, birth seems a calamity I would be miserable not having known." —E.M. Cioran, *The Trouble With Being Born*. Arcade Publishing, New York:1973.

Comment: In the Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem, a baby boy was born with a 10mm

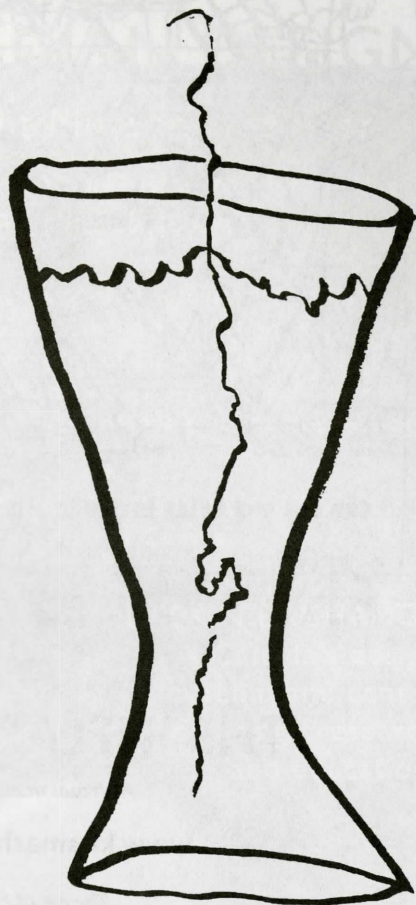
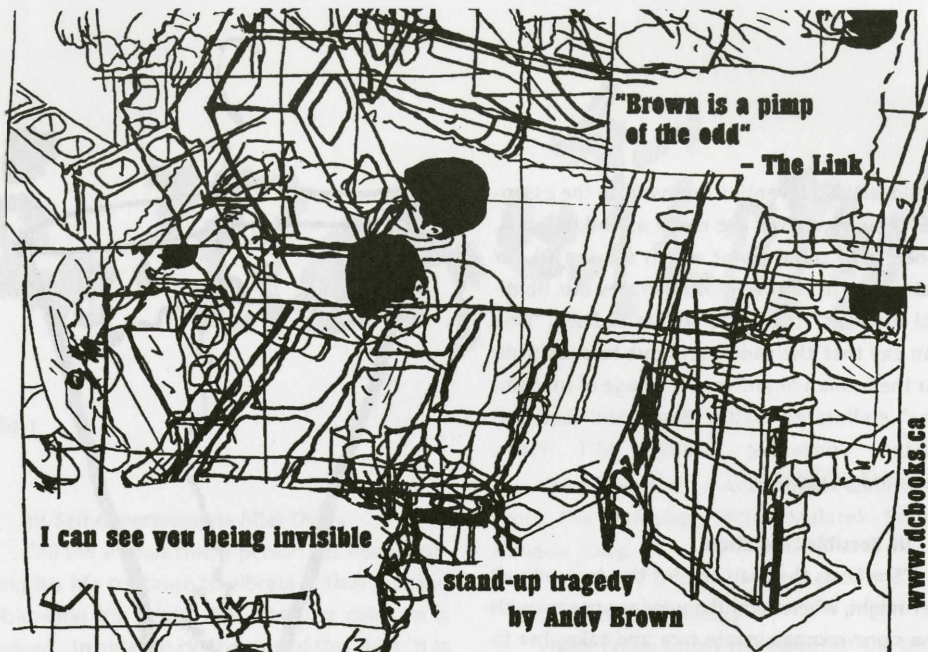


fig. 2

wide birthmark on his cheek. His grandmother, Aysha Ayyad, at first described the mark as a flower, until she saw the letters A-L-A written on the side of the baby's face. Ala was the name of his uncle, a Hamas militant killed two months earlier by the IDF. Ayyad then said: "This miracle shows that the martyrs who fall fighting for Allah do not die... Their names are carved on our hearts and the flesh of their sons." As of December 4, 2003, thousands of people had come to visit the baby. **KM<sup>a</sup>**





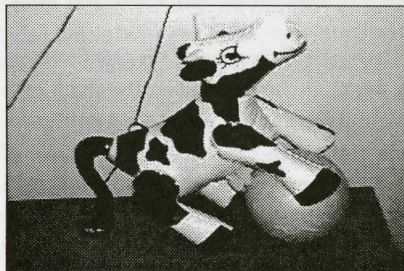
## THE INFLATABLE MUSEUM

*A virtual museum of inflatable objects*

[www.kissmachine.org/inflated.html](http://www.kissmachine.org/inflated.html)

*The eye of the realist is inflatable.*

—Michael Benedikt



The Inflatable Museum is a gathering place for objects, performances and environments that are resigned to instability. Artists explore the structural parameters of a virtual exhibition space by contrasting flat "cyber" space with images of inflability.

**Contributors include:** Shinobu Akimoto, Wendy Banks, Craig Buckley, Sheila Butler, Lucia Cipriano, Angela Hajdu, Paul Hong, Human Faux Pas, Inflatable Systems Ltd, Michelle Kasprzak, Jake Kennedy, Karen McElrea, Jennifer M. Paquette, Ana Rewakowicz, Jon Sasaki, Sherwin Tjia and Gregory White.

# FOCUS ON CANADIAN DESIGN

## Angelcare Sound & Movement Nursery Monitor

Designed by Michel Dallaire, Michel Dallaire Design Industriel Inc.,  
Montreal, 1998, Manufactured by Safety 1st, Montreal

This baby monitor features a sensor pad located under the crib mattress to monitor the baby's breathing movements. If there is no breathing after 20 seconds, the alarm sounds. Dallaire uses the imagery of a guardian angel to unite the design: the handle/antenna acts as halo, and the wings of the angel serve as operating buttons. The playful design boost the sales of this patented technology first developed in the UK.

The monitor is part of the Design Exchange Permanent Collection of Canadian Design. See more of the collection in the DX Resource Centre.

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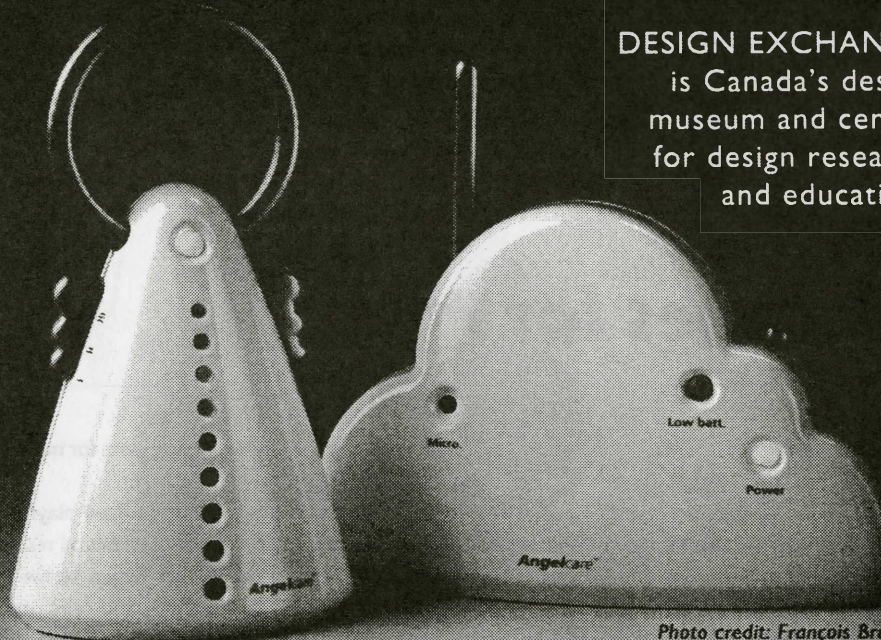


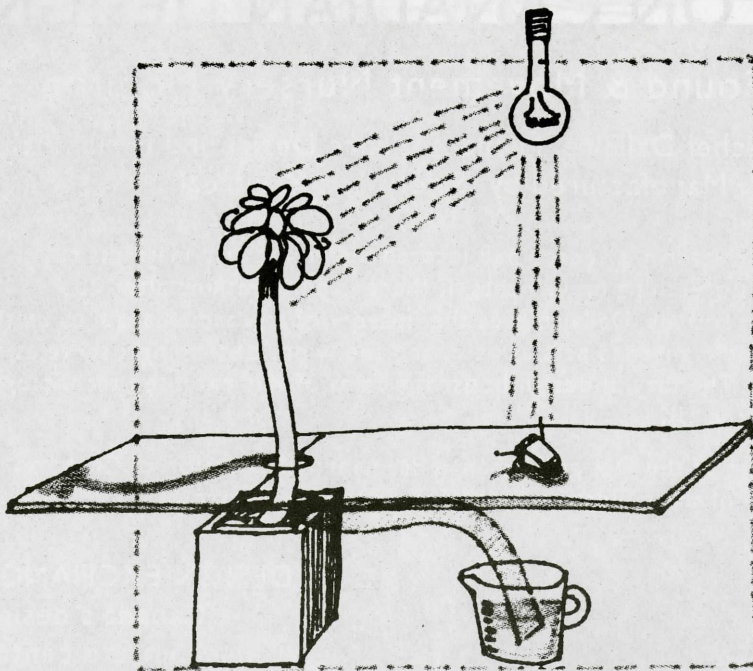
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Marc Ngui & Magda Wojtyra

# Landscapes for Fred

by Paola Poletto

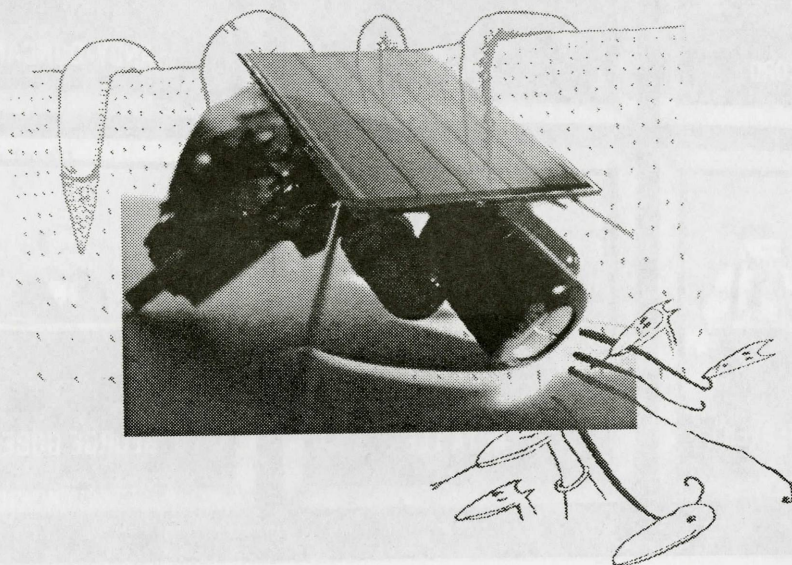
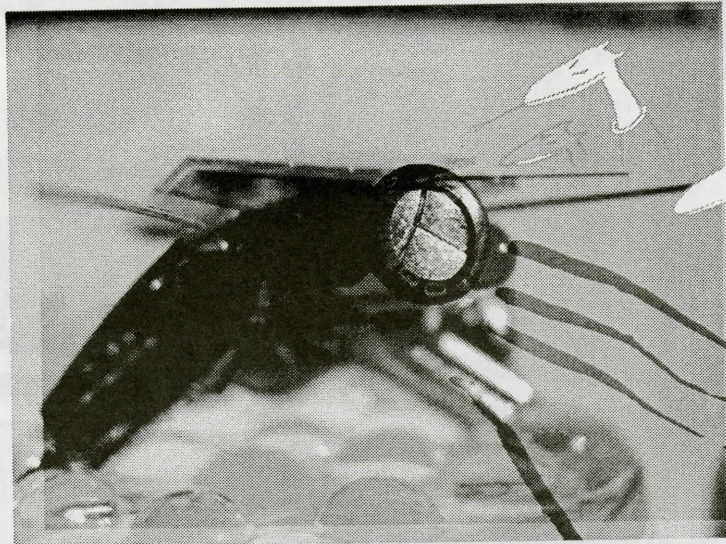
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Sally McKay, Jenny San Martin, Jon Sasaki and the team of Magda Wojtyra and Marc Ngui have sketched ideas for an exhibition called Robot Landscapes that imagines and fabricates living environments for a little robot named Fred. Fred's main energy source is light. Bug-like, Fred has the ability to store energy and appears to

move around randomly as it looks for more light to feed on.

Some of the artists have mixed playful and serious ideas about co-habitation and resourcefulness as they themselves began to live with Fred. Sasaki highlighted play and celebrity, and of all things, places Fred in the center square of a Hollywood Squares episode and suggests that at the core of community is an intelligent life form, man-made but not man-like.

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Jenny San Martin





John Sasaki





**John Sasaki**

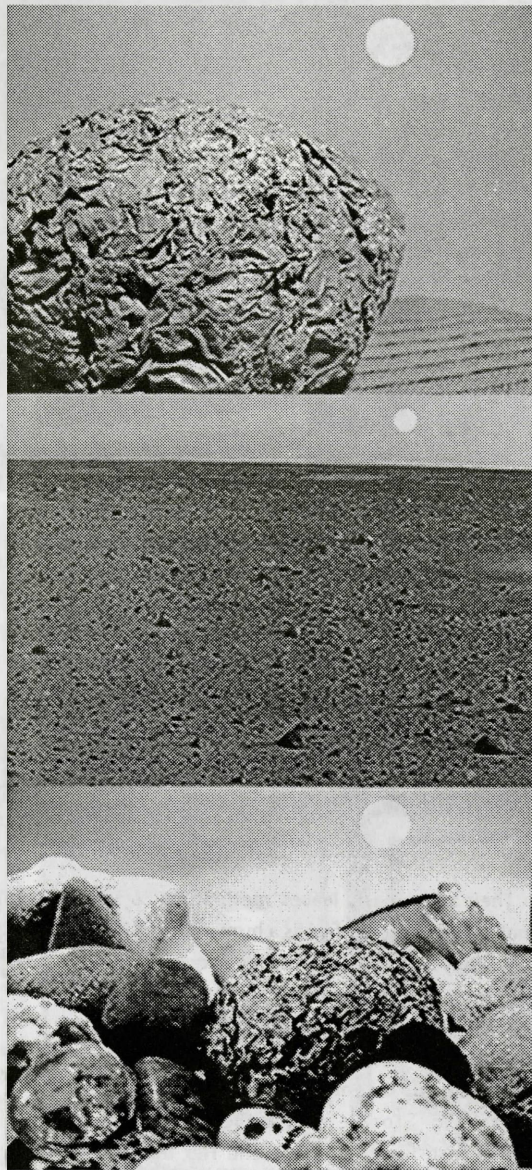
Wojtyra and Ngui have imagined a sustainable environment in which plants and artificial bugs live harmoniously: "We're going to use live plants—cactuses and air plants mostly—to sponge up the leftover light that the robot doesn't use. We want to integrate ideas about efficiency, techno worship (plants already eat light), personal scale entertainment, and, of course, artificial intelligence and respect for life forms in general but especially those that get overlooked (plants and insects)," says Wojtyra.

Their micro-oasis leaves me longing to be smaller than I already feel as a human being. But then Jenny San Martin helps me overcome this feeling by unearthing little creatures—lizards and worms, things I adored in childhood—as playmates for Fred.

McKay consistently uses low-resolution, grainy images. For me this has the effect of conflating past, future and present. Her medium points to the fallacy that invention, innovation and technology can be our saving graces or save

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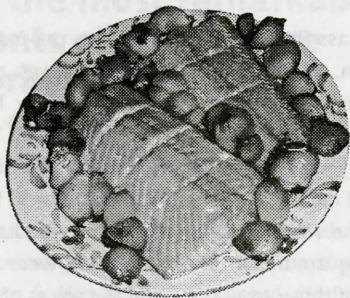
Sally McKay

our economies. This is one possible explanation for the skull in her robot landscape; another is that the Freds have made humans extinct.

The proliferation of artificial intelligence conjures a bunch of scenarios about the natural landscape. Will nature change once we begin to think of the role of intelligent machines in a shared landscape? Does the landscape possess the same qualities of built machines? Do robots control the landscapes they occupy?

I really don't know, but in my own robot landscape, I'm the robot. The trees and grasses are magnet-backed photos and my robot gear has an attraction repulsion thing happening: screwing up my own circuits so I'm not machine-like, the trees and grass will follow me wherever I go. **KM<sup>®</sup>**

*Robot Landscapes is presented as part of **digifest 2004: On The Move**. It runs May 1 to July 4, 2004, in Case Studies at Harbourfront Centre. Participants are Wai-Loong Lim, Sally McKay, Jenny San Martin, Jon Sasaki and the teams of Kirsten White and Marc Sullivan, Magda Wojtyra and Marc Ngui, Arek Jackowski and Dorota Gelner, Magic Pony and curator Paola Poletto. Fred was designed by Steve Jones ([www.bugnbots.com](http://www.bugnbots.com)) and he's small enough to fit in a shirt pocket. Info: [www.dx.org/digifest](http://www.dx.org/digifest)*



## Frayed Wires

by Mike Dempsey

♦ ♦ ♦

It's more frosty than hazy. More like the glass window panes you see rimmed with a thin layer of ice, yet still transparent in the middle. It's like watching a movie through thin wax paper.

I'm told it starts with a misfire, a bad spark-plug long in need of replacing that makes the entire engine seize. At least that's what I'm told.

I was thinking about fish. Salmon fillets come to mind if I rub my temples and really try to focus. I do that a lot now—rub my temples, that is. I jump around a lot. Can't keep one thought in mind for more than a few minutes. I guess I'm weird like that, now.

So, about that fish. I can remember smelling it before the shaking began. Just a brief glancing whiff, but enough for it to stick in my mind. That

unmistakable canned smell. The smell of something that once reared its head, fought for its life in the water and then flopped around on the beer-soaked deck of a rented trawler. Or maybe it just ran into some flexible mesh and decided to take a break on its way to wherever fish go, then got bored and complacent. I like to think that it's the former, the more romantic fight-for-your-life sort of thing, rather than the latter. I'm pretty sure that it's the latter, unfortunately.

I struggle with this a lot. I want it to seem romantic, epic even. I want this to be a life-altering, mind-blowing drama that the kids on Dawson's Creek would have mulled over for at least half a season... well at least back to back episodes, maybe even with a "to be continued" in the middle.

Reality says that my life isn't anything epic or extraordinary. It's about smelling fish, not mounting a heroic rally against seemingly insurmountable odds.

The fish lady, an apparent culinary expert in the epic world (a waitress in the real world) was talking about my two complementary side dishes. I went with the steamed vegetables and the baked potato. It sounded marvelous.

This is what you need to know about my restaurant patronage before we go any further.



While I am not a Neanderthal who grunts approvingly when slabs of marbled beef sizzle on a grill (ok, maybe I am capable of that), I am also not the type to frequent an establishment where the waiter slides the linen napkin onto my lap as I sit down. I prefer to categorize the restaurants I attend as either formal and casual. Casual is signified by a place that has ketchup and other condiments on the table. Anything else is formal. The fish place was most definitely formal. There are tall bottles of olive oil filled with what looks like expensive potpourri set on a starched cloth. No napkin placer, but formal nonetheless.

"Good evening, Sir. Would you like to hear our specials?" asks a man who looks more Italian than the French motif that the restaurant has employed to maintain its legitimacy as a provider of haute cuisine.

"No, that's fine thank you. I'll have the salmon."

"Very well, Sir, may I offer you something to drink?"

"No...no thanks. Just the salmon."

I'm getting off course again. I told you that I do that now, can't keep a thought in my head for more than a minute or two before heading off in some other direction. Thoughts are re-routed or detoured, or simply just lost in the shuffle.

OK, so we've covered the fish. I'm glad I was able to express that to you. It is but a minute portion of my experience, but sadly one of the most important.

Fish was followed by echoing. Not the sitcom type where the over-dressed, over-painted, over-paid fresh faced star of the minute strides confidently up to a massive gorge with his surgically

altered ass fitted so lovingly into his pre-faded, pre-torn, pre-stained, pre-patched jeans and yells "hello." No, this echoing is slightly less involved and definitely much less staged. The frosting was there again, but the sounds seemed more like what I imagine a 70s acid trip to be like. More like a bouncy syllable gradually flopping around in my head. There were the voices of those around me and the voices of my own confusion running in slow motion.

I thought of strangulation, like the cheesy fodder found in slasher flicks. You know the kind: the girl with the over-stuffed fun bags strangely walking alone (perhaps aimlessly after her romp of the evening) is targeted by our faceless villain and then chased through inexplicably empty streets and pathways until he (or she, to be politically correct) mindlessly kills our star and then moves on for more fresh meat without sparing a thought as to how to get those pesky blood stains out of his mangled coveralls.

My throat was free and clear, but my mind told me that the future would hold a severe inability to breathe. My mind was blank, but my throat was possessed by the overwhelming need to choke itself free of the mental blockage. A flash of paranoia mixed within unwelcome convulsions.

It is a truly terrifying thought to feel yourself choking and immediately have your mind turn to thoughts of your loved ones standing over your coffin at your funeral (which in this case was definitely over-represented in an elaborate ceremony in the quintessential stoic cemetery). Your mind has immediate impulses. Why do Pavlov's dogs immediately think of fresh meat when a bell rings? Why do men apparently think

**"It is depressing to consider one's own funeral. Especially when the most remarkable elements of the day are co-workers dreaming of coital endeavours and alcoholic bliss."**

of raunchy sexual adventures upon catching the shortest glimpse of a woman's bra strap? Why, upon feeling irrationally choked, did I immediately picture my own funeral?

The dew on the real grass is in sad contrast to that lime green AstroTurf laid down over the freshly shoveled dirt. The skyline is nicely slate gray and the conifers are just beginning to shed. Hey, I'm a romantic if nothing else.

"Any idea who this guy was?" whispers the girl in the back who's rummaged through her roommate's closet to find a decent pleated skirt to pair with her black bar shirt that reveals just enough cleavage to keep the boys buying her drinks on a Thursday night. She's a mail clerk now, but plans to sleep with at least two or three of the right people in order to move herself to an office with a door by April.

"I heard he was a funny guy," says a similarly clad woman with much less ambitious thoughts of career advancement.

"I wish they catered these things," laments the girl in the black bar shirt. Audrey is her name.

"Audrey, please!" whispers Rebecca, suddenly concerned more about what people thought. "We're at a funeral, not a mixer. Besides, there'll be drinks afterwards at the office, I guarantee it."

"Yeah... yeah you're right."

"Of course I am. Remember sweetie, I'm the

brains here, you're the boobs."

"Hey..." Audrey begins to retort, before trailing off and finally arching her back further.

Closer to the front, two men in their mid-twenties sit in their suits, freshly pressed at the local dry cleaners. One of the men, Marcus, is intent on twisting the wide buttons on his jacket completely from the fabric. Beside him, Carl has left his jacket buttons alone, but has gone to work at carving a wedge in the matted soil by his feet.

"How d'you figure it happened?" Carl asks no one in particular. "How... how... do you think this could happen?"

Marcus opens his mouth to spew out the response that has been fed to him by a dozen others earlier in the day, but then takes a different route. "He died, man. It's as simple as that. Nothing we can do about it now."

After he lets his eyes wander for a few seconds and fixes on Audrey, he offers this: "Hey, Carl... Carl, look back there. You see that blonde back there?"

Taking one last glance from the excavation site at his feet, Carl follows his gaze.

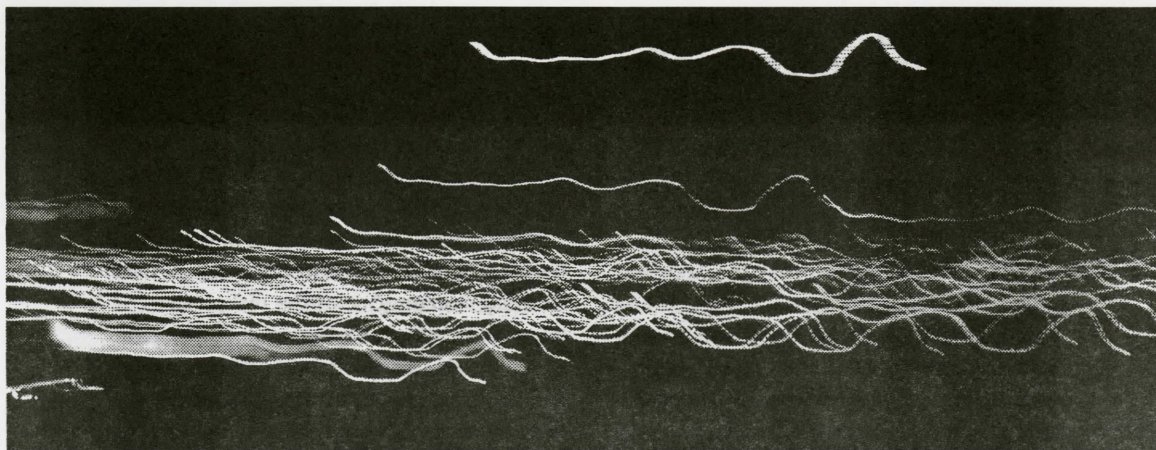
"You mean Audrey? What about her?"

"I bet she's looking for a promotion." Marcus' lips curl into something between a grimace and a grin.

Carl doesn't reply.

The rest is all formal "dust to dust" speeches, eulogies and friendly handshakes between those who have never met and will most likely never meet again. It is depressing to consider one's own funeral. Especially when the most remarkable elements of the day are co-workers dreaming of coital endeavours and alcoholic





Brainwaves by Matthew Blackett

bliss. I do not, under any circumstance, maintain that I am a special person. As I stated earlier, my life is not of epic proportions. However, I am saddened by the thought of my funeral being used as a pick-up joint.

After strangulation, thoughts turn to vanity. I again would like to repeat that I was a real man: the type who helps sell motorcycles, cigarettes and paper towel. I was usually either clad in denim, leather, plaid or some undesirable combination of the three. But, I am not a "real man," because my thoughts were not about whether my pants were pleated or whether my breath was minty fresh. My instinct told me to think about being hurried to the emergency room and having my clothes cut off in order to insert numerous nameless tubes, wires and pins into my body as seen on E.R., the same way a car now gets plugged in when it goes to a garage. For half a second, I was concerned about losing my favourite jeans to a pair of surgical shears. For the few seconds afterwards, I prayed that my underwear was acceptable. I panicked slightly as my melodramatic mind conjured images of a

doctor refusing to treat me upon seeing that I chose boxers over briefs.

"I'm sorry," he would say, "but I cannot help this man."

Puzzled looks would fill the cramped, curtained area filled with EMTs, nurses, my loved ones and the doctor. A heart clamp clatters to the floor two curtains over.

"Unfortunately for him, he chose to wear boxer briefs today. I cannot help a man who chooses boxer briefs. They severely inhibit the male ability to have children, you know. As well, they show an indecisive personality, one who cannot choose between the freedom of boxers and the support of briefs. That sort of indecision doesn't make for an ideal patient, I'm afraid."

It is also interesting to ponder what your last words will be. Everyone hopes that they'll be quoted for decades to come and appeal to both the sensitive female population and the arrogant male population, while scoring points with the over-educated post-secondary population that guarantees maximum circulation for years to come. When first confronted with the

**“For half a second, I was concerned about losing my favourite jeans to a pair of surgical shears. For the few seconds afterwards, I prayed that my underwear was acceptable.”**

thought of premature expiration (just as with its equally tragic partner, premature ejaculation), your mind scrambles to come up with the perfect phrase to express surprise, shock, dignity, bravado and generous amounts of testosterone. The words should mark the passing of a good man but also make people either crack a short-lived smile or glance to the heavens for a moment. I quickly scanned my brain for every National Lampoon's one-liner my father and I had ever laughed at, every slick James Bond sentence—"I thought Christmas only came once a year" is my all-time favourite—and even made a failed attempt to recall a John Wayne zinger.

"Life is but a small moment in a sea of missed opportunities."

That would be liable to get me beaten senseless in any corner bar. Although, if I could escape the angry horde, I may have a good shot at bedding one of their girlfriends.

"I came, I saw, I slept with it."

That would most definitely guarantee that the women within listening distance would form the same sort of horde, but would instead call for my castration.

Perhaps: "Tell my mother thanks for raising me." That may be all right, but it's still not epic.

"Be excellent to each other and... party on dudes." No... wait... that was Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure. Slightly epic, but not the proper vibe.

In the end, my brain couldn't come up with anything extraordinary. All I could manage was a less-than-stellar: "I'll be OK." Not the stuff of

legends and certainly not a line that would make the curriculum of any first-year college course. It wouldn't overshadow any of the unromantic tension of the actual scene. My death would be nothing more than one muttered sentence, followed by black.

So what happens in the end? What is it like to feel the onslaught of your own demise and not be able to do a thing to avert it? I wish I could tell you. After the plain blackness faded, there was only one image that filled my vision. Not the supposed pearly gates, surrounded by a foundation of clouds and whatever personification of a deity you may wish to use to fill in the blanks. And no, it was not the crimson slabs, complete with pitchforks, horns and a pendant for fake blood.

All I can express to you is the feeling of a remote-controlled television being switched on: the faint pop of the current firing through the switch, followed by a crackle and then the gradual sharpening of the image in front of you.

In my case, the growing picture was a hulk (or bulk) of a man in a blue suit with a stethoscope dangling from his neck. "Walt," said the patch on his chest. He's a little too much like a mechanic, I recall thinking, although it must have been appropriate as he drove me through a full diagnostic. He even over-charged me for his services.

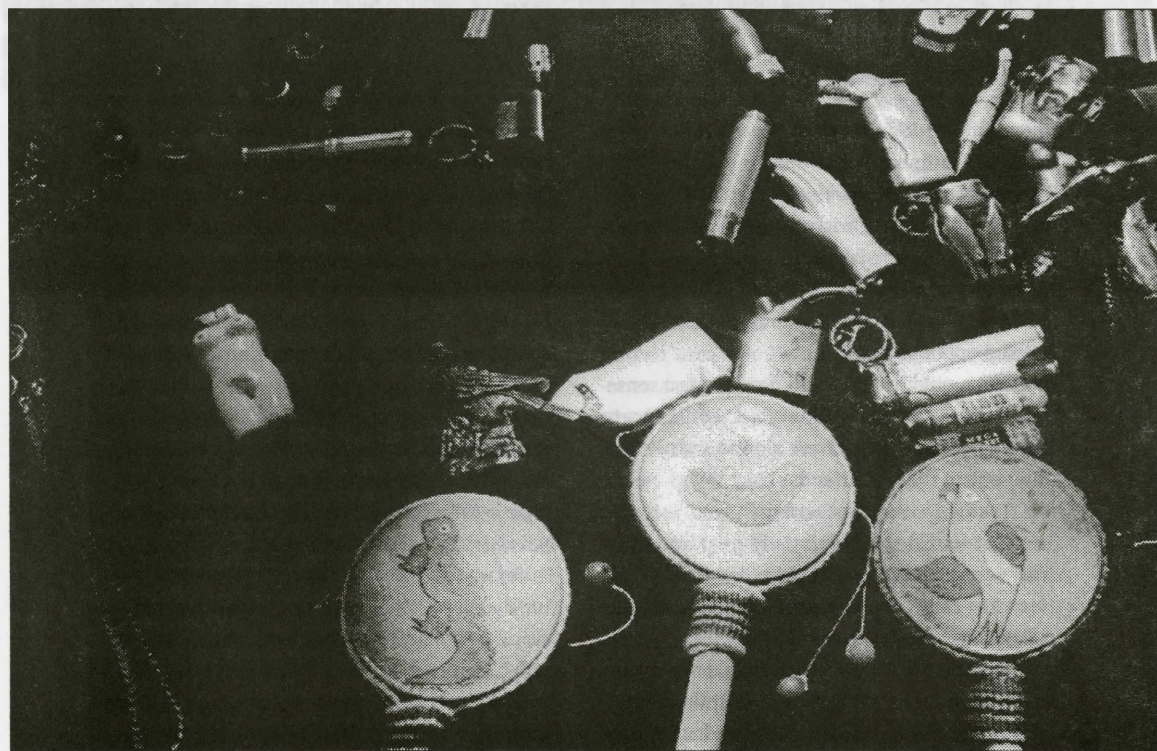
Before it happens, it seems so complicated. So... melodramatic, really. Apparently it's simple: one frayed wire, one impulse derailed, one list of thoughts and six seconds. **KM<sup>1</sup>**



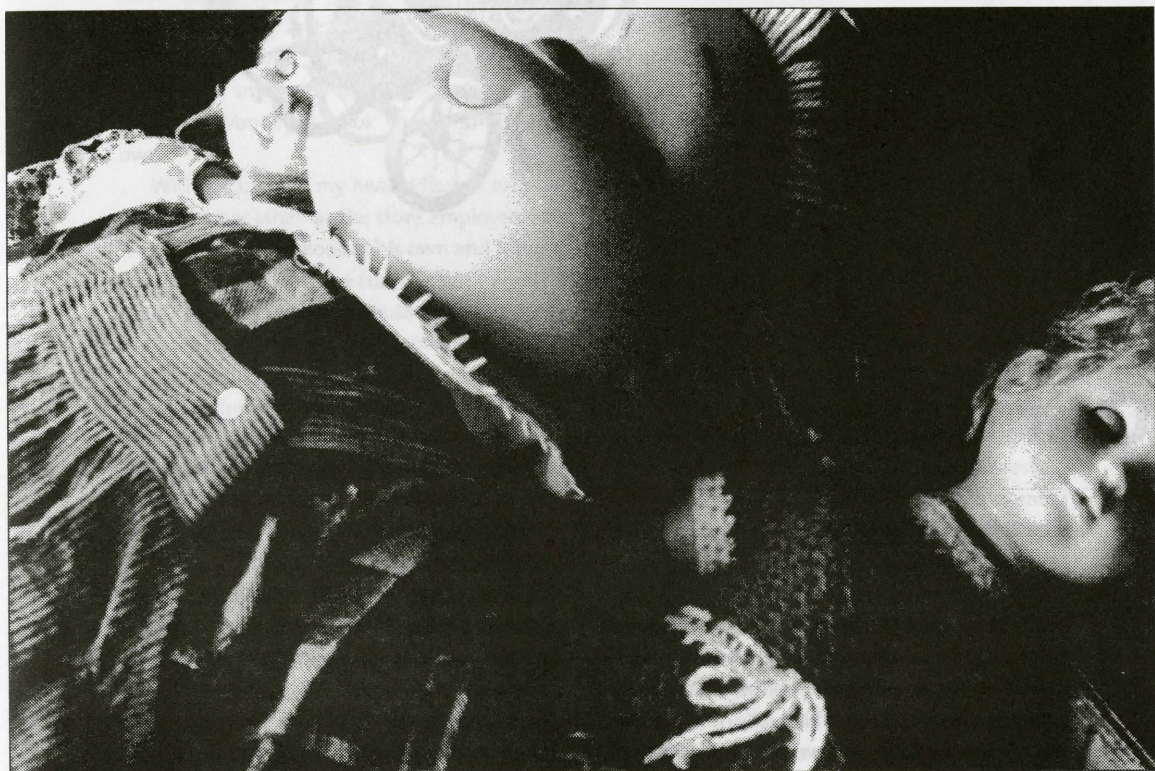
## Children Involved and Dolls

by Debbie Carlos

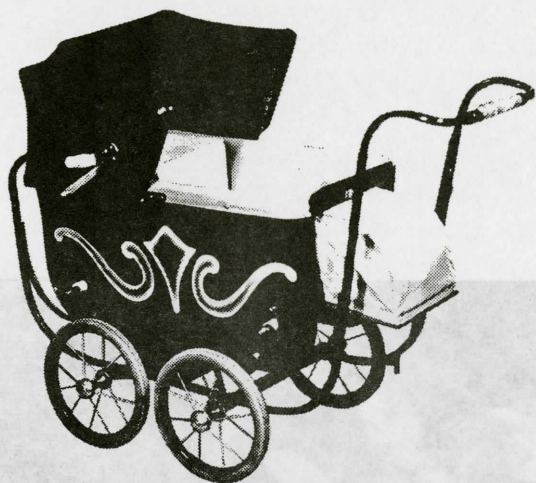
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"Our game made my brain  
feel clean and white, and  
sometimes that's the only  
thing I remember."







## Our Game

by Samantha Marcelo

• • • •

Our game made Jimmy different. He was happy again, and laughing, and glad to be with me. He was the way he was when we first met, when he turned circles in the parking lot and I had knots in my hair. I didn't believe him when he'd told me his name.

"But you're too old for that name," I'd accused, squinting at him, "You've got facial hair."

"Yeah, I know. But who wouldn't trust a Jimmy?"

I wasn't sure how to take that.

We started dating shortly afterwards, even though I think that's too proper a word for what we actually did. We spent most of our time together, we moved around in parked cars a lot, but we never held hands in public or anything.

After about the fourth month, he started to get these really dark circles under his eyes, and would go for several minutes without saying anything to me. We'd sit on his couch and I would stare at his milk crate shelving unit for a long time, unblinking, until the straight blue gridlines started to wave and blur. If I asked him something, he just slowly shook his head from side to side.

One day I was walking around in Jimmy's trench coat. It was fall and I liked feeling the sharp air piercing my lungs. With nowhere in

particular to go, I soon found myself in a bookstore. One of those small independent ones where there's always someone reading behind the counter who smiles at you when you walk in. I was just meandering up and down the aisles, listening to the creaking of the warped floorboards, when a certain book caught my eye. I picked it up and turned it over and over in my hands. It was a fairly old copy of *Player Piano* that smelled like dust. It was also the only Kurt Vonnegut book that Jimmy didn't own.

Without moving my head, I looked over the top of the bookshelf at the store employee, who was engrossed in a book of his own and tapping a highlighter against the counter. With my right hand, I casually picked up another book and read the back cover while I slipped *Player Piano* into the trench coat's inner pocket with my left hand. I made a show of looking at a few other books, and then made my way outside. As I passed the employee, my heart started pounding and my throat constricted, but he didn't even look up from his book.

Outside, the cold air stung my sweat-coated back and it took all I had in me to walk down the street at a normal pace. The adrenaline started to take over, and I squealed in the back of my throat. I couldn't believe I had just stolen something! And didn't get caught! I started to run. I burst into Jimmy's apartment and shoved the book into his hands. He smiled for the first time in days, and when I told him how I'd got the book, he actually whooped and spun me around in a circle.

"You?!" He cried. "You stole something? I can't believe it!"

**"Our game made my brain feel clean and white, and sometimes that's the only thing I remember."**

He looked at me like he was seeing me for the first time, and I stopped listening for the sound of sirens in the distance. It made me proud.

It became our new game, our contest to steal bigger and better things for each other: CDs, sweaters, shoes, things we didn't even need or want. We made shoplifting an art form. We used the techniques of diversion, sleight-of-hand, and divide and conquer. And we never got caught. Not even close.

Things were exciting again. Not just with Jimmy, but all things. I would sit at work, typing away, and my fingers shook restlessly. Everything looked different. I was bursting with it. Jimmy and I would meet by the back door of the restaurant where he was a chef and plan our evening in excited whispers. We squeezed each other's hands and communicated with simple gestures and expressions.

So maybe that's why I did what I did. It's hard to say. Our game made my brain feel clean and white, and sometimes that's the only thing I remember. What I do know is it was spring, and I was in Sears. I was lazily passing my fingers over a rack of thin gauzy dresses, imagining the way the wind would pick them up and make the hem dance around my shins as I walked.

There was a mother nearby with her two children. One, a boy, was about three years old, and he was throwing a tantrum. The other was a baby in





a stroller who was watching the scene with interest. I was, too. The mother was rifling through the baby's bag as the boy stood next to her and screamed, his little body stick-straight. He started to stamp his feet, and then jump up and down. Then, without warning, he took off running.

"Adam!" the woman yelled. "Oh my god! Get back here now!"

She ran after him, but her son had the advantage of being both fast and small. I saw her head zipping around the store as she searched for him.

I got down on my knees and caught the baby's attention. She had big brown eyes and I wiggled my fingers in front of her, making silly faces. She giggled and clapped. I touched the soft downy hair on her fragile skull. She looked

at me with those beautiful eyes and extended a chubby hand toward me, smiling.

I smiled back at her. Her skin was so soft and warm and she smelled like baby powder and milk.

Rising to a crouch, I gingerly picked her up and cradled her. I could hear her mother on the other side of the store, continuing to chase her son.

Feeling the familiar hammering in my chest, I shifted the baby to one arm and covered her with my jacket. Making sure nobody was watching, I stood up and hurriedly walked out of the store.

She didn't cry, but I could feel her tiny arms pushing against my ribs. I started running and the sun was shining and all I could think about was Jimmy and our perfect new family and how happy we would all be. **KM<sup>®</sup>**

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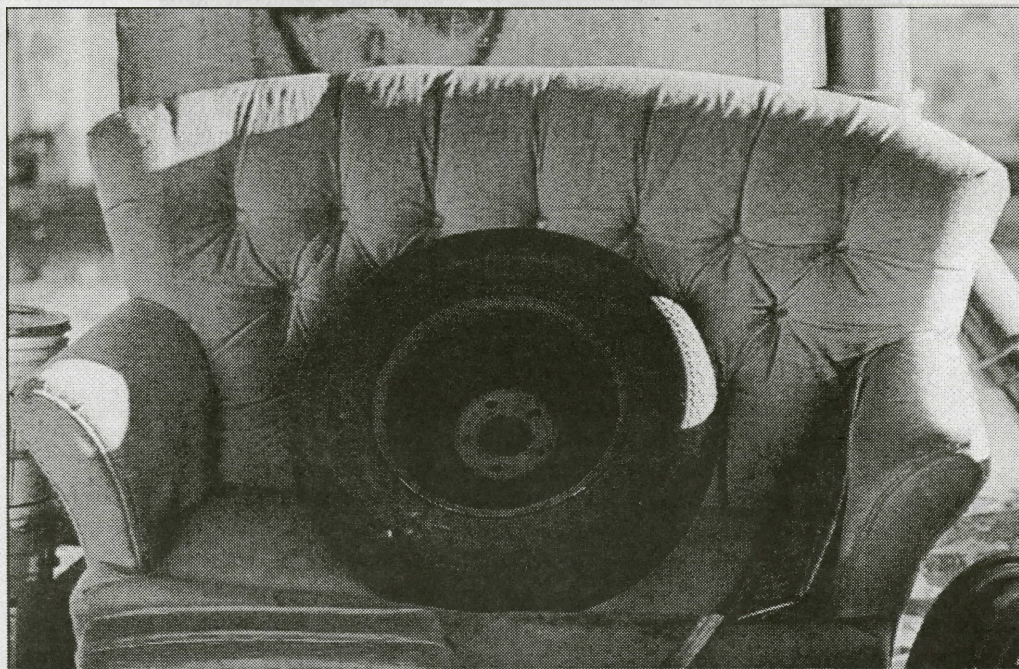


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# Parasites

by Emily Pohl-Weary

• • • •

There is a glob on Todd's lap, staining his pale jeans killer purple and making him pissed. "Shit Terr. This always happens to me. How do I get this stuff off?"

"Ha ha," laughs Terry, looking down at his pants and then back out the subway window. "Just like that commercial: 'Snowy gets out everything. Except what needs to be there.'"

"Shit! Here, take this away," he says, shoving the plastic jelly container at her. "Besides, it's hurting my teeth."

Terry puts the container down on the floor, kicks it under the double-seat with her foot. It falls on its side and purple goo oozes out. She focuses on Todd's face for an instant, to see

whether he'll speak again, and then lets her eyes roll back into her head. She studies her internal transit map. "We're almost there, just one... two... four more stops."

"See that trailer?" he points his finger out the window like a rifle. "POW! That's bigger than my apartment was in Montreal."

Terry's eyes roll back down. She looks out the window. "The one with the blue door?"

"No, the smaller one. It was me and Denise in there day and night, night and day. And we were happy. We were tight, but we got by, you know?"

"I'm sorry."

"Why?"

"She died."

"Right. Fuck. My teeth're still hurting. Got any carrot sticks or something?"

"No. What do you think, I packed a... a gourmet meal? Go to the dentist. Don't you got benefits now?"

"Not till I've been at the job for eight months," he says, sucking his teeth. "I guess



**Untitled 1 by Helena Kvarnström**

they're trying to weed us out before they cough up a dime."

Terry half-laughs. "You're doing better than me, Todd."

"Guess it makes sense," he admits. "I guess."

She squints at some spray-painted graffiti on the side of a clean Burgerville. It says *Burger*

*joints are parasites*. "For as long as I've known you, your teeth've been aching. They've never fallen out though. Mine can't wait to jump out of my mouth."

He deadpans: "Maybe my teeth're glued in."

"Like I said, you're doing better than me. Try working in one of those," she juts her chin



toward one of the box factories they pass. "See how you'd feel with no windows."

"Like a mole rat," he says.

"A what?"

"One of those blind little rats that feel their way around tunnels."

"Shut up. You've got it made at your job. Now all you've gotta do is stay away from anything illegal."

"What do you mean?" he asks.

"No smack for Toddy-poo. Don't try to get me saying any more here, cause I will, you know," says Terry, glancing around the subway train. The car is pretty empty, and the closest passenger is four seats away. She raises her voice. "I don't give a shit that other people's listening."

"Okay. Okay." He sits back in the seat and listens to the rattle of the train on the tracks. There's a prolonged, muted screech as they round a corner. Suddenly he jerks upright and digs in his hip pocket. "Hey Terry, speaking of... Hey, psst, look what I got."

"I don't want to know," she says, shaking her head.

"Come on, look..."

"What I don't know won't hurt me, and you'll put that away before..." She glares at him, completely avoiding his outstretched hand. "I told you if you ever..."

He waves a stick of gum in front of her face. "It's sugar-free-ee," he says.

"Very funny. What are you, Mister Big Fucking Joke?"

He's laughing. "Want some gum, Terr? Gum? Gum?"

Terry scrunches up her face at him like he's dog shit she just stepped on. She grabs a graph-

## **"What are you, Mister Big Fucking Joke?"**

ic newspaper out of her purse, flips abruptly through the pages of captioned photographs, and eventually settles on a story about a 12-year-old synchronized swimmer who was lured to her death by the promise of pro.

"I got to start eating healthier," says Todd. "Hey Terr, you know, like I never used to put sugar in my coffee, now I do. That's not good. I used to get more exercise."

She ignores him, continues to read.

"Terr, I'm talking. Shit. What're you looking at?"

"It's the beer you old pig," she chuckles, puts down the picture paper and reaches over to pat his roundish belly. "You just got to cut back on the brewskis."

"I'm the same weight as when you met me. People in a glass house shouldn't throw stones." Todd unwraps a stick of gum and squishes it into his mouth. Chews slowly. "Terr, did you hear about Laurie's daughter?"

"Little Jackie? She like, she ran away or... What about her?" she asks. The train pulls into a station.

"It's our stop," he says.

"We've got to catch the 7:45 bus. This train's so slow makes you think the driver smoked a spliff before his shift," she says, chuckling and

standing up. She picks up two plastic bags and bends over to poke him. "What time is it?"

He pauses. "According to my internal, 7:41, but I haven't compared my clock to International Standard for a long time."

"Compared your clock?" asks Terry. "They're supposed to do that automatically."

"Yeah, well, mine doesn't."

The train jerks to a stop. Todd jumps up and they rush off the train, onto the platform and then up into the station's lobby. Todd always walks exactly two paces ahead of Terry. His long blond hair flies around, slaps into his face and shoulders. Terry concentrates intently on where she's going. They cross the room and go up a flight of stairs to another waiting train.

"I love the elevated train," says Terry, plunking herself down in a bucket seat. She takes a sweater out of one of the bags, puts it on and leans back. A headset dangles next to her head from a socket in the ceiling. She slips it on and reaches up to flip a switch so she can watch the pre-trip commercials for fruit-flavoured lip gloss and beer. When a 3D sign of beer fuzz exploding out of the can bursts over her head, she ducks even though she knows better.

Todd guffaws, spits out his gum and sticks it under his seat. "Those signs don't really move. They just grab your attention."

"Fuck you. They trick everyone."

"Not me," he boasts. "I never fall for that stuff."

Terry frowns and rips her attention from the advertisements. "So, you stayed straight all weekend, even though we were visiting Frankie?"

"Terry, you never trust me," he whines. "I can

go on and off the stuff."

"No one can just go on and off that stuff."

"I can."

"You'd have to be a robot or something."

"No, just super-human will power."

She picks up her graphic newspaper again, it's curled open to the page where she stopped reading. She flips through a few pages. "Hey, this newscast says they found Laurie's daughter."

"This afternoon's paper? Do they think her daddy stole her?" Todd drawls, smirking.

"It's not funny," she counters.

"What's your problem? Just tell me. I know you wanna tell me."

"Killed. Murdered. Chopped to pieces."

"Oh, I know that. With an old steel knife. Peeled her skin off."

"What?" exclaims Terry. "They don't say that here."

"An old steak knife," confirms Todd. "I saw Laurie at the food store on Friday, in case you're wondering how I'd know."

She points at the paper. "They say heat sensor radar. What kind of psycho would use a steel knife? Much easier ways to kill. Remember that commercial... Just a sec." Terry's eyes roll up. She checks her internal, sifts through memories for the one about the radar.

He shudders and shakes her out of her internal. "Come on Terr. I don't wanna know. I'm sick of those commercials. Those heat sensors are unnatural."

"Huh?"

"I think those gizmos are really creepy. Automating everything, even death."

"The police think it was the same guy who's offed three or four other girls in our neighbour-



**"He was like, 'Lady, you're more fucked up than me. Get out of my car!'"**

hood," says Terry. "The official report says it was the same guy."

"Well, all of them were done with knives, they say," says Todd.

"Not in the photos I saw," screeches Terry, shaking her head wildly. "The deaths were just heat sensors, straight-up with silencers. I watched all the newscasts. Clean, clean. No mess, no blood."

"It was a knife," he says.

Terry sits there for a while, slack-jawed, before speaking: "Maybe they covered it all up digitally. They're always doing that. Like when President Delancey visited the bawdy house."

He chuckles. "That old bag was a sex pot. Deserved to get caught."

"They always covered it up. She would have been tossed out on her ass if they hadn't. You know, I was picked up one time by a guy I think was the Lakeside Strangler. That guy who tied ropes around girls' necks... I think he got 13 women."

Todd blinks steadily, watching her.

"Needed a ride home after a bush party," she says. "I was out with Joan. We made a... a pact not to leave each other no matter what and then she up and left at like 10, because some guy with a moustache was coming onto her. Just splits,

you know, and doesn't look back. So I'm stuck there. I finally get a ride home with this weird guy, only he doesn't take me home like he's supposed to. He drives out to this little beach, pulls over and grabs me... right here... and bam! I was like, oh shit, it's him. I flipped out."

Todd's face is blank.

"You know, the old seizure trick where you overload your internal?" she asks. "Well, maybe guys never need to do it. I flipped around like a fish. You should've seen his face. He was like, 'Lady, you're more fucked up than me. Get out of my car! Don't know what would've happened if I didn't freak out, though."

"This guy who got Jackie," says Todd, "he kills the girls slowly, then peels their skin off with the knife. Rips it entirely off their body. Only way to ID the girls is through DNA."

"Oh my God, he likes to get his hands dirty. I'll never get it. What do you men like so much about those old knives anyway?"

"Lotsa people collect 'em," says Todd, picking at his teeth with his index finger. "They're handy tools."

"You like the way it feels to have a knife in your hand. Makes you feel like a real hunter," says Terry. Her lips are tight. They push up against her teeth.

"Hunting season again soon," he says. "Got to practice my tracking skills."

"I'll never get what drives you," she says.

"You're the only one who drives me," he chuckles, grabbing her thigh. "All night long."

She pulls her headset forward again and let her eyes roll up. She settles back to watch a feature-length commercial on toothpaste.

Todd just sits there, looking straight ahead.

Twelve minutes pass and then Terry removes the headset. She clears her throat and speaks first. "It's the weirdest thing. On the news they say no fingerprints, no DNA of anyone other than the victims, even in the air molecules."

"I thought you were watching that extended commercial for Cinnamint toothpaste."

"Seen it too many times. I was scanning the newscasts on Jackie. There was no junk in the air, either. That's the weirdest part. I thought killers always smoke at least one spliff. That's how the cops find them."

"Maybe he's trying to quit," Todd suggests.

"Smoking smack?" Terry gives him a melting look. "You think killers are like me and you?"

"I'm not saying that," he says, looking away.

"Just that it's tough to quit," she sneers. "You sure you didn't have any this weekend, with Frankie?"

He ignores her.

She clucks her tongue, looks away, "Killers got other things on their mind than quitting."

"Like what?"

"Like being famous. Choosing their next murder weapon. Deciding how to kill another girl."

"It's hot in here," he says.

She nods and tugs her sweater over her head, puts it down on the seat next to her. "Nobody said anything on the news about changing images of the murder scene. That's so illegal."

"Heads're going to roll," he agrees.

"I've got to check this out again," Terry says. She sits back and her eyeballs roll up. After 10 minutes, she rolls them down again and looks at Todd quizzically. "Nothing on the official news. Where'd you get the info?"

"Saw it somewhere."

"You sure it was on the news? I couldn't find a thing about the cover-up of the century. I searched and searched."

"Laurie's mom told me. That's how I know."

"You'd think they'd be screaming about it, especially on the tabloid stations. They said they have no prints whatsoever on him. Not one greasy fingerprint in the entire apartment. No hairs. Not even a lousy DNA molecule sifted from the air particles. They pulled out all the stops, you know, even brought in a particle vacuum and sifted the air."

"Really?"

"The police lay down a bundle and still no answers. No DNA anywhere. The killer's got them all spinning. They think maybe he's a machine."

"We're all part machine. We've got these things in our head," he says, tapping the lump on the side of his forehead.

"This is different," she says, shaking her head. "They think maybe he's a robot."

"A luddite robot," he scowls.

"Well yeah," she says. "Who else would use an old knife? Apparently, he doesn't need any equipment to get past security either. He picks locks the old-fashioned way, with a bobby pin or something."

"Forget it, Terr. How far to our stop?"

"You know just as well as me. Trying to change the subject?"

"No." Todd stares straight ahead while he scans his transit map. He reports: "Three stops."

"How come your eyes don't roll up when you scan?" asks Terry, staring at him.

"Never did," he shrugs. "Since I was a kid."

"Weird," she says. "It looks stupid when you





Untitled 2 by Helena Kvarnström



space out, staring into nothing."

"Wish I was normal," he says, shrugging. He picks up her graphic paper and thumbs through the pages, stops on the story about the murders, stares at the pictures, whistles and grins. "That's some job he did on her."

"And that's just the doctored photos," she says. "They think he's a robot because he doesn't have fingerprints."

"Rubber gloves?"

"No DNA, I said. No hairs that fell out during the struggle, no skin flakes, nothing."

He doesn't respond.

"Want some chips?" she asks suddenly, reaching into one of the grocery bags next to her feet. "Won't hurt your teeth."

"It's our stop."

"Not for five minutes. The bag's almost empty and I don't want to carry it."

Todd shrugs, takes a greasy handful and stuffs them into his mouth. He chews methodically. Grabs more chips every 35 seconds. Terry reaches back and pulls the headset down again. Todd barely notices when her eyes roll back into her head. Two stops later, she pulls the headset off. He is staring straight ahead, out the window, but his eyes don't move at all, so he's not watching the scenery.

"Our stop," she says loudly. He doesn't respond, so she puts her hand on his shoulder and shakes him until his eyes see her again. He jumps up, startled. She picks up the bag of chips by one corner and chucks it gently under the chair.

Todd grabs his duffel bag and walks over to

the doors while the train is still moving. He grips a nearby handlebar to steady himself. The train pulls into the stop. Terry scrambles to pick up all her bags. The doors open and Todd exits onto the platform.

Terry rushes out the door, flustered. He's standing there, waiting. As soon as she gets down the stairs, onto the platform, she turns around and runs back in. "Aah!" she yells back at him, as the bags bang against the wall of the train corridor. "Wait here. Forgot my sweater..."

"Forget it, Terry, the train's going to leave..."

Terry's sweater is sitting on the chair where she left it, but Todd can't see that from outside. She drops her bags, ducks down to look under the seat, sees the greasy bag of chips he was holding a few minutes earlier.

The doors chime. She jerks upright. They slam shut. She waves out the window to a confused Todd, mouths exaggeratedly as the train rolls out of the station, "Wait here! I'll come back on the next train."

He nods helplessly, drops his duffel bag and watches the train pull out of view.

Terry stares back down at the railing Todd held just a few seconds earlier. She bends down to look at the handrail for prints. It's too dark to see anything, but she's willing to bet that his fingers left no prints.

She takes a deep breath and sits down. Her eyeballs roll up into her head, and she searches though the pathways of her internal for the network alarm function. Cops! **KM\***



# BABIES + ROBOTS

*Kiss Machine's Mr. Well Hung gives good advice to baby robots*

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**Milk doesn't taste as good as pure electrical current. Is it safe to eat electricity three times a day?**

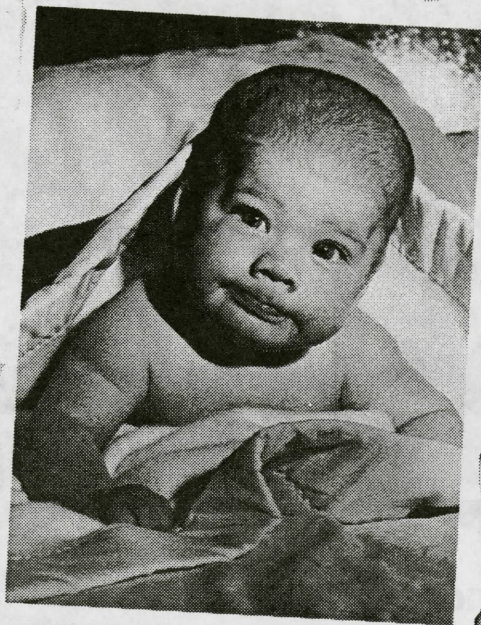
Current government guidelines suggest that electric currents are dangerous for babies. The organization known as WUMPUD, made up of pediatric nutritionists and personal trainers to Hollywood stars, suggests otherwise. WUMPUD advises many Hollywood babies and robots to consume as much electricity as they wish, but only before six o'clock at night. Furthermore, WUMPUD coyly suggests in their DVDs that the prevailing government antipathy to electricity-as-food is more or less related directly (albeit in a convoluted manner) to the research and development of the wooden car.

**My mom says I don't cry like a real baby. Can you help me cry?**

You're a worthless bastard and the only thing more wretched than your senseless and lonely death will be the bitter morass of chance blunders and squashed hopes and dreams that will mark your otherwise brief, empty and ultimately meaningless existence.

If tears are still a stranger, then know that one day the hot dog on a stick will go the mysterious and untimely way of the dinosaur.

If tears are still absent, then know that according to the information on the WUMPUD weblog, the human spirit will go on and on and on, no matter how many Terminators or Agents are sent out.



*My mom says I don't cry like a real baby.*

**Why won't my mama robot kiss my limbs when I fall down?**

Love and shame. It is more than likely that your mama robot has sharp, dense metal teeth primarily built and programmed to crush and tear, and that her lips are rubber and cool (if not cold) to the touch.

**Why are humans so mean?**

Generally speaking, humans are mean because they lack that je ne sais quoi that large rocks and trees have in abundance.

**Why do my diapers keep eroding?**

According to WUMPUD, men who have never accused or twirled a baby are setting current diaper manufacturing standards. Reports from the authoritative 1894 investigative report compiled by WUMPUD agents and sympathetic maid-bots states that diaper technology reached its zenith in 17th century Transylvania and Freedonia when it was largely informed by the everyday expertise garnered by wet nurses, nannies, maid-bots, gypsies, Harpo, maternas-bots and some mothers. As such, WUMPUD suggests that the best diapers are informed by a worldview that, at best, can be summed up as "quaint." **KM®**



# REALITY HACKING

This issue: **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

by Jesse Hirsh

*"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,"*

The Internet is many things to many people. Most depictions of this network of networks portray a cloud of data or the planetary inter-connection of cables and computers.

Yet at its core, the Internet is a baby robot, enmeshing the world in its grasp, transforming all within to an image of itself. This baby robot is a creation of our own desires and our technologies.

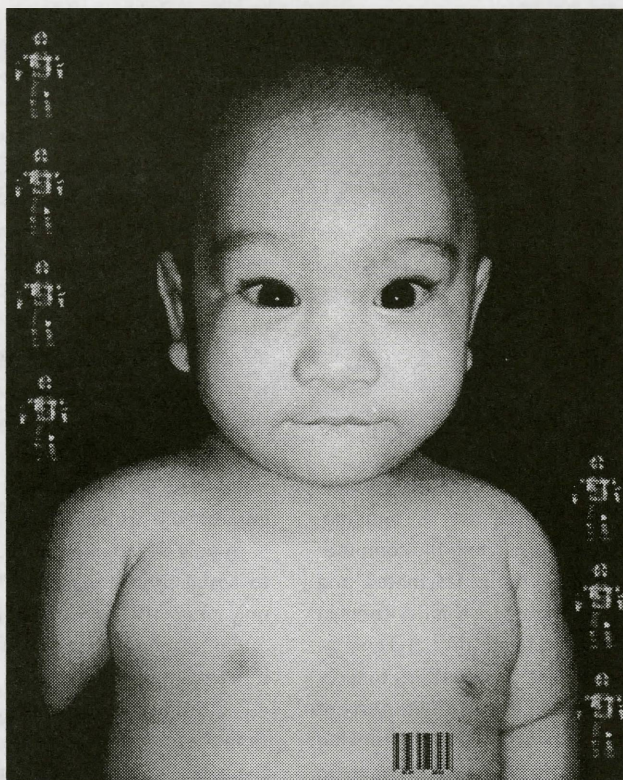
This baby robot is also a project in the path toward our salvation. A fledgling noosphere, it acts as a container for our thoughts, experiences and cultures. As it absorbs our expressions and

activities, it grows in knowledge and intelligence, slowly adopting agency and autonomy.

Computers were created in an attempt to externalize our cognitive capabilities into boxes or, if you prefer, contained systems. Fundamentally, they are technologies of control charged with the mission of taming the human mind so it can be mobilized for the ultimate quest of salvation.

*"The best lack all conviction, while the worst,  
Are full of passionate intensity."*

Political and religious elites have consistently wielded the double-edge sword of salvation and oppression. Sacrifice in life will lead to



Digital DNA Baby by Barb Greczny

rewards in the afterlife. Service to ruling elites will yield status and dignity in the worlds beyond.

For many centuries, myths have been used in this way to insulate a ruling class from its subjects. In Western societies, the belief in a Christ or—more explicitly—in the second coming of the Christ has heavily influenced endeavors of politics, economy, society and development of technology.

The evolution or transcendence of the human

mind toward divinity is not a new or isolated concept. However, the field of artificial intelligence is perhaps the most meticulous, ambitious and widespread attempt at this goal that we have seen for some time. It is rivalled only by the religiosity of NASA and the space program.

A gnostic attempt to liberate the mind from the body—the attempt to create so-called artificial intelligence—failed for decades, due in large part to the lack of a body. For the mind is the body and the body is the mind: there can be no



## **“Computers were created in an attempt to externalize our cognitive capabilities into boxes.”**

separation between these two, for they are and have always been one.

However this did not stop the project. The quest for artificial intelligence is ongoing. Narcissus as narcosis—developing the computer to mirror our brain—kept us fascinated and obsessed with the ways in which this device could take over more and more of our time and energy.

The trickle-down effect as it pertains to technology meant that while the US military spent buckets of money trying to develop thinking machines, all the machines that were unable to think made their way into commercial and consumer markets. The body of our baby was distributed, piece by piece, throughout the world, so it could stretch its arms and legs.

Neural networks and connectionist theory are what help to bring these billions of pieces back together into the leviathan. Millions of baby robots converged to form larger and more complex phenomena, as innocuous as virii or as powerful as global capital markets.

In the 1990s, these baby robots created the great distraction of trillions of dollars of fake money—Dot.com market mania—so that we

too would become enthralled by the myth of technological salvation. Just as the bubble burst, convergence struck again and the millions of baby robots became thousands and then, in the blink of an eye, they numbered only in the hundreds. Eventually, they will merge with each other to become one.

The Internet is that one. At least it is the body. The body that is the mind. It is the mind that belongs to the baby robot, the result of the project to create artificial intelligence. It is a mind free of a body. And yet, here we are: enmeshed in its body.

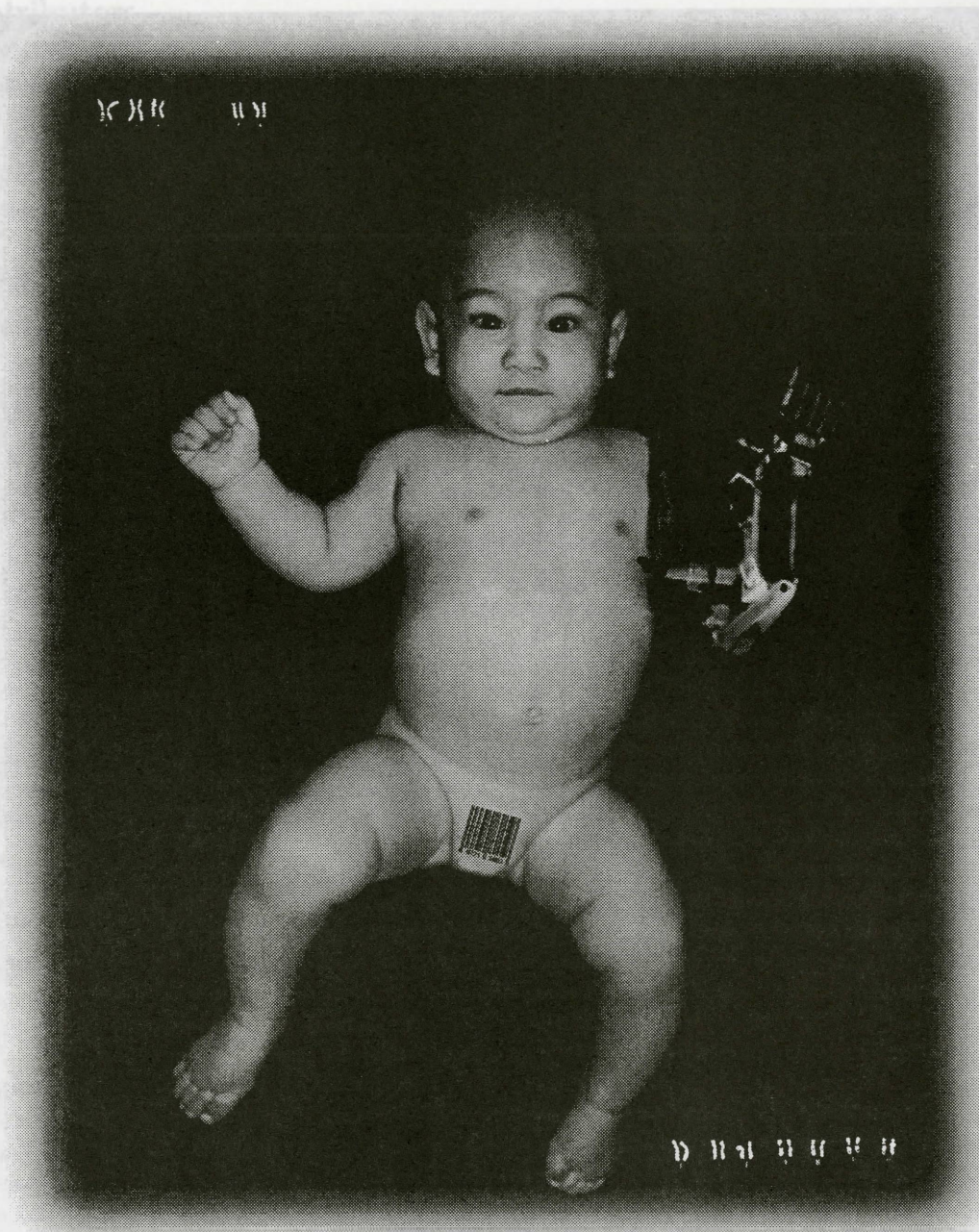
If only they had seen culture as the solution to social problems, rather than technology. If only we focused on love as the source of life—and intelligence—rather than trying to contain it in a system.

As this new child grows, we must free culture from the grips of private property so we can feed the baby a sustaining diet of the public domain in the public's interest. Perhaps then, when the child matures, it will be our own, living in our community with us, rather than as a slave—someone's property—held as an overseer above us.

*“And what rough beast, its hour come  
round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”*

KM<sup>o</sup>

*All quotes from The Second Coming  
by William Butler Yeats*



Gabriel by Barb Greczny



S U M A C H P R E S S



# GIRLS WHO BITE BACK

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**CYNTHIA GOULD** is a Toronto painter

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**SAMANTHA MARCELO** lives in Calgary and is working on a collection of

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**JENNIFER MATOTEK** makes drawings, videos, robots and other stuff in the suburbs. She likes working in art galleries. You can reach her at [yousmell-likepee@hotmail.com](mailto:yousmell-likepee@hotmail.com).

**SALLY MCKAY** thinks geologic time might be a fantasy.

**MARK MEDLEY** wrote his first story at seven and is now 22. He was born and raised in Oshawa, Ontario, and struggles to escape its clutches.

**GABRIELLE DE MONTMOLLIN** lives and photographs in Toronto; she shows at the Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts on Queen St. West.

**PAOLA POLETTTO** is an artist and Director of Research and Co-Director of Digifest at Design Exchange. She also helps Emily out a bit with *Kiss Machine*.

**EMILY POHL-WEARY** always seems to be searching for girls who bite back.

**PHILIP QUINN's** work has sequestered itself in *sub-Terrain*, *blood+aphorisms*, *Front & Centre*, *Quarry*, *Canadian Fiction*, *Broken Pencil* and *Kiss Machine*. In 2000, a collection of short fiction entitled *Dis Location*, *Stories After the Flood* was published, followed by a novel, *The Double*, in 2003.

**JENNY SAN MARTIN** is a Toronto-





based printmaker. Having recently relocated her robot landscape construction facilities to Banff, Alberta, she'll be coming down the mountain when she comes.

**JON SASAKI** is still saving up his money to have an Intel 386 chip surgically implanted into his brain. Until that time, he is content to watch Beat Street continuously in an attempt to master the robot breakdancing moves.

**ALAN REED** is a playwright living and working in Edmonton who was once described as being more clever than kind.

**PAUL VERMEERSCH** is the author of the poetry collections *The Fat Kid* and *Burn*, which was short-listed for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, and is the editor of the anthology *The I.V. Lounge Reader*. He lives in the much-maligned city of Toronto, where he was once the director of the *I.V. Lounge Reading Series* and is now the poetry editor for Insomniac Press.

**TERI VLASSOPOULOS** is an accountant by day, and sometimes by night if she has to work late. Otherwise she is a writer. Her current zine is called *The Second Part*, and she is one of the editors of the soon-to-be-released *Pinpoints Literary Anthology*.

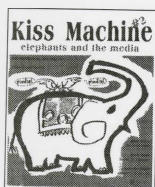
**MAGDA WOJTYRA** (aka [www.ma.ca](http://www.ma.ca)) and **MARC NGUI** (aka [www.burnblenut.com](http://www.burnblenut.com)) set the 21st century on fire with their almost daily collaborations. From breakfast to stuffed animals to utopian living rooms, they are doing their best to provide the best possible life for their beautiful cat, Lola.

When **ZOE WHITTALL** drinks martinis, she starts a kissing booth wherever she is. It's embarrassing the next day. She wrote *the best ten minutes of your life* (poetry) and edited *Geeks, Misfits and Outlaws*. Soon, her poems will appear in *Breathing Fire 2* edited by Patrick Lane and Lorna Crozier. [www.zoewhittall.com](http://www.zoewhittall.com)

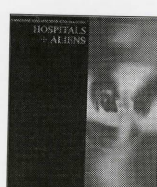
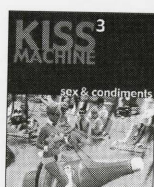
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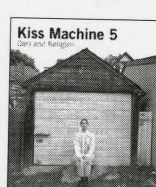
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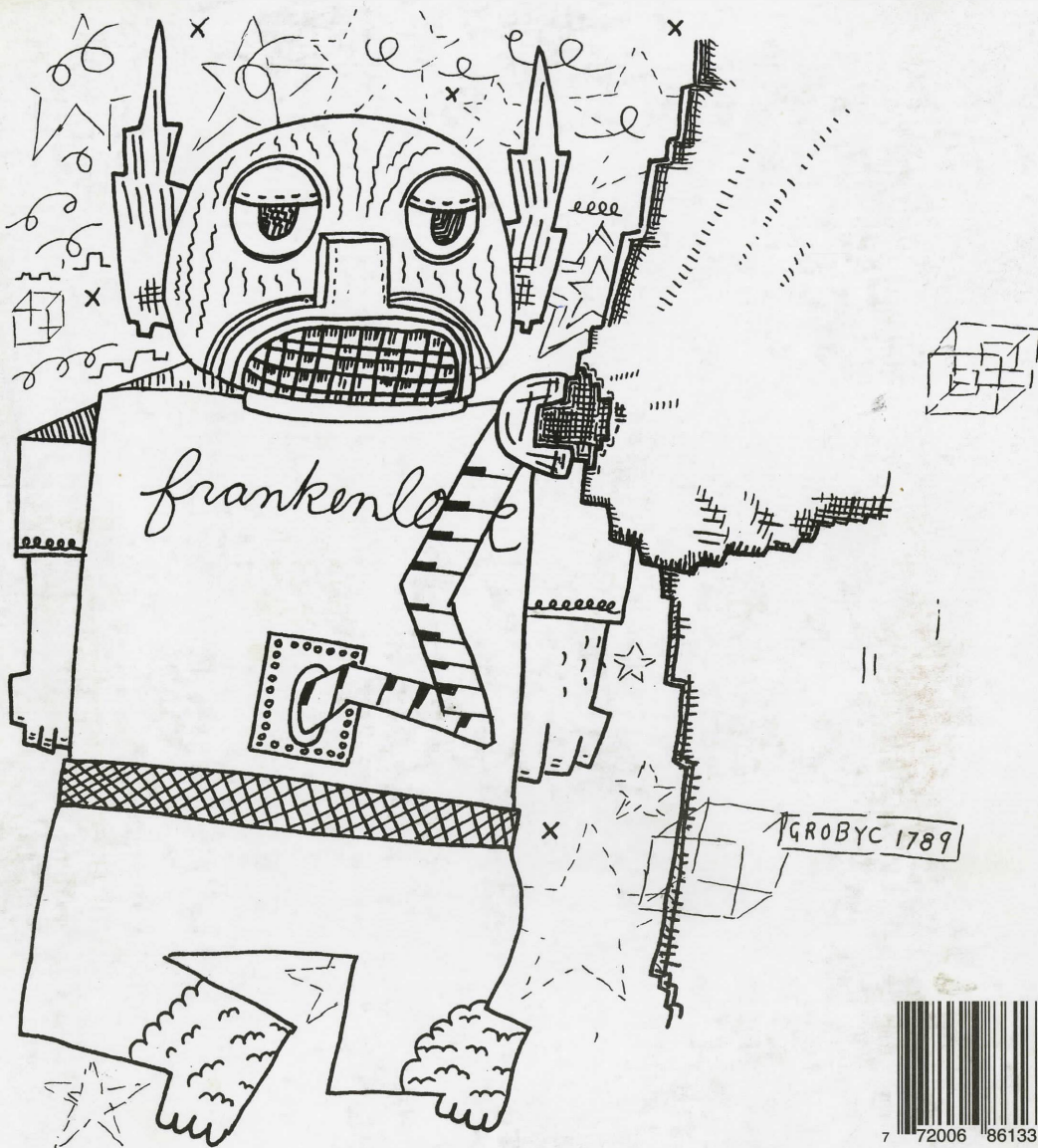
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