Contents

3 Untitled (Award Winner), Nancy Rivers
4 Photo (Award Winner), Pat Lyons
5 "Lines on the Acorn," Nancy Rivers
5 such a day, Chip Aldridge
6 Granny Gry-ner, Nancy Rivers
7 spring flowers, Chip Aldridge
8 Potter’s Clay, Chip Aldridge
9 Photo, David T. Wilson*
10 barroom evening, Chip Aldridge
11 Of Running and Old Age, John Moehlmann*
12 Photo, Pat Lyons
13 Gerontology, John Moehlmann
14 Photo, David T. Wilson
15 Woe is Me, Tim Smith
16 always the wine, Lisa Mickey
17 no price is right, Lisa Mickey
18 Photo, David Schaller
19 Productive Insanity, Paula J. Prillman
19 Untitled, Myra Williams
20 At the Feminist Conference, Charles Mounts
20 Editor’s Note

* The selection committees cite for special merit two works by faculty members: the photograph on page nine and “Of Running and Old Age” on page eleven, works that are ineligible for cash awards.
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old man nods,
endless chins upon the
faded flannel,
an eternity of wrinkles.
gnarled tortoise shell fingers
tremble
to the music of the pines.
one gravelly snore escapes
as his head bows
in reverence to
memory.

— Nancy Rivers
Award for Photographic Excellence
Lines on the Acorn

she spoke, in
a frail utterance,
a tribute to the wisdom
of acorns and
dead brothers,
of
nineteen hundred and
twentyfour, and the cancer that grows
pretty, like the ivy on her walls.
she fussed that the lawn lay uncut,
hers brother passed
yesternight, and
someone was coming?
she swept the gutter in haste
her words faded as
she,
her last hopes pushed closer to the
drain.

— Nancy Rivers

such a day

such a day to scatter leaves!
and wonder how well prepared the chipmunks are
for next moon’s windier days and colder nights.
such a day to put words together!
and pick beggar-lice from wool shirts
that are just too warm in the sunlight
but hardly warm enough under the shadows of near bare trees.
such a day of hickory nuts!
leaf-damp smells, need-to-be-raked
(but not just yet) ridges of leaves
and yet-to-be-jumped-in leaf piles
await the right inspiration-filled afternoon.

— Chip Aldridge
Granny Gry-ner

old woman
tarnished, wrinkled sad-smile
frozen
upon your silent lips.
two dull cracked mirror eyes,
framed by weathered rotting leather skin
reflect a yellowed lace haze of thought.
Time, its fingers
tight
upon your withered throat;
squeezes dry the last few dreams.
tossed aside, forgotten
worth no more to those you lent life to,
than the shrivelled apple core you chew
as your chair wears its mark
into the sagging boards.
give me the seeds you hold there
and within,
i'll plant the life you cling to.
Time will show you another way
and bring you back again —
bursting forth from the
earth's dark breast.

—Nancy Rivers
spring flowers

a gentle knock
to say I'm here.
You were rocking by the smoke darkened fireplace-
not enough fire to warm your coffee water,
just enough fire to throw a yellow-orange glow
on the browns and mellows of the one-room home.
in the corners and niches my eye catches rich colors
of your patchwork.
closing my eyes
I hear the steady creak-creak
of your rocking,
the soft crackle of the fire,
and the old-old song you half-hum, half-sing.
what fire-side memories are you humming?
are they winter thoughts of after sledding fires?
I hope your thoughts are of next spring
so I can see you once again
with earth-dark furrowed skin
and dark hair peppered almost white-
rocking in the evening sun
both hands full of spring flowers
we gathered by the creek.

—Chip Aldridge
Mother earth hid a secret long ago.
It was found near a stream;
It was proved under a fire.

It was grey
like the eyes of the carnival girl.
The sad one - too thin, too quiet
and too young made adult, made salesman,
made hawker.

It was red
like Irish hair, a face of freckles,
a spotted newt not old enough
to yet be spotted, and evening
from the mountain top—
two songs before too dark to see.

It was brown,
like Kansas dust-storms and
Sunday country drive fender-grit brown,
Mother Earth clay;
made and remade-
brown to remember from where it came.

—Chip Aldridge
Gerontology

Leaves lie flatbrown dead in the fallshine. Veins unblushed, thin, sapless. Supple spines no longer waving and flicking against each other. Brittle fingers wag only at the touch of wind.

From my window I see city workers, who in former times stacked corpses in charnel houses, suck them into great yellow machines. Those they overlook are blown by the wind in no direction at all.

—John Moehlmann
Oyster, Va., by David T. Wilson
Woe is Me

I've lived my life
   with the passion of a vending machine
Putting out, when I have to

Those days with her are not only inked,
   but documented and footnoted,
   in the pages of my mind.

Those pages are constantly "checked out."

I live in a dark, huge, empty cathedral
   a depressing darkness everywhere I look,
but still certain of its incredible magnitude ... of uncertainty
and the muscular hands of emptiness strangle me
   until I die

Daily

—Tim Smith
always the wine

somewhere deep in the blue
nestled tight in a dreamworld of past romances
the jarflies sing the end of summer.
she tips the glass and something that she is uncertain of
floods her soul. always the wine
and in a matter of time she smiles and knows.
rotary fan on the window sill whirring
and turning and throwing hot air back into faces
that foolishly believe they’re cool.
and the dust on the floor skids into corners
and over the tiles tumbling over itself, collecting
anything in the way.
just don’t you ever touch the switch. let the whirlwind continue,
ceasing only when a careless foot trips on the wire.
it’s a matter of on and off and high and low
and when the fan comes on, you know your senses blow into
corners and behind doors where nobody looks.
somewhere deep in the blue
nestled so tight in a dreamworld,
she tips the glass letting it click against her teeth
smiling and knowing.

always the wine.

—I. mickey
no price is right

she studied the merchandise
with unseeing eyes.
tucked back in a corner,
relieving the full time help,
watching the unbelievably slow
hour hand slide around the digits
ticking out the minutes like the pennies of her pay.
a man with a popping kneecap
just like her father's
thumbed through the paintings,
telling her of an empty wall in his living room.
this would look good.
she agreed.
the piped in music played gaily,
the computer cash systems buzzed
and the fans in housewares
whirred somewhere over the dividers.
she was oblivious to all but her daydreams
and if she could have sold them,
she knew that she would have blushingly
lowered her head and muttered
that they were out of stock.
you see, daydreams
aren't for sale.

—I. mickey
Productive Insanity

In this state of productive insanity,
I never sleep for fear of missing
Some essential detail—
I THINK 24 hours a day.

Touch me Now
While my skin is porous
With its silky liquifaction.
My senses are so heightened,
Aunt Blue Bell would
Give up "Scotties"
For a patent on my
Sponge-like brain.

God give me the artistry of Picasso!
Let me be abstract. . . .
I'd paint the hell
Out of this conservative purgatory
And put this productive insanity to use.

—Paula J. Prillman

Winter stillness of falling
snow brings crystalized
daydreams of you.
Coldness invades emotions as
well as the physical body; the
heart as well as the hands.
Icy crusts melt when
remembered seconds
with you
invade my mind.
Nice snow,
nice dream.
Both melt and vanish
as if
never
having existed.

—Myra Williams
At the Feminist Conference

A lovely, learned lady held a door for me,
For me, the local academic model
Of the superannuated man.
(Still. . .mistake me not,
No tattered coat upon a stick,
I clap my hands most fervently, and sing.)
"Aren't you setting a dangerous example, my dear?"
"Not at all, said she.
"I do it only because I love you."
Best of all reasons to be kind,
Cool water to the thirsty,
Recovered vision to the blind.
Whatever be the rules
Of this liberating game,
I claim an equal right
To do the same.

—Charles Mounts
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—Greg Norris