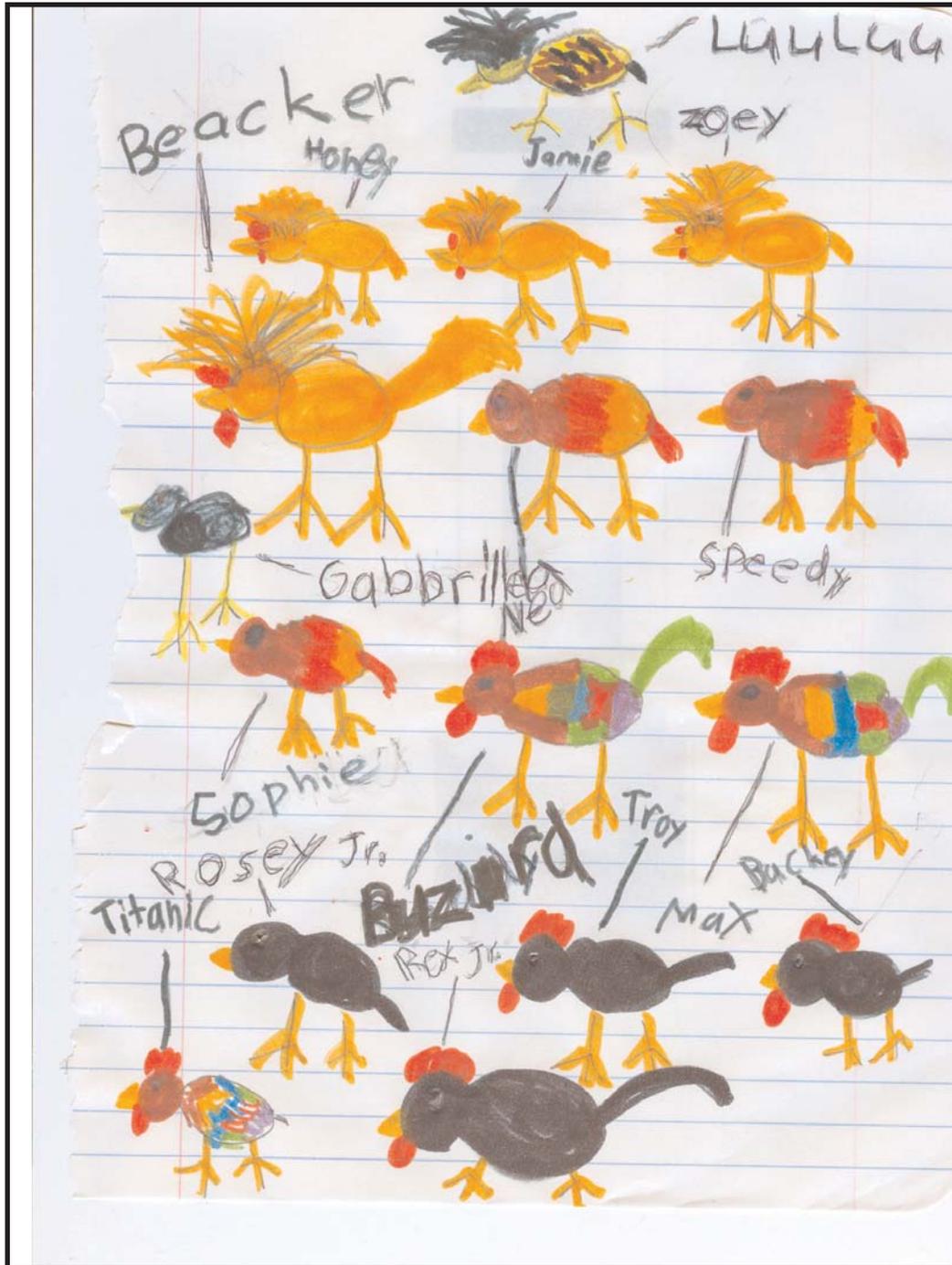


Counting our chickens way before they're hatched. Zack Wilson and Rebekah Cowell on grill;
Sandy Sue Benitez, Julie Kovacs and Kyle Vincent Wolpert pushing the dessert-cart;
Cdulhuvida, Paper-Cuts, Our Favorite Gallery, Staccato and The Dream Journal.

The Blotter

FEBRUARY 2008

MAGAZINE



THE SOUTH'S UNIQUE, FREE, INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE AND ARTS MAGAZINE

visit www.blotterrag.com

G. M. Somers.....Editor-in-Chief
Martin K. Smith.....Publisher-at-
Large, Treasurer
Matthew Boyd.....Micro-fiction
Editor
Lewis Copulsky.....Publishing
Consultant
Brace Boone III.....Director of
Development
T.J. Garrett.....Staff Photographer

Advertisers and Subscriptions Contact:

Martin K. Smith
M_K_Smith@yahoo.com
919.286.7760

Submissions and Editorial Business to:

Jenny Haniver
mermaid@blotterrag.com

**No, I love press releases, with fava beans
and a nice chianti.**

Cover art: "Chicken List" by O. B. S.

Garrison Somers, Editor-in-Chief
chief@blotterrag.com
919.933.4720 (business hours only!
you may call for information about
snail-mail submissions)

All content copyright 2008 by the
artist, not the magazine.

The Blotter is a production of
The Blotter Magazine, Inc.,
Durham, NC.
A 501 (c)3 non-profit
ISSN 1549-0351
www.blotterrag.com

Annual Report

A 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit corporation must regularly report on the state of the business. So, whether you like it or not, it's time to hear about the state of The Blotter. You've been patient, and we appreciate you all staying with us though these weird times.

Preliminary numbers:

3500 – average number of "page requests" we get on our website per month.
6000 – number of print copies we distribute each month, in those locations where we bother to do paper.
2 – turtle doves. You know, turtle doves.

Administration and Trivia: India; United Kingdom; Italy; Bahrain; Nigeria; Portland, OR; Augusta, ME, Cincinnati, OH – just a few of the exotic locations from which we've received submissions. I've been working on a revised tag-line. "The South's Unique, *International* Literary and Arts Magazine". Cool? Alrighty then. Alternative tags – "If you don't get this filthy rag out of my steakhouse, I'll sue!" and "Sure, my son is the editor, but I don't know how he got the job."

More numbers: Since I took over as editor, I've published twelve issues. My chickens have laid 217 eggs of various sizes and egg-related shapes during the same period, making them X times more productive than I, if X is (coincidentally) a roman numeral, and I is me. I have (rather surreptitiously) eaten seven double-orders of hot wings from Armadillo Grill, and twenty-eight orders of General Tso chicken from Panda Grill. On this subject, one might extrapolate that I enjoy Chinese food exactly four times as much as eating twenty hot wings. Also, since Tso is actually pronounced "chow", I have deduced that the General is an honorary title, and he was actually the head short-order cook on board my ship back in the 'seventies. Although that's quite some time ago, I distinctly remember being told, "Somers! It's Tso time, you idiot," by one petty officer or another on several occasions.

Financials: We publish on a virtual shoe-string. More accurately, a bootstring, but I won't explain what I mean by that. Our advertisers are as faithful and true as a crop of blue-tick hounds, but they can only do so much. We need you. I'd like to keep fundraising as simple as possible. Ready? Here goes. We would like everyone who reads the Blotter to donate a small amount of money into a fund that we're going to call "the working budget". We will use this so-called "working budget" to do such stuff as we see fit, like buying paper and ink from the printer, and paying an organization with people we don't even know for the right to temporarily use domain names. I know, I know – it's all very haphazard and risky, but in the rough-and-tumble magazine business, you do what you have to do. Anyway, we'd like each of you to "invest" in our fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants-exercise. Let's say, just for argument's sake, that each of you gave one dollar (\$1) for each month of 2007 that we produced a new issue. I'm not even asking that you pony up a buck for issues we haven't created yet – just the ones we already did last year. These are time-tested issues that you've perused and found to your liking. I'm only assuming that every month each of you is getting one copy each. Based on this number there should be six thousand of you, and that's one dollar per month, for twelve months. I've asked my mathematician Olivia to total this up, and she says, "Dad, that's so third grade." Well, she's right, but for argument's sake, we'll run a query. OK, then...it turns out that the subtotal

of 6000 (copies/readers) times 1 (dollar per month) is still 6000. How do you like that? Hey, just keeping it real. Now, there are twelve months in 2007 (as well as 2008) and just for fun I find it interesting that while the days of the week are mostly named for Norse gods (Woden's-day, Thor's-day, Tyr's-day), some months of the year are named for Roman gods (Janus, Mars,) or God-wannabe's (Julius, Augustus). Anyhow, there are twelve of them, and at a dollar a pop, that's twelve dollars, multiplied against our subtotal. The bottom line is \$72,000, therefore, and that is, obviously, a great deal of money, for anyone other than, say, Donald Trump or the Sultan of Brunei. Such funding would allow us to expand our distribution, grow the magazine, improve the quality of readability. We already have all of the other ingredients – good writing and fine artwork, recycled paper and vegetable inks. For the gods' sake, do your part and ante up. Write a check to Marty. Or just go to www.blotterrag.com and use *Paypal* – we couldn't make it more convenient if we just snitched your wallets. Well, that's not completely true – snitching your wallet would make it easier.

Operations: We continue to distribute in our Fortresses of Solitude – NC's Triangle; Asheville; and Athens, GA. We struggle to hold onto gains in Wilmington, NC; Charlotte; and Virginia locations; Atlanta; and New York City; and hope somehow to recover the NC Triad, although we have pushed on into Austin, TX; and have feelers out to Charleston, SC. I cannot say for certain that any copies still reach Boise, ID, because I never understood how we got there in the first place, although I am pleased because when I was in fifth grade I did a class project on Idaho, and when I sent a query letter to the capital in Boise, they sent me lots of cool brochures, mostly about fishing, so I'm not surprised that folks there are affable and accommodating.

Executive Roundup: We had great good fun on our trip to the Bahamas, and I must say, there is a huge difference between First Class and Business Class, but it's worth it. I didn't even know that there was such thing as a thirty-year-old Macallan scotch, and although I'm sorry that I spilled that one bottle, I did get more than my fair share of the replacement. Gloria, who is fairly brand new to the art of massage, earned her four hours' salary and then some, and the fellows who showed up with the sangria vat and the platter of paella were gracious to teach us how to do the samba, and what's an extra Jackson or two among friends?

Summary: It was a good year, and I hope everyone got what they were looking for, either actively and/or accidentally. Oh, by the way, I like and/or. I wish we could vote for President using and/or. Wouldn't that be fun? I want him and/or her. It wouldn't change much, but so many more people would be confused.

Final thoughts: Blame is for children and old men. Tipping does not actually insure prompt service. Bananas have no bones.

All done here? Meeting adjourned.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

We often use Bobco fonts, copyrighted shareware from the Church of the Subgenius. Prabob. We also use Mary Jane Antique and other free-ware fonts from Apostrophic Labs and other fonts from other sources.



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is published in the first half of each month and enjoys a free circulation throughout the Southeast and some other places, too. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

Subscriptions are offered as a premium for a donation of \$25 or more. Send check or money order, name and address to The Blotter Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also available, 5 for \$5. Inquire re same by e-mail: chief@blotterrag.com.



CAUTION

Just when you think that you might be doing the wrong thing, offending where no offense was intended, turning away the ones you love, you hear the laughter; the kind word. Our thanks to DP for that.

"Mayhem"

by Zack Wilson

Tim was nicknamed 'Mayhem' because he used the word a lot. If he was moving house he'd come in the pub and say it was 'mayhem', if the toilet was crowded it was 'mayhem' and if his smoke alarm went off at 3am and it wouldn't stop so he had to permanently dismantle it, it was 'mayhem'. He lived above a newsagents for a bit until his Status Quo CDs pissed Rafeeq, the owner, off so much that he evicted him and some rockabilles moved in instead.

He was fond of drinking snakebite, that electric mix of cider and lager normally drunk by the dangerous, especially on a Sunday after he'd been orienteering. When

he drank it his face went cardiac maroon apart from a white, half inch wide line just beneath his hairline. His hair was lank and black, especially after orienteering because he would never bother to clean himself up. He never ate properly either, so his breath stank.

One Sunday afternoon we had an argument about politics. I'd been feeling bad because I'd badly mistreated Ellen, my girlfriend, the night before. I told Mayhem to fuck off and left the pub. It was November and dark and rainy. I didn't go straight home, but had a Beck's in a strange pub on Ecclesall Road and then made my way to the 24 hour Spar by Hunter's Bar roundabout.

I was enjoying the cold air and the fresh wet in it as I tried to decide which frozen meal I'd enjoy after my evening spliff. The lights from the Spar made the pavement glisten, and there was a ramp with a banister for disabled people adjoining the steps that led into the shop. I was about to walk up the steps when I saw Mayhem coming towards me from the opposite direction. I turned quick-

ly into the doorway of a closed fancy dress shop. I would wait until he'd passed or done his shopping.

He walked past the ramp. A homeless guy in a Nike baseball cap and Nirvana hoody sat on the brick edge of where the ramp was highest, by the door. He was polite and quiet in his requests of strangers. I watched Mayhem walk past him and over the wind heard him say, "Get a job you lazy cunt," to the homeless fella, who immediately stood up and swung at him.

Slight and drunk, Mayhem ducked and slipped. The punch hadn't connected, and Homeless stooped over Mayhem, shouting. Using the banister of the ramp to struggle to his feet, Mayhem half rose then rolled under the bottom rung of the banister onto the ramp. Homeless swivelled, and ran up the steps to the door of the shop before pursuing Mayhem down the ramp and the street into the darkness. I laughed, and decided to celebrate with another pint and no dinner.

I next saw Mayhem in the pub on the following Wednesday, in the evening, he was in for some European match on Sky. He was standing blocking my view when



They told you that nobody likes a smart ass?



That's because they never met
The Raleigh
HATCHET
We are one wicked little music, art and pop-culture rag.
Revel in the unrecognized and ridiculous with us.
We like you.
Available at select locations and on the web at www.raleighhatchet.com



BLUE BAYOU CLUB
GONNA HAVE **BIG FUN** ON THE BAYOU!!

106 South
Churton Street
Hillsborough,
N.C. 27278
919 / 732-2555

www.
bluebayouclub.com

he asked me if I'd have a look at the C V he'd just prepared for an agency.

His long, weak fingers pulled it from his jeans pocket. Folded in 4, it was handwritten in blue biro on squared paper, like you get in maths exercise books. Damp had smudged his name at the top, and it finished halfway down the page. Mayhem was 39. There were no jobs listed until 1987 and he didn't have any hobbies or interests. The A4 sized sheet was coming apart in the middle where holes where staples had been were widening.

I gave it him back and said it was fine.



Cdulhuvida

In the next section of the story, Thor meets the Midgard Serpent. In Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, H. R. Ellis Davidson has pointed out that this fits a recognized pattern in world mythologies, where a Sky-God fights a World Monster. This is also seen in the legend of Saint George and the Dragon. Again, this episode differs from the popular The Life of Hymir, giving a much more detailed account of the battle and calling the Serpent by its Beothuck name, a name not suited to the English tongue, Cthulhu.

IV. Setting out to Sea

The sea was black as ink, with tepid waves like ripples in velvet. The only sound was of the oars breaking the water. The Giant Hymir started to row faster, hoping to exhaust his guest. "Let me know if you begin to tire, Voerr, and we can take a break."

Thor, disguised as Voerr, was ready to take his hammer, Mjollnir, to the giant's head, but he restrained himself and replied that he was just getting his second wind. Thor then increased his pace and the boat began to fly across the water.

They soon came to the reef where Hymir was accustomed to sit. "Stop!" Hymir cried. "This is where I always fish for whales."

"Then this is where you failed to catch a minnow yesterday?" Thor continued to row. "Surely if we go out deeper, we can catch bigger fish. Besides, I'd like to get beyond the fog."

Hymir was not pleased with this idea, but Thor rowed for a few more hours. They were soon out so far that Hymir could no longer smell the land. The fog had not thinned, so that it was impossible to know the hour. Again Hymir said that they should stop, as it would be dangerous to go any farther in the dark and he had no desire to spend the night at sea.

"Near here is the home of the Midgard serpent, which you call Jormungand and the Skraelings Cthulhu. It is not safe to fish in these waters, especially at night."

"Cthulhu!" said Thor. "I've met his head priest and now I'd like to meet him."

Hearing this, Hymir realized that Thor must indeed be one of the gods, as no single man ever escaped after seeing the Red Men of the North. They had even managed to chase most of the Vikings out of Vinland and into the arms of the Christians. It was believed that the Beothuck painted themselves with the blood of their victims, being very fond of the color red, and that they offered all strangers to their dead priest, Cthulhu, hoping to entice him back from the watery depths.

...To Be Continued



**The
Nightbound Show**

Weekly internet radio
featuring **your**
music, poetry, essays
& short stories

listen + submit
nightsound.com/radio

“Suffer The Little Children”

by Rebekah Cowell

Fact: hair is a living organism that needs fats, proteins, minerals to live.

I killed my hair.

My father told me my sins were filthy rags. “When you pray, God sees a pile of filthy rags”, he said.

Gaining weight is harder than starving.

As a child I liked being outside at night, I was always looking for answers.

By the time I was seven I knew I was the odd one out.

My father believes every woman, child, and man that has not repented of their sins will burn in the eternal darkness of hell: they will suffer death every second of every minute of every hour of every day – eternally.

I tried suicide and that didn't work out for me.

My will to live superseded my will to die.

I spent three days in a coma, and one week in a psychiatric ward, I

came out scared speechless but alive.

I'm the second daughter of a Baptist minister – I wanted *God* more than any of my siblings. I took long notes at ever sermon he gave, I won the prize in my Sunday School class for memorizing 100 Bible verses, I read Foxes *Book of Martyrs*, and I prayed.

I wanted *it* to be real. In numb terror, I'd ask God to forgive me over and over again, every night I would pray for forgiveness.

I was filthy rags.

My father and I don't speak anymore.

Out of the bottomless nightmare of falling I wake up cold, wet, gasping for air.

When I was ten my father decided I was not “saved”.

I was a bad, a very bad child.

I did things that made my parents ashamed, I pulled out my own hair. My dog died, he died of Parvo – preventable with a puppy vaccine. We'd moved *again*, I was

sleeping alone in a bedroom in that 4-story dilapidated house, my dog was my constant companion, curling up in my blankets to chase away my fears – closer to him than my siblings, his death devastated me – at night when I was scared I pulled out handfuls of my own hair. I did exactly what I would do in my twenty's when I cut my arms.

Fact: physical pain makes the emotional pain cease for awhile.

I pulled out over half of my hair when my parents' finally took me to a doctor, a holistic doctor nonetheless. She was puzzled, when she discovered the truth she didn't recommend therapy or counseling, she left it to my parents to sort out. HA! I was a bundle of nerves, a ten-year old self-mutilator and back into the family fold I went where mental health issues were a sign of sin.

That night, I asked my father if God would forgive me, he said I had to repent of all my sins, and so I did.

The clock says it's a little after 2:00am - I change my sheets, I drink a glass of water, I'm parched. I feel faint – I lie back down remembering the nightmare.

The nightmare isn't complicated, it's me free falling into a fire and just when my feet hit the heat, and flames lick up to my ankles, my body jerks awake, my brain screaming, “You're ok”.

I've had “fire” nightmares for as long as I've had memories.

I'm in love with a man who doesn't love me. He throws up all my problems, familial, emotional, he can not love a girl with this many



CARRBURRITOS
Burritos, Tacos, Nachos and Margaritas!

Mon thru Sat 11am-10pm - Closed Sunday - 933.8226
711 W Rosemary St. Carrboro www.carrburritos.com

problems. He says this. I love him more than I've loved anything else, dogs included. The question I can not lay to rest, why he can not love me. But it is ok, because if God can't love me, than neither can a man. I let him fuck me, even though he doesn't love me, more punishment.

My mind my therapist says is anorexic, and I can not trust the feedback I get from it, she says to avoid looking in the mirror, to hug myself and feel the new me. I do not love the new me.

My parents married young. My mother was engaged before she graduated from high school. The photo I have from her yearbook is a likeness of myself, the bone structure of her face, the bone structure of mine, her eyes have yet to show the dullness of being subdued and wounded, she is poised and ready. Her uncle, the one who later disowned his family, saw potential in her, he offered her college. The summer before her wedding she went to California to visit. She got a job selling encyclopedias door-to-door, earning money for her wedding dress. The courage it took to sell door-to-door and the determination my mother showed to earn her own money are uncharac-

teristic of the woman I know. I remind myself that at one time she was bold and independent. Believing herself to be in love, and for reason I don't have clear answers for, my mother went back to North Carolina to marry a boy in the army who would later get a vicious dose of religion.

Hot flashes?
I'm only 24.

My doctor says this will happen until my body's thyroid regulates. It's what happens when you start eating food, and stop living on air. I was not prepared for this; starving has done more than emaciate my frame, it's screwed with the hard-wiring of my body, and minute details continue to surface.

God couldn't punish me anymore than I've already punished myself. I deny my body. Doesn't this make me good? Or am I still filthy rags?

Forgiveness, what a divine thought. I'm going to forgive myself, I think rolling onto my side. I'm going to get better, and I'm going to love me, I say before I drift off to sleep.

I am, and always have been optimistic. Suicidally optimistic.



The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals.. If nothing else, wed love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterrag.com

Apparently some people lose the ability to fly in their dreams. Perhaps it is puberty that brings this on, or the joy of sexual discovery that overwhelms the happy and occasional event of make-believe. I am old enough now to have the time to sit and wonder about how I can still fly, but also about how many of the rules have changed. My dream-flight is an unreliable skill; I often find that I cannot get very far off of the ground. This is troubling, because what good is flight if your feet may still be grabbed by monsters or other bad-guys? Sometimes, for reasons obscure to me, I may only fly backwards, putting me in harm's way yet again - with tree branches and power-lines. And when it rains in my dream (something that is also a mystery), there is some question as to whether the capacity will avail itself to me at all. I feel like my wings, which do not manifest themselves but are in fact invisible muscles in my dream-shoulders, are also becoming older, keeping time with reality-me, the feathers dusty and worn, the biggest pins and quills gray at the edge. Perhaps I am not working out with weights in the gym (the real one) enough? Could it be that simple - that I only need to lift weights in order to improve my flight-skills?

KEC - Chapel Hill, NC

Haircuts • Color • Highlights

ALTERED IMAGE

Hair Designers

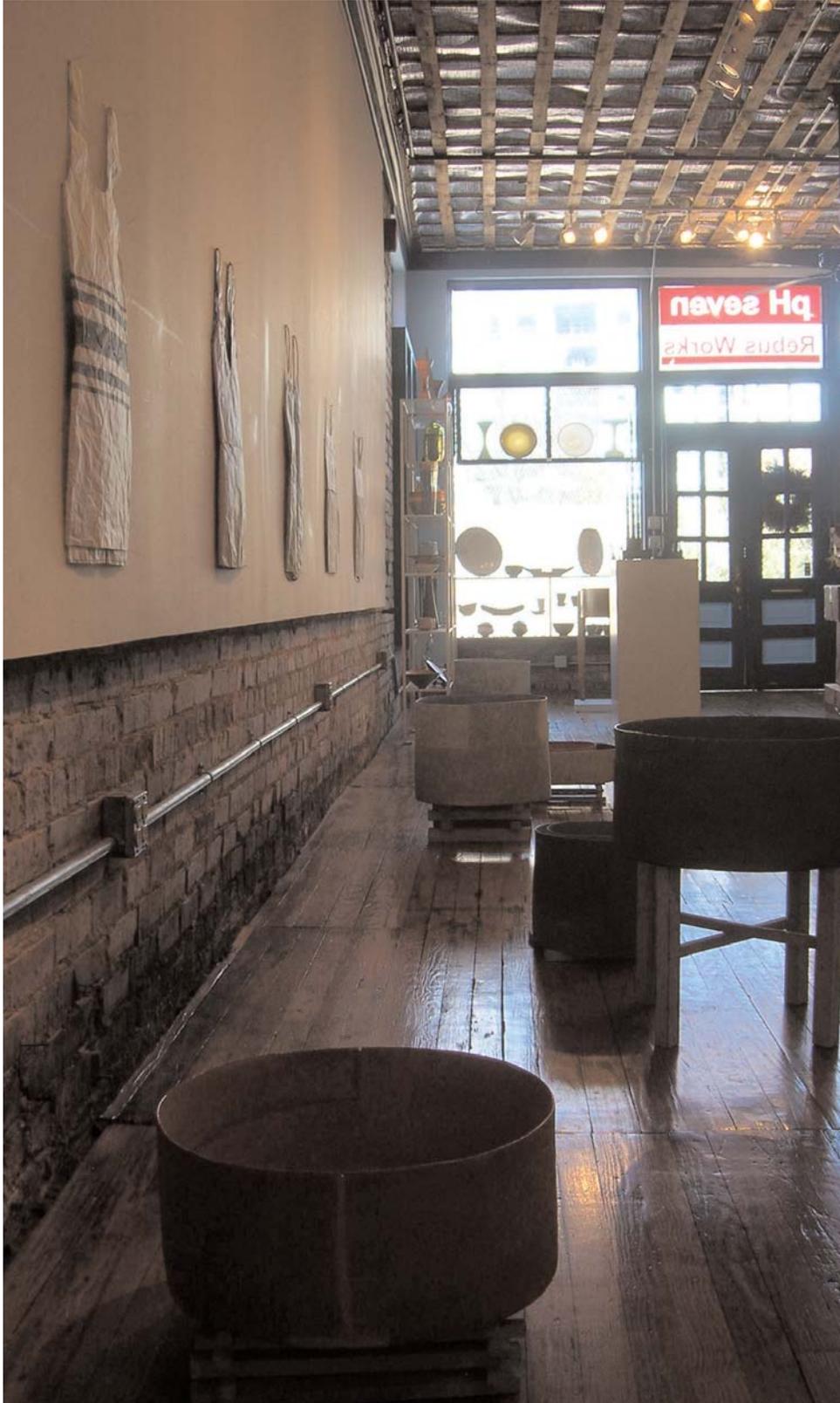
1113½ Broad Street
Durham, N.C. 27705

919-286-3732

Over twenty years at your service

Redken • Paul Mitchell • Rusk

“Okay, here we are, inside the gallery. Note to Sarah: there’s no place for me to sit down, and nowhere to put my beer. Are those bathing suits on the wall really made of paper? Now we’re talking. Where was Warhol with this one back in my cocktail years? Sorry, just kidding.”



“Rebus Work 301 Kinsey Street

www.rebusw

Rebus Works is an exhibition for artists to introduce innovative works of fine art and high community art events. Curated on January 26, is “when i go ceramics by Meredith Bricke bathing suits by Kristen Penland,” featuring the work created with and inspired by Penland. Upcoming exhibitions include ceramics by O’Brien and drawings by Ab

There's no one here right now. She only lent me the key, and told me not to break anything. I guess those lights stay on all of the time.

No, I don't know what you call that color.

ks" Gallery
t, Raleigh, NC
works.us

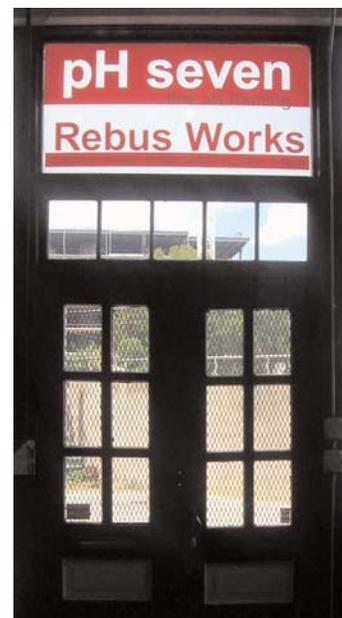
n space created by artists
ovative and compelling
craft with an emphasis on
rently on view, through
o swimming" featuring
ell and hand-made paper
Martincic, and "Via
k of many artists associ-
enland School of Crafts.
de paintings by Tiffany
ie Harris.



"What are those? Pottery? Oh. *Ceramics*. Not some kind of chair at all. No, I was *not* going to sit on it. I do like the brickwork, however. Is that supposed to be like that? If not, don't change it - it's very nice."



This is the front door. I can't read the sign. It looks like it says "Heaven's Road Works. Hang on a sec, lemme turn it around. Ah-ha, there we go. pH seven...Rebus Works.



That makes more sense. hey, who is that out there? I can't see. Over there. No, right over there!!! Hey, nice car, buddy!

Paper-Cuts: Books You May Not Have Read

by Martin K. Smith

The Saturday Evening Post Stories 1936

Little, Brown & Company, 1937

Ah yes, the dear old *Saturday Evening Post*, a name sure to incite warm fuzzy feelings in anyone with a jones for The Good Old Days. Heartwarming covers by Norman Rockwell, enclosing a confection of happy endings, pride, boosterism and Values. The kind of magazine that folks like, for instance, Ronnie and Nancy Reagan could read without fear of being disquieted. By those same benchmarks, a name that could also incite various mixtures of contempt and wrath among people not so fond of The Good Old Days, to whom the *Post* was a voice of The Establishment: stodgy, reactionary, unfriendly to the vital progress of peace, love, music and so forth. Joan Didion, who contributed numerous articles, said in 1968 “Quite often people write me from places like Toronto and want

to know (demand to know) how I can reconcile my conscience with writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*.”

The *Post* ran from 1821 to 1969. It claimed Ben Franklin as a founder, though the pedigree was kind of thin: the first issues were printed on presses bought from Franklin’s surviving business partner. It was one of the main markets for fiction in its day. (It was a weekly, so had a lot of pages to fill.) These old anthologies are interesting for their glimpses of big-name writers before they became big names: this collection houses Mary Roberts Rinehart, Conrad Richter, J.P. Marquand, James Gould Cozzens, Paul Gallico, Booth Tarkington and Stephen Vincent Benet. They’re also a sort of cultural core sample, a collage of where the pop culture of the time had its head at; or rather, where the *Post*’s editorial staff, influenced by pop culture, had its collective head.

Many of the stories live up to that Heartwarming reputation. In Eddy Orcutt’s “Wheelbarrow”, a boy comes to Paxton College “from some flag-stop high school up in the San Joaquin Valley” and joins the track team because he idolizes its crusty and hard-bitten coach. He can’t run worth a damn, but through Herculean effort wins the Big Track Meet and Coach’s approval, while His Girl watches devotedly from the stands. In Booth Tarkington’s “Some Ways Like Washington,” a seemingly boorish art dealer, speaking in one of the oddest dialects I’ve ever encountered – “Ah, he acquires too my pyootiful inkstend made from a early seventeent’-century silver pomander; how I hate to lose it!” – surprises his assistant by showing nobility of spirit and not swindling an impoverished mother and daughter when he buys their heirloom Gilbert Stuart portrait. Guy Gilpatric’s “Captain Snooty-off-the-Yacht” sees Mr. Glencannon, chief engineer of the tramp steamer *Inchcliffe Castle*, get the better of both Captain Snooty and his wealthy employer. Mr Glencannon got the better of people in several *Post* stories, except when his favorite tippie – Duggan’s Scotch, “the Dew of Kirkintilloch” – wasn’t getting the better of him. (Pop culture in 1936 could still see a drinking problem as funny and endearing.) He was one of several crusty, hard-bitten but goodhearted characters who entered pop culture through their *Post* appearances. There was Tugboat Annie, a lady captain of salty vocabulary (which of course was *not* quoted



verbatim); and the team of Tutt and Mr. Tutt, crafty folksy lawyers who could always be found arguing on the side of homely good sense and young love.

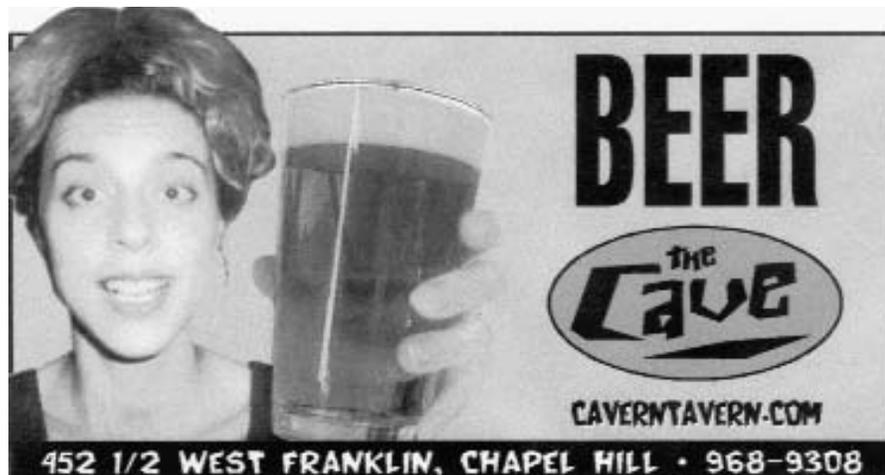
The archconservative rep is upheld by I.A.R. Wylie's "The Third Day", an anti-Communist fantasy about Russians rediscovering religion. His anti-Commie-ism is almost a love-hate thing. His Russians are all so blindly, devotedly, uniformly loyal to the Party that I couldn't tell whether he feared the Soviet menace or secretly admired its effectiveness. They don't even know what a church is anymore. "A big dome-shaped building humped itself dismally against the starlit sky. It was a survivor of the old days, but it was so solidly built that no one had bothered to pull it down. After the revolution, it had been used as a museum for revolutionarily propaganda. And until quite recently the children had been taken to see those relics of the wicked past. But now it was no longer necessary." But when Sergei Nicholaevitch – whose life as judge of the People's Court, leader of the shock brigade at the Stalin Factory¹ and Red Army veteran is not offering the fulfillment he expected, plus his wife has just died in childbirth – finds an old Bible in the abandoned museum and reads it, his Soul Is Reborn. He starts spreading what he's read to his enthusiastic comrades. "Men and women began to stand up and ask questions with passionate earnestness. 'Who was this man? Why has no

one told us about him? He was a great leader – greater than Lenin. Perhaps he is on the earth still. Perhaps we can find him and talk with him."

There's a personal favorite, Mary Roberts Rinehart's "Lightning Never Strikes Twice". It's an empowerment story. Camilla Rossiter's entire adulthood has been defined by her wifely status. "It had always seemed such a satisfactory marriage. At dinner parties, when someone would state that there was no such thing nowadays, someone else was sure to say 'Well, look at Camilla and Jay Rossiter.' That always ended the discussion, so it could go back to Roosevelt and taxes, as usual." Then one day out of the blue, Jay – a pompous self-certain Babbitt type – informs Camilla that he's divorcing her. He plans to marry some rich younger woman from the Virginia horse set. Camilla is all but flattened with shock, but presently discovers the ability to lead a life of her own. So when Jay returns – having discovered he can't stand horses – and expects to be taken back with open arms, she's able to smile and say in effect

"I don't think so." (What is a Babbitt-type? For a long answer, read the Sinclair Lewis novel of the same name. Short answer: it's what they called yuppies back in The Good Old Days. Babbitts live in McMansions and drive Hummers and are totally oblivious to both items' karmic absurdity.)

There are dark non-happy-ending sides as well, to my mild surprise. Walter D. Edmonds' "Escape From the Mine" has a Loyalist prisoner in the Revolution who has lost his home, business and wife to the war. The Baron of William C. White's "The Baron Loved His Wife" lives in Nazi Berlin, and loses his wife – and everything else – to his superior in the Gestapo. Richard Sherman's "You All Want Something" shows the cynic view of Hollywood as venal, hypocritical and backstabbing already well-established by 1936. Dave Partridge, former newspaperman, on Christmas Eve is in danger of losing his screenwriting contract and thereby his wife, who's grown too fond of their Hollywood lifestyle. (Actually she hasn't; she'd rather have him than the money, but he doesn't know



¹ They make automobiles, not Stalins.

The Blotter

this.) Meanwhile, various stars, agents and staffers all scheme at their various agendas. Dave drinks too much and crashes the studio Christmas party, where he bashes the studio chief's head in against some faux-antique grillwork in the faux-antique tapestried boardroom. Sherman also has this interesting cynic view on writing about Hollywood:

"There are some seven studios like Magavox, but there is no Magnavox, and if there were, it would be called something else here. The Mammoth Film Corporation, Super-Celluloid Productions, Blumberg Pictures, Inc. – any of these classic aliases would serve as well, and sound as phony. Motion-picture organizations bear titles such as Paramount, Warner Brothers, Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and so on – that is, they bear such titles everywhere except in what is known as fiction. Then they become transmuted into such unconvincing appellations as Magnavox, just as Greta Garbo becomes 'Hedda Haberg, the great foreign star.' Custom has enameled

the device to the proportions of a sacred convention. Unfortunately, by now none of the psuedonyms sounds real."

On considered thought, though, even the dark sides are kind of conventionally dark. Sergei's wife's death is a predictable plot catalyist. The Baron was a nice man, but shouldn't have gotten involved with those horrid Nazis. The hinted moral of Dave Partridge is that good-hearted newspapermen should stay with their hometown newspapers, instead of succumbing to the lures of Hollywood money and Hollywood lifestyle which will invariably destroy them. Camilla Rossiter's tale is a frown on divorce – indeed, the tragedy of losing one's spouse seems a common theme. Camilla is a Virtuous Wronged Wife; and if Jay had been a virtuous man he wouldn't have dumped her for Miss Rich Horsey-Face and ended up alone.

Judging by the stories overall, the *Post* in '36 was a bit like Jay Rossiter: middle-aged; self-assured; confident but not arrogant of its prominence in the world; viewing that world with certainties that had the potential to harden into reactionary stone but hadn't done so yet; proud of risks taken in youth (i.e. accepting works by unknown writers) but now more cautious (pronounced "sensible") with maturity. Even if it did ossify, politically and culturally, in later years, it still seems to have done right by its writers.

When people demanded of Joan Didion how she could work for the magazine, she answered "The *Post* is extremely receptive to what the writer wants to do, pays enough for him to be able to do it right, and is meticulous about not changing copy." (She was talking about nonfiction, which is a whole other angle; but for any writer that kind of treatment is golden, especially the well-paid part.)

People, worldviews and magazines often do ossify with age, and contract Nostalgia in varying degrees. It's all part of the Circle of Life and all that blather. Ben Franklin was wise to the phenomenon. He didn't say it in these exact words, just like he didn't exactly found the *Post*; but he noted that "the Good Old Days are never the present day."



the indie Brooklyn, NY

THE INDIE presents a multicultural perspective to current sociocultural issues by providing a community-based monthly newspaper.

THE INDIE
61 Dunwell Ave.
Asheville, NC 28806
(828) 505-0476

<http://indiebonfires.blogspot.com>

www.blotterrag.com

Mark Kinsey NERD
Massage and Bodywork Therapist
NC license #6072
919.619.NERD
819 Broad St., Durham, NC

“Smashing, Just Smashing” by Ivan Faute

Clara's daughter-in-law helped her out of the wheelchair into the plastic molded one. “It might be too cold,” Clara said.

“What’s that grandma?” Patricia, her daughter-in-law, asked.

Clara knew Patricia shouted at her; just because Clara spoke quietly didn’t mean she was deaf. The two older grandchildren, Glen and Jennifer, were chasing each other around the table. The third one, the baby, boxed the air over his chair. He lounged in his baby carrier in the chair next to Clara.

“Can we have our quarters?” Glen whined. Six-year-old Jennifer bumped him with her hip.

“Can we have our tokens,” she corrected. “They don’t take quarters,” she told her brother. “Do you want Pepsi or Lemonade Grandma?” Patricia yelled.

“Lemonade,” Clara said.

“OK,” Patricia shouted back. “No, Glen. Sit down, Jennifer.” The middle-aged mother sat in the chair across from the baby and her mother-in-law.

“It’s too bad Barry isn’t here, isn’t it Grandma?” She motioned, violently pointing downward, for the children to sit in their chairs. Clara sat at eye level with her granddaughter through the Styrofoam cups on the table. A man was suddenly behind Clara and leaning over her with a plastic bowl full of rice pudding and stuck full of lit candles.

“Sing, sing,” Patricia said with her happy voice and began “Happy birthday to Grandma.” Glen asked for a quarter.

“We haven’t had dinner yet,” Grandma Clara said.

“Blow out the candles, Grandma,” Patricia said. “Watch Grandma blow out the candles Jennifer.”

Clara watched a lump of candle wax fall into the bowl of rice pudding and turned to see the baby’s black hole of a mouth.

“We haven’t even had our dinner yet,” she told him. The baby gave a one, two punch in the air with, of course, dimpled fists.

Staccato Microfiction

is the that which cannot be explained of

Staccato Magazine,

Matthew Boyd, Editor.

Your submissions, 1/2K words or less, to

staccatomag@yahoo.com.

Don’t try. Do.

“Fluorescent”

by Sandy Sue Benitez

Spring rain taps the iron
covers of streetlamps,
sending a morse code
only the dead understand.

Lovers huddle beneath
black vinyl umbrellas.
Buzzing like anxious flies,
seeking shelter

from the icy water
pelting frost into their pores.
They wander towards
the tease of light,

resembling delirious moths
oblivious to sudden movement.
Their hearts glowing steadily,
beacons guiding lost souls home.

Escape to Teaneck, New Jersey

Heading down I-95 along the coast I
made a stop off the side off the highway
in Teaneck.

I asked at the local gas station where I
might find Eric
a really cute boy I used to see
on television back in the 1950's
he was tall had brown hair blue eyes
an all around popular guy
who was a favorite with the
parents of teenage girls who
would watch him every day
and sigh.

by Julie Kovacs

Tutti Fruitti Rose of Picardy

The sitting room shrank to a two-dimensional form
chairs with gangly legs tap dancing

a rainbow fish in the aquarium singing a Bobby Darin
song about a guy named Mack and snapping his fins

table lamps floated to the ceiling bulb colors
of strobe lights changing back and forth from red
to yellow
to blue
to green

dripping like icicles
a living chandelier
French provincial 1897

red velvet armchair slept the ibex
his one-way ticket from the Zagros mountains
ensured a lifetime supply of caviar and chocolate lady fingers.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Zack Wilson was born in Skegness in 1974. Since then he has lived in various places in Yorkshire and the Midlands, and now lives in Sheffield. He currently works as a filing clerk, having previously been a labourer, an administrator, a cook and a teacher. He has featured in various places, including *Zygote In My Coffee*, *Unquiet Desperation* and *The Beat*. He can also be read at www.myspace.com/sheffielddram. Notice that we're so comfortable with our UK friends that we don't even mention that they're from the UK.

Rebekah Cowell is a graduate of UNC with a degree in Philosophy and studies in Piano Performance. Ms. Cowell has had columns published in *The Herald Sun*, *The Carrboro Citizen*, and *The Chapel Hill News*. On her submission she wrote "P.S. I have a piece that will be published in the fall issue of *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*...just in case you're wondering if I'm a complete nobody :-)" Rebekah, as soon as we read your piece we knew that you're wicked good.

mckenzee - Larry Holderfield (Cdulhuvida) is doing all those things a new husband does. He offered to send us recipes, and we're holding him to it.

Marty Smith is Mr. Frodo to our Samwise. Got a favorite gallery you want to see here? Send Jenny your nomination at mermaid@blotterrag.com

Ivan Faute of Chicago writes, "this piece is part of an ongoing project, '365 Stories for the Edification of Children,' which was chosen as a finalist for the Calvino Prize."

Sandy Sue Benitez's poetry has appeared in numerous poetry journals such as *Scorched Earth*, *Words-Myth*, *Falling Star Magazine*, *Chantarelle's Notebook*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Orange Room Review*, *La Fenetre*, *Lily*, and *Loch Raven Review*. Sandy resides in Wyoming with her two hyper children and darling husband. She is also the editor of *Flutter*, an online poetry journal. Her first book of poetry, *Ever Violet*, by D-N Publishing is available by contacting the author at SandyB1070@msn.com.

Julie Kovacs, is a resident of Tucson, Arizona and her poetry has been published in several online and print literary journals, including *Falling Star*, *Children Churches and Daddies*, *The Flask Review*, *Perigee*, and *Because We Write*.

Kyle Wolpert writes, "I am a Durham resident at school up north. I love reading the Blotter over the summer and thought I would finally submit something. I would like to send this poem ("A Modest Sentiment") to my school's literary rag too, later on, if that's alright. Anyways, this poem is my way of paying homage to my favorite authors (namely Eliot, Swift, and Cummings). I hope you like it, but I'm also open to suggestions about how to change it. Let me know if I should write a bio or something." Nah, we've got your back, buddy.

"A Modest Sentiment"

by Kyle Vincent Wolpert

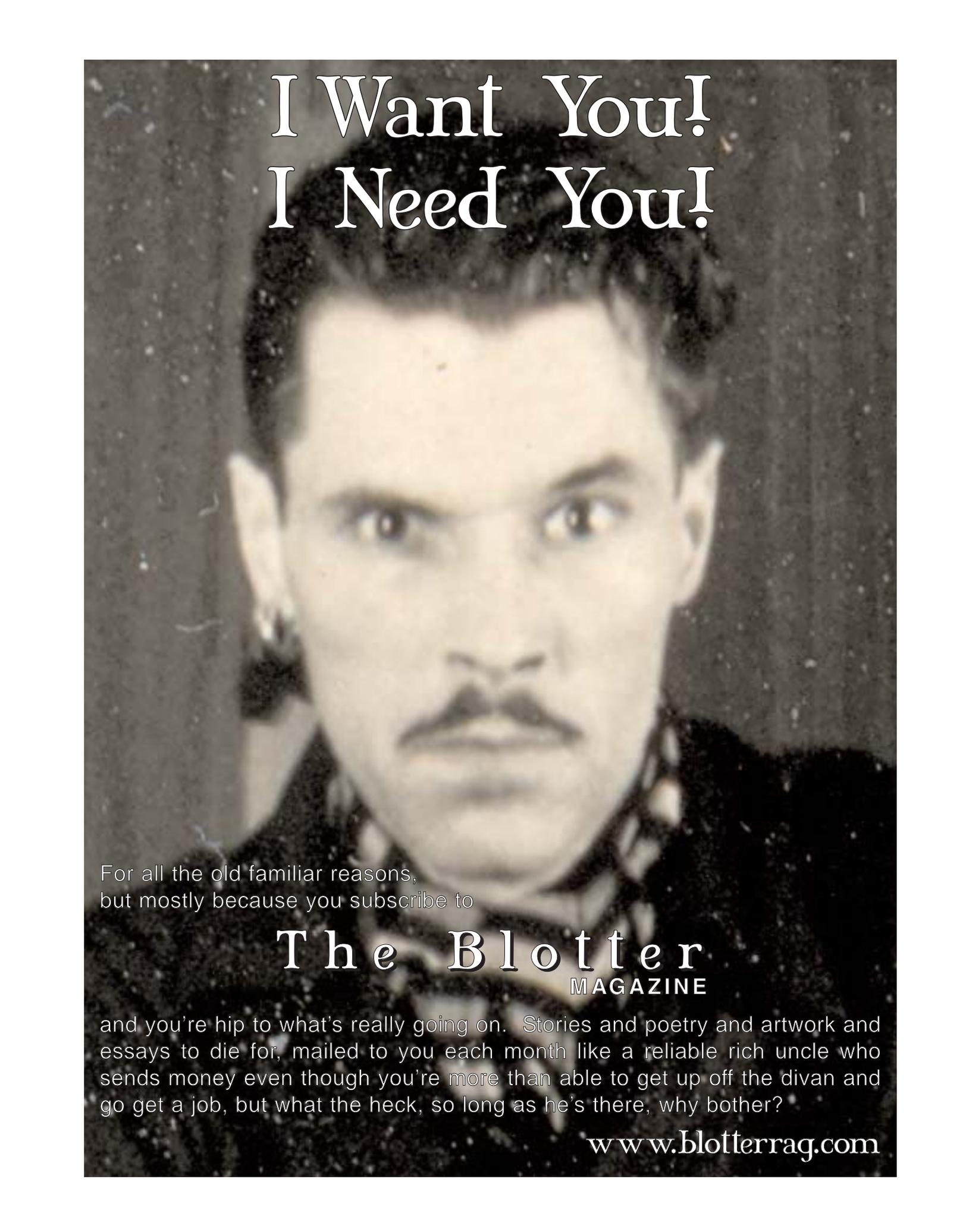
I hate modern poetry.
My arguments follow:

1. February is really the cruelest month,
(April is only half bad)
snowfallcold covers everything,
we've nowhere to hide (2. why are we all so sad now?)

Not that frostbite concerns the poet,
for all sense of Feet (and Meter) has died in these lines;
literary rapture claimed them (with brother Rhyme)
giving way to haphazard (or maybe misplaced?) sentiments

sprawled
across
the page.

But Why?



I Want You!
I Need You!

For all the old familiar reasons,
but mostly because you subscribe to

The Blotter
MAGAZINE

and you're hip to what's really going on. Stories and poetry and artwork and essays to die for, mailed to you each month like a reliable rich uncle who sends money even though you're more than able to get up off the divan and go get a job, but what the heck, so long as he's there, why bother?

www.blotterrag.com