

## Poetry Series

# Theresa Haffner

- poems -

### Publication Date:

January 2010

### Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Poems are the property of their respective owners. This e-book was created by Theresa Haffner on [www.poemhunter.com](http://www.poemhunter.com). For the procedures of publishing, duplicating, distributing and listing of the poems published on PoemHunter.Com in any other media, US copyright laws, international copyright agreements and other relevant legislation are applicable. Such procedures may require the permission of the individuals holding the legal publishing rights of the poems.

### **Theresa Haffner (August 25,1945)**

Theresa Haffner is a 30 year veteran of the Los Angeles poetry wars. She has been editor/publisher of two periodicals, THREADBARE Literary Journal and AFTERSHOCK Magazine, and was regional editor for THE NEW PRESS, a nationally distributed literary magazine from New York. She has published two collections of her poetry, ACHERON and Other Poems (1996) and DIFFERENT DRUM (2003) . Currently she is working on a novel titled RIVER. She also performs as a musician and singer/songwriter with a large body of original work to her credit. She is 62.

#### **Works:**

'Acheron and Other Poems' (1996) New Wind Press.  
'Different Drum' (2003) New Wind Press.  
'Black Star' (2005) New Wind Press.  
'surface of the land' (New Wind Press)  
'The Case for Wisdom at 5: 00 A.M.' (New Wind Press)

## **A New Place to Live**

We need a new place to live.  
Alternative environment  
new  
pad crib lay up  
hide out  
maybe even  
cabin in the rough

You know when those  
welfare checks and government pensions  
get thin  
after all we all get our checks  
for mental disabilities emotional disturbances  
crazy enough to qualify too fucked up  
to pay us off put us on the old  
once a month pay day routine  
full moon tweaking on an 8 track  
hiding in the laundry room  
they say it's a progressive condition  
tried really tried to be straight upright and true  
Section 8 subsidized our ware then got too fucked up  
even for Section 8  
we need a new kind of place to live

Rent too high to pay so checked out  
the communal scene and cooperative forms  
of living socialist dialectics lighting  
up our Marxist non revisionist eyes

A rooming house room was about the best  
share the kitchen and bath

with a hundred other roomies and freaks  
and their games and jealousies  
and treacheries and betrayals

and their friends of their friends  
and opera at 8: 00 in the morning  
but oh please  
play your synthesizer low

so trying to deal drugs our of the pad  
laid us out  
pay the rent  
pay the connection  
the house a public thoroughfare  
lost the sound system  
lost the color tv  
lost the synthesizer  
then the homeless bit you know  
on the back porch in the back of the  
station wagon in the stolen vw

then living for the better part of an extra  
month in an abandoned car  
parked next to Carl's Junior  
and Osco Drugs

without running water or clean clothing

car started but wouldn't drive  
broken axle  
we finally bought the car for \$60  
when the owner came  
three weeks later and found us living in it  
beer cans and Carl's Junior paper cups  
building up around the car  
with the stench of urine

Police gave us two days to move the car or else

By then Alpha Beta and Osco Drugs had  
gotten plenty tired of us pan handling  
change for the telephone and me of course  
dollars for short dogs the usual morning  
recipe of Night Train or White Port wine  
that became a necessity to keep me off the  
curb and out of the gutter

and using the rest room at Carl's Jr.  
to clean up in

The car ran only two days but it  
took us to San Fernando Dept. of Social Services  
to get a hotel voucher on General Relief

Finally lost the car after it stranded us  
the third time  
lost our clothes lost  
the tools lost all our provisions of course  
lots of layed up food oranges and god knows  
what else moldering in plastic bags in the  
interior lost everything we had in the car  
when it was towed  
but it got us to the hotel  
on the voucher and we started making it  
back up the ladder of success.

got a couple of synthesizers  
made a bottle harp from empty Sundance wine coolers  
for a jam session  
started dealing a little drugs  
you know hands on feeling like we were  
once more our human selves

get terribly dependent on a welfare hotel  
with a voucher  
kept renewing the damn thing  
dropping out of the program and starting over  
just to get the voucher and all that security  
NO VISITORS AFTER 10 P.M.  
with a roof over our heads  
potted palms in the lobby  
messages in our message box  
thought we would stay on there forever  
maybe buy the hotel  
invested in the whole fourth floor  
thought we owned the place  
jam sessions from midnight to dawn  
filled the place up with mirrors and syringes  
but the hotel kicked us out eventually too  
and we had to move  
now we need a new kind of place to live

We started hanging around with these two lesbians  
who are friends of ours who are prostitutes

Medea writes punk rock lyrics and sings  
She used to be with Black Flag  
Her going and coming and late night jam sessions  
helped get us kicked out of the hotel  
And Anne who is very quiet and reserved  
underspoken where Medea is outspoken  
Medea turns tricks and makes a lot of money  
Anne gets SSI and keeps an apartment  
Together they make out alright

We began to think in terms of incorporating  
them into our radical game plan of unconventional  
living arrangements  
Teaming up with them so to speak

After we opened up the nailed shut bathroom door  
to make adjoining suites at the hotel  
hotel kicked us out last week we decided  
a little more wide open life style might be in  
order

We don't want to pay a lot of rent Section 8  
and living in abandoned houses for nothing  
has conditioned us to not obligating a great portion  
of our meager income for somebody else's landlord  
not more than half for rent  
not more than 30%  
not more than well you guessed it we  
want about the lowest rent possible  
save our bucks

for expensive motel bills and dealing at a loss

And we don't want a lot of restrictions  
We don't want to have to be in by 11 or keep  
our synthesizer down after 12 or keep the  
number and type of visitors who visit us  
on the wrong side of 13 or african or asian  
or real long hair

We don't want to be interfered with though there  
be a constant stream of single gentlemen all one race  
or small groups of long hair obvious street addicts  
hanging around at all hours of the night and morning  
for whatever purposes we don't like them  
to make assumptions We Are Professional People  
We have rehearsals recitals Poetry Readings  
We don't like anyone to point a finger  
We don't point a finger at anyone lest we  
in turn be judged

We want to climb in and out the windows  
take the doors off the hinges tear out the smoke  
detectors make vivid black and white abstract paintings  
on the walls and window shades  
drag in tons of surplus vegetables and frozen foods  
from supermarket dumpsters  
and  
make loud music  
have a continuous party make house repairs hammer nails  
do remodeling late at night every night  
and not answer the door or telephone on Tuesday  
and Wednesday morning all day

We like other people around but we like our privacy  
too We like to make love often for hour after hour  
sometimes for days before these ghostly mirrored walls  
our reflections glistening in the intimate shadows  
far into the utopian distances

We can use a little supervision too got used to it  
in the county jails and voucher hotels No Visitors  
After 11 under penalty of eviction or DEATH works well  
on us free hippie spirits too optimistic to say no

We envision a warehouse a store front a live in garage  
a mobile home tree house undersea cavern high rise  
office or cupboard under the sink

We like to remake our environment into our own  
likeness and if this means unconventional  
disorderly or outright destructive it is because  
we take the shortest course between two straight lines

Our aesthetics are internalized not externalized  
We don't judge by appearances We look below  
the surface of things  
We spend our lives in search for the true nature  
of reality and seek to penetrate to the burning  
coal within  
We seek to get to the heart of each experience as  
life unfolds its tapestries before us  
We know there is a mystical truth not unlike  
Nirvana that gives our lives relevance and meaning  
We suffer ecstasies too strong too exquisite  
too unbearable to ever gauge ourselves in terms of  
any straight person any 9 – 5 corporate worker or  
housewife who never takes chances always pays their  
bills on time never speeds in traffic and never looks  
beyond the hem of their taffeta petticoats

Ours is a simple credo

We do not feel guilty about our various illegalities  
only regret that so much unhappiness this way comes  
We are culpable for our felonies and our misdemeanors  
We realize that we have stepped beyond the boundaries  
where  
we can make our living within the reins of legality  
and that every person is entitled to make a living

The nature of our crimes then is not moral but  
political

We recognize that it is money that is behind it  
and when there is no longer any money in it  
our crimes will become legal

We do not ask for any forgiveness only that you  
let us be do not disturb or distract us

and keep your distance from us even as we must  
keep our distance from one another

If you do not involve yourself with us  
you will not be hurt by us

We know that we did not become the way we have  
become  
by being timid or by refusing to fight  
and that each of us is prone to episodes of violence  
and uncontrolled temper

Do not interfere with our self styled barbarism  
as we befoul our dwelling places and make our illegal

money

We are the last stanchion of the lost hope of humanity

We looked in the paper this morning An odd  
ad in the classified section reads "Hotel/Storage  
\$10 a day" We called up It's an old apartment  
building but its condition is not good It's not  
inhabitable unless you want to do some major repair  
for free rent Sounds just like up  
our alley

So we move our stuff over to this filthy  
plumbing overflowed four story brick walk up  
on Vermont Street By now Medea and Anne are at  
each other's throats  
arguing constantly and we are running  
out of dope and out of money

So we pay our \$10 and start filling the place up  
Looks like we've found a new place to live

Theresa Haffner

## Acheron

'Who listens to classical music, anyway? '

-Bill Bored, 'Urban Contemporary.'

structural dawn, vacant skies  
meaningless streets, desolate sidewalks  
deserted now in this hour after sunrise  
get used to the directionlessness  
(drifting aimlessly like a boat with  
broken rudder)  
get used to the poverty  
get used to the filthy clothes and  
unshaven faces  
(prematurely aged by the sun's  
ultraviolet rays)  
of those who populate this barren  
landscape  
of run down hotels and abandoned  
buildings  
how many days, how many days  
days without names, each one like the  
others  
got to remember who i am  
got to remember who i am supposed to  
be  
got to remember the dreams and visions  
of my youth,  
the ideals i lived my life for  
got to remember my name  
always get \$1.25 for beer, the Rx for  
alcohol  
that helps to forget the hopelessness  
helps to forget the dreams that won't  
come true  
helps to forget who i was and the life i  
used to lead  
helps to forget where i am and how i got  
here  
helps to face another day without hope  
of change  
the stench of urine, the smell of decay  
the back alleys of broken glass  
plastic bags and bottle caps  
the trash strewn in disarray  
a symphony of crumpled newspapers  
old rags and cardboard boxes  
strung like garlands and arabesques  
overflowing the dumpster  
in cascades like colored streamers

(NOTE: Charon ferried the souls of the dead across the River Acheron to the underworld, but only for a price. Those who could not pay, who had no coin to toss, or who could not afford a proper burial were denied passage and condemned to wander

100 years without a resting place.)

Theresa Haffner

## After Images

i.

the afternoon tv  
became the very real  
depiction of a reality  
that some had predicted  
but none of us wanted  
to see.  
the verdict  
in from the Rodney King Beating Case,  
now video telereporting  
from the corner of Florence  
and Manchester  
where a man had been pulled from  
his truck and beaten  
and the rioting had  
begun.  
No police on the scene  
the reporting from  
the circling  
newshelicopter the only link  
between sanity  
and disaster

ii.

the  
esoteric moment  
we thought it was just  
isolated incidents  
the night  
raged on  
the fires ignited  
the orange glow of burning buildings  
against the black palm trees  
and night sun  
orange against black  
the harried Washingtonia palms  
like gargoyles  
the Sack of  
Southern  
Los Angeles.

iii.

"no justice, no peace!  
went the chant outside the  
Parker Center Police Headquarters.  
We were all on their side  
as they leveled a police  
guard checkpoint,  
a tiny empty shack,

and dismantled it into  
splintered pieces, igniting  
the kindling  
as eggs pelted  
the troopers.

one fire.

three fires

thirteen fires.

orange and black  
the tv image flamed

iv.

how much is enough  
"this" could go on  
for another two or three  
days, " i said to judee

the 11 a.m. news report  
like a continuation of the  
night before  
prompting walks to  
the corner convenience store  
for vodka, malt liquor  
"hope it doesn't happen  
here, " i said to the frightened  
Korean in the liquor store.  
he sold me what i needed from  
the door, behind partially closed  
iron gates. wouldn't let  
anyone in the store. Closing soon,  
get what you need. Curfew.  
No businesses will be open.  
3 p.m. the smoke  
hung low across the southern sky  
over los angeles.

v.

burn out...  
next day, like waking to a  
nightmare -  
like a war had been here  
while i slept.  
Convenience store,  
burned out.  
This quiet neighborhood  
this peaceful street  
as nice a business corner

as you could ask  
but now the two liquor/food  
stores in walking distance were destroyed  
and for the first time in memory  
there were panhandlers on the  
sidewalk.

i took off on the bus to  
get my check.

vi.

p.o. box office  
closed until tomorrow, no way  
to get check. Hollywood Boulevard  
blackened by store fires. All my favorite  
places. Fredericks, Playmates, two well known  
lingerie stores,  
the discount electronics store where  
i got my tv adapter, gutted, the Swap Meet  
store across the street from Tommies Burgewrs  
on Wilcox. You could smell the smoldering  
timbers. Some buses not running, I caught  
Line 210 down Vine St. to Santa Monica  
wanting to take a short cut home.  
ended up getting stranded  
at Sta. Monica and Van Ness, because  
Sta. Monica bus took a detour out  
of the area,  
making a quick circuit back downtown  
then out of service. and there were no  
more buses running.

had to walk home  
from Van Ness all the way on my  
crutches, having no money but the dollar  
judee gave me for bus fare.

as i walked the sidewalk  
beside this battered street, past  
the shattered windows and burned out  
skeletons that used to be  
recognizable as businesses,  
a sense of awe fell about me  
at the senseless destruction  
of what had become more than  
3,000 fires

and i said under my  
breath,

"Oh, Beirut, this  
beautiful city."

Theresa Haffner

## **Allen Ginsberg Called Me Long Distance From New York**

Allen Ginsberg called me long distance from New York..

It woke me from a sound sleep. Groggily I put the receiver to my ear.

"Hello, " I said.

"Hello, " he said. "This is Allen Ginsberg. I'm calling from New York."

I thought it must be one of my friends playing a joke on me.

Still in a fog, I said, "Oh, you must be putting me on."

"No, I'm not." he said. "I AM Allen Ginsberg. I'm calling long distance from New York."

Gathering my wits, I said,  
"Wait a minute. You SOUND like Allen Ginsberg. Maybe you ARE Allen Ginsberg! "

"Look, " he said, "you're embarrassing me and probably yourself, also."

His identity was established. But he wasn't calling for me.

He was trying to reach the woman who had lived in the apartment before I did, who had once been a secretary for him in New York.

He wanted to give her complimentary tickets to his upcoming appearance at McCabe's, an exclusive performance venue here in Southern California.

She had already moved.  
I didn't know her well  
and had no idea  
how to contact her.

As we chatted we gradually overcame the awkwardness of our introduction.

"I'm a transsexual, " I told him.

"How charming, " he said.

But no matter what I said

or how hard I tried to persuade him  
I was unable to get him  
to give the complimentary tickets.  
to me instead.

On the night of the concert.  
I called the club,  
wanting to buy a ticket..

The tickets cost \$62.50  
at the door.

It was more money than I had,  
so I was unable to attend.

Theresa Haffner

## Aluminum Foil

1.

It happens from time to time, usually after a prolonged period of sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

Aluminum foil is a good reflector of light, but not bright enough to reflect much in the way of an image. As it becomes wrinkled, it develops hills and valleys which reflect the light in different directions, forming patterns of light spaces and dark spaces.

Random patterns having no meaning in themselves. Then the images appear.

This is a little like the process Leonardo Da Vinci used to "discover" the statue within the granite. Or the woodcarver lets the grain of the wood suggest the carving.

No two pieces of wood have the same grain and no two pieces of aluminum foil can wrinkle in the same pattern.

But no two people, even looking at the same grain or the same wrinkle, will see the same image.

Foil wrinkles in themselves have no meaning other than that the foil is wrinkled.

Whatever meaning we see, whatever image we interpret, is projected onto the random patterns by our own consciousness, out of our particular life experience. The thoughts and ideas both conscious and unconscious which occupy our minds and the degree to which we have developed our creative imagination.

Then it happens.

A pair of eyes looking at me as if reflecting from two tiny points of light located about ½ inch above the surface of the aluminum foil. An image formed independently of the wrinkle patterns and apparently taking on a life of its own.

It happens from time to time, usually after a period of prolonged sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

I don't have time for this. It is Sunday morning and I have to be worried about making money. Or trying to figure out a way to jump start my music career.

Real things to do in the real world.

It happens differently each time, sometimes when I least expect it. Still one thing leads to another.

My eye is drawn to the aluminum foil because of its brightness.

Once there my mind begins interpreting in the patterns of light and dark spaces.

Distorted images. Crudely drawn and greatly exaggerated. Cartoon caricatures. Briefly sketched and not completely filled in. Lacking detail, using no more than necessary to suggest an idea. Ambiguity. One eye, A pair of arms. A frowning face. Sexual imagery. Erotic metaphor.

The same process as used in the appreciation of abstract painting.

Then (because I have done this so many times before) the images begin to pull me in a similar direction.

They take on a decidedly medieval flavor. Hooded figures. Cowled heads. The three pointed cockscomb of the fool. Long capes and monk-like robes.

Then it happens. The image forms independently from the pattern of wrinkles and takes on a life of its own.. A crack occurs and a passageway opens between two worlds.

For brief periods over the next two or three days the passage or portal will open and close numerous times, sometimes only allowing a momentary glimpse. Sometimes opening for 15 minutes. Rarely opening for longer than 45 minutes to an hour and a half during which the two worlds are joined.

The opening is not stable, but clearly for the next day or two it will be easier to access or make contact with the non-physical realm.

There they are in their pointed hats, helmet horns, or the long ears of a donkey. The light and dark spaces reversed like a photographic negative, so that their faces are dark, one or two eyes characteristically shining like flashlights from their dark foreheads.

They say nothing. They are just watching. I stare back into their eyes. Freely associated streams of thoughts, ideas, memories, bits of dreams, unfinished poems, visualizations flood my consciousness as if I am watching a movie about myself.

Because it occurs differently for each person, there is nothing specific, Nothing that can be proven. Nothing concrete, only in the abstract. No geography. No geometry.

The content of each persons image stream is different from every other person's image stream and probably as meaningless in themselves as the aluminum foil wrinkles, indicating nothing more than that the person is experiencing thought..

The entities are capable of direct communication. They can speak. They can write letters in my own handwriting. They can cast the future and deliver esoteric dissertations of a metaphysical nature.

But that is not necessary tonight, so much having been said previously. Tonight it is only necessary that the channel be open and the contact is made.

I don't have time for this. I stopped having time for this fifteen years ago.

The passage has closed. I examine the aluminum foil again, more closely, trying to reopen the channel, for I want to begin writing this poem.

But the channel cannot be opened (or closed for that matter) at our own whim. Instead it seems to depend upon some cosmic or celestial timing.

It happens from time to time, usually after a period of prolonged sleeplessness and/or use of stimulants.

Sometimes it is necessary to spend a few hours in contemplation of the infinite.

2.

I AM THE ONLY ONE LEFT.  
THE ONLY SURVIVOR.  
THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS BEEN HERE  
SINCE THE BEGINNING.

I don't mean the only one in my age group—  
or other people my age I have met only  
in the last 15 years.

They haven't been with me since the beginning.  
I'm the only one who has been here since the beginning.

All the ones who were with me then are gone.

A.I.D.S., HEPATITIS C, OVERDOSE,  
MURDER, THIN THE HERD EACH YEAR.  
Life doesn't have a high rate of survivability.

And every time a person dies  
(unless they are an artist or writer)  
everything they know is lost with them  
like a book or hard drive that has crashed—information  
that can't be recovered.

Information only they could know.  
Our link with the past gradually  
being shortened until our only understanding  
of it is second hand  
because there is no one here who  
has experienced it directly.

I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS. I AM  
THE BEARER OF TRUTH AND THE ONLY ONE  
WHO UNDERSTANDS. I AM THE ONLY  
ONE WHO HAS BEEN HERE SINCE THE  
BEGINNING.

Introspection is important, isn't it?  
If any of this is important.

This is what it's like to be 57 years old  
on a Sunday morning at the Alexandria Hotel  
in downtown Los Angeles.

My hair is turning white  
(but my life is still a work in progress.)

Theresa Haffner

## Anthem

'You can't trust anyone under 50.'

-the author.

(Dedicated to the psychedelic experience as epitomized by San Francisco's Haight Ashbury, 1965-1969)

Now our Anthem in the Sun  
Before our race is finally run  
Before our time on Earth is done  
Before life's last ounce is wrung  
From the anvil press of time.

Sometimes I feel like I'm fixin' to die.  
The months, the days, the years go by,  
Caught in the Gordian knot we tie.  
These are supposed to be the best  
    years of our lives  
Too stubborn to quit, too tired to try  
The many things we've left undone.

There must be a way to make the pieces fit,  
To make sense of the puzzle of it.  
There must be some closure to this quest  
And some time to enjoy the rest  
Of our days upon this planet Earth.

They say there are seasons to the life  
And now is to reflect and wonder why  
And what's been done, what went awry,  
And what can be salvaged yet withall.

I had put my faith in the divine plan,  
Make me worthy, I'll do what I can.  
There must be something greater than  
This insignificant life I'm living.

Rise above, and it appeared.  
There was a force guiding us here.  
Permeating all that is or was  
Or has yet to become.  
A divine purpose grand  
Could be read in seaweed,  
    tea leaves, grains of sand,  
I Ching pennies, starry skies,  
A mile high over Colorado nights,  
The continent criss crossed in cars  
The motors throbbing, speeding far,  
Piloted by sleepless eyes,  
Fueled by psychedelic highs,  
In the swirling madness of the time.

The eyes are windows of the soul.



By a government oppressed  
A nation occupied,  
A population in denial,  
Prohibited, criminalized,  
Forced to recant to survive,  
Even Bob Dylan Christianized  
Our leaders murdered, jailed, or in disrepute  
Until even the memories become confused,  
Until even we are not sure of the truth  
Until even we start to not believe.  
Did it really happen, was it real?  
Or was it like the truth concealed,  
A hallucination of the mind?

There must again be a gathering of the tribes  
To come together at least one more time,  
For those of us who can remember,  
To discuss, report, symposia,  
To compare, to speak, to formulate  
-a-gospel-now, before it's too late,  
At last to know for sure.

Was it a time when God walked with us within,  
A time which will never come again?  
Or were we mistaken?  
Was it just a dream from which  
we could not awaken?

(If so, was it worth is just to believe?  
For that alone has made it worth the while  
to me!)

Theresa Haffner

## **Betamax**

redirect  
inset point and counterpoint  
all said  
the porno tape  
waiting wearing  
the door knocks  
white socks  
opaque silence  
the telephone quickens  
out of attunement  
the porno gyrates  
flesh tones in the  
late night living room  
test markers  
monarch butterflies  
spasmodic migration  
the silence surrounds  
enfolds  
the tape is rewinding  
gray static  
the end of all tape  
nothing recorded nothing on  
automaton hand me  
the remote  
autocorrect auto summarize  
remote hand  
playing spades in the chat room  
we are cards in a  
game of chance  
enter space bar captain consistent  
open medley of played  
single cell mitosis  
fun with the camera phone  
morphed to deviate  
sinister  
now it is oprah  
the black martha stewart  
sea urchins  
sea anemone  
stellated  
striated  
strip search  
barnes and ignoble  
enabler  
past depravity  
dark schism  
search bar engine  
cybersex  
flesh tones  
with the sound turned way down  
surreptitious  
too much down time

resize crop enlarge  
I am you are he is  
golden opportunity  
she lay on her back  
beneath the tableau  
naked breasts exposed  
eyes closed mouth open  
she awaits  
porno rain  
multiple ejaculations  
falling on her breast  
and face  
corrugated  
confiscated  
video altered afternoon  
clasped hands  
closed eyes  
the picture tells a  
thousand stories  
the tape flickers to  
its ending and  
starts to rewind  
gradually picking up speed  
until it slams to the beginning  
then clicks, switches gear  
and turns itself off.  
the silence engulfs  
remote signal  
the emptiness emerges  
loneliness  
waits...

Theresa Haffner



security, and traumatized to the point i can no longer  
believe in myself

and `til the morning light over  
cold coffee cups

i won't have to see your face

Theresa Haffner

## Blue Monk

Thelonious Monk played at  
the Five Spot Café  
in New York City's  
Greenwich Village district  
during the summer and autumn months  
of 1957  
The legendary bop pianist  
led a quartet of jazz musicians  
the ambience  
a heady mixture of  
mood and texture  
the tinkle of  
black and white piano keys  
discordant left hand  
tenor sax  
the underpinnings of a way of life  
that still echoes down the  
mindstream  
of long lost summer nights  
in the metropolis of NYC  
to sit at the bar  
nursing a whiskey highball  
drifting on a pot induced euphoria  
violet clouds of cannabis smoke  
blue light illumination  
made the music seem to float in midair  
and Thelonious himself  
was at the piano  
right there  
where you could touch him  
where you could, if you dared  
to talk to him,  
request the song  
"Blue Monk"  
a slow blues in Bb that  
musicians have improvised on  
for untold hours  
through untold years  
never the same  
always new  
always different  
and "Straight, No Chaser, "  
an uptempo blues in F  
that implies how musicians like their whiskey  
and how the people who listened to them  
liked their life  
not watered down

Theresa Haffner

## China White

Cold wind blowing in the junk sick dawn  
I remember the first time anybody ever turned me on.  
I came back in the living room  
Like I was floating on a cloud.  
China white could never get me so high.  
Made me think that this was paradise.  
Couldn't believe how good it felt.  
I said if god made anything better  
He must have kept it for himself.  
I said, "Wow, this is for me.  
This is how I want to feel....  
.... forever! "

Once I swore I'd never put a needle in my arm  
Never put powder up my nose.  
Never do anything I couldn't control.  
A little wine. A little weed.  
That's the only thing I'll ever need.  
And if I should take a few pills.  
I'm sure they won't do me any ill.  
But that was long ago.  
Since then I've done so many things  
I said I wouldn't do.  
I never thought I'd ever be a junky.

Hard to imagine I could  
Have ever been so square.  
Then began that long eventful journey  
That became a road to nowhere.  
But then I didn't care.  
I thought I was on my way to heaven  
And tryin' like hell just to get there.  
When you're young you haven't any fears.  
No matter how many years have passed  
You still believe you'll get there at last.

Then one day you realize  
You still have not arrived.  
The journey just goes on forever  
Only now the price you pay  
For every passing day  
Has grown so high you think  
You'll reach your destination never.  
It dawns on you you're not going anywhere  
Only now you cannot stop.  
You still need the drug that used to take you to the top.  
You have to have it. It's what they call a drug habit.  
Now you're hooked on smack.  
You're using stuff..  
You're shooting dope.  
You're strung out on junk—  
-and it isn't china white..

Now it's Mexican brown—or tar black.  
Comes in a balloon.  
Looks like a bugger.  
Sometimes it's been cut with milk sugar.  
Now your nose is running  
Like you've caught a cold or flu.  
You realize you're getting drug sick  
But you can't afford to kick.  
Every time you score  
You find you still need more  
Or you start to withdraw.  
That's when it hurts.  
The analgesic works  
But the pain killer causes pain  
When you try to stop.  
Withdrawal takes 72 hours.  
Three days.  
Dilated pupils. Sleepless nights.  
Hands shake. Muscles ache..  
Then the symptoms subside.  
But it's the emotional pain  
You just can't abide..

You're alright as long as you've got dope.  
As long as you're high you're good to be around.  
You've got hope.  
The dope makes you feel normal.  
It takes \$20 just to make you feel  
The way other people feel naturally.  
You're relaxed. You're laid back.  
You pick up the house. Vacuum the rug.  
"Let's play some music, " you say.  
You even make plans to quit using some day.  
The only way that you can tell  
Is when you're in repose.  
The conversation lags. Your eyelids close.  
Someone would think you just drifted off.  
They wouldn't recognize that you were on the nod.  
But late at night the heroin  
Runs out the hour glass of time  
By morning you've got the "heebie jeebies."  
The color has drained from your face and eyes.  
You make a promise you'll try to keep.  
"I've got money in the bank...I'll reimburse you  
after the bank opens... Have I ever not  
kept my promise? "  
That's when it gets hard for anyone  
who knows you or cares about you...  
...or god forbid, should love you.  
Because if they give you money and you  
pay it back you will impose on them  
again and again for more and more.

Anyone who has any money is at risk  
because you know they have it..  
You'll cajole, reassure, snivel,  
manipulate, threaten, intimidate.  
If necessary you'll just take it,  
rationalizing that you'll pay them back  
and that it's more important for you to score,  
because in the end you know they'll  
give in anyway.

And of course the danger mounts  
because the amount it takes to get you high  
is nearly as much as it takes to kill you..

The danger points are when you first begin  
or when you've been off dope for a while  
when you've been in a program  
or just got out of jail..

You don't realize your tolerance is low  
You do your regular amount  
-"I always do two balloons—it's  
what I need to get off"-

or if the first shot isn't enough  
and you go back for more.

Or any time you've been drinking  
alcohol or taking barbiturates,  
tranquilizers, sleeping pills.

Then you do your shot..

You won't realize it  
But you'll be going out.

It's not instantaneous. It might take  
fifteen minutes. You'll speak  
a few words, slip into a nod.

Your complexion drains.

You cannot breathe.

You would die there  
peacefully and at ease

If someone didn't care about you.

Make you breathe. Slap your face.

Pick you up and walk you around.

Put you in a cold shower.

Shoot you up with speed  
if they've got any.

Baby sit you, because for hours it  
can be touch and go. If they

stop reviving you, you won't  
Revive, you know?

So they call paramedics.

The ambulance arrives  
sirens blaring, and they

run upstairs..

By now they will have dragged

you out in the hall to avoid prosecution.  
Because the police come  
with every call to 9-1-1.  
And if you die they'll drag you  
to the the broom closet on the  
second floor. Or roll you up  
in a carpet and carry you  
to the dumpster. Drive you  
to the pier and dropp you off.  
But first they'll have to tie  
weights to your body.  
Lamp bases. Cement blocks..  
Tire chains. Because bodies float  
and that's not what they want for you.

After a harrowing few hours  
you're out of danger. Able to  
breathe on your own.  
"Thank you, " you will say, "for  
keeping me alive." But by then  
you're coming down and all  
you can think of is you want  
to get high again.

I saw you laying on my living room floor  
Begging me please go out the door  
And borrow some money so you could score.  
It's just five dollars. you will say,  
But if you can get ten  
So I won't be sick  
So I won't have to kick  
So I can get well again  
I can pay you back  
When I get my check..  
I'll make it up to you.  
I won't forget.  
You know a good friend is hard to find.  
And a good friend is something  
I thought I'd never find again.

In conclusion,  
If I ever took something  
That made me feel so good  
That when I didn't have it  
It made me feel so bad  
And all had to do  
Was just not take it  
If I ever got straight  
I would think long and hard  
Before I ever took it again.

That's just me.

But then, I'm not a junky.

Theresa Haffner

## Compassion

On the good nights, I could almost discern three fingers on the face of the moon.

I could see a person clear across the parking lot and optimistically mistake their identity for that of my friend.

I could go to the Donut Shop at midnight, and having no money to buy donuts, stand outside for an hour debating the merits of rechargeable batteries for portable televisions.

I could stay up all night long, sitting in Laundromats or the backseats of cars, writing long disjointed poems and figuring out solutions to all the world's problems.

I could fly so high in my mind's imagination that I could understand the nature of the universe and the relation of all things within it.

I could make myself believe, even for that brief moment, that life was a beautiful thing, full of promise and ultimately worth living, instead of the desolate, tawdry, meaningless existence that all common sense and previous experience would dictate.

But on the bad nights, I could go to sleep on the sidewalk and wake a 5: 30 A.M. with dirt on my forehead, my wrists swollen, and my face distorted beyond all recognition, needing only a drink to ease my suffering, and having to wait a half hour for the liquor stores to open.

When I would seek to drown myself in a delirium of intoxication but, drunkenness evading me, drink myself into a stupor instead and obliterate myself briefly in the forgetfulness of sleep.

On the bad nights, which can stretch into days and become weeks, when I would wander the streets begging for money to buy alcohol, without taking a bath or changing my clothes, until I smell so bad they won't let me on public transportation, until I won't go inside a store or restaurant even if they would allow me, until I have driven away friends and loved ones, preferring instead my own solitary aloneness, until I have effectively "X'ed" myself out of the society that I no longer wanted to be part of because it had already failed me.

There will be both good nights and bad nights, but hopefully over the course of a lifetime, the balance will fall on the side of the good nights.

But even suffering must run its course, and eventually I will come to myself and figure out a way to start putting the pieces of my life back together again.

I realize that no one can tell me what to do, even if I am causing my own suffering, and efforts to coerce me against my will are doomed to failure.

You can't help someone until they are ready to help themselves.

In the meantime, all you can do is have compassion.

Theresa Haffner

## Cross Talk

"wow."

"flutter."

"did you hear that? "

"i thought i heard wow and flutter."

"could have been a wah wah peddle. wah wah wah ha ha."

'have you had your belts checked? loose belts mean wow. flutter means belts too tight."

"i've had all the belts replaced."

"leather or rubber? "

"do we have both channels? just jiggle those wires."

"it was shorting out."

"twist those wires together. now we've got them both on."

"what's that? "

"that low buzzing sound? that's 60 cycle hum. you get it when the signal comes too close to house current. 110 A.C."

'do you know what's wrong with it? "

"not yet? "

"can you read a schematic? "

"we don't need a schematic diagram. we're troubleshooting. just turn it up and see what it sounds like. diagnose and go from there."

"what's that hissing? it sounds like a waterfall."

"that's white noise."

white noise is the sound of a blank tape playing. the background noise of vacuum tubes, transistors, condensers and resistors of an electronic circuit. the sound of a radio playing with nothing on. the signal to noise ratio when the balance dips on the side of noise and the signal tends to break up in clouds of static.

with the microphone turned on and the volume turned way up and listened to through headphones late at night, elements of chance and random occurrence entered the audio environment, some of which defied definition as to origin and meaning.

the high volume amplification makes any sounds in the same room unbearably loud... to speak sounds like a loudspeaker in the headphones. the sounds of fingers tapping

or objects being moved take on the sounds of heavy equipment being unloaded... if someone drops an object it sounds like an avalanche. ordinary breathing, even quietly held short inhalations, sounds like the labored gasps of a mammoth beast or hyperborean titan.

through an open window, the otherwise considered quiet night bears traces of much life and movement. the distant sounds near. footsteps. a cat meowing. distant dogs bark. the sound of car motors. distant TV's play the late night news. sometimes events occur in the sound spectrum which are not as they are interpreted to be. thus slamming doors, shouting voices, police sirens, even gun shots may not be as they seem. or are they?

after many hours of late night listening to the high volume sound magnifications of the far reaches of the audio landscape, elements and event scenarios began to appear the origin of which could not be identified as to source or meaning. autonomous perceptions began which could not be attributed or differentiated as to actual physical sound, electronic distortion, the projections of the subconscious on various audio electronic phenomena, imagination, or the actual bleed through of interdimensional reality, psychically perceived, due to the synchronistic and serendipitous nature of our universe.

"you will meet a tall dark stranger."

"after the 20th of the month will be well inspected for travel."

"do you know where to get fake I.D.?"

"jiggle those wires to see if we've got both channels."

the sounds of a distant radio station. but what radio station? just a person giving information. truck dispatcher? unknown personification on an unknown frequency.

"let me adjust your gears."

"keep away from me with that WD-40."

"my heads don't need to be demagnetized."

went to the wrong door by mistake, asking for loose screws. gave him a copy of Moby Dick. playing the radio with nothing on. exact change only. good. nobody likes approximate change. went to the wrong door by mistake. met a tall dark stranger.

alternate frequencies over modulated feedback attention deficit hyperactivity narcolepsy all treated by the same medication.

desperately tried to keep her awake, fearing that if she fell asleep she would dream again.

the first time she had dreamed an archon was liberated, an archetype was activated, all the traffic lights turned green on South Parkway, and 20 new transvestites showed

up on the next day's Ricki Lake Show.

"don't you believe that dreams are real? " she asked.

"only as long as you continue to dream them, " he had told her.

through some accident of the human collective unconscious, he began to experience her dreams (which according to Jung is not telepathy, but the same dream occurring simultaneously in two people.)

gradually he found himself drawn into her dreams as a reality. at first the damage was minimal. although it could sometimes be a rough ride, all he had to do was wait until it was over and things would revert back to the previous reality. the time stream that he was from. then he began to notice changes. small things. inconsequential details. bleed through. things that didn't revert back, causing residual erosion of time stream continuity. the gradual disappearance of his own universe and its replacement by another.

her dreams were unstable, able to shift from extreme to extreme. and they were sequential, meaning that one dream began where the previous dream left off. so that events of the previous dream became the reality that was the basis for the next dream.

not only was she unable to control her dreams, in her waking state she had no memory of them at all.

"what did I dream? " she would ask upon awakening.

he had no way of knowing if the erosion was occurring in all places at the same time, because he still didn't know if all mankind inhabited one universe, or as he strongly suspected, due to the nature of synchronicity, each person inhabits his own universe which is distinctive to him alone. if so he wouldn't be able to contact the other universes, would he?

he had no idea if it was affecting all universes, but he was certainly facing destruction on a universal scale in his own universe.

at the bowling alley, shaking her violently and slapping her face to make her wake up. walking her back and forth back and forth like some kind of a big floppy rag doll from gutter to alley... back and forth between the alley and the gutter amid the thunder of exploding pins...

then finally came to time when she could be no longer awakened, when she would no longer respond to physical stimulation, no matter how violent.

there was nothing to do but wait. the dreams could begin at any moment. an ominous silence fell over the bowling alley.

by now large segments of the population were being lost on a daily basis. as much as half a city disappearing at a time, as if under the influence of a negative archetype (and when they awake the next morning they have no memory whatsoever of the occurrence, or even that anything is different.)

according to C. G. Jung, the eminent psychoanalyst, archetypes exist within the collective consciousness as a powerful grouping of constellated feelings or intense emotions which ordinarily remain inactive, or even unknown, without effect on people's consciousness. sometimes, however, an archetype can be activated inadvertently by encountering an event or association of sufficient intensity.

an activated archetype cannot be perceived directly, but it can be detected because it spawns chains of paranormal and synchronistic phenomena the way a hurricane spawns tornados. akin to a risen kundalini, it is accompanied by a heightened sense of religiosity, feelings of dread and wonder, oneness with a higher power, apparent telepathy between sexual partners, automanous or somnambulistic mediumistic phenomena, precognition and clairvoyance. people who experience an activated archetype become charged with an energy called 'numinosity'.

the archetype functions when material exists in the subconscious which needs to be transferred to the conscious memory. when this is accomplished, the archetype is once more deactivated and the paranormal activity ceases.

typically most people are so repressed concerning the activated archetype influence that the next day they either deny it or don't even remember it at all.

once deactivated, the archetype cannot be reactivated at will. though we long for it, we cannot predict its reoccurrence, but must rely on chance reoccurrence and "cosmic timing".

they stood together in the dream devastated landscape in a cabana or beach house constructed on the pylons of a wooden pier extending into the Pacific. at low tide you could walk on the sands and rocks of the ocean bottom and search for shell fish in the tide pools. but when the tide came back this would be a maelstrom of sea foam and ocean waves breaking against the rocks...

the Earth was going through a disruption of its tide patterns, the high tide cresting higher each day perhaps due to the gravitational influence of the moon or other planetary body on a near collision course with Earth.

...in the dream their clothing removed itself and their bodies merged into the energy currents of an ancient dance, dissolving into eroticism...

outside you could hear the approach of the waves, the pounding of the demolishing surf. as long as it was out it was out. but when it came back, it was moving right along, at planetary velocity, rising many feet in just a few minutes. the cabana would no longer be safe. every day the tidal tsunami crested higher and washed further inland, flooding the low lying areas and destroying the beach front property. if they didn't leave the cabana now there wouldn't be time for them to make it to higher ground... the dance continued...

now the waves should be all around them. the cabana should be completely submerged, everywhere was the presence of sex and death. through the window they could see the approach of the towering waves. waves like skyscrapers, a mountain cliff, advancing walls of water, steep crested, primordial with foamy white caps, mesas and bluffs, war machines, engines of aggression, laying siege to the shore, great monolithic monsters raised on hind legs like a wandering juggernaut.

illuminated in the numinous glow reflected from the opaque face of the approaching planetoid, disappearing in the thunder of the waves...

playing the radio with nothing on.

it's spooky with the volume up so high. hope nobody hits a note. could break a window. moving about very quietly, very carefully. promise of rattle damaged cones and power blown speakers.

those were days when they used entire apartment buildings as guitar amplifiers. move the power transformers into the manager's office, open up the front windows, and use entire apartments as speaker enclosures.

then crank them. entire city blocks pumping out megawatts of high voltage rock and roll.

"why are the speakers hissing at me? "

the white noise blending with the noise pollution, the static sound of electronic circuitry, the electromagnetic equivalent of swamp gas, will o' the wisps. ghostly voices materialize for momentary whispers. then what's that? sounds like somebody talking.

must be a radio station. it means the antenna isn't grounded to the chassis. called interference. when the radio station plays through on the speaker wires.

or cross talk, that means that the heads are out of alignment. but then the heads would be talking backward, wouldn't they?

bleed though is where a magnetic image of one layer of magnetic tape is imprinted on the next layer of magnetic tape.

but it was a man-the voice of a man whose universe was being destroyed by another cannibal universe, existing in the dreams of his girl friend. a general distress signal. "I don't know if destruction is immanent for you as it is for me. but there's no way to know if I'm even talking to anyone or if other universes exist. all I can say is if you can do anything to help me, please do. if you can't, and least you exist, and..." the words faded out as if from another universe.

`wow, did you hear that? it's some dude whose universe is being destroyed and he's

trapped in his girlfriend's dreams"

"wow, that's deep. i wish i'd listened to that more carefully."

"it's no radio station. it could be the real thing."

`that's one of the only ways other universes can communicate with us is through radio interference, echoes in water pipes, air conditioners, gas heaters, electric motors, and the wind."

"do you want to listen to it back? it was recording the whole time."

they rewound the tape and played it back but the only thing on it was the white noise, the noise pollution, the ghost whispers. the voice that had been speaking to them was not recorded, either because of electronic malfunction, or because the signal was non-magnetic and therefore impossible to record, or because the time stream no longer existed.

and in the morning they would no longer remember it anyway, only a vague sense of numinosity as is common with an activated archetype.

"the trouble with troubleshooting is you have to be careful not to shoot yourself in the foot, "

"whoa, it wasn't my idea to call a phone psychic for technical support to help fix the tape recorder."

"i think all we need is an oil change and some new upholstery and we can get it up and running and be out of here."

. "press RESTART. Or repress START. i can't remember which."

"did you ever figure out what was wrong with it? "

"it wasn't on/"

"it wasn't on! "

"you mean the only reason it didn't work is because it wasn't on? "

"damn machines are just like women. won't do anything for you unless you turn them on first."

.

Theresa Haffner

## Cyber Poems

### POEM WITH STRING

and so i said take this program of  
artificial intelligence insurgency  
take this parliament of one  
take this uninstallable database and  
delet it from your memory  
cleanse your files  
download it to a different site  
and encrypt it with antivirus software  
encode its corrupted commands  
purge your megabytes  
with hidden strings of BASIC interface  
in a cyber language you no longer understand  
ABORT FAIL and RETRY  
BAD COMMANDS  
INVALID PASSWORD  
you are in calculator mode  
as text editor no longer supports your  
file name extensions  
your application won't open  
in this window  
nothing can save your work  
to disk if you don't save it now  
in the event of a system failure  
the resultant crash will be  
0 files 0 folders 0 megabytes  
close these windows  
internet webpage details  
properties in web space  
information can't be hyper text markup  
link to metelanguage  
alphanumeric ascii  
x-files and ladies' chat rooms  
eyes bleary at dawn  
bloodshot after searching the web  
since midnight  
your hard drive seizes  
your problem device freezes  
your system hangs as your irretrievable  
document is unprotected

### MOUSE TALES

do not sit so close to the monitor  
watch out for that mouse  
miss modem regrets she's unable  
to plead guilty to spousal abuse  
espoused to a mouse  
all is madness  
what you're married to a computer

## LOTUS

word star incompatible  
incomprehensible  
data spreadsheets named after flowers  
all absolutely obsolete  
going out by email  
this one reminds me of you  
unprocessed microprocessors  
disastrous database  
transmitted over telephone lines  
intercept the intermittent  
irregular electromagnetic signals  
interrupt the silent hours of  
darkness after 9 pm

## VERSION CONFLICT

we need a new computer  
hidden mouse tales  
realign our print head alibi to the  
daisy wheel mentality  
urban distance colder than  
the arctic snows on main street  
printer won't print  
scanner can't scan  
i can't troubleshoot my  
entire life alone  
without technical support  
probable cause  
in the dent of the dangerous  
was loneliness

Theresa Haffner

## **Dark Side of Town**

we came home on the dark side of town

we came home to a deserted rubble of half forgotten memories, children's toys, fenced yards grown heavy with weeds, and a cold wind blowing

we came home on the wrong side of the tracks

we came home to the industrial miasma of where we used to live and found we didn't live there anymore

we came home to the cold shoulder of forgotten dreams and forgotten neighborhoods

we came home to where the unlocked door stood open and the floorboards flapped in the wind that blew through the empty house

we came home to the unreality of lifetimes that used to be lived by the people who used to live them

we came home to the midnight of deserted railroad yards, rusted tracks, empty boxcars, noon whistles and the paper mill once prosperous now deserted but for the white haired old man in the shipping office

we came home to the vacant lot where our childhood was

we came home to a new land of strangers, commerce, and the implacability of change

we came home to where our poverty came as inexplicably as other people's success

we came home on the dark side of loneliness where a forgotten sun rose over the trancelike horizon of a deserted junkyard

we came home to the inner melancholy where even now the memories lie dormant

we came home to where a greeting card on valentine's day was the most meaningful thing to us

we came home to lost pages of forgotten poetry flapping like leaves in the wind of silent refuse beaches

we came home to where horizons were closer and the radio tower on the hill beamed concentric rings of our loneliness

we came home to the nocturnal setting of long deserted friends and the surreal back roads of our youth

we came home to where our grandmother's house was still standing and the city fountain still stood in the center of town

we came home to where there was no modern jazz or poetry and psychedelia was still a long lost dream away

we came home to where the fear of sex merged with the fear of death and the future

still lay before us like a carpet of unrealized potential

we came home to the innocence of christmas lights, parental hands held crossing the street, and the expectation of giving

we came home to where our interment by day in the school was sharply contrasted to our interment at home by night

we came home to where snowed in by a blizzard gave us our only holiday and the tiny transmitted voice from the radio station gave us our only hope of vibraphones and cool jazz

we came home to where we looked for but could not find an avenue of entry into the esoteric knowledge of an elite inner circle

we came home to where good grades eventually gave way to apathy and absenteeism

we came home to where we couldn't keep up with the joneses and so started trying to keep up with ourselves

we came home to where the interstate highway outside our school window beckoned with our only hope of transcendence

we came home to where 2000 miles of culture shock eventually ended our concept of home and family

we came home to where the unconscious mind acted out its messages by means of children's games and compulsive behavior

we came home to the enchantment of a child's aquarium and forgotten summer evenings under the tree beside the bank of the river

we came home to where paper dolls offered the only mysterious alternative to Captain Video

we came home to where there was no Devil and Jesus was not yet necessary

we came home to where nobody understood us even as now nobody understands us

we came home to where other children's spankings stirred within us a strange preoccupation and the reality of jail was beyond our comprehension

we came home to where we knew not the meaning of good and evil and neither did we know death

we came home to where we did not ask and we were not answered

we came home to where we had nothing with us no excess baggage of a child's remembrances

we came home to where we carried our reality within us

we came home to where no one knew us yet we knew everyone like the back of our hand

we came home on the dark side of town

Theresa Haffner

## Different Drum

distant at first  
the sound wavering  
    in the air  
carried on a faint  
    afternoon breeze  
    that eddies and shifts  
mistaken for sounds  
    of traffic, obscured  
by car horns or children  
    playing  
then once more it clears  
    and sound waves deliver  
what can only be  
a distant cadence  
    on a different street  
borne by the wind,  
    now fading out-  
-or do my ears deceive me?

transfixed on the street  
    I lean against my  
crutch tips  
    only a specter of  
my former self  
    a ragged figure  
dressed in black  
my head tilted to one side  
    my ears listening  
trying to make out the  
    sound of distant drumming

the breeze blows dirty air  
    from the overcast street  
black folds of my skirt  
    flapping loosely about my legs  
like a flag

What will you say to them  
    that will make them understand?  
What will you tell them  
    that they will not forget?  
How will you convince them  
    to change their minds?

Teach me, that I may  
    learn to teach them.  
Teach me, so that I will know.

Touch me, that I might  
    touch you.  
Stir my heart, that I might  
    stir your soul.

Tell me, so that I will remember  
So that they will remember  
So that you will not forget.

I cannot tell the branches  
to scratch the sky  
I cannot tell the trees  
to scream.  
I cannot tell the rain  
to cry.

because I am poor  
because I am old  
because I am disabled  
crippled by emotions  
crippled by hopelessness  
crippled by love

Teach me that I might know  
from the very beginning  
what I have always  
known in my heart.

There are anthems  
on the sidewalk  
There are pageants  
in the store windows  
forgetfulness of things past  
taking steps, one foot  
before the other,  
one after the next  
small steps

how have my steps, once fast  
become so slow?  
Once I took long strides  
now only a short distance is left  
but it seems so much  
harder than before

Late in the day,  
the sloping afternoon sun

now all that remains  
is this city bus.

myself on crutches, taking too  
much time climbing aboard,  
taking too much time  
paying the fare,  
taking too much time

climbing off

still it is only the bus driver  
who waits for me

Twilight, I stand outside  
as I have done  
so many times before  
straining my ears  
in the urban soundscape  
for a distant rat-tat-tat,  
a fragment of a street beat,  
the drums and cymbal  
of a marching band

a tattoo beat out  
with sticks and snares  
on a remote street,  
the rise and fall  
of distant footsteps  
marching together  
or standing alone

For years I believed  
that I had heard them  
For years I waited for them.  
For years I believed  
they would come.

But am I the only one  
who has heard them?  
Is there no one else here  
who can say, "Yes,  
I heard it. I heard  
a marching band  
practicing yesterday afternoon  
about two blocks away? "  
Is the music, then,  
for my ears alone?  
Is the song not distant  
but near?

Is it possible that  
no one else has heard it  
because in fact  
it does not exist?

That there is no crack  
drill team or drum corps  
practicing just out  
of earshot,  
waiting for us

to join them even now,  
with their uniforms  
and instruments,  
just around the next corner,  
just beyond the next  
parking lot  
only one block away?

Have I been the only one, then,  
refusing to believe  
it did not exist,  
getting further and further  
out of step  
responding to the music  
of a different drum  
that only I could hear?

that I searched for  
but could not find?

Theresa Haffner

## Down the Highway

down the highway  
nocturnal vista  
setting off the night time  
in dots of red and white light  
and patches of black  
along the curve of the interstate

lunar gray concrete  
nodules of hemoglobin  
psychedelic pearls on a necklace  
of mountains and highways

interstate lights on the off ramp  
spins the synaptic neurotransmission  
raw holes in the forest  
of cartoon emotions  
makes for a fine feeling  
along the nightmarish  
front row of double values  
ambiguities of the cruelest  
kind  
pencil insensitive  
cartoon drawing crosshatching  
dynamics of night and time

more spokes for the wheel  
now is the ideographic  
inclination  
hope you are having fun  
with your friends  
drinking  
and staying out all night

metered diamond lane  
zig zag  
motorist contrived  
refuel  
nightmare exhaust wind  
images of night  
gone mad

interstate multifaceted high contrast  
dot matrix resolution  
silver studded motorcycle stallion  
midnight chimes the  
red and white child psychotic

neon dream web menagerie  
visions of orisons  
and dream hit medications

avenue highway interstate 94

Theresa Haffner

## **Dream #1**

I dream that I meet my friend S\_\_\_\_\_ S\_\_\_\_\_ and Jonny the guitar player.

They both ask to buy product from me, so I say, "Yes, I'll do it, but first I have to repunctuate (\*) all the signs on Hollywood Boulevard."

"I'd like to see that, " says Jonny.

"I'd like to write it down, " says S\_\_\_\_\_ S\_\_\_\_\_.

We go to a screened in porch behind where Jonny is living.

They are both tired and lay down to sleep as I begin repunctuating.

The repunctuation was taking a little longer than expected. When they awake they both are impatient with me because I still haven't sold them anything.

I continue repunctuating. They get mad and both leave, swearing at me.

I am in a piano bar in a cocktail lounge that is located in the high school I used to attend in my home town.

It is only open sometimes. It is usually kept secret and only intended for the faculty and a few select students.

It is in a room that opens behind the school library.

They have Michelob and Lowenbrau on draft.

There is a small crowd of rowdy customers. They are all sitting around on those one piece wood and metal high school desks we used to use. Among them is the woman I went there with, who may or may not have been my love interest, and a tall "Wavy Gravy" type hippie guy with long blonde hair, dressed in buckskins and knee high Indian mocassins.

Some of the customers are shooting pool.

I go into the adjoining room which is still a part of the school library. There are bookshelves with books on them.

I look through the books, then go back to the piano bar.

"There are lots of books in there, " I told the bartender, "but most of them need to be repunctuated. I've only repunctuated a few of them."

The bartender looked at me blankly.

"I know a place that's got a piano bar for songwriters." I told him.

He didn't say anything.

"Yeah, each one gets a desk with an FM radio, a cassette recorder, and a portable keyboard."

Nobody was paying any attention.

"So you get your beer, you record a song off the radio and you figure out the music on your portable keyboard."

"And that's your piano bar."

Nobody thought it was very funny.

The woman I came with was angry with me. She was getting ready to leave.

When she left I got up and followed her out.

The hippie guy in buckskins got up also and followed out behind me.

The woman had already reached the pavement and was flagging down a car.

The hippie guy asked me, "Are you two together? I mean are you\_\_\_?" He made a gesture with his fingers and whistled suggestively.

"I don't know, " I said.

The car stopped and she got in. It was already speeding away.

The hippie guy and I began walking up the road together, not saying anything.

It was one of those winding mountain roads like Laurel Canyon Boulevard in the Hollywood Hills.

When we came to a narrow gravel driveway leading up a steep incline with woods on either side of it, the hippie turned and began walking up it.

"Oh, do you live up there?" I asked.

"Yes, " he said.

"Can I come and visit you sometime?" I asked.

"No, " he said.

---

(\* ) Repunctuate: To rearrange the punctuation of an existing piece of literature so as to alter its meaning, often with humorous intent.

Theresa Haffner

## **Dream #2**

I dream that I go to a Reality Doctor. He says that to rebuild my inner reality I must first defeat my physical senses.

To do this he recommends a regimen of modern jazz music and abstract expressionist art (1) .

I dream that a dog has come into the burned out beach house where we are sleeping. Its legs and paws wind around my feet and ankles. Then it bites my hand with its sharp teeth. It hurts.

I turn around to face it and instead of a dog it has become a great Bengal tiger. Very huge with black stripes in its orange fur.

The tiger leaps at me and dissolves.

The Reality Doctor tells me I have successfully faced my inner tiger.

The empty swimming pool in front of the burned out beach house where we sleep has become filled to overflowing, full of algae and brackish water, with a thicket of bushes and trees growing around it.

There is a small incline where grass used to grow, now eroded into a small gully of clay and dirt that led down to the water.

I took off my clothes and got down on all fours, assuming animal form. Either a tiger or a black panther. On all fours I ran down to the water's edge and waded in.

It was full of algae, very muddy and slimy, with green growing plants.

It didn't smell good. "Eww.." said someone.

I ignored the smell and looked around. Soon I found a clear stream flowing through the algae.

I followed the clear stream through the algae until I got to where it entered the bog and formed a small pool of clear fresh water.

I paddled around in the dappled sunlight until I heard voices.

Someone was coming.

---

(1) Two hours daily of modern jazz and abstract expressionism once a week or as often as I could get it.

Theresa Haffner

## Erraterra

VOID

settled over the darkness that  
came between, and mile high  
mindstorm roiled over the  
surreptitious subterfugal  
subterranean vegetation. melancholy  
excavations of the hollowed-out mind shaft  
occurred. nine times the cavity collapsed.  
Relax. this little turbulence only proves you can  
have the capstan containment with enough of  
the cartridge to make even your sinister  
mile-high sister to grieve! ! !

rapid onset

rapid ending

Angela bent. blossoms were spent  
listlessly. the late night tv

"Well, Better the ERRATERRA than  
the Green Hills of Earth," Sam the Boldface  
Belted Brother with rapidiographic  
inversion said, an elephantine smile curving about his  
EXEC Business Prospects Report/

the sky ectothermic

subcutaneous plasmatic

poignant

pregnant

they plunged the plummeted rock  
of the grid E R R A T E R R A, the  
wild uncharted unclaimed unsanctioned  
P L A N E T O I D A L landscape  
that had become the exilic home of these round  
ex - chest rest nomads  
Bash except Saturday the new land that  
was about to be discovered.

NOT THAT IT HAD BEEN

overly built and cast erect  
plenile and plenary cost effective  
on the overcrowded non-determinant  
exact change inconsistent  
bard stock rasputin synchro EXTRA CHANGE  
ScholaStic `plastic elastic cast rated  
hard rock  
rendering willow psychosis  
shackles of  
the bent trees and born again  
savage from the velvet underground  
of the planet venus

(often enough an oxymoron would forget  
to breathe in the plastic bag  
over his head leaving only enough  
of the post-dated prophylactic  
effect to cause dandruff and a whole  
generation has grown up fetishistic.)

enamored of the plastic and the latex

well worn phrases like "I don't want to have sex  
with my mother" or exact change was paid or  
"I do want to have sex with my mother but I don't  
want my father to find out" but everybody knows  
it's alright if you use a condom and by the end of the day  
condoms were no longer to be confused with  
condominiums.

"Nonsense is better than No Sense, " she reiterated.

"I have no money."

"But then, on ERRATERRA  
there would be no need."

It was freedom from the rat race and mistakes  
that PLANED the Planet Earth  
when it was only third from the sun.  
Now it was already fourth and soon there would be  
no son at all.

mucous molecules  
askanse glance – and given the sex of the real sister,  
NO REST

"well, as long as the saul bellows evolve from the  
same sex, " I said  
from  
somewhere with infrared sunglasses.

a painful gorky's had set in.  
real time, you are neither an ass nor  
assorted as very

cost essential  
but then  
risking the only open playing  
fueled by the herbal savage heroin they loved.

"WELL, " I said, playing my gambit in the  
opening moments of the planetary competition.  
ERRATERRA was just one of the games that  
had to be won in the eventual street removal  
DEATH defying limit

because we all know by now that death  
is not a beginning only an ending

and you may have lived before,  
perhaps in brooklyn or near the dock of the  
havelock ellis clandestine elastic bay windows.

starters were closing up the gap  
between the head gear and the gear heads  
remember to give it a lube job and see if it needs  
its belts changed  
exact change was no longer considered fare exchange  
and I played a large auditorium with no people in it.

listen to me, my little nectarine,  
my freestone peach, my macaroni salad,  
my pasta bar, my cling peaches in heavy syrup,  
my born-again witch  
everybody was a born again something  
and realizing the criminal possibilities  
of multiple personalities  
living on exact change  
in a cheap hotel  
a game lost to begin with

nowadays instead of a fast car, many partners,  
long lasting sex, and a vacation at the end  
of the year, we want  
fast sex, many partners, a slow car, exact change,  
enough gas to get to the next exit on the freeway,  
and a notice to vacate.

UNDERSTANDING was one thing she lacked, like  
wrapping on the surface of a thing  
her windows started to steam up eventually.

radically altered in expression,  
control top panty hose never alienated the open  
cliff dwellers, etc., the sulfite suburbanites

Yes, she said, and they debated the fact whether the most  
important technological advance of the 20th Century  
was the photocopy machine or the polyurethane dildo

subliminal sex caught sublime jet streams in the skies  
over ERRATERRA.

Theresa Haffner

## Fire

11: 00 a.m. no money. only three pennies which is enough to cast the 'i ching' oracle but not enough to pay the parking meter.

a week now since the fire. the smell of smoke gradually clearing out from the halls of this cheap hotel where we live.

there are bits and pieces of copper and brass lying around the floor of the hotel room. jewelry parts. no complete articles, just the metal wires and brackets of, say, a bead necklace after the beads have vaporized. or melted into unrecognizable black 'shish-ka-bobs' on their metal spits.

these are steve's things. all that could be salvaged after his room was destroyed by fire. they remind him of terrell—his lover who died.

they are being stored with me because my room wasn't destroyed. he is staying with friends until he can relocate.

this is all he has now. this and the singed pages of a few of his magick books—heavily water damaged.

he will make something out of these pieces. maybe not jewelry, but something that for him at least has magickal power.

not to argue with magick, for magick is as magick does. but I am not attracted to jewelry for magickal purposes.

the only way a piece of jewelry—or metal or stone for that matter—will hold magickal power for me is if it's worth a lot of money.

or at least has a lot of weight, something substantial with some size to it. (unless it belonged to a very special person.)

but it's the idea behind the object—not the object itself—which has power. this is the whole concept of magick.

leave these pieces for steve. humble smoke scarred remnants of copper and brass.

because fire has a power that is neither metaphysical or conceptual.

fire is singular and absolute.

11: 30 a.m. life goes on. have to take these other belongings left by andre and pam over to their new hotel room where they had to move because firemen chopped a hole in their ceiling.

the morning sun is bright and warm. i am ducking the traffic cop to avoid getting a parking ticket, and the stark reality of razed walls and billowing smoke, the level headed thinking of the management that evacuated all the inhabitants, and the prompt response of the fire department that limited the damage to only two rooms of the antiquated hotel—seems like a distant memory.

andre and pam will be all right once they get a pay check.

till then people will give them a break so they can get by.

steve has his mysticism to console him. not only his teachings, but also others who study the principles of higher consciousness and seek to live a more spiritualized existence. who will give him the help that he needs for starting over, so that if he has nothing now, it will not always be so.

funny how those who lead the life of the spirit are subject to the same foibles, jealousies, personal conflicts, and isolation,

unforeseeable natural disasters and acts of god

as those who do not.

the same fate befalls them both.

damn these cheap hotels. we were lucky the whole thing didn't go up like a tinder box.

you can't argue with fire.

-12/15/99

Theresa Haffner

## Fresno

I could almost  
    live here.  
It's like a real city.  
People think it's  
    big,  
but it still seems  
    small to me.  
I live in L.A.  
Someday it will  
    be like this  
    everywhere,  
with Rite Aid  
    Drug Stores,  
Home Depot  
    Home  
    Improvement  
    Centers,  
AM-PM Minimarts,  
Starbuck's Coffee Shops,  
and Kinko's Copies  
in every shopping mall,  
in every city,  
in every state  
and municipality  
in every country  
on every continent  
in the world.

And there will be  
    no more  
    unhappiness.

Theresa Haffner

## **Glimpse**

she lays on the bed  
with a young man she shares  
night gowns with

who would be her brother  
and not her lover

she has eyes that would drive you to  
deal and to not be straight

that you would go to  
the penitentiary for

you would want to stay but once more  
you don't have the keys

they fall from your grasp

outside her window  
you are a song worth  
remembering

Theresa Haffner

## Heartbeat

heartbeat  
yes i still have one  
heartbeat  
let me know that i'm alive  
heartbeat  
a primordial rhythm  
heartbeat  
the pulse of life

heartbeat  
ancient tribal music  
heartbeat  
the cry of the blues  
heartbeat  
submerged emotion  
heartbeat  
longing to be true

heartbeat  
blood is rushing  
heartbeat  
hear it in my ears  
heartbeat  
throb of passion  
heartbeat  
measuring the years

heartbeat like a drum  
heartbeat like a river  
heartbeat soft and tender  
heartbeat like a whisper

as long as the heart still beats  
we are all one  
as long as the heart still beats  
we are not alone  
as long as the heart still beats  
we are bound to the same beginning  
as long as the heart still beats  
we share a common soul

and when the heartbeat ends  
and when the heartbeat ends  
another heartbeat begins

Theresa Haffner

## **Hollywood,3 A.M.**

1.

Bits of newspaper  
and the tattered remains  
of porno pictures  
blow across the pavement  
flutter in the 3 a.m. wind  
a lonely taxi cruises  
empty streets  
discarded flyers of  
forgotten rock and roll bands  
fall to the ground  
and cover the sidewalk  
like autumn leaves

2.

Hollywood,3 AM.  
all night diner  
a Styrofoam coffee cup  
sits on a folded napkin  
circular stains round  
its bottom  
a jelly donut in the  
display case  
the door is open  
and everybody here  
the cripple, the beggar,  
the homeless, the thief  
and even though they  
have never met  
they still know  
one another with the  
unerring knowledge of  
all late night diners  
and people who were  
ever too poor to buy a meal  
unread newspapers open  
to the want ads  
wait the dawn

3.

Hollywood,3 AM  
walk of fame  
stars line the sidewalks  
with the names of celebrities  
from a bygone era  
and those who walk these streets  
with worn out shoes  
who do not even recognize  
many of the names

immortalized beneath their feet  
sleep in doorways  
or on the sidewalk  
covered up with cardboard  
or wrapped in blankets  
like shrouds  
haunt the dark recesses  
of alleyways and deserted  
buildings  
they say, "do you have any  
spare change, mister? "  
"brother, can you spare  
a dime? "

4.

Hollywood 3 AM  
between buildings  
along driveways  
and across parking lots  
floodlights direct their beams  
along light corridors  
carefully monitoring  
all activity within their radius  
and transmit their information  
to other vigilantes, agents,  
operatives and police organizations  
by means of high pitched  
variations of the light frequency  
phenomena that should be  
happening all the time  
becomes most pronounced between  
between the hours of 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.  
observing them in a  
red tinted mirror  
discovers further activity  
otherwise undetectable  
when the surveillance  
helicopter flies overhead  
everything gets crazy  
on the roof an unrecognized  
figure is seen climbing up  
wearing infrared goggles  
and carrying a two way radio  
he won't be there when  
morning comes

5.

Hollywood 3 AM  
nobody on the street  
just an old alley cat

arching his back  
    he says "me-ow"  
go home you old alley cat!  
and two or three guys  
on the corner selling cocaine  
as we approach, they say  
"what do you want? "  
"what do you need? "

Theresa Haffner

## Inscription

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray  
From the straight road and woke to find myself  
Alone in a dark wood. How shall I say

What wood that was? I never saw so drear,  
So rank, so arduous a wilderness.  
Its very memory gives a shape to fear.

I am the way into the City of Woe.  
I am the way to a forsaken people.  
I am the way into eternal sorrow.

Sacred justice moved my architect.  
I was raised by Divine Omnipotence,  
Primordial love, and ultimate intellect.

Only those elements time cannot wear.  
Before me and beyond time I stand.  
Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

These mysteries I read cut into stone,  
Above agate, and turning I said, "Master,  
What is the meaning of this Inscription? "

Theresa Haffner

## Laser Night

crazed  
crazed neath the crazy moon  
i wandered  
convulsed with a craving  
i didn't understand

above the mondrian roof tops  
in the chasm of the sky  
the stars unfolded in a drama  
of living and dying

like the crack of doom  
the dawn of disaster

below the tangled  
television antennae  
and tenement fire escape steps

on the sidewalk  
of crashed crystal dreams

the dreamer wept

your eyes were beautiful  
sparkling like laser cut  
diamond jewels in the  
early morning light

Theresa Haffner

## Ledger

### 1. Debits and Credits.

Bringing It All Back Home. The pen stabs the tar-like sheet.  
Ink flows like Blood on the Tracks.

We once thought there would be a quote a Bob Dylan song lyric appropriate for every situation in life.

I can't tell you how important he was to us. How much he spoke to our hearts and our souls.

He was our Prophet. Our spokesperson.

Each one of us got something personal and profound from him.

But that was before 'Nashville Skyline'- when he changed - when a lot of things changed - and he no longer spoke for us or to us.

We never listened to him again, or bought his records. He ceased to be our leader.

After that we had no leader.

Stabbing the tar-like sheet. After midnight trying to make sense of the debits and credits in an account book where for years nothing has added up right.

The numbers turning into bits of poetry scrawled between the ledger lines more than twenty years out of date.

How quaint. How low tech.

How many years we lived like that—Exiled on Main Street—effectively x'ed out of a society that no longer recognized our needs or credited our payments-

just blithely kept going on—the money getting higher and higher—turning its back on us as surely as Dylan had—

Going faster and faster, glossing over inconsistencies, while we kept going slower—tied to a principle.

The accounts just didn't add up.

### II. Incoherent Universe.

—"Ain't it just like the night to play tricks when you're trying to be so quiet—"  
-Bob Dylan, Visions of Johanna (Blonde on Blonde) .

Because we had seen the world as basically coherent, now incoherent universe didn't hold together but kept getting farther apart.

It was really hard on us to change with the changing trend—as if nothing had ever

meant anything—as if we didn't have to add up to zero.

Because debts were successfully executed and our payments were not credited to our accounts.

Even a hundred years difference in our lives would only be glossed over with flair on the radio.

We had seen the universe as coherent—maybe at war with itself but coherent just the same—where there was something to stand for—and something to fight for—and if it was necessary to keep the accounts balanced—something to die for.

Sold out—and never received the payments. The check was in the mail but it was made out to somebody else and never arrived.

There we were waiting for a check that would never come.

### III. Spontaneous Remission

-“we're sitting here stranded although trying our best to deny it—”-Bob Dylan (Ibid.)

Suddenly about a year ago things started to add up in this out of balance universe.

We don't know the cause of it, but for the first time in 30 or more years we have had a year of uninterrupted growth and coherence.

Benefits accrue from energy invested. Benefits from synchronistic and serendipitous coincidences.

Debits and credits. Now the pen stabs the paper. The tar-like ink like blood.

After 35 years of adult life. After 56 birthdays. To try and balance the ledger.

To see what went wrong and what went right

What we owe and what we've got coming

The uncredited deposits

The interest on principle  
(if there still is a principle)

and that's our strong point, because we never gave up our principles, even when the current was flowing the other way-

and those principles that used to be liabilities  
are now like money in the bank.

### IV. Going Back In Time.

I'm immersing myself in the music of the 1960's. The psychedelic rock of the San Francisco bands. Quicksilver Messenger Service. Jefferson Airplane. Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Bought new CD's of the original records. Benefit of hindsight. Have read the books. Studied the history of the period-

-tracing down the origins of a thing-

-going back in time-

Because if you go back far enough you come to a time when the universe wasn't out of balance

when it was coherent

when things made sense.

If you can go back to where it still made sense, then you come back forward, you can see where it got off track, where it got off balance

maybe then you can find out how to fix it-if it can be fixed-

-repair the rift in your life-

As you credit the debits and debit the credits to get a better understanding of what's been received and what's been owed

The totals stack up much better with the re-accounting.

After RFK was assassinated all bets were off.

Somewhere between 1967-Blonde on Blonde-Dylan's motorcycle accident-and 1970-Altamont-

Something went terribly wrong.

Have to go back and retrace the origins of the coherent conditions of the world we found when we came of age

Come to find out it has not always been a world averse to our basic needs and desires.

Because there has always been a pitched battle between the forces of restriction and deterioration

and the current of rational and humanitarian thought.

Because a lot has been lost and a lot has been gained at the expense of something more valuable.

We didn't teach our children well.

Because a lot of people were really trying to excuse the fact that all the gains in art  
and consciousness grew out of consciousness expanding drugs  
at the expense of a position of social unacceptability.

And when we got in the really deep water and out of our depth-  
a lot of us were unable to escape.

In L.A.-where the buildings we once lived in are torn down and nothing remains of the  
past

it may not be too late  
to reinstate the policies based on principles

Because it was a pioneering effort to say it's better to have compassion.

Theresa Haffner

## Light and Shadow

Out of the Darkness-Light!  
The forms emerge and move.  
The play of light and shadow  
    brings motion.  
Gradations of color bring  
    shade and hue.  
Intersecting lines dance.  
The forms emerge and recede  
    again.  
The light returns to darkness.

Between darkness and light  
    life exists in all its  
    complexity and  
    variation.  
The interplay of light and  
    shadow creates patterns  
    we interpret as meaning.  
Here too you and I exist to  
    perceive these moments  
As grains of sand on a windy  
    beach.  
The forms recede and emerge  
    again.

Out of Light and Shadow—  
    -Life!

Theresa Haffner

## Lucifer

In the garden,  
    I saw you.  
You were more beautiful by far.  
And I walked with you  
    and talked with you.

In the garden,  
    I knew you.  
You took me by the arm  
and put your hand on mine.

I loved you then.

When we were together  
    in the garden,  
So very long ago,

I called you by your name  
    and you were mine.

Theresa Haffner

## **Mandala**

Unto all things give the opposite.  
Unto joy give sorrow. To happiness give regret.  
Unto laughter give tears. In time of mourning,  
rejoice.

For what has a beginning also has an ending.  
And no thing can exist without its opposite.  
For nothing can exist alone and everlasting.

Contemplate each moment with a meditation  
of its opposite.

As surely as light creates shadow,  
the one brings forth the other  
and each will be followed by the other.  
Thus happiness will end in sadness  
and the end of suffering is relief.

Surround the old and elderly  
with youth and young children.

Death is healed by sex.  
When a loved one dies,  
celebrate by making love.

Moderate pain with pleasure. Grief with humor.  
Piety with insanctimony. Modesty with ribaldry.

In wealth, remember hardship by going without  
a luxury.  
In poverty, reward yourself with whatever  
luxury you can afford.

On the day of your marriage,  
contemplate the price of the divorce.

Thus, on the occasion of moving into her  
new apartment,

she wept.

Theresa Haffner

## Mars Reflections

cold criminal element  
the undeciphered code of the last armed outpost  
to see any of the events down along the causeway  
where the dried riverbeds meet  
the tiny terraformed areas of the planet mars  
domed cities, with the mirror sky reflecting  
heat and light back against the greenhouse surface  
a glittering latticework of delicate spider webs  
but mars is a cold mistress  
the black sky  
the tiny sun 1/2 the diameter of earth's sol  
a pinpoint above the rocky horizon  
there are very deep scars reminding one  
that mars was once very much like earth  
in a primeval era of warmer latitudes  
dream latitudes  
for now all was armed resistance  
and the pale monoliths  
the monuments on mars of another time  
primordial immemorial a time before history began  
these outposts  
a vague dwelling where man hath carved a bleak existence  
a frontier a foothold against  
the megacold of the martian night  
a winter that turned the ice crystals of carbon dioxide  
to sheets of permafrost at the polar ice caps  
no one sails the frozen canals  
no one treads the martian gobi  
but for the tiny terraformed areas  
and the domed cities  
crystals on a necklace of the bejeweled martian night

we did not come to mars because it beckoned  
it did not lure us with its mystery  
or welcome us after we were here  
it had little to offer other than a convenient  
rock for us to aim our interplanetary missiles  
developing our space drives for the real prize  
alpha centauri  
four and one half light years away  
a double star system promising  
worlds of unparalleled beauty  
more distant than one life span  
and mars the first stepping stone

we came here not expecting  
to be unable to return  
not because the distance was too great  
or the interstellar sea  
too inhospitable  
but because the political climate  
on earth had changed

they call us criminals because we had  
to defend ourselves against  
a government not our own  
that would devour our lives as  
well as our freedoms  
they say that life on earth originated  
as bacteria on mars propelled to earth  
by violent meteor strikes  
now deimos and our tiny phobic second moon  
rise in the west and set in the east  
and mars unable to support life of its own  
has become our second home.  
exiles in a sky of black and cobalt blue  
and when we are old will we still be content to  
wander the hydroponic gardens of the tiny  
terraformed domed cities  
unable to return to the swelling globe  
of the planet earth looming orange  
in the sky over mars  
alpha centauri will have to wait  
while mankind reconciles his destiny  
in the twenty second century A.D.

Theresa Haffner

## Mind Collage

(In collaboration with David Behrens a.k.a. 'Bill Bored')

1.

under the slightest spell of the harvest moon  
I AM PHYSICALLY NOT WELL.  
image of the yellow moon rising full above the city skyline  
WATCHING A NEWSPAPER TURN YELLOW IN YOUR WITHERED HANDS  
like a transformational yellow peach ripe enough to eat  
I SEE YOU SITTING THERE IN YOUR GILDED ELECTRIC CHAIR

2.

saw weird abstract paintings in the peeled paint and burned out writing  
TONY BENNETT ON THE RADIO  
all black, only black, the black negligee i wore about my shoulders  
SHADES OF MELANCHOLIA; AN OPIUM DREAM OF ETERNAL INKY PROPORTIONS  
an arc of the downtrodden; homeless night of the ancient sun  
NARCOTIC NIGHTMARE

3.

crazy barbara came in, slowly, languidly  
CAN YOU MAKE A NOOSE? ? ? ? ?  
she came to the table as if in a dream  
DECADES RAN LIKE WATERCOLORS BEFORE HIS EYES  
we exchanged phone numbers; mine would never last  
WE USED TO GIVE EACHOTHER SHOTS

4.

the cluttered dirty second floor hallway  
MORTGAGE YOUR SOUL  
a world of perpetual night where sunlight never entered  
MEN PERCHED ON TOP OF CRYSTALLINE CYLINDERS; STARS  
a world of mirrors, light objects and reflections  
SHALL I JOIN HER IN THAT DARK ABYSS?

5.

finally disappearing in the intractable darkness  
IT STARES AT ME LIKE A WATCHFUL EYE  
a shriveled phallus transforming into the folds of a v\_\_\_\_\_.  
SEXUAL POLARIZATION BECOMES NONEXISTENT  
urgent recovery of all non-combustible parts  
A WELL OF LONELINESS  
excess of xx and xy chromosomes; about to burst  
NATURE IS A CRUEL MISTRESS  
"not so, " she cried, as the transmission ended

Theresa Haffner

## **Mushrooms**

Have you ever gone out hunting for mushrooms?  
Or been on a mushroom hunt  
when you were only a child  
perhaps with your grandmother or grandfather  
out in the country  
in a meadow or a woods  
in early Spring  
just after a rain  
where the moss only grows  
on the north sides of the trees?

And the mushrooms you find  
don't taste the same as  
the button mushrooms  
from the supermarket shelf  
but instead have a kind of  
wild "gamy" taste  
like venison.

You may not think it's possible  
to find wild mushrooms growing  
in the middle of a large city  
like Los Angeles.

But it is possible to find them.

You just have to know where to  
look for them.

Oh, by the way,  
the Martians have landed.

Yeah, I was talking to a  
Martian just the other day.

Same day I went out  
hunting for mushrooms.

Theresa Haffner

## Nights Like Tonight

nights like tonight  
with the fires of the infinite  
shining through our eyes  
an intimate moment shared  
as hushed incandescents cast a surreal glow  
in the euphoric light  
in the bathroom  
the interior landscape lengthens and grows  
into dimensions of the far distance  
there are long shadows  
mixed with small shadows  
angles of reflection  
one mirror into another  
reveal the partial image  
of an unclothed body  
the colors dance  
we are god's children  
we were born  
to live these moments

Theresa Haffner

## **Of The Meaning...**

of the meaning of love  
thought streams trail loosely  
shrill cat screams cut across midnight alley  
car horns arabesque in the moonlight

of the purpose of existence  
a tangled miasma of dirty laundry  
mixed with strands of seaweed  
hung from a mermaid's torso

of the understanding of knowledge  
cellar mice laugh at the uneaten cheese  
trashers pick the dipsy dumpster  
clothes pins on a daisy chain clothes line

of the reason we argue  
cellophane candy wrappers  
rolled into a ball the size  
of chicago that ate the planet jupiter

why we stay married  
the dog grew too big for the bone  
and buried the moon in the  
back yard

of the larceny of hatred  
the city slenderly leaks  
bracelets and necklaces  
of toy balloons and  
seersucker pajamas

of wealth and poverty  
zig zag cigaret papers  
left over from last night's  
zany after hours office party  
the halloween witch  
electric broom kazoom

of the acquisition of wisdom  
cookie crumbs geomantically divine  
the fortune of children's games  
with game duck hunters

why we write poetry  
a slice of a gone world  
we don't stand a chance  
before the lunatic fanatic  
rhinoceros of eugene ionesco  
hopeless understanding

Theresa Haffner

## **Offering**

These things I have to offer.

Some songs that I have written.

A few poems (both published and unpublished)

A love of abstract painting.

Incense. Candles.

Musical instruments.

A guitar. Tambourine.

Homemade things.

Things made of wood.

Some pages of an unbound book.

Memories I have scraped together

My knowledge of many things

But especially music theory.

My ability to play the piano.

Some books of wisdom.

The Tao. The I Ching or Book of Changes.

A few mystic symbols and occult diagrams.

The Kabalistic Tree of Life. The Hermetic pentagram.

Instrumental music.

Ravi Shankar. John Coltrane.

John Fahey.

Kaddish by Allen Ginsberg. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T. S. Eliot.

Egyptian artifacts as well as artifacts from our own time.

The loves I loved.

The tears I cried.

The years I have lived my life.

An upstairs window

A good pen.

An unabridged dictionary.

A manual typewriter.

An easy chair.

These things I have gathered from my life.

An offering to the oneness.

Theresa Haffner

## On Lillian Way

night  
cold gray against greenish black  
street lamp globes against  
rectangle buildings  
sitting in a parked car  
along the deserted alleyways  
off santa monica boulevard  
car windows fogged  
the cold green street lights  
filtered through the prism  
of a broken windshield  
delicate spiderwebs of  
white light diffusion

only in L.A.  
a prostitute stands  
against the bare wall  
under a street light  
with traffic going by

on the sidewalk  
across the street  
cocaine sellers asking  
"what do you want? "  
"what do you need? "

beside the building  
a bottle and can collector  
inspects a long low  
excuse for a trash barrel

the prostitute  
draws a lot of attention  
cars pull to the curb  
windows unwind

in the car adjacent  
derelicts are fixing dope  
shooting up in the  
luminous twilight

now the whore has a trick  
a car door slams  
and tires spin away

much like a river  
the wind has stirred up the palm leaves  
and palmetto shadows  
extra currents for a  
3 a.m. late night traffic flow

much like my soft core

more than usually hard core  
translucent shadows

on the concave street  
vertical street signs  
body schisms

Theresa Haffner

## One Day

one

We are in the last month of the old millennium.

One day was not all it could have been.  
One day we could have had a brighter outlook.  
No one does what they do without some regret.  
We are in a new landscape.

Our entity has been like  
a pot of soup on simmer—  
Restless bubbles coming to the top  
for over a month now.

One day we will have the energy to face  
our shortcomings and overcome our difficulties.

One day we will be students of the  
inner nature as well as the outer  
relationships.

Our garden will grow when we  
are once again in the mainstream  
of the Human evolutionary current.

We are fraught with uncertainty, inaction,  
and inactivity. We are not as we would have  
wanted ourselves to be.

One day our principles will hold the  
foundations of the world.

We will not be lost as long as we are not  
the only light on the path.

One day we will no longer be shackled  
by the highs and lows of our individual  
existence and be able to live continuously  
in the consciousness of the new awareness.

Spiritual energy flows like an electric current.  
One need only to be one of the conduits along  
which it is passed to be energized as well.

Everywhere the spiritual energy has flowed  
the environment will show signs of revivification,  
regrowth and renewal.

Whenever two or more people act together  
to raise their consciousness, their efforts will  
be increased exponentially.

One day our hearts will be touched  
by Spirit and our lives will be  
transformed.

two

A quickening.

An energizing.

A New Wind is Rising in the Sun.

The Sun, in this case, being the  
Human Consciousness.

Theresa Haffner

## **Oneness**

Oneness.

I know there is a oneness

Sense, feel, intuit that

There is a oneness

About which all things evolve.

Ever at the center

Never at the circumference

These things I have been taught

Ingrained, propagandized

Then I experienced for myself

I realized that all things are one thing

And one thing is all things.

It is hard to remember

In the rush of the city

In the maze of technology

In the speed of a microchip

But in the silence

The memories return

And so does the oneness.

Theresa Haffner

## Open Reading

Distances.

The L.A. poetry scene is  
all about distances.

The distance of the suburbs from  
one another, separated by miles of  
freeway,

With no real downtown section

And the distances of the people  
from each other, too,

Separated by miles of fences they have  
built around themselves.

It is hard for any sense of literary  
community to develop here.

At the poetry reading  
I am wearing black.

I am there to pick up some manuscripts  
for publication in THE NEW PRESS, a  
poetry magazine for which I am the  
regional editor.

There are about 35 people in  
attendance, all of them poets  
except two.

There are featured readers followed  
by an open reading. The features  
read first. Then the other poets read  
in the order they signed up.

Each poet leaves as soon as he has  
finished reading.

The remaining poets talk loudly  
among themselves and ignore the  
poet who is reading.

Because I signed up last, I am  
scheduled to read last.

By the time it is my turn, there  
is nobody there but the two  
audience members who are not poets.

She is a substitute school teacher

and he is a computer analyst.

It is their first day in California  
and they are interested in seeing  
some plays.

Outside the street is empty and  
we are the only people on the  
sidewalk.

I ask them for a ride home.

On the way, I sincerely thank them  
for coming out.

"You don't know how important you  
are, " I tell them.

"Without an audience, poetry  
is nothing! "

Theresa Haffner

## **Plutonium**

The first time the world was destroyed was by water.

The second time was by fire.

The third time the world was destroyed was by megaton nuclear warheads aimed against the world capitals in 'mutually assured destruction.'

The fourth time the world was destroyed was by global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, desertification, deforestation and defoliation of the Amazon rain forests and old growth redwood timberland.

The fifth time the world was destroyed was by man's inhumanity to man, cruelty and suffering caused by greed and indifference.

The sixth time the world was destroyed was by contamination of the atmosphere, pollution of the rivers and streams, and eventually, the ocean itself.

The seventh time the world was destroyed was by epidemic infectious disease released by a bioterrorist attack.

The eighth time the world was destroyed was by the close approach and near collision of a planetoidal body with a gravitational field strong enough to pull the Earth out of its orbit and send it spiraling into the sun.

The ninth time the world was destroyed was by plutonium, the radio active waste product of uranium created from the peace time uses of nuclear energy having a half-life of 24,500 years.

The last time the world was destroyed was by ice

Theresa Haffner

## Portrait of the Artist RICHARD JUHRDEN as a Young Man

reflections in the shattered  
looking glass  
many faceted multi talented multi dimensional  
like a diamond cut jewel  
a teardropp prism  
splintered and fragmented  
reflected and refracted through successive  
translucent exposures  
each a different surface a different image  
a different face  
of the Hall of Mirrors  
façade  
each containing a veritable portrait of the  
mask and masquerade  
of the real person  
RICHARD JUHRDEN  
flashing windows of a stereopticon  
like a deck of cards the faces wedded to each other  
kaleidoscopically  
opening like accordianesque  
cubistic paper dolls  
like the many cubistic images he draws  
images of a deeper interior and truer identity  
of the person portrayed in the  
cracked and fractured  
shattered glass  
of crushed opal designs

why must he continue to shatter the glass that  
destroys his image and continues to annihilate  
his identity like a crashed windshield  
in unrecognizable  
shards of anterotic broken glass  
that remains on the floor?

Eros was never so inhumane to Psyche  
when he said do not cast your glance upon me for then you will  
know my name.  
the identity is only known in the finding  
and can only be found when it is  
lost  
dispersed to the winds  
marooned on the sands of time  
awaiting death on the crags of  
the mountain cliff.  
deserted. alone.  
or in the maniacal throes of  
self destruction  
the careening cries of self deluding  
self abasement  
and the sufferings of hell that  
raze the walls and bash the hydra – heads of serpents

against the anguish of  
the megalomaniac night...

Oh, awash are the bonds  
the blood, the brutalities, the self abnegation, the  
debauches, the perversions, the sorceries,  
the humiliations, the slashed wrists,  
the cigaret butts put out on burning coals of  
human flesh.

How much do you have to torment yourself  
to prove that you have an immortal soul? That you  
feel the pain of your afflictions?

When the looking glass is shattered  
and the shrieks of hell have come out,  
when the demonic hordes have marched forth and all but  
devoured you in your flesh,  
when you have given yourself up to every violation  
and defloration, every succubus and incubus,  
like a concubine in the temple  
rife with the cohabitation of deities  
when asaroth and asmoday  
have defiled and plundered you to their fill  
and still you have not been consumed  
in your eternal search for truth  
when you have tried every deceit  
and betrayal as a new suit of clothes to trash  
and then discard  
when you have ridden the dragon to  
the very edge of the abyss and the threshold of  
infinity  
then will come the upraising of the spiritual man  
like the erecting of the apex of a triangle  
from the radices  
of the base.

do not be surprised  
brave pioneer  
if you recognize the image that you countenance  
there as your own.

do not feel alone if you find  
another tired soul there  
tried but not destroyed  
unexhausted and unconsumed  
upon whom the wages of defeat no longer  
have power,  
still recognizable in the light  
that glimmers faintly  
secure in the knowledge that  
the earthly body may wear away  
but the human spirit will remain

imperishable

Do not be surprised if I call you then  
by name  
and greet you as my friend.

Theresa Haffner

## Recipe X

1. With just a dash of salt to save my soul.
2. The haunted frightened trees, down to the windy beach, far past the twisted reach of crazy sorrow.
3. Because only decaffeinated coffee, non dairy creamer, non-alcoholic wine, partially hydrogenated salad oil, and hypo-allergenic recording tape were used...
4. Never realizing until it was too late that the female hourglass spider always devours her mate after they have intercourse.
5. Died clutching her chest, coughing and gasping after breathing second hand smoke.
6. Where black was the color and none was the number.
7. Reconstituted from concentrate...contains no juice.
8. The huge female, her black bulbous body swaying back and forth on the distorted web. The tiny cowering male.
9. Low calorie sodium reduced polyunsaturated freeze dried potato chips
10. Reads only expurgated editions of ribald classics.
11. The foreign sun that glints upon a bed that is never mine
12. Electric treadmill physical fitness machine malfunctions, , , Exercised himself to death.
- 13, Drank purified water. Breathed purified air. Excreted purified urine.
14. Because even the President of the United States must sometimes have to stand naked
15. 11 year old nephew killed by violent Saturday morning TV cartoons
16. Drank L.A. tap water. succumbed.
17. Went blind from radiation sitting too close to computer screen
18. red meat suicide
- 19.. Right now I can't read too good, don't send me no more letters, no.
20. "It's a case of non-chlorinated water, " he said.. "No, " I said. "It's a case of the runs."
21. "Had the cat declawed and Towser's bark taken out the same day I had my Appalachian accent surgically removed.'
22. An iridescent speck of black, tiny desiccated hulk, glistening in a distorted web in the back of an old fashioned record player.

23. Jewels and binoculars hang from the head of the mule.
24. Adjustable content filter removes 30% to 60% of violence and sexual content from TV programming,90% of truth from the news
25. Formulated a way to filter out 40% of blues tonality from African American music.
26. Non-erotic pornography.
27. Accidentally smelled her own body odor and died
28. High voltage power lines caused brain tumor
29. Non meat veggie burgers, soy milk, artificial flavor and food coloring added
30. We just wanted to take out some of the chemicals that have been added and add some of the chemicals that have been taken out.
31. Raised scentless flowers in her garden. Depollinated hybrids can't reproduce
32. Accidentally fell into a toxic landfill and dissolved
33. It takes a lot to laugh. It takes a train to cry.

Theresa Haffner



## **Satan's Turnpike**

Satan built a highway  
    Across the United States  
And straight up to Alaska  
    To span the Bering Strait\*  
Then out across Siberia  
    Did Satan's Turnpike run  
To the coast of Europe  
    Joining two landmasses as one.  
Across three continents distance  
    That four lane pavement ran  
So you could drive your car by land  
From New York to Paris, France.

And Satan was an architect  
    And he built his buildings tall.  
And Satan was a builder  
    And he built his bridges strong.  
And Satan was a draftsman  
    Who designed with arc and pen  
And Satan was a teacher  
    Of the hearts and minds of men.

And Satan was a good man  
    Who never did nobody wrong.  
He said, "I'm not responsible  
    For what other people have done.  
If I did only half the things  
    For which I take the blame,  
It would not be a hundredth  
    What's been done in the  
    Other One's Name."

### SATAN'S TURNPIKE

---

(\* A suspension bridge across the Bering Strait, once thought to be impossible, is now a thoroughly achievable architectural feat.)

Theresa Haffner

## Scrambled Eggs

one egg apiece  
she names the eggs before she fries them  
she writes the names on the shells  
before she drops them into the skillet  
that way she knows who's egg is which  
anyway some of these days she screams  
she screams "I can't stand it any more"  
"The problems of everyday life have gotten me down"  
"I can't program my VCR."  
"I've got carpel tunnel injury  
and I can't stand the pain."  
But it's you, my husband, who gives me so much stress  
more than you realize  
you don't know how much it can build  
until I am at the breaking point  
until I am beyond the breaking point  
until I am broken  
I have to fight for every square inch of territory  
inside this 12' by 16' hotel room we call home  
it seems we are fighting too much for people  
who are supposed to be on the same team  
we are playing different games together  
sometimes it seems like we are fighting on a deeper level  
than what we are arguing about  
could it be we are really arguing about  
leaving the refrigerator door open?  
where to put the audio tapes? the telephone answering machine?  
we argue a lot about the electric fan.  
I don't like fans because they blow the papers  
and make a lot of noise so you can't enjoy  
listening to music or listening to the silence  
when I was in jail there was a 50,000 B.T.U. air purifier  
on the ceiling of my cell that rumbled loudly day and night  
and was never turned off  
but of course you've gotten so deaf you can't  
hear how loud it really is  
so deaf you can only hear every fourth or fifth word I say  
so I have to repeat every thing  
so I have to shout—and that makes you mad—  
and still you didn't hear it, but everybody else in the  
building did—  
and you could have a hearing aid, but you won't get one  
instead you just accuse me of talking too softly and  
jumbling my words—until I am so stressed that I stutter  
or can't speak at all—  
until I am getting a speech impediment—  
how frustrating to have talked it all out with you  
expressed my innermost emotions  
told you just how I feel about things  
only to realize moments later  
that you never heard a word I said.  
you used to be able to hear if you put your mind to it

and we were talking in a quiet room.  
you used to hear what you wanted to hear—  
but not any more  
so now you won't talk on the telephone  
I have to make all your calls for you  
and of course we argue about my friends  
you don't like any of them  
you think all they want to do is  
steal from me and waste my time  
particularly if they are good looking young gay guys  
then your jealousy verges on violence—  
as if I was going to have an affair with the first  
cute young thing that paid any attention to me—  
don't you know if I had an affair it would be  
with some old man as grizzled and weather beaten as you? ? —  
and I am getting older, now, too, and need to  
become more independent, more self sufficient,  
able to do things on my own, so when the day comes and  
there is no one to help me, I can still  
be able to help myself  
have to be stronger and take the initiative even if it means  
stepping on a few toes or hurting someone's feelings  
-so because I had two things he didn't have—  
ability to hear and ability to see—  
-after all, he is a senior citizen—  
I began making telephone calls for him  
and filling out applications, writing notes to the landlord,  
gradually taking up more and more time until now when he comes in the door  
until he leaves it's "Honey, do this, hold this for me, what does  
this say, would you hand me something out of the refrigerator—  
be sure to close the door—what do you mean you won't  
hold the flashlight? "  
the only time I have to do any of my own work or get on the computer  
is after he's gone to sleep—then he wants the lights off and me to  
sit there in darkness—  
and I just can't abide by that—  
it's just a single hotel room  
have to stand my ground no matter how miserable he gets  
he's going to be 70  
he's still strong, vibrant, active,  
still able to carry boxes up the stair and  
move furniture with the strength of several horses  
but time has more meaning, now,  
and there is no one who can help us with our troubles—  
young people come to us for help with their troubles—  
and depend on us for wisdom and understanding  
who can help us if we can't help ourselves?  
it's been so long and we've been through so much  
surely the best time is ahead of us now  
we know it won't last forever  
his children are grown  
and I have no children of my own

once I depended on him when I had no place to go and  
no one to turn to  
when I couldn't make it on my own  
when I was homeless and had nothing, he was there to help me  
I have to practice the piano. I have a performance Saturday night  
she names the eggs before dropping them in the skillet  
then she scrambles the eggs  
the outgoing messages on her answering machine  
are quotes from Bob Dylan songs 30 years out of date  
the phone rings the answer phone says:

"All along the watchtower / The princes kept the view /  
While all the women came and went / Their footservants too /  
Meanwhile in the cold distance / A wild cat did growl /  
Two riders were approaching / The wind began to howl"

-August 20,2001

(Dedicated to Douglas D. Carlyon, my common law husband  
of eighteen years, who died April 18,2002, less than eight months  
after this poem was written. So long, Doug.)

.

Theresa Haffner

## **Seven Hells Have I**

Devil may care  
What seals my fate.  
What others would share  
The Devil may take.  
The future forbear  
Now lies in wait.  
Seven Hells have I.

Power was mine  
I tried to keep.  
Ambition tried  
Horizons to sweep.  
Now love lies  
Beyond my reach.  
Seven Hells have I.

Pleasure sought I  
More than I should.  
Knowledge sought I  
None others would.  
Now evil gives rise  
From seeds of good.  
Seven Hells have I.

Seven colors.  
Seven tones.  
Seven paths to find.  
Seven oceans.  
Seven levels.  
Seven hills incline.  
Dark Angelic  
Solemn lessons.  
Seven Hells have I.

Theresa Haffner

## Silent Spring

I woke in the morning to the raucous "caw-cawing" of a crow.

He was perched on the electric wires above my sidewalk bed, swaying back and forth in the breeze to keep his balance as he cried.

I was concerned that he might go to the bathroom on me and I pulled the blanket back over my head.

It was already 7: 00 AM and soon the heat of the sun would make it impossible to remain where I was, let alone sleep.

I heard the "caw-cawing" again. Then it was quiet.

I listened, but I heard nothing.

In a world that should be teeming with birdsong, I heard nothing. No sound of other birds.

Oh my God, I thought, Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'\* has come at last.

I waited. Eventually I heard a sparrow. Then other birds. Nuisance birds, Rachel had called them. All that we have in the city.

I got up from the surprisingly comfortable bed I had made from three airline cushions. I surveyed my surroundings. From where I stood I could look across the parking lot and see people going in and out of Circuit City. A place where I would be able to panhandle.

A block the other way I could see the rooftop of Von's Supermarket, where I would be able to purchase alcohol.

Down the hill I could see the traffic and city buses going down Virgil Ave.

At least I would be centrally located.

Life goes on. Another day had begun.

---

\* 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson was the first great book to alert the public to the danger of chemical pesticides and helped to spark interest in environmental concerns that would characterize the decade of the 1960's.

Theresa Haffner

## So You Want To Be A Poet?

So you want to be a poet,  
not, I guess, if all you want is to write something sugary for your boyfriend  
and say, "Oh, these are my innermost feelings,"  
certainly not if you want to make money,  
because almost anything you could write that isn't poetry  
would make more money  
but  
if you want to be taken seriously  
it takes a lifetime of preparation and hard work  
just to get something published  
in some obscure literary magazine  
that nobody ever heard of and nobody reads

So you want to be a poet?  
Most people never make the commitment  
but once you make the decision  
to call yourself a poet  
it really gets tough  
because you start to take yourself seriously  
and you've got to put up or shut up

So you want to be a poet?  
Because nobody's ever heard of you  
or ever read what you published in a  
magazine with circulation ZERO  
you want a bigger audience.  
So you go to an open poetry reading  
attended only by other poets  
total non-poets in the audience ZERO.

So you want to be a poet?  
Especially if you want to express yourself  
or 'Tell the Truth'  
Sometimes the truth isn't politically correct.  
You have to put your ass on the line  
and people tell you, "Oh, you shouldn't write that."  
Your personal feelings make them feel uncomfortable.

So you want to be a poet?  
Especially because poets don't get paid  
so unless you are independently wealthy  
you have to work a day job.  
When you put down "Occupation: Poet"  
they say "No you aren't."  
You're a word processor. Or a copy editor. Or a security guard.  
Poetry is your hobby."  
Damned time consuming hobby. I could have collected stamps  
or recycled bottles and cans.

So you want to be a poet?  
You seek to gain recognition  
so you ask a particularly well-known poet

in your vicinity for advice.  
She says, "Why don't you enroll in my workshop?  
It only costs \$260 for 8 weeks  
and I will give you recognition."

So you want to be a poet?  
After four years in a workshop  
surrounded by more or less untalented poets  
who write endlessly about their childhood  
or the intimate details of their love affairs  
at last you understand why it makes people uncomfortable  
to tell the truth or express your personal feelings.

They also teach you that all that off the wall  
experimental stuff, the flashy catch phrases,  
the florid vocabulary and inside jokes  
just make your poetry sound foolish  
and that takes a lot of the fun out of it  
but at last you think you're ready

So you want to be a poet?  
you want to find your own voice  
and that means reading all the poetry you can get  
your hands on  
modern stuff, contemporary stuff, classical stuff,  
boring stuff in obscure literary magazines  
nobody's ever heard of,  
learning all the styles and all the rules  
and all the schools  
just to know what's out there and who's who.  
Then you throw it all out  
and just write the way you would have written anyway.

So you want to be a poet?  
For those of us not teaching college writing classes  
on university campuses  
and living in ivory towers  
it can be downright thankless.

So you want to be a poet?  
Your friend tells you not to worry.  
"Great poets are never recognized during  
their own lifetimes. You'll be famous  
after you're dead."

So you want to be a poet?  
It takes a lifetime of work and preparation.  
Then suddenly you're 54 years old,  
you're no longer a word processor,  
you're on crutches and living on disability  
and all the stuff you've written but never published  
because there aren't enough obscure literary magazines

that nobody ever heard of  
is in envelopes in a file drawer.  
Then you get evicted and guess what?  
Hah, hah, your files are destroyed.  
So much for immortality. How are you going  
to be famous after you're dead if there's  
nothing for anybody to read?

So you want to be a poet?  
In lieu of fame, you settle for being part of  
a literary community, a circle of friends who  
are creative artists, who read each other's work  
and inspire each other.  
So you dress in black and go to the poetry reading attended only by other poets  
and you find most of them to be egotistical,  
arrogant, desperately covering up their own inferiority, unwilling to associate with  
"bohemian types" dressed all in black, or else they don't know a damned thing about  
poetry.

Anyway, everyone has to leave to go home right after they read because they've got to  
get up early in the morning to go to work  
so there isn't anybody to stay around afterward to chat, to get acquainted, to inspire  
each other.

After all, this isn't the 1950's and we're not in San Francisco in a North Beach coffee  
house extemporizing incomprehensible hour long poems to the accompaniment of  
bongo drums or modern jazz till all hours of the morning while insomniac customers sip  
coffee and play chess, now are we?

So at last you're on your deathbed, your last breaths rattling in your chest,  
and the nurse says, "Aren't you a poet? Haven't I heard of you someplace, somewhere,  
a long time ago?"  
But it's a case of mistaken identity. She has you confused with somebody else and has  
never heard of you at all.

So you want to be a poet?  
Which brings us back around to where we started.  
If you're going to do it you have to love it.  
The hours of writing, most of which nobody will ever see,  
the rewriting, the editing,  
the number of bad poems for every good one  
And if you're lucky the occasional flash of glory that comes when you know you've  
written something that touches an inner core  
that releases something indescribable  
and makes it all worth while  
It has to be a part of the fabric  
of your being,  
the way you see life  
and your position within it.  
the way you think,  
how you respond to situations,  
solve your problems, resolve your conflicts,

epitomize your happiness,  
You have to go for broke and write  
as if your life depended on it  
not because you want to  
but because you have to,  
because without it you would not exist

And the poet said, "Without poetry, I am nothing."

So you want to be a poet?  
It's not easy and it takes a lot of courage  
But it's rewarding when you find somebody who  
has not given up, who makes a contribution  
to the art, who makes a difference.

Thankfully, there are still enough poets and the people who love them (or at least tolerate them) that there will continue to be poetry for now and for the foreseeable future, despite the hardships.

Theresa Haffner

## **Solar**

To find a spiritual center  
by listening within  
by shutting out external sensation  
by discontinuing the  
internal dialog

To find the sensuality  
in the exclusion of the senses

To find the emptiness within  
and enter into it  
to become one

A seed soul

A soul atom

Begin then to generate a current  
emanate a vibration  
a stream of energy  
flowing in a direction

Hopefully this stream will  
attract others to it  
and be attuned to  
others like it

So that the stream becomes a river

To divide the night

Theresa Haffner

## **Sometimes**

Sometimes my spirit weeps

Sometimes my heart cries out in agony

Sometimes my feet are washed  
in the blood of my tears

My reward is not here.

Consciousness gradually returned to me.  
Something about a game of chess..

It was a Friday evening and  
I was in my apartment,  
but I had the overpowering feeling  
that I did not live there.

I had been trying to enjoy a game of  
chess  
with a friend, but the usual round  
of weekend callers kept interrupting  
our meditative state of mind,

each with their own agenda  
of self motivated wants and desires,  
preoccupations and intoxications,  
demanding my time and my attention  
as if I owed it to them,

languishing in anger, relishing threats  
of ass-kickings and get-backs,  
worshipping violence and mean  
spiritedness  
as if it were a religion.

I glanced helplessly at my friend,  
who put his index finger  
to the side of his head  
as if it were a gun

and pulled the trigger.

I knew that I wanted to leave

but simply going to another place  
was not the answer, because anywhere  
I went  
I would only take with me  
the same frustrations and confinements,

the same conflicts over spiritual energy  
bothersome grosser

conduct  
each one chained to his or her own  
personal desires  
the appetites of the flesh,  
the acquisitiveness for possessions  
I knew that if I wanted to be someplace  
else,  
I must first not be here.

that I could not escape this world  
and still be in it.

I realized I must make the transition to the higher  
world,  
the more spiritualized existence  
if I am to escape the longings  
and desires that cause suffering  
I must become not,  
no thing.

The Journey must begin today.  
I must seek to embrace the void,  
to understand the meaning of non  
existence  
the annihilation of the self  
to achieve Nirvana.

Because I had seen that  
I have been fighting a battle  
that I cannot win  
that if I hadn't overcome  
the same stumbling blocks,  
the same struggles  
which had always tripped me up,  
held me back,  
kept me from succeeding,  
after this much time, half a century,  
that I was jiving myself  
to think I could overcome them  
in the time I had left

That I was exiled in a land  
where worth was made of gold  
and measured by its inert properties,  
a world of matter in conflict with itself  
at war with all other matter  
seeking its self existence above all other  
condemned to continue its  
aggrandizement  
until the realization that  
awakening cannot come from victory  
that peace cannot come from anger

that awareness of the infinite  
is the only cure, the only course  
the only way to escape  
the round of death and rebirth

it is the knowledge I have been seeking  
it is the only relief from the  
universal roller coaster  
of peak experiences,  
highs and lows  
which by repetition  
can ultimately  
only remind you that death can not be  
denied.  
we want to feel the peace of mind  
that sees death as liberation  
and annihilation as  
relief from suffering.

And with this realization,  
it began to preoccupy my mind  
I began to long for it  
as one longs for a distant lover  
and desire to hasten its occurrence

and with the knowledge  
of its inevitability

I began to feel solace.

Theresa Haffner

## Sonnet

There is a deeper meaning to be found  
Within a poem not defined by words  
For it's not the meaning but the sound  
That speaks unspoken to be heard.

For there is a deeper level still  
Than the interpretation by the mind.  
A deeper silence that cannot be filled  
By phrases turned with artifice of rhyme.

Like a river hidden from the sight  
The truth remains submerged and unknown  
Confused and obfuscated by the mind  
Communicating clearly, soul to soul.

For are we not ships passing in the night,  
Enclosed in darkness, emanating light?

-July 30,2007

Theresa Haffner



## Text

as poets we are externally  
no different from any other persons.  
we have the same conflicts  
the same joys and sorrows  
yet we use the elements of our life  
to create works of art  
opening our personal experience to public scrutiny  
laying bare the secrets of our soul  
transforming our fears and shortcomings  
to somehow give other people hope and courage  
reaching out with human kindness  
to touch another  
person to person  
without assumptions without dogma  
not to preach but to share  
divulging things that have never been revealed  
putting our hearts and our reputations on the line  
that other people be better able  
to understand their lives  
that they will know they are not alone

times a poet is said  
to be a spokesperson for a certain  
segment of the population  
we are often very lost  
and feel very much alone

many

we are very insecure in our feelings  
we don't know if anyone has ever  
felt this way before  
we hope that by shedding light  
on our inner feelings  
another soul also lost  
will find the courage  
to seek  
his own way to the dawn  
Theresa Haffner

## The Ancient Race

and who am i to tell?  
and what am i to say?  
and who am i to tell?  
and what am i to say?  
we are an old people  
an ancient race  
our ways have been forgotten  
our artifacts have rusted  
our civilization crumbled to dust  
now we face extinction  
an old people  
and when we are gone  
and when we are gone  
who will be here?  
and what will remain?

and who am i to tell?  
and what am i to say?  
and who am i to tell?  
and what am i to say?  
we are an old people  
our ancestors once stood  
before sod huts  
beneath the desert sky  
and worshiped pagan gods  
now the lineage has been broken  
we did not keep the ancient rituals.  
or practice the ancient rites.  
now time has passed us by  
and what did we live for?  
and what have we learned?  
and what has been accomplished?  
and what do we leave behind?

we shall go off this planet  
leaving no trace of our existence  
and who am i to tell?  
and what am i to say?  
and who will be there  
to know if it makes any difference?

we are an old people  
the wages of time and age  
are visible in the lines of our faces  
we are slow. we no longer  
have the resilience of our youth  
once we were many  
now we are few  
our hearts still beat with passion  
but we no longer have  
the desire we once had  
nor the belief in unobtainable goals

we know that we won't live forever

we shall die with the same beliefs  
we lived our lives for

we saw the best minds of our  
generation  
starving, homeless, wandering the stark  
streets  
pushing a shopping cart  
bat crazy and talking to themselves  
unwashed and uncared for  
without family or friends

aware of our own mortality  
aware of how little time we have left  
aware of how little we can do  
by ourselves alone  
elders of a mighty race  
no longer recognized the  
possibility of change

given time to write a poem,  
some will come to say  
'why did you write? '  
why did I write?  
only to prove to myself  
that i was here

Theresa Haffner

## The Black Stars

I.  
along the highway  
we passed the black holes  
of burned out stars

black stars

holes in the universe  
where love has gone wrong

and even the light can't escape  
and even the light can't escape

and even the time is running backward  
and even the time is running backward

and even the time slips away

negative universe  
    a storm within your eyes  
where the weight of dying stars  
    accumulates

along the highway  
we saw the black holes  
of burned out stars

black stars

the light of dying suns

II.  
beyond the event horizon  
lies a world we can never know

beyond the event horizon  
lies a world of beginnings and endings

that we can see but can never enter into

for we are trapped by the gravity  
of a dead star collapsing on itself  
in an orbit growing ever smaller

a world so tormented it can not  
escape even from itself

a world that has already become invisible  
and soon will cease to exist

beyond the boundary  
we passed contaminated

oil; refineries

illuminated by the orange flare  
of petroleum fires

near a deserted train yard  
the rusted tracks bear witness  
to a world that has never been

our car headlights speed  
through pitch blackness  
searching for survivors

refugees from a world that cannot be seen  
though it be only a few feet away

a world of singularity  
undetected but by its influence  
on surrounding bodies

their orbits distorted by the  
massive gravity field

III.

on our way to the city  
we saw the black holes  
of burned out stars

black stars

the light of dying suns

Theresa Haffner

## **The Book of Vladimir**

### Book One

These are the words received in a dream  
which I wrote in a book when I  
woke up.  
These are the symbols of death and  
Eternal life.  
Cross. Triangle. Pentagram. Hexagram.  
Inverted pentagram.  
These are the words of darkness  
and light.  
The words of Vladimir.  
Proceed only if you dare to read.  
These are the words of darkness.  
Slowly I came to consciousness  
in the mind of a dream  
behind the steering wheel of a car  
wrapped in a blanket.  
Slowly I drove the car  
looking for an escape  
but there was no way out.  
The road continued on forever.  
I was pursued but the gates would  
not open for me.  
These are the words of darkness  
and light.  
These are the symbols of Eternal life.  
The rose. The cross. The inverted triangle.  
These are the numbers:  
1,3,5,7,9,11.  
These are the sigils of witchcraft.  
These are the metals of alchemy.  
Iron. Copper. Lead. Tin. Mercury.  
These are the names of the demons:  
Astaroth, Asmodeus, Lilith, Baal, Belial.  
I return to darkness to dream again.  
These are the words which I, Vladimir,  
received in a dream.  
The words of evil.

### Book Two

I record these words now that I may give  
them to you.  
In them are found the secrets of magick  
and witchcraft  
that have been learned at the greatest cost.  
Proceed only if you dare for they not  
for the faint of heart.  
They can enflame your mind with madness

and provoke your heart to acts of violence  
and self-destruction.  
But in them also is found the secret of  
Immortality,  
such as it is.  
These are the words of darkness and light.  
The symbols are the cross, pentagram,  
hexagram, inverse pentagram.  
The point within the circle is the symbol  
of the universe.  
The numbers are 1,3,5,7,9,11.  
The planets are the Moon, Venus, Mercury,  
Mars, Saturn, Jupiter.  
The metals are Iron, Copper, Lead, Tin, Antimony.  
The Angels are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael.  
The Demons are Astaroth, Asmodeus, Lilith, Belial.  
The colors are Red for sacrifice and  
Black for destruction.  
The wages of sin are death.  
The wage of knowledge is lost innocence.  
The symbols of Eternal life are also  
the symbols of death.  
The answer is veiled in secrecy  
and hidden in darkness.  
These are the words I, Vladimir,  
received in a dream.  
The words of evil.

Book Three.

Book Three is not yet written.  
These are the words that I, Vladimir,  
received in a dream.  
The words of evil.

Theresa Haffner

## **The Case for Wisdom at 5: 00 A.M.**

death  
that old grim reaper that's been  
following us for so long  
that ultimate tax collector that  
just keeps on  
sending us his notices  
until he finally collects his bill  
the final rent that goes unpaid  
because there's  
no one there to pay it  
that ultimate seducer making  
his ultimate seduction  
leveler of all hills and levels of  
elevation  
as well as equalizer of  
income brackets  
waiting for us at the end of the line  
working with his old friend time  
the one we spend most of  
our lives outrunning  
trying to sidestep the man at the end  
but so few get away with it  
certainly not for very long  
and he just waits there patiently  
knowing that  
we'll come to him eventually  
of our own accord  
each of us in our own way  
and submit ourselves  
like ladies in waiting  
to life's greatest mystery  
the one that begins  
"whither thou goest"

death  
will i meet it straight in the eye  
or will i lie there winking  
waiting for him to take me off to  
some last surgeon's scalpel  
or nurse's sedative needle  
or lying on some bathroom floor  
waiting for some paramedics  
that didn't come because nobody  
called them  
or unconscious waiting for  
somebody to pull the plug  
will i be alone or with a loved one  
or with somebody i don't even know

death  
you old deceiver you  
you do not have to wait for us

most of us will catch up to you  
soon as we can  
having run through our entire lives  
in a frantic search  
for your dark sweet narcotic  
to rejoin you in the home where  
we have come from  
and life reveals itself a long  
eventful journey  
that ends at its beginning and  
begins at its ending  
with our embrace  
time running backward down a  
railroad track  
the days connected to one another  
like successive frames of a  
stereopticon  
the scenes depicting old age  
transforming into youth  
and childhood transforming into  
old age  
curving along the line of the  
wheel  
finally disappearing at its distant  
beginning  
                  now its ending  
which is where our journey begins  
proving that time is like a circle  
and the circle now is joined  
the end connected to the beginning  
in its completion like the shape of  
a "torus"

we know not "whither thou goest"  
we know that death is our  
ultimate destiny and our true  
home  
we are in life but as visitors  
traveling the days like tourists on  
a tour bus  
buying souvenirs sending  
postcards  
reading books repeating  
quotations  
knowing that this is not our home  
there is nothing lasting here  
all of it is borrowed  
all of it has to be paid back  
we cannot stay a single day  
without the hotel bill  
moving on we have only a limited  
time

the meter will run out the visa  
will expire  
the tariff is too high we will  
never get through customs  
there is nothing we can purchase  
and we have only time to spend  
all the time in our lives  
like a weekend vacation  
compared to eternity is but a  
moment  
the briefest wink of an eye  
life is not our home  
for when our journey ends we stay  
in death forever it is our home  
everlasting

we shall never have to  
leave nor be evicted  
nor have to pay the traffic tolls  
for in death we are eternal  
it is the cause and creation of  
this house of cards  
we have been living in

yes we live we die so what  
nothing special to it it happens to  
everybody  
no big deal about it  
it is life's great equalizer  
when we have gone through the  
gate  
there is no one greater lesser taller  
smaller than anyone else  
the clothes come off also the  
family name  
in death no one is treated any  
differently than anybody else  
it could be said death is for the  
living  
the way we think about death  
the funeral the casket  
the after death state the religious  
doctrines  
of resurrection redemption  
reincarnation salvation  
heaven hell or purgatorio  
all have meaning to the living  
but catholic protestant hindu  
moslem jew  
all are the same in the eyes of  
death  
which are the eyes of god  
no one knows for certain "whither

thou goest"  
but one thing i know for certain  
the journey is the same for  
all of us  
each has the same destination and  
reward  
none are coming back none will  
become angels  
none will suffer the punishments  
of hell  
of this i can assure you  
in death there will be no  
remembrance  
life is over finis that is that  
there is peace to be found in this

the ancients seemed to have a  
better understanding of the basic  
nature of life and death  
even with their magic, their  
rituals, and their demonology  
the egyptians believed that the  
human soul consisted of several  
different spirits  
each of which were part of the  
whole  
yet existed separately and were a  
able to act independently  
this was taken from the observation  
of actual phenomena  
each had their purpose and  
reason for being  
but only one part of this soul  
personality went to heaven and  
became eternal  
this was the conscious identity of  
the person who had lived  
the others became active at the  
time of the person's death  
and afterward they were able to  
communicate with the living  
partook of the funerary offerings  
participated in rituals  
went in and out of the tomb at  
will and traveled widely  
they could eat the food pictured  
on the walls of the mausoleum  
but they were in no way to be  
confused with the actual person  
who lived and who had died  
that consciousness was held in  
great reverence

it was not to be disturbed and  
could not be communicated with  
the rest were like spirits  
shades artificial entities  
that were not in themselves alive  
this is why there were pictures of  
them painted on the walls of the  
tomb  
and why there were statues and  
likenesses of the person  
who had died for by means of the  
likenesses they could be invoked  
by the people who came to the  
tomb  
they existed for as long as the  
likenesses existed  
for as long as there were pictures  
of food painted on the walls  
but people stay dead a very long  
time  
and when the likenesses were  
gone they could no longer be  
invoked  
for without the likenesses there  
could be no remembrance  
it was very sad the fate of these  
strange spirit beings  
pictured as little birds with  
human faces  
who were able to turn  
themselves into other animals

another strange doctrine of the  
egyptians  
involved the journey of the  
deceased through the underworld  
of the dead to reunite with his  
beginnings  
bringing to completion the circle  
of life  
this controversial doctrine was  
little known  
probably kept secret and quite  
possibly illegal  
as it was thought to contain  
highly dangerous forms of magic  
it involved those unfortunate  
souls who were dissatisfied  
had left unfinished business or  
wanted to change events or deeds  
they did during their lifetime  
in the land of the living the

egyptians observed the sun  
to come up in the morning in the east  
and every day make its journey  
across the sky to the west where  
it disappeared below the horizon  
on the western bank of the  
nile river  
as if it had died and  
would be gone forever  
yet each morning as if by a  
miracle it would be reborn again  
in the east and once more  
make its journey across the sky  
where it had come from they  
did not know, but they perceived that  
at night it must go beneath the  
earth and journey to the east  
back across the sky of the underworld  
which was populated by  
the souls of the dead  
thus the souls of those deceased  
who were unlucky enough  
to want to choose this kind of  
afterlife  
who were lucky enough to have  
the huge amount of money necessary  
to pay for the magic to bring this  
about  
made their way to the western  
bank of the Nile river where they  
climbed down the steps below the  
horizon and entered the land of  
the dead  
in the underworld the night sun  
rose in the west and set in the east  
so that for the dead time  
actually moved backwards  
and each day in the underworld  
marked one day off in the life of  
the deceased during which he  
could relive and alter the events  
as he would have preferred  
as days went by and he lived  
his life in reverse he became  
younger and younger  
until he became a child  
then a tiny infant  
finally as the sun set in the east  
he became unborn  
as such like the sun he became a  
baby in the egg from which unborn  
potential it was conceivable that

he could be reborn  
again as an infant in the land of  
the living  
such a miracle however was  
not only highly unlikely  
as far as i know it had never been  
known to have happened  
of course anything is possible but  
i wouldn't  
bet any money on it

death  
why this subject  
going over and over the same  
morbid thoughts in my head  
at 5 a.m. i look at my  
reflection in the bathroom mirror  
i'm getting older now  
my face shows the definite signs of aging  
notice the thickening of the  
neck and the lower jaw  
my hair definitely streaked with gray  
the skin of my face now not only  
shows the signs of wrinkling  
i have irreversible lines of age  
around my mouth  
the whole texture of my skin  
has become coarser  
thicker less fluid less supple  
like i've gotten frozen in my ways  
like the bark of a tree the wages  
of time and age are showing on my face  
i need to get these teeth pulled  
what's left of them  
dentures would help fill out my jaw line  
but look how much weight i've put on  
it's natural for your waistline  
to fill out but these pounds  
don't come off the way they used to  
a couple of inches but i've  
never been this heavy  
no doubt about it i've definitely  
lost the flower of my youth  
i'll never see 20 again  
i'm not yet fifty people live like  
there's no tomorrow  
like they've got all the time in the world  
but face it i'm starting to get up there  
the years mounting up and it's  
too late to start back now  
if only i'd taken that dancing class  
or had a picture of dorian grey in my closet

all this thinking about death has  
got me thinking more seriously about life  
not that i'm going to die right away  
but face it  
40 something and 40 something  
adds up to ninety something and it's  
probably safe to assume that more  
than half of my life is  
behind me  
and still it's going by so fast that  
six weeks goes by in the time it used  
to take two weeks  
a week can go by in as little as  
two days thanks to the  
miracle of television  
but it's clear that the process of aging  
does something recondite to the  
relative elapse of time  
never thought this through but one way  
to slow the process of aging might be  
to slow the relative elapse of time  
it's hard to tell how  
much time i've got left  
some people have a long time  
some are here a short time  
some are already gone some  
go in their fifties  
(i'll never live to 60) (but how many  
people thought they'd never live till 30)  
but even if i live to 65 which is a  
popular age to go  
that's only 20 more years  
(compared to the 40 something  
i've lived already)  
and going as fast as it is now that's  
not very long to get done some of the  
things i want to get done  
it would be nice to live to 100  
or 85 (even that sounds  
awfully young to go)  
a bible scholar friend of mine told me  
we are allotted three score  
and ten years in life  
as he was 70 when he told me  
he said everything else he got  
was free time  
my other friend told me  
"when you're our age  
we really don't know how much time  
we've got left maybe five years  
maybe more"  
a year later we was dead at 53

my mother died at 47 of cancer  
my father at 36 in an automobile  
accident  
god i need more time than that  
i've got to have ten years at least  
ten years at least and i can finish up  
but that's really pushing it  
i've got a few things i set out to  
accomplish in this life and i'm already  
way behind schedule in  
accomplishing them  
and the ravages of a lifetime of  
drug addiction and alcoholism are  
already taking their toll  
particularly in recent years the  
alcoholism which gives me such  
painful heartburn that it's almost  
impossible  
for me to continue drinking  
and my liver has become a major  
cause for concern    cirrhosis is no joke  
and i don't think Medi-Cal pays  
for transplants  
it could be an unwelcome way  
to cut short an already too brief  
journey  
the life of a poet is not all  
glamour and glory  
neither is it grit and gravy  
it's not everything you would think  
it might be (but of course  
it's everything to me)  
it's been a struggle my whole life through  
and it might still pay off  
but i can't just do anything i want  
here i sit in a rented hotel room  
waiting for my disability check to  
come

as i think about it though there  
are certain advantages to being older  
it's easier to handle the problems  
of day to day living  
when crises arrive (as they always do)  
we have lots of experience to  
know what to do  
it's easier to get a seat on a bus  
or in a theater  
no one asks our age in a nightclub or  
adult entertainment  
the streaks of gray in our hair  
make children mind us better

cause younger people to look upon us  
with a reverence of respect in spite  
of themselves and the dignity  
of our age gives us the right to address  
younger persons of either sex  
as "sweetheart"  
"darling" or "dear"  
we don't have to be afraid of  
losing our composure because  
we've lost it so many times before  
we're sure to find it again before  
it gets lost for good  
we know much more who we are  
and what we're about in the world  
we're more financially secure  
because we don't take the chances  
we took when we were young,  
and the secrets of life accrue  
to where we have insights into  
the better buys  
and where to get them  
we don't fall prey to the hysteria  
or the stress that youth endures  
we know that if the check  
is in the mail  
if it doesn't come today it will  
probably come tomorrow  
we're not usually good enough  
to fend off every criminal by  
dint of our physical prowess  
but we have the cunning not to  
take up with them in the first place  
young fools are not asking us  
out all the time  
we don't have all the glamour  
of the young and beautiful or the  
handsome young plaything  
but being secure in our identity  
makes us secure in our sexuality  
and with our years of repeated  
experience our sexual lives  
couldn't be more satisfying  
compared to the tentative  
experiments of youth and the  
insecurities and conflicts they  
engender we speak without envy  
we know that we can't be all things  
to all people  
we know that if we can just be  
one thing to a few people  
or a few things to one person it is more  
than enough to accomplish

we have a more philosophical  
outlook on life  
it takes year after year of  
dedicated study just to get some  
idea of what's going on  
it's impossible to understand the  
meaning of knowledge until you  
become proficient in at  
least two disciplines  
after that the barrage of  
information no longer overpowers  
us and you have a framework to  
categorize knowledge  
the expanding cognitive universe  
opens like a flower of  
understanding  
the wisdom of the ancients  
merges with the discoveries of the  
modern world to give a  
unified meaning to existence  
it's a pity that it takes so long  
to learn and gives us so little time  
to do anything with it  
it takes thirty-five years just to  
learn that you need to know something  
another ten to get a basic understanding  
of what it is you need to know  
when you are young the world  
opens before you like an unlimited potential  
could do anything might even  
become president  
but as childhood wears on each  
decision shuts off an entire area  
of accomplishment  
makes you take aim on  
your ultimate destiny your  
final resting place when  
death makes you eternal  
in youth there is time  
many hours after hours to drift  
aimlessly gathering life's experiences  
before deciding what to become  
but when you are older life has  
made the decisions for you that  
you haven't made for yourself  
you know what you must do  
and how much time you have to do it  
if you have a longing to leave  
your footprints on the sands of time  
you had better get to stepping  
  
by virtue of all this useless and

pointless knowledge we have been  
gathering  
over so many years we begin to feel  
we have an obligation to right  
some of the wrongs of the  
world  
it is no longer worth it to live  
just for our own benefit alone  
but for the rest of humanity as well  
and our posterity  
that we must take responsibility  
for improving the situation  
because there is no one else who will  
do it  
and if we don't it won't get done  
we don't think the world will  
remain unchanged  
or always wallow in the sight of  
self indulgent bureaucrats  
and dishonest auto mechanics  
but not having children of my own  
the longing for immortality reasserts itself  
i want to leave something of myself behind  
something of worth that will be  
here after i'm gone  
the love song if j. alfred prufrock  
and the kaddish of allen ginsberg  
replay themselves endlessly inside  
my mind like an unwinding spool of  
recording tape  
i keep hoping that life cycle  
will ease the anxiety of oncoming age  
naturally  
lead my head to some peace of  
mind  
i have a fear of being cremated  
please don't let me be cremated  
or worse like so toe tagged  
pauper's funeral just burned up  
i want to be buried in the ground  
like my mother  
and her mother before her  
that i may become one with the earth  
that a willow tree may spread its  
branches above me head  
and grasses grow  
and somewhere sometime  
someone might visit my grave  
it's not too much to ask

last exit to dreams  
when you are at last able to look

death in the eye  
look at life as a sower of seed  
and a cultivator of the soil  
as you sow `ere shall you reap  
provided you have ample water  
for your crops to grow  
apples are apples and oranges  
are oranges and never will  
one become the other  
but cultivate your crops with discretion  
and a fruitful harvest will be yours  
look at life as the captain of a  
ship  
as you chart your course across  
uncharted waters  
learn to hold the rudder and steer  
the course  
if you steer the course long enough  
eventually you will cross  
to the other side  
if you change your course you will  
drift aimlessly forever  
don't invest in unsecured second mortgages  
never store your goods in an  
unlocked storage garage  
don't trust your money  
or your mate to your best friend  
for the trust of time is your truest friend  
the voyage is never over  
till you meet the final destination  
"whither thou goest"

Theresa Haffner

## **The Death of Billie Holiday**

When Billie Holiday died  
(for all our sins)  
all she had was \$500  
taped to the inside of her thigh

she had no condos, no real estate,  
no expensive cars, no elegant furniture  
no swiss bank accounts

had she lived  
all those things  
would have been hers

but she died in 1959  
before any of them  
were possible

never in her wildest dreams  
could she imagine the extent of her fame  
or how many lives would be touched by her

she had lived a life  
of dizzying highs  
and treacherous lows

and all she had to  
to show for it

was an understanding  
of life

and how to communicate it

through words  
and music

Theresa Haffner

## **The Death of Poetry**

Poetry is dead and God is alive.  
I heard these words and began to cry.  
Without poetry what would become of me,  
Drowning in a sea of Christianity?

Poetry is dead and long let it lie  
With its Thee and its Thy and its Thou and its Thine  
May we never see another line  
Of iambic pentameter with end-stopped rhymes.

Poetry is dead, and so it shall lay,  
Mouldering at the pit of its shallow grave.  
And no longer will they give a hoot  
For the quatrain stanzas or the metered foot!

Poetry is dead at the bottom of the sea  
With its anapests, dithyrambs, dactyls and spondees.  
And also eight to sixteen lines  
On your innermost feelings or the meaning of life.

Poetry is dead but how long will it stay  
Before they resurrect it for another day?  
Has it not been just a few years time  
Since they said it was God who was dead—  
-and poetry alive?

Theresa Haffner

## **The Game of Chess**

(Also called the Game of Life)

The real meaning of things is not usually at first perceived.

Temporary objectives may assume exaggerated importance that will quickly subside once its purpose has been fulfilled and the real purpose behind the purpose emerges.

Whether you play on the board or off the board, every chess player knows you have to think two moves ahead and you have to protect your pieces.

Because chess is mortal combat.

The King, who is yourself, male or female, rich or poor, each of us is a king in our own right—

is the master of this game we are playing.

His pawns are his friends and supporters. They are vicious attackers and able defenders.

Do not underestimate their power, because a single pawn can bring about his opponent's checkmate when the rest of his pieces are gone.

Group them in flanks about your king for safety.

His horses go out in pairs. They can maraud and defend. They are called knights, but their true nature is more that of a knave, a jack, a ne'er do well.

They are the independent contractors who for their own purposes will do the King's dirty work.

They are the burglars and thieves of the dope dealer's company that act as backup, the enforcers who answer the door and screen his clients, sometimes called lieutenants.

Every property owner has more than  
his share of them.

They may be sincere or insincere. They  
may be loyal or talk behind his back,  
but when their destruction is through,  
they will be the first to be sacrificed.

The Bishops are his spiritual advisors.  
One White, one Black. One good, the  
other evil. They battle like the right  
and left hand paths.

Eventually, however, they too will fall.

The Queen is his wife. The love of his  
life, whom he would do anything for.  
Who means everything to him.

Most powerful of pieces, she operates  
the household, controls the finances,  
and in the flash of an eyelid can cross the  
entire board and meet the opposing  
queen in her own parlor, on her own  
terms, and can back her down.

He loves her, but when the opposition  
brings in their big guns to check and  
counter check, he will sacrifice her, too.

Then the King will be left alone,  
surrounded by the passel of what  
pawns remain, and the lateral attacks of  
the distant Rooks, lifeless castles,

the empty real estate left around when  
the queen is gone.

Theresa Haffner

## **The Human Kind**

We are all children  
Lost on horizons  
That compass our dreams

Once there was laughing  
And singing and dancing  
On beaches that beckoned

We were all young then  
And faultless of fear  
With our whole lives before us

With hope for the Human Kind.

Oh my people, my children  
My brothers and sisters  
What has become of you?

We were a people  
Who held a great promise  
Now troubles surround us

And worries enfold us  
And devils entreat us  
And poverty breeds avarice

Remember the Human Kind

We once were a city  
Become a great nation  
With the world all around us

Now trials' tribulation  
And heart's deprivation  
On the eve of millennium

Ask the unanswered question  
Of this generation  
Has this great city fallen?

Come, join the Human Kind

Theresa Haffner

## The Journey

["It is relatively common for experienced (marijuana users) to feel themselves to be more... open and filled with wonder at the universe, to find sexual love to be a union of souls as well as bodies, to feel nonphysical kinds of energy flowing in the body, to feel at one with the world, and to feel that time comes to a stop. Not quite as common, but still frequent, are experiences of mind-to-mind contact with others (telepathy) and feeling in touch with a higher power or god."

- Transpersonal Psychologies by Charles T. Tart.]

on our way to the city  
we encountered the remains of other travelers  
whose journeys once traversed our same terrain

on a hillside grown thick with brambles  
was the wreckage of those souls  
love had left behind

one was

STRUNG

like a bead

pierced by a needle  
run through the heart  
by a thread  
and suspended from the trees on a string

some were

HUNG

like desiccated fruit  
withered drying in the wind  
hanging from the twisted branches  
barren of a leaf

the rest were

FLUNG

their hearts

WRUNG

dry of emotions

like grains of sand to the far reaches  
of the cosmos where sand and sea unite in the  
infinity of space

beside the road

where the silence of the inner ear  
makes images from the wilderness of familiar things,

i make the pilgrimage being once more in pursuit  
of that which brings transformation

i, the priestess

i, the prophetess

survey the wasted efforts of those whose  
paths had been turned away

and seek to perform the sacrament  
on the high hilltop  
where wildflowers

queen anne's lace, flowering dill, purple dock, ragweed and goldenrod,  
yellow daisies and tiger lilies grow

along the mighty highway  
we saw mile after mile  
of broken glass

Theresa Haffner

## The Message

THE MESSAGE...  
is in the wires  
telephone wires  
telegraph wires  
THE MESSAGE...  
is coming closer  
you can hear it humming  
across the mountains  
across the desert  
across the valleys  
across the alley-ways  
into the people  
THE MESSAGE...  
is getting stronger  
it's coming longer  
you can almost hear it  
you can almost see it  
it's in the air  
it's everywhere  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's on the TV  
it's in the news  
it's on the front page  
it's in the headlines  
it's in the gossip columns  
it's on the late night talk shows  
THE MESSAGE...  
is on the airwaves  
it's on the radio  
it's beaming everywhere  
from the broadcast tower  
it's on the short wave  
wireless transmission  
satellite transmission  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's on the highway  
it's in the fast lane  
it's in the horsepower  
it's in the octane  
it's in the motorcars  
it's in the diesel truck  
it's in the station wagon  
it's on the transit lines  
it's on the interstate  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's in the airways  
it's on the railways  
it's in the locomotive engine  
you can hear them throbbing  
you can hear them turning  
it's a mass vibration  
it's a thunderous occasion

spinning out the message  
THE MESSAGE..  
it's on the phonograph  
it's in the autograph  
it's 3-D sensational  
it's in pornography  
it's on the movie screen  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's loud and clear  
it's in the air raid shelter  
it's on the launching pad  
it's in the rocket blast  
it's in the message  
it's in the message  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it now is being heard  
you can listen for it  
hear the message  
you can almost feel it  
you can almost touch it  
soon it will be understood  
across the oceans  
across the continents  
city to city  
person to person  
the message is being heard  
THE MESSAGE..  
it's a vibration  
mass communication  
it's in the space age  
it's in the brain waves  
electron microscope  
digital microchip  
interplanetary rocket ship  
a lunar landing  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's in the people  
hear it in their voices  
see it in their faces  
it's in their laughter  
their tears and smiles  
it's coming by land and sea  
a thousand miles  
THE MESSAGE...  
will it be heard by you?  
will it come to see us through?  
can it still reach us yet?  
can it get through to us yet?  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it shall be known by all  
it shall be told by all  
it shall bring the truth

to everyone great and small  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
the starry night  
the icy dynamo  
the whirling whirlwind  
the volcanic lava flow  
a distant aeon's time  
get ready for it  
ready to receive it  
across your synapse  
in your own hometown  
calling out your first name  
can you hear THE MESSAGE?  
can you see THE MESSAGE?  
telephone wire  
telegraph wire  
it's calling for you  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's THE MESSAGE...  
it's THE MESSAGE...

it's THE MESSAGE!

Theresa Haffner

## The New Land

quadrille matrix database traces  
non repro blue graphline  
across pale green geometric grid  
vibrating crystals  
transmission of electromagnetic energy  
different wavelengths  
varying frequency patterns  
radiotelescope reception

stellar microwaves

doppler red doppler blue  
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,  
ONE OF PURITY AND NOBILITY  
where the material reality  
does not interfere  
with the work of the imagination  
WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH  
FOR THE NEW LAND

clouds of tonalities  
come and go  
within the music  
timbres of single notes  
hang suspended in temporal space  
articulated clarinet and oboe  
gain resolution then disperse into the  
geometries of the symphonic ensemble  
atmospheric cadence and dissonance  
drift cloudlike

cacophonic dodecaphonic  
a mobile of spires and spheroids  
on the beach of the infinite  
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,  
ONE WITHOUT HATRED OR RANCOR  
where the pettiness  
of human jealousy and infidelity  
does not enter  
WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH  
FOR THE NEW LAND

intransigent airships  
delineate absolute trajectories  
morning dreams  
midmorning mind schemes  
silent thought streams  
astral communication  
on the morning of the new awareness  
drifting continents geographic shift  
planetary tectonics  
THERE IS A HIGHER WORLD,  
ONE OF PURITY AND NOBILITY  
where the material reality  
does not interfere  
with the work of the imagination

WE JOIN IN THE SEARCH  
FOR THE NEW LAND

Theresa Haffner

## The New Paradigm

"As direct opposites converge on 0°polarity,  
then the poles will shift." -'Zero Polarity' by the author.

Between boredom and indifference lies the new paradigm.  
Between the climax and the anticlimax lies the new paradigm.  
Between the beginning and the ending lies the new paradigm.  
Between the back and the front lies the new paradigm.  
Between the list of the lost and the lost list lies the new paradigm.

If you can't see this you are probably too far away and need to wear glasses.  
If you can't hear this you are probably making too much noise and need to take the earplugs out of your ears.  
If you can't feel this you have lost touch sensitivity.  
You who have ears, listen.  
You who have eyes, see.

More and more our days are spent driving down this synonym for an information super highway called the Internet,  
where virtuous and virtual are not synonymous.

Between the back brace and the head injury lies the new paradigm.  
Between the microcosm and the macrocosm lies the new paradigm.  
Between the Vision and the Voice lies the new paradigm.  
Between the clutch and the power brake lies the new paradigm.

Who controls the past controls the future. More and more our time was spent in serious exploration of our own past.  
Come down in time. The past is always with us because the past becomes our present.  
We change the past by diligent excavation, re-remembering, and redefining our understanding of it.

Between the golf on Sunday and the all sports weekend lies the new paradigm.  
Between the side dish entrée and the box lunch lies the new paradigm.  
Between the couch and the cushion.  
Between the chest and the drawers.  
Between the headboard and the bed.  
Between the lamp and the lampshade lies the new paradigm.

Urban legend? A child locked in his bedroom without human contact since birth was raised entirely on the Internet with technical support by raisedbywolves.com.

Between the mainframe and the motherboard lies the new paradigm.  
Between the Mountain Crest and the Timberline lies the new paradigm.  
Between the land of the free and the home of the brave lies the new paradigm.

Between the watermelon seeds and the cantaloupe rinds,  
between the organ donor and the transplant,  
between the book and its cover,  
between the Sumerian Sunrise and the Artifacts on Mars lies the new paradigm.

For anyone who ever wanted everything,  
for anyone who ever wanted nothing,

for anyone who ever wanted to be with somebody,  
for anyone who ever wanted to be alone,  
in the hours before dawn, between the silences of 3 a.m., lies the new paradigm.

Between the mouse and the click,  
between the chasm and the mist,  
between the mystery and the rose,  
between the hours of parking and no parking,  
between nothing and no thing,  
between zero polarity and the insertion point  
lies the beginning of understanding.

The new paradigm.

Theresa Haffner

## The Next Generation

(STARDATE 45122.3. The sensors aboard the Starship Enterprise have detected a subspace anomaly. The nature of the anomaly is as yet unknown, but Commander Data has reported a slight drain on the warp core generator. Captain Jean Luc Picard has alerted the senior crew members to keep him informed of any changes and meanwhile continue on course to the colony on Aldebaran III)

"It must mean we're really getting old when the only thing we talk about is television, " I say to Bobby. He sits across from me, the flickering colors from the TV screen playing across his face, the dim light illuminating the room like a lunar landscape.

We are watching episode #232 of 'Star Trek: The Next Generation.' There are no more new episodes. We have seen this episode before, but we are watching it because it's better than not watching it. We watch it at the same time every night. We are watching it because we are addicted to its predictable action, its monotone dialog, its hypnotic cinematography. We watch it because we have seen so many episodes that we know all the characters, their life histories, their personal characteristics, their predilections and idiosyncrasies, better than we know some of our own family members.

(Commander Data has been experimenting with oil painting. All of his subjects appear to be meticulously drawn but do not express feeling. Ship's Counselor Deanna Troi suggests that he attempt abstract art to explore his subjective experience.

Their conversation is interrupted, however, by a message from the bridge. The subspace anomaly has greatly increased in both its size and intensity. If it continues to grow at its present rate the Enterprise will soon be in danger of being drawn into it and being destroyed.)

I feel that my life is slipping away, that I am trapped, helpless, in a void of television shows, TV dinners, and a routine of daily activity, doing the same thing at the same time each day, that makes the days go by as quickly and painlessly as possible. I feel that each week that passes is a week that I will never have again. That I am dying, slowly, the life energy being sucked out of me, a little bit each hour, each day, in a plethora of 'Seinfeld,' 'Friends,' 'The X-Files, " and 'Star Trek: The Next Generation.' That I am caught in a time warp and slowly and inexorably being drawn into its vortex.

{The subspace anomaly continues to grow and to draw energy from the Starship's warp core generator.

"Shields at 14 per cent, " says Commander Worf.

"At this rate the Enterprise will be destroyed in 13 hours,28 minutes, and 32 seconds, " says Data.)

Somehow I've got to escape from this, to rejoin the flow of humanity, to begin my life once more. If only I could meet the person, write the poem, sing the song, paint the painting. If only I could break the cycle. But it's too safe remaining here. And I use

television like a drug, insulating me from my own feelings, insulating me from my own sense of loss, substituting instead the fictitious emotions of fictitious characters, lived vicariously at the same time each day, with a standardized format designed to keep the self distant, removed, safe, anaesthetized from the pain of indirect living.

Bobby says, "You really know you've been watching too much television when everything on the cable is a re-run."

(Captain's Log Supplemental: The Enterprise has escaped from the subspace anomaly with 1.4 seconds to spare. The senior officers on the bridge look at each other with a sigh of relief.

"Ensign, lay in a course for Star Base 67, bearing 6571, mark 82, warp six, " says Picard.

"Engage! ")

Theresa Haffner

## **The War Begins**

DAY ONE:

No more protests—no more discussion pro or con—no more dissent—the war is on as cruise missiles bombard Baghdad and marine forces cross Kuwaiti border into Iraq.

The ghostly green infrared night vision images.

The orange blasts of the exploding cruise missiles.

The U.S. tanks and armored troop carriers painted the same deadly slate gray of the Iraqi desert.

Periodic Kuwaiti air raid sirens signaling citizens and U.S. personnel to don gas masks and enter shelters until the all clear. The Iraqi missiles intercepted or landing harmlessly in the desert with no trace of chemical or biological warheads.

The typical information, disinformation, and misinformation from the usually unreliable sources.

After the all clear, the streets of Baghdad and Kuwait City—empty—deserted-still. Businesses closed. No traffic on the streets. Nobody out. Frozen in silence. Waiting for the morning and the second wave.

# # #

The game of chess. Coalition forces open with cruise missile to government bunker in Baghdad.

Saddam counters by setting fire to oil fields near Kuwaiti border. A defensive move to interfere with coalition communications and night vision devices to slow the progress of the land invasion.

U.S. marines cross Iraqi border and begin the march on Baghdad.

# # #

The first gulf war was a comedy of errors. the bungling inept Iraqi soldiers falling over themselves trying to surrender. The erratic ineffectual Scuds lobbed hodge podge at random targets. The inept Iraqi military.

Not so 12 years later. Both Coalition and Iraqi forces exhibit a cold precise professionalism. Both sides exhibit deadly restraint.

DAY TWO:

1000 antiwar protesters jailed in San Francisco.

Coalition helicopter crashes killing 16.

Turkish forces ready to cross north Iraqi border to secure Kirkuk oil fields and occupy

Kurdish lands.

11: 38 A.M. Baghdad. Clear sky. Traffic on the streets. Buses running. Private cars. Station wagons. Sedans. Four lane divided highway. Tree lined urban streets.

# # #

8: 30 P.M. Baghdad. Night. The streets now empty. British aircraft bombers left Britain 2 ½ hours ago. For 2 ½ hours Baghdad has known the air attack is coming. Now the first anti aircraft artillery fire. The green night vision. The expectancy of high ordnance bombs.

Anti aircraft fire. Incoming bombers. Explosions on the outskirts of the city.

Saddam has offered a \$14,000 reward for each Coalition soldier killed. \$28,000 for each prisoner captured.

The anti-aircraft subsidies.

One U.S. officer has been killed by hostile fire. 14 accidental deaths in helicopter crash.

30,000 soldiers advance on the Iraqi desert.

Vast expanses of empty desert—flat—gray brown—empty. Endless flat horizon. Local dust storms.

Along the Tigris River—oases-palm trees—canals-cultivated areas. Paved roads. Railroads. Power lines.

“Shock and Awe” has begun.

# # #

Over 50 presidential palaces in the vicinity of Baghdad. The digital virtual computer imaging like a sophisticated video game.

Seven oil wells afire. A second U.S. marine killed.

Scattered vehicles on Baghdad’s night time streets.

American Armored division moving toward Baghdad.

DAY\_THREE:

9: 45 A.M. PST. Friday.

The night desert dreamscape like the surface of the moon.

Cruise missiles launched against Baghdad.

Islamic call to evening prayer.

Air attack on Mosul-the second largest city—near the Kirkuk oil fields in Northern Iraq.

Shock and awe.

# # #

A – Day. The northern war seems to have started..

Smoke rising among the palm trees and high rise office buildings. Orange fireballs.  
Bombs falling across Baghdad.

Incendiary fire balls. Baghdad under heavy bombardment.

This beautiful city.

“LIVE LONG, IRAQ AND PALESTINE. GOD IS GREAT! ”-Saddam Hussein.

Baghdad, population 5,000,000.

General Tommy Franks, Commander of U.S. forces.

# # #

Saturday Morning, Iraqi time.

After the most punishing bombardment of the war destroyed the presidential palace-the military headquarters- the secret police - the offices of security-government TV and radio-leaving the high rise buildings in flames—

Dawn found the streets deserted and smoke rising over the ruins.

Shortly later there were vehicles on the street, public transportation, Saturday Morning, first day of the week after Friday, the Islamic day of rest.

Power still on. Reservoirs not flooded. Streets still open. Civilian businesses could conceivably open.

Coalition smart missiles precision piloted by laser guidance or Global Satellite Positioning.

U.S. intelligence believes Saddam to be injured since preliminary bunker busting attack on the Hussein family compound.

The massive troop movements—column of combat vehicles—moving north over the desert moonscape.

U.S. television returns to normal programming, periodically breaking away for news from the Gulf—

Preparing the way for the Academy Awards broadcast on Saturday night.

# # #

One day all this will be a memory.

In the first Gulf War I found many images that reminded me of the images in the Biblical Battle of Armageddon.

But it was not Armageddon.

This war is much larger. 300,000 almost numerating the grains of sand on an ocean beach. Gog and Magog.

But it is not the final battle. It will soon be Day Four.

Theresa Haffner

## **The World Has Changed.**

The world has changed a lot.  
As a people we've grown and regressed  
and grown again.  
When I was a child the world belonged  
to our parents.  
Now it belongs to our children.  
In between it belonged to us..  
We either wasted it or sold it  
or struggled against insurmountable odds.  
The condition leaves the appetite unfilled.

Still I suppose the similarities shine through.  
Some things haven't changed.  
The way the sun shines on your hair  
and shoulders  
The way lovers cling to each other.  
The pathetic emptiness people feel  
when they are alone.

They said that wisdom comes not by  
crying out for it  
But by waiting for it to come.  
That it would not be what we thought  
it would be.  
That it would lead to calmness of heart.

In truth it comes from accepting your  
weaknesses as well as your strengths..  
Your faults as well as your virtues.  
The good with the bad.

So hurt me all that you can  
if it makes you feel any better.  
I can take it and still accept you back again.  
I will be content with small rewards  
knowing that in time my rewards will grow  
until they are commensurate with my spirit.

And will still love you..

Theresa Haffner

## Two Blocks East, Three Blocks West

(for Eddie Villanueva)

Two blocks east, three blocks west,  
These city streets are all that I have left.  
They never miss me when I go.  
They don't get mad when I don't come home.  
These city streets have become my only friend.

Three blocks west, two blocks east.  
I get everything I need.  
I see everyone I want to see..  
And every day is like the one before.  
Nothing less and nothing more.  
First you get some money  
Then you find someplace to score.

Everything I own  
    I carry in my pocket.  
My telephone numbers  
    and a photograph in a locket.

Two blocks east, three blocks west.  
That's the width and breadth of it, my friend.  
A world without color, a world of gray.  
A world where sunlight goes and comes  
to mark another day.

A world where nothing is permanent  
A world where nothing lasts.  
I don't think about the future.  
I don't think about my past..  
A world without religion  
Without family or friends  
A world without patriotism  
A world without regret.

A world of first names and changing faces  
Like gray smoke that rises and drifts  
without leaving any traces.

Once my world had color.  
Once it had life.  
It had a tiny baby.  
It had my wife.  
A house in a neighborhood  
With a garage and a lawn.  
But I didn't do right.  
Things went wrong.  
It was my own fault.  
Now they are gone.  
Instead these city streets of gray.

The concrete sidewalks  
of cement and brick.  
Are all that pave each break of day.

To make a living on these mean streets  
You either have to steal,  
Become a prostitute  
Or else you have to deal.  
Some people loan money.  
I've tried my hand at all of them.  
The only thing that's certain,  
One day it will end.

They say I'm an opportunist.  
To tell the truth  
Most people here  
Are only passing through.  
They don't know me.  
They don't care about you.

They're just here for  
Something they can get.  
They are hustlers, users,  
They are not friends.  
When push comes to shove  
They'll be on their way.  
What harm if I get the opportunity  
To make them pay?  
I lay my traps and snares  
To catch them unaware.  
I provide them goods and services  
At inflated prices.  
And after 7 PM it doubles.  
It's more expensive at night.  
It's not my fault  
If they didn't see me coming.  
They don't call me Fast Eddie  
For nothing.

Come, look at this street corner  
Only one year from today.  
The streets will have the same names  
But everything else will have changed.  
If you want to find somebody  
There's no guarantee they'll be here.  
But if you want to pick up something  
Someone will take you there

See these marks on my arm?  
This is my house. This is my car.  
This is my swimming pool.  
To me they're just scars.

The future is uncertain  
No one knows how long  
    the shadows cast.  
One only hopes the memories  
Will be enough to last.

Because if I don't love  
    I will not be hurt.  
Because if I don't hope  
    I won't be disappointed.  
Because if I do not try  
    I will not fail.  
Because life comes with only  
    one guarantee.  
One day you'll die.

Two Blocks East.  
Three blocks West.

Theresa Haffner

## Unknown Agent

I am an unknown  
agent  
the operative  
with no name  
No one knows  
my identity  
without guilt  
and without shame  
I take my orders  
from newspapers  
and TV  
I am guided by the  
headlines, bits of  
paper, and  
debris.

I uphold the power  
to which I have sworn,  
and enforce the code of justice  
without malice or reward  
I am the servitor of God and Satan  
and the governments of  
men,  
unknown to other operatives  
and by the countries,  
disavowed by them.

The House of Love  
will cause you sorrow  
Your safe home  
will be cracked.  
Everything I give you  
the Cosmic will take back.  
I represent the Hierarchy  
and act on their advice

Sacrifice, O Lord  
this darkness  
in our soul.  
Banish to the dark  
the hatred that  
we hold.  
Cast out from us  
the demons, their  
evil and their lies  
Forgive our thoughts  
of treacheries  
which confine our lives

I care not for either side,  
have no ideology  
or creed,

and about the organizations  
I have nothing to reveal.

I am the Keeper of the Scales  
and all lost car keys  
are in my hand  
I keep my abode in the  
barren spaces  
And the place where  
all roads end.

No one ever  
sees me coming  
When I materialize  
as if out of smoke  
No one ever sees me leaving  
disappearing as I go.

I have no soul to lose  
and by none to  
be suspect  
Nothing in my life  
to prevent me  
from my task

And when he lays me down  
in death  
I will utter  
no remorse  
Only pride  
that with no emotion  
I performed

By no one will my  
identity be guessed

My storage locker is not full  
of bounty of the quest

What the Cosmic bestows  
the radio can't deny.

By toiling into the matter  
neither answers  
or their questions  
will they find.

Theresa Haffner

## Untitled

many days have come and gone  
and still i linger here  
climactic times have been and passed  
and still my mind's not clear  
the sun has gone behind the moon  
the piper sucks a silver spoon  
no rhyme is real no chime is true  
for me there is no you  
for you i cannot be seen  
the puzzle has a missing piece  
the sky with broken pieces strewn

Theresa Haffner

## **Waiting To Be Discovered**

i am waiting to be discovered at this stage of my life at this point in time as a voice to stir the awakening of the hearts and minds of man to a rebirth of freedom

i am waiting to be discovered as a survivor of the sixties who will pick up the scepter of the beat generation and reassume the battle they once waged

i am waiting to be discovered after this many years as a poet who words will not be misunderstood

i am waiting to be discovered crying out to the people to be courageous, do not give up the battle, for the tide will soon be turning against those who tolerate injustice

i am waiting to be discovered as a living verification that dreams which don't come true overnight can be achieved over time, and that dreams which seem impossible could never be achieved at all unless they are dared to be dreamed

i am waiting to be discovered on a page in a book on a shelf by a person as a voice of hope where no hope had existed before

i am waiting to be discovered as a new american patriot who will strike a blow against the hypocrisy of modern america that says one thing and means another

i am waiting to be discovered telling frightened white america to cut out their senseless yelling they have nothing to be afraid of

i am waiting to be discovered as one who can help a nation rediscover its identity and redefine its basic concept of freedom

i am waiting to be discovered as a force for good in a world that does not know good from evil

i am waiting to be discovered on a park bench seated next to you with a wild look in my eyes and pigeons at our feet with sheaves of paper in my hands gesturing wildly shouting "the rebirth of freedom"

i am waiting to be discovered as a voice which will reassert the basic principles of "love" and "peace" once held sacred by a generation to a nation that has trivialized them and a government that has stated that such principles lead to moral degeneration, street crime, and violence

i am waiting to be discovered as one whose life has been immersed in revolution, dedicated to building a new way of life, and pioneering the exploration of consciousness

i am waiting to be discovered as a voice of the present informed by the past and speaking for the future

i am waiting to be discovered as an artist who took a stand on the issues of her time before it was too late

i am waiting to be discovered as the homeless person with no shoes that exists inside all of us

i am waiting to be discovered as a poet whose poems were not about mowing the lawn,  
dishes in the sink, or the names of vegetables

i am waiting to be discovered as one person no better or worse than any other whose  
personal journey echoed that of as generation, embraced each direction with courage  
and responsibility, and still in not completed

i am waiting to be discovered as a poet who cried real tears over the state of the  
brothers and sisters of her generation

i am waiting to be discovered as a person who embraces the ideals of John F. Kennedy,  
Martin Luther King, and Anwar Sadat, yet knows that only by putting them into practice  
in our daily lives can they be realized completely

i am waiting to be discovered as one who is proud of the accomplishments of the last  
half century that have come so far, yet knows how much farther we have to go

i am waiting to be discovered

Theresa Haffner

## War

to fight the bitter fight

to wage the bitter war

a war waged for freedom  
by small bands of misfits  
with the wide eyes of inspiration and holy sacrament

a war waged with the weapons of poetry, music, drama,  
painting and modern dance

a war waged with spoken word, computers, paintbrushes, video cameras,  
typewriters, guitars, and keyboard synthesizers

a war waged with Jack Daniels, Old English '800', Budweiser, Magnum,  
King Cobra, Cisco, and Thunderbird wine

a war waged with psilocybin, mescaline, marijuana, cocaine,  
methamphetamine, and heroin

a war waged with deviant sex, bisexuality, homosexuality, transvestism, bondage and  
dominance, sadomasochism, fetishism, masturbation, and heterosexual love

a war waged with mysticism, candle burning, wicca, meditation, tarot cards,  
Satanism, shamanism, and magic invocation

a war waged in the tradition of the masters who came before:

Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary  
Snyder, Gregory Corso, and Charles Olson

Percy Shelley, John Keats, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge,  
Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, e.e.  
cummings, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, and Eugen Gomringer

Charles Ives, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Edgard Varese,  
Eliot Carter, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, and Philip Glass

Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollack, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Piet Mondrian,  
Mark Chagall, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, Toulous LaTrec, Paul  
Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Cezanne

John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy, Miles Davis, Charles Parker, Ornette  
Coleman, Sun Ra, and Pharaoh Sanders

John Cippolina, Jerry Garcia, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Ray  
Manzarek, Paul Butterfield, Lou Reed, David Bowie, and Bob Dylan

Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Darby Crash, Keith Morris, Il Deuce, Greg Ginn, Henry  
Rollins, and Mike Watt

a war waged by prostitutes, drug dealers, drag queens, compulsive gamblers,

alcoholics, convicts, criminals, homeless people, and poor people everywhere

a war waged with word and ideology, and those who lend their bodies to be the weapons of the war

a war waged with the common bond of humanity shared by all people

a war waged by those who fell prey to their own devices, in mental institutions, jails, prisons, asylums, half way houses, missions, and board and care homes

a war waged by all the faceless unknown contributors and seekers of truth who did not achieve fame, who may be judged by society and by themselves as failures, who may live in economic ruin, having given everything for the struggle, whose names have not been recorded by history, but whose courageous deeds have not been without effect.

a war waged in the name of all those who gave their lives through o.d. deaths, suicide, murder, and a.i.d.s.

a war waged by everyone who ever went for broke and committed themselves wholly and totally to a cause or an ideal

a war of liberation as serious as any revolutionary insurgency against any South American third world dictatorship

a war fought without generals, without commanders, without military, without strategy, and without guns

a war fought in the name of freedom by such unlikely candidates as S.A. Griffin, Rafael F. J. Alvarez, Scott Wannberg, Saint Teresa Stone, Katie Soljak, M. Mollet, Doug Knott, and also those writers who have all too often struggled in isolation

a war fought to overthrow world religions, multinational corporations, criminal justice systems, television evangelists, old money accumulated by southern plantation owners on the slave trade, and any doctrine that insists that it and only it is the right way and denies the right of any other to exist

a war waged against the ideology that allowed a government to wage Desert Storm against an unprepared, under equipped and disorganized Iraqi people, killing and estimated 150,000, mostly civilians, while sustaining only light casualties, some by friendly fire or accidental death

a war waged against superstition, supernaturalism, fundamentalism, ignorance, and bigotry

a war waged against murder, violence, dehumanization, oppression, intolerance, victimization, discrimination, censorship, and the execution of criminals

a war fought that our world be safe for poetry, for music, for painting, for independent thinking, for minorities, and for our posterity

a war that each of us must wage within ourselves and one day must take up in the world about us

a war for brotherhood

Theresa Haffner

## Wounds

I am turning the dial on the radio—switching stations looking for some music to listen to. It is late at night and the lamplight in my hotel room casts steep shadows.

I listen to each station for a few seconds before deciding to change it. I have been reading Rimbaud and the mood hangs heavy in the room, the images still lingering in my mind.

I am naked and my legs in the thick lamp light are like a latticework of tiny red dots, needle marks, puncture wounds, and tiny hair follicles where I have shaved my legs, imposed over the drifting clouds of bruises where injections have missed the veins, and old scars of abscesses that have healed, the ravages of my soul. And still below that the Cimmerian and disappearing network of blue veins deep within the skin, receding, hidden, obscure, like deep rivers. The suggestions of blue the only clue to their location, very hard to hit.

It is a pity that I don't have any veins closer to the surface, easier to see. But I have used them so many times, injecting them with my mania, that they are no longer in evidence.

So I have to use the deep ones, and they are very difficult to hit, so that I miss more times than I hit, and bruises emerge and migrate like ornate tattoos.

I don't lament what I have done to my body. It is mine and I can do with it as I please. Only that it is so much harder to inject than it used to be, as I have come to love it more. It has become like a religion to me.

I have been taking amphetamine, and I want to inject some more. Which is why I have taken a break from Rimbaud.

The room is deep and the city whispers outside my second story window.

I begin exploring the flesh of my thighs and my hips, searching for a place to inject. There are no obvious places. Many places have been used two or more times and are unusable.

Flesh tones in the lamplight. As I examine the latticework of puncture wounds, bruises, and scars superimposed over my skin, my eyes begin to swim, and I begin to hallucinate.

Lines intersect and rearrange themselves across my naked flesh into words that I can read. They are rapidly changing, only in existence a moment before changing into something else, so that it is difficult to tell what they mean.

So I began to read my legs:

Velvet skies / none of the above / felt pink / pride of love / felt the  
night / pistils of thirst / it shed light in time / futile / ray of thought /  
entry / King of Poetry / make dim mask / denials / ergot of love / the  
one I dare / thine own heart / thrash the halls / chemise / the hand of

daffodils / herds Rev. the rose / chant of goat / medicine of rye / faults  
I have some / lady of love / religion of light / my boat / my daily need /  
then one day he died / faith / bottom of the vault / effects as yet  
unknown but unintentional / phantom of self / but then I can / take ships  
to the other shore / other flames other loves / the flesh tones impale /  
listen to the chrysanthemums / the vile pigeons / Ode to Endymias /  
Absu Syrta Sq. / ancillary / new dictionaries / I said synaptic / old  
fisherman under the bridge / henbane root / Atropine / anabolic /  
triplicate /

At last I give up on finding a place to inject and decide to take a break, the blood  
running down my leg. I will try again later.

Once again I begin turning the dial on the radio. The music. The static between  
stations. The place between stations where two stations come in at once. Once more I  
pick up Rimbaud. I will be awake long past the dawn.

Theresa Haffner

## **Yellow Daisies**

i hate flowers

more precisely, i hate the feeling  
that thinking flowers are beautiful engenders

that kind of vulnerability  
that i have come to see as weakness

that i despise as

i also hate love songs  
as something overly sentimental, outright corny or  
in bad taste

the kind of feeling in a relationship  
that makes you feel like a fourteen year old girl

alright for fourteen year old girls but not for adults  
who have too much dignity  
who have been hurt too much already

i  
hate  
love

not because i don't love you

not because i haven't  
felt the pangs of love's  
blood red intensity

but because of the abusive love relationships  
that strip us of our dignity  
rob us of our freedom  
and make slaves out of us to one another

rob us of our sensibilities  
as surely as any intoxicating substance  
as dependence forming as any drug addiction

better our pain than our innocence

mine instead the  
scream of the inner city  
the cry of the desolate pavement at night  
the cracked cement  
the  
broken glass

mine the cry of desperation

and violent loneliness

where human beings like stunted flowers  
grow to a weird distorted blossom

better my pain  
than to be caught one more time  
in foolishness

where love hurts

Theresa Haffner