

[1999]



*Winged
Nation*

Winged Nation



Susan Marshall

Maggie in Heat

pencil

Volume 7, Number 1

Winged Nation

Volume Seven, Number One
Spring 1999

Staff:

Susannah LeVine
Jessica Lustig
Liz Masnik
Christine Weaver

Assisted By:

Robyn Benson
Kim Bylander
Jenny Cotton
Mary Beth Cox
Andrea Hagy
Kristen Reynolds
Tunisia Riley
Trina Zerick

" . . . the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, . . . she will be born."

-- Virginia Woolf

This edition of *Winged Nation* was typeset in Times New Roman by the staff.

Winged Nation is a proud product of a women's community at the College of William and Mary. Our publication provides opportunities to share our unique perspectives, and to explore female existence in a society that has consistently undervalued our contributions to the world of creative expression.

Contents

Jessica Lustig	Untitled	pen	cover
Susan Marshall	Maggie in Heat	pencil	title page
Shannon Garvey	At Golgotha	poem	4
Christine Weaver	New York	poem	5
Grace Kline	Etiquette Book, 1919	poem	6
Trina Zerick	The Boy . . .	poem	8
Darcy Luetzow	Europa on the Phone	poem	9
Grace Kline	The Pleiades	poem	10
Jessica Lustig	Tracking the Light	prose	11
Jessica Lustig	Untitled	pen	20
Abbie Doss	Veiled	poem	21
Trina Zerick	Gallery of Art	poem	22
Darcy Luetzow	Blue Brooms	poem	23
Susannah LeVine	Kansas Rivers	poem	24
Susan Marshall	Untitled	pen	25
Christine Weaver	Wednesday . . .	poem	26
Tokya Colpitts	Awake and Still . . .	poem	27
Shannon Garvey	How I Discovered . . .	poem	28
Trina Zerick	A Nightlight . . .	poem	29
Tokya Colpitts	I come in . . .	prose	30
Andrea Hagy	The Potato Eaters	poem	31

At Golgotha

At last the woman gives way;
crumples like a badly built clay pot.

In a gown of purple shadows
she weeps and prays,
hands clasped together with desperate strength,
head bent, darkly cowled in cave-like hood.

Rain falls from heaven;
her cloak grows heavy, stretches against her body
so the bones show through
and she is a sad pile of firewood
covered with a leaky tarp.

Strangers, made bold by growing darkness, join her,
pressing in, multiplying through the generations,
all reaching towards her,
crying, begging:
Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

Shannon Garvey

New York

She steps off the bus
straight onto a lighted 42nd street,
Evita in Buenos Aires.
Mist and wind make her cry
right into his shoulder.

She asks him if he's been here before
and his blue, blue eyes slap her in the face.

Central Park empty,
he pees in the bushes.
She runs to the black iron gate
pressing her face to the cars in the street, dreaming,
and waits for him to finish.
Will they buy tickets for the Garden tonight?

Ice skaters and a maintenance man --
she makes him take a picture on the arch of the bridge,
demanding hard copy memory,
and they head into the city.

Times Square alive,
lacing her arm through his,
he leads her through the people.
She's a pinwheel on Fifth Avenue.

He doesn't want dinner,
so they duck in a health bar for hot chocolate
and she zips his sweater tighter around her shivering body,
exhausted.

On the bus ride home
she wraps her hand around him in the dark,
pulling away from the accents of the women behind them.
And she begins to see that the place she needs is
right now
with him.

Christine Weaver

Etiquette Book, 1919

Say as few words as possible –
do not carry too much baggage,
talk about an illness,
or your nervous breakdown.

Restraint is always
a sign of good breeding;
a woman never
smokes on the street.

All women receive respect
from well-bred men;
accept it as if it were a pleasure,
but don't seem too eager.

We all like to be liked –
it is very easy to like people
who seem
to like us.

(a girl dancing with her arms
around the man's neck;
men and women walking, arm
in arm in the city streets)

What if you do make some mistakes!
Many a good reputation has been ruined
by loose tongues
close to your ear.

The perfect guest is a man agreeable
to as many girls as possible;
a woman should never expect
her sex to win special favors.

The man may give his girl
many things which may prove
embarrassing
to the young lady.

Do not slur your words
or mumble! Too much lipstick or rouge
is vulgar! Do not give anyone the chance
to say or to think . . .

Grace Kline

The Boy Who Drew Cats

The boy who drew cats
became a famous artist
after the incident at the temple,

but when the cats
he slashed into museum walls
ate the tourists

(mistaking them for goblins
and allowing their blood
to congeal on white whiskers)

the boy left the city
to sleep in the living room credenza
next to collectible china.

Trina Zerick

Europa on the Phone

The ticking from the clock in the kitchen bounces off cutting boards, rotten plums, a stained coffee cup with cow designs.

Europa sits on the orange sofa, naughty lingerie under her purple flannel pajamas.

She dips pretzel rods into the nectar of crunchy peanut butter that sticks to her fingertips like drying semen.

Her own right hand resting periodically on her own left breast.

The cordless phone, the antenna pointed and hard, bleats for attention from its cradle.

She carries the peanut butter with her.

Europa says: "Hello?"

Just breathing – heavy, masturbating breathing.

Putting his voice in her phone / his dick in her pussy.

The plastic peanut butter jar bounces around on the floor.

Amazing that it should bounce so much.

She presses the hang-up button. Again, again.

He is still there, his voice a lightning bolt frizzing the hair in her ear.

She is rushing around closing blinds.

She throws the phone in the microwave. High power. 100 minutes.

She takes the steps 2 at a time to her room, safe like a shoebox.

She makes a pup tent out of her blue floral comforter.

The microwave beeps.

It's too soon, she thinks.

She hears a grating at the window, like fingernails being filed down past the white.

Perverse persistence.

Europa is still in her pup tent as the room

fills with the smell of bestiality.

Hooves begin clogging nearer, nearer.

Darcy Luetzow

The Pleiades

I knew a girl who never slept and
whose refrigerator held only a few pieces
of food – an orange, a can of beer, a
jar of sauce, the rest starting out white
and bright like standing on a distant
star. I've been told you can't stand on
stars – that they are only gas
and explosions, that even if
there were no heat, your feet would sink
past the center. Still, she did not sink,
what's more she did not burn.
She is a fakir on hot coals
all night, every night, she has saved
herself and she will never be tainted
by daytime TV. She takes
only what she needs, she convinces
herself that she needs less than everyone else.
In this way she is sort of a saint, burning
hotter and brighter than the rest of us, bedding
her soft feet down in the stars.

Still, sainthood comes at a price, outside
the realm of the church. I heard she was too
often cold, that she froze with every touch,
taking so long to let herself feel anything
because she wanted to make sure she felt
everything. She was like a nun in some ways
and though she took to the stage (never the
screen) she was like a star in some ways
and also the most distant planet in her system,
she was always there, next door, her light
on all night, while I slept
in my nervous bed.

Grace Kline

Tracking the Light

I remember once when I was a little girl, my grandmother and I were walking in a cornfield to see who could spot the first firefly of the evening. It had been dry that summer, and the corn stalks were scratchy against my legs. The dust was wonderful though -- silky and fine. It had been so long since the last rain that there were no dried mud clods to cut my bare feet. Grandma was barefoot too and I liked that. Nobody else's grandma I knew walked around barefoot to look for fireflies. As we walked, she picked a few tiny ears of immature corn, husked them and broke them into pieces. She gave me half, and we walked for a while in companionable silence munching corn. That's one taste I can never describe accurately. The closest I can come is that it tasted the way cotton sheets smell when they have been drying in the sun all day. Grandma's clothes always smelled that way -- of sunshine and earth and living things. She was wearing her favorite dress that day. It was a red cotton sundress with black embroidery at the collar. I thought it made her look like a giant poppy turned upside down. Poppies have always been our favorite flower.

I glance down at the slightly droopy bouquet in my hand. Wild poppies make lousy cut flowers, they wilt so fast, but those are the kind she likes best. I touch one flaccid petal and hope they survive the train ride to the Fayetteville Hospital. She has been living there in the geriatric ward for nearly six months now, and the doctors say it won't be too much longer before she is moved downstairs for more intensive care. My grandmother is dying of cancer. She was diagnosed with an especially aggressive form of brain tumor last October and given six months to live. It has been eight months since that diagnosis, and her body is still alive, but it is getting harder and harder to find the grandmother I grew up with. My grandmother who once stalked fireflies for hours in dusky meadows now shuffles painfully the few feet between her room and the seniors' patio. She no longer smells of sunshine, but rather the astringent soap that everyone in the hospital uses.

I look at my watch. The train is late, as usual. I hope it comes soon. The heat is giving me a headache. I set the poppies down on the bench next to me and reach into my bag to see if I have any Tylenol or Aspirin. I find the small bottle and pop open

the familiar red lid. Of course the train arrives just as I shake the pills into my palm. Quickly I gulp down two and drop the rest back into the bottle. One pill falls on the platform and I hear it crunch under my shoe as I snap the lid shut, grab my poppies and climb into the train. The transition into air conditioning is so sudden that it gives me gooseflesh, but the coolness is a huge relief. There are not many people riding the train today, so I don't bother saving a seat and go straight to the water cooler at the back of the car to fill a paper cup. It is short, so I'll have to hold the poppies in place for the whole train ride, but if it perks them up any, then it will be worth the effort. I stroll easily back to my favorite seat midway down the aisle and do not even wobble when the train lurches out of the station. I settle down in my seat and set the cup with the poppies in my lap. William, the conductor stops and I hand him my tickets and ask him how his new baby is doing. "Fine," he tells me. And shows me the latest pictures. It is our weekly ritual. As William continues down the aisle, I think back to the events that have led to my riding a train enough times to be on a first name basis with the conductors.

During Thanksgiving, Grandma seemed a little subdued, but whenever anyone mentioned anything, she brushed it off saying, "I'm just a little tired." It was believable. She was cooking for her whole family, all the while keeping track of her two great grandchildren who were darting in and out of the kitchen playing dinosaur. My grandmother was the undisputed queen of the kitchen -- dispensing occasional swats with a wooden spoon and turning this way and that as if spun by the force of the little bodies as they hurtled around her. Even so, she was a fair and careful queen. Not one matchbox car, plastic doll, or little hand ever got squashed under her feet. Often she would pause in her dance across the kitchen to pull a scared face when one of the 'dinosaurs' roared at her.

Ever since that Thanksgiving she had been having a dull pain in her stomach, but refused to see a doctor. The spring before last, she had been at my house helping me to paint the living room. She had baked a cake to celebrate. I had gone to the store to pick up some bananas, and the local paper. I remember walking through the door and thinking how wonderful the house smelled with the new-paint smell mixing in with the smells of chocolate and the buttercream frosting Grandma was mixing in the kitchen.

Sitting in the train, I cannot help thinking how much the wheels clicking against the track sound like the electric mixer rhythmically hitting against the metals sides of the mixing bowl. I lean my forehead against the window and listen a moment to the wheels as they clack along. Clickity, clickity, clickity, went the mixer. I leaned against the doorjamb and smiled at the familiar sound as I stepped on the heels of my sneakers to pull them off. Suddenly there was a cry and thump from the kitchen and the rhythm of the mixer broke. The bowl started to hum as though it were being whirled around faster and faster with no one to hold it in place. I dropped my bag of groceries and ran to the kitchen. Grandma was lying curled in a fetal position on the linoleum, clutching at her midriff and wheezing through her teeth. I stood for a moment then dropped to my knees. "My stomach, my stomach," she whispered and looked up at me with big eyes. "It'll be OK," I told her, "I'm going to call for help." I reached across the table for the phone and cursed as I banged my hip on the corner of the kitchen counter. Frantically I dialed 911, and then forgot my own street address. As soon as they told me the ambulances were on the way I knelt down next to my grandmother and patted her hand. Then I went back to my bag of groceries and set it on the counter. I had an irrational fear that one of EMT's would step on the bananas and slip before he got to my Grandma. I sat next to her and held her hand until the ambulance arrived. The mixer continued to whine away in the background, but I was afraid to let go of her hand to turn it off. Sweat beaded on her upper lip, and I wiped it off with the cuff of my shirt.

Three EMT's rushed into the kitchen. Two of them knelt around my grandmother and one of them unplugged the mixer. The sudden silence seemed almost solid, and the EMT's' voices cut into it like knives. I stood in the corner shaking from relief that someone else was finally in charge. One strapped my grandmother to a stretcher while the second began to assess her condition. The third asked me for her name and if she had a history of heart condition, stroke, and so on. I said no, she's never been this sick before. He nodded and whisked her out the door. I shoved off of the counter and ran after them. My car started on the first try, and it wasn't until I was halfway to the hospital that I realized I had left my shoes lying by the door.

Barefoot I tried to follow the stretcher into the ER, but a nurse pushed me back; told me to go wait in the lobby. So I waited. For almost an hour and a half I waited, crossing one bare foot over the other trying to hide them under my chair. Then a doctor came out. He told me that my grandmother was hemorrhaging and had been taken to the O.R. to try and stop the bleeding. He said everything was under control, but that it would be a while before they knew anything. He smiled and said I might want to go and get some shoes, then come back. I hesitated. What if she were to die. Worse, what if she were to ask for me while I was gone. But I needed to pick up Grandma's insurance forms and my wallet and the doctor was right. I did need to get some shoes.

So I drove home. I must have done seventy-five the whole way. Thank God there were no cops out. I didn't have my license with me. Once home I started shoving my right foot into the sneaker standing by the door and hopping my way over to the other one, lying on its side halfway across the room where someone had kicked it in the rush out the door. Going into the kitchen to grab my wallet, I noticed the walls and ceiling were splattered with buttercream frosting. The mixing bowl lay on its side where it fell, with the cord draped haphazardly over the toaster. Before leaving, I set the bowl upright.

Back at the hospital, I started calling her family and friends. Within two hours, there were enough people in that hospital waiting room to fill up nearly half of the available seats. I don't know what we thought we were going to do. Most of us just sat with our arms around each other. One of my uncles had brought takeout and forgotten to pick up forks, so he and his family sat shoving vegetable chow mein into their mouths with their fingers and crude spoons fashioned from the corners of the take-out boxes. Their chins were shiny with sauce, but they didn't bother wiping it away. My sister Kim and her kids arrived a little later. Gabriel, the youngest leaned in close to me and whispered, "Is this gonna be a surprise party is 'at why everybody's so quiet?" "No Sweetie," I told him, "Your Mee-maw is very sick, and the doctors are trying to find out why." "Oh," was all he said.

He and his sister tried to be good. They sat and colored and told each other knock-knock jokes. Normally, those jokes drive me and my sisters up the wall, but today we welcomed and listened to every one. Eventually, though, they began to get bored. First they

just swung their feet under their chairs. Then they started kicking each other under the coffee table. Before any major fights broke out, my sister suggested that they have a sliding race across the waiting room. Gabe and Annie said that was a stupid idea, and continued to squabble. So my sister took off her shoes, ran and slid across the floor herself. "Doesn't this look like fun," she said. The kids looked at her like she was crazy and shook their heads. "Oh yeah that looks awesome," I said, took off my shoes and joined her, sliding on the linoleum. We just wanted to tempt the kids, but it *was* fun. We ran and slid and laughed until our socks were dirty and the tears came streaming down our faces. Soon everyone was laughing at our antics. Gabe and Annie got up and joined us. We ran and slid, and pretended to ice skate, the tears just pouring down.

Then the doors opened and a doctor stepped out. The laughter hiccupped to a stop. My sister and I straightened our hair and tugged at the hems of our shirts, sending guilty glances over to our abandoned shoes. Annie hid behind her mother and Gabe wiped his nose on his sleeve. My uncle broke the silence: "Well, what is it?" he asked. "We managed to stop the bleeding, but she has a growth on her liver," said the doctor. That was how it all started.

The hospital ran a biopsy on some cells from the lump and found out it was cancerous and malignant. With operation alone, chance of the cancer returning in under two years was about ninety percent. If they followed the surgery with chemotherapy, chances of at least five cancer-free years would go up to about fifty percent. Still not very good odds, but my grandmother was determined to fight. She immediately checked herself into the Oncological Institute of Fayetteville, the best cancer institute within a two hundred mile radius. The first time I rode this train was the week after her surgery.

It was raining, and the Hyacinth platform was crowded. People stood shoulder to shoulder under the too-narrow overhang. I stood over my suitcase and clutched a bunch of poppies against my chest. When the train arrived there was a mad dash for the open doors. Everyone got soaked in the downpour. I changed the poppies to my left hand and slung my bag over my shoulder with my right, but in the crush at the door I grabbed my suitcase handles with both hands to keep the bag on my shoulder. I felt the poppy

stems crush, but it was too late. I spent most of that first train ride trying to prop up the broken stems with my fingertips. The woman sitting behind me on the train went and got me a cup of water to put the flowers in. I thanked her and tried to make it work, but the stems were bent in too many places to keep the flowers in the water. Every time I loosened my grip on them, the poppies would fall out of the cup and splatter tiny drops of water on my lap. The water drops made dark spots on my skirt that would not rub out.

I got off the train and caught a cab to the hospital. The water spots on my skirt finally dried, but I still felt dirty walking into the bright white hospital corridor. One of my shoes squeaked, and I looked to see if it made a scuff on the floor. I tried to tell myself that the floor had seen much worse than whatever might be on the soles of my shoes, but somehow I still needed to look. The lady at the front desk wore big earrings and a nametag that said MISTY in tall letters. She shuffled stacks of papers back and forth on her desk. "Excuse me," I said. She didn't look up. "Excuse me . . . Ma'am," I tried again. She looked up and took a green lollipop out of her mouth.

"Yes, can I help you." She didn't smile. Her lips were stained greenish. "Can you tell me where Mrs. Anne Lightfoot is staying. I'm her Granddaughter." I tried to smile.

"Room four- fifteen. Take the elevator up to the fourth floor; turn right. It's the third door on the left."

I followed her directions.

My Grandmother is lucky. She has a single -- the walls are thin, but at least she has some semblance of privacy. The door is ajar, so I peek in before entering. The room is dim but a shaft of sunlight slices through the ugly green curtains and falls across the bed. Dust motes dance in the sunbeam like fireflies and I can see that my Grandmother is watching them. I knock and push open the door. She looks up at the sound and smiles. I hand her the broken poppies with words of apology. She phoo phoos me and asks me to give her the phone book. I don't know what she is up to until she opens the book and presses the poppies flat in it. "There now," she says, "Now I can make a beautiful pressed flower arrangement and the bent stems won't matter a bit."

She's always known how to make me feel better. I didn't want to look her in the face. I was afraid to ask her how she was doing -- afraid of what she might answer. I did ask -- what else

can you say to someone lying in a hospital bed? She pulled up her gown to show the scar. "I look like a spayed cat, don't I," she said and grinned. I had to laugh and agree.

That was a year ago. A month after the surgery she went in for her first chemotherapy. Afterwards, she went home. With the new drug cocktails, there are almost no side effects until the second or third treatment. After the second treatment my grandmother was fine for ten days. Then I got a call at seven-thirty in the morning; "It's started," she said. She had woken up with her pillow covered in hair. By the eighth and last treatment, she was completely bald, and her eyes had sunken into her face. The skin around her jaw hung in sallow folds that swung when she walked. I thought she looked like one of those gag-shop rubber chickens. I never thought those were funny. I wondered how she could face going in for treatments every two weeks, knowing how wretched they would make her feel, but she was determined to live.

Not only to live, but to be. When she lost all her hair, she and I went hat shopping. Soft cotton ones for every day, and a fashionable straw hat with a velvet band for Sundays. Our favorite though was a deliciously tacky floppy red sunhat with a huge swath of Hawaiian cloth wrapped around it. Grandma walked out of the store wearing that one. We laughed for days at the looks strangers gave us on the street.

Soon after the treatments ended, however, she had no need for hats. Her hair began to grow back almost immediately -- thin and white at first, gradually gaining thickness and color. The whole family celebrated the day she went in for her first haircut. The color returned to her face, and her movements became quick again. Her three month checkup showed that the cancer was still in remission. Early that summer, Kim and I threw a party to celebrate her recovery. After the party, Kim was in the kitchen rinsing dessert plates. I was on the porch collecting empty lemonade glasses. It was dusk. The air was warm and heavy and smelled like cut grass. I set my tray down just to stand and enjoy the evening. Nights like that smell so good that you don't want to breathe out. From faraway I heard a radio playing and people talking. Their sound wove a human strand under the persistent chirping crickets. A whippoorwill called and I knew that summer had finally arrived.

Two laughing shadows emerged from the dusk. Annie swung her shoes, one in each hand. My grandmother followed

close behind also carrying her shoes. Their feet were covered in grass clippings. Grandma was wearing her red sunhat. Annie had liberally adorned the brim with poppies. The reds clashed, but neither of them seemed to care. Annie ran up and threw her arms around my legs. "I saw the first firefly!" she told me, and grinned. My grandmother and I smiled at each other. She picked up the tray and began to walk inside. I followed, thumping along lopsidedly with Annie riding on my leg. I didn't worry about the mess I knew the grass clippings would make on my clean linoleum.

She put all her energy into living. During the first month and a half after her diagnosis, she worked constantly in her autumn garden. Her radishes took first prize in the county fair. She carefully tended rows of curly Kale, but refused to pick even one leaf telling us, "They won't be right until after the frost." With October twelfth came the first frost. That night my Grandmother had her first stroke. The stroke caused Grandma to lose partial movement of the left half of her body, but her mind remained untouched. Smiling crookedly she would tell anyone who would listen, "I've always wanted a lopsided grin." But as the cancer hopped from one organ to the next and her strength weakened, she realized that she could no longer live on her own. That's when she asked that I apply for her to live in the home where she stays now. That was six months ago. I have been riding the train out to see her every week since.

I look around the car I sit in today. Everything in it is familiar, from the curved gray walls to the scratchy blue and red upholstery on the seats. The only thing that changes are the advertisement posters above the windows. Today a fat man floats on a pink and purple rubber horse in the middle of an immense pool. "Play Lotto," reads the caption in four-inch yellow letters. In another, a grinning model gracefully waves her cigarette and declares: "It's a woman thing." I don't smoke.

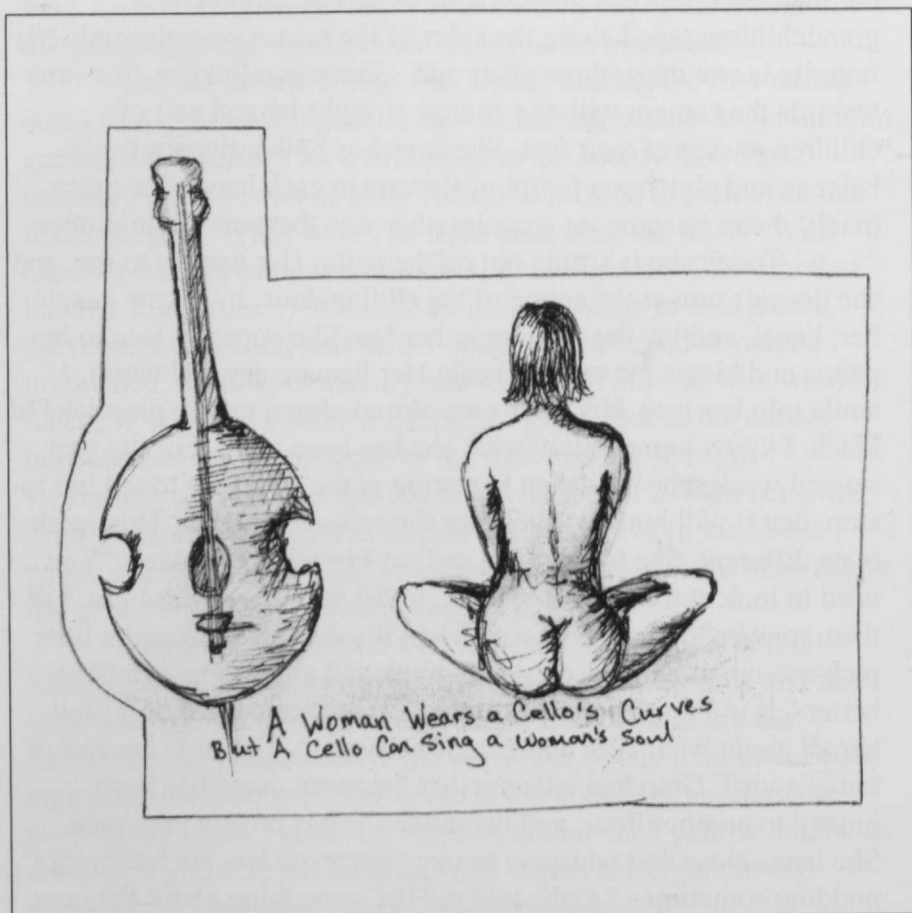
I ignore the poster and check on the poppies in my lap. I take one out of the cup and hold it up to the light. It has always fascinated me how poppies manage to have the color and feel of rich velvet on translucent petals finer than tissue paper. I feel the train slow. I put the flower back in its cup, pick up my purse and move to the front of the car. As soon as the train stops I hop down to the platform and wave goodbye to William. It is two blocks to the hospital from the train station. I push through the revolving

doors. Alma, the receptionist, nods and hands me the visitor registration sheet. I sign in and take the elevator up to the second floor. Walking down the hall, I exchange nods of greeting with every nurse I pass. It hits me that I know most of them. I knock and open my grandmother's door. The room is empty, but I enter anyway to throw away the cup I have been carrying the poppies in. Before dropping the cup in the trash, I stop in her bathroom to pour out the water. She has photographs of all her children and grandchildren taped along the sides of the mirror over the sink. My favorite is one taken three years ago. Annie is a toddler. She runs towards the camera with the strange straight-legged gait of children unsure of their feet. She stretches both arms out for balance and clutches a fistful of flowers in each hand. She grins madly. I can imagine my grandmother was that sort of child once.

Today she is sitting out on the patio. Her back is to me, and she doesn't turn at the sound of the sliding door. I walk up beside her, kneel, and lay the poppies in her lap. She cups my face in her palms and kisses me on the cheek. Her lips are dry and warm. I smile into her face. Her pupils are shrunk down to tiny pinpricks of black. I know immediately what she has been up to. For the past several weeks she has taken to staring at the sun. I try to tell her to stop, that it will hurt her eyes, but she refuses to listen. This week is no different. She turns to me and says in all earnestness, "You need to look at the sun sometimes, to fill your eyes with light. Fill them to overflowing. That way when it's dark or you need a little pick-me-up, all you need to do is blink and everything is a little better." It is a good day. Eventually she recognizes me and I tell her all about what Kim and her kids are up to. Towards the end of today's visit, Grandma tells me that the mean nurse has been moved to another floor, and the nurse she has now is very nice. She leans close and whispers to me, "She even lets me have extra pudding sometimes." Gabe told me the same thing about the new lunch lady at his preschool last week. It makes me realize just how much things have changed over the past few months. I am reluctant to leave after only two hours -- I feel that I should be spending more time with her, but any more than that might make her over-exhausted. As I leave I see her touch a poppy to her lips and smile. The sunlight is warm on my face. Feeling a little foolish, I open my eyes and let them fill with light. When I look ahead again there are tiny black spots crawling like ants across my vision, but I am

strangely happy. The sidewalk seems to rise to meet my feet and I whistle as I walk towards my train.

Jessica Lustig



Jessica Lustig

Untitled

pen

Veiled

The silence of a world
without the voices
of women.
Mouths covered by black cloths
to keep out the dust,
to keep out the thoughts
that might be personal
or original.
Only a pair of dull eyes
is ever visible
behind the screen of oppression
that is a part of attire,
a part of life for
these women,
sheltered from the dust,
victims of the windstorm
within.

Abbie Doss

Gallery of Art

Stoned politicians and poets
warily edge the walls
of the permanent collection
where our bench
is an archipelago surrounded
by Greeks and the Mediterranean.
Acolytes pass us;
they are tourists looking at the new acquisitions.
Their footsteps muffle in my hair
and their voices crumble into feta.
We sit solidly as queens
on a slanted chessboard
and form one body
whether Jew or Greek,
slave or free,
because we are baptized
in the spirit and in the blood.

Trina Zerick

Blue Brooms

Mom bought that black dress with me at two a.m. at an all-night
Wal-mart.
The lint from her kleenex is still on it.
Another Sunday and the pastor tells anecdotes like bar jokes.
The organ is so loud the hymnal is vibrating in my hands.
I read the hymnal board, looking for sugary ingredients.
And the windows are bright and messy, scribbled by a new box of
markers.
My mom hunches when she sits, her back a brittle tower of Legos.
I tried to hold the pillar together when she shook the blocks undone
over the hospice bed.
And I start pulling out my eyelashes as the sermon reaches the
twenty minute mark.
The sanctuary smells of brown altar flowers ready to be tossed.
My mom and I spent the last week trying to pack Lois into
decorative shoeboxes.
My mom and I prayed, but we couldn't shrink the size of Lois's
left breast.
Lois bought the next size bra in black lace.
In the hospice, Lois's nephew fed her ice she couldn't chew.
Lois's breath was gasping; her wig on the dresser to her right.
Lois just got a new car that she ran off into a ditch three times
when her eyes crossed.
I read my Bible that night with children's books and old teddy bear
posters in my room.
I skinned my knee in the valley of the shadow of death.
The pastor makes us stand so he can bless us better.
My mom says she will send me Lois's dishes when the townhouse
is cleaned out.
They say Lois was a saint, that saints are more common than we
think.
I slink out of the sanctuary, into a kindergarten Sunday school
room.
A fake portrait of Jesus hangs on the cinderblock wall.
His eyes, like blue brooms, sweep the yanked lashes out of my
eyes.

Darcy Luetzow

Kansas Rivers

They don't move.
The land there is flat
like the bottom of a tin pail;
they don't flow.

The Little Arkansas,
laid across Wichita,
is slow and glassy –
grown over green with algae.

They're shallow.
The land there is flat
like a rusted washboard
so their grooves can't cut deep.

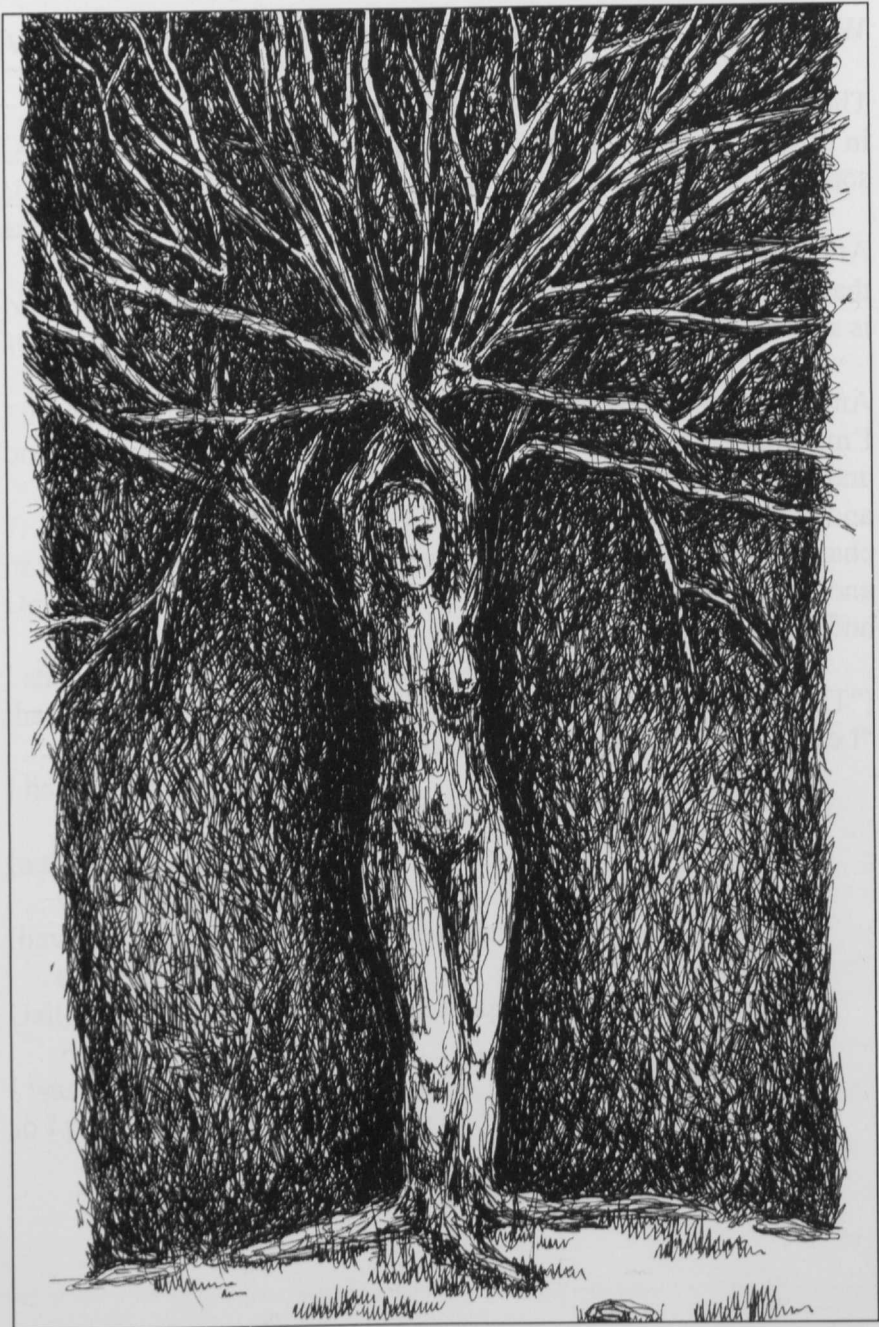
In Winfield, the Walnut River
tips over its dam;
twenty feet downstream,
men in rubber waders stand and fish.

They're thin.
The land is flat and parched,
a stretched canvas tarp.
In summer, they often disappear.

Little capillary creeks
south of Salina: Smoky,
West Emma, Running Turkey –
five-yard bridges cover them.

In the northwest, near Atwood,
there are no rivers –
only scattered boulders,
the wake of a glacier's plow.

Susannah LeVine



Susan Marshall

Untitled

pen

Wednesday after everything else

The girl sitting across the table from me
in the study lounge has a twitch, or an itch;
something indefinable that won't allow stillness.

At the end of the room
that boy from my philosophy class
is smiling at me.

And after a long night of coffee and cigarettes
I'm thinking of you
and how you still have my bike
and how you took my love
chameleon-like as it was
and wrapped it in your sock
and put it in the freezer.

("That way," you explained,
"I can numb it before I kill it.")

Christine Weaver

Awake and Still Dreaming

Equilibrium achieved
and . . .
all matters of decadence
are curving their way into my voids.

No more searches for my soul
at the grocery store . . .

Finished finding comfort in the chaos of endless
bread aisles . . .

. . . expecting answers among the pickles,
or maybe stashed between two cans of . . .
Del Monte Fruit Cocktail.

I should have known all along . . .
that missions are often encoded in the apple bins
. . . right next to the rows of red cabbage (which
I have never really understood).

In the distance,
. . . someone attacks
(having been offended by its indifference)
. . . the milk cooler.
Gallons of method spilled out and explained . . .

I wasn't prepared to face it
so I paid for my tapioca pudding and left.

Tokya Colpitts

How I Discovered Mortality

When I was 5, or maybe 4,
my father took me to see the mummies
at the Natural History Museum.

There was a man
lying in a glass case just
at my eye-level.
He was black and crumbly and all tied up so he couldn't move.
And his nose was gone
and so were his lips
and his teeth were bright white and he was smiling.

He had hands and feet and legs and toes
just like my father.

And life suddenly had an end.
I would not always be a child
whose bare legs stuck to the vinyl car seat in summer.
My father, the flawless giant,
would not be with me,
holding my hand,
forever.

Everything I knew would
vanish,
buried under miles of earth,
remembered by no one.

And I felt all of forever spreading out
like the white tile floor leaking over the whole universe
and more.
And I cried all the way home because,
suddenly,
on a hot day when I was 5 and the world overflowed with sun,

Death was.

Shannon Garvey

A Nightlight behind the Dresser

My room, walled with Lincoln logs,
where I soaked my splintered finger
in saltwater every night before bed.
Glow-in-the-dark stars floated
just before the ceiling.
Mother and I laid on scaffolding
to build constellations like we were God.
When she flicked cigarette ashes
out the window, they turned back
into the car, landing cold on my lap.
She said that Eskimos kissed with their noses,
and I inhaled her snores in motel double beds.
I papered the walls with scripted
apologies and promises to do better,
and she always wanted a little girl.

Trina Zerick

I come in through the back door

Entering . . . met by mixtures of sounds and smells that no longer hold any significance . . . only a half-abandoned excitement of newness . . . like the little throw rugs on the kitchen floor that are more trouble than you might have anticipated . . . old books, sad looks, and the house is suddenly too small to accommodate my intrusion. Suddenly my life is not so much defined as I originally pretended when I was alone . . . sprawled through the wide, circle center of a tire swing that used to dangle from our favorite tree. The colors are familiar, but it is the patterns I won't continue to agree with . . . so try to understand when I tell you or try to tell you that I have to step outside of myself when I am here . . . in *your* house . . . with all of these sounds that I hardly know anymore. I invent the notion that you are waiting for my voice to break through . . . but the afternoon has stretched on . . . and in the fresh stillness of an early summer . . . the sweat has trapped the ideas inside . . . closed windows . . . open screen doors . . . hats forgotten on the floor or hanging. What *is* your obsession with houseplants? Why must you talk about the winding road that leads to the tower? It is no more tangled than the intentions that I have often gathered into careful piles for myself, only to be made to give them all away . . . one by one . . . because I thought that you were listening.

Tokya Colpitts

The Potato Eaters

The rugged bleakness of the room
the prolific dark, a thin umbrella of light
and this seated five
an unsmiling troupe
melding into the bareness of the walls
complexions like rusted tools
Breathe deeply the scent of cold and Earth
In the back two windows squeeze the static night

But ah, look closer
there is more to this
It will not do to confine it in a singular frame

In a small corner there is a place
where the fields swirl into the golden sun
and dark figures stand broken at the waist
with tanned weathered faces
and mangled hands like roots

With her fist
a peasant woman sifts a clump of dirt
wipes hands on an apron
wearily smiles *I am looking for the other end of the earth*
That frugal meal that she carries back in her shawl
steaming skins in an earthen bowl
served under a roof made of thatch
is the meaning of one day
turned and turned again and without waste

A small question as to who is worthy
and why that which is purest
is often the most dirty

Andrea Hagy

Acknowledgments

The women of *Winged Nation* wish to thank:

Elisabeth Austin
Professor Christy Burns
Rebecca Butz
Carol Chitnis
Kerry Davis
Lizza Gonzales
Kathy Hoffman
Sharon Kelly
Valerie Kreutzer
Bridget Leonard
Susan LeVine
Inge Lindh
Professor Leisa Meyer
National Organization for Women, Richmond Chapter
Charles Newton
Kristi Richardson
Sandy Weaver
Tom Weaver

and everyone else who has supported our fundraising efforts.

Special thanks to Jenny Lieb.