

## GROUT / SPRING 07



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Articles: [Faint text, illegible]



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The following issue of Grout was selected, compiled,  
designed and produced by the  
following band of hapless renegades:



Shotgun Bride / Kea Wilson

Assistant Shotgun Bride / Elliott White

Hired Guns / Dane Cole / Esme Gaisford

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Josiah Stephens / Mary Terrier

Max Walukas / Grace Valles.



Immediately following the printing of Grout, they  
were all brutally massacred by  
one-legged bounty hunters in the ghost town of  
Blood Cactus Gulch.  
May God rest their souls.

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# Blossom.

by Dane Cole.

The crowd gasped when they saw,  
Blood red blossom, breaking through  
Sweetest smell, bloomed into beauty  
Sole pride of shrub divine  
Leaves shriveled, unthorned and without worth  
A dust, rough from seasons without rain  
The masses huddled 'round, breath withheld  
To preserve sweet aroma, copious surround  
It withered away, it's red now that of dirt  
And from it's womb came first fruit,  
That vulgar eyes did feast upon.  
With hungry hands, they stole again  
And when sordid teeth had sunken in,  
The multitude spat and cursed  
The perfume of death, oh such stythe  
Fetour worse than rot and shit  
The fruit spilt across the earth,  
Blood red and bleeding  
"Coagula", the hearts desire  
"Solve", the stink of mire.

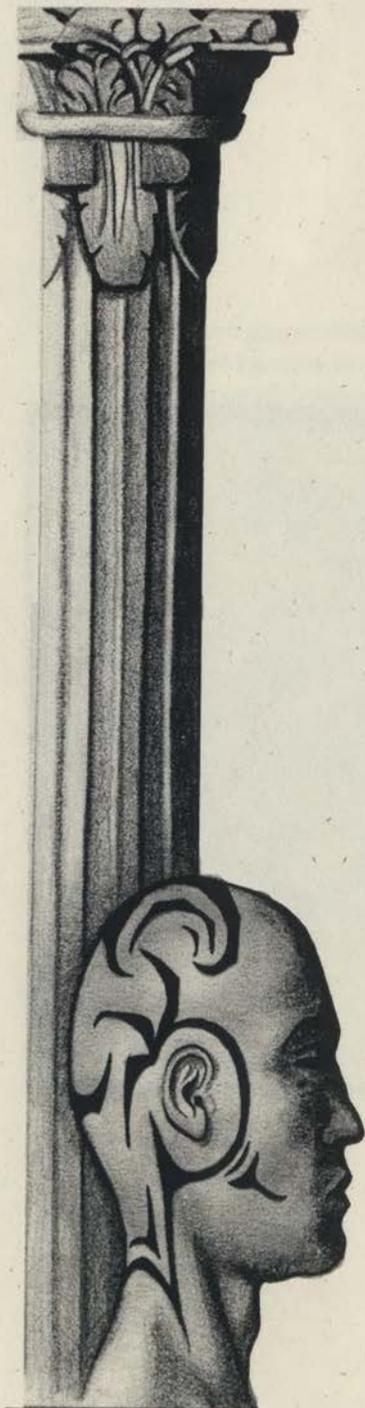




LVII.

by Graciana Valles.

There are moments of  
Slow motion laughter  
cascading over  
and  
under  
your atmosphere  
like majesty  
everywhichwaying  
into the universe  
rocketing  
like time  
from eyelid  
launchpads.



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by Andrew Moreno.

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I saw I saw  
I thought I saw  
a smile  
Play across your eyes

I felt something  
Inside myself  
some joy  
Rest upon my mind

You're close so close  
I won't look close  
my scrutiny  
Would shatter this

39

Finders betrayed by our keepers,  
We struggle through forests entangled in  
creepers  
Ensnared by the lies from the times  
Before people had words  
when they only had rhymes

46

Run me down ragged, all tiptoes on  
-razor blades  
Slaves in the sun till we die  
(in the shade)



# Les Faux Amis.

by Laura E. Waleryszak.



## Beginnings

In her annual conduct report, Henry's kindergarten teacher described him as "a quiet but curious boy, well-mannered, fervent sleeper." This last detail was an understatement.

Penny Lockwood, a twenty-four year old in her first teaching position at the Acorn School was, frankly, unnerved by the child's sleeping habits. During the napping hour on the first day of school, Henry fell into such a deep sleep that he did not stir when a homesick boy started crying two mats over. His unmoving body remained indifferent when the Holly twins, situated on either side of him, launched their pillows at one another, the soft corners of the projectiles occasionally skimming his stomach. It wasn't until Ms. Lockwood roused the students for a story and he remained motionless amidst the shouting and a few carelessly placed slipped feet that Helen Holly declared, "I think Henry's dead."

The panicked young teacher could not wake Henry by shouting his name or tickling his feet. Ms. Lockwood sprinkled water on his face and, instead of waking him, two of the drops fell on his eyelid. The moisture gathered in his dark black eyelashes, and slid down his cheek, like the tear of a corpse. She lowered her face to just above Henry's nose and mouth, but Ms. Lockwood could not tell if the faint spiraling motion she felt against her cheek was the child's gentle breath or the heat emanating off of the surface of her flushed skin.

She was hurrying to the school phone to dial the paramedics when Ms. Lockwood heard a voice exclaim, "He's turning blue!"

Henry began coughing immediately when his teacher pulled George Holly off of him. George, one of the more experimental six-year olds in the class, had plugged his young friend's nose.

Henry's wide grey eyes stared straight above him and first set upon his teacher. Penny Lockwood would never forget the way that boy, fully awake now, stared at her in astonishment. In all her years of studying Early Childhood Development, she could only compare his expression to an infant's surprise at the reappearance of a toy from behind a parent's back that he thought had disappeared completely from existence.

Henry, usually a shy boy, did not seem bothered by the intent stares of all of his classmates. Instead, he continued to watch his pretty teacher's concerned face and calmly asked, "Ms. Lockwood, have you been running?"

From then on, Ms. Lockwood assigned Henry to quiet play while the rest of the class napped.

She wrote 'fervent sleeper' on Henry's conduct report, but the traumatized teacher wanted to write 'this child will not be long for the world if he strives so zealously to return to death when he sleeps.'

Henry's parents were never surprised by such reports. His birth set a precedent. When he was born, Dr. Kate Addison told them that, in her two decades as an

obstetrician, she had never before birthed a sleeping newborn. Wanting to ensure that his airways were open, Dr. Addison spanked his slippery bottom until the child awoke, shrieking with indignation. Even as he loudly protested, Dr. Addison would remember how the baby's eyes intently traversed the perimeter of her face in his first moments of life.

Henry grew up, but he did not outgrow his sleep patterns. Around the time he hit puberty, his behavior fit in well enough with the stereotypical sloth of his fellow teenage boys. In college, his hall-mates believed that he would sleep through an entire day without any stimulus to wake him. It was possibly the quietest college dorm in the country as Henry's roommates and neighbors slinked around for hours in order to test their theory. The record waking time was six p.m., but he was usually woken by the sounds of the city street below his window.

Despite all of this, Henry was not lazy. The benefit of his unusual condition was that, for the duration of his waking hours, he was completely alert, as if dreamless nights of unconsciousness prepared him for complete lucidity during the day. So, the quiet but curious boy became a quiet but responsible man, one who took extra measures to ensure he could control his sleep cycles: he always set three alarm clocks, left his blinds open in his eastward-facing bedroom and bought a dog.

What neither his parents, nor Ms. Lockwood, nor his friends knew, however, was that Henry noticed everything when he was awake. Years later in college, the memory of Ms. Penny Lockwood leaning over him provided enough imagery to arouse Henry's lustful passions during lonely nights. He remembered, as clearly as if it were a movie replay, not only the details which inspired his younger self to ask if she'd been running: her pink cheeks glistening with a light layer of sweat and the heaving of her small breasts beneath a light green, collared cotton shirt. But he also remembered that she was prematurely graying; he admired the random and sparse flashes of gray in her dark brown hair because they appeared, to him like pieces of silver thread. There were slight stains on her shirt, peeking out from under her armpits in shapes vaguely resembling the shapes of countries on the world map that hung on the wall behind her. The right underarm: Spain. The left: India. The pink flush of her cheeks traveled all the way down her neck, where it deepened to a blushing red and finally disappeared behind the collar of her shirt, most likely thinning out into tendrils of color that curled into the space between her breasts and reached out, threatening to consume her entire stomach.

Visual stimuli affected Henry as if he were an adult newborn because he emerged from complete darkness into every new day. It was as if he was being born again, every time he woke up.

Henry became an architect, the only architect in his firm who never needed to record measurements. Certain coworkers looked on with jealous awe as Henry produced flawless sketches of designs easily recalled from college textbooks. At first, some were suspicious; they called him an 'odd duck.' But, like any envy first enflamed by a natural ability which cannot be imitated with training or skill, the resentment of Henry's colleagues soon tempered into respect, and finally warmed into admiration.

It was partly due to Henry's impeccably keen eye that their modest company grew to be one of the most sought-out firms in the Greater Boston area. Aside from the two instances in which he hurried into board meetings hours late- he'd overslept, of course- Henry was beyond reproach.

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On the morning that Ace interviewed Henry, he did his usual trick- made eye contact. This usually worked when he first met a woman; his candid eyes made the observed feel seen, not just looked at. Macey Hallet was no exception.

As a seasoned Staff Writer for "The Boston Globe," Macey 'Ace' Hallet noticed eyes first: they communicated to her how much she could trust their source. She'd made a career out of investigating other people's business, so Ace abhorred shyness, perhaps because she could not understand it. Downcast eyes and timidly worded sentences were the worst marks of human frailty, either that or indicators of a liar.

So Henry was an anomaly to Ace. He certainly did not fit her expectations for the up and coming young local architect who had just been selected to design the new Boston Public Library. He spoke softly and infrequently- only when Ace asked him a direct question about the library project. Yet, those traits which she normally equated with intolerable shyness were balanced in Henry's countenance by his penetrating eyes. They engaged Ace in a conversation that was simultaneous with,



as she apparently believed he was too apathetic about her to tell her otherwise.

Absurd, he thought. And then he said it out loud, "It's absurd." He sunk back into the bed, flattening the ticket stub obsessively between the palms of his hands.

"How can you think I would only be able to remember you, or even that day, by this souvenir alone?" Henry shouted into the dark room, a room out of time: he did not know how long he'd slept, only that his body was sore and Ace was gone. It could have been days, weeks, maybe years. Perhaps she'd found someone else already, someone who could more accurately convey with words the affections imprinted on his soul.

"Do you remember the scene in that movie, the scene with the needles? I remember that's how we discovered our shared phobia. Do you remember how we used those grotesque moments in the film as excuses to reach over and grab at one another's bodies? We both overreacted, pretended we were more afraid, so that we could touch each other. I remember clutching your thigh during one of those scenes. You were wearing jeans and I could see the outline of your leg muscles as you flexed them in fear. Do you know how impressive you are to me? I will never forget the shape of you: yours are the toned legs of a champion thoroughbred."

Henry, a disoriented Rip Van Winkle, shouted into the unhearing void. Any ears had left long ago.

#### *Remarquer/To Notice*

At first, Henry's stare was enough for Ace. As someone dependent on language, she was shocked to find how much they communicated to one another, wordlessly. He never used words to confirm or downplay the intense connection between them, so she was left to ascribe as much or as little intention to his interactions with her. Earlier in the relationship, she could feel secure by simply looking into his face, by watching herself being watched. But, an inordinate amount of time passed, and soon her naturally suspicious sensibilities, acquired from years as a reporter, overtook her former patience with her lover's silent affections.

She had no way of knowing that he actually noticed so much, that he was constantly so inundated with awareness of her, that words felt inadequate. Language failed him.

She didn't fall asleep that night. Instead, she waited for the moment when Henry's body went limp, when he entered into that same unresponsive state that had once frightened his kindergarten teacher. Ace gathered up the alarm clocks, closed the blinds and turned off Henry's phone. She carefully guided the sleepy lab out into the lawn and locked the door.

Henry remained reposed with a blank mind, blissfully unaware of what he'd wrought, dead to the world for another night. ♦



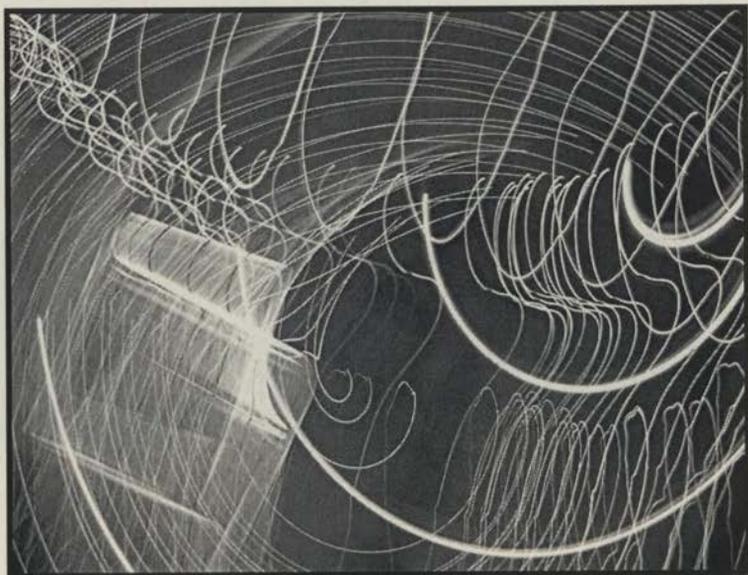
Sensele.

by Melinda Carrera.

I looked out my window and the world dissappeared,  
shrouded in a translucent blanket of white  
which thickened to opacity not twenty yards away  
and took reality with it.

The sun could do nothing to burn that silvery expanse,  
that land of naught,  
that view of isolation that seemed to me a waking dream...  
some perversion of my thoughts.

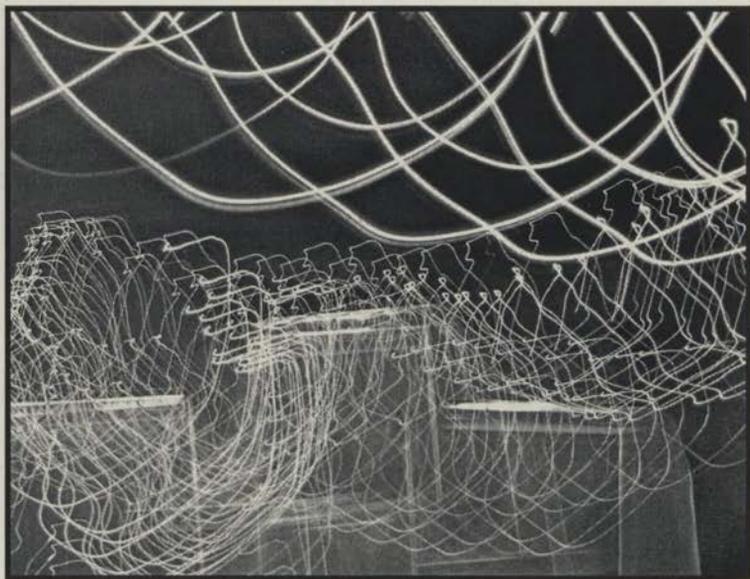
And as I walked my ghostly path  
the gulls, bobbing in the half-frozen creek,  
their charcoal feathers gleaming in the not-quite light,  
appeared to float in space.



# Rain.

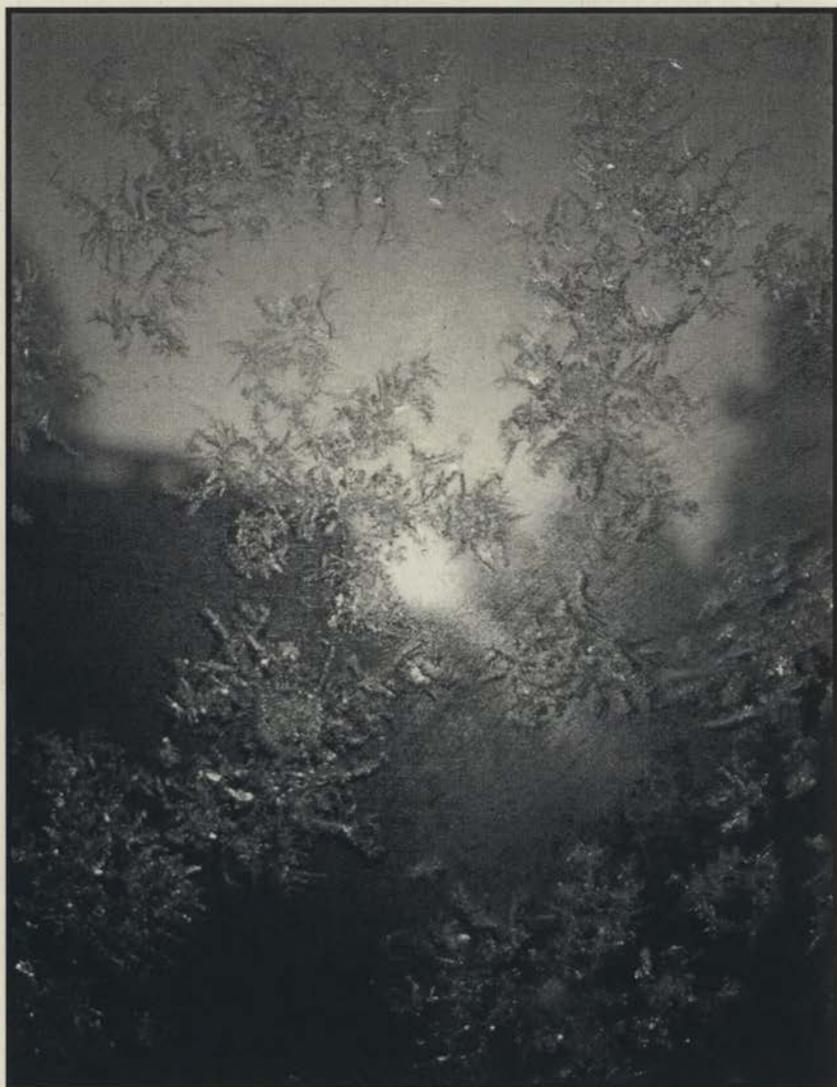
by Alysia Johnson.

Sometimes I go walking  
Up and down the hills  
In the dark damp dusk  
The haze of the night  
Penetrated  
Only by the haze of orange streetlights  
On the fog of rain  
That just settled down into crevices and hollows  
Bedded down for the night  
Tired from cleansing  
The garbage from the air  
The smells of cigarettes, gas  
Mown lawns and rotting fruit.



# The Middle Place.

by Kea Wilson.



The first time Edie saw the man with two families, she was riding the yellow line towards Poble Nou at two in the morning, drunk and worrying the amputated heel of her stilleto between her palms. She didn't recognize him as a beggar at first. She didn't know the way they stood yet: hands clutched at dyed roses or prayer cards printed in Catalá and Braille, never on the handrails, stances wide for balance. She didn't know that only a beggar would meet your eye on the underground, and when she realized it, she didn't know that it was better to become suddenly absorbed in the knotted rainbow of the station map over the doors. She didn't know, but she could still feel that collective averting of eyes, like a marionette string threaded between them had just been pulled taut. Her attention was an indecency, and she felt it as acutely, as a heart palpitation while she tugged one headphone out of her ear and looked towards the center of the car.

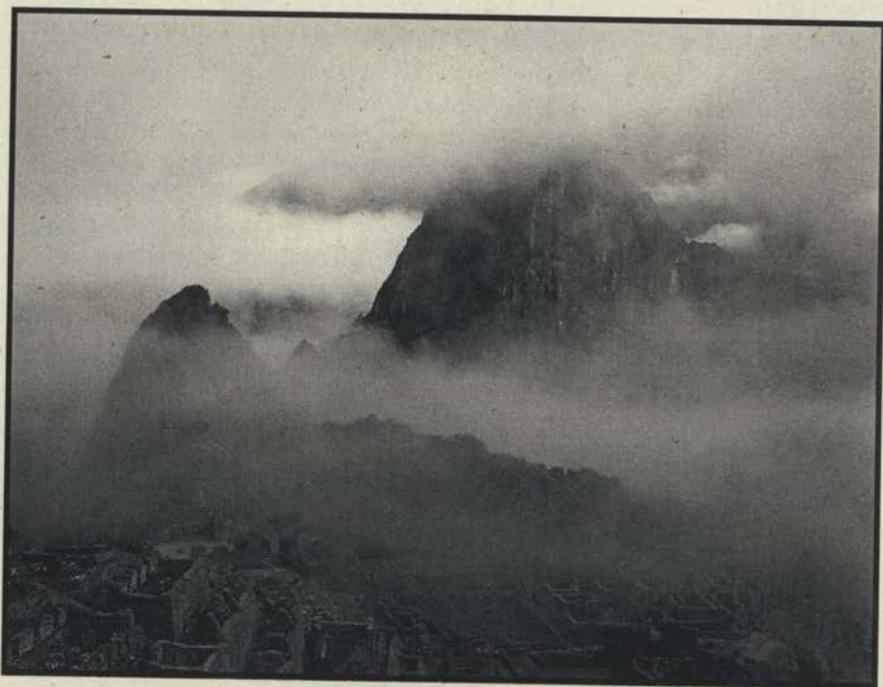
Edie's most vivid memory of college was an image of her cross-eyed composition teacher Mr. Bill, sweating and pounding the chalkboard in front of a poster of Yates. Show, don't tell. Don't have the woman tell the man how much she loves him: have her bake him a cake. And remember your narrative distance, he said. The narrator is not always the story. So whenever Edie tells the story of the man with two families, she remembers Mr. Bill and does her best to enter the third person omniscient. In her better retellings, she becomes a conveniently poised camera; or better, she recedes entirely from the car, leaving him standing there in front of his forced congregation, spotlighted and completely alone. As she speaks, she paints the man with the economical detail and color of an anatomy book: orange wool pants knobbed with lint, a yellow grocery bag full of Kleenex packs, dark skin, a local at first glance until you heard his Spanish. It was worse than mine, she laughs, though her brain has secreted away a wider memory of his measured syllables, articles and adjectives tucked clumsily around nouns and verbs like a suitcase packed in a rush. She never says that he was the first stranger who'd looked her in the eye and spoken to her in the full month she'd been in Barcelona. Instead, she squints her eyes, wags her chin slightly, purses her lips. «I can't believe I fell for it.»

As Edie will tell it later, the man had begun his speech the minute the doors latched themselves closed. With her own memorized idioms and subjunctive turns, she repeats his: «Ladies and gentlemen, I will not lie to you, I am a poor immigrant and I regret to take up your time this evening.» He pulled a laminated photograph from his front pants pocket and curled its edges with his fingernails as he spoke. As he explained it, the woman in the picture, whose hairline lay a full inch too low on her forehead, was his wife in Sri Lanka: with the help of kind strangers, she would be able to join him in Spain along with his five sons, pictured there in identical denim dress shirts buttoned soberly to the neck. A burst of plastic fruit trees and a laminated waterfall erupted behind them, and the flash glared off their pomade and bleached their faces gray. The smallest's lips hung slightly parted, but otherwise, their expressions rhymed perfectly: no one smiled.

In reality, there wasn't any someone. There was a man smiling at a woman down the bar, his teeth glowing gray under the blacklight. There was blue confetti on the countertops and a mural of what looked like New York on the wall, the buildings gray against silver constellations against a dimmed aubergine sky. There was Edie, her hand buried in her purse, crushing her fucking condones corderinas with one hand, the band singing «scared of the middle place/between life and nowhere»: her, taking the moment far too literally.

She took four shots, paid for them in coins and left before the encore. She doesn't tell this part: the streets crowded with protestors when she walks out of the club. A man in black, a man moving fast, no, a man in full riot gear clipping her on the shoulder as he runs past her yelling «Dejapoliciádejadejadeja,» hitting her so hard that she falls down on her knees, her elbows, her right cheekbone, the heels of her hands, all at once. The fall knocks all the air out from inside of her, sobering her instantly. When she looks up, a man in a camo jacket is screaming and setting fire to a giant banner: «SOMOS AQUÍ, Y TAMBIÉN TENEMOS MOLOTOVS.»

Edie doesn't tell this part, because nothing happened next. She walked away from the riot. She left before they started the tear gas rounds. She read in the paper the next morning that it started as a homeless rights protest, but she didn't finish the article to see what it became. When she pulled herself up off the pavement, she didn't ask anyone what had happened, didn't run for cover shielded under the coat of some disaffected activist, didn't end up in a flat in Reus drinking Oolong and plotting to plant a pipe bomb in the Ciutat chambers. There was no dialogue,





no development. She walked away, as quickly as she could, all the way back to the underground.

When she stepped onto the car, he had already started.

«Ladies and gentlemen, I will not lie to you, I am a poor immigrant and I regret to take up your time this evening.»

His shirt was new. He had gotten a hot shower and his hair was still wet.

«I have been in your country for six months, and you have shown me much kindness. A woman, on a subway car, just like all of you, gave me these new clothes. I am very happy here.»

He couldn't have been talking to her.

«But my family is still in Pakistan, and it is only with your help that they are to join me.»

He held up a photograph. Two children, a boy and a girl, posed on a wooden sled in front of a photographer's green butcher-paper backdrop. They wore christmas sweaters, an elf and a candycane each. The boy looked past the camera, undoubtedly placated by some stuffed animal his father was holding. The girl was clearly close to tears.

«I am begging you,» he said. «Anything you can give. You can help them to come home.»

/ / /

When Edie tells this story, she adds a third act. She sees the man with two

families again, and she gives him everything she has in her wallet. He recognizes her: from the yellow line, from the blue line, from the memory of her face which accompanies the slow guilt he feels every morning as he selects his family out of a shoebox he bought at a flea market. He cannot stop crying long enough to give the money back. She sees him again, later, sweeping the sidewalks at La Rambla in a city services uniform.

The girl in the story does not ride the metro anymore. She moved back to the states three months ago, where she drives a used Civic with synthetic upholstery and a grating Elvis planted defiantly to the dashboard. She commutes to a newspaper office in downtown Milwaukee, and she jokes to her fiancé that when God painted the midwest he only had three colors: gray, brown and corn. She spends her weekends at house parties in the suburbs, and she wears the same coat—red nylon her mother's in the seventies—everywhere she goes. She laughs often. She smokes whatever cigarettes are cheap.

She is not stalled in the tunnel between Llacuna and Bogatell. It is not the morning rush, and she is not pressed between a pregnant woman and a tall man forced to strangle-hold his guitar: so close, she could kiss five different strangers on the mouth without moving an inch, if anyone thought to speak or meet eyes. The heat doesn't make her heart race, and she is not scared that the man who's back she's pressed against can feel it. She can't feel the city twenty feet above them, a million tons of brick and buildings and people and steel, a heavy blanket about to smother. She can't fathom the earth below them, the dark, unseen shifting of stone. The heat does not subside; the train doesn't move. ♦



# Sequined Shoes.

by Luke Borders.

I am green, green – Consumed by the hustle, consumed by the flow of girls of pearls of seas of sunken eyes wrinkled and lined hung dimly from the vine, perished furrowed and foul. From the trauma and terror of a supposed future of fear she appeared a shadow in the door. Head held high and lips aglow – she came towards me again as if accidentally shoes glistening in the ebb and flow of the city's possibility.

Sequined shoes sing my blues trampling through the city streets turning passions into heat. In passing bars and in their cars, lonely men turn their heads and long with lusting tongues to lap the nectar that so becomes you. But young and mortal Venus, who has suckled you? what will plague me when I do?.

With not quite a smile and not quite a frown her eyes looked scatteredly around the room, a living tomb with hollow walls that echo but make no calls. Dramatized by opened eyes, sheets and pillows and laces are strewn upon the floor. The shoes are placed neatly by the door, on guard, beckoning me to let myself stay.

Can I find beauty behind beauty this time beauty? for beauty I cannot forget you as I chase you thorough blind alleyways across endless lines of endless sidewalk To find through a yellowed window-pane of some reposed room the shoes set still by beauty illusory.

Sequined shoes, sing me blue whispering of a silent doom. Cuckoo bird taking roost, scowling eye split on high, never watching immaculance as pavement wears the shoes. Every friend today is a customer, every customer a regular. This bed is not my own. Soon one will remain

The CD opposite this page is the first-ever  
Grout Compilation.

All works were written, arranged or recorded by the  
following St. John's students:



1. Julie by Garrett Hobba
2. Just Inches by Shelby Sifers
3. Stampede In The Trees by Landforms (Written by Max Walukas)
4. I Can See Now Why Girls Get Married by Martha Keen and Jay Bayles
5. Goodnight, Eva Braun by Oliver Lémke (Ft. Caroline Caldwell).
6. The Red Fallows by Aaron Field
7. Oh Diana by E Einowski
8. Rhapsody on a Theme of Aristotle by Mike Esterheld
9. East Virginia Blues by Simon Tajiri
10. Farewell from Grand Central by The 1912a (Written by Jake Faulkner)
  11. Wandering by Garrett Hobba
  12. Rapunzel by Max Walukas
13. Shelly Song by Aaron Field and Ian Hayes
14. My Friend John by Simon Tajiri
15. Father John B by Mike Esterheld
16. Between Us by Shelby Sifers
17. Ballad of Hardluck Annie and Andy by the 1912A (Written by Kris Hutson and Jake Faulkner)
18. Long Way Home by Emily Green and Simon Tajiri
19. PTSD by The Predacons (Kevin Andrus, Sam Porter, Sterling Pratt and Gabe Villalobos)



Final thanks to:

Everyone who submitted / Cobalt Blue / Polity /  
The Moon / E. Einowski / The incredible, wonderful and  
devastatingly sexy Grout staff / And you. For reading it.  
That was nice of you.

**GROUT / SPRING 07**