

pacific REVIEW

omnivore



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Caves, Epiphanies, and Writing

I met a man who lived in a cave. I'm not kidding. I don't mean a night or two and then back to the burbs. He *lived* in a cave. I met Carl when I was hiking in the woods around Big Sur. He claimed to be an LA banker who stabbed his wife after he caught her fucking another man. So he ran. And here he ended up, living like the Flintstones. I'm talking about a bed, a chest of drawers, an ice box (à la *The Honeymooners*), a bed-side stand, a painting on the wall, the whole 1 bdrm uppr wst sde loft thing, only it was in a cave next to a waterfall about two miles into the woods off of PCH.

We got to talking, and I asked Carl, "How do you keep sane out here all alone?" "I write," he said, and he pointed toward a corner at the back of the cave. Sure enough, there stood a pile of journals about waist high. With Carl's permission, I grabbed a few journals and sat on his bed and began to read. What I found was page after page of delicate poetry and graceful prose, a diary of this man's life on the lam, ducking the law in the wilderness. Something about his writing hit me hard. I mean, what I read was not just rote communication but survival, the safe harbor, the hope, the notes of a man torn to bits by his mistakes. For some of us writing has no room for luxury. The words bow low to existence. They offer hope for the next breath. What university, what society, what country, what religion doesn't anchor itself in writing? This was Carl's deal. He didn't exist to write, he wrote to exist.

So now, here I am, far from those woods, the editor of *pacific REVIEW*, inviting you to take a peak into the caves of some remarkable writers and artists. For this issue's submissions, I searched for the same spirit that I found in Carl's journals, the joys and pathos of life. We named this issue "Omnivore" because an omnivore eats anything, and we didn't want to limit our focus. We wanted to open the floodgates to good work. In this issue, we proudly maintain the *pacific REVIEW* tradition that spans well over thirty years: to respect the writers and artists who, from around the world, make our journal the real deal. We make no profit here. Every nickel that comes in goes back to the page. Everyone on our crew, from editors to interns, works for the love of the word. We care about writing and art. Submissions come naked. We don't give a damn if you're well known or unknown, as long as your work holds up. And in this issue, I believe you'll find some of the finest work *pacific REVIEW* has ever published.

It's been a long-time coming--false starts, mutinies and break-ups, arguments and make-ups, yet the work held tight. So to Carl, wherever you are, probably in San Quentin, I hope you're still writing. And to all the men and women on both sides of this issue of *pacific REVIEW*, let's raise a glass to a great literary journal and a great tradition.

Leon Lanzbom

Editor-in-Chief