

OPUS

2006

Correction:

The play *Cleo Valentine* on page 22 was also written by Michael Cardinali.

I truly apologize for this mistake and its implications.

- Lauren SooHoo

Editor in Chief, English Club

OPUS

Issue iv
2005-2006

State University of New York at Geneseo
1 Collge Circle, Geneseo, NY 14454

Dear Readers,

Thanks for picking up this year's issue of OPUS. We all hope you enjoy it.

The process that went into the publication of this magazine proves that OPUS is indeed a creative work of its own. With so many exciting submissions, choosing fifty pages worth was a daunting challenge. A vast amount of time, effort, and work went into this publication, ensuring that OPUS live up to its Latin etymology! At times strenuous (and even volatile), I hope you agree that our creative process was well worth both our time and yours.

Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Lauren SooHoo
Editor in Chief

Our most sincere hank you's:

To Dr. Greenfield, for his moral, monetary, and musical support. We couldn't ask for a better advisor.

To Michele Feeley, for her never-ending support and encouragement.

To Marie Henry, for her patient help and omniscience.

To the members of English Club, who have been a fantastic group this year.

To the talented writers and artists who submitted to Opus - our decisions are getting more difficult each year.

We couldn't have done it without all of you. Thank you.

- English Club

Table of Contents

<i>Sister Savior</i> , Meg Vasey	5	<i>Table and Chairs</i> , Benjamin Gajewski	28
Photograph, Kaye Robinson	5	<i>Projects</i> , Jessica Allen	29
<i>Drifting</i> , Nicole Schwartz	6	<i>Tuesday Laundry Day Destinies Of We and Cotton</i> ,	
<i>Paint By Numbers</i> , Kelly Sclafani	6	Meg Vasey	29
<i>Flying Alone</i> , Monica Moschetta	7	<i>Alibi of a Tree Named Serenity</i> , Robert Mammano	30
<i>The Retirement Home</i> , Greg Fisher	7	<i>There i Sank into the Leaves</i> , Alex Egan	31
<i>Lauren</i> , Robert Mammano	8	<i>Ankles and Blankets</i> , James Merenda	32
<i>Six O'clock Summer</i> , Megan Lyons	8	<i>Montauk at Night</i> , Nicole Schwartz	32
Photograph, Nicole Schwartz	8	<i>Holywell Street</i> , Libby Donaldson	33
<i>Turning Off The Light and Accepting the Silence</i> ,		<i>Picking Up the Pieces</i> , Sonia Vieira	34
Dana LePage	9	<i>Remembering Matthew</i> , Kelly Sclafani	35
<i>Shades</i> , Nicole DeLawder	10	<i>Untitled</i> , Daniel Freund	35
<i>Monday Night</i> , Alaina Maggio	11	Photograph, Stacie Mauchan	35
<i>"And When You Realize,"</i> Laura Morris	11	<i>Life, Death II</i> , Jordan Schauer	36
<i>Despair Comes in Bottles and Shots are Half Off</i> ,		<i>In an Instant</i> , Robert Mammano	36
Mallorie Rosenbluth	11	<i>Grim Reaper</i> , Aaron Wiener	36
<i>Ups and Downs</i> , Mike Fink	12	<i>Satan's Lavatory</i> , Nathan Corrigan	37
<i>Open Wide</i> , Nicole DeLawder	12	<i>Fragments</i> , Nicole DeLawder	38
<i>Beneath Gold Moonlight</i> , Dana LePage	13	<i>The Maid's Secret</i> , Stacie Mauchan	39
<i>Moon</i> , Suzanne Hally	13	<i>Broken</i> , Stacie Mauchan	39
<i>With the Ecstasy of Words</i> , Carrie Jean Braman	13	<i>Beneath the Storm</i> , Kelly Nichol	40
<i>Cityscape</i> , Libby Donaldson	14	<i>Fredonia Factory</i> , Alex Egan	41
<i>White Pages</i> , Alex Egan	15	<i>Whore or Lover</i> , James Merenda	42
<i>The Oriole</i> , James Merenda	17	<i>There Are No Kings Inside</i> , Kelly Higgins	42
<i>Untitled</i> , John Kulak	18	<i>Exceptional</i> , Eric Dawson	43
<i>Haiku</i> , Suzanne Hally	18	<i>Salvation Through Illumination</i> , Meg Vasey	45
<i>The Poster</i> , Erika St. James	19	<i>Untitled</i> , Mallorie Rosenbluth	45
<i>"In the Process of Morning,"</i> Laura Morris	19	Photograph, Benjamin Gajewski	46
<i>Snow</i> , Audrey Amir-Denton	19	Photograph, Nicole Schwartz	46
<i>My Last Attempt at Creativity</i> , Dana LePage	20	<i>A Bad Listener</i> , Danielle Dornbier	47
Photograph, Stacie Mauchan	20	<i>"I Keep Having Pregnant Dreams,"</i>	
<i>Geometry Pop Quiz</i> , Michael Cardinali	21	Laura Horwood-Benton	47
<i>Cleo Valentine</i> , Alea Wratten	22	<i>South Hall Ceiling</i> , Benjamin Gajewski	47
<i>A Resolution Never to Become a Poet</i> ,		<i>How You Know It's Finals Week</i> , Nicole Schwartz	48
James Merenda	25	<i>APA Style</i> , John Kulak	48
<i>Convictions</i> , Tyler Baker	26	<i>Classroom</i> , Benjamin Gajewski	49
<i>Notre Dame</i> , Libby Donaldson	27	Staff	50

Sister Savoir
Meg Vasey

Do you remember when we'd play "don't fall in the lava" and we'd jumped from couch to couch but then I'd purposely jump in and say "why don't you love me, why didn't you save me?" and roll away on the carpet (death by shaggy yarn) and drop your hand.

And in the grocery store we'd sing and race to snatch the coupons from underneath the attention-grabbing blinkers and push each other into people we didn't know and yell "you're always in the way." And when we sat in the backseat in the car on the roadtrip to Chicago with dad, you would be angry about having to go to Hardee's but really dad just stopped so I could go to the bathroom and then you'd say "Meg won't be hungry for lunch, she already ate all the snacks." But I couldn't argue in my defense because I had a donut in my mouth so I started to choke from laughing and dad got nervous like he always did when we ate food and laughed but we kept laughing. And I remember when we would drink bath water out of our tea-set cups when we were three and five and we'd say "this is the best tea" because it didn't matter that tea was not tea, because we were in charge of our destinies and the destinies of tub-bound luke-warm water.

And I remember the day I felt sick when you said I first let you down, when I told them about you and the boy with the black hair because you wanted trust but I wanted you safe. And when you stopped telling me things, I knew we were grown up because it was me trying to save you from the dangers of life as carpet lava and you were rolling away (a perfect model learned long ago from the elementary me). But all I wanted was to grab your hand and pull you back where you belonged; invincible on the couch, next to me.



Kaye Robinson

Drifting

Sitting in the middle
of the sunlit bay:
The biggest fish in sight
floats,
like a hammock in mid-air
swaying side to side.

The seagulls hover up above
Eyeing their delicious bate
- bright orange in a monotonous cloud of green

and there you are on the pier,
the hungriest gull of them all
eagerly casting out the fishing line
sending the lure as far as it could soar.

I am right here.

The line is too short.

I am right here.

You try once more
with as much strength as the
powerful tide that pulls me farther away

And again the fishing line is unable
To reach,
hook,
and reel in
The only fish in sight.

Already too far out,
I continue to drift
by the winds' whim
and the tides' choice

becoming
smaller
and
smaller,
drowning in conformity
with all of the other fish.

I was just too far out,
too far out.

Nicole Schwartz

Paint By Numbers

She is twenty years old
She doesn't have a favorite color anymore
She wears a blue hospital gown
And lays brain dead in her blue bed
Staring at the blue ceiling
Because that is all that she can do

She was nineteen years old
Her favorite color was white
She wore a white sweatshirt
And sat on her white college dorm room carpet
Taking forty white antidepressants
Until all she saw was white

She was seventeen years old
Her favorite color was red
She wore red pajama pants
And sat on the red bathroom rug
Cutting with a red screwdriver
Watching the red blood trickle down

She was fourteen years old
Her favorite color was black
She wore a black mesh shirt
And sat on her black carpet
Painting her black nails
Staring at the black night sky

She was ten years old
Her favorite color was yellow
She wore a yellow bathing suit
And sat on a yellow towel
Tanning in the yellow sun
Watching yellow butterflies flutter by

She was five years old
Her favorite color was green
She wore a green summer dress
And laid on the dewy green grass
Looking for green inch worms
Hanging from the green leaves

She was just born
She didn't have a favorite color yet
She was wrapped in a pink blanket
And laid in the pink hospital crib
Sucking on her pink thumb
Dreaming of a beautiful life

Kelly Sclafani

Flying Alone

After a rushed kiss good-bye,
I stood in line
to walk barefoot
through a suspended doorframe,
holding my breath,
as it scanned my body for metal.
I forgot to wave before turning
the corner
gate seven gate seven gate seven

On the plane,
the flight attendant told us to
keep our seatbelts fastened
while in our army of reclining chairs,
take note of the closest exit,
not to inflate the life vests inside
the aircraft, and if the cabin pressure
dropped, to place the mask on ourselves
before helping others.

There was traffic on the runway;
too many planes prepared for take-off,
so I waited with my nose pressed
to the plexi-glass.
In response to the pilot's reminder
that smoking was prohibited on this flight,
the girl behind me asked her father
about those that do allow smoking,
"Do they open the windows Daddy?"

I unzipped my backpack,
reached for the gum that would save my ears.
The plane left the ground, I blinked
and saw the coast meet the ocean
the waves that knocked me over
the summer before;
mere wrinkles in the sheet of azure.
Above the world, the things that stand out:
baseball diamonds and swimming pools,
tombstones and houses, equally spaced.
We live and die in rows.

Monica Moschetta

The Retirement Home

Her hands, the palms, the swollen nubs
of them, collapsing on themselves,
flexing folded crumpled knuckles,
streams of blue green veins under
exhausted skin, made so by decades,
birthdays, handshakes, houses
and now the dry central heating.
They pry open romance novels,
sneak chocolates, funnel pills, write
letters if I remember, pick out twenties
hidden in fading envelopes, press dials
on her remote control, and more rarely on
her portable phone,

and in my nightmares they fold
neat and flat, not over knuckles
but her tired breast.

Greg Fisher

six o'clock summer

Pull up a lawnchair sunshine,
you have a tendency to do me right.
Be my pillow baby- my head is
heavy tonight.

The lawn mower's humming-umming
a few houses down.
These are my sweet summer sounds.
The kids are calling- maybe
manhunt tonight.

There's the ice cream man- he's playing that song.
The ice cream man- he's playing that song
ice cream man- he's playing that song
man- he's going

Fireflies glowing lemon-lime bright.
Hiding and seeking-
they dance tonight.

Megan Lyons

Lauren

the visible heat and the pinheads of sweat
the out of practice choir of cicadas and air conditioners
and the orchids on Oceania Avenue
will always remind me of

that one summer
I saw your smile on the face of every child
dancing barefoot on the pavement
under the gushing fire hydrants

their laughter more than echoes
and I wonder where you are

Robert Mammano



Nicole Schwartz

Turning off the Light and Accepting the Silence

Dana LePage

Poetry is why I write emotional metaphors on scraps of lined paper. You are why I don't erase them as soon as they bleed ink into the white. Why I am still biting my lips at 2:13 am, laying back on striped sheets staring up at brass bed posts, why I am quietly singing myself awake with our favorite lyrics, *"you only hold me up like this, cause you don't know who I really am..."*

That extra hour I stay awake each night is for you. My eyes are heavy, lined with stardust and salt specks, and I am almost too tired to write any of this down anymore. Maybe soon it will be you again, keeping me awake each night.

You pick me up on the side of the street and the car ride is endless and over too quickly. I chastise you for not calling earlier in the week and you shrug in such a charming manner that I give in and run my hand through your hair instead of changing the song that is softly mumbling awkward love lyrics on the radio.

Your apartment is just the way I remember it and the lake behind it still reflects the moonshine and the light in your otherwise dark and unreadable eyes and we pause on the doorstep just long enough for you to kiss my earlobe and for the porch light to automatically turn on.

Inside a dimly lit kitchen you pour me a glass of water; you never had developed the taste for chardonnays and zinfandels. A quiet immaturity that I should have realized much earlier. Your fingertips pause over mine for a moment, and your eyes flash with recognition and remembrance.

"Emerson." Your voice is quiet and filled with unspoken apologies.

"Shh, Jay, I know." But I have never let you say those words to me, and I have simply expected to forget that late rainy September evening, when the wet in my shoes was no colder than the icy tears my cheekbones were drinking up.

But there was more to that night than what we never said to each other, more than the way your hands moved up my back and around my shoulders, even more than the feelings that I didn't allow myself to recognize. I follow you down the hallway, my fingertips trailing the walls, my eyes trailing your back.

Your room is still cluttered with guitar picks and throw pillows, and the air is muffled with rustling leaves outside of the window that opens up over your bed. But I do not forget that we are here for a reason, and that everything we do must be explained with an excuse. You slide our CD into your computer (it is not a coincidence) and those same words that have echoed through my mind on restless nights with sore legs sweep the room. *"I used to waste my time dreaming of being alive now I only waste it dreaming of you."*

Tucking my head under your chin, I rest my cheek slightly against the familiar scratchy wool of your favorite evergreen sweater. We stand physically locked together but not quite touching until the song ends and our heartbeats slow. I have always been the impatient one, but this time I was willing to wait as long as it took.

Our bodies lower onto the bed, and your hand cradles the back of my head. Your tongue probes my lips open with gentle uncertainty. I allow for this to happen, I welcome the warmth of your mouth on my neck, your breath mingling with mine. "Is this ok?" Your whisper surprises me; you were never assured of my pleasure before. I bite my lip from the momentary sting, for me it has been awhile, and I nod silently as a droplet of ocean water slips onto the pillow.

Our hips meet, begin to move together as one, my back rising and falling against moist sheets. You make soft, muffled noises and close your eyes, but I choose to stare at you the entire time. I thought I had memorized your face, but a new crease around your mouth and a stray hair across your forehead make you seem like a stranger beneath faint moonlight. I try to block out all of the possibilities of others that may have been beneath you in this bed. You release your sexual tensions inside of me and collapse next to me on the twisted sheets. You take me in your arms and kiss my sweaty forehead.

"I want to talk about it tonight." You hold me away from you and force me to look into your chocolate raspberry eyes. "We need to." I will let you be the brave one for now.

You lead me to the kitchen and turn water on for tea. You take out two mugs, my favorite blue ceramic one, and the one I bought for you in a cheap Chinatown gift store. I go through the motions, placing sugar and honey on the counter, opening the refrigerator and taking out milk. This was once my place too, on early Sunday mornings, me with a towel wrapped around my damp hair, you with a bowl of cheerios and the New York Times.

The air is warm but I shiver anyways; it is too familiar in here, and you mistake my shiver for coldness and stand behind me, wrapping your skinny arms around my shoulders, your front pressed against my back. It has not become uncomfortable for you, our bodies hugging has not just become a distant memory. But for me it has, and unconsciously I

grow stiff and you step back and away. As I turn around to face you your eyes reflect the hurt and confusion in mine.

"I don't understand, I thought you wanted this." You take my hand in yours, yours is clammy and uncertain but you grasp mine as though you are hanging off the side of a cliff.

"I don't know what I want." I can't hold your questioning gaze anymore. "I thought I knew what I wanted, coming here tonight, I knew what I had wanted to happen." But now that it was, I wasn't so sure. You did not know me anymore, and I could not trust myself around you. The water for tea is ready but my hand is shaking and I drop a spoon onto the tiled floor. You kneel down to pick it up and I take a gulp of tea, numbing the inside of my mouth where your tongue had just invaded. I could never comprehend my own emotional contradictions and tonight was no exception.

"I just didn't think I could make you happy anymore." You offered, crossing in front of me, and dropping the spoon in the sink. "I didn't think I was happy anymore." Those words stained my heart with bitterness and forced a lump in my throat. I was not asking you what you felt, I knew you had not been happy with my eagerness to please, my desire to take care of you, to build you up, and my acceptance to allow myself to stand right behind you instead of beside you. I turned away from you.

"Emmy, I'm trying." You turn me around gracelessly by my hunched shoulder blades. You are watching me with liquid alertness, your eyes glistening with hollow tears. But this time it was your turn to cry, to shed the tears you had never offered before. It was a habit of yours that I was glad to be breaking; you could not have the prerogative of keeping your emotions a secret anymore.

"I can't do this anymore. If I can't make you happy then maybe you need to find someone who can."

"Emerson, I, I still love you." The hesitancy and uncertainty in your voice was alarming but brought a calming cessation to my humming mind. You only loved the idea of me.

"Thank you Jay. You taught me a lot about myself." I placed my mug on the counter and turned to leave.

"Wait Emerson, please, let me drive you home." You had accepted it; I knew you would not fight for me.

"I'll walk home. I'll be fine. Goodbye Jay."

As I let myself out of the front door, I did not turn around one last time to see the hypothetical tears that may or may not have been running down your face, or to hear you ask one more rhetorical question. For now I could make do with the memories that were already concrete and irreversible in my head. As I closed the door behind me and walked by your window one last time, the porch light automatically switched off. I heard the lyrics of the same song that had begun the evening playing from your room again. *"Turn off the lights and turn off the shyness, cause all of the moves make up for the silence."* This time they didn't though, but for once I was content without your voice in my head.

Shades



Nicole DeLawder

Monday Night

Your voice crackles
On my cellphone
You're reading Yeats,
Half of the words
Obscured by static.
I tell you I like it
Even though I'm only half sure.
Your voice is too animated
To ruin with disappointment.
My roommate looks up from
Her computer screen—
It's 11:30, I know.
Fiction Writing is at 8:30.
I haven't started reading yet.
I know.

One more poem
Becomes two more
Becomes
 I really have to go.
I hate that I like you so much.

You just laugh.

Alaina Maggio

And when you realize what
You've done
Your synapses will revolt so
Tell me how does it
Feel to know your own
Body despises you
And you know that you've done it on purpose &
Nothing can be done
Whisper a little song,
It's the last one you'll ever
Hear in that steel trap
You've so gently constructed
For yourself to
Crawl away, to hide away.
Don't suffocate when you
Look for a way out and
Decide that darkness is your
Best hope and your only
Decision.
Wanderlust will kill you,
They've subtly implied.
Well, they lie, and
It's time for you to
Learn to fall away

Laura Morris

Despair Comes in Bottles and Shots are Half Off

He says he's never seen
a girl so pretty
look so damn broken
(and can he buy her a drink).

She raises her head
and lets warm rum whispers
escape her barely parted lips,

I've got scars you could never dream of.

Her grey-green eyes
let him know
he can't afford
what she's been drowning herself in tonight.

And his steps are deliberate
as he walks away,
leaving her there like
the broken nose
the split lip
the set of open veins

with nothing left to do
but bleed

Mallorie Rosenbluth

Ups and Downs

Mike Fink

It was at around noon on a Thursday, upon throwing himself from the 12th floor of the City Corp building that Hank realized he could fly. His silent fall came to an abrupt halt, and he let out a hardy laugh as he propelled himself upward like a swimmer kicking off the bottom of a pool.

He waved at people through the windows of the high rise buildings, did a figure eight over the Coney Island Cyclone, stuck out his tongue at hundreds along Broadway, narrowly won a race with a Jet Liner, did loops around the newly lit Rockefeller Tree, and wove in and out of the cables along the Brooklyn Bridge before returning to his office building. He arrived just in time to interrupt his wife as she passionately kissed their boss.

"I grew wise
To your deceit and your lies
only yesterday.
I'll let you hurt me no more
You worthless whore
so stay the hell away."

After that Hank began to live the high life, in both the literal and figurative sense. He made his public debut on the Late show, was offered a position to play outfielder for the Boston Red Sox, talked about breast implants with Howard Stern and the increase of autism with Imus, shook hands with the President, was reported to be the father of bat boy by the World Enquirer, got himself a fancy house in the Hamptons, and even made a deal to put out his own line of Air Hank basketball shoes.

One night, while sitting in his house considering the pros and cons of joining the Olympic high jump team, he received a phone call.

"Countless times
I've stood in your autograph lines
Longing to hold you.
I know I made a mistake
And caused your heart to break
But please let me come back to you."

Hank slammed the phone down on the receiver. His wife had clearly been crying. She had only cried once during their twenty five years together. He had come home one day to find her curled up on their sofa with tears running down through so much mascara it appeared as if her pupils had exploded like cheap ballpoint pens. The image had been so unsettling that it had stuck in his mind like a scar. Did she think she had the right to cry now? After she had been willing to throw their relationship away for a few nights with a male bimbo? Certainly not. A slow flight under the moonlight would ease his nerves and take his mind off the unpleasant situation.

Hank leapt off the third story balcony of his home and promptly fell screaming to his death.

Open Wide



Nicole DeLawder

Beneath Gold Moonlight

Opening herself up, fragile and timid
the notes lift between tulip lips.
She sits beneath a green glow of fluorescent light
behind her head- a halo of insecurities
floating out like cigarette smoked harmonies.

Don't let one more drunken shadow forget
another memory of twisted legs
and fumbling fingertips.

Her grievances swim out past salt covered shoulders.
Dreams *do* last so long.
Perched just too high on black leather,
a choker of emerald around her throat,
capsizing lyrics of love.

Here is the time to take another
glass of spring and summer
so we can drown in melted snow.

Not everyone is inherently bad she thinks
as sadness sits still in her smile
tucked below sharp cheekbones.
It's so easy to drown out the high notes:
shrill incessancy reminding us
of our human disease.

Now it's her turn to wear
this home-made crown of dandelions.

She steps down onto hard ground
as the walls open up to her
like hands held in rain.
Don't let me down my sweet girl.
Blue eyes only look so good in daytime,
but it's beneath gold moonlight that they shine.

Dana LePage

Moon

An orange slice in the sky,
The forgotten snack of a giant
It rots away as the night passes,
Colours fading from orange to grey.

The world was ours that night.

Suzanne Hally

With the Ecstasy of Words

After watching Virginia Woolf
bleed herself all over white space,
having climaxed and settled with her,
I light a cigarette.

Near to tears with the ecstasy of words,
the sun blunders in
hits the ashtray I hold aloft and
scatters into wisps of light
on my lap in myriad colors.

Carrie Jean Braman

Cityscape



Libby Donaldson

White Pages

Alex Egan

I never realized how many white vans existed until you broke up with me.

We were some pair, they said. Whenever I was without you, a dotted outline followed me where you should be, but it was never long before you filled it in. Now your absence was no missed call, no ten-minute drive, no “see you tomorrow”—it was the final chapter, the last episode, the drop of the curtain.

First, came confused anxiety—silent phones, compulsive deletions, false up and down hopes, nausea like you wouldn’t believe, and no sleep to make it all better. I wanted relief, I wanted peace of mind, I wanted to *know* what you knew. You didn’t have the decency to tell me yourself (maybe a relapse of that “I don’t use the phone” disease?) I even went to our spot, but the river gave me no answers.

Then, unfortunate realization. In a technique a convicted stalker with twelve restraining orders would have admired, I furtively drove by your house four times that night. Funny how determined I was for you to break my heart. On my fourth trip, about to give up, the lights were finally on in your living room.

At the door, you greeted me with a confused look as if you had the right to. There was nowhere to go but upstairs.

Entering the too familiar doorway, I felt the air had changed. My collages, your boutonniere, “our” clothes were all still present, but something was completely different. Looking around at the bed I had fallen asleep in, the jeans I had worn, and the incense long burnt into ash, my eyes finally rested on your angular form standing awkwardly in front of me. It was *you*.

I felt the words, “Can we talk?” had been long overused in ours and other instances, so I tried a new one. “Haven’t talked to you in a few days,” I said, trying to keep my voice bright. You mumbled excuses like “I needed to think” and “I didn’t know what to say.” All I heard was “I didn’t care enough anymore.”

I had no other choice—I fell back on the old cliché. Swallowing the lump inconveniently growing in my throat, I asked, “Can we talk about this?” trying not to sound too desperate.

You sat on your bed, avoiding my eyes. “About what?” you asked dumbly, as if you didn’t know exactly what I meant.

I resisted the sudden inclination to scream and played along. “About us.” You nodded blankly. My head began to spin as a feeling of helplessness rose in my chest. This wasn’t the way I had planned it—I could tell by the look in your eyes that everything was already wrong. Struggling to keep myself collected, I sat down next to you. Your bed had always been one of my favorite places, now it was as comfortable as broken shells. We were a few inches and a thousand miles apart, and I didn’t know where to begin.

We talked about what had been wrong with the relationship as though we hadn’t already been over it a million times. Then we attempted something different and tried to listen to each other, but we didn’t know how to anymore. You told me what you wanted, I told you what I wanted—they were no longer the same things. It was ironic after how unbearable it had been to be four hours away from you, that being ten minutes apart had been the real problem. I hadn’t been home a month, and here we were, falling apart.

When I could no longer hold back the tears, your arms were around me. When I could think straight, I felt I might have been getting through to you. I even felt your own tears on my back at one point, a relief I hadn’t thought possible at the time. But tears didn’t mean a changed mind.

You mentioned there was someone else, something that should have registered as a neon warning sign, but it didn’t seem urgent at the time. Especially with my head on your stomach and your fingers through my hair and tracing my hips. Especially after the tear-filled kisses, your bony arms wrapped tightly around me, and the “I love you’s” before our “goodbye’s.” Especially because it felt the same.

The words of what exactly was said now blur together into a new batch of false promises scattered by my tears and a feeling of undue hope. But there was one thing you said to me that I don’t think I will ever forget or forgive. As we stood locked together one last time in your driveway, I looked up at the stars (Do I even need to mention how in love we were under them?). You whispered to me, your head in my neck, “They’re all yours.”

I froze at those three words that you meant to be kind. My heart so utterly shaken, I stopped breathing. After a moment, the best I could do was choke out, “There’s enough for both of us.” I should have known then that we would never share them again, despite your promises never to give up our “hammock nights.” Still, I walked away from that night with tears merely resting in the corners of my eyes, convinced that tomorrow you would change your mind or the next day or the next day.

Tomorrow came without the promised call but instead a spoonful of salt to add to the sores not even fully opened yet. I saw now that the neon warning sign had been a bright, blinking “Dead End,” something I wondered how I could miss. She was already your new girlfriend.

Step three, justifiable rage. I knew well enough not to hate myself for this. I hated you for making me believe you still cared about me, I hated you for moving on so quickly, I hated you for being unable to wait *more than one day*.

When fury had settled to a simmer, I felt cheated. You, who had always insisted there could never be anyone else, had found someone else. You, who had been in love with me for *so long*, had already found another love. And I, well I was

left to figure out what to do without you. I railed against the idea, mouth frothing, that you could truly give up everything we had had together for a girl you had known only a few days. Then I realized it was the only way I would believe it was over. For good. *Forever*.

Forced acceptance. I tried to keep myself busy, laughing—best friends are always good for that. Those were the days I didn't need you. Thoughts of you fled while I rolled on grass, strung beads, and dangled feet out of convertibles. But there you fell in the instant between laughter, the segues, the scene change, the moment before unconsciousness. In those inescapable rifts in my desperate distraction, I could not help but remember.

Always a contender in my battle to be okay was the inevitable depression. I wasn't suicidal, I wasn't murderous, I was *petrified*. How was it possible that we really weren't going to be together anymore? We always had fallen/drifted/run back to each other—*always*. Now there was no hope of that ever happening again. *How had this happened?*

Disbelief returned about once a day. I found the words "you'll be back," or just, "come back," forming in your direction, and every once in a while I caught myself listening for your car in the driveway. After the occasional misleading daydream, I would start, expecting to see you walk through my door—yet the phone still hadn't rung.

I lost eleven pounds in a week, thanks to the dread that had stretched out and made a home in my stomach. The hips you had always loved were starting to jut—I wanted to tattoo them. But maybe permanence wasn't really what I needed, so I dyed my hair.

I didn't really let myself "get it all out." I couldn't do it. My tear ducts were running on empty after all the tears I had already shed, no—wasted, when we were still together. Maybe I was just too numb. So I skipped the complimentary grieving stage, the hours of sobbing and dwelling, and went straight to forgetting you (or trying to). I avoided the hundreds of pictures I had "forced" you to take with me, I didn't listen to our songs (we never had found just one), I didn't wear your clothing, and I hid all leftovers of your presence. If everything else didn't already remind me of you, that may have worked.

Covert misery. Once in a while a leak would spring in the mask I was maintaining, and I couldn't help but fall back into what we had been. If I really needed to, I let myself reminisce in public places. Your memory would fall heavy over me, filling my head and the room with faded kisses and stale words of adoration. I only allowed myself to return to the poems we had written for each other (yours always desperate and uncomplicated, mine less obvious but always autobiographical). The words were too honest and beautiful to resist. When the nostalgia threatened to take over, I quickly painted over the wrinkle in my exterior before the tears could drop and form a stain.

The worst part of it, the constant ache in my head, the feeling I could never avoid no matter how much gas I wasted, was how badly I missed you. It was much more than I had ever thought you could miss a person. I had gone from being your everything to your nothing in less than a week, and it had hit so fast I don't think I believed it yet. Where was my hero, my Icarus? Where was the boy that would teach me where he would be in the stars so I would never be alone in astronomy class? Where was my lover, my best friend, my other half? I realized that he had been gone for some time now. I couldn't help but wonder if you missed me half as much, or at all. Did I even grace your thoughts anymore?

I hadn't seen you together yet. I saw a picture once—you looked happy, but I'd seen you happier, she was cute, but I'd seen prettier. I knew that when the time came, something inside me would change to the point of no return. I was holding off as long as I could. Was I really supposed to be able to bear to see her hand in yours? Your arm around her waist? You looking at her the way you used to look at me? And the unbearable, the unspeakable—I can't even type it here. Here was hoping I never had to.

Of course I spoke too soon, and it happened. A flash of a wave in a public place, and five minutes later we were face to face. I had known it all along, but finally seeing the two of you together unexpectedly reassured something in my mind—you would *never* have what we had. Ever. The spark, the intensity, the passion that had glowed palpably bright between us was now nowhere to be seen. Your hand was not in hers, your arm not around her waist, and *you did not look at her the way you used to look at me*. You were no Bonnie and Clyde, no Jack and Sally, no Gavin and Stella. It was a warm spot on the sorrow I was nursing to know our love could never be replicated. Not now, not ever.

Temporary elation after the encounter dwindled to a dull, but present and growing, sense of release. I was at the beginning of returning to my peace of mind. After thinking I would die without you, I found myself more eager to make the best of my life after you were gone. I could hardly believe it, but I was *happy*.

It could not be denied that we had made something no one could ever touch, no one in my future or yours. First love was something that could never be repeated or forgotten, and I wasn't going to try to. Sometimes I wished I could change the past. I wished I hadn't said that, or I asked myself why I hadn't done that. Not only had I given you my heart, my soul, and my mind (and the whole of them)—I had even given you my *body*. Obviously giving you all of me had not been enough of me. I ached to take it all back, but how could I have known it would end this way? I *loved* you, and I still do. No matter what I told myself, I wouldn't have done it any differently.

I knew the tears I had shed over you could never fill more tiny paper cups than the moments of beauty we had shared over the last year together. I refused to regret one moment, no matter how much grief the loss and reliving of it brought. For the first time in my life I had been able to say what I never thought I would say—"I'm in love." Your love was gone, but there would always be this tiny part deep down inside of me that would be yours forever. After I had given you so much of my heart, it was inescapable that you would always keep a piece. Luckily it was big enough that there would still be enough to share with others.

And I admit, I was curious about new people myself. I wanted the stomach bubble:s and giddiness again, the

exploration of a new mind and body. You had been my first for just about everything, I wanted to know what being with someone else was *like*. I wanted to feel what it was like to fall in love again—it seemed now like the falling, not the fall, was the best part. And of course, I didn't want to be lonely anymore. However, I was not ready to jump into another relationship so soon when I was still feeling like part of another. It may have been easy enough for you, but there was no way I could move on so fast.

So for now, I write for you the last chapter of a story I never thought would end. I drip these hopeless and hopeful words onto my keyboard in my last appeal to you to find me in your heart and remember what loving me was like. As I sit here behind my white pages, I could wait for you to appear out of the sunset in the type of movie romance I'm still waiting for, but the "should's," "would's," and "could's" just don't matter anymore. I know you won't.

This is not an attempt to change your mind. I will not beg, or cry, or bleed for you anymore. I just want you to understand. There's still so much left unsaid, but we both said enough. If you fail to get this message, I dispense my soul for my own therapy, in an attempt to make sense out of the senseless, or for another like me, to know that there is someone else out there feeling the same way. I know that like the clouds, this ache in my chest will subside. I just need to write while it's still there; (you know) it wouldn't be as good otherwise.

I hope that you remember every kiss, every touch, every word. I will. Don't forget the first time we met, the first time I told you I loved you, the first time we made love. Remember the leaves, the beach, and our first dance. Never ever forget the first girl who loved you, she will never forget the first boy she loved. And when you get lonely or sad, think of me, and know that there is a good chance I am thinking of you.

In the meantime, I lie in the grass, waiting for fireflies—keeping in mind that yours has flown long and far into the night. And if by chance you ever find your way back, know that there is no room for you in my jar.

The Oriole



James Merenda

Untitled

waves lap at the shore
in fluid quakes lending unrelentingly
to absorb the ground, I let my feet melt
into the sand washing away, sitting
The clouds roll above in
an apathetic dance, continuously floating
in front of the idle blue sky
that sees everything

With no sign of change.
years perhaps pass, never counted
never gained or changing something –
Some aspect, some history, some zen
moment within the frame of the mind, though
no other thought to change it;
sitting settled then, like mountain
resting in earth, Phases
of weather
peel skin, stun senses,
dissipate memory into the very originals
of things again;

old age shivers on the waves
spraying palm trees cool,
cleaned, with renewed breach again
over the melting earth, Sitting
in the wind, air blowing
cotton pressure, apathetic
explosions from shivers
a time ago, now surrounding the island, inhaled in the smallest lung
imagined:
I wait for someone from the blue sky, from
behind the clouds to come
and sit beside me,
with news of the weather where the water hasn't been.

John Kulak

Haiku

Knowing how to touch,
Fingers tease and taunt her flesh,
This is making love.

Suzanne Hally

The Poster

Morning upon the loch, still to savor
Yet save for the sweet rushes of the reeds,
Their leaves, pregnant with dew, bent in labor.
Fog settles round the trees, ensconcing beads,
Each bough given an ethereal shine,
As if God's breath were blown upon them.
A painter's brush plays across the wine,
Blurred turrets captured in water's hem,
An oil masterpiece forever more.
Where has the mistress of the castle gone?
For the blue boat lies still upon the shore;
Wooden vessel, for her use she does long.
No more oars to fit inside her old locks,
For Kylemore fashions not solid docks.

Erika St. James

In the process of the morning
There is a flutter and a
Rustle, no matter which
One comes first
As long as time permits
The warmth will keep you
And (but?) then again
You want to let it so
In true fashion
You escape between
The creases of it all
And melt seamlessly
Into what you once
Though was bliss
And as you get older
Things change
Your world is smaller
Than it used to be
Even though you
Stand at the corner
And still can't touch
The other side.

Laura Morris

Snow

Exploded clouds in the 3am sky,
Soft descent on a sleeping world,
Ticking clock noises and creaking buildings,
Sighing as winter's blanket tucks around them.

Warming the air,
Bathed in orange glow,
Magic landing to silence the cold,
Gusts turn to whispers,
Dancing past my window and into my bones.

Heating my winter cold insides,
The blue in my veins,
Heated snow white,
Winter's pulse where my dead November lay.

Softly,
Thick and inviting,
Over me and through me,
Ignite me, sparked alive
Cotton on my eyelashes,
A piece of heaven fallen for me in this quiet,
Now I am orange inside too...

Audrey Amir-Denton

My Last Attempt at Creativity

Dana LePage

If you tell me that you're missing me, then I can know that summer is closer than I think and all of this wasn't a make believe story that I conceived all on my own. It was this game I played with myself. If it took you more than one day to respond to my email then I would know that you weren't checking your hair or straightening your tie, you weren't paying close enough attention to detail for me. You were getting away. "No, it wasn't like that, it wasn't about you" you would insist, pursing your lips and biting on your thumb. My tongue was thick that night, that February evening. The snow was whiter against the black nightline and the moon was outlined in gold green eyeliner. I was ready to dive in. When did everyone else get decide that I should worry about what you thought of me, what you were thinking to yourself as I sashayed by whatever angle of you I could sneak past and move along, quiet and unconcerned? Why did I care if your heart was squeezing a little more in your chest under your pin striped blazer every time my lashes lowered under my bangs or my hand brushed your arm? It was time to give you a little malice. I couldn't just sit there and let you watch the tears drown in cheekbone divets, swimming between velvet dimples and freckled road bumps. Just let go of your insides, forget how your eyebrows twist and your fingers clench when I am in the passenger seat and you are studying me with silent eyes and hushed fingertips. It took just that one night in February for me to recognize that it would never be acceptable to speak slow and always be waiting for tomorrow. Never would I admit to myself or to you that being numb was out of the question, out of the equation. There's this other girl standing in front of you, and she closes her eyes. You take her delicate pale hand and don't look back. I don't blame you. I really don't, because I realized in February that it was simply a lack of creativity that had pulled me towards you to begin with. It was voiceless tact that you practiced best and I was finally ready to walk around your arrogant upturned mouth with my words, walk all over you and leave black boot footprints atop the back of your hands as you lay face down on the tracks. But you just laughed, smiled with your shadowed eyes and picked yourself off the ground, wiped the dirt off your jacket. You placed a fingertip over my forehead, ran it down the length of my face, down the fall of my nose and over the slant above my lips, calssoused and aluminum foil flavored. You wrapped your scrawny arms around me one last time and sighed into my hairline. "I'll be back here at midnight precious" was your low murmer. But I had stopped believing you were coming back for me last February, one year ago today. The cold was reasurring that I wasn't making believe this time, the cold equaled lonely because I knew any feeling of heat was only a disguise of disregarded naivete. If you ever find me now, I would want you to tell me what we fought about, what made your heart clench and your teeth grit, what brought that sandy dirt taste in the back of your throat. I don't remember anymore. I cant remember anything except that it was Februrary and that you were my last attempt at creativity.



Stacie Mauchan

Geometry Pop Quiz

Mr. Zwick

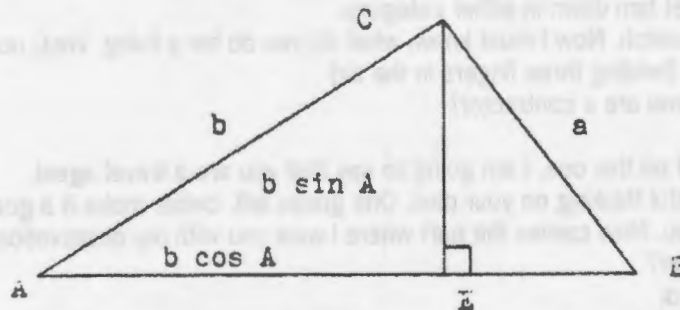
Name Elijah T.

Date 11/14/73

Period Fourth (4th)

F

SEE ME



Find the measurements of the sides of the given triangle. Remember to show all work. Check your work carefully after you have finished.

• Structurally speaking the triangle is the strongest geometric shape. My father is an engineer, he told me this. The atoms in a diamond are in the form of triangles. The Epcot Center at Disney is hundreds of triangles, creating a giant metallic globe. Yesterday I was walking and there were two people in front of me. A guy and a girl. We all kept our socially acceptable distance. I drew large lines between us making a triangle (3.0). I thought, it could be a love triangle. How fragile a love triangle is compared to diamonds and Epcot. The angles always shift, becoming larger or smaller, favoring or rejecting. There is no stability in this triangle, nothing to build on (3.2). If you absolutely need to know, the best shape for love is obviously, the circle. No beginning or ending, continuous without strain. Natural warmth, like the sun. Growth from the circularity of cells in conception. Eyes of September blue sky, Sea foam green and chocolate brown. The semi-circle of a smile. The balls of our feet which we need to dance (2.0).

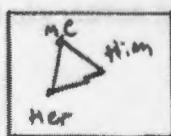


Fig. 3.0

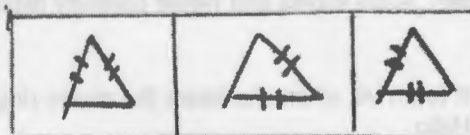


Fig. 3.2



Fig. 2.0

Cleo Valentine

Mr. Weller sits alone at a booth, in a rowdy bar called Doodahs, and is approached by a striking woman named Cleo.

Cleo- Penny for your thoughts

Weller- You might need a quarter for that one?

Cleo- Am I lost? I thought I was at a bar, not a parking garage.

Weller- You can park yourself in this booth, if you'd like.

Cleo- [sitting down] Why thank you. What are you drinking?

Weller- Rum and coke minus the rum.

Cleo- Are you one of those guys who stay sober in order to take advantage of beautiful drunk women, like myself?

Weller- Not in the least, see my friend Casanova over there, he will need two things from me when we leave: a sober driver and a shoulder to cry on. I hate to let him down in either category.

Cleo- And you are sensitive, what a catch. Now I must know, what do you do for a living. Wait, no let me guess.

Weller- Okay you get three guesses [holding three fingers in the air]

Cleo- I am going to start by saying you are a contractor?

Mr. Weller- Nope, that's one down.

Cleo- Damnit, okay let me think hard on this one. I am going to say that you are a travel agent.

Mr. Weller- That might be some wishful thinking on your part. One guess left, better make it a good one.

Cleo- Obviously, I was just baiting you. Now comes the part where I wow you with my observational skills. Are you ready? You, my new friend, you are a teacher?

Weller- I have to say, I am impressed.

Cleo- Really? Wow now how about that, I knew it. You can just tell with teachers. They have this airy thing going on around them, the good ones anyways. What do you teach?

Weller- Secondary social studies.

Cleo- Oh my, secondary Ed. I imagine you have tons of trouble dealing with the female student body.

Weller- No that's no problem what so ever. I do have this problem with women in bars though; they always come up to me and play these silly guessing games.

Cleo- The only difference now is that I am the one that guessed right. That must put me in a league of my own?

Weller- Well, I suppose you are right. Really though how did you know I was a teacher, do I have a kick me sign on my shirt? Or worse are you the mother of a student of mine?

Cleo- Mother! Excuse me teach, but you are not clever enough to get away with that. I have a good mind to leave you all alone again. [She gets up to leave.]

Weller- [He grabs her hand] Don't do that now. I think you misunderstood. What I meant to say is a sister of one of my students.

Cleo- That's better. I told you I can just tell a teacher if I see one. You just seem like the caring type.

Weller- My friend Casanova claims that being the caring type prevents me from 'getting laid' when I go out.

Cleo- And is that your goal here tonight?

Weller- Not at all, I have papers to grade tomorrow morning. You know being a teacher and all.

Cleo- Well teach My name is Cleo Valentine.

Weller- It is nice to meet you Cleo I am Mr. Weller [shaking her hand.]

Cleo- Mr. Weller huh? Cute, but if I have to call you that one more time, I'm gonna slap you.

Weller- Fair enough. So Cleo, where do we go from here?

Cleo- What do you mean?

Weller- I guess I am just asking you about your motives, that's all. Though, I want you to know I am not implying anything.

Cleo- Oh God, are you married? [Slapping her forehead.]

Weller- No. no not at all, Far from it. Got close once but it just didn't happen.

Cleo- That's her loss or his!

Weller- Her loss, definitely her loss.

Cleo- You want my motivations huh? Well, I think you're a handsome man, who is both hilarious and intelligent. And while you are not going to get laid tonight, it is not because you're sensitive. I would however like to see you in a suit a week from tonight. Can that be arranged?

Weller- Nothing personal, I appreciate the offer dear, but I don't think that is not in the cards right now.

Cleo- You are married in there huh? [pointing to his chest.] That's fine; I can respect your decision. Here is my number, just incase you get a divorce. Take care Mr. Weller. [Cleo leaves and Weller carefully placed her phone number into his wallet.]

[A couple days later Cleo is waiting for 9pm to arrive, when she hears the phone ring.]

Cleo- Hello, I sure hope this is important... Hello.

Weller- Ah Miss Cleo ... is this Cleo's number.

Cleo- Maybe you should check those things before you call someone. Yeah this is Cleo.

Weller- So Cleo how's it going?

Cleo- Well considering I have a date at 9 and much to do until then, things are going fine. So who are you and in what regards are you calling me. If this is Video Express I already returned 'Busty Cops vs. Naughty Nurses,' so get off my back already.

Weller- AHH NO this is Mr. Weller, you know from the other night, but wait a minute... Busty Cops?

Cleo- [replies quickly] Yeah well the producer and I are good friends. So Mr. Weller mmm, how'd you get my number?

Weller- You gave me your number at Doodahs, about a week ago.

Cleo- Well honey I give a lot of people my number at Doodahs.

Weller- Well I don't know how to respectfully respond to that.

Cleo- Not many people do. We don't have a date tonight, do we? Cause...

Weller- Well no actually I have a date myself.

Cleo- [Clicking fingers trying to remember him] Weller, Weelllller, Oh yeah ok MR. WELLER, I owe you a good smackin' don't I?

Weller- Normally I resolve physical abuse until the third date, but seriously how are things?

Cleo- Do you want to know the truth or a marvelous fabrication?

Weller- From what I can tell the truth seems much more interesting than the fabrication.

Cleo- You really do like me don't you?

Weller- Well let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Cleo- No let's; after all I always like a man in a tie. Tell me, are you going to be able to support our children on a teacher's salary?

Weller- Well that depends on how many were you planning in having?

Cleo- WE, are planning on four! Solomon, the first; responsible, intelligent, graduates at the top of his class, marries at the age of 32, and become a lawyer. Our second, Zillah: Beautiful, tall and elegant with the grace of her grandmother, who eventually owns and operates an independent dance studio for young women. And then there's little Joey who could never grasp the concept of reading.

Weller- Wait Joey's illiterate?

Cleo- Taking after his father of course, always pushing him toward competitive sports. And finally there's Agatha.... My darling Agatha, who rarely spoke but expressed herself through watercolor.

Weller- None of them follow in their father's foot steps?

Cleo- Heavens no I want them to pursue their own dreams not be drowned by the public education system.

Weller- Well you know a lot of people believe that being an educator is a noble profession aside from...

Cleo- [She cut him off] So aside from the future Weller family, is there any one particular reason why you called me?

Weller- Actually since you asked there are a couple reasons.

Cleo- Being what? My breasts, considering they are so voluptuous?

Weller- Um well yes but also because I didn't throw your number away.

Cleo- So what ...

Weller- Usually I do, or just give it to my friend.

Cleo- Mmm tell me more.

Weller- I don't really know why I kept your number, but do know that you seem like the type of person who would appreciate the opening of a new penguin exhibit, so what do you say Tuesday at noon?

Cleo- Actually I prefer Meerkats, you know like Timon in the Lion King, but sure Tuesday would be great. Oh my goodness look at the time, all this talk about kids in zoos has completely thrown me off track. I've really got to go, we'll talk later.

Weller- Uh alright I'll see you later. [in a rush as well.]

[In a restaurant Mr. Weller walks in, Cleo, unknowingly sitting behind his reserved seat sees him and covers her face with a menu.

The characters take turns talking to their dates while at the same time eavesdropping on the other's conversation.]

Weller- [As sitting] Sorry I'm so late, traffic was busy, I had to stop and help an old lady change her tire. Have you been waiting long?

Cleo- So Ralphy what'll you be having this evening. Mmmm that sounds great, you know I am having a blast, the atmosphere in here is Mediterranean, and the waiters are so friendly...

Weller- I'm sorry Sally would you repeat that, it's so hard to hear over all the noise. So how's the agency treating you these days? It's probably important, go ahead and take the call before the food comes.

Cleo- Just great, I think I forgot my purse in the car, and it's essential that I have it with me.... Are you sure you really wouldn't mind walking a mile to the car, wonderful I'll tell the waiter to put a hold on our food. Don't come back until you

have it, thanks Ralphy.

[Cleo moves her chair back slowly until hers hits Weller and proceeds to make a large commotion]

Weller- Oh dear I'm so sorry Cleo, Cleo?

[Cleo smacks him....]

Weller- What the hell was that for?

Cleo- Oh I'm sorry Mr. Weller I thought I owed it to you.

Weller- Mm that's right very cute, very clever.

Cleo- And what are you doing here Mr. Weller; I thought you didn't go on dates and that why I agreed to go to the zoo with you because I thought I was an exception to the rule. And who's this Sally woman anyways?

Weller- Ok first I am on a date with Sally because I'm doing a favor for a friend.

Cleo- And what friend might that be [looking toward his lap]

Weller- No. Look can we just go back to our dates and if we need to we can talk later.

Cleo- Fine. [Goes back to her seat, but gets very antsy, and goes and sits in his date's seat.]

Weller- Cleo what are you doing?

Cleo- Stop dicking me around Weller.

Weller- Listen I think you need to go back to your seat. [Pointing to her seat as if scolding a child]

Cleo- What? I am not one of your students; don't talk to me like that.

Weller- No, no not like a student, but my date is supposed to be back soon, I think, and it would just be awkward if you were still here.

Cleo- Awkward! Why the hell should I feel awkward?

Weller- Because. Because how would you feel if you were on a date and as you came back from the bathroom, there was some girl in your seat . . .

Cleo- [Interrupts] Some girl? Some girl? I thought we were friends? Now because your princess wrapped in a bitch is coming back, now I am just some girl?

Weller- Friends? How are we friends? We met at a bar, I called you once, we might go to the zoo, and Jesus two minutes ago you slapped me in the face. I have never been slapped in the face.

Cleo- That is your mother's fault, not mine. [Crosses arms.]

Weller- Look, can you just move back to your seat please?

Cleo- You're unbelievable! No, I take that back, you're believable because your like every other guy I have ever met, every guy who fits your type.

Weller- My type huh?

Cleo- Yeah your type.

Weller- Please, enlighten me as to who I am.

Cleo- The quiet type, the stable type, the guy who had his life planned for himself when he was fifteen. You're safe, you drive the speed limit, eat a lot of turkey, drink milk at dinner, you read books about global politics, you shop at the Gap, you only listen to music from motion picture soundtracks, and do you want to know why? Because in that bubble of a world of yours, you need an escape, a place to go to when you want an "experience," some story to share with your boring friends, about this girl, this crazy girl whose name is Cleo, who wouldn't get out of your seat, who made a scene in front of a bunch of strangers she doesn't even give a shit about [loudly, looking around the restaurant]. Well, you know what [beginning to get extremely upset] at least you won't get to brag about how you fucked me, because you're too much of a pussy to leave this restaurant with me, even when I make an idiot out of myself. [Looks away] -Pause-

Weller- I, I don't want to ffuu ...

Cleo- Oh right, you're still married to a woman who left you two years ago.

Weller- No, it isn't that either.

Cleo- Then what is it? [Quickly]

Weller- Just shut up, and let me tell you. What I want is to start over.

Cleo- Start over? And what, become an English major turned playwright?

Weller- Not my life, just you and me. Me and you should start over. That's what I want.

Cleo- Really?

Weller- Yeah.

PAUSE

Cleo- Hi there, can I sit down?

Weller- It would be a pleasure. My name is Mrrr. Welle, my name is Thomas by the way [they shake hands]

Cleo- It's nice to meet you, Thomas, My name is Cleo Valentine!

Alea Wratten

A Resolution Never to Become a Poet

I've made only one sure decision
in my short presence of consciousness—
I decided long ago that I'd
never become a poet,
Ever.

Never become one but,
I have stalked and seized upon dusty
un-exercised volumes along the
oft-neglected shelves nonchalantly
declaring themselves Poetry
not too boldly, afraid to offend
sections on culinary arts and
travel guides with their presence.
I search through multiple cover designs
ignoring those with minimalist identification,
looking for **LARGE BOLD TITLES**,
then taking pages from Clancy novels
to stealthily maneuver
my way to the front counter—
my mission: To make all aware of
my highly sophisticated tastes;
“Are you reading Ginsberg?”
I'd say with a judgmental smirk
and the obvious parading of poetry
beneath my arm, at my side.
I don't need a bag—I plan to read
this volume from cover to cover
while I walk miles home
in a beret that doesn't fit my head
or personality.

I have slept with Frost's poems
upon my breast, proudly proclaiming
that I, too, have taken the road less traveled;
missing the point, and turning his morose reflection
into proud nostalgia snubbing the popular path.
I have no way to express
the awe that results from the resonating voices
of poets, owning rooms, buildings, city blocks
for three minutes at a time. These poets get my blood
excited, warming my skin, and reacting to the
now cold environment, and chills roll through me.
I don't ever want to be responsible for effects like that.
I will study poetry, strain my eyes
and test my skin with chills
I will profess superior knowledge of poetry
catching biblical allusions like Samson pulling
down the poetry café, and nobody notices because
all they're really thinking is...
“Where'd this motherfucker buy his shoes?”
“What does she think she's doing in that top?”
“What the fuck does pedantic mean?”
Really, I want to know.
Responding to words like “revolution”—
rallying troops behind my applauses
for this vague visionary's prophetic call
to overthrow...everything? Blaming distant

governments without faces for not caring enough
while simultaneously weaving in calls for anarchy,
emulating a similarly ambiguous notion
familiar to punk rock,
and fifteen year olds who don't know what
Condoleezza Rice does, only that it's wrong.

I will dutifully nod, like I know what the poet's saying.
Sneaking glances at the clock or my wrist watch, thinking
“Is it over yet?”
And when poets onstage are criticizing crime that I have
been found guilty of
I will justify to myself what I've done,
what I didn't do, what everybody else is doing,
why the hell is the rest of the audience in denial?
I'm the only one in the room who REALLY gets
this poem. I'm right here with you, Poets.
Preach to me and I will genuflect before you.
Teach me, teach me, Teach me EVERYTHING
it takes to be you.
But I'll never become you, Poet.
That's far too much pressure for me.
I'll stick to silent critic.

And when the poet is done,
I will spread my eyes wide,
nod, scan the room for reaction
and I'll be your right hand, Poet
affirming to those around me that
“That shit was deep”
and sit ankle-high in my own.
Don't get me wrong,
I've got so much to say,
that there isn't a soapbox that could hold me,
a megaphone that could really explain it.
I'm just afraid of water,
and that if I wade into the ocean,
I'll drown in its passion and practice,
and have to forsake the puddles
we all used to call home.

James Merenda

Convictions

Tyler Baker

I'm watching a couple sitting next to each other in those bucket seats at an airport gate. They're waiting for their flight, but it probably isn't mine. The guy, a nice fresh, collared man with slight bags building below his eyes is smiling teeth. I'm watching his eyes as they scan her skin, as they search anxiously in his eye sockets. He fixes on one thing for a few moments then looks for something new. She's thin and small and pale. Her hair is well kept and expensive, but everyone has something they splurge on. She's biting her lip; her eyes are fixed on his. She sees him, not through him. She's watching everything he is exploring; she's monitoring everything he searches for. She doesn't seem to care what he's on the hunt for, just comfortable that he is hunting her. He has a ring and she doesn't. No one sticks to their convictions anymore.

On the plane I get my air headache. I call it my air headache because at a certain altitude in the air I get it, and by the end of the flight I'm clawing at my armrest and closing my eyes to stay nauseous and not sick. Motion sickness in a confined container, the lack of incoming fresh air and surplus of recycled, reused air makes me stale. Flying however is the fastest way home. That couple from before, there sixteen rows my senior and I wonder where exactly they live in approximation from me. Maybe they are just visiting; maybe one is dropping the other off. One thing I know, they won't be connecting from Rochester. I don't know that Rochester is a common connecting place, then again, why would anyone come to this city? It's the equivalent of a modern day ghost town, high taxes and low business. The city itself is still living off of prehistoric fame, like a high school quarterback who won states then spent the rest of his life pushing carts. Birthplace of the Kodak Company and final resting place as well. I try to take pride in knowing there is nothing to take pride in. The bald headed, liver spotted man next to me is coughing out his lungs and spraying me with a filmy, spotted liquid. When did it become acceptable not cover your mouth when you cough? When did it become fashionable to spread bacteria and germs? The couple is together, the girl is sleeping on his shoulder. He swipes his credit card and picks up the in flight phone and dials. I imagine his first words, "Hi, sweetheart, I'm on my way home to you."

Landing in Rochester, it is a dark indigo sky and I can see the stars. Landing in Rochester, it is night. I love flying in the dark, it's enthralling, and its modern technology at it's finest. I rely on navigational systems and electricity and satellite communication to take me through the dark. As I get into the accordion hall that connects the plane to the terminal, I get this anxious excitement. I could be anywhere right now; this could be any airport in the world. As I get to the end and walk through the doorway, I'm sunk with familiarity. I'll be in my car in three minutes. I'll be home in twenty five.

At the gate, I watch as the couple separate, ignore each other. A woman, showing a few more years than the man and weathered in that motherly way, with a ring twisted around her finger and wide eyes smiles teeth when she sees the man. He acts fake surprised, like a man going to a surprise party that he knows about. She hugs his waist and he strokes and kisses her head...two weeks, three, maybe more. She is sexually frustrated from being apart and he is limber and well spent. The woman from the plane has faded into the background, faded into non-existence. To his wife, there is nothing wrong, the world is without bruises. Things this tender never stay ripe. As I pass the two of them, I "accidentally" put my shoulder into his back and we separate, ignore each other. When you make a commitment, any kind, you are held to that by character of the world. Your character, the definition of who you are holds true to the test of your convictions and promises. When you say, "I love you"...you better mean it.

In my car, I test my speakers out with the last CD I listened to before I left. The front, left speaker is still blown. On the expressway, I turn down the dreary, depressive music of my day and listen to the road. How can you make the forever kind of commitment and throw it away so hypocritically? Sometimes, we put all our bets on the impossible, hoping things will work in our favor. Impossible is not unattainable, impossible is an idea. When something needs to be worked out, needs to be made easier, it must be impossible. If it wasn't then it would just be hard and no one can accept hard. Not being worthy of time, not being able to be done, that's acceptable. When you admit that things are hard, that's not. So the character of the world is simple now a day. Everyone gives up on hard and doesn't even try with impossible. They talk and talk and talk as if they are a reincarnation of the Sun God, full of egocentricity and bloated arrogance. They make promises they know they will not keep, they make words and sounds that mean less to them and more to you. It's strategy, it's a defense, and it's the only way to be safe in this world. Be dishonest, and honestly surrender. When you use words, do you bite your tongue metaphorically, or do you pretend like you actually mean them? Does your brain smolder and smoke? When do we, the inherence of Earth, and the inhabitation of the entire universe as we know it, turn to everyone and call them liars? Call them frauds? Call them hypocrites and stone cold killers of dreams? People just don't trust in honesty or each other anymore.

At home I drop my bag in the hallway and make my way to the kitchen. I toss my keys onto the mauve, marble tiled counter and pull out the cherry wood glazed kitchen table chair. Sitting down, I immediately rifle through the mail, looking for something different, something fresh. I doubt anything will be different; this place is just as I left it. This town smells the same, looks the same, sounds the same, feels exactly and painfully the same. I wonder if I got in my car and drove until I ran out of gas, where I would end up. Not far enough, but I could fill it up again and try a second time from there...a third, a fourth, a sixteenth time. I would be in Denver or Seattle or San Francisco by Tuesday.

Finding disappointment in my mail, I move to the living room and bury my face in the leather of my couch. My eyes immediately close and I start giggling. In a moment, I'm laughing, in the next my mouth is open wide and I'm pouring out

mirth. Puking it out. Then suddenly I stop and my mind takes over again. Sometimes things hurt so bad that you have done everything else but laugh your heart out. Sometimes things hurt so bad that you have to laugh your heart out as the only method to breathe again. Sometimes things only hurt because you won't stop picking at them. I am a sole soldier in this world war of words. I'm knighted and strapped; I'm heroic and packing heat. I'm Zeus and I hurl bolts of lightning at the dumb drama of life. Sitting up, I plant my feet on the ground and put my face into my hands. This is comfortable. I realize that I have made a commitment and I have a string of strong convictions. I have said those three untouchable words that are meaningless and overused and overemphasized and unfairly unoriginal. I have created something sacred out of nothing and meant every ounce of it. I am Prometheus and I have given fire to the mortal humans of my devotion. I'm not going to pick up that phone or picture frame. I'm not going to fall to my knees or bash my head into the wall. I'm not going to shiver or shake. I'm going to forget that while I hold my commitments and convictions and promises high and true, the rest of my world just isn't ready to yet.

Notre Dame



Libby Donaldson

Table and Chairs



Benjamin Gajewski

Projects

I.
Soft dusty scent of cut wood
met me in the basement
as I tiptoed around bent nails
hidden in sawdust.

I sat on a stool and,
so close to the saw,
he guided my fingers,
sticky with grape jelly.

After crafting a wooden heart,
I sanded the edges for what seemed like hours
and was surprised to see its eroded shape
when I stopped.

II.
I painted crimson roses at the feet
of the Virgin Mary, thinking it silly
to put a statue of this bland woman
in the backyard where
water rushed and a harmonica echoed
and curious mosquitoes were electrocuted
in the nighttime.

A pocket-watch hung on a hook
in his alcove of wood shavings.
He told me the hands had frozen
the moment his week-old son died.
My developing skepticism
impiously snatched it to examine,
and he flinched:
"It's never moved from there 'til now."
Lips pursed.

III.
I cried when he stained
the fresh wood of the chest
he had made for me,
ruining it with every tan brushstroke
and minute that passed.
I tried returning the watch
to a broken hook, but, not catching,
it dropped onto scattered sawdust.

Jessica Allen

Tuesday laundry day destinies of we and cotton

I throw all the
socks into
the laundry but
somehow I will
always find
one lonely
leftover sock
and even though
each entered alone
all the socks
now have sock-mates
except this one sock
that has no one
and sometimes I
remember
what my grandfather's
face looked like at
my grandmother's funeral
and I wonder why
with all the beauty
in matchings
there comes the time
for washing and drying
and the commonplace tragedy
of a stranded sock
one less pair

Meg Vasey

Alibi of a Tree Named Serenity

Nobody ever really talks about what the trees are feeling.

I was a large weeping willow, my trunk stood almost perfectly straight, and in my prime my branches extend in all directions and my leaves draped to form a giant beautiful canopy. I stood on a street in the little town of Newburgh, Indiana.

I was planted and named by another, "child of the soil." Her name was Janet and she loved me as if I was her sister. Janet planted me when she was only eight with the help of her Grandpa Jimmy. He told her one day her and this tree were gonna grow big and strong.

When Janet reached her teenage years her parents disowned her. They would not tolerate "a hippie drug addict whore," in their household. She came to live with Grandpa Jimmy. Even in his autumn years, when he hobbled and coughed Grandpa Jimmy's gregarious laughter billowed out of the house like puffs of smoke.

His funeral was crowded. The following day Janet left; abandoned the farm, the home, and me.

She came back many seasons later; and oh how she had changed! Her hair in long braids, she wore darkened glasses, and carried a young boy child. She called him Elijah.

The years after Janet's return were my happiest. There were always troves of people coming and going and the air was always alive with joyous melodies. The house was colorful and emanated vitality. I became both an extension of the home and a member of the family. Picnic blankets and ganja smoke were always under my branches. Janet even gave birth to her second child, a girl named Melanie, in my shade.

Sunshine, rain, snow, and sleet, blossom always bloom, but then retreat. It's such a silly cyclical spiral; jovial, trivial, and dismal. First loves, first heartbreaks; giggles and tears; falling down and growing up; these clichés and many others are of more concern to us rigid bystanders than you would think...and the most frightening thing about it all is how quickly it can change.

One day Janet was leaning up against me, and she simply stopped moving. Shortly afterward, they severed some of my larger limbs. They wrapped her in me, and sunk her deep underneath my shadow. I felt an extraordinary warmth rise from the soil. A heat so intense that after it passed I would feel nothing but frigid.

The children left for a long time. No one was there during the somber winter when a quick bright river of light struck and set fire to me. It didn't hurt. Flames engulfed me yet I felt untouched, a cool haze surrounded me.

After the fire, one of my charred braches sprouted, and I lived on in this way. Many years later Melanie came back to Newburgh with a husband and two little ones. She named my phoenix sapling Renewal.

Robert Mammano

There I Sank into the Leaves



Alex Egan

Ankles and Blankets

There are nights when
thanks to cloud cover
watching the moon together
from miles away
just isn't feasible.

All the broken stems
and wilting roses falling
in the snow are meaningless
if this canvas called the horizon;
and Nature, the painter,
has no audience to impress.
There will be nights
where the sky will be brilliant
and the conversations
go dead with misguided frustration-
another argument without a point.
And those nights,
while hoping tomorrow will bring
forgetfulness, the best weapon
is lunacy-
For before wielding
crescent moons as scimitars
one must come to terms with Night.

For even while lunar manifestations
hide behind cumulus buildups and blizzards,
She can't be covered in a blanket
if her ankles are exposed.
Upon morning meals
the yolks broken bring her smiles.
And some dawns she'll seek
to hide her face-
untouched by cosmetics.
But He'll hold her hands down
kiss her briefly and tell her
She's Beautiful-
and she'll tell him he's crazy.

He'll agree,
but think the same for her
And they'll revel in this insanity
this brilliant chalice of imperfection
that they drink of daily
and be comforted by its contents.

James Merenda

Montauk At Night

Two boundless bodies
on the sandy shore
precede
like the rapid waves
that crash down upon the
soft sand and slippery rocks
and sneakily creep towards the couple's feet
just missing them.

Thunderous sounds of receding waves,
like fireworks on the Fourth of July
growl as the small boulders are swallowed
within the water's retreat
into the boundless body itself.

Whitecaps appear magically
through the thick-sealed fog
making even a flashlight's beam visible.

Old memories come and go,
glorious scents of seaweed and
Peace
make way,
then disappear
like each wave's voice
as it makes its close encounter with the shore.

Soon enough the empty footsteps in the sand are washed away-
diminished,
by the sneaky salt water
that finally reaches its destination –
the couple's feet.

And like each wave
the two bodies recede
hand in hand,
disappearing
into the fog.

Nicole Schwartz

Holywell Street



Libby Donaldson

Picking Up the Pieces

Sonia Vieira

Simon Thomson had been pacing back and forth in front of the flimsy bathroom door of his tiny Brooklyn apartment for what seemed like hours. How long did these things take, anyway? He was beginning to burn a hole in the carpet and the ticking from the clock was getting under his skin.

Gently, he knocked on the door. "Honey, is everything alright?" The door flew open, and he was faced with his girlfriend, Maggie. Mascara-streaked tears slid down her face. All of his planning flew out the window. Every comment he had thought of to say vanished. Simon's brain went into overdrive and he couldn't force his mouth to form a response.

"I'm pregnant," Maggie angrily stated, and slammed the pregnancy test to the floor. She burst into a fit of sobs, shaking with each heart-wrenching cry. "Why me? How could this happen?" she stammered. "This wasn't supposed to happen!" Simon's head twisted to look at Maggie; he had never heard this edge in her voice before and couldn't understand why she was so upset.

"Isn't this a good thing?" Simon ventured. "I mean, we have mentioned the idea of having a baby before." Maggie glared at him; he crumpled at her reaction, and wished he could retract the question. His heart was racing. *Aren't we in this together?* he thought to himself, not daring to speak again. His green eyes desperately searched Maggie's face for a glimmer of hope, but found nothing. She was staring blankly out the window, her hand covering her mouth in a feeble attempt to stop crying. Outside, it was snowing. Simon's heart continued to race, threatening to beat out of his chest. He took slow breaths, trying to calm down, but failed miserably.

Maggie's voice broke into his meditation. "I'm going to call my doctor," she said, reaching for the phone on the table next to the tattered couch. "Maybe he can fix this." Simon snatched the phone out of her hand before she could start dialing.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" he shouted. "Are you seriously thinking about getting rid of our baby?"

"My baby, Simon. *My* baby," Maggie interjected.

"Isn't this my decision too?" Simon questioned.

"Why would this be your decision? Is it your body?"

"You wouldn't have this baby if it wasn't for me!" Simon's confusion quickly shifted to anger, and it was hard not to feel offended. He couldn't believe the things she was saying. What happened to his sweet and caring girlfriend?

"Thank you so much for pointing that out," she sarcastically snarled. "Thank you for reminding me that you are the one who screwed up my life, as if I hadn't realized that already."

Simon felt like he had been slapped in the face. Did she have any idea what she was saying? How crazy she sounded?

"Can't we just talk about this, *please*," begged Simon. Despite how hurt he was, the last thing he wanted to do was lose the baby *and* Maggie. He saw his world, slowly spiraling down the drain as he clung to his last bit of hope.

"Fine," Maggie gritted through her teeth as she plopped down in a chair, "but I honestly don't know what there is to talk about."

"How can you say that?" he screeched. "You don't want to have this baby and I do. I have no problem starting a family with you. In fact, thinking about that makes me so happy. About as happy as it makes you upset, I suppose. I thought we were gonna do everything together. I thought you wanted to *be* with me." He turned away from her, unable to handle anymore of her negative reactions.

"Simon, listen to me. This is not the time to do something like this. We're barely 25 years old! And yeah, we thought about doing this *someday*, but that day has not come yet. What are you planning on supporting the baby with? Your student loans? Your job at Friendly's? Look around you." Simon surveyed the shabby apartment, slowly taking in every imperfection. The yellowed paint was starting to chip off the walls, and their furniture looked like the stockroom for Salvation Army. "We can barely keep up with ourselves. There's no way in *hell* we can support a baby too. I couldn't live with myself..." she stopped mid-sentence, her blue eyes once again welling with tears.

"We might not have much, but we could give this baby love, and that's what matters. I'm trying to find a better job, and you *know* that. How could you throw that in my face? The whole reason I have those student loans is because of that. I don't know what to tell you. I feel like my life—our lives—are shattering into a million pieces. Who's gonna pick them up, Maggie?"

"I don't know, Simon, but I just can't do this. Have you honestly thought this through?"

"Have you?" Simon contested. He tried to meet her gaze, but Maggie stared at the floor, refusing to look up.

Simon never knew the power of one word until that moment. "Yes," she answered.

Remembering Matthew

You saw him at the bar
You were high on methamphetamines
And you were bored
And he was different
His mannerisms weren't macho enough
He was only 5'2" and 105 pounds
He dressed in nice clothes
He didn't hit on your girlfriend

But he asked for a ride home
You lied
You offered that ride
But not home

In your friend's truck
He touched your leg
Your insecurities with your sexuality
Hit him with your gun
Your friend drove to a deserted area
On the outskirts of town
You dragged him out of the truck
You tied him to a wooden fence
He looked like a scarecrow
You beat him repeatedly
With the butt of your pistol
Until he was unconscious
Until he could no longer force you
To question yourself

You took his boots
You took his wallet
And drove off
With his life in the back seat

You left him for eighteen hours
In thirty degree weather

Five days later he died

And you bragged
You killed the 'fag'
You were the hero for mankind

But don't let anyone know your secret
Tell the cops you didn't know him
If he isn't around
You can hide the truth
Hide behind your girlfriend
Hide behind your criminal record

Just don't let anyone know
That **he**
Is a part
Of **you**

Kelly Sclafani

Untitled

Head eternally on swivels stand in awe of a panoramic
that's all too real for any soul to bear it's burden
The ground has been scorched
Devoured by sickeningly celebrated advances in weapons technology
The wounds are deep
and deeper only are the delicately placed holes that are beginning to
dislodge Satan's ceiling tiles
As the crosshairs slowly fade
into a crucifixion scene before a sunset
and trigger-fingers melt
and loaded guns majestically fall useless to the soil
An unfamiliar remorse overcomes the stench of black powder and burnt flesh
The thought of "what the fuck have I done?" proves wholly unavoidable
They never said it would go down like this
This isn't what we signed up for

...
Thank God for textbooks
because if my grandchildren knew the truth
they wouldn't be able to look at me

Daniel Freund



Stacie Mauchan

Grim Reaper

In an Instant

A little boy laughs
gleefully, as he reloads
his homemade slingshot

A tiny sparrow
twitches mindlessly as Death
engulfs its body

A sensitive leaf
watching helplessly, decides
it is his time to di(v)e

An itty bitty
ant sees only the shadow
coming over him

Robert Mammano



Aaron Wiener

Life, Death II

Seven thirty in the morning, the phone rings from across the room and I trip over Kristen's damned shoes getting to the receiver—she never kicks them against the wall, but leaves them in the center of the room, and I always forget about them.

When someone calls to tell you someone died, they always tell you how they died, and you never need to ask whether it was drugs, or an accident or a disease that tortured this person for the last six years and finally succeeded.

Death doesn't make you appreciate life, it makes you prepare for death.

Jordan Schauer

Satan's Lavatory

Nathan Corrigan

My quivering eyeballs bulged out of their sockets. A single drop of perspiration trickled down my throat until it was intercepted by the fabric of my shirt. My nostrils twitched involuntarily. In a few seconds, it would be too late.

Fifteen minutes earlier, I strode with no particular aim in mind through the maze of aisles in an Ames department store. It was a beautiful autumn day, a fact that was completely irrelevant within the concrete walls of a massive shopping center. *Just killin' time*, I thought, veering left into sporting goods. I would be picked up in twenty minutes, and I had only to keep myself occupied until then.

I pushed on past baseballs, basketballs, soccer balls, golf balls, until I arrived at my safe haven among unending walls of merchandise: the fishing tackle department. Home away from home. Browsing through wiggle warts, puddle jumpers, and squirming squirts, I paused and considered purchasing a package of lime-green, garlic-scented mister twisters, but decided to forgo the option; it was at the end of the season anyway.

Somewhere between power worms and stinkbait, I began to perceive a low grumble deep within my lower intestine, indicating that in a few minutes I would have a serious problem on my hands. I excused myself to search for the bathroom. Ames being the type of homogenous department store in which every single outlet is laid out essentially the same, I wound my way through the aisles in the general direction of the front-left corner, where the restrooms are invariably located. I was wrong. There were no restrooms here. Where are they? What kind of mutant store is this?

Rather than simply asking someone where to find the facilities, which would have been nothing short of sensible, I decided that the best course of action would be to follow the wall until I inevitably found a bathroom. So I did. Venturing into the roll-back jungle, I hacked my way through menswear, footwear, nightwear, underwear, silverware, Tupperware, until at last I came to a clearing, in the center of which was a door with a beam of golden sunlight streaming down upon it. I went through. It was the loading dock. Flabbergasted, I re-entered the main store. I could perceive actual pressure now, and I began to feel a twinge of panic: the kind of panic you feel when you are stuck in the middle of a massive department store with no idea where the bathroom is, on the verge of a massive diarrhea attack. I decided to keep moving.

Turning a corner in the toy department I saw a door all the way down in the far corner. I quickened my step. I began to sweat. There was a sign above the door. *What does it say?* I squinted. *Restrooms. It says restrooms.* I began to jog. The added movement set internal mechanisms in motion in a manner for which I was clearly not prepared.

I broke into a full sprint. My quivering eyeballs bulged out of their sockets. A single drop of perspiration trickled down my throat until it was intercepted by the fabric of my shirt. My nostrils twitched involuntarily. In a few seconds, it would be too late.

Reaching the doorway, I grabbed a towering rack full of bouncy-balls for support and swung through the opening, kicking the door open with my feet, as an avalanche of rubber balls cascaded onto the floor behind me. I paused only for a split-second to calculate my next move. The farthest stall was open a crack. I ran.

I catapulted myself into the stall, threw open the door, leapt into the air, unzipped, pulled down my pants, and sat on the toilet in one fluid motion, not one second too soon. I will not go into great detail regarding what followed, but suffice to say that the next two minutes were not the greatest moment of my life.

My work here was done. Relieved in every sense of the word, I reached for the toilet paper only to discover that life is truly unfair. There was no toilet paper. Not a scrap. Not a square. In my hurry I had failed to check! My mind raced in a fury, struggling to compute this unanticipated turn of events. It took me a moment to regain my composure, and to realize that the bathroom was unoccupied except for myself. All I had to do was slip quickly out the door into the next stall. And here there would surely be an ample supply of toilet paper, which had suddenly become more precious than plutonium.

I reached for the latch and felt unexpected resistance. I pulled again, harder this time, yet it would not move. Standing up, I shoved on the lock with the full force that my weight would provide, but to no avail. I was locked in. I sank down onto the toilet in defeat. I had nearly resigned myself to the fact that I would surely die here when, with the newfound courage of a soldier trapped behind enemy lines, I realized what I must do. I must crawl.

With my pants pulled up as far as safety would allow I lowered myself onto the filthy, bacteria-encrusted, uncomfortably moist bathroom floor and crawled, on my back, into the next stall. Resuming an upright position, and finding a treasure-trove of toilet paper, I wiped at roughly the speed of sound. I threw open the door and dashed over to the sink, where I washed my hands until they were red and raw, and the soap dispenser was empty. Looking up from between my sagging shoulders into the fogged mirror, I pondered for a moment what I had become.

Then I dragged myself upright, and trudged toward the exit, glancing up to see the sign posted over the bathroom door.

**"We take great pride in the quality of our restrooms.
If you have any comments or
complaints, please contact the management"**

Fragments

I'VE STOPPED THE HEAVING
THE NEED FOR THINGS I HAVE NOW
LEARNED TO SAY.



MY OWN VISION IS FREQUENT
TEARS / ISLANDS / THERE'S
THE COOLING HUSH GIRL EVE
GOING BE AURIGHT
BUT OFTEN YOU PULL AWAY
→ HAVE WHEN YOU KNOW
THE STOPPED THE HEAVING
NEED FOR
LEARNED TO SAY



Nicole DeLawder

The Maid's Secret

I was taking care of the most divine
people, catering to their every need.
I cleaned, I served, and I married the wine.
Watching, as it missed and out dropped a seed
into water, poisoning, to deep red,
the color. A smile breached across my face.
It reminded me of moonlight on dead
nights. The way you looked, the hue, and the taste,
of your blood, as watched off the secret
in your marble sink. No one ever found
out. About the accosting, forced to let
White gloved hands incite dirt, without a sound.
I was your maid, your concubine. Too rich
was your world. Should have known pleasure goes 'round.
For no one knows about your little bitch,
placing her boss six feet under the ground.
So asked, "What do you think of all day?"
I'd hide my laughter, and "nothing" I'd say.

Stacie Mauchan

Broken

A bleak bedroom, a disorderly desk,
A candle's flame indecisive.

A scrawled note, a burning cigarette,
Ashes of love letters misted in cologne.

An empty picture frame turned on its side,
A photo creased and torn into two,
A dying moan of a telephone lain carelessly off the hook.

A familiar CD scratched and broken,
A promise ring rusted in age,
A boy's baseball sweatshirt ripped at the collar and smelling of perfume from its last wear.

A shattered shot glass bathed in vodka,
Blood drops dried to a milky brown,
Tear stains upon a hardwood counter, glistening in the flickering light.

A pill bottle left open,
The contents scattered among the debris,
A girl twisted in death hung halfway off a chair, her mouth caught kissing a sigh of relief.

Stacie Mauchan

Beneath the Storm
Kelly Nichol

I don't feel the same about thunderstorms anymore. I can hear the rain run down the gutters of our porch as I sit in the front room of the home I've lived in for twenty years. I could turn my head for the chance to see a bolt of lightning electrocute the deep blue, light grey, rose sky, but I do not. I keep my foggy eyes focused on something, anything to keep them busy. My stepfather is standing outside watching the storm; he is hunched over like a man in a walker, but he has no walker. He slowly turns beneath the white pillars of our porch to face the lightning as he breathes in the carbon monoxide from the cigarette perched at his wrinkled mouth.

My dad liked to sit on the porch and take in the thunderstorms like a man admiring a Monet in the Louvre. I heard the crack of fresh thunder and rushed to the screen door to see if he was in our spot yet. There he was, reclining on the bench swing we put up the year before. I guess my mother still wanted to give him something nice to sit on even if it was his cushion for smoking cigarettes, and even if he didn't live with us anymore. He was still our father, our friend. The storm went on, rain falling forcefully from the sky onto our black pavement. I sat with my father on the porch swing, our bellies full from the dinner my mother had made. I was never scared of thunderstorms when he was here. We had seen many kinds of thunderstorms. Those that come on sunny days, when you least expect it and those that come without rain. Thunderstorms that color the sky black and those that open up to an eerie light; we could always tell when the sky was up to something, like when it turns green right before a tornado (it happens in the Midwest, my mother said). There are thunderstorms that make our windows shake and ones that come out of the heat, fighting back the humid summer nights. I used to count the thunder like we counted train cars together at railroad stops. We swung together in unison, sheltered from the storm in comfortable silence. It was our lullaby, our sweet escape. I leaned on the shoulder of an old wrestler and the belly of a man who loved his barbeque ribs. He reached around my nestled back and flicked his cigarette into the tarnished jug beside the bench, just as the lightning flickered among the midnight blue smears in the cloudy sky. I smiled when the lightning came down so low that it looked like it was going to touch our treetops. I felt safe when the thunder broke, like the sound of a tree splitting in half. Still, it made my stomach jump, but it settled as my father patted my small arm clutched around his waist. When the last cigarette was smoked and the sky became too dark to see – even when the lightning lit up the front yard for a split second, exposing our washed out yard – we left the protected porch and went inside where mom was putting the flowers back on the kitchen table.

I hear the screen door creak open and a waft of cigarette smoke creeps into the front door. I keep my eyes fixed on the television, waiting until I hear the door close all the way, and then I turn my head to the front window. It is still light enough for me to see the storm and the spatters of rain that have come onto the porch. I think of my father, buried beneath the ground, beneath the storm, above the storm, and my stomach jumps.

Fredonia Factory



Alex Egan

Whore or Lover

Oh it's so perfect
how easy and new,
and when will we learn
a force
we dedicate
soft misnomers to
made in claims of eternal and undying,
lust and broken condoms
and lies and bruises
and cash and fuck!
When and why do we continue
to pretend
we wouldn't abandon our
devotions when one
more appealing to the eye appears-
sure home is where you make it
and the grass is always greener...
and I'm just hoping the house falls down
and the lawn turns to dust.
So maybe we're not all
that good at creating;
our greatest invention
was never made to last,
no money back guarantee.

Tell me again
that you knew me
before you knew my name.
I've spent lifetimes
in the arms of hateful
liars professing to me
and they still couldn't
pick my shining face
out of a crowd
of dying whores.

James Merenda

(an impressionist piece based on: "I love you.
I may never have met you, and I may never see you, but I love you.
And perhaps I have had the pleasure of your company, and I'm honored
by that. The point is: I love you, and always will.")

There are no kings inside

We see, believe, then let them be
and fight alone, internally
wondering if our neighbors see
destruction of society,

but keep in mind and don't forget
their answers never really fit,
just turn your cheek and take a hit,
the flame of love's already lit.

In God we trust, supposedly,
but fear it creeps increasingly,
instilled by those who cannot see
the flame of love inherently.

The rat race choir still will sing,
just plug your ears from listening
and pray for those in suffering,
for Eden holds no room for Kings.

Kelly Higgins

Exceptional Eric Dawson

There are really only two sorts of people; those who feel exceptional and those who feel inferior. She was an ordinary girl who looked at everyone else in awe. She walked through life seeing in everyone else the lies she tried to tell herself, but believed theirs whole heartedly. Perhaps she needed to; perhaps the world just couldn't make sense unless everyone else was happier than she, better than she. It doesn't really matter why, however, it's just the way things were; she knew that.

There have to be people like me, she'd comfort herself, staring in the mirror. People to fill the space around the brilliant, and the beautiful, because without ugly there is no pretty, without stupid there is no smart. Would a rose be special if all the flowers looked alike? I make attractive.

"Hey Michelle," he says. He's gone as quickly as he appeared. But his scent lingers. She inhales deeply as his cologne trails him across the hall. Joop. But it only reminds her of roses. They'd been friends once; that's why she still gets a greeting. But he's not Ethan any more, not to her. He's Ethan Hozz. He's one of the beautiful people, one of the brilliant people.

If Michelle could be anyone she would be Ethan Hozz. She'd always felt that way, even when they were kids. He was different than everyone else, the exceptional of the exceptionals. Whenever she was near him, or could hear him, she felt like she was even more clueless about life, like she'd never done or felt anything the right way before; and he was the only one who could show her how the world was meant to be.

"Come on," Ethan yells from the sidewalk outside of Michelle's window. She had just hung up the phone and he was already outside her house waiting. She finishes putting the rubber band around her ponytail and darts down the stairs.

"Mommy," she says. "Ethan's here, we're gonna go play." After getting the permission she needed, Michelle meets Ethan on the curb.

"It's about time," he lets out impatiently. "We don't have all day."

"I was doing my ponytail. So where're we going anyway?"

"I just told you when I called, the coolest place ever. Come on."

Clearly he feels he has waited long enough because he has already started to walk away. Michelle follows him, like she always does, down the path between their houses into the woods. To her surprise he stops about fifteen feet inside the woods.

"Here we are," he says proudly, smiling as he looks in front of him.

"This is, like, our back yard," Michelle responds slightly dumbfounded. But as soon as the words are out of her mouth she can see the look in his face, the look he always gets when she can't see the things he sees. She can't help herself; her face becomes one big grin. She loves it when this happens; when he shows her some of his world.

"Look," he points to a large flat rock directly in the center of the river that flows perpendicular to their properties.

"It's just a rock," she still doesn't understand.

"Come on," he says again, his favorite phrase with her, as he grabs her hand and leads her across smaller stones till they reach the larger one in the center. "Now sit like an Indian." She has no choice but to obey whenever he tells her to do something. "Touch the water." She plunges her hands into the cold current of the river.

"It's just water; I've got it in my sink too."

"No, you're not doing it right. Close your eyes." She's powerless to do anything but what that voice tells her to. The world is dark but she can hear Ethan moving around her. Suddenly both her hands are in his and he slowly lowers them till the moment when her fingertips are just touching the river's surface. "Can you feel it now?"

"It's so peaceful." Finally she understands what he meant her to. Sitting there on that rock, with her hands in his, she is part of the river. The current no longer flows around her, or under her, but through her. She'd never felt this way before, she'd never touched the river right. Would it be the same if he weren't there, holding her in place? She doesn't know. But it doesn't matter; he is there; he'll always be there for her.

She's aware that his hands are no longer on top of hers, but she can still feel their pressure. She sits silently and motionlessly, too afraid even to take a breath for fear of moving slightly and losing this moment forever.

"Can you smell it?" his words startle her from her trance, but still she doesn't move. Slowly, however, she allows herself to take a breath. It's so strong, how could she have not noticed it before? *I wasn't breathing*, she remembers.

"It's a rose, but it smells better than any other rose I've ever seen." She knows that's exactly what he wants her to say, but she also knows that it's true. She opens her eyes, cautiously, slowly letting the light fill her vision. Her sight is tinted blue now, and she's certain it's more of his magic, an effect of being part of the river. Once her eyes are focused again she can see Ethan sitting in front of her holding a rose directly under her nose. "How'd you know all this?"

He closes his eyes and tilts his head up, as if able to stare through his eyelids at the bright blue sky. A deep breath. "Just listen and the mountain sings everything you need to know."

Michelle never was able to hear the mountain sing to her, but it made her happy just watching him listen. She'd do anything to be a part of his world again, to feel again what it is like to be part of a river, but she knows those days are gone.

they have been for a long time.

"Hey Michelle," he says. But as she takes a book out of her locker she does not hear his foot steps moving toward the other side of the hall. His scent gets stronger. She turns around quickly and standing before her is the exceptional, Ethan Hozz. "It's been a long time." She can't respond; he's smiling at her. "I know we haven't really talked in a while; but I thought you could come over tonight, the way you used to." She nods her head and the bell rings. He says goodbye and makes his way across the crowded hall.

Twenty squares of sidewalk never seemed so long to her. But, she hadn't walked them in four years. Eventually, after what seemed like hours, she was standing in front of Ethan Hozz's house, staring at the front door. *But that's not where I need to go.* She can't decide whether she likes it better this way or not. It makes it easier not having to knock, and wait for someone to open the door. But she hasn't done this in four years. The tree doesn't look like it has changed at all. Every single leaf is exactly where it was the last time she made her way up. When she reaches the branch that leads to his window she sees that the room is dark. There's only a small light on his desk providing the limited visibility. Could this be a joke? Would he use their history to make fun of her, impress some other girl? She has to keep going; it's worth the risk to see his world again.

She remembers his room, and nothing has been changed. She makes her way across the room to his door, where she knows the light switch is, not really needing the little light that there is. When she flicks the switch and turns around she sees why the light wasn't on. He must not have wanted her to fall out of the tree. She falls now, to her knees on the soft carpet. It's damp, she didn't notice that before. Lying on the floor is Ethan, surrounded by a pool of his own blood, though the red lines just below his hands must have stopped bleeding a while ago.

The room is pristine, only two items lay on the floor next to the body; a steak knife, more red than the black and silver of the handle and blade, and a piece of paper, neatly folded and placed a few feet away from Ethan's body. He must not have known how much he would bleed, because the paper, despite its distance from him, was still sitting in the pool of red. She picks it up, her hands touching his blood, and reads:

Dear Michelle,

You're the only one who ever understood me. No one else has ever been able to be as close to me as you were, but we haven't spoken in years. Forgive me, I beg you, for how I've treated you. And remember me the way I was four years ago; you're the only one who can. It was the last time I was happy, the last time I could hear the mountain sing; that last night we sat outside in the woods on the last day of the summer, dreaming what the future would be like. You were always exceptional, I'm sorry I couldn't be too. Pretend I died that day, Michelle, because I did. I'll love you forever.

Ethan

She sits alone in the corner. Silently. It doesn't matter to her now, nothing does. He had killed that in her, that desire to know what it was to live. The desire to know the smell of the rose. The wish to feel the flow of a river on her fingertips and the hope to hear the songs of the mountains. All this meant nothing to her now. What remains are her memories, stained with red. The feel of blood on her fingertips, the smell of death, and the deafening screams of silence.



Kristen Matheson

Salvation through Illumination

In the dense black universe
of night time in my bedroom
static explosions flash
a million tiny light bulbs
as my fingers scratch
kinetic on the blankets

while
on Chicago's navy pier
electric lollipop streetlamps
line the sidewalks
cotton ball starbursts
strung on lake Michigan

and
in the secret tropics of southeast Asia
seasonal conditions bloom
entire trees of fireflies
winged buds bathing in the moon glow

In the oil spilled midnight
driving home on the highway
the iridescent yellow smudge
of a truck's high beam flashlights
refract off my rearview mirror
electrifying a circle of light
from my suspended wisps of hair
the halo so many pine for
a prism I achieved for free

the atmosphere conducts
every earth-bound constellation
the charming pulsars
of 60 watts and neon signs

we become celestial
through friction or a light switch

Meg Vasey

Untitled

we sat on the floor
in front of the refrigerator
eating leftover lomein
out of soiled white cartons
with chopsticks
(who am I kidding? plastic forks and each other's fingers)

me, dressed in little boys' underwear
and your hoodie
with our favorite band on the front
the one from my shitty little town
who dreamed big enough
to make it

you, in the boxer briefs you hate
but I love
and the undershirt left at my house
that you refuse to take off
because now it smells
like you
like me
like us

and outside
the galaxy aligned itself
on black blanketed battlefields
but inside
there was just cold chinese
and warm thighs
and we only noticed
how those stars seemed to shine

Mallorie Rosenbluth



Benjamin Gajewski



Nicole Schwartz

A Bad Listener

i tell you
my favorite flowers
are daisies

Simple
white sunbursts with egg-yolk yellowed centers

Easy
growing wild along roads and climbing random fences

Cheap
just weeds with a popular disguise
and this is important because I know our love is on a budget

despite all this
Simple Easy Cheap

you always show up at my side door
with your crooked smile

and empty hands

Danielle Dornbier

I keep having pregnant dreams.

Last night I was so far along
I held my round stomach
no longer something to be loathed, the
product of too many wild nights,

and short-lived pride gave way
to a strange new sick worry
creeping over me as I remembered the cost
of diapers and toys and clothing

(of not finishing school)

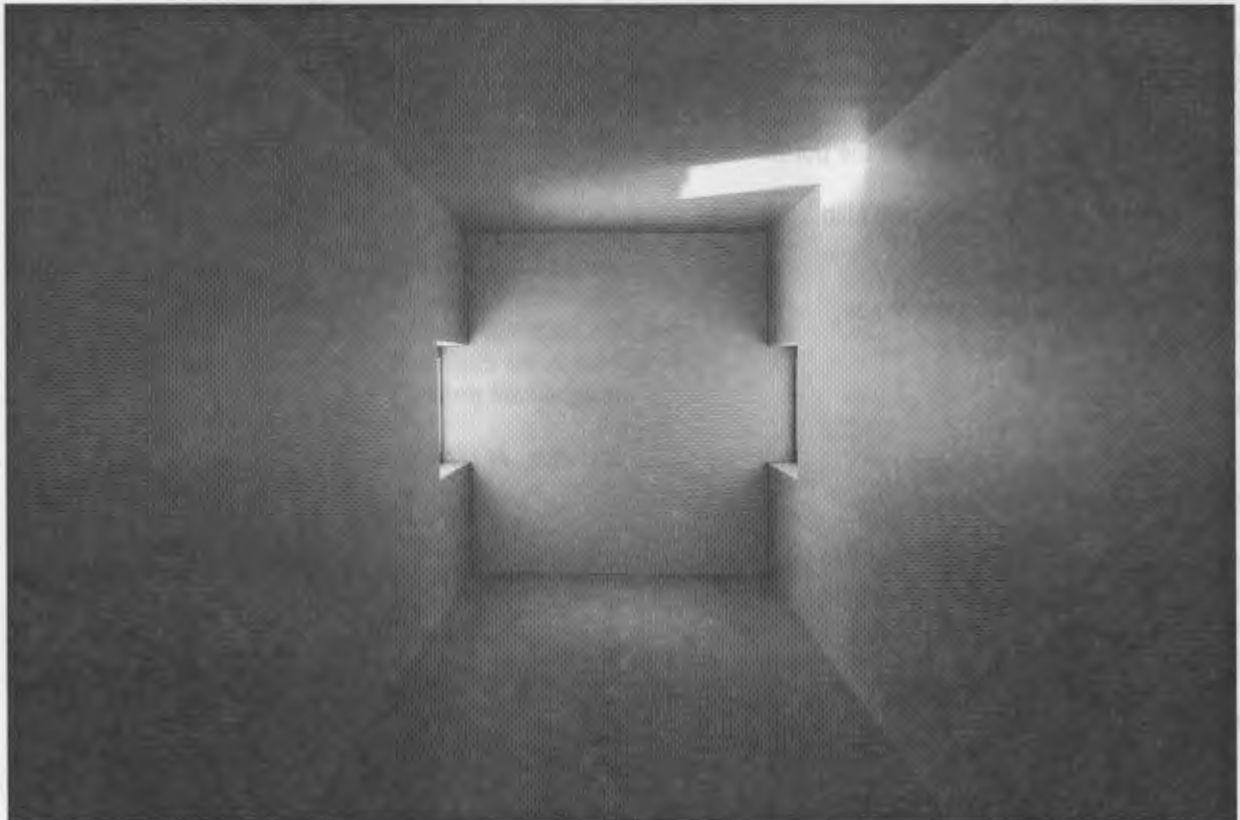
and that afternoon at the daycare when
left alone with nine hysterical swaddles of cloth
I promised myself I would quit-

and last night my friends held me
while the prospect of future guilt loomed too large
to fit inside my head
and I dried my tears and gave it some thought

and I called you and you said,
"Let's keep it."

Laura Horwood-Benton

South Hall Ceiling



Benjamin Gajewski

How You Know It's Finals week

Two girls sitting on the tips
of their chairs
Hunched over boundless books
Tapping their feet and fingertips
To the rhythm of the song's untamed crescendo's
That match their heart rates.
The clock tower is the Master of Mockery
And coffee drowns the tongues' taste buds
Like a sunlit bay at high tide.

Disorder dominates this 12 X 14 dorm –
Twenty-ounce plastic Aquafina bottles
pink post-its
and a plethora of papers
blanket the suffocating desk tops
like chocolate syrup that forms
a cement shell over the scoop of ice cream.

Overflowing laundry bags
bloated trash cans
crammed
like our minds with
abundant facts and theories
just waiting to leak out and recycle
all
over
again.

Wrinkled gum wrappers,
coins,
scattered sneakers
soak into the winter green
crooked carpet
as easily as body lotion creeps into the pores
of skin and penetrates
like the delicious scent of Black and Mild
from that same old man's pipe
that flows through the open window
settling smoothly in each strand of hair,
each thread of cloth
reaching into our souls
relaxing us.

Yet another CD begins to revolve
Two girls sit on the tips of their chairs
Toes tapping
Heads nodding
As they continue to memorize the past
Study the present
And prepare for the future.

Nicole Schwartz

APA Style

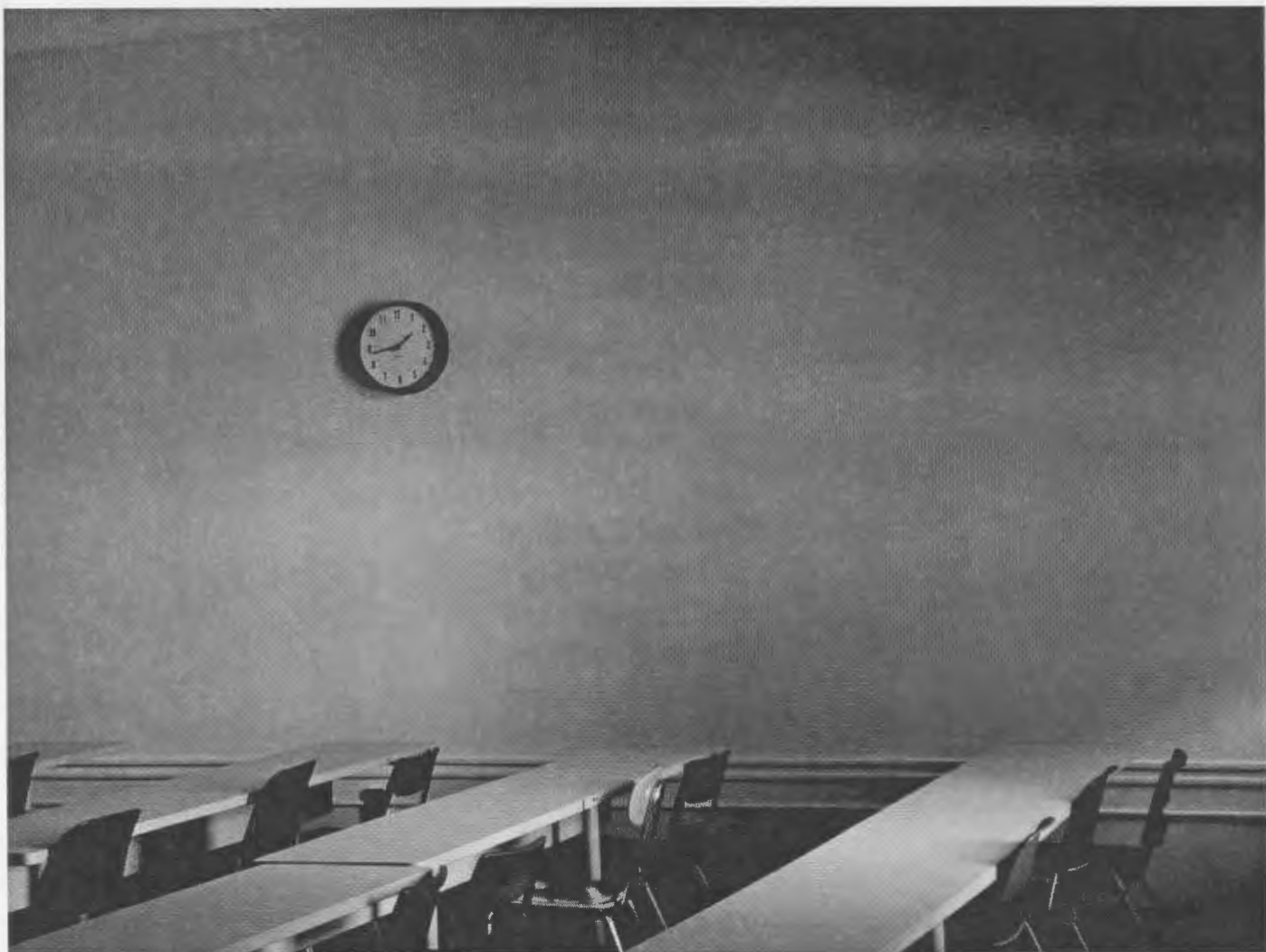
Research has shown
that people are more likely to feel stupid when they read poetry
than a psychology paper.
because
wordiness is irritating
and uneconomical;
Redundancy is pointless
and tiresome;
adjectives are sinful
Tell it how it is
but not what it's like.

"See how terse this reads?
See how basic it is?
That's how your papers should read.
Give nothing but the pertinent information in your writing, folks,
just the facts, no embellishment –
it's simple, deliberate, and to the point and you know
that's what's beautiful
about APA" (Bazzett, 2005).
Analysis of the results indicated
that the findings were
significant,

and i
went back to my room
i went back to my room to my computer where
my pajamas lay on the floor beside the chair,
i sat in the chair by the pajamas and wrote
insignificant poetry

John Kulak

Classroom



Benjamin Gajewski

English Club

President:

Jessica Allen

Vice President

Fall: **Terasa Hahn**

Spring: **Stacie Mauchan**

Secretary

Fall: **Dana LePage**

Spring: **Alea Wratten**

AAC Representative:

Stacie Mauchan

Alea Wratten

Webmaster:

Suzi Hally

Staff:

Michael Cardinali

Aaron Netsky

LeAnne Pickard

Steve Sanfillipo

Nicole Schwartz

Brittany Slusher

OPUS

Editor in Chief:

Lauren SooHoo

Art Editor:

Alex Egan

Submissions Editor:

James Merenda

