



# Sampler XXI

Spring  
2009

## Sampler Twenty-One

A compilation of writing and visual art by Aquinas College students (Grand Rapids, Michigan), spring 2009.

### Contributors

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### Acknowledgments

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Back cover (terra cotta): *Listen to the Breath* . . . . . Senior Chelsea Nix  
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Manuscript selection: . . . . . *Faculty*: Dr. Brent Chesley, Dr. Jennifer Dawson,  
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Kara Madden, Zarah Moeggenberg,  
Emily Peiffer, Bona VanDis  
Winning poem judge . . . . . John Rybicki  
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STILL LIFE #2 - Oil  
*Emma Dalrymple, Sophomore*

## Telephone Pole

Like Atlas, he stands  
clutching the cables necessary to link society,  
he lifts his bonds high above his head  
yet never tangles a wire.  
Cast in cold cement  
like a corpse in the mud  
at Waterloo,  
he cannot fight back.  
He suffers the scars of  
cigarette burns and bumpers  
bicycle chains and frost bite  
chewing gum and paper maché.  
Behind splintered lips  
he bears staple-teeth,  
flying too many flags for one name:  
*-work for cash*  
*-apartment for rent*  
*-garage sale*  
*-lost pet,*  
flags placed in his hands  
and ripped away again.  
His breast-plate once shimmered  
with a crest gold and green.  
Now he is naked,  
his supple skin chips away  
to reveal the metal bone within.

One must wonder:  
Did we chip Atlas' hands away  
when he tried to hold the world in place  
before  
or after  
we decided  
we didn't need him?

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WINNING POEM OF THE  
ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS  
UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE POETRY PRIZE

"Telephone Pole" by Emily Peiffer, Senior

This year's preliminary judges for the contest were Dr. Michelle DeRose and Pamela Dail Whiting.

The final judge was Michigan poet, John Rybicki, who has written three books: *We Bed Down into Water*, *Traveling at High Speeds*, and *Yellow-Haired Girl with Spider*. In addition, he has also published in numerous magazines and journals. Albert Goldbarth comments on John's most recent book *We Bed Down into Water* saying, "...the unexpected is always waiting for us, in ambush, in John Rybicki's poems. Cancer lurks inside of love, love waits redemptively inside of cancer, and sometime out of the greatest despair a raucous ecstasy burns forth."

Rybicki is an associate professor of English and the writer-in-residence at Alma College. He also teaches creative writing through Wings of Hope Hospice to children who have been through trauma or loss.

*Some of John Rybicki's comments about the finalists and Emily Peiffer's poem follow.*

I applaud all ten of these poems for their vision and heart. They all, in their own ways, offer my spirit that sacred bread of language I live for in fine poetry. These poems offer the reader that highest octane language where we are awakened into a new way of seeing. In one poem apple blossoms become dirty dish water fluttering down in the wind; in another two men paddle their canoe along a street turned to river—passing right under a street light. Awesome.

The one poem of the ten finalists that sustained in power from the first breath to the last resounding syllable was the "Telephone Pole," poem, which I place first among these poems. How on earth did this writer take something so benign—a thing we see, or look past every day with our sterile adult eyes—and transform it into something so other than and mystical? This poet has not been tamed into seeing the object for what it is. Like a child he or she sees the shimmer that can reside in the ordinary. The poet in this poem takes my tired eyes out of my skull, dunks them in holy water, tosses them back into my head so I see the world anew. And there's such a resounding emotional payoff at the end of this imagistically lush, and visionary poem.

*John Rybicki's honorable mention commentary is found on page 62.*

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The Academy of American Poets, founded in 1934, supports American poets at all stages of their careers and fosters an appreciation for American poetry.

The annual prizes for university and college students are funded by alumni interested in encouraging young writers. We are grateful to Aquinas alumni Dr. Tony Foster and Linda Nemeč Foster for making the prize available for Aquinas College students.

## **The Vietnam Soldiers**

*with thanks to Ted Kooser*

They have set aside their green bone helmets,  
cut and bruised,  
splashed with drips of red and rust;  
and their tired-out, mudded-down guns  
of achromatic carbon, swamp brown,  
mud green, and ruddy copper;  
their pockets half full of gold bullets;  
limbs in wet bandage;  
limp jackets with gnat-eaten holes;  
and have stormed in broken and with heat  
into the film of cool, soft whispers,  
assonance, laughter, affection  
in moonlight, sparkling night  
amethysts and diamonds, the yellow Vietnam photos  
rise like a breeze  
under white creamy morning snow  
as if their souls were clouds  
and the world had been nothing but sky.

*- Zarah Moeggenberg, Junior*



CIRCUS MUSIC - Wood and Steel  
*Patrick Maguire, Junior*



VENUS/MARS - Chine Chole Print  
*Cynthia Miskura, Freshman*



## Connemara Rising

Connemara rises  
a shadow with no body,  
a ghost without a past.  
Stories lie untold here—  
buried in the barren earth,  
these children of the bog.

Connemara rises  
from myth blown out to sea—  
calling Irish names of old,  
these mountains' windswept keen.  
Rain like nails on windowpanes,  
Gaelic chisels carry on.

Connemara rises  
in the memory of song,  
remembered by the poets  
of a thousand ages gone.  
Sing to us of Renvyle, muse,  
of beauty terrible and strong.

- *Dan Treul, Senior*

**A Pint With Patrick**  
*by Stephanie Gerling, Senior*

A row of thatched roof cottages, in a country an ocean away from everyone I knew, became my home. Every morning I woke up, cupping my hands in front of my face as I blew into them, grasping and gasping for a few moments of warmth.

He lived across the street. The street that sliced the middle of my new hometown in half: two pubs, one hotel, one church and one corner store on the left, the cottage on the right. The road was more than what separated us. I knew it when I got there. I knew it when I left. But it was the road that connected us, and ultimately connected me to him. The only person the tears were for the day I boarded the bus and left, unsure of when and if I would ever come back.

I ran across the street my first night in Tully Cross, the Euros jingling in my pocket instead of dimes and nickels. Dumping Euro after Euro into the payphone I managed a quick, “Himomit'sstephanieimadeitheresafei'llcallyou tomorrowloveyoubye!” before my time expired.

“Want a pint?” a voice said from behind the bar.

“I’m sorry, what?” I answered. The accent was still foreign to my ears, still thick with the centuries and stories that happened before me.

“Want a pint?” he said again, gesturing towards the taps in front of him.

“Um...yeah,” I said. “I mean, yes. Please. Thank you!”

I walked up to him as he began to pour me a Guinness. He tilted the glass directly against the spout, controlling the foam as it rose towards the lip of the pint. When it was dangerously close to the rim, he stopped and set the glass on the coaster. I reached for it.

He shooed my hand away.

“You have to be patient,” he said matter-of-factly. “It has to sit. So should you.”

Promptly, as if commanded, I sat down directly in front of him.

“Someone died there,” he said, pointing to the stool to my right. “Just one day he was sitting with a Guinness and fell over. Dead.”

I turned to my right, half expecting a ghost to be sitting with a glass perched to his translucent lips.

“You’re joking.”

“No, Miss! I am not. That’s him right there,” he said pointing behind me.

I cautiously looked behind me and was greeted by a picture of a smiling wrinkled man. Grinning back, I turned towards the bar and asked him, “Did you know him?”

A sad smile creasing his own face, he answered, “He was my best friend.”

I paused as I settled into the worn bar stool, toying with the fraying thread that held it together, watching the tan from the foam settle into the

black of the Guinness. He brought it up to the tap once more, waiting a few moments before placing it before me.

“What’s your name?” he asked as he poured another pint.

“Stephanie,” I answered.

“Stephanie what?”

“Stephanie Gerling.”

“Stephanie Garling?”

“No, Stephanie Gerling. G-e-r-l-i-n-g.”

“This isn’t a fucking spelling bee!” he said.

I froze, wishing I could dive into the Guinness and drink myself to death.

Then he laughed. After a moment, I joined him.

‘You’re Patrick, right?’ I asked, sipping the sharp taste of the Guinness.

“Oh no!” he said, slapping his hand to his forehead, “You already know me!”

I knew him by name and now by the way he poured a pint. I didn’t know what was hiding behind his ruffled appearance, his top-three buttons unbuttoned shirt, or his graying chest hair peeking above the pinstripes. He finished pouring the second pint and placed it in front of me.

“Oh, no,” I said, “One’s fine. I have to get back to my cottage.”

“No, no, no,” he said, edging the pint closer to me. “You might as well stay.”

So I did.

He stayed behind the bar. Placing Guinness after Guinness in front of me, I gladly sipped until the beer mingled with the blood in my veins.

“You’re a nice girl,” he said. “I can tell.”

I finished the last of my beer, leaving the foam to rest in the bottom of the glass.

“You’re a nice man,” I said. “I think.”

He laughed. A good, real laugh that developed in his belly and traveled up his spine, eventually tumbling out of his mouth, “Ahh, I see you’re a wise ass, too.”

I smiled. A good, real smile that hadn’t ventured its way onto my face in months, a smile I had forgotten existed.

Every time I walked in after that night he poured me a pint. Guinness, Smithwicks, Heineken. He didn’t always ask me to stay. I always wished he did.

The row of thatched roof cottages became smaller as the bus drove away, making the distance to the ocean barrier smaller as well. Resting my forehead on the seat in front of me, I cupped my hands in front of my face, grasping blindly for what I was leaving behind as I gasped my last goodbye.

## When

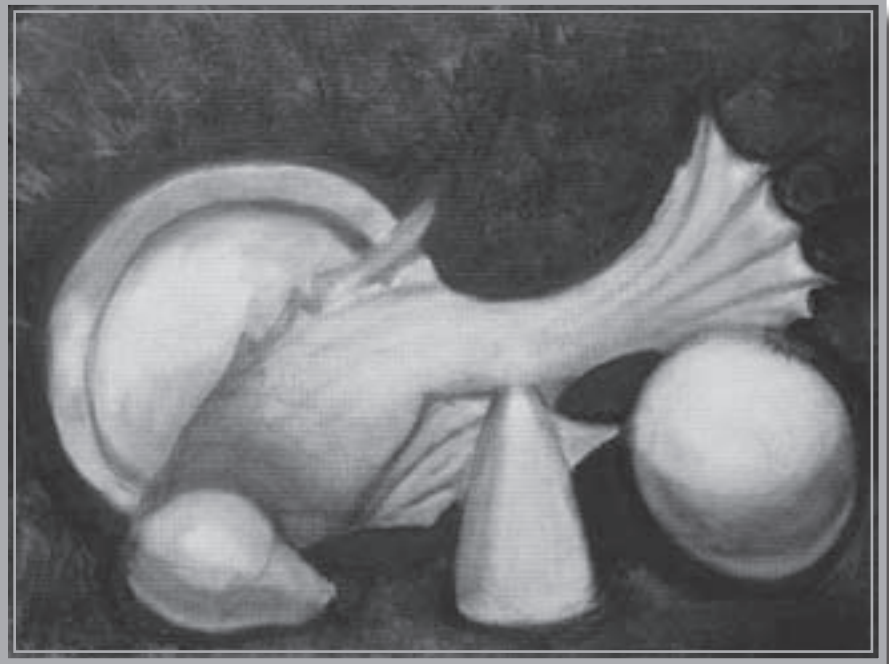
I am flying  
in the dreams of my childhood.  
Flying, through an orange sunset sky  
over farm fields and waves of purple wildflowers.  
When I awake,  
I can speak to the flowers  
and add melody to the robin's song.  
I can paint pictures in the clouds  
with the blue sky as my canvas.  
I climb to the top of a thick branched tree  
and whisper my secrets to a fuzzy yellow caterpillar.  
Ocean waves wink at me with their sea foam eyes  
and the moon smiles down on my window each night.

Some years ago,  
I stopped flying in my dreams.  
Why has the world become so quiet?  
Nature speaks to me in a dead language.  
When did I forget my mother tongue?  
The children are still fluent.  
When I watch them,  
I can almost remember  
how to paint with the wisps of clouds,  
how to say "love" in daffodil.  
Last night,  
I had a dream.  
I am flying.  
The freedom of my childhood  
carried me upward on silver feathered wings.

- *Katie Carty, Junior*



*Ryan Tefft, Sophomore*  
UNTITLED - Found Objects



PRETTY PEAR - Oil on Canvas  
*Emily Rowe, Senior*

## Fingerprints

My fingers gripped the wire,  
pale claws too weak to mold the metal.  
My eyes looked past the web of silver.  
I was fascinated by the chickens  
squawking in my cousin's yard.  
I didn't notice my grandfather  
until he stood beside me  
and told me a story.

*Have you ever seen a fresh egg?*  
I shake my head. I want to.  
*Your great-grandmother made me fetch them.*  
I don't have chores like that.  
*A man down the street*  
*gave us eggs for a few cents.*  
I think I have that much.  
*Your Great-Uncle Jim and I,*  
*we would take as many as we could carry.*  
I can only carry two.  
*We walked down there early in the morning*  
*and pulled eggs from their nests.*  
I stare at the chickens.  
Where does the egg come out?  
*But sometimes we had to wait*  
*before we could take them home.*  
I look at the scattered feathers.  
*A fresh egg is still very warm.*  
I think they are supposed to be cold.  
*The shell is malleable.*  
I pretend I know what it means.  
*If we carried it too early,*  
*the egg would form to our hands,*  
*so when it hardened*  
*you could still see the lines of our fingerprints.*

- Emily Peiffer, Senior

## Remembering

spiderwebs lace  
themselves across boxes:  
a silky veil  
concealing treasures beneath.  
dust plays with my feet  
as i retrace forgotten dance steps.  
dim light filters through a  
circular window,  
illuminating everything in  
nostalgic glow.

dressers stand tall  
like memorials  
commemorating the fallen  
fashions of better days.  
an opened drawer  
showers the air  
with musky breath:  
i can smell her.

the family tree branches out  
from a soiled box  
containing photographs  
of stoic faces  
framed in time.  
the photo of my grandmother  
steals my eyes.

i stare at myself,  
poised and beautiful,  
smiling at the unnamed  
photographer...

i remember  
the grandfather  
rescuing the little  
girl  
from an army  
of eight-legged  
creatures  
circling her life  
with glistening  
lifelines:



so fragile  
that when one thread  
gets torn  
the tree's branches  
snap from underneath me  
and i fall hard  
into the humid abyss,  
praying to be caught  
in the web of my  
grandfather's love.

- Elizabeth Leduc, Senior



BETH - Clay  
*Laura Steinbacher, Junior*

## **Hard Birth**

Hidden in the woods, a creek presses against its banks. It swells like a pregnant woman: ankles puffed up like balloons, veins ready to burst. The earth tosses back damp hair, grits her teeth. Water pushes up from underground to meet the sky, bursts over dams, rushes forth from every corner, swirling in muddy eddies of meconium and blood.

In Cuba, the sea rises to swallow a wooden house. In Texas, the highway disappears. That long black scar in the earth is erased, smoothed out into a gray field of tree limbs, guard rails, and mud. In Michigan, two men paddle through roads turned to rivers, canoe slipping smoothly beneath a red light. In India, the earth is a lotus flower floating on the sea, constantly created and destroyed.

We have tumbled out naked and dazed, tossed headfirst into the blinding sun. It is quiet now. Blinking, we hug our cold, bloody bodies and long for home.

- *Kyla Sisson, Junior*



LOST AND FOUND - Terra Cotta  
*Chelsea Nix, Senior*



STILL LIFE WITH MIRRORS - Oil on Canvas  
*Margaret Schmitz, Junior*

## Apple Blossoms

They're cutting the apple trees down; pink blossoms filtering through the air, treated like so much dirty dish water. The Orchard says it's too early for the trees to blossom, they need to be tamed. Even now the blossoms hurtle towards the earth while I stand kissed by reeling flowers, sex and death drifting on the air, the breath of Spring.

We walk through the woods, his presence a distraction. His animal grace blinds me. I can't see beyond it to *shake* this feeling that wild things are just that, wild. They can't help but to joyously grow.

It's in the way he moves; he captures the light.

Conscious friendship is displaced by lightening Spring as casual rest, body against tree body, takes on the texture of wild woods and lush awareness. Legs planted in the earth, tangled up in his nature and the wild tangle of my hair, the air has changed: oxygen blossoms, shoots down roots, coils ripe and saturated.

Pink blossoms, green leaves, renewal; these things are suppressed, trained to adopt another shape.

His wide palm strains against the bone of my hip.

This spring the trees blossom too early, too fully, too joyously. They're only *just* wild enough to blossom at all.

- *Amelia Crist, Junior*

## Solidarity

kicks off old work boots  
on the back stoop. He lays them on newspaper  
inside the door. Holding his cap by the bill,  
he flicks off clumps of melting snow,  
fingers reverently trace  
the UAW there embossed.

He's a union man,  
just like his father.  
He pays his dues,  
and walks the line.  
He votes to uphold  
the common good.  
"E Pluribus Unum,"  
so says the almighty dollar.

He knows Satan  
cannot drive out Satan.  
A house divided  
soon will fall.  
He jokes and says,  
"United We Stand,"  
down at the bar."  
And so he does.

He roots for those Lions,  
who will soon be fed to Christians.  
He knows how the story *always* ends.  
Yet, he roots all the same,  
because that's how it rolls

when you believe  
in one nation  
under God  
indivisible  
... in unity  
and brotherhood  
for all.

- *Sean Donovan, Graduate*



3 OF 12 MOPED PRINTS - Silver Gelatin Print  
*Patrick Maguire, Junior*

## **It is Raining**

I peer out at the greyness—  
the swallowing stillness.  
I don't want to go  
to school today—  
too many people.

We are curious in our compulsion  
to open up to others.  
Sparrow-common is the notion  
of shedding security for identity  
and popularity.

But I am not a sparrow.  
I don't seek feather warmth  
in the binding fetters of others.  
Why must we all be sparrows,  
chittering away our private stories,  
while drawing precariously nearer to someone else?

I am not a bird,  
nor something furred or soft.  
I am a hedgehog,  
one of the prickly ones.  
My warmth and my proximity  
come at a price.

The sparrows of the world  
can huddle close, their feathers  
do not wound. The closer I get  
the deeper the spines tear.  
The more damage is done  
upon your taking leave.

The stillness brought on by  
the damp air is a comfort.  
The world's throat is cold,  
but here, I hurt no one.

- *Ryan Jones, Junior*



## Not We

I climbed to the top  
of the great crags of stone  
that float above the sky.  
I took a breath  
then pulled myself back down.

I swam past the edge  
where the land stops  
at one cold, blue, lapping expanse.  
I treaded water for a minute  
then returned to the shore.

Somewhere, way out  
beyond the last little town,  
I found darkness deep enough  
to think in.

I came back, of course,  
to find you  
and tell you all about it  
so we could leave together.

But while I was away,  
you had crawled into  
a tinseltown magazine  
and had gotten your foot stuck  
in a lipstick advertisement  
and couldn't get out.

- *Luke Sprunger, Junior*



UNTITLED - Pencil  
*Dan Schumaker, Freshman*

## The Lone Wolves

I'm standing on my father's back porch,  
smoking a cigarette I'd put out last night.  
The elementary school is letting out,  
and from where I stand  
I can see the line of long yellow buses  
and the gleeful faces behind glass,  
pressed tightly to the window panes.  
I don't watch those kids for long though,  
because I never rode the bus  
when I was their age.

My gaze falls instead on the  
solitary few who troop down  
the snowy sidewalk towards home,  
their eyes on their shoes, the lone wolves.  
Where I grew up, I was always in  
walking distance of school.  
I walked the same path everyday, down  
a long, stick-straight road where the  
trees on the horizon never seemed to  
get any closer.

I've walked my share of straight lines,  
followed echoing footsteps along  
Rue Crescent in Montreal, ran  
the blues down on Maxwell Street in Chicago,  
and rambled barefoot by the endless  
Lake Michigan shoreline near  
Sleeping Bear Dunes, but these all seem  
mere jaunts compared to the two-lane  
city road that looms like eternity  
before me now.

I always had time to think  
on the long walks down that road  
but I forget now what I was thinking then.  
I'm wondering what's on the minds  
of these lone wolves. I'm wondering if  
the trees are getting any closer  
for them. I take one last glance at  
the expanse of asphalt that is so much  
a part of me, and I've never felt older  
than I do right now.

- *Kyle Austin, Junior*

**Army Man**  
*by Connie Hight, Senior*

I walk into the cold and sterile room just as he coughs a deep, wet cough which rattles his chest and insists on the removal of a linen handkerchief tucked in his right breast pocket. He is almost completely bald, but a few stray white hairs cling to both sides of his head, which I know never need to be combed. I sit down on the stool in front of him as he lifts his head from his handkerchief and smiles. Bright, blue eyes sparkle out from underneath the wrinkles lining his face. His eyes tell his true age. Not the age of his body but of his spirit. I smile back.

“My name is Connie and I will be taking care of you today. What brings you in to see us?”

“Connie, I knew a Connie once. Back in the day, back before you were even born. Did we ever have a fun...” he replies as another deep, wet cough causes him to lose his breath and stop talking.

I reach out and touch his arm, stroking it up and down as he struggles to control his cough. He spits into his handkerchief and shows me the results—green, yellow mucus with a hint of blood stains the white of the linen. I place a monitor on his finger to check his oxygen level, which is recorded with a piercing beep and a flashing red light. Eighty-nine percent, much too low. I check his blood pressure, pulse, and temperature while I type the results into my computer. As I stand, I reach for his arm to help him out of his chair. The feeling of bone between my fingers startles me and I loosen my fingers, afraid of bruising his delicate skin. Slowly, we shuffle across the hallway as I guide him toward an exam room.

“I am going to help you put on a gown so the doctor can listen to your lungs. I don’t like the sound of that cough!” I smile again as he struggles to lift his arms, the loose skin hanging off of his bones as I slide the wool sweater he is wearing up over his head, displacing his stray hairs. I think of helping undress my children the same way, their youthful skin soft and pink and smelling of baby powder.

“Connie, she was something else! I fell in love with her right before leaving for the war. We had a fun time, we did!” Cough, spit, cough. “She helped me out of my clothes a few times!” He pauses to cough again, blue eyes sparkling.

I laugh. “Oh, she did? I remember helping my husband out of his clothes before leaving for war, too. ‘Connies’ are known for causing trouble. At least that’s what my husband tells me.”

Carefully he folds his linen handkerchief in half and places it on the counter as I tie the strings hanging from the back of the hospital gown. “Your husband an Army man?”

“Yes, he was. He’s retired now. He served in two wars and I told him I couldn’t do it again.” I ease him into a chair and as he coughs again, I hand him his handkerchief.

“I am an Army man myself. Served in the war as a tank sergeant. My tank was hit by the Germans, but they didn’t get me.”

Another deep, wet cough shakes his body and I picture him as a young soldier, hit by enemy fire but defying death. I lean down and wrap my arms around his frail shoulders, pulling him close to me, feeling the outline of his rib cage.

“Thank you for your service,” I say as I pull away from him.

“Thank your husband for his service for me. I sure do appreciate what these boys are doing. These terrorists are crazy!” Cough, spit, cough. “I don’t understand how they can fight against an enemy who is too afraid to stand man to man!”

I try to smile but can’t. I lean down to embrace him once more. I tell him the doctor will be right in and I hope he is feeling better. I tell him I am leaving for the day, but the night shift nurse will help him if he needs anything. I turn and leave the room, closing the door behind me. I do not tell him how blessed I feel for meeting him. I do not tell him I don’t want to leave him. I hand his chart to the doctor and leave. As I drive home toward my husband, I think of this other Army man in his tank, facing down German soldiers. I start to cry and wonder if we will ever learn.

## Composed Whilst Having Time to Find Proper Words

She told us to remember the beauty that remains

Thin fingers left imprints on the brown-gray glass  
she heard the streets below echo with the threat of guns as people aligned

Shades of bitter gray fell from the sky

Torn velvet tapestries linger against windows gray with the weariness of war  
soaked with

the sea-salt drops  
of mothers' tears

I weaved between white-gray displays, a child of sixteen  
my thin fingers traced the faces  
drawn expressions too old for the children who bore them  
glass-encased chess pieces once held by weathered hands  
small wooden portals to comfort

Clasped hands cold beneath my chin  
I cried in the sterile Dachau bathroom  
each gentle collapse of my sea-salt grievings becoming prayers upon the concrete  
a voice for every soul who had been too fearful to release their private devastations  
now at peace

Her journaled words pulsed, rushing empathy through my veins

Torn velvet tapestries linger against windows gray with the weariness of war  
soaked with

the sea-salt drops  
of mothers' tears

She told us to remember the beauty that remains.

- *Mary Carlson, Senior*

# Bachelor of Fine Arts - Student Work



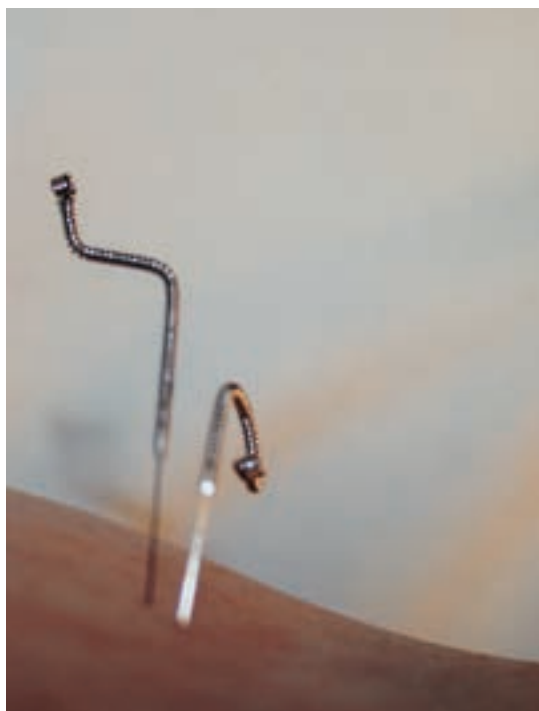
UNFASTENED - oil on canvas *Kim Harris VanderLende*



2,3,4 - oil on canvas *RaNae Couture*



FLAG WITH MEAT LOAF - oil on canvas *RaNae Couture*



NEEDLE SCAPE 1  
digital photograph  
*Jillian Osborne*





UNTITLED -  
soy/paraffin wax and  
steel candelabra  
*Jillian Osborne*



SCISSORS - oil on canvas  
*Kim Harris VanderLende*



NOSTALGIA - oil on canvas *RaNae Couture*



UNTITLED - linoleum print  
*Jillian Osborne*

## **Autism is a Flower Blooming in the Dark**

She is not like us.  
She walks with her face turned up  
to the sky, wandering  
off sidewalks.

She is a pale flower,  
blooming in the dark.  
Her albino stem flutes  
into five a.m. petals  
the color of the sky  
when she floats  
out of bed.

She does not heed us.  
She peels off the shirt  
we have pulled over her head,  
the pants we buttoned  
before she sprinted away  
to dance in the tub,  
letting water drops spatter  
her new-moon petals.  
She throws back her head  
and laughs like rain.

She defies our possibilities.  
We sputter—why don't you  
grow green leaves  
to soak in the sun? Empathize,  
we plea, photosynthesize.

She is not like us. She exists  
within herself, sepal and filament  
radiating light.

We are the sun  
and she does not need us.

- *Kyla Sisson, Junior*

April 19th 1945: Dachau, 16x16x12

Bruises grip walls like moss;  
white breath holds the air;  
fog lulls our feet together.

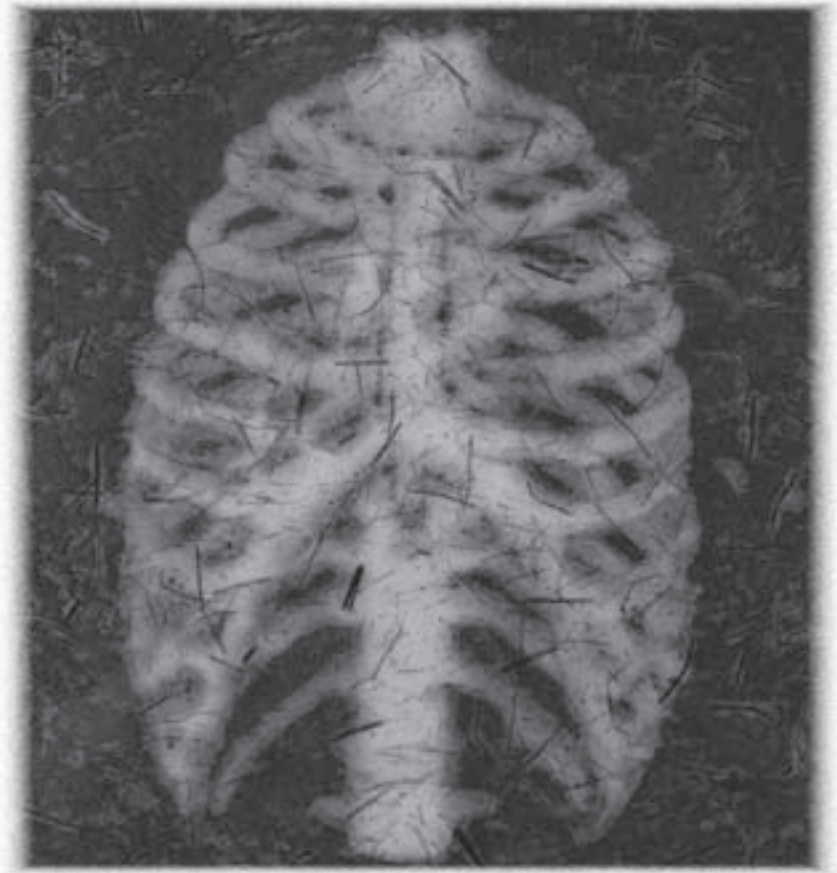
We gather—hold our naked selves,  
hands gripping arms and waists like twigs  
sucking at the bitter nectar of new leaves.

Eyes close—fumigation flowers in wafts,  
dews collect in the crevices of life—  
The buzzing sings as a chamber choir.

Growing—clouds warm our thighs;  
we sit so tight on this canopy.  
Our gasping grabs at the sky,

but God throws his palm down;  
storming rain flies ferociously,  
our eyes flooding with prayer.

- *Zarah Moeggenberg, Junior*



RIBCAGE - Rust Print  
*Elizabeth Hertl, Senior*



FIGURE - Oil  
*Laura Steinbacher, Junior*

## Desdemona

Dusk shrouds truth, slows breath,  
light halos twisted hair. Bars of bed frames force  
shadow cross fair face. The moon, betrayer, stands as sentinel.

Hands at midnight rough and cruel, words bracketed with  
scorn. Blind hands, driving pleasure/pain through  
barbed sieves; no release only driving, driving,  
driving greed.

Death of dreams within the marriage bed, the paradoxical  
marriage bed: dead a virgin, wife, and whore.

No room for repentance, what's done is done  
is done and done again today; unforgiving nature  
jealous of the old flame, the old allegiance to the moon,  
tangles women in smothering sheets.

Tears and anguish never vocalized, never owning  
body or mind; we are led again and again to  
the marriage bed.

Dusky shadow, bruised and deepening, shrouds the light of  
the fair Desdemonas. Roses and rosaries have  
no place here. There is no reverence left; only knowledge  
of invasion and what comes after.

- *Amelia Crist, Junior*

## **SHE**

She watched me as I tied my laces; crossed at the ankle, wrapped around twice, tied in a bow at the inside, tucked in so no one could see. This way it looked perfect, like there was no work, like it just happened. Can you show me how to tie them? she asked, I never had a pair. I stood up while balancing on my toes, without looking at her. I walked around the house in proper form, heels in and toes out, making soft triangular indentations in the carpet. Breaking them in so I could dance away from the questions. She was in the kitchen; I could hear her as she removed the dishes from the water, still hot and dewy with kisses of detergent. She stacked them according to size, according to color, according to her. Blue nestled into orange. Orange rested on top of red. Yellow hid underneath teal. But we never had green dishes; he didn't want them. I listened to the familiar sound of ceramic brushing against the wood of the cabinet and it became my melody as I slowly teetered down the stairs on my toes, holding onto the banister for support. But suddenly the ceramic melody stopped and when I stepped onto the landing, I saw her standing over the sink looking out the window, a pile of unplaced colors sitting next to her. I could see her reflection, faint and wispy, as she cried.

## **HE**

He sat downstairs, legs up on the recliner, hands tucked in his pants, remote control resting on his stomach. The area around him had the suffocating scent of stale nicotine. Smothering the basement, the cigarette smoke lingered in every corner, pulling on the blinds, hiding beneath the couch, playing with the wood planks on the floor. I grasped onto the back of the recliner as I tiptoed into the basement, pulling it backwards. He sat up, causing the remote to glide off his stomach and hit the floor. Batteries toppled out, doing a jig as they ricocheted off the wood. Grab that for me, he said. I scooped up the batteries: straight back, bent at the knees, holding my center. Perfect form. His eyes stayed on the screen, watching the different colors leap and tackle each other. Blue intercepted orange. Orange tackled red. Yellow battled teal. But there was no green; they didn't play today. Turning slowly, I tried to dance back down the hallway. I tripped, grasping onto the wall for support. He flicked his lighter on, the flame igniting another cigarette, another distraction. The smoke rested on my back and pushed me up the stair. Faint and wispy, it curtained my face as I cried.

*- Stephanie Gerling, Senior*





UNTITLED - Linocut  
*Beth Rinehart, Junior*

### Even though the electric bill is breaking me

The threat of outer padlocks brought the boy and me to this house.  
It bulged with belted men siphoning wind  
through plastic hoses, stripping the funeral floors of black  
soil. No room for loneliness here. I am a child  
cheering through studies, stairwells and tea rooms begging books,  
willing to ignore previous occupants whispering in the murder-lit kitchen.

But when R's smudge the pages and green keys are made, the boy and I stand in the kitchen,  
now seeing the gauges and stains. McCullough would write the house  
violent. Young teeth gnawed the boy's door. My book-  
shelves jar at angles only befitting of cobwebs. The wind  
rocks the tree, whose limbs are a spider's, scraping against the roof. I am a child,  
blind. Face in my blankie. Singing to discourage the black.

At twenty-one, I can't kill the lights, not knowing what waits in the black.  
I claw up the stairs. Into the kitchen.  
Feeling the breath of what waits in the basement. This house was once that of a child:  
ribbons and barrettes, her remains. I sweep them away, but they're persistent. They house  
themselves back in their corners. And the wind  
taps double-dutch. Asks me to play forever, like the twins in that book

that kept me from bathing. I tell myself this is a matter of too many books.  
Too many scream queens sleeping in my dvds. It's me, not haints. I turn on the black.  
The universe on my ceiling glows sick. Alone with the wind.  
Something rattles in the kitchen.  
The mice foam at the mouth, ripping through this house.  
They lay poisoned offerings outside my door with the pink barrette of the child.

The boy says it's the writer that makes me cry like a child.  
Alone in our bed, the characters walk out of my books  
and dance through the house.  
Contorting faces. Shuddering blinds. Sending black  
spiders to creep on my face while I'm sleeping. The kitchen  
is only a room for pots. The monsters creep out of my head. That pounding is only the wind.

A scream turns my door into wood chips. This is not that of the wind.  
A raging child  
whose blood stained the kitchen  
is rousing fury within my books—  
kamikazes on my walls. I'm bumping and bruising my way through the black.  
Where's the door? Where is the door? WHERE IS THE WAY OUT OF THIS HOUSE?

Alone in the house. Boyfriend away. Pulled out of my work by the wind.  
A story rose out of the black. Into my room. I am the child  
who just read the book with the man-eating cat. I turn on all of the lights through to the kitchen.

- Rachel Reilly, Senior

## An Ode to a Jedi in Training

when the harsh sunlight turns milk sour  
when Friday nights are spent alone with your toys  
when raiders fear a dragon over a knight  
when all hope lies within a hive of scum and villainy  
when all the identification needed is merely a wave of a hand  
when Wuher's worries faced no avail,  
and Dr. Evazon finally faces his death sentence from 12 systems  
when it doesn't matter who shot first, but who survived last  
when a gunfight breaks out in docking bay 94—that's right—94  
when an overgrown ape is the first mate  
when the aging falcon's wings can barely take flight  
when letting the wookie win saves an arm, or even two  
when a million voices cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced  
when all they can do is lock the door, and hope they don't have blasters  
when a flyboy jumps into the garbage shoot and discovers an incredible smell  
when a kiss for good luck becomes incest  
when turning off the tractor beam seems painfully simple  
when it's John Williams who seems to have saved the day  
when a mentor loses his head  
when you realize you're not out of this yet  
when kids don't get cocky, but generals do  
when spending time bulls-eying wamprats finally pays off,  
and hokey religions and ancient weapons overcome all odds  
*is when the force will be with you—always*

- Matt Bergevin, Senior

## Gypsy

A train rattles into Chicago,  
the home of a wandering gypsy.  
Streaks of purple glow in her hair,  
her skirt embroidered with hippie  
roses flirts with the dusty floor, and her laughing eyes  
smile on those bickering over the meaning of life.

Because the meaning of life,  
she knows, can't be found in Chicago,  
or in any one place, but only deep in the eyes  
of a cherished love, a child, a mystic gypsy,  
or maybe whatever you call God. Her hippie  
songs float up, mingling with the scent of patchouli in her hair.

The patchouli in her violet hair  
is her spice of life.  
The roses on that hippie  
skirt twirl as she spins in circles in Chicago.  
A perfect home for a mysterious gypsy  
with brilliant, laughing eyes.

Her warm mocha eyes  
glisten and a soft ring of snow crowns her hair  
as the sun dazzles on the white streets of her gypsy  
home. She praises the city she has given her life  
to, as the tinkling of the tiny golden bells around her waist ring throughout Chicago.  
She knows not everyone can live psychedelic and free like a hippie.

No, not everyone can live like she, so psychedelic and free as a hippie  
with carefree laughs to mask the secrets behind her eyes,  
secrets of a small loneliness in her heart on the empty streets in Chicago.  
Wind ruffles her paisley-printed shirt collar and runs its fingers through her hair  
whispering, *does it take this inner solitude to find the meaning of life?*  
What is the cost of the life of a gypsy?

The life of a gypsy,  
along with her hippie  
skirts and songs find balance in a life  
that allows both lonely secrets and laughing eyes  
to breathe inside the same body, and sparkle like the snowflakes in her hair.  
The empty or crowded streets, both are her home in Chicago.

A train rolls through Chicago, home of a wandering gypsy.  
The scent of patchouli in  
her hair wafts behind the  
hem of her hippie  
skirt as her laughing eyes  
watch the unfolding of  
the meaning of life.

- *Katie Carty, Junior*



WINGED THING II  
Wood, Plastic and Yarn  
*Jackson D. Botsford, Senior*

## Naptime

*With thanks to Prein Hahler,  
"Practicalities" (2007), Oil on Canvas*

The woman is almost invisible,  
almost swallowed by the debris  
of toys, cups, dishes, rope—  
layers of immaculate filth.

Her face is too stern to be  
happy, but she is too  
still to be angry.

She balances a plate on  
her hip like Atlas balances  
the Earth—

I want to believe that she  
is just resting or  
returning to the Old Ways  
embracing her Mother Earth  
with the intimate silence of sisters.

It isn't the time to tell her  
that there's a toddler—  
bare bottomed and fed—  
somewhere in the house.

*- Daniele Reisbig, Junior*



DREAM CAVE - Plaster, Clay and Glass  
*Jamie Velasco, Junior*

## Rattles

The death rattle I heard  
in three—a cat, a woman, and a bird.  
How strange to say—none were mine  
(and now I am theirs.)

I did not kill cat or woman,  
the dying bird was shot by man—  
who, I cannot care. Rattles are enough  
to trouble me—sitting here.

- Meghan Harris, Senior



CAGED FIGURE - Mixed Media  
Laura Steinbacher, Junior



## Mailboxes

by Rachel Koval, Senior

I stood behind the gnarled pine tree in the front yard with the 12-gauge shotgun while Jeremy leaned against the wooden mailbox post at the road's gravelly edge, hunting rifle in hand. I hated that my hands were shaking. I knew my brother loved this. We could hear the rattle-trap Chevette limping its way up the road. It shook on its axles with the excitement of the six teenage boys crammed inside. City kids, I thought. We could see the guys taking turns hanging out the windows with a baseball bat, victimizing another John Deere mailbox. There went another one. Jeremy shifted slightly in anticipation as the car neared our long gravel driveway.

What were we trying to do anyway? I hadn't thought the guns were really necessary to scare off the punks; but my dad seemed to think it would be more fun for us that way. We were farm kids, and there was nothing else to do on a Saturday anyway. My hands began to sweat; I gripped the stock tighter. The kids were at our driveway now and the car shifted into park. A window rolled down and my brother made his move. "I don't think so, fella," my brother chided menacingly as he aimed the rifle at the driver. Jeremy nodded in my direction and shouted for Lance to come out from his hiding place. I guess we looked pretty scary—three farm kids, two with guns, strolling towards the Chevette. "Don't let them see me shaking," I thought.

"Just get in your piece of crap car and drive on back downtown, boys." Jeremy went on, "You're not getting our mailbox." The driver still managed to look tough with the barrel of my brother's gun in his face. They all looked tough except for one. He looked about fourteen and terrified. Just like me. That's why my hand slipped when he started running. I was nervous and edgy; my finger slipped on the trigger. The kid dropped in his tracks and covered his ears; everyone else ducked instinctively. My shot had gone wild into the cornfield. The others hemmed and hawed without really communicating. The city boys got back into their car and drove off, but not before I muttered "I'm sorry" to the kid I nearly shot.

Jeremy picked up the gun I had hurled to the ground along with his own. I couldn't touch the sleek blackness of the weapon without feeling the taste of vomit rise in the back of my throat. "All this for some mailbox," I whispered as we trudged up the back steps. All Jeremy could do was nod.

## Papa

I was yours once before.  
Small, pink, young enough to be held.  
Tiny fingers rolled between cigarette  
roughened index and thumb. Once,  
you, peppered beard prickly on palm, were mine.  
And I, wooed by rushing heartbeat, I was yours.

That soft da-dum, da-dum, da- and I was yours.  
Lulled by callused hands in long hair. Before  
I knew our game, I required that you be mine—  
I only wanted you. I'd squeeze the arms you held  
me with, my cheek warm within folded elbow. Once—  
tightly—and announce that you were mine. Cigarette

smoke and all. It would stagnate in static wisps around the cigarette  
tip, an impenetrable veil that enfolded us furtively. I was yours  
then. Even with the smoking. But do you remember, once,  
I pleaded with you to quit. They were gone before  
I could complain that I was nightly held  
by a disintegrating cloud of ash—that used to be mine.

At night even, you were mine  
when I tossed beneath sheets until I rolled like a cigarette  
from beneath comforter and canopy. I would be held  
by you as soon as the da-dum of bones on floorboards woke you. Your  
wisps of pepper hair would brush my cheek before  
I missed the space I had burrowed beneath the blankets. Once

the changes came. Once middle-school. Once  
burgeoning breasts imposed on teeny wardrobe. Were you mine  
then? You were mine, before. Before  
skin and sex and cigarettes.  
Before I knew to blush at boys. Were your  
arms aware that I was too conscious of the way you held

your palm over my belly. Because you held  
me still. Once I was grown. Still, once  
hips and thighs rounded as if I were yet yours.

I got impertinent, claiming that I was mine *and* you were mine.  
And I forgot all about your cigarettes,  
how the smoke pressed us together before.

Before I knew better, you held me,  
encapsulated in a secret cigarette mantle. And now, once in a while,  
I hear your deep, "Mine," and I think, no hesitation, "Yes, yours."

- Amanda Sibilla, Junior



4 OF 12 MOPED PRINTS - Silver Gelatin Print  
*Patrick Maguire, Junior*

### Ode to a Deck of Cards

Bought this card deck  
at a garage sale  
in an elderly community.  
Little modular homes  
situated  
with American flags,  
pink flamingoes, and bright flowers.  
Trekking through geriatric valley  
finding treasures,  
a petite stack of rectangles acting  
like a hick town magic carpet.

They were faded,  
nine of hearts missing,  
the Joker in his place,  
a Queen's face cracked—  
what a dingy troupe of actors.  
Took them along,  
to the gang of three whose  
fists of Budweiser  
and Dorito-cheese breath, spoke  
some redneck spell.  
The three and I—the Club, the Spade,  
the Heart, and the Diamond—  
played that deck of cards  
until the Queen of Diamond's face smirked  
and the Jack of Clubs  
became a lucky trump.

Partying professionals, we dealt  
hoping to prove  
our card shuffling prowess,  
and those pieces of  
processed paper saw action.  
Diabolical deals in Blackjack,  
speed round Texas Hold 'Em,  
terrible partners in Euchre,  
idiotic Nines, drunken Spades,  
Rummy, well, it's Rummy.  
Someone, usually the Spade,  
unless the Heart drank too  
much Jack, would finally pass out,  
then War and Go-Fish got some play.

But when we finished a game,  
and the Diamond quit her  
fighting with the Spade  
and the Club played footsy  
with the Heart,  
that deck of cards stuck together  
with beer drizzle and sticky,  
artificial orange cheese.  
Twos mating with sixes,  
Queens conjoined—  
this treasure I bought for 50 cents,  
a best set of friends.

- *Meghan Harris, Senior*



WENDELL'S PLAYScape - Terra Cotta  
*Bernadette Poirier, Sophomore*

## Shoes

*by Alison Bohne, Junior*

I can't bring myself to buy new shoes. It isn't because I can't afford to buy new shoes, and it isn't because I haven't looked at new shoes. It isn't because I don't need them either. My black Sketchers are ragged, torn, just over a year old, and well past their prime. They have holes in the soles, salt stains, and frayed laces. They have practically no traction, and they no longer keep my feet the least bit dry. But they are a perfect fit.

The relationship between my feet and my shoes is of paramount importance. I run—over concrete, rock, grass, dirt, treadmills. If I cannot run, I tap out rhythms on carpets, table legs, and seat backs. I've been told that running shoes shouldn't be so light or so flimsy, but we cannot choose what we love, and I love my little black shoes. When I run, I want nothing to hold me to the temporal world. My shoes are as light as a breath, but they are still tough enough to protect my vulnerable feet.

My feet look ridiculously fragile un-shoed. They have such a small center of gravity—my heel and the apple-shaped pad beneath my toes—but I demand much of them. My shoes have gotten to know my feet well, stretching and reshaping around every curve. I cannot yank the shoes away and force my feet into a new relationship. Not yet. It's all too soon.

I also love my shoes because they have been with me on my travels. I like to imagine that the places I love have adhered to my shoes, and my shoes carry those places in some small measure. My shoes have taken me through the streets of Dublin and the forests of the Ring of Kerry. They have been to the Badlands of South Dakota and Yellowstone National Park. They have touched the pavements of Minocqua, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, and Mount Rushmore. They remember more mundane places as well. They have plowed through the snow covering my college campus, paced the hardwood floors of my house, picked their way through my backyard, walked through meadows, and hopped down railroad tracks at a steady tempo, rail-to-rail-to-rail.

I've had them stolen. I've had them borrowed. I've had them hidden. I've had them thrown at people's heads. I've jumped fences, climbed trees, splashed in puddles, slid on ice, and jogged up mountain paths. I have also danced, flounced, skipped, and tip-toed. My shoes have guided a horse, scaled a castle, rested against each other in the prow of a kayak, and they have, at times, slid out from beneath me and made me land on my face, backside, hands, elbows, and any other part of my body that I could possibly devise to catch myself with.

My shoes and I have come to an impasse.

I cannot wear them in the winter without risking the safety of my feet. I cannot lay them to rest without a sharp pang of loss. They carry the dirt and sands of countless places. They remind me where I've been. They take me where I'm going.

I can list my excuses. I cannot afford new shoes. I'm being resourceful by using what I have, until they actually *need* to be replaced. I don't want to break in a new pair, and these work just fine thank-you-very-much.

But my excuses wear thin.

My shoes have to go. I must run ahead.



SELF PORTRAIT - Charcoal  
*Emily Olenzak, Freshman*

## love a priori

He slowly lurches in the rocker.  
Each tilt back squeaks; each pitch forth creaks.  
His blank face swims among porch light shadows—  
glazed unfocused eyes gaze  
inward, scanning a clouded horizon  
in search of Plato's realm of the real.

His brother doodles on napkins  
oblivious of others,  
sitting for hours alone  
and sipping tap water  
in a darkened corner booth.

They play cerebral philosophers  
staring off into space—  
cataloging and dissecting  
love's meaning—

sad grasshoppers  
springing through the dry  
stubble of word fields

as Beauty bends to pick dropped keys,  
then smoothes her dress and sashays away.

- Sean Donovan, *Graduate*





VASE - Stoneware  
*Jim Zordan, Sophomore*

## The King's Music

Nappy.  
His roots sing of the sublime,  
roots of his scalp  
and his brothers,  
roots that bleed a red  
cacao.  
He howls a weary measure,  
feeding an ancient tune,  
cavalry stomp,  
pomp and circumstance,  
the stumble onto the  
Ark of the black-at-heart,  
the tiptoed climb  
through glass ceilings.

Far from the ivory sands,  
this grass is not the same green.

The tips of the roots, fluffed black digits,  
fly through the air, frenzied,  
reaching,  
dancing, dreaming,

but the roots hold steady;  
rock steady;  
they nest deeper than graves.

- Erica Meyers, Junior



GOBLIN - Clay  
*Stephanie Gam, Senior*



DUALITY'S CURTAIN - Digital Photograph  
*Owen Fifield, Sophomore*

## Lucid After Midnight

If you've ever awakened, yawning with muddled thoughts,  
ever stared groggily at the flashing red numbers of your alarm clock,  
ever padded softly on slippers to the bathroom,  
rubbing sleep from your eyes and combing knots from your hair.  
If you've ever felt the cold rush of the shower jolt your senses,  
ever tasted the biting cool of mint toothpaste on your tongue,  
ever thrown on some familiar clothes, jeans and a T-shirt,  
that you may have worn yesterday, or the day before.  
If you've ever eaten breakfast, cold soggy cereal with juice and toast,  
ever driven your car to work, tapping your fingers to the music in  
traffic,  
ever gotten there and spent all day slaving  
so hard that you lose track of time and its meaning.  
If you've ever gotten home and kicked off your shoes,  
ever cracked a beer and lost your head in some fuzzy TV station,  
ever found yourself drifting off to sleep on the couch,  
potato chip crumbs scattered on your lap, the faint glow of the tube  
flashing shadows on the wall, only to

### WAKE UP

in your own bed  
and find out that  
the whole day was  
just a dream.

If you've ever been alive,  
then perhaps you're like me,  
and can't tell where  
the dream ends  
and reality begins.

- Kyle Austin, Junior

Honorable mentions, Academy of American Poetry  
Contest for Colleges and Universities

Autism is a Flower Blooming in the Dark  
*by junior Kyla Sisson (page 35)*

April 19th 1945: Dachau, 16x16x12  
*by junior Zarah Moeggenberg (page 36)*

Comments by poet John Rybicki, this year's final judge.

"Autism is a Flower Blooming in the Dark," and "April 19th 1945: Dachau, 16x16x12" both deserve an honorable mention.

The autism poem is a thing of grace and vision. The sentences are silky rivers and remind me of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers dancing a routine once they had honed their moves to perfection. There's an illusion of effortlessness in this poem I admire, a feeling like the writer just breathed the words onto the page. And when I read this poetic exploration of autism the paper becomes a kind of movie screen in my hands: I see through to the world of the poet's invention. A very moving and accomplished poem.

The holocaust poem, conversely, is all about compression. Here we have hand grenade language, a linguistic fireball that takes on harrowing subject matter and renders it in such original fashion I am drawn into what Shirley Clay Scott calls, "an uncommon experiencing of something familiar." The people in the gas chamber "grip arms and waists like twigs." The author uses almost pleasant seeming images to explore something ghastly later in the poem: "clouds warm our thighs;/ we sit so tight on this canopy. Our gasping grabs the sky,/ but God throws his palm down." I respond out of two mouths to this audacious utterance: how dare he/she say that; and thank God he/she said that. Brave and visionary poem in the vein of Jack Gilbert's "Find Something."

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