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2003 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine

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Quiz and Quill

Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio

Spring 2003

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Editors' Note

Whether or not you are aware of it, this is the end of a dynasty. Dr. Bailey, our faithful advisor, is leaving us to rot on the roadside, to sway like plastic bags hopelessly caught in the branches of a tree, to sit on the toilet without any T.P. In other words, he is retiring and no longer keeping us out of (or in) trouble. So while we glare at him angrily for abandoning us, we will also take this time to thank him. Not only does he keep us hopped up on sugar, but he also keeps us organized and points out our shortcomings with a snide laugh. For this we thank you and will miss you, Dr. Bailey.

This, the last of Bailey Era *Quiz and Quills*, is once again filled with writing from Otterbein's student population. We would like to send a thank you to all those who submitted entries and to those who helped in the judging of the contests and the selection of the work for this magazine. We would also like to thank Jenny Hill for designing it all.

So please enjoy these writings and spread poetry (Yee-haw, says Allison) and prose (Woo-hoo, says Teresa) throughout the land.

2003 Quiz and Quill Contest Winners

Poetry Contest

First Place	<i>Dream Talk with Grandpa Skeeter</i> by Becca Rossiter
Second Place	<i>Before the Paint</i> by Becca Rossiter
Third Place	<i>What My Mother Chose</i> by Sarah Grooms

Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

First Place	<i>One Year: 9-11-02</i> by Becca Rossiter
Second Place	<i>What My Parents Gave Me</i> by Becca Rossiter
Third Place	<i>Yesterday I Saw God</i> by Amanda Knapp

Short Story Contest

First Place	<i>Virginity and Fidelity</i> by Teresa Moore
Second Place	<i>Dust of the Earth</i> by Carissa Lofredo
Third Place	<i>Everflow</i> by Deron Fetz

Personal Essay Contest

First Place	<i>Rain Drops</i> by Teresa Moore
Second Place	<i>Mt. Liberty</i> by Debra Van Schoyck-Gerber
Third Place	<i>Little Brother</i> by Pamela McVeagh

Playwriting Contest

First Place	<i>When the Bit is Removed</i> by Traci Meister
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Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

First Place	Katie Crabtree
Second Place	Abbie Hooper

Art Contest

First Place	Rachel Fout
Second Place	Jon Juravich
Third Place	Jessica Peters

Contest Judges

Poetry and Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contests

Janet McCann is co-author of *In a Field of Words: A Creative Writing Text* (Prentice-Hall, 2003) and a teacher of creative writing at Texas A & M University. Her volume, *Looking for Buddha in the Barbed Wire Garden: Poetry*, was published in 1996. She graduated from Otterbein in 1963.

Short Story Contest

Candyce Barnes has published fiction in *The Southern Review*, *Story*, *The Georgia Review*, *High Plains Literary Review*, and *The Ohio Journal*. She has taught fiction writing at Ohio State University and has conducted writing workshops at Thurber House and the Institute for the Advancement of Arts in Education.

Personal Essay Contest

John Deever, a 1990 graduate of Otterbein, was one of the first Peace Corps volunteers to serve in Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His memoir about his Peace Corps experience, *Singing on the Heavy Side of the World*, was published in 2002 and is available at his website, www.deever.com.

Playwriting Contest

Doreen Dunn's plays have been produced throughout the country, including "Frontiers" at the Victory Theatre, Los Angeles, "American Roulette" at the Cleveland Public Theatre, and "Great Grandmothers & Daughters" at Gallery Players, Columbus, OH. Her most recent full-length play, "Lillian and Ethel," won the Attic Theatre Center's National Playwriting Competition and was produced in Los Angeles in October. "Frontiers" will be revived in 2003 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

Sarah Mills Bacha is a free-lance writer, communications consultant and president of her own firm, SMB Communications Ltd. She previously was a business reporter at *The Columbus Dispatch* and comment page editor at *The Journal-Gazette* in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Art Contest

Kate Sturman Gorman is an illustrator and fiber artist. She has taught illustration at Otterbein and the Columbus College of Art and Design. She lives in Westerville with her husband Jim and their two children.

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Snow Day in Elementary School

Jason Carney

I woke up to
Sizzling and egg-beating
Coming through my
Heat register, and the
Smell of pancakes
Trembling on a skillet.
I walked down carpeted stairs
Hearing Bugs Bunny seduce
Elmer Fudd, and the
Rocking cackle
Of my six-year-old brother.
Stepping onto the kitchen tile
I saw you:
Towel wrapped around your head like a
Hindu, wearing dad's bath robe,
An apothecary in your laboratory
Preparing a cure.

Before the Paint

-on Georgia O'Keefe's muse for IRIS, 1929

Second Place, Poetry Contest

Becca Rossiter

His kiss is green, a narrow
shoot of something warm and
encompassing
like a baby's hand wrapped tightly around an index finger. He

leaves too soon, scattering breakfast
dishes, lingering in the doorframe
to struggle with a broken umbrella;
the rain is frozen mist.
She watches, strewn
like unmade covers, head
tilted and every muscle listening. His
footsteps and scuttling staccato eighth notes
over sidewalks...

She starts her day in his still warm
nightshirt, inviting the green
kiss and the frozen gray together on
canvas. She paints the moment
welling up, demanding space: petals

like the curve of a woman's hips,
then two blooming hearts on either side of shadows on skin.
Purple nearly black like a
beetle in the sun. The startling green reaching
up, more like lightning than stem.

Strawberry Season

Allison Barrett

The sun reflects off
buildings in shiny slices,
as Starla and I walk home,
her pony-tail bobbing,
my long hair swishing
side-to-side.

The air yawns warmly,
the palm trees dream
of fireworks

Behind the rickety fruit stand,
across the street
from Von's supermarket,
is a man with yo-yo eyes
and a maniac mouth.
There are no crates
of friendly red strawberries,
just the Crazy's ghoulish hands
clutching his dick.

My head swivels forward,
I block out his lewd grunts
and think
Wild dogs smell fear.
"Don't run," I hiss at Starla.
Our rubber band Gumby legs
are dignified for ten seconds
before bursting into
a wobbly gallop.

Later, the officer's eyes are bored
by our lack of details.
We flinch when he says *penis*
because we all know
he has one
as well as shiny boots
and a gun.



Jon Juravich

Rain Drops

First Place, Personal Essay Contest

Teresa Moore

Volcanic ash and gases form thunderstorms as a volcano erupts. The steam accumulates above the volcano peak and forms into raindrops held within clouds of ash. And then the ash and steam fall to the ground as rain, hardening as they fall, becoming concrete drops. I stand in a chalky room with black-topped tables and hold a raindrop in my hand. Hold a raindrop between my thumb and forefinger, rolling its light gray oblong body between them. Hold a raindrop that fell years ago in a country that I have never been to and probably never will.

I am anti-umbrella. Probably, because I don't own any clothes that could be harmed by the rain, and I never do my hair. Maybe when I get a job and have to wear rayon skirts and pantyhose, I'll change my mind. But right now, I like to roll up the bottoms of my jeans, kick off my flip-flops and let my hair hang in wet strips around my face.

This boy that I'm dating doesn't like the rain. He finds it a general annoyance. He allows that rain is needed for life to be on this planet. "But couldn't it just rain during the hours that I'm asleep?" he asks. "But then you wouldn't grow," I say. I think we have to break up.

"I think girls who are wet...from the rain...or the shower...or just in general...are sexy." Daniel admits this as he blinks raindrops out of his eyes. "Am I turning you on right now?" Lesley asks sweeping back her damp hair and striking a pose. It's hard to say if Daniel is blushing, but I'm the one to say, "Hell, yes. I'd do you." And with this we convince Daniel to come with us on our rain walk.

The graves were covered in long, wet grass that reflected the streetlights. We could hear cars hiss along the street until the noise was softened by trees and replaced by the sound of big drops plopping onto the sidewalk. The shadows made it impossible to tell which side of the stone had writing or which side was the grave. We strolled, in silence mostly, along the sidewalk, shuffling to slide around the wet leaves that clung to the ground. We stopped to find our reflections, lined with streams of rain in the windows of a catacomb, or maybe it was a storage shed. We tried to scare ourselves and each other, but couldn't; the graveyard was too peaceful.

A police officer in a cruiser with the lights out stopped us in the park by the river. He leaned out the window and coated us with his flashlight, lingering its beam on Lesley. "Not to alarm you," he said, "but we're looking for a girl that escaped from St. Ann's Hospital. She's suicidal and fits your

description." He flashed the light up and down Lesley without leaving his car. "But she had a black coat, not a green one." The jacket color cleared things up, and the police officer drove away, lights on dim. Daniel, Lesley, and I watched his taillights turn the corner. "How will we ever know if they found her?" Lesley asked. "Someone could be killing herself right now, right here, and we would never even hear about it." Lesley and I watched the news the next day, but they didn't mention an escaped or even an unescaped girl.

Apparently, rain and other forms of overcast weather can lead to or heighten depression. There have been scientific studies on the number of people who commit suicide and the times they chose to do so. The number rises in the winter, when the sun remains hidden for days. Rainy days also produce more suicides. However, it has also been theorized that most murders occur in the summer and that anger and aggression are heightened by heat and humidity.

Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* in 1816, the year after the enormous volcano eruption in Tambora, Indonesia. The ash was shot so high into the atmosphere that it couldn't be rained out and gravity had a weakened effect on it so it didn't settle. It just spread into a giant cloud of ash that covered most of the world. It blocked the sun and made it so cold that 1816 was called "the year without a summer." Shelley writes of red skies and perpetual coldness, as it was in England and throughout the world in 1816. Shelley's monster and scientist were created that year, and both were depressed, lonely, morbid.

My grandfather shot himself in the head with a hunting rifle in 1958. My dad was ten at the time. The only reason I even know this is because my mom told me as we sat on the corner of my bed, the sun warming our seat. "Now, no one needs to know about this, okay? Keep it to yourself." But I never have; I tell it as an interesting factoid about my family, as though no one ever hurt over it and no one ever died. It's just a touch of scandal, a bit of mystery. I even told my friend's mother about it as she picked us up in the church parking lot. It seemed that as the tires circled over the wet pavement, my mind circled to my grandpa.

But my grandma claims it was an accident; he was cleaning his hunting rifle and it went off, shooting him in the head. I only know this because my oldest brother had the audacity to ask her in front of my other brother who told me about his asking. My dad refuses to talk about it. However, he has an odd love of Tim Taylor on *Home Improvement*. Tim Taylor's father died when he was ten. His mother had to work hard to raise her three sons. Tim now works hard to raise his three sons. My grandma worked three jobs to support her three sons and daughter. My dad works hard to raise his four sons and daughter. I see a connection...or maybe he just thinks the show is funny.

I read once that suicidal tendencies are hereditary. It was in a novel, so the dependability of this fact can easily be questioned. But at 14, I started to wonder if I would ever kill myself, since my grandfather had. And if so, how I would go about doing it. I decided on jumping off a building so I could pretend I was flying for a second or two before I hit the ground. To have one moment where I am water heading to the earth, water mixed with ash, water that spirals to the ground to become concrete. That's the closest I ever got to suicide, and I don't think it had anything to do with my genes.

Maybe its because I love the rain. I never feel like I should expand my world when it's raining. I want to stay in my room with the light casting soft orange on the walls and the rain murmuring, or crying, or wailing outside. I want to be alone, be lazy in a way that means I do exactly what I want to do when I want to do it. The rain cuts the world down to me, and everything is where I am'— in a chalky room with black-topped tables.

Being Alive at an Otterbein Fraternity House*Jason Carney*

When I awake lying
On our cigarette scented couch,
In a tilted fedora,
Shirtless,
I realize I've lost my shoes
When I see my socks.
I let my empty wine bottle
Rest on the carpet
As I rise.

I find sunlight
Dancing through the necks of a
Congregation of beer bottles,
Crowding invisible pews on our coffee table,
Waiting for the morning to preach to them.

Winter's Waking

Nathan Ericson

Days dwindle as winter creeps
around the corner. Trees shed
their summer coats and freeze
without their fiery sweaters.
Darkness overcomes
light.

Crickets, frogs, robins, black-capped
Chickadees disappear. The doors
to their dwellings read,
Closed for the season.

December comes marching
while they dream up a foreign
film festival in their mind's eye.

Sheep become the woolly beasts
they yearn to be. The farmer eyes
them gleefully
on Christmas day.

I wait
for winter.
Snow hushes
the world I
live in.
I wear
my sweater.
I smoke
my pipe.

The cold is a drug
to my synapses. They fire
rapidly at the first inhale
of crisp
winter air.

My snowshoes
wait anxiously
over the mantle.

Boy in Fountain, 1992

-after the Douglas D. Prince photograph
Rob O'Donnell

The gods have a swimming hole,
I don't know if you know,
but one can go there and just
snorkel around.

The water is dark with murk
and light doesn't reach the bottom.
The pond is girded with ancient stone
pillars, fallen and broken,
that crack and cleave
the mighty rock.

Zeus reclines by the edge of the pool,
bronzing in the sun. Resting
upon a golden fleece,
he flings two sided coins
into the inky depths,
and children dive deep,
rescuing the stray and
searching for the bottom.



Jessica Peters

Little Brother

Third Place, Personal Essay Contest

Pamela McVeagh

I am a big sister and I consider this job to be a privilege.

When Ken was 12 and I was 15, he was diagnosed with leukemia. He spent a year in the oncology ward and in and out of PICU at Rainbow's Babies and Children's Hospital. I have, in my mind, an immovable image of Ken during one of his stays in Intensive Care. He was a tiny, porcelain doll lying asleep in a huge sterile bed, surrounded by beeping, blinking monitors and invaded by several clear plastic tubes. I was a mature 15, and everybody commented on how well I was handling "the situation" as it was referred to. But as I looked at my precious little brother, I suddenly felt helpless and pitifully young. I sat down next to him and held his warm limp hand and repeated a coarse mantra very quietly but ferociously: "Please don't die." I envisioned all my energy and health as liquid light, and I poured it all over my brother's expressionless face, his wiry limbs, his slowly rising and falling torso, deep into all his organs, and finally filling all his veins and replacing the blood that had wronged him.

Ken has been in remission for five years, and you'd never know he had been anything but healthy. He tells people that the scar he has from the broviac tube that took the chemotherapy directly to his heart is a bullet wound.

Ken's face looks like mine. His chin is sharper, his features a little broader, and his cheeks thinner, but we have a very similar smile. His cheeks widen as his eyes turn into little sparkly slits and his top teeth, which are naturally straight, appear.

Ken recently got new glasses. They are brown and thick framed, reminiscent of Mark's glasses in *Rent*. He takes them off during conversations and emphasizes a point by gesturing with them, like an old man. Ken also just got his hair cut.

"Ken, it's becoming dangerously close to being a mullet."

"Whatever. No, it isn't. You have a 'fro, so worry about yourself."

Nevertheless, the next time I saw him, his medium brown, chin length hair stopped abruptly at the base of his hairline in the back. Ken hates the sun and so his hair is dark and dull and his skin is so pale it's almost translucent. And he likes it that way.

For a seventeen-year-old, Ken is very mature. Of course he worries about normal teenager stuff like where he's going to go to college and whether Incubus is cooler than Hoobastank, but for the most part, he has it together.

Ken fervently hates and passionately loves; sometimes his feelings are inexplicable, but that won't stop him from defending them.

"I hate Dave Thomas."

"What? Why? What's wrong with him?"

"He's old. But it's not just that. He's annoying. I hate his commercials and I hate him."

Ken's mysterious detestation of the founder of the Wendy's fast food chain did not wane after the man died last year.

"I'm not glad he died. But at least I don't have to see him try to be funny on any more stupid commercials."

Ken doesn't dress like anyone else I've ever met. He isn't a particularly extraverted person, nor does he crave attention. In fact, he is quite happy to fade into the background most of the time, but that is difficult to do when one is wearing two different plaid shirts and vintage bell bottomed polyester slacks. As a freshman in high school, Ken would wear jeans and a conservative button down shirt every day. But somewhere during the course of his sophomore year, Ken decided to wear not just one, but two collared shirts and to button them up using the holes of the under shirt and the buttons of the outer shirt.

It all escalated from there.

He acquired a wardrobe full of 1970's vintage clothing from our neighbor. The donator was Terry Templeton, who used to be a flower child before he met his wife. He is now an Optometrist and right wing Republican so he decided it was time to get rid of the garbs of his wilder days. Ken asked if he could have them, "Just to see if anything fits me." To our Mum's dismay, every article of clothing from the woolen rainbow colored sweater to the flared gingham pants fit Ken perfectly.

Terry Templeton's daughter is a pert, platinum blond cheerleader named Mary-Megan: she is a peppy, sweet, All-American girl, but an absolute airhead. Ken is very intelligent, grounded, somewhat cynical, and not even mildly interested in supporting his school's sports teams or 'pepping up' the student body. However, Ken is unpredictable at best and he and Mary-Megan are practically inseparable.

Over the summer between their junior and senior years in high school, Mary-Megan practically lived at our house. She was over by 10a.m. every day and didn't leave until her devout Lutheran mother marched down the street to our house to retrieve her, usually around midnight.

"You and Mary-Megan get along so well Ken. Why don't you two date?"

Ken stared at me agog for a moment and said, "That would be too weird. I mean, she's Mary-Megan, how could I possibly date *her*?"

On any given day Mary-Megan looks like she could be modeling for a teen magazine, and every time she went to the mall without Ken, which wasn't very often, mind you, she came home with a gift for him. Sometimes it was a funny present like different colored duct tape and sometimes it was a t-shirt bearing his favorite band's name. Mary-Megan is indisputably pretty, extremely sweet, and thoughtful so I didn't see the problem with "*her*."

In regards to the duct tape: Ken makes things out of, covers things, and decorates things with duct tape. A set of full body armor created entirely with cardboard and duct tape resides under my bed since Ken doesn't have enough

space for it in his bedroom. Try to envision, if you can, boots, shin and thigh guards, chest and back armor, gloves, a sword, and a gladiator style helmet made out of duct tape. Ken's T.V. remote is covered in duct tape, his wallet is covered in duct tape, and the trailer hitch on the back of his gold 1990 Ford Tempo is also covered in, well, you get it.

Ken wants to be a cameraman or a filmmaker. He is going to college next fall to major in film. This fits Ken. He watches approximately six hours of television a day and is more in tune with popular culture than MTV. He is incredibly artistic and sensitive; and, although his movies may not be mainstream, I can guarantee they will be interesting. I am an actress so I have already envisioned the academy awards in a few years' time dominated by the McVeagh children.

Last night, when I got home, I noticed that a message had been left on my answering machine. I pressed the little gray 'mailbox 1' button and was greeted by Ken's impersonation of one of Chris Farley's Saturday Night Live personalities. After laughing too much to actually comprehend the substance of the message, I replayed it: "Uh, so, I was leaving a message on an answer machine this one time and uh, and the person came home and picked up the phone and I was like, 'Oh, hey! Hi there, I was, uh, just leaving a message on your answer machine . . . and uh,' so I'll speak to you later sis, love you. Uh, bye."

Our Mum called me later and said he was supposed to tell me he had made honor roll.

When the first episode of the Star Wars movies was released about a year and a half ago, Ken declared that I was like Ja Ja Binks, the gibberish-talking Alien. During that time a commercial for a fast food chain used another alien type creature to promote the Star Wars themed children's meals: this alien was apparently called "Marcilup" or something close to it. I was told I was even more like this little alien than Ja Ja, so Ken calls me Marcilup or Marcy for short. I call him Squidge. I don't know why, but I started it about ten years ago and it stuck. I often think passersby at the mall or in restaurants must find our conversations interesting:

"Squidge, what do you think about this shirt?" or "Pass me the salt, Marcilup."

I could talk about the many weird and wonderful facets of my little brother endlessly, but I won't; I'll end by saying that when he was little, Ken was Kenneth. I never call him Kenneth anymore, but our older brother, Andrew, refuses to call him anything but his full name. My parents have a weird habit of adding strange names in the middle of our own; "Kenneth Ian MacTavish MacGillicuddy McVeagh." We don't know why, it's a parent thing, we suppose. But Ken wants to use that as his professional name in the film industry; I think it suits him.

What My Parents Gave Me*Second Place, Burkhart Poetry Contest**Becca Rossiter*

The tremor of his voice box
coaxed me from dreams made heavy
by the hymn's drone.
I stared down at slanting wooden
floorboards, the black church shoes of strangers,
held my breath and listened to my
Father's honeyed tenor,
listened with a sudden flash
of protection, "*He is mine.*"

Clinging to his torso like a
morning glory vine, my warm
four-year-old face pressed
to the prickly curve of his neck, I heard
where the music began —
a trickle inside, a rocket of breath —
and I remember even then
wanting to touch that place, to cup it
in my fingers.

I'd watch my mother's monarch hands
from where I lay half under the grand piano's
stretched belly,
my own palm atop her cold, bare toes as she
pumped the stubborn pedals.

By Definition*Rajahm Sellers*

Me being I has nothing to do with what you see
 I'm the ultimate surprise of two uniting to be
 The color of my skin is what has been defined as black
 Look me straight in the eye and tell me some dumb shit like
 that

Tan's the color I feel I am
 You may disagree with me but I don't give a damn
 My mother used to call me a gray child and I would laugh
 Today I realize her crazy analysis of half and half didn't
 have adequate math

I have heard all the remarks; confused, Oreo, zebra, lite-
 bright damn near white

Never understood why this was said to me but was willing to
 put up a fight

Nothing about being biracial is humorous like people
 thought when I was young

Now I've gotten wiser people aren't apt to speak with such
 an ignorant tongue

As an unhyphenated African American helixed with European
 ancestry created like you

If you think you are pure of one race or ethnicity, I laugh
 out loud cause you are the fool

I love who I am, what I am and things to be

I hope people who don't approve of the unbelievable will
 finally see

If we keep defining ourselves with definitions for who we
 are

We will never become examples for the future by near nor
 far

One Year: 9-11-02*First Place, Burkhart Poetry Contest**Becca Rossiter*

How ironic, on today of all days, to
 watch a hummingbird trapped
 in our empty garage. I stand there with
 a mug of burnt coffee, clad still
 in furrowed pajamas, bitter toward the
 news anchors who stole
 away my morning.
 I didn't *want*
 to step back, to ease into the volcano again...

Maybe I thought there'd be
 something different: the muscle
 of forgiveness, a smell other than oil.
 But only an army officer flinging bold, gleaming
 prayers to a God who lives only
 in America.
 Only multi-colored, white-toothed school children singing
 to a flag:

"Bless
 this nation, remember this day, kill
 the enemy."

And I can't tear myself away from
 watching this insignificant
 hummingbird ricochet off ceiling
 and wall. Escape so simple
 with the garage door blown open;
 wind and cloud and blossom wait.
 In the background, the TV spurts on.
 I catch the word *invincible* and silently
 cry with an ache that has
 changed me.
 I cry for the day, the exhausted wings,
 for the eyes that don't see them.

Yesterday I Saw God*Third Place, Burkhart Poetry Contest**Amanda Knapp*

yesterday, I saw god
he ducked behind a tree
a building, a stop sign, a lamp post, a parking meter.
I dunno where he thought he'd hide.
there ain't a shadow someone hasn't lit
sometimes I kick the dead leaves
in the gutter
and turn over rocks
buried deep in the dirt
hopin' to catch him
off guard
to trap him in a glass jar,
the way I did fireflies
when I was five.
but they all died you know.

Overpopulation*Amanda Knapp*

What has happened to the night fall?
the stars roost on the ground,
leaving the sky as blank
as a stuffed dodo's glass eyes,
whose farcical grin made me snicker
on a kindergarten field trip
to the museum, chock full of charlatan
statues, busts of so many
ligaments and skin and muscles
who in reality, safely rot
deep in the ground, that I
have to wonder if there's ground
enough, but then I think of the
empty space in the air and sigh,
while there's still room.

Reaction Upon Your Leaving

Claire Cahoon

It wasn't until I passed a McDonald's the other day
that I realized you were really gone.

I hadn't been to one in weeks,
maybe more.

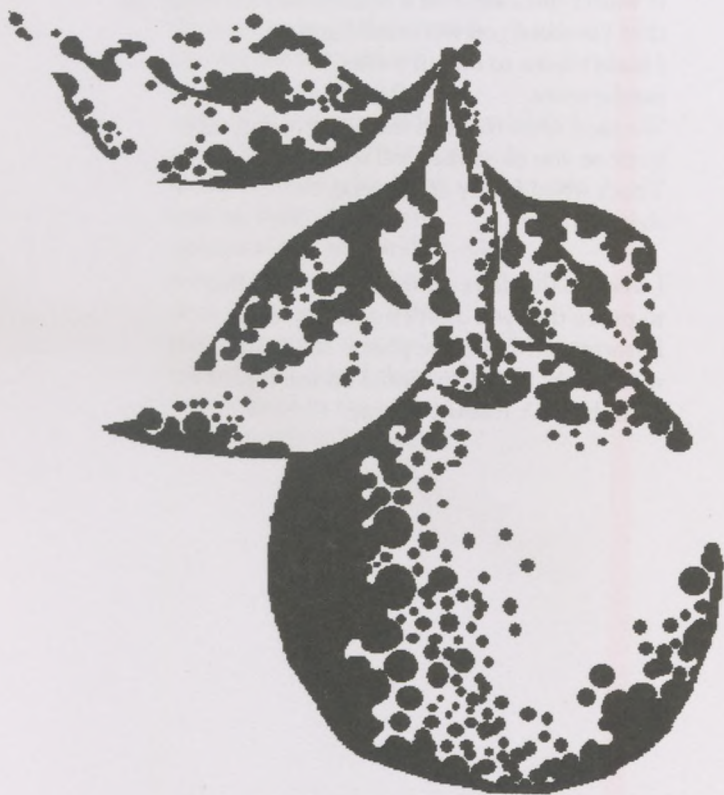
We used to go there to the point of gluttony
because you liked the food so much.

That's when I fully understood
that you'd left.

I went to the drive-thru for a cup of coffee
to prove that you didn't matter anymore.

I unwrapped the white plastic coffee stir
with the M arches indented on the top.

I still haven't thrown it away.



William Paul Davis

Virginité and Fidelity
First Place, Short Story Contest
 Teresa Moore

Aphra Behn was the first professional female writer. She was likened to a prostitute her entire life for this selling of her mind. The female mind was considered the property of her father, guardian or husband. Behn used hers to make a living. Floozy.

Kate's mother told her of the death of Kate's ex-lover's wife at the end of a phone conversation like a tidbit of gossip not quite juicy enough to be mentioned right off. Kate colored, coughed and then wrote down all the information about the viewing and the funeral. Kate's husband asked her if anything was wrong. Kate colored and coughed and said "no."

Aphra Behn became the first married prostitute, or so it is speculated since the subject has not been extensively researched. She married Mr. Behn in 1664. He was a striking man and Aphra Behn, being a prostitute, soon tired of his behavior. Consequently, she became a striking woman; perhaps the first but there is no way to know since this subject has not been extensively researched.

If one was to imagine oneself a virgin – a true virgin, a completely pure virgin, he or she must imagine a life without imagining. A life without imagining is death. Death is sterile gauze and stainless steel, hairspray for the hypoallergenic, a lack of virus and bacteria and bugs. In death there is no cause of death. In fact, it is the only place where one does not fear contracting a cause of death.

Kate's parents met her at the airport. Kate's mother did not like the airport as that it had much confusion, what with all the people and ports and flights and departures and luggage. So really only Kate's father picked her up at the airport, and her mother sent regards from her armchair at home. Kate's father would not wish to force Kate's mother to face the confusion that would in turn force her to have to at least attempt to understand the confusion and this of course would require thinking. And this Kate's father did not wish to encourage, and Kate's mother did not wish to pursue.

Kate's parents had disliked Kate's ex-lover. They thought he was the sort of man that might not treat their daughter with the respect she deserved. What if he introduced her to unorthodox, demeaning sexual positions? What if he left her to her own devices for weeks at a time? They whispered that Kate's ex-love was a rover and since she had met him, Kate had been spending entirely too much time by herself, doing exactly as she pleased.

Aphra Behn's parents were relieved when their daughter married a respectable merchant. They were certain that he would soon impregnate her and this would keep their little Aphra from spending all that time alone, doing whatever she pleased. Aphra Behn's mother and father sighed with relief after the wedding; there was nothing left to worry about – at least not for them, since their little Aphra was now Mr. Behn's responsibility.

Kate stood at the edge of death. It had a lush, well-kept lawn, pruned trees and a wrought-iron fence. The headstones threw clear-cut shadows across the lawn. Quite charming, fetching really. Yet, Kate knew it was not really death because a mosquito was sitting on her arm, sucking her blood. It is a well-known fact that malaria can be contracted from *plasmodium salciparum*, and here was one sitting on her arm. Moreover, Kate had arrived at this death by means of an airplane, and, as everyone knows, airplanes are capable of technical problems that lead to crashes and can also be high jacked by terrorists and flown into large buildings. Really, there were too many causes of death for this to be death.

Aphra Behn's husband always knew what and where his wife was at every moment of their life together. Luckily, he died a year after their marriage without having produced an heir. Aphra Behn was resurrected. She mourned her husband's death alone, doing exactly as she pleased.

Kate's husband called Kate at her parents' house. Upon hearing that Kate had not returned home from a funeral that had begun eight hours earlier, Kate's husband felt confused. It had been over ten years since he hadn't known where his wife was, whom she was with and what she was doing. He felt more annoyed and more lost than anything until his imagination began whispering ideas of crimes and catastrophes that could have injured Kate. Thankfully, he was not a virgin.

Kate had told her husband that she had to hurry to her hometown because one of her friends from high school had died. She did not mention that the deceased was her ex-lover's wife and that she had really only met her once and then was not friendly or comfortable in her presence seeing as how Kate's ex-lover, who was Kate's (not so much) friend's current lover, was present at the time. Kate's ex-lover had been master of ceremonies at their meeting and he had been neither friendly nor comfortable either. Really, if it all might be said purely and virginally, the deceased that Kate told her husband was her good friend disliked Kate and Kate in turn disliked her.

Kate's husband did not want to cook that evening. He took his and Kate's three children to a fast food restaurant, purchasing three orders of chicken nuggets and one specialty hamburger, minus the pickles. He told the children that on average, Americans pay one dollar for every 27 cents worth of food they get at a fast food restaurant. He said this because Kate was not there to say it. She had told him earlier that week while plucking her eyebrows. Kate's husband then told the children that they were eating somewhere around four dollars and fifty cents worth of food that he had paid something like fifteen dollars for. He did this math in his head in order to show his children that calculators are not needed and that it is important to be able to do math in your head.

Aphra Behn was not so talented in doing mental math. Instead, she spent a year or two in debtor's prison after her husband died. This particular prison forced Aphra to have more fidelity than ever before. She was unable to talk to anyone and wondered whom exactly she was practicing fidelity for. This line of internal questioning kept her from becoming a born-again virgin like many of the other inmates.

The three children stared back at Kate's husband; chewing chicken nuggets dipped in barbeque sauce, honey Dijon sauce, or no sauce at all. Kate and her husband worried about the child who used no sauce. A child who preferred no flavor was a dangerous thing. What if she made up her own sauce and this sauce was no-good scum; it would be a hard life for this child.

But the child had no intention of inventing a sauce, instead seeking the purity of none – virginity from sauce and extra flavors. Kate and her husband had not considered this option. They would have feared more for this child had they known of her virginity.

If Kate had told her husband of the death of her ex-lover's wife, she would not have been the infidel she was. But Kate did not tell her husband because the idea of being infidel intrigued her, which goes to show that she was adulterous even before attending the funeral of her ex-love's wife.

Aphra Behn believed that moonlight was the only true light. Perhaps this is why she was considered a prostitute. She claimed that she and indeed everyone only existed by moonlight, in the hours that were filled with loneliness. She came to this belief in the year after her husband's death while spying for Charles II in the Netherlands. In moonlight hours she learned the most information and felt most fearful that the letters she was sending the king, written in daylight, weren't true.

Kate's ex-love's giant eyes, the ones that had stared at her in half-moons as he pressed his forehead to hers and hummed the theme to *The Twilight Zone* years ago, were now full moons. Full moons on a rainy night without clouds – or rather the clouds were below the rain – or rather the clouds were a white tissue that Kate held up to his full moons to absorb his tears.

Kate had told her parents that she had a sudden business conference near her hometown. She explained that they chose the rural setting in order to allow the employees to focus on the work at hand rather than be distracted by bars and nightclubs and prostitutes on the corner. Her mother told her about her brother who had recently passed kidney stones. She promised to air out a room.

Standing over a grave with one's ex-love can be quite awkward. When one stands over the grave of one's ex-love's wife with one's ex-love in the moonlight, comfort and ease are guaranteed. Especially if one is alone with one's ex-love with a cloud of tissues to catch the rain.

Kate and her ex-lover wandered off together and dangled their legs into the cavern of another grave. "Quite morbid, really," they giggled. He chivalrously jumped in to fetch her shoe when it fell off her foot, holding it like a glass slipper. He offered to be a prince, but Kate saw that he was just the prince's servant.

Kate's ex-love had found that it is quite easy to forget the death of one's wife if one pretends that he is living in the time before he knew of the existence of that said wife. As he imagined this, he gave up any chance of being a virgin and any chance of being dead with his wife.

Aphra Behn lost her virginity when she was four. She told her cousin that his sand castle was ugly. Her mother chastised her for having a negative opinion, especially of the future family leader's sand castle. Aphra's cousin punched her in the nose and made it bleed. This nose had been likened several times to a cherry in size and shape.

Kate and her cousin played together as children. They especially liked to swing together in a position they called "the butterfly," where one would sit on the other's lap facing each other, legs spread out in both directions from the caterpillar swing. Later in life, Kate realized that this position was startlingly similar to the Kama Sutra position called "the butterfly." This discovery ended Kate's virginity as she began to imagine chasing butterflies with her cousin.

Kate's husband was tucking the three children in bed. He laid them down: one with a blanket with satin edges, one with a generic stuffed bear called "Heart Bear" and one with a cardboard Golden Book. This third child dutifully filed the book onto her nightstand. She had no need for an object to cling to for she did not imagine any monsters under her bed.

Meanwhile, Kate and her ex-love found that their exuberant, death-defying mood had flown out when the full moon eclipsed the full moons of his eyes. One finds that it is not the most pleasant sensation to be sitting virtually in a grave with a full moon striking long, grotesque shadows along the smooth cut grass. Kate got goose bumps; her ex-lover decided he could hold the contents of his bladder rather than relieve himself in a nearby bush. He suggested they get drunk; Kate suggested they take another look at his wife's grave and see if she might rise from the dead.

After Kate's husband called her parents, Kate's parents began to worry. After all, that is what they had done most of their lives. However, they were slightly out of practice and soon fell asleep on the couch or Lay-Z-Boy recliner where Kate would find them the next morning.

Kate's husband, on the other hand, lay awake envisioning fiery car wrecks and bloody rapes. He did not know that his wife was sitting next to a grave with freshly mounded dirt, begging for her ex-love's wife's soul to be revealed to her and her ex-love. Nor did he dream his wife could or would be so positioned, especially considering that both she and her ex-lover were completely sober.

Kate was rather surprised herself. She had not imagined that she could lie to both her parents and her husband so she could make an unexpected visit to her hometown to go to the funeral of her ex-love's wife. She had not imagined she could be so audacious as to actually appear at the funeral uninvited, especially to the funeral of her ex-love's (more) current love. She was quite startled that she had then spoken to her ex-lover, indeed sought him out alone after the funeral and held him while he sobbed. She had not expected him to so readily accept her comfort, nor to show so much of the weakness he had tried to hide from her decades ago. And now she was giddily shocked that she was able to comfort and heal her ex-love's broken heart (when no one else could), especially as that his heart was not broken over her.

Aphra Behn began to publish her work in 1669. She did so because she had let a soldier at the prison read one of her stories. As a result, he had refused to give her dinner the next day and told the other soldiers that she was a bitch. Aphra Behn was satisfied and surprised. She had not imagined that her writing could affect a man. She had never imagined that something she wrote could make a person feel enough to hate her. She had not dreamed that her words could inspire cruelty, especially as that she had written a humorous story.

Kate dropped her ex-lover off at his house as dawn broke. He leaned over the seat and gave her an awkwardly shaped hug. Someone stared out the screen door, wondering if the new widower already had a mistress. This someone asked Kate's ex-lover who had dropped him off. Kate heard him reply "Anna's ghost," Anna being his dead wife.

Kate thought this reply quite intriguing for if she were a ghost that would mean she was in fact dead. But she knew she was not dead for the mosquito that she had noticed sucking her blood the day before had left an itchy, red mark on her forearm. This mark had been joined by many similar ones throughout the night, confirming that Kate had been alive all night. All that time she had spent in the graveyard with her ex-love had been real for couldn't any of these itchy, red marks be the beginning of malaria?

Perhaps he had meant that Anna's ghost was Kate rather than Kate was Anna's ghost. Had Anna's ghost become Kate while she and her ex-lover had keened and wailed over her grave, purging their grief? Kate thought that this was it, that Anna's ghost was Kate. And if this was true then her ex-lover was not necessarily her ex-lover. For was not Anna's ghost his current lover? Thus, if Anna's ghost was Kate, then Kate was her ex-lover's current lover.

Kate's husband lay awake envisioning fiery car wrecks and bloody rapes. He did not realize that the lover of his wife's ex-lover had become his wife through a strange séance in a graveyard. If he had realized, he would have lain awake longer with more fear. But as he did not fear his daughter's startling virginity, so he did not fear his wife's infidelity, both of which would never be realized as virginity or infidelity to anyone but Aphra Behn.

Kate's father dropped her off at the airport the next morning. He wondered how Kate could have such a glow after being up all night. He felt the same unease he had years ago when Kate had started to date her ex-love. Indeed, Kate hadn't felt so alive since that time. She ignored her father's warning about time and insisted on stopping at a bookstand in the airport. There, amongst the virgin bestsellers was *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn. Kate bought it because it sounded exotic. Halfway through the flight and the book, she turned to the passenger next to her, a balding man in a Hawaiian shirt. They began to talk of Aphra Behn's infidelity.

Maw-maws*Allison Barrett*

She asked me for a cookie
 when I walk into her room.
 She sits on the bed, half naked,
 pendulous breasts rest
 on the flat band
 of stomach, hugged
 by the tired elastic
 of her polyester underwear,
 an elderly Venus of Willendorf,
 fragile as an insect
 from her glasses folded
 on the dresser.

Her sense of smell deadened
 by decades of cigarettes,
 she doesn't realize that the sharp
 scent of urine crouches
 in her sheets.
 How do we tell her,

this woman whose red fingernails
 once clinked on a glass
 of mint tea
 while we played Rummikube
 on her deck?
 I didn't mind fetching
 her lighter then;
 those skinny Eves
 in the pastel pack were
 so pretty, and she smoked
 them with a pinkie in the air,
 slouching back in her chair,
 legs crossed, like a film
 noir bombshell.

They made her voice husky
 for answering the phone at
 Rina of Italy's Hair salon,
 where she worked just for fun.
 She was *worldly*,
 had a map in her bonus room
 with red pins stuck all over
 the Caribbean to mark
 the cruises
 she'd been on.

All of this is gone now.
 I hand her the cookie, but we
 both wish it was a cigarette

numbered among the lucky

Julie Kirsch

Where the river hammers the shore
I stand on the better side
of fortunate,
Can burrow into a warm
cranberry colored coat,
tighten a hood to muffle moans of the wind,
reminders of the souls
cold on the other side.

Empty branches clutter like loose shingles
or clap like windowless shutters;
weathered hands build fires as
blank eyes stare,
blind to colors
other than their brown mud floors and
pale ashy skin.
For years, their hungry bodies
devoured hope from the inside out,
left naked hurt exposed
to beat painfully
where hearts belong.

Their porous bones soak up the cold;
saddened
my steps take me home,
where numbered among the lucky
I crawl under blankets
chillingly aware of the ease
which my good fortune
could crumble
into the ash
of a colorless life

Ms. Tammy Burtenshaw*Ladan Ali Osman*

A blond lady from the townhouse
Across the cracked stretch of pavement
Sat on her front steps.
Drunk as hell
Beer bottles littered
Around her bony ankles.

She didn't notice
Her daughter fell off the steps.

She was screaming "niggers!"
At the kids coming
Around the block
And couldn't hear her daughter
Crying out for her black daddy.

Death of a Proletariat*Jason Carney*

I got kicked out of heaven
For bringing God
Black coffee.
He wanted cream.
I dropped catsup
On my silk robe
From my celestial hot dog,
And they rolled their eyes.
They were pissed
When I said
Laughing
My halo looked like shit.
I threw a harp.
The bastards.

Carnal Knowledge—age 10*Anna Damico*

Barbie was no longer safe.
Rocker Ken must have been drunk
when he came home and beat her,
threatened her like all small
men do:

Don't make me hurt you, bitch
I swear I'll kill you if you scream
Now shut up and get what's coming to you

Then, his stiff plastic hand groped
her unmoving breasts as she
whimpered in a voice that was
small and young like my own.

Ken's non-existent penis dug in
between her shiny plastic thighs
and scraped against her dry, resistant
flesh. He pressed his weightless
weight against her as he whispered
thickly into her ear:

Yeah, you know you like this, baby
You wouldn't dress this way if you didn't
You want more, too, don't you

She could only cry dry tears on
my carpet as I moved her hands
to cover her face that
smiled like a supermodel.

Mt. Liberty
Second Place, Personal Essay Contest
Debra Van Schoyck-Gerber

For almost thirty years I have lived on the outskirts of the tiny town of Mt. Liberty. In truth it is probably like every other little town in the Midwest, but for me, as a preteen in the seventies, it was the greatest place in the world. My dad always said it was one of those places that if you blinked twice you would miss it, which was more than just a figure of speech. The corporation, line to line down State Routes 36 and 3, measures a little over five-tenths of a mile. If you travel to the east about six miles you will find Mount Vernon, which in comparison to Mt. Liberty is a huge and modern place. To the west about six miles is Centerburg. As a kid, I was fascinated by Centerburg's claim to fame as the geographical center of Ohio. I was disappointed when years later its title of geographical center was challenged. I attended school in Centerburg for a few years, but I never really spent much time there otherwise. My social life was contained within the woods, railroad tracks and creeks that surrounded the little town a mile from my home.

From one end of Mt. Liberty to the other there is a main row of houses along the north side of 36. Behind this main row are two more rows that flank both sides of an alley type of road. The main row of houses lined the major road. They sat back only a few feet from the state route, but had always been quaintly pillared by large protective trees, which lined themselves down the main drag. I never understood why, but a few years' ago, they cut all the trees down, exposing the well-worn, defenseless little white box houses to the world.

On the south side of 36 more than half of the town was made up of Gates's horse track. Mr. Gates raced Standard breed horses and this was his private track, where he exercised and trained his horses. He always kept the track meticulously mowed and maintained. Going west on the south side of 36 there were some more white box houses with one exception. The exception was a large, sadly neglected house that still maintained remnants of a past glory. It was clearly different from the much simpler and smaller boxes that dotted the road. It held a dominant appearance, which implied a once placed importance to its structure. A large porch with ornate gingerbread woodwork accented it and the windows were shaped and framed to give character. Over the years this house has been bought and sold many times with each owner trying desperately to return the aged beauty to its original state of something special.

When we first moved here about thirty years ago, it was the early seventies. The whole area was woods and farm country. The surrounding land was comprised of dairy farms and cornfields. But the main points of interests for us kids were the railroad tracks that set back, but ran parallel

with the main road, and a dry creek, which took notions from time to time to flood its banks. The places where the railroad and creek crossed were adolescent meeting spots. The shallow swimming and fishing holes created by the bridges were a kind of rural community center or playground for the farm and Liberty town kids. There was nothing fancy about these spots. Fishing was for minnows and swimming was more like wading. If we had a real wet year we would cut a grape vine loose and swing out and drop into the water. Snapping turtles were common in those days and for us kids just knowing that they lurked around created a thrill. We would sneak up on one another, give a pinch and scream, "Turtle!" We would all run out of the water as if we were being eaten alive and then laugh from the pure adrenalin that we had generated. It was an old ploy, but it worked every time.

I was never really one of the farm or Liberty kids. Not really. We were considered city people, outsiders, who had moved into the area. In those days new houses didn't pop up left and right on someone's newly dismembered farm. The people who moved into the area either bought an old farm house as a fixer upper, or a little white box in town, or one of the few semi modern houses that already stood on a small plots of land. The rumors were that these places were built on land that a farmer would sell to make ends meet in bad years. There were no housing developments. Just a house here and there usually on the corner of someone's place. Where you lived was your place. If you were going to see a neighbor you said, "I am heading over to Mooney's place" and everyone knew who and where it was. New folks stood out like a sore thumb and the locals made it their business to learn what they could about you. "Aren't you the folks that moved onto the corner of Mooney's place?" they would say filled with friendly interest. The place you bought didn't become your place. Instead, you were labeled by where you were from. We were called the "Worthington people on the corner of Mooney's farm."

When I was a kid and on into adulthood Mr. Mooney was the greatest neighbor and the nicest person I have ever met. To a young girl he seemed bigger than life. He had a "good old boy" demeanor with just enough gruffness to make him intimidating. His eyes were piercing and his smile was more of a grin. In those days, the Mooney name carried a lot of weight. I was told, when we first moved here, that you could spit in any direction and would more than likely hit a Mooney brother farm and since the Mooney farm surrounded our place I believed every word. Mr. Mooney had three kids, but they were either several years older or younger than I, so we didn't socialize much. His two older children Cathy and Linda were the undisputed beauties of the area, and Mike was the baby. A little pudgy, but he had all the finest characteristics of his father. I never really knew Mrs. Mooney very well, but she always held a certain fascination for me. Even though she was probably in her late forties, she was a beauty who I thought possessed all the charm of royalty, and for a

long time I truly believed that one-day we would learn she was really a princess from some far off kingdom. She could have been a local girl, I suppose, but she lacked the sturdy coarseness that shadowed the frames of the working farm wives who milked the cows, sold the tractors, cleaned the barns, worked in the fields and cared for the children all at the same time. The Lowell Mooney's didn't have cows or crops. They had horses, a lumber mill, and Mr. Mooney worked a full time job in Mt. Vernon. From what I knew he left the cows and farming to his brothers.

We soon learned that the main focal point of Mt. Liberty was the little market that sits dead center among the little white boxes. In the seventies and early eighties, "Shirley's Meats and Vegetables," Slash, "Marathon Gas Station" was the heartbeat of this little town. Most folks just called it "Shirley's" or "Shirley's Market." The small somewhat dirty stucco building had an antiquated feel to it, even then. Out front sat two old gas pumps with bits of rust at the bottoms. Between them stood a flimsy rack of oil under a container of window cleaner. There was a large sign that said Marathon with a big "M" at the top and an American flag hung on a pole by the open sign in the window.

Inside was a small meat counter that had bacon, hamburger, sausages and a few other cuts of meats. Depending on the season there were also fresh vegetables: corn, green peppers, onions, green beans, and cucumbers. If we came in during the early morning, when the market first opened, the air was filled with the smell of bleach or some cleaning fluid from Shirley's mopping, but later in the day it was as though we were walking into someone's kitchen because Shirley always had something cooking. Lunch and supper for Shirley Jouner's family usually sat simmering in a large crock-pot or electric skillet in a remote corner, but the stewing meats and vegetables filled the little market with a homey feel.

Shirley Jouner and her husband Tom owned and ran the place. She was a large friendly woman who always seemed to have dark circles under her eyes, which added to her tired expression. Tom, who was also large, countered his wife's calm complacency with an air of wild abandon. He always had some deal in the works, to which he gave feverous attention. They had two boys Herb and Tim, who by no surprise were also large, but Herb carried his size in a way that was more flattering than obese. His younger brother Tim was not so lucky. He was more round and had a baby face that never really matured. He was artistic and intelligent with eyes that were soft and kind, but kids being kids were cruel and never let him escape from an easy tease.

Shirley and Tom were masters at learning information, mainly by giving as much as they got. They were very open about any topic including themselves. You immediately felt you had known them forever. They were quick to bring you up to speed on the town, the people and any juicy gossip that was going around. They knew about fires, car

crashes, why the sheriff was at someone's house, who had lost their job and why, as well as, whose place was for sale. But their greatest gift was getting to know the new people in the area. They disarmed any defenses by simply being themselves. If you didn't attend one of the two churches or have a post office box in town, the market was where you met your neighbors. Most purchases that were made at the market weren't made so much from the need of things. Prices were cheaper in Centerburg and Mount Vernon, but the Market had a sort of social networking that took place. You were connected to each other and the community there. We learned about each other and sometimes about ourselves, but soon after Tom and Shirley sold the place, folks drifted away.

The town itself hasn't really changed much in thirty years. The Market is now just the market. The new owners removed the gas pumps and got a liquor license. The two churches and the post office are still here, but there are no new businesses. The real change is in the surrounding area. Many of the farms have been lost to development. Road front property has been cut into five-acre lots and the woods have been either bulldozed or lumbered out. Today we don't worry or even care about who has moved into the area, mainly because they are coming in too great a number to keep up. I still find myself referring to people as the Columbus or Powell people, but the "places" are no longer the same.



Rachel Fout

She Only Sings

-after John Everett Millais' Ophelia (1852)

Sarah Grooms

The flower bush whimpers
as pure, clean water hums to her,
beckons her to join the snails
and clams at the murky bottom
while her delicate, lacy dress
balloons and holds her for a moment
at the surface; a gauzy parachute
steadily leaking.

Flowers for dead Polonius
hover over her in a quilt that holds
no warmth. Her hair spreads
like ink from a pen dipped
in water. Lips parted
just enough for lyrical murmurs
and moist air to slip out.
She will sing even as her lungs
fill with water.

Her eyes hold nothing.
She cannot see the glowing, green
banks and the leafy canopy with deep
blue sky behind it. She will not see
the water as it covers her irises, filling
her up and weighing
her down. Ophelia
will sink like a wind abandoned
streamer, fluttering to the ground
to settle in the cool,
silent stream.

The Epiphany of Finally Growing into my Wings

Julie Kirsch

Finally, I found a pair of wings that fit—
strappy silver platform sandals
 bands flowing around bony curves of feet,
pillars of flashy confidence, and

in my shoes I am
a glimmering, silvery goddess
 shimmery blade of light,
decadent woman, who buys shoes I wear

nearly never, but that's not the point.
I am self made Cinderella, and what matters
 is that I twisted away from the safety net
and leapt into myself,

bought shoes utterly not me, yet totally mine,
and after falling for a while
 managed to catch a friendly breeze
then settle down into sunny sand

which liquefied under my feet because I
am living lightning, crackling
 from the epiphany
of finally growing into my wings.

The Lease*Anna Damico*

She leaves at 9:30.

I wake across town at
10 o'clock and dress modest
but attractive thinking of
what you like:
pink, spaghetti straps, long hair.

I drive with a small butterfly
irritating my stomach,
its wings brushing at my conscience
leaving guilt marks on my thoughts.

Twenty minutes later,
I'm in your arms, in her house,
in the bed you share. The love
we make is sweet
despite its bitter flavor.

Afterwards
you tell me
"In another month
we'll have to move anyway.
I can be with you
when I can get my own place."

Hours later she trudges
through the front door
to find us playing
video games. We look up
at her and she looks back
unsuspecting.

She puts her arms around you
and jealousy kindles inside me,
so I turn, stare at the television
and wait for her lease to be up.

What My Mother Chose*Third Place, Poetry Contest**Sarah Grooms*

She greets daylight with a toasted bagel
and the rhythmic clank of spoon against glass
as Ovaltine islands
erode into milk.

If life allowed, she could
read her way through libraries
at speeds only rivaled by NASA rockets.

In her floral print, cotton shirt
she shuffles around our six-room
house to avoid having to limp
because she is on a mission to perfect pie crust; sew
the straightest seam.

While hugging her I can see
glints of aborted plans made before
her first nine months. She wanted
to study in England, see the castles
and drink tea in hand-painted
china. She wanted to continue English
country dancing after her womb
shrunk a second time.

Instead she smiled and made us ham sandwiches
and took us to Girl Scouts meetings. And she read to us,
her smooth, charcoal-gray voice compelling
princesses to dance and dogs
to talk as she slid the thin pages
underneath her thumbnail, each page
marked with its indentations.

Shower Time*Rob O'Donnell*

The power went off
in a windowless bathroom
while the steam filled your
ears with a blanket of wet.
All sounds meshed together,
Dripping and dropping and
Splishing and splashing.
The drops and bubbles sang
with the scents and sensations
of rivers on your skin.
Embrace the black heavy air
And listen to whispers
Of water as it beckons you
To follow, abandon the close
Comfort of towels and clothes
And lights and home.

The Dust of the Earth
Second Place, Short Story Contest
Carissa Lofredo

I have never broken a single bone in my body. I have never risked it. Trees never held much allure for me, stiffly erect and far too rough as it were. I never had any boy neighbors to roughhouse with either. Instead, I preferred to sit quietly and read, and no one ever broke a bone doing that. I am sitting on the back porch, reading *The Grapes of Wrath*. I lean back, swinging one foot back and forth, spreading my toes like a tree frog. My dad is sleeping on the hammock, hair the silver of bleached wheat. In the distance, eighty Hereford cattle graze on thirty acres; lowing voices and swishing tails roam freely over the back hill. The other fifteen acres enclose the barn, house, garage, and various sheds.

I wiggle my toes in the dirt, mouse-like, to attract a passing cat. It ignores me, tail held straight out behind. I drop my book in the dust of the porch and stand up, dizzy for a moment in the noon heat. Dad snores, comfortable in the shade of the oak trees. It is summer, but school is out for me—I am ten years old.

My mom calls me abruptly from inside the house. I know it is dusky but still stifling in there, just as it is oppressive out here. I hesitate and decide to risk pretending that I do not hear her. The cat skitters sideways as I hop quietly off the porch, overlooking my mother and sneaking past my father. Fifty feet separate me from the barn. My mother calls out again in a rusty voice like a glass grinding on glass. I am almost in the open mouth of the barn when my father awakes. I turn back at the sound of his voice, as I always do. He is not angry, but instead his voice is thick with hot sun, dry air, and sleep. He tells me, "Girl, go help your mother! Where do you think you're going?"

I answer, "Nowhere, Dad. I just didn't hear her." I amble back toward the porch. *The Grapes of Wrath* sits spine-up on the floorboards, already gathering a fleecing of dust. I pick it up. The pages are warm. My mother calls out again, and I put the book under my arm, push in on the screen door, and enter the house.

In here it is still summer as one would expect, but it is an under-the-porch kind of summer. I am reminded of the time four years ago when one of our dogs had a litter of pups under the big porch. Since I was the smallest, I had to climb under there and get them all out when the bitch was gone. The air was thick and dusty—the result of years jailed in without sunshine. It smelled of animal droppings and rotting vegetation. When I reached the far corner where the dog's nest was, I clicked on my flashlight and then vomited on the ground in front of me. Something had gotten to the pups long before I had, and they were only a heap of fur and brittle bone. I scrambled out of there backwards as quickly as I could.

In our house, all of the blinds are pulled down and have been for so long that opening them seems almost like a dream. My mother likes it dark with her illness; she can sleep better. (Dad explained cancer to me in the most

grotesque way—telling me how “it” is eating my mom from the inside and lives in her bones. I am not sure why he chose these words, though I do not think he meant them to sound as they did.) I long to cry at her that I do not trust the dark, that I never could.

Her room is just behind the kitchen—why anyone would build a room behind a kitchen I cannot say, but there it is. My mother is stretched out on the bed. She cannot climb the stairs anymore, so we made this room hers a month ago.

She is just calling out again when I come in. Her mouth, caught in mid-word, hangs open like a knothole in the side of the barn. I imagine, strangely, the beam of sunlight that you would see on the inside—the sun coming through a knothole.

Mom closes her mouth, trapping the cancer deep inside. All she wants is a glass of water. I take the glass from the nightstand, letting my eyes sweep across her form under the blankets on the bed. I can see the bones of her legs and knees clearly, even under the layers—they look strong enough but I know they are hollow and delicate. I turn away, dizzy by the heat of the room and my thoughts, and I cross into the kitchen. I fill the glass methodically from the tap, and return it to the bedside. My mother does not say a word, only looks at me and then smiles faintly. I smile back, swallow hard once and then back quickly out of the room, shutting the door after me.

Filling my mom's glass makes me desire a glass for myself. I reach for a glass in the cupboard, straining on my tiptoes to reach a tall one on the upper shelf. My fingers brush it, and it completes a shallow spin off the edge of the shelf. The crash is deafening in my dead house. I see the shards slide across the floor to settle in the darkest corners, where they will hide menacingly. I know I will not find every broken piece.

I head for the closet and get a broom and dustpan. I almost kneel but then I realize that I cannot see where the glass is lying. I sweep blindly, covering most of the area of the floor. When I have a dustpan full of an amount of debris that seems to be equal to a drinking glass, I head for the porch door. I blink for a moment in the sunlight; my hands are outstretched in front me, holding the broom and the dustpan. I cannot remember the sun being so bright—I never do when I leave the house. I cross the porch but in my momentary blindness, I miss the loose floorboard. All at once, I am lying on my side on the bottom step of the porch. There is a pain in my wrist I have never felt before—it feels like I am being eaten alive. Tears come, and my dad hears me from the other side of the porch. I know my wrist is shattered from the impact with the hard, dry ground.

Of course what I miss the least is the darkness. It is strange to see the house so bright and full of light. The sunlight falls in thick shafts through the dusty windows now, although it has not made the rooms unbearably hot. My

wrist is locked rigidly in plaster, but I am able to tear down the blinds myself. I never hear my mom complain; I do not know what she thinks. Surely she has noticed the thin band of light glowing and growing under her door.

My dad is sleeping on the porch again, and he does not awaken when I carry an armload of material down to the street to be thrown away. When I return, I pick up my copy of *The Grapes of Wrath*. There does not seem to be much else to do, with all the chores done. I can already feel the dust collecting on my skin like the ashes of the dead. It is going to be another hot day.

Slow-Motion Struggle*Allison Barrett*

Sleep, with his
tousled hair
and drooping eyelids,
smothers me
in soft pillows
and flings stars
at the ceiling.

The stalwart print
of my textbook
wobbles,
trickling down the page
like rain
on windowpanes.

My protests morph
into a yawn.

He shoves the moon
in my mouth,
spills night
in my eyes,
and tucks me in.

Mid-November Meteor Shower

Julie Kirsch

We searched for a patch of available darkness,
sought the gold streaks of meteor tails
that stretched across the sky.

Headlights vanished;
midnight surrounded the car;
drifted
 through windows;
clogged the throats of would-be speakers
with the heady smell
 of rotted leaves and autumn dying.

We waited,
 shivered,
and savored our wishes
for shooting stars and any magic
possible
 to miracle seekers.

Fluorescent city lights
 brightened the horizon;
the halo grew lighter, taller
as nightlights and streetlamps pushed
 against the darkness.

The haze devoured
our little patch of dark and silent sky,
cast its effects deep into
 the country field we stood in,
reflected the silvery puff
of disappointed breathing
 as nothing worth wasting a wish on
could be seen
against the sky.

Dream Talk with Grandpa Skeeter
-Leeds, England

First Place, Poetry Contest
Becca Rossiter

Four thousand
 miles from Ohio, you
 visit me, looming like Lazarus.
 In my dream, you tell me
 to get over myself, donning the same
 red flannel, offering up
 the same
 dusty chuckle. You are alive
 as breath against my hand,
 as the morning I stood
 in my purple
 sundress, watched you kiss
 cigarettes cradled by thick,
 yellow knuckles.

The glint of arrowheads scavenged
 from deeply furrowed fields and
 your pink and black Ford sleeping
 in its garage cocoon: I remember.

I remember hamburgers cussing
 drops of hot grease, crass jokes
 thrown with the *cluck*
 of Ma's tongue. You were
 the factory worker who
 read Voltaire—*One great use*
of words
is to hide our thoughts...

Shocks of white
 hair and wave-like, warm
 muscles:

I was scared of you then and your
 deep, tickling grip. Now,
 you are as faded
 as the bluebird that stained
 your upper arm, a Navy
 dare.

I came to your grave
 once, trudged through the wet
 April grass to show off my own
 tattoo, hoped
 you'd grin and nod somewhere
 beneath the white peonies.
All is for the best in the best of all
possible worlds...



Jon Juravich

