

# ABSENCE

SPRING 2006

VOLUME 8

NUMBER 1



That's the way to live

Dr. Russ Ciolli



# ABSENCE

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PENN STATE MCKEESPORT'S  
LITERARY AND ARTS MAGAZINE

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VOLUME 8 // NUMBER 1

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Penn State McKeesport

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VOLUME 8, No. 1 // SPRING, 2006

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## EDITORIAL STAFF

Jonathan Sease -- Editor-in-Chief  
Benjamin Olcott -- Staff Editor  
Rajiv Raja -- Staff Editor  
Steve Zwolinski -- Staff Editor

## FACULTY ADVISORS

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Marissa Sinisi

# MISSION STATEMENT

*Absence* is committed to the publication of a high-quality literary and arts magazine for the Penn State McKeesport community. It is our goal to provide all students, faculty, staff, and alumni with a venue for their creative endeavors and to generate interest in the creative arts in the wider community.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES & EDITORIAL POLICIES

Eligibility for publication in *Absence* is open to students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Penn State McKeesport. Poetry, fiction, non-fiction & creative non-fiction, visual arts, and photography will be accepted for consideration by the student editors. Previously published works will not be considered for publication in *Absence*. Upon publication, all rights revert to authors; however, *Absence* reserves the right to republish all materials electronically and to use materials published in the magazine to fund publication of the magazine. The preferred means of submission is by email attachment; send to: <ctmro@psu.edu>. A blind-review process is employed by the student editorial staff of *Absence* to ensure that all submissions are judged solely on their artistic merit. All submissions are made to a faculty advisor, who removes all information linking each submission to its author before turning it over to the student editorial staff for review. Final publication prerogative rests solely with the Editor-in-Chief.

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## Table of Contents

Mission Statement; Submission Guidelines & Editorial Policies // 5

A Note from the Editor-in-Chief // 10

Geoffrey J. Pashel

***Winner, The Chancellor's Prize for Best Visual Art***

Wyoming // Back Cover

Kellie Lynn Mooney

***Winner, The Chancellor's Prize for Best Literary Art***

Angry Mirror // 11

Dion Harris

***Second Place, The Chancellor's Prize for Visual Art***

Untitled // 42

Mark Curcio

***Second Place, The Chancellor's Prize for Literary Art***

When // 29

Jonathan Sima, Senior, Woodland Hills High School

***Winner, Best High School Submission Scholarship***

The Ungratefully Dead Artist // 56-57

Unseen Colors // 58

Tahirah D. Abdullah

A Love Supreme // 39

Tricia Andriso

Sonnet Suicide // 36

Glenn Beech

Directions // 46

Rain // 49

Darell Bell

The Beautiful Self // 32-33

Maybe Giving Up is What You Do // 37

Joslyn Carter

A distancia nosotros estamos cerca // 29

Shenaz Choudhury

Joy of Life // 28

Dr. Russ Ciolli

That's the way to live // Front Cover

Mark Curcio

HER // 12-16

A New Beginning // 26-27

Writelife // 44-45

Courtney Bryon Ely-Denberg

My Heart Burns // 36

LITURGY // 40-41

Naimah Gloster

Life's Purpose // 33

Bill Johnson

Memories // 30

And tonight we'll paint this town red . . . // 31

Shrug tall cause we dont see . . . // 31

And we progress . . . // 31

Scale the Sun // 53

Amy Nath

Untitled // 63 [Inside Back Cover]

Leah Pelkey

Lost Land of Z // 54

Awaiting Goodbye // 54

Le Sans Ramsey

Flirtatious // 17

Hope Don't Live Here // 18

Angel // 19

Blue Rose // 20

Graffitied Life // 34-35

Jonathan Sease

Hyper Metal v3.o.XX // 38

Grenade v3.o.XX // 43

Thomas M Sutherland

Meaning of True Love // 21-22

Susanne Tindall

Birthdays // 24

Earth's Revenge // 24

James Tuttle

Towanda // 2 [Inside Front Cover]

Untitled // 25

Untitled // 48

Wet Rose // 50

Untitled // 55

Doretta Lonnett Whalen, PhD

Old Dreams: New Music // 51-52

Steve Zwolinski

Hey, The Other Guys Do It, Too // 23

My Brother // 47

Acknowledgements // 62

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I just want to say that I enjoyed work on this year's edition of *Absence: Penn State McKeesport's Literary and Art Magazine*. I'd hate to say this but I originally thought this year *Absence* wouldn't get published due to a slight lack of manpower, but I have been wrong before and this is no exception. I'd like to thank the entire staff who all helped make this possible. I hope that next year, *Absence* continues stronger than ever.

Sometimes I thought, "Why did I join?" but then I said to myself, "I wanted to express this creativity that I have inside." But this magazine isn't just about me; it is about all of us here at Penn State McKeesport desiring to showcase their talents in the literary and visual arts. I encourage all you who read this to pick up your pencil and some paper and start writing, to pick up that brush and a canvas and start painting, and to pick up that camera and some film and start photographing.

Thank you all for your support and hopefully *Absence* will continue to flourish for years to come.

Jonathan Sease, Editor-in-Chief

**Kellie Lynn Mooney**

***Winner, The Chancellor's Prize for Best Literary Art***

**Angry Mirror**

You think you know me,  
But you have no idea.  
Take a guess,  
Who do you think I am?  
If you know me so well,  
Why can't you answer me?  
You look at me everyday,  
Why don't you know me?  
You're very cynical of me,  
You try to perfect me everyday.  
How can you be so disparaging,  
If you have no idea who I am?  
You always talk to me,  
But your words are never said with care.

Just turn around,  
And walk away,  
You're always good at that.  
Don't look at me anymore;  
You only look at the outside.  
I won't allow you to see inside,  
I don't want you to know anymore.  
What's that? Now you care?  
I wouldn't dare share myself with you;  
You're not worth my time.  
Don't look at me!  
I thought I said turn around!  
Don't look at me!  
I can only show your reflection.  
I hate you!  
. . . Stupid mirror.

## Mark Curcio

### HER

“Lay me here,  
Down to rest,  
Away from this world,  
The world that I detest.”

As I read those words in my journal, I knew that my love for things was in jeopardy. That entry was yesterday, and today, I didn't know how I felt, so I left my journal blank and headed to school, not expecting anything drastic to happen. But I was wrong. I had to stay strong, because that day lasted so long . . .

The bus ride to school was painful because I knew who would be waiting for me there. Her. She would be there and I had to maintain myself and work with the cards I'd been dealt. Who's "her" you ask? Well, there's this girl who walked into my life this year. As soon as I saw her eyes for the first time, she was beautiful and I had to go meet her. But, being me, I was afraid to. I guess whenever I saw her, my heart turned inside out. I sweated, and didn't know what to say. It's already 6 months into school, and I still haven't said one word to her. I did have a couple moments with her though. The 2<sup>nd</sup> week of school, she dropped her books in the hall and I picked them up for her. She said, "thanks," but me being shy, I didn't say anything back and went to my next class. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of school, these boys were picking on her because she got good grades. So, after school, I confronted them and told them to leave her alone. Since then, I haven't seen them do anything. And then last week I had an excellent chance to talk to her because our eyes met but, it figures, the bell rung as soon as a syllable was on the tip of my tongue urging to come out. All those close chances and all I had were short glances. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing at all, I guess.

I pulled out my journal, opened it to today, took out my pen and tried to write something. But the thoughts in my head had problems traveling to my hand and suddenly my body felt like sand. So bad that I couldn't stand it. As I was about to write something, all of a sudden, the blank ink of my life dripped from my pen, and onto the paper like a splash from a dripping faucet. There was now a huge ink spot on my paper, but I tried to ignore it and starting writing. But I was so tired that I just ripped the page out and threw it out the window. I said calmly to myself so no one would know, "Off to school I go, and so far, what a show . . ."

Period 1 was a drag, period 2 was too, period 3 was in a bag, and period 4, everything said was stuff I already knew. 5<sup>th</sup> period was a study hall, so I took out my favorite book, "Poetry within us" and started reading some of the passages. I left off at a poem entitled "Imagine If," so I gathered my thoughts together and read it to myself:

"Imagine if eyes were ugly,  
    Skies showed pain,  
    Imagine if lies were never real,  
    And happiness was shown with rain.  
Imagine if peace was a thing of the past,  
    See how the future would last,  
And imagine if the end was tomorrow,  
    Would there even be sorrow?"

I looked up after reading that, saw all the lights, my classmates, even my teacher up front pretending he was awake. I knew that that poem meant something, but I wasn't sure. So I closed my eyes, went into a calm state, and dreamt about what it could mean. But then another poem suddenly was being told in my head. In my dreams . . .

"Don't let love get away,  
    Not just one day,  
Not just one moment in the present,  
    And those feelings I hope you said,  
    Were actually meant.  
    The message has been sent,  
    I hope you have received it,  
    Conceived it,  
    Believed it,  
Because that's what love is meant to be,  
Something that only me and you can see."

Ring!! As the period bell screamed into my ear so I couldn't hear no more, I woke up, grabbed my book . . . "Where's my book?" I said calmly to myself. I had to go to lunch now and I felt like I have lost my inner self. You see, that book, I didn't buy it. That book is something that I write my work in, my thoughts in. That book was my journal. I had to find it no matter what the cost was. At lunch, my friend

Andy kept asking me, “what’s wrong,” but I just shrugged and said, “I lost it. I really lost it.” He just looked at me in a weird way, said, “I would say you did, geez!” and went back to eating his sloppy joe. The rest of the day seemed like forever, and me searching for my book kept it all together.

As 8<sup>th</sup> period came around, there was still no sign of it. But then suddenly, in the corner of my eye, I saw her walking towards me. She was so very attractive: angel blue eyes, beautiful hair, and a great smile. To myself I said, “Wait, she’s smiling at me, and she’s walking right towards me . . . Stay cool. I’m ok.” “Hi,” she said as my heart was pounding like a bass drum. It took me a while because I was lost in her eyes until I said, “Hey.” “Great start to a great conversation,” I said to myself. She then looked right at me, and said, “Yea, sorry if I scared you today, but I took your book. I was looking through it and I really like your poetry.” She smiled during those whole 2 sentences, and all I did was smile back and blush like a little kid getting paid after doing a good deed. “Anyway, here it is, and we should hang out sometime,” she said. She then lifted her right hand and in it held my life. I took it from her and said, “thank you,” and right before she was about to leave, this sudden urge came to me and out blurted something that I didn’t say, but my heart did. “What are you doing tonight?” I asked. “Nothing,” she said. “Do you want to do something with me tonight?” I asked. There was a long pause. I felt like I was in heaven asking God a question about my life and he had to pause to answer. The pause was so long that I was about to say: ok if you don’t, it’s ok. But then she smiled, looked at me straight in the eyes, started to sway back and forth like she was nervous too and said, “Sure. I would love to.” I then felt like I was in a movie during a love at first sight scene. I suddenly went from post-suicide to heaven in a matter of seconds. I ran as fast as I could to my locker, got my stuff, and ran to my bus because tonight was going to be great. Tonight was going to be heaven. Heaven at 7.

On the bus, I grabbed my journal, opened it to a blank page and started writing about my day . . .

“You feel like dirt,  
Just waiting to get hurt,  
You feel all this pain,  
And you feel like there’s nothing more to gain.  
Don’t give up,  
You’re almost there,  
It’s your life,  
And you’re the one who should care.  
From bad to good in a matter of a minute,  
You know you had to get with it.

You are there, you are ok,  
And that's all I have to say."

I walked through the door, jumped on my couch and fell asleep. I woke up to 3 blinking lights saying, "6:23." I had a date at 7:00, a date that I'd never forget, so I had to get ready. I got my shower, put on some cologne, a nice shirt and pair of pants, combed my hair and got ready for romance. Luckily for me, she lived only a few blocks away, so I thought we could go for a walk and talk and get to know each other. Nothing was going to stop me now, nothing. As I was walking, I saw something on the ground. It was that piece of crumbled up paper with the ink blot on it that I threw out the window earlier that day. I took the paper and placed it in my pocket. I did this because, for some reason, I thought I would need it . . . for memories perhaps. I kept walking and walking and looking at the clouds turning darker and darker with the sun in the background falling. It was like heaven was calling.

But then, suddenly, heaven fell and my heart fell with it. Around her house, there were police cars, and an ambulance. Behind those horrifying vehicles stood two people . . . crying. I walked up to the officer and asked him, "Officer, what happened?" He looked at me like he was about to cry and said something that made my heart suddenly fall on the floor waiting for someone to step on it. "Well, son, some girl, about your age, um, she was walking to her house, and I'm sorry to tell you this, but... she's dead. She was hit by a drunk driver. She's gone. I'm sorry." He walked away towards the giant black, deadly bag that held the person who held my heart. I paused. I then pictured her beautiful eyes and face, and then glanced at that horrifying black devil, and then in my head, her eyes shut. This was Romeo and Juliet all over again. I talked to her parents for a while and then headed back to my house because I didn't know what to think. Maybe if I commit suicide, I'll see her in heaven sooner than later. But no, suicide was not an option. I couldn't just give my life away. But how could this happen? . . . I love her.

That night, as I was looking through my yearbook, last year's yearbook, just glancing at all these people that I know, and that all mean something to me. Then, like a flash of heaven, there she was. I didn't even know her last year, but her picture was in last year's yearbook. I really wish I met her last year so I could've known her longer, and our love could've grown stronger. But, I looked at her picture, and then looked up outside to the stars and said, "God, she was beautiful, take care of her ok?" A tear started to form on my eye and flowed down my cheek. "Why God? Why her? I know I don't know her that well, and I know time could only tell. I know we just met today, but in a way, she made me happy. Why did you take her from me. . . . Whenever I thought we could someday be. I know you love her, but I loved her too. If only I could've known her better. Why her God? Why?"

I opened my journal, and then a crystal-like tear dropped and landed on the page, and flowed down. Where I caught it, I picked up my finger and there was her name. Above it said something that will remain in my heart forever. It said, quote, "I wish one day I met him, that's all I want, just that one smile when I see him, then my life would be complete." She wrote that in my journal.

I went to bed shortly after. After all the tears, after all these years with no one, I went to bed. But before I did, I took the crumbled piece of paper with the ink blot and starting writing on it. With tears on my face, and emotions all over the place, I finished the day with one last passage . . .

"Look at me one more time,  
Give me that one last special sign.  
Smile at me, and let me see,  
All of your beauty.  
I'll see you again, in the future I'm sure,  
But one thing will be a blur,  
And that is I loved her . . .  
Only her."

The End.

## Le Sans Ramsey

### Flirtatious

You look into my eyes.  
And you wonder what I'm thinking.  
You look at my lips and question the fact.  
Whether or not they taste like candy . . .

You wonder if my caramel skin tastes like its color.  
You want to explore my luscious body.  
It might be the way I swing my hips.  
Or maybe how I turn back and look at you.  
I know you want me by the look in your eyes . . .

You're close enough that I can hear your heartbeat.  
You wrap your arms around my waist.  
Planting small kisses all over my face.  
And you hold me like you never want to let go . . .

How can it be that fate brought us together?  
Is it love or could it just be communication.  
I wish I could be with you for the rest of my life.  
The only thing different with our destiny is.  
That thing all men and women do . . .

It's not hard to find out.  
What all of this is really about.  
We don't know each other; We were being *Flirtatious*.

## Le Sans Ramsey

### Hope Don't Live Here

I think I've lost my way.  
I'm on the wrong track.  
Can someone show me the way?  
Or do I have to find my way back?  
I've always tried my best.  
But no one ever notices.  
I'll soon have to put my heart to the test.  
Ignore all those who protest.  
Make things the way they're suppose to be.  
Only without changing me.  
I've been looking for wisdom.  
I've been looking for guidance.  
But all I really want is freedom.  
And for those to shower me with acceptance.  
I'm not trying to front.  
I'm not trying to be fake.  
I'm just trying to make a better place.  
Not for you, but for me.  
Obviously you can't see.  
What has really come to be.  
I am a wander, an outcast and a lethargic individual.  
How can it be as to what faith has brought to me.  
Is it because of me?  
Or the fact that I shouldn't be me?  
I really don't know.  
All I do know is that . . .  
Hope don't live here, anymore.

## Le Sans Ramsey

### Angel

I wish I had the chance to say.  
Of how I feel about you today.  
I used to say that I hate you.  
I used to never wanna be around you.  
Then something happened to us.  
To stop all of my fuss.  
I thought I might go crazy.  
That was only a maybe.  
I wanted to cry tears.  
That would hide all my fears.  
However, things don't work that way.  
So now I must be on my way.  
Before you left.  
Before you died.  
I wanted to say . . .  
That "I love you."  
I never had the chance.  
Never gave it much thought.  
But even 3 years later.  
I can't get rid of the thought.  
But I do know you're watching over me.  
Time and Time again, I wonder.  
If you were here would it still be the same?  
It doesn't matter now.  
Coz somewhere, somehow . . .  
You're watching over me.  
I love you, my *Angel*.

## Le Sans Ramsey

### Blue Rose

Tears, Tears, Tears that fall so light.  
Please don't tell the truth of my life.  
For I am just a person . . .  
Only human, nothing more, nothing less.  
It's hard to express myself.  
When others expect so much more than just myself.  
I hate being weak.  
But I cannot prove to be strong.  
Coz I've been alone for so long.  
That my heart begins to leak.  
The rich red color of a delicate rose.  
I wish I could be just like that, than to pose.  
Will I ever have justice?  
Or does it begin or end in poetic justice?  
Please show me a sign.  
And try not to decline.  
For I am a beautiful thing . . .  
And not a useless something.  
I know that I am different in all ways.  
As things change around me when they may.  
I'm so slow I'm left behind. For I am a Blue  
rose only one of my kind.

Thomas M Sutherland

## Meaning of True Love

I love you. . . . but what does that mean?  
We're just friends. . . I know . . . you told me before.  
You wonder why I feel so much for you when you feel nothing at all.  
To tell you the truth, there is only one way to put it:  
"Every little thing that you do . . . Baby I'm amazed by you" (Lonestar).  
I love everything about you, from your opinions on matters to your  
personality.  
But people mock my love for you and made me infamous over night.  
To my classmates, it was one big joke. . . . .  
Some call me a stalker, others say I do not know what love is.  
Maybe they're right. . . .  
Maybe I don't know what a relationship is all about . . .  
Still one thing I hold true.  
My feelings for you:  
I care about you deeply  
The closer I try to get to you  
The farther we seem to move apart  
I look forward to you first thing in the morning. . . .  
Like the sun, you brighten up my day.  
Nobody has ever made me feel this way  
When we dance  
our eyes meet  
And I feel as if I could spend the whole night in your eyes.  
Looking deeper and deeper into those beautiful hazel eyes. . . . .  
Something I could do forever till the day I die.  
You hold me tight and all of my worries vanish in the midst of your warmth.  
Your words to me are like the sweet sound of soothing music  
Even though our words are not many  
They mean a lot to me. . . Your friend  
Every time our conversation ends  
I feel like the luckiest guy on earth to know a girl as sweet as you  
Every day I'm away from you feels like time wasted.

I long for your friendly presence  
Every time I'm with you is like a day spent in paradise.  
I couldn't be happier when you're with me  
Every time my heart beats. . . .  
I long. . . .  
To be with you . . .  
To hold you in my arms . . .  
To hear the sound of your voice . . .  
To see your sweet face . . .  
    For your love . . .

**Steve Zwolinski**

## **Hey, The Other Guys Do It, Too**

Dear Lover and friend of mine,

Hope life is treating you just fine.  
I've come to send my best wishes to you,  
Even though I know my love is not so true.  
There's a little something I have to give,  
Otherwise with myself I shall not live.

It's about the thing I said at school,  
And it certainly has nothing to do with being cool.  
It was said to many, but understood by few,  
Hey, The Other Guys Do It Too.

I have your picture hung up on the wall,  
Sometimes staring at it magically makes it fall.  
I know I may sound stupid, but I'm spilling my soul,  
And someday I hope we can again make our love whole.  
Don't believe the rumors or the sayings of the guys,  
It can only cause more problems and will always arise.

It might be a favor I ask one too many times,  
It may not always be in verse or in rhymes.  
But you know when you'll hear it, it's always on cue,  
Hey, The Other Guys Do It Too.

Guilty is my heart but strong is my resolve,  
For you my sweet the world shall revolve.  
We'll meet up someday and have a drink,  
Perhaps then I will get some time to think.  
But I shall never poison my brain too much to say  
That I will always let you have your way.

And so, I think you've had a decision to make  
And all the twists and turns in life you shall take.  
I've pointed it all out in very plain view  
Hey, The Other Guys Do It Too . . . .  
Hey, The Other Guys Do It Too.

## Susanne Tindall

### Birthdays

It is a day for all to celebrate someone else getting older  
It is a day for the acknowledgement of life last year  
Why must we get older?  
What is it that we learn each year?  
I have learned that when I get older  
I will never stop learning daily.  
Today is your day and I hope that it is celebrated right  
Spend your day learning all that you can  
And loving every minute of everyday  
Because tomorrow will hold something new to learn

### Earth's Revenge

Humanity coats the planet  
Like a cloud  
Mother Earth ends this epoch  
Like limestone filtering water  
Crumbling the cubes  
Which have invaded the very curbs of her land  
Quarantining people and creating a beautiful numinous peace.



Untitled

*Absence 2006 -- 25*

James Tuttle

Mark Curcio

## A New Beginning

Life says go and I stand still,  
Waiting, thinking under my own free will.  
Gifts of stories I'm about to unfold,  
Memories and lies that were once never told.

I'm slow out of the block,  
When the gun says to go.  
My life is always on the clock,  
People say to move, but I never know.

Listen slowly to the repetitious wonders,  
In my mind, my brain always ponders.  
Starting again to go back to the new,  
This is something for myself I have to do.

I need a new beginning,  
Get me back to square one.  
Because I'm tired of my ears ringing,  
Anymore it's just not fun.

When I was young, nobody seemed to care,  
They just looked and smiled.  
But my parents, no, they would just stare,  
Because I am the oldest child.

Christmas was fun as a little boy,  
Open the wrappings for the big new toy.  
Same with Halloween too,  
Now I sit at home with nothing to do.

My music has changed from fast to slow,  
Just slowly turning up the beat.  
Everyday I listen to the radio,

I just can't stay off my feet.

School has gone fast for me,  
In my eyes, day one I see.  
Elementary, Middle, and Senior High,  
Wow, have all these years really gone by?

But now it's time for a new beginning,  
*So no more rhyme as well.*  
Start of something new and exciting to live by,  
As my life starts again.

But in order to make this new beginning a success,  
You must have a good ending.  
*So let me pick up this rhyme scheme again,*  
And then I'll stop pretending.

This is my life, a new beginning for me,  
I hope I can last.  
I promise myself to be the best I can be,  
But I'll *always* remember the past.



Joy of Life

*Absence 2006 -- 28*

Shenaz Choudhury

**Mark Curcio**

*Second Place, The Chancellor's Prize for Literary Art*

## **When**

When the shadows overturn and the smiles are forsaken, the hearts they will burn, and the feelings will be taken. When the trees turn to black and the moon turns to blue, the world will be under attack, and what else could we do? When the words are oversaid and the thoughts are overwhelmed, I will be alone in my bed, waiting to be held. When all these things are said and done, I will still be here.

When all these things are done and thru, I will still be here for you.

**Joslyn Carter**

## **A distancia nosotros estamos cerca**

Me haces falta mi amor con toda mi corazón.  
Deseo que tú estuvieras aquí entonces que yo te podría abrazar.  
La distancia entre nosotros no es nada cuando viene a cómo nosotros  
nos sentimos.  
Las estrellas nos mantienen conectamos.  
Cuándo tú los mira piensan en mí.  
Cuándo los brillos de luna por su ventana son cerca donde seré.  
Sé que usted piensa en mí en este momento y que el corazón es conmigo.  
Este es donde lo quedará.  
Cuando te veo otra vez mi corazón estallará con felicidad.



Memories

*Absence 2006 -- 30*

Bill Johnson

## Bill Johnson

And tonight we'll paint this town red  
Moon locked eyes  
Overhead, and never again  
I'll smile, she'll smirk  
And I wait for the moment  
Bliss on the end of my eye  
But it kills me  
Like cracked lungs screaming in space  
These deaf lines marching to the cadence of patience

-- -- --

Shrug tall cause we dont see  
So imbibe our blind dance and toast your glass to the floor  
And enjoy the wine steeped in this trailer park  
Smile over cringe and relish the taste  
The stagnant cliché of societal masquerade  
A smell all too familiar  
why not pull up your spine, it's falling down  
But we're drifters, lack for better actions  
Riding between words  
So kill the lights, shorten our tongues  
And live the monochromatic dream

-- -- --

And we progress  
One foot in front of the other  
Never looking back  
And as the darkness bows over the hill  
The holy is ahead to greet us in open arms

**Darell Bell**

## **The Beautiful Self**

One of the hardest things that people rarely learn how to do is to accept themselves. With acceptance comes so many other things, but early on we find ourselves believing that we have to be like everyone else to be important.

As early as middle school, we discover that everyone isn't the same. We ostracize those who don't "fit-in" and shun others who don't act like everyone else. The guy with the weird hairdo and the girl with the funny shaped nose just don't have any friends and, therein, we find that looking and even acting differently can possible place you on the outskirts of normality.

As we conform to the "norm," we make it harder for ourselves and others to accept what we're born with. Trying to keep up with everyone else is a lose/lose situation. Everyone can relate when your parents would tell you "If your friend jumped off a bridge . . .," but even after our teenage years we try to fit-in.

This trend undoubtedly seems to carry itself through our adulthood. Not only are people made fun of because of their appearance, but criticism seems to run deeper as to judge those based on religion, ethnicity, and other touchy matters. It's terrible that people find solace in the degradation of others.

What is so beautiful about the human spirit is the fact that it can motivate itself. We shouldn't wait for others to move us. The energy and willpower should resonate from within. Oftentimes, it seems that people will only try things they know they can do. Working at a place you hate because you are afraid to take the chance on a new job. Perhaps you are even staying in a bad relationship because you don't want to be alone. No matter the situation, we must take chances.

Trying to please everyone is impossible. No matter how famous, or beautiful, or smart you are, there are always people who won't like you. All too often I see people trying to please others and it doesn't work. Learning to please yourself is hard work in itself; why make your life harder by trying to please the unappeasable.

Lastly, a person must realize that self-love is the best love there is. With acceptance comes so many other things. When someone can accept

themselves fully, then everything else seems to fall into place. Things you thought you could never do become things of the past. Obstacles that you couldn't overcome are now small trenches that you can crawl through. Accepting your strengths and weaknesses pulls everything you are together.

At the end of the day, we have to find some type of serenity. It can come from a friend, a sibling, or lover, but all in all, it must start from within. After that assurance of self is clear, then no one can tell you any different about who or what you should be.

**Naimah Gloster**

### **Life's Purpose**

Why are we here?

God gave us an opportunity to live life as we please,  
But why do we spend so much time wasting it away?  
Can we really say that we have lived, if we have not really  
enjoyed what life has offered us? We must find our calling,  
and fulfill our dreams and goals in life in order to have really  
lived. To wake up with a smile on your face and to go to bed  
thanking God for your existence on this earth is the absolute  
beauty of it all. So don't take life for granted. Live it as you wish  
but give your life meaning . . . a purpose.

## Le Sans Ramsey

### Graffitied Life

I'm sitting on the bus that's going to downtown.  
I sit and stare outside my window.  
As we pass the different creations of Mother Nature.  
I see art scribbled on the sides of walls,  
buildings, houses and the insides of bridges.  
It's graffiti . . .  
As I gaze at the different styles, techniques, picturesque, imaginative and of  
course unique work.  
It makes me wonder about my life.  
Is it as colorful as the art I see outside my window?  
I don't know.  
But I'm still wondering the fact of it.  
Then I decide to go over my life for the next ten minutes on the bus.  
I will admit that my life is not the perfect thing in the world.  
And I also know that it's not the worse thing ever either.  
I know I'm different from others.  
But isn't that the way God wanted?  
People only gaze at me from the outside.  
Never from the inside out.  
But, what do they care?  
Coz I surely don't.  
Let's take a minute and think about it . . .  
My hair is the color of the earth on fire.  
My eyes are the color of a bleeding lie, they change all the time.  
My skin is the color of hot caramel in the sun.  
My lips are the color of a pink delicate rose.  
However, I am not multicultural.  
I am not sure of what I really am.  
But I do know that my soul is 100% multi-emotioned.  
I feel what I need to feel.  
I love what I need to love.  
I hate what I need to hate.

I cry for what I need to cry for.  
And I express myself when I feel it's the right time.  
Please don't get it twisted.  
I am one-in-a-million.  
I've got five more minutes on the bus.  
Now I see the light.  
I want to be different.  
I love it.  
It lets me know that people want to be like me.  
That's why they love me.  
That's why they talk about me.  
They can't get me off their minds.  
Four more minutes.  
I am above all the best.  
I am the highest; most exalted one, the best.  
Three more minutes.  
Now I've got a smile on my face.  
A smile as bright as the sun.  
Two more minutes.  
Just give me a reason.  
To change myself.  
Just one.  
One more minute.  
Now I've gotta prepare myself.  
Show everyone who and what I am . . .  
The bus ride is now over.  
I step off the bus, and onto the multi-colored sidewalk.  
I am now in the real world.  
No longer in my world.  
But . . .  
I will always be in my Graffitied Life.

## Courtney Bryon Ely-Denberg

### My Heart Burns

My heart burns  
Fury  
Purely  
Cold and sarcastic  
Bitterness  
Once bright  
“Glitterous”  
But it burnt me  
All this fire that  
My heart burns

## Tricia Andriso

### Sonnet Suicide

Sarah when you left it made us all cry,  
Life was too short for you to have to go,  
Twenty-three is too soon for suicide,  
Your mind and soul must have felt pretty low,  
With this decision you should have said no,  
Your family loves you, this you knew before,  
Happy with smiles you put on a show,  
But inside you were fighting a huge war,  
I wish you would have called and told me more,  
But depressingly we cannot go back,  
Now we have to relive to take a tour,  
If you were here I would give you a whack,  
You knew I was always there and could have lent  
A helping hand before the heart braking end.

Darell Bell

## Maybe Giving Up Is What You Do

I've been weak for years  
But I can't take it anymore  
It's like walking through life  
Without ever opening doors

I find pride and wisdom in the things I do  
I find lies and criticism in the laws anew  
So far the world is just a sound  
But never loud enough to turn around

Amidst the trouble lives harmony  
Amidst the love lives pain unseen  
So deep inside ones eyes so feared  
Away from trust that seemed so near

I've been living up the world that so blue  
But maybe giving up is just what you do.





## Courtney Bryon Ely-Denberg

### LITURGY

Sixty-four ounces of coffee later, and the blue cupolas were another distant memory. They would stand out, of course, just as the yellow stars stood out against the dark blue; but nevertheless, it felt like forever ago. We had stopped at a Sunoco on the way. I had told him the night before, “If I don’t get coffee, I’ll sit in the car for the entire two hours.” He knew better than to call me on my bluff. I was the Lucy to his Desi. That’s precisely what made it so sublime. He was sensible, dedicated. I was “hair-brained” and comical, the type that leapt well before looking.

From the Sunoco, we continued down Lysle with our coffees splashing in hand, clutch squeaking under foot. I was a slave, but I think he was, too. I mixed his coffee and he backed into parking spots. We were fairly simple to please. He giggled and shared, “I just had a vision.” I watched him. His beard was coming in nicely. He knew I liked it. His teeth were all showing, straight and small, and I could see the tip of his tongue touch the backs of them lightly when he spoke. “We’ll be driving to church every Sunday drinking our coffee and calling each other ‘Honey’.”

We pulled into the lot and parked. A woman got her minivan stuck in the snow and reversed without moving. We drank our coffee. The church bells rang loudly, telling us sternly to come inside. We drank our coffee. The world was happening all around us, but we were without it. We drank our coffee with each other. I listened to him intently as he readied me for the next two hours. His eyes looked so innocent and happy when he recalled his days at church. The night before he had told me that the altar was the place where he felt closest to Heaven.

I followed him around the building with the blue cupolas to enter the front door. He touched his right hand to his forehead, his chest, and then across his shoulders, right to left in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We walked past a few scattered families to find our spot in a pew about four rows back. I looked to the left and saw a small woman with white hair and hard features. She held a tiny bible in her hands and read from it in Russian along with the preacher. I felt as if she were my own grandmother. We never made eye-contact, we never spoke a word to each other, but I liked her.

The inside of the building was nothing more than eye candy. It was, actually, a very small room. It had large paintings of the apostles along the front wall, lined in gold paint, and paintings of Russian saints encircling the inside of the cupola. Throughout the sermon I would periodically look up at a single beam of light that streamed in a square shape and lit up an arbitrary spot on the balcony. I doubt that it was Jesus, because he probably would have sat closer to the front, maybe beside the

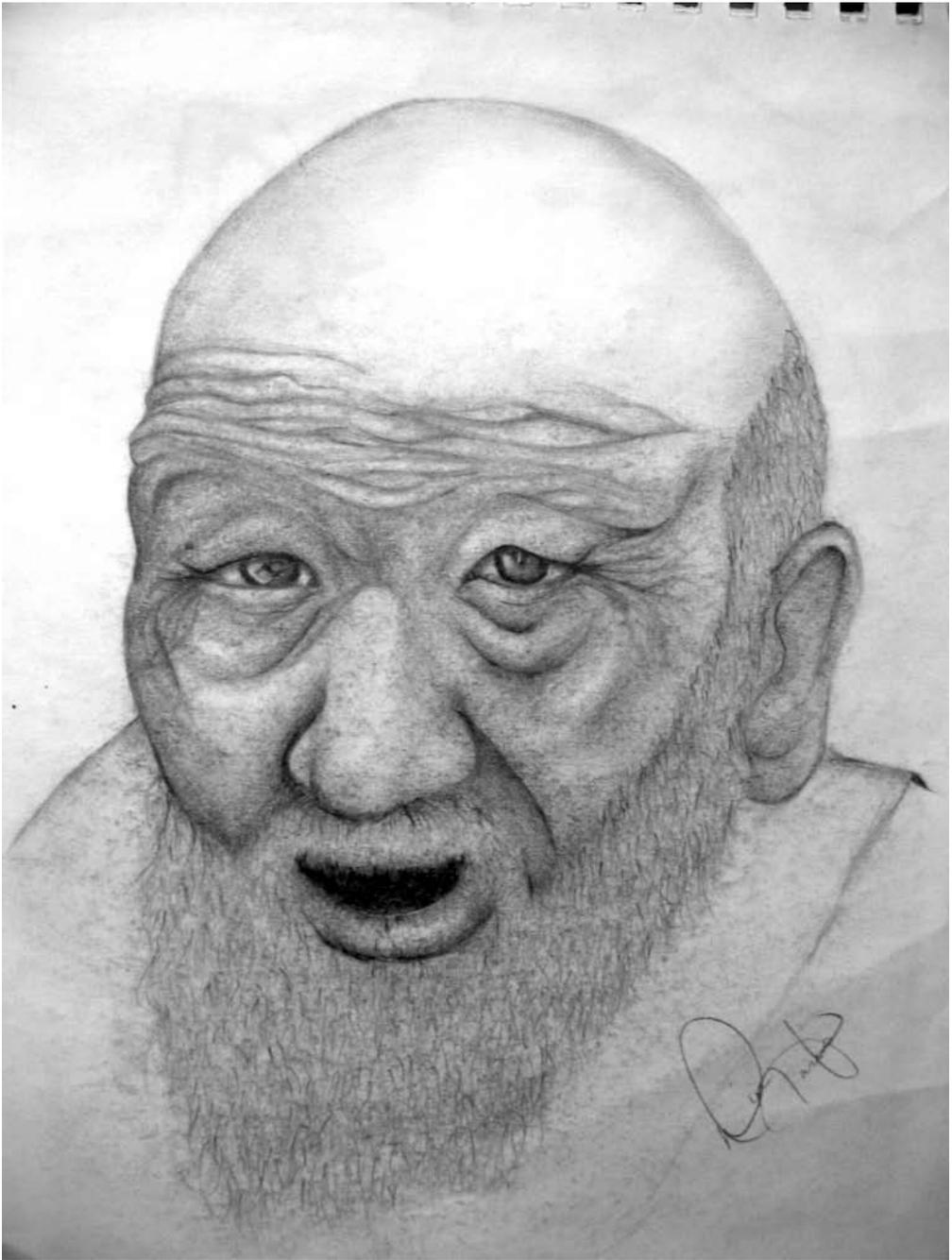
little blonde boy that looked like a prime candidate for a possession. There were brightly colored stained-glass windows thin and dramatic along each side wall. I didn't pay attention to the pictures on them, but I remember the cerulean blue and the multi-toned orange. There were reds, greens, browns, yellows. A softly colored border ran near shoulder height along the walls.

I looked over at him. He was softly speaking in a deep incoherent mumble. Not that the Russian he recited would have been very understandable to me, anyway. He looked back and smiled very thinly, preoccupied by the Word. I was more than in love with him that morning. He spoke to me through the entire experience, leaning in closely and comparing the practices here with the ones from his regular church in D.C. I'm positive that he never looked so beautiful to me.

I listened to everything very intently. We stood on our feet for the majority of the two hours, while the Father sang loudly the Russian scripture. The echo of the chords his voice struck was hypnotizing, but the heavy smell of incense tickled my throat. The ceremonies conducted were very traditional and routine. It was almost a pageantry of religious tools. My senses were being treated to a unique state of affairs. The two of us remained kneeling (along with most of the others) while a handful of mothers and fathers with their children lined up for communion. I was briefed by my host that it would be over soon.

At the end of Liturgy, we all lined up to kiss a religious picture and then a crucifix. I kept my eyes on the preacher, perhaps incorrectly, when I noticed that my lips made contact with a spot that would have made Jesus blush. Then we kissed one more picture (possibly of the Virgin Mary with Child), and took a piece of bread crumb. I dropped a dollar into the basket and walked down the aisle to the door, where I performed the sign of the cross three more times, and now I was free to walk out the door.

We caught the attention of a woman walking near us and asked her to take a picture of us in front of the church. The one that we had taken of ourselves before walking inside probably didn't turn out so well, so we wanted another one. She walked backwards across the parking lot slowly, the way that the blue cupolas would distance themselves from us as we drove back home on Lysle. "I wanted to hold your hand the entire time," I said to him, when he asked me if I had a good time. He smiled softly to me. Everything always seemed "softly" to me as the world happened all around us and we drank our coffee.



Untitled

*Absence 2006 -- 42*

Dion Harris

*Second Place, The Chancellor's Prize for Visual Art.*



**Mark Curcio**

**Writelife**

I open my eyes,  
Lies is what I see.  
This is me,  
Living this game that we can earth,  
Birth is what I have done,  
Sun shines over me everyday,  
Way too far from the end,  
Descending into time,  
Sign here on the dotted line,  
Kindly not forgetting what I have seen.  
The screen blinds my inner thoughts.  
Caught by emotion,  
Motions caused by fate,  
Stating, "here I am, here I stay."  
Anyway, not making sense in the present tense,  
Emensing time until my rebirth again.  
Sending all my words through the window,  
So leaving my pencil behind,  
The blue line I've signed so far.  
Star in the future,  
Pure in the past,  
Last one in the present,  
On my heart there's a cast.  
So many commas,  
Not many dots,  
Lots and lots of stories,  
Worries to be over thought.  
Pennies glisten in the jar,  
Far from where I sit now,  
How can I feel this way?  
Feeling this way right now?

Not knowing what to think,  
Blink a second here,  
My heart begins to sink.  
Rhyming 'til the end of my life,  
Strife walking right pass me,  
Seeing what I could be.  
Patiently waiting,  
Stating over and over again.  
Over and over,  
Four leaf clover wishing luck upon me,  
As I write more and more,  
More in store for my future,  
Sure I know I plan,  
Standing here right now.  
But repeating gets me nowhere,  
Staring at the board ahead,  
As my pencil suddenly runs out of lead . . .  
    So I proofread my life,  
    And all the words I've just said.

# Glenn Beech

## Directions

I left my house knowing where I was going.  
Right turn only, Dear Children Crossing, City of McKeesport, Mohawk Drive;  
House for Sale, It's a Boy, Beware of Dog, Yard Sale Saturday;  
Dairy Queen, Bud's Red Hot, Chevrolet, Pennzoil;  
10 MPH, Life is everlastingly;  
**Stop!**

I thought I knew where I was going?  
Stay in center lane, One Way, Eastland Mall, Thirty-first Street;  
Stay Off the Grass, Do Not Litter, Caution Joggers, *The Daily News*;  
Tillie's, McKeesport Hospital, Toyota, Esso;  
25 MPH, Life picks up momentum;  
**2 Way Stop!**

Am I certain where I am going?  
No Left turn, Emergency Vehicles Only, The Waterfront, Oliver Drive  
Guardian Protection, It's a Girl, Boat for Sale, *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*;  
Panera Bread, Penn State McKeesport, Volkswagen, EXXON;  
55 MPH, Life is suddenly momentary;  
**3 Way Stop!**

Where was I going?  
No Turn on Red, Yield to Pedestrians, Children at Play, Educational Drive  
Estate Sale, Neighborhood Crime Watch, No Parking Anytime, *The New York  
Times*  
Luciano's Brick Oven, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Chrysler, BP;  
65 MPH, Life is moving too fast  
**4 Way Stop!**

Have I lost my way?  
I am far from where I thought I'd be;  
I close my eyes, wonder, re-evaluate, and search;  
Life has not taken me in the direction I once thought it would;  
**No, I have to make a, U Turn!**

**Steve Zwolinski**

## **My Brother**

I grew up with a boy who loved his peers  
Had more friends than anybody of his years  
Stuck a wastebasket on his head and spun it about  
All while my Dad taped it out

He used to be my best friend and he still is indeed  
He always comes back to me when he's in need  
But I wish he would talk to me when he needs a shoulder  
To cry on from the pains of getting older.

The boy is 15 now and doesn't like talking  
My only purpose is for his mocking  
And he's now turned into a separate branch of the tree  
Leaving the rest of us to dry, yes, you and me

I'm afraid to think that he doesn't love me anymore  
That I'm no longer the warm-hearted core  
Of love and trust, friendship and reason  
That would last throughout all the seasons.

Every night, no matter how much I have for him fear  
I still pray for him every night, and even shed a tear  
It shouldn't be this way, the baby I held in my lap  
I'd thought I'd found a friend without my map.

So it's a message that I'm wanting to send  
That my brother and I have a friendship that never ends  
I know it's not very guy-like to say to him  
"I still love you," even if it's on a whim

If he could just give that to me, I would be pleased  
And all our roughnesses will be appeased  
Then we can say to each other, heart to heart  
That we loved each other from the very start  
From the very start . . . .



Untitled

*Absence 2006 -- 48*

James Tuttle

## Glenn Beech

### Rain

My mother has told me, I was born during a severe storm  
She said the rain came in torrents  
During my life:  
It has provided me with comfort, when no one was there.  
It has hidden my tears, after losing a loved one.  
It has filled me with a sense of warmth, when sighting a rainbow.  
It has refreshed my lungs, after a spring rain.  
It has provided moments of tenderness, while under an umbrella with a  
    woman.  
It has provided me with surprises, wet on this side of the street dry on that  
    side.  
It has cooled me, during a hot summer day.  
It has presented me with an instant playground, puddles for jumping into.  
It has made me feel cold, while walking across the campus.  
It has relaxed me, when I heard it on the roof.  
It has frightened me, when it comes as hail.  
It has had people, question my sanity.  
It has made me sad, when it brings down the autumn leaves.  
It has provided me with memories, both good and bad.  
It has heightened my senses.  
It has made me feel alive.  
Rain is a friend.  
When I die, I want it to rain.



Doretta Lonnett Whalen, PhD

**Old Dreams: New Music**

Huggin' the lengths of iron rail  
the iron horse barreled down the Dixie trail.  
Full speed ahead  
it whistled and wailed,  
comin' to deliver.

Hot breath risin' with its evenin' song,  
it whistled loud 'n whistled long  
callin' to black folks settled in barns  
on picturesque cotton farms.

Oh many a one  
lay still like prey--  
yonder train,  
faraway.

Many an ear  
pressed to the floor  
to feel the roar,  
like distant drummin',  
of the train a-comin'.

Burdened, worn  
from the endless day,  
eyes flashed open  
at a hint  
of the train  
miles away.

Hearts pounded  
with the hope  
that the train would come . . .

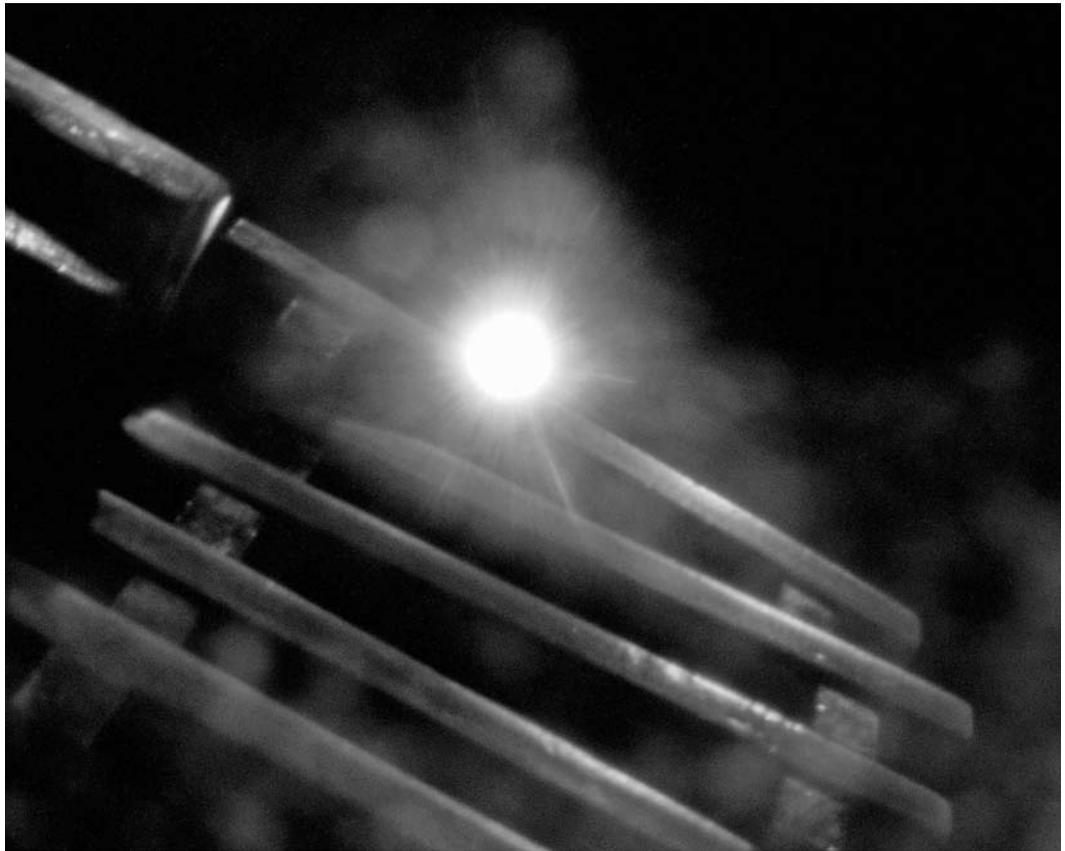
'n on the lips,  
a gentle hum  
'n a smile begun.

Fingers flailed  
like banjo strummin'  
as the train chugged by.  
Do ya' hear the hummin'?  
The favrite's song's  
"The Train's A-Comin'"

The train's a-comin'.  
That's the train a-comin'!  
The train is a-comin.  
Now the train's a-comin.

The song--  
it grew  
'n ghosted away.  
Then silence  
was heard.

The night train  
passed thru  
cotttonland,  
comin' to deliver



## Leah Pelkey

### Lost Land of Z

Come a little closer to Z land where wild emotions roam,  
They reside far away in a cave that feels like home.  
When you're drifting in the calm waters around the rocky shore,  
You know that life will treat you right because it can't hurt anymore.  
But when the Eye Movement Rapids sweep you fast away,  
All of those emotions try to make you stay,  
to cling to the lost land of Z forever in a dream,  
but then you wake once more and can't get back to sleep.

### Awaiting Goodbye

I am empty, lost, and forgotten.  
I'm hiding in my secret garden  
deep in my mind where you and I  
are happy and safe, and love's  
lost mistake's erased.  
I follow dreams long gone,  
and here we can right what is wrong.  
I'll find my way behind my smiling face  
and my scars, loving only my broken heart  
and tender wounds while chasing your shadow  
through vacant rooms.  
I'll sing the songs that we used to sing.  
Do you think it's too late to begin?  
It's hard to say when we rarely speak.  
We're wasting and weak inside.  
We've cried and we've lied besides,  
You know we're just awaiting goodbye.



Untitled

*Absence 2006 -- 55*

James Tuttle

**Jonathan Sima, Senior**  
**Woodland Hills High School**

*Winner, Best High School Submission Scholarship*

### **The Ungratefully Dead Artist**

My art, it smells,  
But now it sells,  
And is displayed at every museum.  
Paintings hung  
Were on the tongues  
Of every critic as being obscene.  
My sculptures were  
No good to stir  
An interest into the birds.  
But now that I'm dead  
And the will has been read,  
Their appreciation has been earned!

It aint no picnic basket,  
It aint no ivory stair.  
So many times I've asked it:  
Why is life so unfair?  
Oh, never mind the fact that I'm  
Such a celebrity,  
I've looked upon my casket, and  
I'm pretty much dead as can be!

Oh, a festival day  
Is in order, they say,  
And my names supposed to dazzle the night.  
But amidst the cheers,  
I'm left to tears,  
For something just aint quite as right:

The work they admire  
Theyd save for the fire  
When I was alive to show it.  
But now that Im dead,  
Theyve labeled my head  
“A *genius and a poet!*”

But it aint no picnic basket,  
So why should people care?  
My lithographs upholstered  
Their couches and their chairs.  
And Warhol himself bolstered  
The idea I was square.  
Now he sees in me a younger he  
Boy, life is so unfair!

I could barely get by  
On my scant salary,  
And no one bothered in helping me through.  
But since Ive croaked,  
The bulk of my work  
Is worth bout a hundred million two!  
Its a comical thing  
How life may bring  
The best at the worst of times:  
Im at any rate  
An artistic Bill Gates  
And I cannot keep a dime!

Cause it aint no picnic basket,  
It aint no ivory stair.  
So many times Ive asked it:\  
Why is life so unfair?  
Oh, never mind the fact that Im  
Such a celebrity,  
Ive looked upon my casket, and  
Im pretty much dead as can be!

Jonathan Sima

## Unseen Colors

poetry is  
the breaking  
of stained  
glass

over the  
heads  
of  
atheists,

the fragments  
littering  
the ground  
and air

with  
unseen colors. . . .

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**We are here to make sure students graduate and go on to successful careers.**

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**The ACE office is located on the lower level of the Kelly Library. To contact us, call 412-675-9491, or send an email to [dap4@psu.edu](mailto:dap4@psu.edu).**



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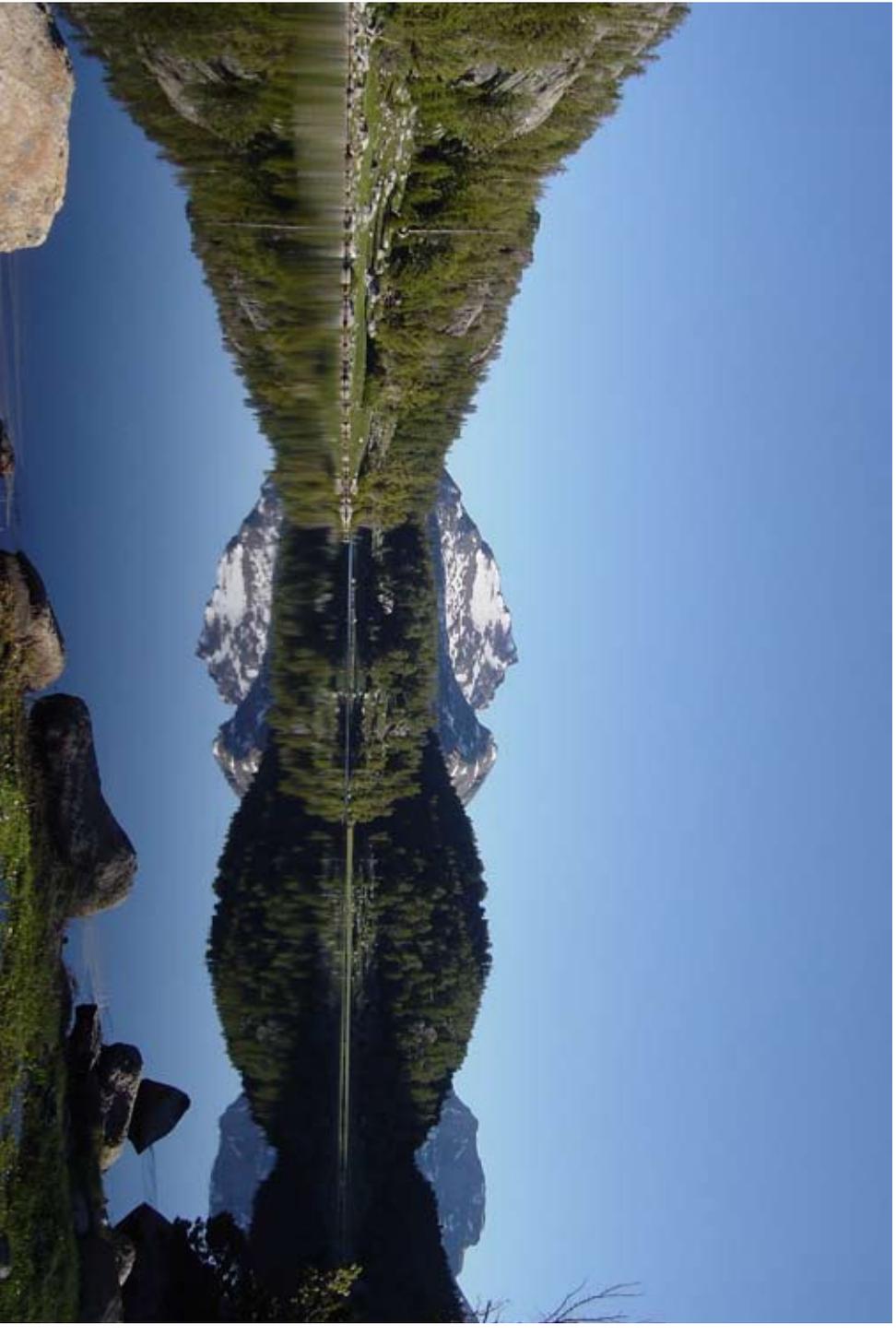
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Untitled

*Absence 2006 -- 63*

Amy Nath



Wyoming

*Winner, The Chancellor's Prize for Best Visual Art.*

Geoffrey J. Pashel