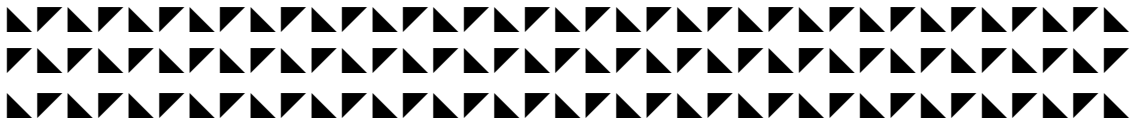


A B S E N C E
2007



A B S E N C E



PENN STATE
GREATER ALLEGHENY'S
LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE
2007 - VOLUME 9

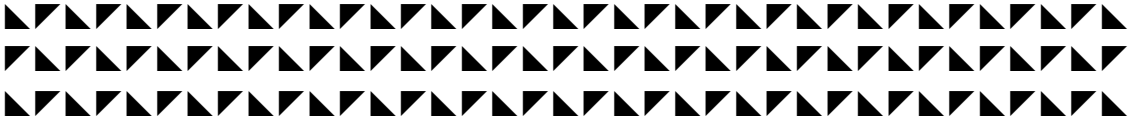
THE CUMULATIVE PUBLISHING EFFORT OF
FACULTY, STAFF, & STUDENTS AT

PENN STATE GREATER ALLEGHENY

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PENN STATE
GREATER ALLEGHENY'S
LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE
2007 - VOLUME 9



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DR. CLIFFORD T. MANLOVE
MARISSA SINISI
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MISSION STATEMENT

Absence is committed to the yearly publication of a high-quality literary and arts magazine for the Penn State Greater Allegheny community. The magazine's goal is to provide all full- and part-time PSUGA students, faculty, and staff with a shared venue for their creative endeavors, and to generate interest for the creative arts in the Greater Allegheny community.

|| || ||

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES & EDITORIAL POLICIES

Eligibility for publication in *Absence* is open to all full- and part-time students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Penn State Greater Allegheny. Original 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. 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 its publication. The preferred means of submission is by email attachment; send to: <ctm10@psu.edu>. A blind-review process is employed to ensure that all submissions are judged solely on artistic merit. All submissions are made to a faculty advisor, who removes all biographical information before turning them over to the student editorial staff for review. Final publication prerogative rests solely with the Editor-in-Chief.

|| || ||

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Consciously gravitating towards the written word and crafted image since being in the womb, it has been a dream to partake in the conception and formation of this forest of ink you hold in your hands. Despite all the strained deadlines, aspirin tablets, and hesitant explorations into brinksmanship... well, take a look for yourself. This the culmination of many, many early morning meetings, sleepless nights, dozens of brave entrants, and months of planning and debate with only a few brave faculty members to lead the way.

And I wouldn't forget the other great members of our little group. Ultimately, you all made the magazine what it is. Your artistic discretion truly made for a stalwart compilation of literary and visual works that reflect the creative output of the Greater Allegheny campus. I could not be prouder of the selections and I can only hope the works appearing in next year's *Absence* will come across just as superbly.

Perhaps most important of all, I would like to offer a thank you to everyone who submitted work in the first place. Without your words, pencils, and negatives, *Absence* would be without drive or purpose. This, I feel, would have been a great disservice to the community. Fortunately, the turnout this year was quite voluminous, allowing the magazine to have the maximum effect in sharing and bringing attention to the talent that exists, right here, in the community. It is that appreciation of talented individuals such as yourselves that I hope drives more people to submit next year, as we seek to constantly improve the quality and content of this annual publication.

In a perfect world, we would not have to worry about so many little things in our lives and the restraints on creative thought would vanish. Unfortunately, our lives remain unaffiliated with this dream, and often there is little time to sit down and create something sheerly for the beauty of it. But there are ways. Try writing a poem on your coffee break. Sketch something at lunch. Take a camera on a trip to the city. The potential of a blank page is far more than what most people think.

Finally, thank you Dr. Manlove and Ms. Sinisi, as without the much needed help of you both, the creation of this magazine would not have been possible. So please, turn the page and begin to understand why *Absence 2007* is our best, and that with continuing appreciation of the arts, the words and images of students will be witnessed in the moments, days, and years ahead.

Christopher DeMarco, Editor

VOLUME 9 IS DEDICATED TO

SUSAN C. LEWIS, B.S., M.Ed., Ed.D.

PENN STATER

DIRECTOR OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, PSUGA

&

ADVOCATE OF THE ARTS

ATOP

WINNER, *THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR BEST LITERARY ART*

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.

The heaviest thunderstorm
on the calmest, warmest of nights;
Fog creating a veil of translucent cotton
in lieu of trying times.
Each being finds its pain water-soluble,
each drop of salvation washing away the wicked world.
The sky recycles beauty upon beauty,
layering the armor of that salvation
in each flawed creature it encounters.
A tree sends a passive glance to one of its brethren,
it is aggressively accepted,
and their branches make love in the savage, optimistic breeze.
The ground laps thirstily at this shower,
weary from the relentless sunlight...
becoming drunken,
and numb to mankind's abuses.
"Become the storm before it subsides
and enjoy the rainbow afterlife as a reward!"
...shouts a thunderclap.
Lest we be greedy
allow the laceration in the clouds to heal,
so that they may bleed in the future...
And weep with joy at that day.

WINNER, THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR BEST VISUAL ART

AMAKA ONONGAYA



THE KEY OF LOVE

AMANDA HOBBS

In the heat of the moment
I just can't explain
I hold you in my heart
As a valuable asset
That I can't attain
Love and lust are overtaking me
My heart is beating
And inside it feels like music
It's writing a symphony

A
 G
 F#
 E

When I look at you
My mind starts singing
accommodation of this soul
Waiting for the rhythm—and timing
To be just right...

 in 4/4
A
 rest
 G
 F#
 half rest
 E

So lyrics and words of love
Will simply come flowing
Flying naturally
And coming out in the right key
The key of love—The key of me
over and over in my head the notes repeat

A
G
F#
E

Wanting emotions to be set free
And when i look into your eyes
I see that you are the one thing
That this orchestral piece needs
The bass—The heartbeat
The very foundation on which
I built this symphonic dream

A
G
F#
E

I need you to write my rhapsody
My lyrics and melodic poetry
My beginning middle and end
You simply complete me

FRIENDS

STEFANIE VIGAR



THE CLOSE ALLIANCE—A FOLKTALE FROM INDIA

Dr. Jay Breckenridge

- Narrator: One day a farmer went with his oxen to plough his field, and as he completed the first furrow he was met by a tiger, accompanied by a jackal.
- Tiger: Good day to you, Farmer.
- Farmer: Yiii!
- Tiger: Don't be alarmed. I am sent here by Providence to eat your two oxen—not you.
- Farmer: My two oxen? Oh, well, yes... that's better... No! Wait a minute. Providence has sent me here to plough this field—I need my oxen to do that.
- Tiger: Grrrrr!
- Farmer: Wait! Wait! Please, spare me and my oxen. I will bring you a fine tender milk cow instead—my wife has it tied up in the yard at home.
- Tiger: [consults with the Jackal, who nods agreement] Very well, I agree to this exchange.
- Narrator: So the Farmer took his oxen sadly home to explain the bargain he had had to make with the Tiger.
- Farmer: I had to promise the milk cow to the Tiger so I could keep the oxen.
- Wife: What? You great simpleton! If you give the Tiger my milk cow, how will I get milk for the children and for making cheese and butter?
- Farmer: But I have to have the oxen to prepare the wheat field so we can make bread.
- Wife: There must be a way out of this dilemma. Hmmm.

Farmer: I don't see one.

Wife: Go back to the tiger and tell him that the cow would not come along with you, so your wife is bringing it.

Farmer: You mean return and face the Tiger empty handed? I don't think so!

Wife: Do you have a plan?

Farmer: Well, no...

Wife: Then do as I say. Trust me.

Narrator: So the Farmer returned to the tiger, finding him sharpening his claws and teeth.

Farmer: I'm sorry, but the cow wouldn't come with me—my wife is bringing it.

Narrator: At hearing this news, the tiger began to pace and growl threateningly, and the farmer was terrified. Just then, the wife rode up, swaggering and blustering, dressed in the farmer's best clothes and riding on the pony from their stable. She had tied his turban very high so she would look taller and more imposing.

Wife: [in deep voice] I hope I can find a tiger to eat. I haven't had tiger's meat since yesterday when I ate three for breakfast!

Narrator: Hearing these words, the tiger bolted into the forest, nearly trampling his jackal companion in his haste to escape.

Jackal: [following Tiger] Slow down, Master—there is no need to run away. That rider is none other than the farmer's wife.

Tiger: Why should I believe you? You may have been bribed.

Jackal: Oh, please, Master. You should know by now that I live only to serve you—especially at meal times.

Tiger: Ha! You will be the first one to run if it turns out that you are mistaken about the Farmer's wife.

Jackal: All right, how about this. We will tie our tails together so neither of us can run out on the other.

Narrator: This they did, and then they set off arm in arm to deal with the situation. The farmer and his wife were having a good laugh over the trick she had played on the Tiger when they saw the gallant pair striding toward them, ever so bravely, with their tails tied together.

Farmer: They're coming back! Run for your life!

Wife: Hush! Stand still. Let me think.

Narrator: The wife waited until the pair came near enough to hear her and then shouted to the approaching pair.

Wife: Thank you, friend Jackal, for bringing me such a lovely tiger for my lunch! I promise to make quick work of him and then share the bones with you.

Narrator: At this, the tiger took flight, forgetting all about the jackal and the knot that held their tails together. Off he went, full tilt, dragging the jackal behind him, bumping and thumping over hill and dale until he was quite exhausted—and the jackal was nearly dead from all the bumps and bruises.

Wife: [laughing] Well, I think the lesson is clear: don't attach yourself too closely to a coward.

I AM NOT AFRAID

LEEANNE EDWARDS

I am not afraid
of TOMORROW,
for I have seen YESTERDAY
And I love
TODAY

May TODAY
BE all you've hoped for
May TOMORROW
Be all you've dreamed of
Let YESTERDAY be all you loved

SUNSET

SECOND PLACE, THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR LITERARY ART

JONATHAN SIMA

Streamers of orange and purple
Undulate in the sky. The blanket of
Night shall soon be upon us.
Swirling winds blow the curtain of day.
Earth is caught in metamorphosis,
Turning its sleepy head. . . .

OCEAN CITY SKY

KYLE DUFF



AMAKA ONONGAYA



THE NAME

MARK CURCIO

Think of people you know. Usually you can relate them to someone else you know, and sometimes you know them, but forget their names. This was the case for Jeff Versa. Jeff was just like any other New Yorker; he enjoyed the Yankees, a large pizza with extra toppings, and the subway to get from point A to point B. A true Yankee clipper. He could get the girls, the cars, and the money, basically anything himself the playboy could want. There was one thing, however, he could not get, and that was names.

In high school, Jeff was the most popular thing since sliced bread. Of course, if he tried to talk to someone, they would have to acknowledge him first. Even though he forgot names, he was a master at hiding his problem. Once he went through a whole day of talking to other people without having to say their names once. He would use corny, every day greetings like, "Hey... man," or "What's up?" Even though he held it off for so long, his luck would soon run out when he met Christy Hawthorne, the head editor of the prestigious New York Times, soon to be the love of his life. Little did he know, she was also the curse of his life.

They met one day in beautiful Times Square as Jeff was walking to his job in the office building, 23rd floor, 3rd street. He was walking to his slavery when he suddenly ran into Christy.

"Excuse me," Christy said, annoyed.

"Sorry, I did not see you there," said Jeff with his attractive smile.

"Well, maybe you should watch where you're going."

"Maybe you should give me your number," replied Jeff with a boyish charm.

Christy, surprised and someone nervous replied, shaking, "What? Do I know you? You don't even know my name."

Jeff, pausing at the word "name" and anything to do with it, replied, "Well, you could always tell me." Little did he know, that suggestion would be the deal maker with the devil.

Christy, hesitating, answered, "Christy... Christy Hawthorne."

Jeff paused.

A weird feeling came across his body and he said the first thing that came to his mind.

"Christy."

After moments of silence and awkwardness along 4th street and Broadway, Christy finally broke the silence. "Yes that's me."

Jeff then wanted to say, "I'm Jeff. Now we know each other," but for some reason, something else came out of Jeff's mouth.

"Hello?" Christy said annoyed.

After moments of silence and awkwardness along 4th street and Broadway, Christy finally broke the silence. "Yes that's me."

Jeff then wanted to say, "I'm Jeff. Now we know each other," but for some reason, something else came out of Jeff's mouth.

"Hello?" Christy said annoyed.

"Christy Christy Christy. Christy Christy. Christy, Christy."

"What?" she asked, confused and scared.

"Christy?" Jeff said unknowingly.

Then the reality finally hit Jeff Versa right in the face and speared it a little bit all over to rub it in.

"Why do you keep saying my name?" she asked.

"Christy?" Jeff asked, again, without warning.

"You keep repeating my name over and over again... You're really freaking me out. See you later, nice meeting you." Christy then ran away.

Jeff, upset with himself, screamed, "Christy!" but then realized that it didn't do any good because for all he knew, he said, "Wait for me" or "Can I make out with you?"

He was confused, he knew what he wanted to say in his head, but her name was the only thing that came out of his newly acquired mouth. As soon as Jeff turned around, he noticed a hot dog stand and got a sudden needed hunger of fat and God knows what on a bun.

He walked over, looked at the hot dog stand dealer and said, "Christy," with one finger in the air.

The hot dog dealer then replied, "Listen buddy, I don't know a Christy, I don't care. My name is Xavier. I live in a trailer, and I sell god damn hot dogs all day long. What else do you want from me? You want me to do a dance? Sing some Sinatra song into a frozen wiener? Honestly, Jesus Christ."

"Christy." Jeff answered, still with one finger in the air.

Xavier, annoyed, gave him a hot dog and said, "Here. Free of Charge. Now, get some help, kid."

Jeff just shook his head, put his eyes down towards the ground and ate his hot dog like it was the first time he could taste. As he was walking away, he then stopped right in his tracks and realized something... He was late for work.

He started to run through the crowds of melting pot Americans before he finally was able to flag down a yellow lifesaver, known in New York as taxis.

He got into the car and said, by accident again, "Christy Christy Christy!"

The taxi driver then turned around and simply replied, "You're lucky I know you and where you work. Otherwise I would call you psycho and what are you on."

Jeff then shook his head in disbelief of the turn of events, and sat in the backseat, buckled up, quietly.

Once the car came to a near stop, he threw money into the car and screamed, "Christy!" while the driver looked at the bill received by air mail and said to himself, "God Bless You, Kid. Psh. Christy."

He knew he was late, so he just walked into the office like nothing ever happened and sat down at his cubicle and began to play his daily round of solitaire to waste company time. Then, out of nowhere, like his earlier disease of Christy, was the sound of his boss, Mr. McKenzie's angry voice box.

"Hey Versa! You're late. You're fired. Pack up your stuff and get the hell outta here!"

Jeff annoyed, stood up in front of all of his now former employees, looked straight into his former boss's eyes, pointed at him and said, "Christy Christy." This equaled laughter amongst everyone in attendance. No, he wasn't going to be there all night to the viewers.

"That better mean I Quit, Versa." His boss replied angrily.

Jeff then gave him the ever so famous finger on the way out the door which had a sign that said, "Be Somebody Today" on the door.

Outside on the park bench sat Jeff, annoyed with everything and now, everyone. He couldn't talk normal, lost his job of three years, and lost the girl of his dreams because he can't stop saying her name. Go figure.

Then, like a drop of fate, the girl whose name was the most popular word in Jeff's vocabulary came around the corner. She paused and stared at him.

Jeff, disgruntled and looking homeless as a sewer rat looked up, squinted into the sun, stared directly at her and said the only thing left to say to her that day...

"My name is Jeff."

Christy met the love of her life that day. The saying goes that when you meet new people, the first thing you learn about them is their name...

Usually.

MIEI FIOR

GLENN J. BEECH

I never quite understood what Nonna meant when she would say, with a glimmer in her eyes, “I miei fior.”

I knew she had a beautiful flower garden of zinnias, roses and foxglove, but it seemed as if she referred to us, “I miei fior.”

Years later we planted seeds.
We cultivated, nurtured, fed and protected.
We removed injurious weeds and sowed sage.

Each day you grew, became stronger, and developed confidence.
Each year you blossomed, and became more beautiful,
Secure in your roots.

Now, I understand!
Nostri fiori, Our flowers, Our children,
Nina and Christian.

MARK WREN

L'espace
L'espace stupéfiant
La frontière finale
Vous tenez les mystères qui dépassent le temps.

PAR' RIS WALKER

Pantalon
Pantalon vert
Tu portes un pantalon
Tu nettoies un pantalon quand il a une tache.

AMANDA MAKSIN

Vent
Vent fort
Tu souffles toujours
Je t'adore en été.
Continuer.

A WOODPECKER GUARDS HIS NEST

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



AN EXCHANGE

JONATHAN SIMA

Have you ever felt awash, though your talents drawn its vein?
Though youve given of your heart so oft your heart is split in twain?

Have you ever drank your fill of the substance men instill
When their world crashes down upon their skullcaps and their will?

When the day is drawn to dusk and the evening lingers on,
Have you ever passed the sleepless night with droning chords of song?

Have you ever felt ashamed of the righteous name you carry?
Do your actions speak your sin, or does sin become you? "Very.

"Very much the same old same old, very much the caste-iron truth.
Very much of what you make it, very much a wasted youth.

"Very much my mornings haunt me, very much my evenings wane.
Very much my sins belike me night on night and day on day.

"Very much the bottle takes me in its bitter, bitter hold.
Very much the load outweighs me as I stagger down the road.

"Very much the dying twilight at the cusp of any day,
Very much the glowing ember when all embers tend to fade.

"Very much the madman in me speaks the sanest little words,
Very much the cholera wins me if I lose my final nerve.

"Very much of what you make it, yesterday, today, and morrow:
Now I've reached my final foothold, fettered down with fervent sorrow."

.

So you say, and so you say, that every day serves to belay you.
So you say that every whim the world gives you turns to slay you.

So you say that every other cause is lost with every breath,
So you say the only antidote you know for life is death.

So you say the course of living is misgiving to an end,
That you plan to throw yourself before the mercy of your hand.

Then to life's untimely end, I say, with no today or morrow:
I drink to your unhealthy cause and ruin mine for sorrow!

AQUEDUCTS

GEOFFREY J. PASHEL



LOVE AT WORK

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.



WHO IS CORRECT?

KATHERINE A. MCFARLAND

While at my Great Uncle Harry's viewing service, my Grandmother, Garnet, and I were discussing how much certain family members have changed over the years. This idle chitchat had made me wonder how have I changed. So I decided to bring this up to my Grandmother to see how she thinks I have changed. I simply asked her, "Nanny, how do you think I have changed?" I knew that whatever she told me would not be completely accurate since most grandparents view their grandchildren as angels. I knew that my loveable grandmother was no different. But I still wanted to know how she sees me and how different her impressions would seem compared to how I see myself.

She took her time and thought about the question. Her eyes seemed to shine as old memories played over in her mind. She smiled at me. In her eyes, it looked as if years have been lifted. She did not seem to be seventy-four, but much younger. Her red head shook as she grabbed my large hand in her smaller one. She told me that I have not changed that much. I think she still sees me as a little baby that she babysat. She told me that I have grown up into a fine young woman that anyone could be proud of. She told me that I have a big heart with a smile to match it. She thought that I was easy going but that I let far too many people take advantage of my kindness. She thought it was rather odd that, the once outgoing child I use to be, has now turned into a woman who is more of a loner. She asked me if that was because of my grandfather's death. I simply told her that I just like being alone, trying to avoid the question. Nanny gave me a look not totally buying my statement, which caused me to laugh. Nanny smiled, and said, "Do you know that when you laugh and giggle, your eyes sparkle?" I told her that I hadn't noticed. She told me that my laughter and giggles are contagious. She said that I am a good listener, but some times she wonders if I actually heard what was said. She told me that my clothes style has changed from dresses with Patent leather shoes to jeans, tee shirts and sneakers. She admired how protective I am of my brother and those that I care about. That is how she saw me. She told me that I haven't changed much over the years and that she is very proud of me.

I see myself very differently than she does. I see myself as a procrastinator. Ever since my grandfather died, I have slowed down my pace. I love being alone not only because of necessity but also because that is my place within the family. I have grown up fast over the years. This sudden need of maturity has left me cold and distant to the untrained eye. I have never gotten along with people my own age since I grew up learning values and manners instilled in me by my grandparents, parents, and other relatives much older than I. I have become an emotional mystery, choosing never to cry in public or with my family. No one has seen the pain I go through

every day be it physical or mental. I am more a hollowed-out shell of who I once was. The smiling, high-spirited child of my youth is gone. The only remainder of her is the act I put on. Yes, I will laugh and fool around with family and friends, but that is just so they think that everything is fine. I agree with my grandmother in that my lifestyle is more relaxed and that I have become more of a loner. I think my grandmother was a 100 percent correct when she said people take advantage of me and that I am very protective of my family. I see myself as a more violent creature than she does. I enjoy reading things about wars, death, and destruction. I have three favorite spots to hang out they are: my grandmother's porch, my room, and cemeteries. I like to look at churches, but I don't feel at home there. My weird habits and interests normally scare people.

Talking to my grandmother reminded me of the fact that no one knows the real me. Since I have hidden so much from people, for my own safety, they don't understand me anymore. I guess I have realized that even my family only knows what I let them know and what I have showed them. To everyone else I am sweet, caring, even bullheaded some times. They also know that I will stand up for what I believe in, and that I care tremendously for my family. But that is not the true me, is it? Who is really wrong in their perceptions or is there no wrong answer? I believe that both perceptions are correct since everyone has two faces. Like in theater, there is a face of comedy and the face of tragedy. Real life resembles this in that everyone has two faces; the face they show to the public and the face that only they can see.

AMANDA HOBBS

T
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SQU
ARE

No matter what the shape
Love is always there
Always caught in confusion
Misleading, misguiding, misconstruing
Molding and forming
As hearts continue breaking
Over and over again
Love is simply
Simply..
Simply..
Repetition
Doomed to F

A
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Into a deeper hole
!TRAPPED! With no way out
Only to find that you are

In much D
E

E

P

E

R

Than you were before

SEPIA SARAH

STEFANIE VIGAR



OREGON TREES

AMAKA ONONGAYA



MY LIFE AS A WINNER

DARELL BELL

For so very long I haven't thought much of myself.
I haven't been able to move forward from the past
I struggle everyday to be happy
But I find myself being content

I didn't start from much
But now I feel I've grown
I feel I've been fortunate to love the things I own

I think I've been too hard on myself
From days to months to years.
From happiness to heartache
From sadness to cheer

So as the time keeps ticking
And my fears become much thinner
To live, to hurt, to tell, to yell
My life as a winner

CUTE DOG

ERICA COLLURA



BUILT FORD TOUGH

DR. RUSS CIOLLI



THE JUST HAND OF UNJUST MAXIMS

JONATHAN SIMA

Born into poverty, not a day goes unnoticed.
Born into prejudice, not a thought goes unheard.
Born into nothingness, not a shadow falls idle.

“I was born impoverished, have lived impoverished,
And shall die as my father died, nameless.
My headstone, if I can afford one, will carry the same inscription.

“I have lived with one name and shall die with one name,
Just as my children shall live and shall die,
Just as my father and all in his line,
Just as the unborn in ages to come.

“As I till the dry earth with my weatherworn hands,
I have no expectations.
These hands, I was taught, were always meant to till dry earth.”

... Not a day goes unnoticed, not a thought goes unheard,
And never a shadow falls idle.
The dawning of man goes unwritten
By the just hand of unjust maxims.

ESTACIÓN DE TREN

MARK CURCIO

The station was quite plain against the grain,
Sitting in the middle of two rails of manmade wonder.

The shiny sun always set simply between the two metal lines,
Leading from here to there, point A to point B.

The building itself was a wonder in its own respect,
Sitting on the valley, different than all the rest.

When you think of a train station you think of rails upon rails of track,
People waiting, tickets breaking, luggage sitting on the top rack.

But this station was nothing like the rest, nothing like the best,
Just a station for one train coming in and one train going out.

There were no doors, oh no. No doors at all.
Just some beads of bamboo, hung gracefully along an entrance to eternity.

Different colors they were, all those pinks and greens,
Reds and yellows, purple and blue, and oh so many other colors too.

But this station just sat across a valley, reflecting in the water,
On the other side nothing, just shadows and wonder.

Picture a small house with beads at the beginning,
A track going through it with nobody singing.

I'm sure no one got off because there is nothing there,
Just a place to sit, wonder, read, and stare. Stare at the endless tracks with despair.

It was a small little train station, located in Spain,
Sitting there quietly, always looking the same.

Note: Based on "Hills like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway

VISION AND REMEMBRANCE

J. BAUCUM-BASTIEN

Vivid dreams at night introduce
Vivid sights by day.
Colors in detail matched only
By strange happenings
In an interior, mysterious world
Where I am a certain-someone and sometimes
Anyone I've never known.
Tales of curses and silly outcomes to sad situations
Are precursors for a day that is much too much of a paradox
To really be real
And so I scream that a dream
At night introduced
Into a mind at once seduced my magic
And truth and the whole
God of the situation
Is sometimes unstable,
Sometimes constable of a thought
That, breaking every rule, still desires to be free.
And in day, though fading and nonsensical
Is a diary whimsical of flitting, of encouraging
Of demolishing thought.
I wonder
Where I stand in the battle
Between night and day and escape
And surrender
And I wonder how they live together and
What is real
And suddenly after a dream
I wish I had never had
I slowly remember,
And in remembering, smile
That what I know is what I've created
What I love is how I've created

What I loathe is who I've created
And the Holy Grail that everyone and no one seeks
Is the remembrance that thought
Is really
Really all that is.

MINGO CREEK

SECOND PLACE, THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE FOR VISUAL ART

STEFANIE VIGAR



THINKING...

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.



GEOFFREY J. PASHEL



THE BRUSH STROKE OF MANY

JONATHAN SIMA

There should be no black
power or white power, or
this hand or that hand
is greater than his hand
or her hand, or one
or the other, all or
neither, but rather
the power to step up
and love each other as
human beings.

What is black anyway?
What is white anyway?
The world doesnt hinge
on one painters palette,
instead by the brush stroke
of many.

MIDNIGHT BLOSSOM

JONATHAN SIMA

When it comes to formal dinners and events,
I've never liked wearing carnations, and
My uniqueness prompts people to stare.

The multitudes ask:

*Why do you choose
Not to wear
A flower
Over your heart?*

I reply:

*My carnation is the moon
Under a thick spread
Of midnight clouds
Peaking through the faintest break
To form that of a flower.*

From time to time I walk the night
And wear a carnation across my shoulders.

RED FLOWERS

STEFANIE VIGAR



THE BILOXI DOCK

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.

It's the place where waves dissipate to foam, then green stained glass, calm...placid. It's the place to retire memories and the empty 40oz. bottles that accompany them. It is the walk into the past which we all desire, yet the path narrows and drops into a pool, deep as the feeling itself, with answers just beyond a breath and out of reach. Fish swim below the murky surface as do ideas in the head of (s)he who bears witness. The inquiries float to sea, empty, with the bottles alongside, riding the next wave. This beauty is timeless. The ocean, however, knows not vanity. Therein lies the deepest beauty. Fog caresses the surface and is disturbed by several seagulls. These satellites to the moonlit depths disturb, as well, the fish, with their noisy, self-appointed vigil. The sea understands. She speaks all languages; taught Spanish by Conquistadors, Portuguese through Brazilian traders, German from U-boat commanders; all of whom she freed from existences of servitude. Now they rest underneath her thick, aqua comforter. These realizations are a dime-a-dozen at the pier's end. To fish for enlightenment there is to drop one's line in liquid dense with the aforementioned fish of thought. It is the place where a pirate ship obstructs the sunset and forgotten parties litter the ancient sands. It is the handcrafted path to inner-fulfillment. Welcome to the Biloxi dock.

WAVES THAT NEVER BREAK

AMAKA ONONGAYA



NOWHERE WARM

AMAKA ONONGAYA



FOR LEN

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.

The man I love lies unconscious,
incapacitated in a hospital bed—
not completely alive,
though not completely dead...
the gray area in between.
Tubes run into his nostrils,
needles invade his veins—
unaware of his drugs,
unaware of my pains...
the gray area in between.
Doctors don't answer my questions,
each rude nurse hurries by again—
"You're not a spouse, sir,
or next of kin"...
the gray area in between.

CANOE TRAILS QUEBEC

DANIEL T. BROWN



Home 4,425 Miles from Home

Glenn J. Beech

I look out over the valley and see the mountains, which I know by name, Tudaio, Croda Medodì, Antelao, but I have never seen them before.

The conifer trees, with the heavy sent of pine, are a contrast to the deciduous trees with which I am familiar.

I hear a language which is not my native tongue, but I understand.

I drink water from the outdoor fountain and taste pure sweetness.

I stand in the piazza and feel a chill, but it is a hot summer day.

I am home, but I am 4,425 miles from home!

I kneel down to look at the flowers. I recognize the colors but their structures are different from those I know.

I smell the tall grass being mowed by hand.

The forest is alive with the sounds of birds and animals I cannot identify.

I taste the merlot, crisp, clean and dry ...more mellow than that which we made.

I am uncomfortably relaxed.

I am home but I am 4,425 miles from home!

The steep, white, dolomite mountains rise from the peaceful green pastures.

I detect the familiar scent of an approaching rainstorm.

I sit along the bank listening to the gentle sounds of the waters of the Piove.

I take a handful of morè from the bush and enjoy their recognizable sweetness.

I walk the path for the first time, but it is so familiar, and I know where it leads.

I am home, but I am 4,425 miles from home!

I am immersed in the land where my maternal grandfather and grandmother were born over 120 years ago. My senses are once again awakened to those things which are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, known and unknown, old and new, comfortable and awkward. I am alone, but I have companions as Nonno and Nonna are with me.

I am home, but I am 4,425 miles from home!

MINDS OF METAL

JONATHAN SIMA

Metal meets minds made of metal,
Equation after equation is solved.
The problems of the world are gone forever
Thanks to our computers, to our machines,
Our very own twentieth-century Titans.

Hunger? Was there ever such a word?
And worry? What was it once, really?
War? Now a thing of the past—extinct!
And illness? Dead, and nothing more to it:
There's only us and the machines.

No more forests—bah! We make our own air.
No more timber-chopping, for we use steel.
No more fuss over oil, we've generators
Guaranteed 1,000 years a piece
(An accurate figure, so say our machines).

Global warming? Damn the lot! We've been told
That everything is now stable.
Our atmosphere is kept in check
By our super-smart machines,
Our twentieth-century Titans.

And doomsday? Hah! It's been disproved!
Our machines decree the human race undying.
So long as we keep our egos high,
Our wits and whims on hold,
Our machines will never lie to us again.

SECOND CHANCE

DORETTA LONNETT WHALEN, PhD

'Loaded up th' wagon,
climbed up on,
set out f'r th' long ride
at th' crack o' dawn.

The brown horse danced
and the driver sang
to the music of the wheels
and the hooves o'er the land.

The sun led the way,
and the party headed on:
Forty days have come,
Four hundred miles gone.

As the day grew hotter,
they sought shade,
and happened on a stream
in a mossy glade,
though the driver slept too long
in the tranquil shade.

Eyes that closed on weather fair
open to a frightful chill in the air.
The wind, it whips across the plain,
ancient spirits come to claim
those who wander an unknown road—
the travelers who had lost their aim.

The driver, to race the setting sun,
unleashed a charge
for the horse to run.
Dust rose high from the mad gallop.
Provisions spilled out.

Squintin' hard fr'm th' rock slivers
'n feelin' f'r m' pocket bandana,
th' leathers jerked right 'way.
'grabbed f'r th' edge of th' seatboard
'n held on bes ' I could.

It was t' be.
The driver, flown free,
smashed his head on a tree,
The horse streaked into the day's last light,
and the wagon grinded
to a splintered halt.

Eyes that closed on a dark, cold night
open to caressing light.
What a cozy bed!
Warm breath on my cheek,
gentle nuzzle to my head-
these from my loyal steed,
now refreshed,
ready to lead.

DRAMA OVER A CAT

MILDRED R. MICKLE, PhD

This poem was inspired by a Group Presentation activity on dramatic monologues in English 263.

Thanks, class. :D

Do I get my cat a kitten companion?
Oh, I don't know.
Kittens are known for scuttling about the house,
And my kitty won't let that go.

Because cats, you see, are territorial,
And my kitty's the Queen of the Roost.
With her bright orange fur and light green eyes
So shrewd. Yes, I dare say, as shrewd as Proust.

My cat will she put up with a kitten not her own?
Will she indeed take the title of mama?
Maybe she will.
Oh, all this drama!
I'm scared that she won't.

Rather than nurture a kitten scuttling through her territory,
Demanding time from the person she owns
She'll kill, and that will be that.
Perhaps I'd best not throw stones.
Still, would a kitten addition mess with karma,
Test the fates, bring out the carnal
Like a bird landing within her reach?
How can it be that my docile little sweet
Can be so ferocious so fierce at the sound of a little ol' "tweet?"
How could an innocent "meow" stir up her ire?
Why would a tiny baby create a threat so dire?

My cat, my naughty, politic cat
Who scuttles about the house,

Tries to trip me as I walk,
Who may deign to catch a rat,
But probably wouldn't because she's gotten fat,
Who likes to stalk, but may balk
At any unknowns,
Who is quieter than a mouse,
My cat, Queen of the Roost,
At heart a chicken, yet secure in her rule,

HAVING HAD . . . NOTHING

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.

Having had experience in not many things,
and having no knowledge of how the wind sings,
I am inclined to question the skies,
to understand that which knowledge denies
and comprehend that which godliness brings.
To fully take all that I may from this quest,
lo, and behold my flight from the nest,
from mother's protection and father's stern words,
from the mockingly chirping mockingly-birds,
for they have a knowledge of bringing unrest.
I have a firm knowledge of pleasure and pain,
I yet have no knowledge of tact and refrain,
but what if such wisdom is at birth instilled,
never passed on and constantly killed,
then having had nothing I've nothing to gain.

LITTLE TOWN

MARK CURCIO

So much drama in this little old town,
Always a new thing to hear or talk about.
So much twinkle in people's eyes,
Always a new "Love" to get over or start.
Something always new to moan about or just be upset,
If only life was so easy.
Something always in the way..
If only it all could fade away..
I shouldn't be talking because I'm just another person in the mix,
Something always new that I have to ponder about,
Something always old that I never let go.
If only I can just throw it all away.. Just like the rest of us.
Such a little town, yet so many new problems.
Such a tiny mind growing with opportunities..
But too afraid to let them become something true

MUSIC MEMORY

J. BAUCUM-BASTIEN

A musician's fingers already know
Where to go
And how to bring the soul out from the ether.
The singer voices his being into eternity.
The writer, cleverly tying the vocalist
And the rhythm together,
Imprisoning them in the intimate dance of sound
Slinks deftly behind the curtain and remains nameless.
The producer has a vision
The ingredients of a hit mix in the air
He is the star in some spheres
And a mighty sphere among some stars
Sly singing, freak playing
And in a sleepy sound of silk you're caught
Caught in the game
Of sex, attraction and magnetism
In a game of truths, emotionalism and lies
Ego tripping on the irony of life
And the parallel of voice and feeling and
Rhythm and heartbeat
Of creation and birth
And the memory of life before it had a name.

WHO ARE YOU

LEEANNE EDWARDS

Ignorance isn't an excuse forever
And I refuse for that to be mine!
Morning noon and night they complain
"Slavery, slavery," Slavery shouldn't stop you AT ALL!
Other people didn't let it stop them.
Martin Luther King, JR. was it in to win it, and
Even though he knew he wasn't going make it to the mountain top, he said
Brother, Sister, YOU ARE SOMEBODY
Over, and over again what goes around, comes around,
Does it ever stop; will it ever stop?
Youthful people are the people who need to understand these things, life isn't promised.

FOREST FAMILIES

AMAKA ONONGAYA



A LYRICAL TOXIN

EDWARD J. BILLER, JR.

I've tried forgetting things,
regretting things.
The fury stings,
a message sings,
an omen grinds.
I've tried each time
to right an act
a line
a hurtful melancholy wave
a tainted painberry wine.
But no rest or shelter
can find where to go
so overflow
damned damnable dams of the heart.
So letting go
as grasp pasts
not willing to part,
is harder and farther
than I know
or you know.

IT FADES

ALLISON ARNFIELD

And then it fades.
Glaring at a twisted youth, beckoning sweet vulnerability
I see it.
It removes itself from the background sounds of life.
Distances itself from the misery it ensued.

It's fading still.
But I can still touch it.
I feel it, sense its presence.
No physical embodiment, my own personal affliction.

My entire fault in the end
Or is it?

Funny how you knew
You KNEW right away
That the unwelcome guest had arrived

It's almost gone.
If only I'd unclasp my hand from round its throat.

THE TWILIGHT OF ANY LIFE

JONATHAN SIMA

The cool crisp air crests and breaks on dry earth,
Wholeness in an unwholesome daybreak rejuvenates at dusk,
And even the most imperfect factions are one with the changing season.

Yes,
The twilight of any life passes in autumn
As the leaves, freshly dead, come of ground
In a menagerie of shadows.

ABSENCE & THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE FIRST ANNUAL

TEACHING INTERNATIONAL AWARD

Penn State has embarked on the promotion of greater awareness and understanding of world issues, international trends, and global policy debates. To this aim, the University is engaging faculty, students, and other members of the community to modify curriculum contents, introduce new teaching methods, enrich library collections, and foster interdisciplinary cooperation.

Penn State Greater Allegheny is strongly committed to these internationalization initiatives, and has adopted a country or region of the world each year as a common theme to inspire teaching and scholarship.

For 2008, PSUGA Faculty members are cooperating to explore and reflect on various aspects of India's history, culture, and economic, social, and political reality. Course lectures, student research projects, public debates, service learning activities, theater productions, art exhibits, films, and guest lectures will help our community learn about the world.

Finalists for the 2008 Teaching International Award will be selected from the Teaching International presentations given by PSUGA students at the end of each semester. The Winner of this \$100 award will be selected by the Student Editorial Board of *Absence*, in consultation with the Teaching International Committee.

Look for More Details Fall 2007

Look for the Inaugural Teaching International Award Winner
To be published in *Absence* volume 10 (2008)

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