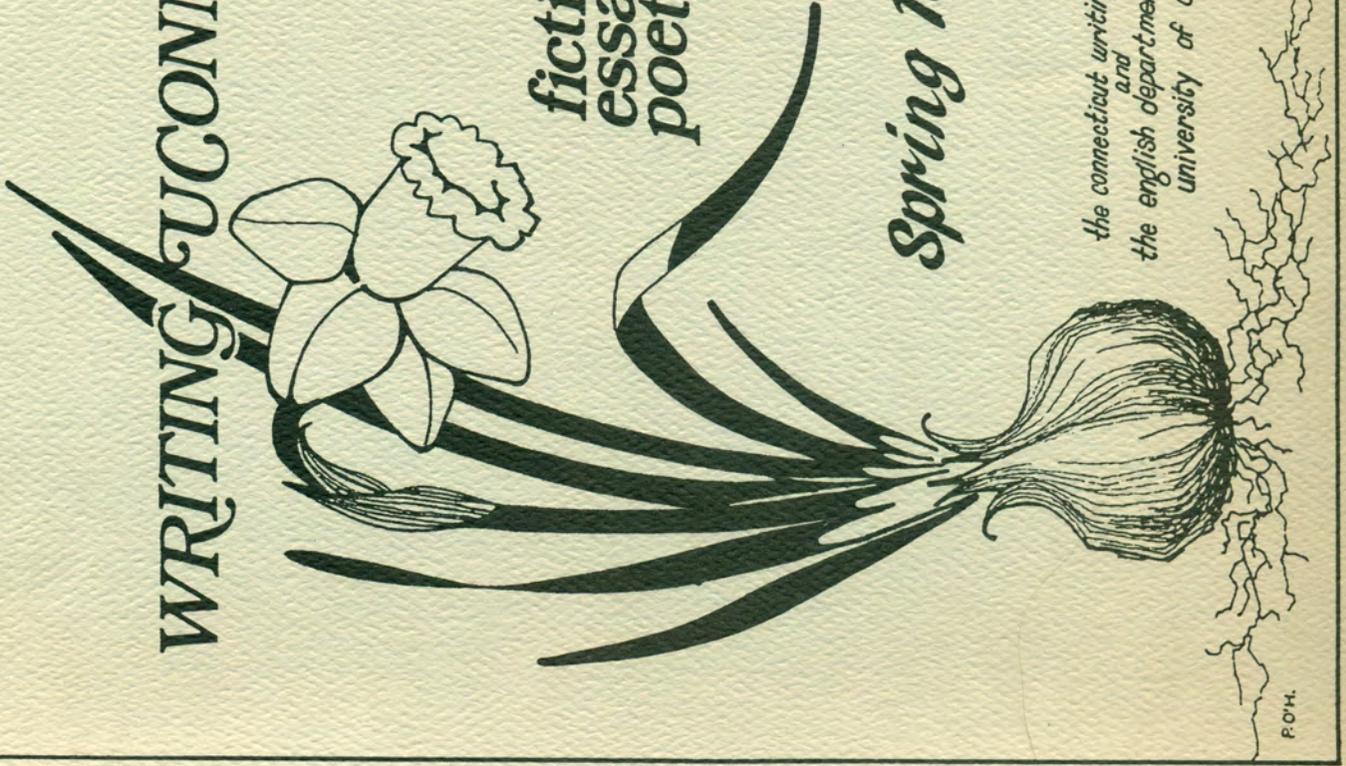


WRITING UCONN

fiction
essays
poetry

Spring 1986

the connecticut writing project
and
the english department of the
university of connecticut



R.O.H.

This fourth issue of WRITING UCONN has been prepared by Matthew N. Proser and William Sheidley, with the assistance of Noel Ambery, Jennifer Bacon, Susan Cossette, Debra Dean, Joshua Ladds, Rudi Lebowitz, Philip Love, Sara Neller, Mary Ellen Olson, Peter Walsh, Matthew Winiarski, and Wilkey Wong. The cover design is by Pat O'Hara of the UConn Co-op. Lynne Rowley typed the manuscript, and the booklet itself was produced at University of Connecticut Publications.

Our objective remains the publication of the best student writing done at UConn, and we once again invite undergraduates to submit work for consideration. Regrettably we cannot print all the good writing we get. We wish we could. But we promise to give each submission a thoughtful review.

We hope that through the pleasure WRITING UCONN gives, all students will come to make good writing a real part of their lives.



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POEMS BY SUSAN COSSETTE

Small Spaces

little blue & white
room in mommy's six room
colonial
chipped Sears furniture
portable black & white TV
closetful of clothes
no where to go

but

college they put me in this
ten by fourteen room that I
share with a girl I never
met and have not much
in common with I
study I
go to some bars warm bodies
beer soaked floors loud music we
press through the crowd for a drink to
the bathroom to comb out hair

and they expect me to find
someone to marry when I graduate

Ophelia

I throw flowers
at the ground I
think I see you
standing
in front of me, but

you have gone

brooding boy
I wonder
if you really loved me--
was I your

virgin your whore
fantasy I

have more to do I
am worth more I
refuse to run
mad
through the wood
talking to myself
scattering
dead flowers

any longer I

am so afraid of
your flame I
watch you
burn white-hot
burning flames

consume you

If I love
you
it is for
the worst of reasons

Epithalamion

I.

curled in the bed
for days, a dozen
books dirty coffee cups
and overflowing ashtray

wearing my father's pajamas, I
haven't showered in two days I
haven't left this room this

poem wants to be finished

if I am waiting in the bedroom
let someone write my wedding song--
it would be a real beauty I
would inspect it, the way
a scientist examines
a curious new species I
would let it spin down the drain
with tonight's dirty dishes--
there is no

time for weddings I
have already married words

II.

let me show you a poem
let me show you
your lady--
her lips painted slick red
sucking on a cigarette, your lady
is a dragon
your modest bride
wears black lace slips,
doesn't cook, she can

whip up a mean poem when
she has to--
since

her friends are all married
since
she isn't
since
no dark-eyed wavy-haired impassioned
poet writes her wedding song she

writes her own

Untitled

my poem changes
itself changes
other poems each
time
it is written

this poem is
a wooden club this
poem is a
snake that sheds its skin

there is a
feeling of
power that flows
from my pen

knowing

I can change the
ways in which
you might see these words on the page
knowing
I am dangerous

Susan Cossette is a senior English major. She wrote these poems in English 246.

A New Year's Eve in Hawaii

The night our mothers
Turned us loose with Zippo lighters
And a string of firecrackers,
We stood on the back stairs,
A couple of sparkling live wires.
We dared each other
To hold those red devils
Till the count of five,
Like heroes with grenades
In old war movies--
Certain no fuse
Would last past three.

(My tag-along sister
And her friend traced
Their names with sparklers
Out in front. Stuck in cold water,
The spent rods hissed.)

A hot hand of hana
Flared in the kitchen,
Hoots and groans burst out
As players slapped cards down.
Long into the night
They chunked ice cubes
Into glasses, filled
Empty beer cases
With bottles sweating still.

In the glow of yellow light
I plucked at my string
And secretly counted--
He loves me, he loves me not--
As we tossed fireworks
Whose shattered shells
Would blanket the lawn
Like a thousand hibiscus petals,
By morn.

When Kana Visits

When she visits, Kana always enters
With the authority age requires of her.
Then she hops up into a straight-back chair
And lets her dangling feet swing bare,
Straightens wiry wisps of hair (escapees
From the confines of a net) and granny glasses.
She heaves her leather purse onto her lap
And deftly undoes its polished clasp.
Frisking each pack of gum and candy
She carries for grandkids, she makes inquiry
After a book of matches and her Winstons.
A cup of coffee with two saccharins
Is put before her. "I smoke now," she declares.
Who of us would dare dispute her right?

Pele, Goddess of Volcanoes

When Gloria Ogata
Brought a picture
Of Kilauea erupting
To school for show and tell
I saw you, Pele,
Caught unaware.
From the crater
You directed the flow of lava
Twisting itself like rope
Down to the sea.

Clad in a pau knotted
On your side, you stood
With one hand outstretched, pointing.
The flames hot winds fed
Flew back--tongues of blazing hair.
But I remember most
Your eyes, the fiery intent
In the eyes of a goddess
One might hope only to appease.

That night at the dinner table
I hid choice morsels of pork,
Then wrapped them in ti leaves for you
Out in the backyard. Later,
In bed in this house at the base
Of Punchbowl's dormant crater
I lay dreaming, dreaming
Of smoke plumes, lava flows,
And your black eyes
Descending.

Keesler AFB, Mississippi

On her full-length mirror
My roommate's left a note
Again: "Don't wait up."
Here even the homeliest among us
Might attract suitors enough
To count on both hands,
If she desired.
Alone in my room,
Seeking relief
From summer's sweat-soaked air
I slough off all my flabby clothing.
How sallow my tanned skin's turned.
I front the mirror,
Scowl at my reflection.
Even that coarse patch of hair mocks me,
An arrow on a map
Telling me, "You are here."
I turn out the light
And slip between cool sheets.
My back presses itself
Full up against
A concrete wall painted white.
The instinct to survive rising.

Debi Kang Dean wrote these poems in English 246.

MERCY

Peter Walsh

I think Halloween fell on a Saturday that year because I remember what the air felt like. It was really heavy, pushing in from the left and right, pushing down from above. You could feel the air surround you, and whenever you moved, it was like walking under water. That's how Saturdays always were, removed somehow from the rest of the week. And like the day, I couldn't help but feel detached. Everything around me seemed to be held static somewhere between autumn and winter, a still and silvery place.

It was Barbara's idea to go to the hospital. I didn't have the presence of mind to tell her no--I was too busy looking at her face. I want to say it was angelic, but there was some sort of mild corruption in her eyes which made her that much more attractive. Whenever Barbara spoke to me her voice took on a tone of saccharine compassion, a sweetness thick enough to immerse my thoughts in an unaccountable desire. I was trapped. She descended upon me after classes and I soon found myself backed up against my locker, agreeing to go with her, in costume, to the children's ward at St. Vincent's Hospital. Halloween was only a day away.

The whole plan was probably just a community service project she had cooked up to get into the National Honor Society. Regardless of this, I had committed myself. Leaving the house on Saturday, I was dressed as a vampire. Somehow, I ended up driving. I suppose that's the masculine thing to do, but I've never liked driving. There is always a feeling that the situation is completely out of my hands.

The whole way there Barbara had been desperately trying to keep the wings on her angel costume from being crushed. Every time we turned a corner she would suck air in through her perfect white teeth and tell me to slow down. We pulled up to the attendant's booth at the hospital parking lot where a man peered into my window and smiled a big, yellow smile. The cigar in the corner of his mouth, just a shade lighter than his skin, looked as though it had been there for days.

"Trick or treat!" he laughed, but his smile stayed the same, so it probably wasn't a smile at all, just a way to keep his cigar from falling out.

I reluctantly spoke to him. "We're here to visit the children's ward. Can I park here?"

He waved me through with another laugh and after driving around for a few minutes, I found a space in the far corner of the lot. The huge, silver hospital seemed to arch towards me as we moved closer to it. I saw my vague reflection in the windows of the cars we walked between. The unfamiliar face of a vampire gazed back into my eyes. There was little definition in the afternoon sky. The grey light that fell upon us made me feel confused about Barbara. Dressed as an angel, the beauty she held still filled me at once with both desire and a subtle repulsion. There I was, at the hospital against my will. There she was in front of me, clutching a down jacket against her chest, the white dress, her naked shoulders. It all compelled me to turn away and once again look for myself in the opaque car windows on either side. Glancing into the glass on the passenger side of a Volvo, I saw only dark ovals where my eyes should have been.

White light poured from the doors at the hospital's back entrance. As we stepped towards them, the glass doors parted automatically with shrill electric music. The area we first came upon was the emergency room waiting room. A woman was performing the rosary in another language while a young girl sat on the floor at her feet, pulling on pages of Highlights magazine. The only other person in the room was a man of fifty or so. His fly was unzipped and he was crying into his hands. Something terrible had brought him to this, the most terminal of places.

We got into a service elevator with two orderlies who were talking about their squash games. Getting off on the fourth floor, one of them laughed and said that sometimes the hospital felt like a cage. The doors closed behind them. With the two voices gone, I suddenly became aware of the hum bearing down from the fluorescent lights overhead and the sound of the invisible machine that pulled us up to the seventh floor.

The doors opened and the smell hit me like the glare of blue and stainless steel.

"Jesus," I spoke under my breath, but Barbara still heard me. Her wings caught the air as she tuned around.

"What's the matter?"

"That smell reminds me of biology class."

She said nothing, but my thought remained on the scalpel I had held over the fetal pig. I could see my reflection in

the blade. Holding the cold fetus still with my other hand, I had shuddered while making the first incision. Fluid poured out of the cut, and I felt an itching in my palm. At first glance there was nothing, but blood soon emerged in my hand from a gash the length of a cigarette. The rounded cut looked like a gill in the center of my palm. Through the formaldehyde haze, my eyes moved from the pig to the blood running through the lines in my hand to the industrial turquoise walls of the classroom that swam about me. I felt like my body was lying in the center of a vast ocean of tepid water. The last thing I remember was how cool and smooth the bathroom floor felt when I fell to my knees.

Barbara led me to the reception desk, and for the first time I noticed that she was carrying a paper bag in her arm. The woman at the desk gave a kind of half smile when she saw us. Her beehive hairstyle made her look too much taller than she really was. She told us that we should avoid exciting the children and then said that some of them couldn't eat candy. I saw that uptight WASP look come into Barbara's eyes as she pulled some diabetic candy out of the paper bag and slid towards the nurse for inspection. The nurse nodded.

As we walked down the corridor, Barbara turned and looked me over. "Aren't you going to put your teeth in?"

For some reason I whispering. "Why, does it matter?"

"Yes, it does, it matters very much." She smiled at me with an all too familiar coercive look in her eyes. "Come on, just do it, please?"

I put the plastic vampire teeth into my mouth. They felt just as I had expected them to feel. I was aware of my gums and tongue, and because my mouth was kept open, it was difficult to swallow.

Barbara decided it would be best if we separated and visited the rooms alone. She left me with a bag of candy and then walked down the blank hallway where she disappeared around a corner.

The first room I walked into smelled like warm, antiseptic care. The little girl on the bed looked like a broken statue. She was lying on her back, staring at the ceiling. Her name was Christine and she had fallen out of a fifth story window.

"Are you a good vampire?" she asked me.

I smiled and offered her some candy corns which she took and put into what was left of her mouth. I felt the

sickening rush of saliva as the taste of my fangs seemed to magnify. Christine spoke about the things that came out of the closet and moved around the room when you were asleep, things that wanted to get you. I tried to tell her that such things didn't exist, but she was intent upon making me see otherwise. I gave her some more candy and went out to the hall where I got a drink of water.

The next room was bigger and moist. I heard a humidifier breathing somewhere near the corner. The walls were a very light blue, almost green. Combined with the sound of the steam's release, it was like standing at a water's edge.

Philip couldn't move from his position on the bed. He had been put into a body cast after being hit by a car as he tried to ride his brother's ten-speed bike.

"Do you really drink blood?" he asked with a toothless smile.

An older boy on the other side of the room laughed. He head was shaven into what at first appeared to be a monk's tonsure, but I suppose he was having some sort of brain surgery. The bandages on his wrists were stained liked dirty linen napkins. In spite of all this, the way he was laughing made it impossible for me to feel sorry for him. I asked him what was so funny.

"You are," he smiled faintly. "You're not a vampire. You're not anything."

I pretended that I wasn't paying attention. I picked up and examined the G.I. Joe at Philip's bedside as the peculiar boy continued.

"This is the cup of my blood."

Philip started crying as though he had heard all of this before.

"It will be shed for you so that sins may be forgiven."

Philip was screaming for the other boy to shut up. I reluctantly went over to his bed and asked him to please stop. I gave him some candy. He smiled at me with his eyes closed. As I walked out the door, I heard the sound of candy hitting the floor.

There were four beds in the next room I visited. They were brothers and sisters, all badly burned. Their skin looked like the top of an overcooked open grilled cheese sandwich. Three of them were jumping about the room

speaking Spanish, throwing pillows at each other and playing with the electric beds. The eldest sat on a bed with his face to the dark window. His I.D. bracelet read "Garcia, J." With my limited knowledge of Spanish, I tried to ask him his name.

He replied in a voice that seemed removed from his thin body, "Jesus," without even turning to see the vampire who loomed over him.

He had burns all over his arms and legs, and I could only imagine what lay beneath the hospital smock he wore. All the burns I could see had a strange symmetrical pattern. Trying to talk to him was frustrating. I arranged a sentence in my mind and asked, "What happened to all of you?"

He spoke quickly, but I understood the important words. "Mother...very angry...pushed us into the stove...." He turned and revealed the stove-top burner spirals branded into the sides of his ten-year-old face.

My head began to swim. I couldn't understand why something like that should ever happen. There were no answers on the walls as I looked around the room, catching glances of grilled cheese skin. I wanted the power to lay my hands upon their open wounds and have all the burning fall into my empty soul, or to put them asleep for a long time so they might awake with no recollection of anything that had happened.

I felt an uncertain sickness, a ringing in my ears like the sound of the automatic doors that had swept me into that place. I moved from the bed slowly, leaving Jesus to stare at the floor. I walked to the door as calmly as possible, telling myself the whole way that the burning-flesh smell was merely a hallucination. That made wading through the smell no easier, and I let out a breath as I stepped into the hallway. I bumped into the nurse with the beehive hairdo.

"Oh, it's you. I hope you're not scaring the children."

I tried to speak, coughing up only a few syllables before I was taken over with the sensation of choking, as though I was being given a throat culture. I spat out the vampire fangs into my hand. An embarrassing string of saliva stretched between the corner of my mouth and my fingers. I wanted to be far away, swimming in a cool blue ocean.

"I don't know what happened," I told her. "One of the kids started crying for no reason."

I didn't look into her eyes, but I knew she was staring at what was hanging out of my mouth. "Well, in the future, be more careful."

I wanted to tell her there wasn't going to be any future. Once I left the hospital, I had no intention of ever returning.

As the nurse walked away, I felt Barbara's presence from behind. I didn't turn around when she said my name. She walked around to face me. For some reason, her dress had stains and marks all over it. One of her wings was about to fall off, and her halo was so crooked it looked like a silver zero floating over her head.

"Every fucking kid had to pull on my costume when they had chocolate all over their hands." I noticed she was sweating. Makeup had started to run down her face.

"Can you fix this?" She motioned to the wing that was falling off.

I went behind her and took hold of it. The sound of crumpling paper was like celery being chewed. I pulled it up a little and the wing began to tear.

"Never mind!" Barbara pulled away from me, but I didn't let go. The wing ripped off her back.

She spun around and glared at me as I held the thing in my hand. "You stupid asshole! Why the hell did you do that?"

She looked at me for a moment, as if she was waiting for an answer. I let the wing drift to the floor in front of her feet. I looked backed at her with that kind of blank expression which sometimes accompanies the greatest satisfaction.

Peter Walsh is a sophomore English major. He wrote this short story in English 246.

POEMS BY LYNNE M. VAIL

Perfect Years

she mixes herself the perfect
gin & tonic,
cutting limes methodically
she has been doing this for years.
it has been a good week.
he hasn't hit her more than twice.
he was drunk,
she thinks.
if he does it again I'm leaving
but she has told herself this before.
they only talk to each other in bed.
she remembers, at sixteen, coming home
with a hickey on her neck
and having her mother ask
the typical maternal questions.
her father didn't even ask.
he just looked at her.
she tilted her chin in the air, slightly
as if she were proud.
they didn't notice
her torn stockings.
at least she didn't have to lie.
she sighs and adds three icecubes
to the drink.
she listens to them hit
the bottom of the glass
like a well-aimed uppercut
to the jaw.

Hangover

Fire spreads its Fury's wings over the room,
rising from an indigo place,
a source that moves in desperate syncopation
like the breathing of cliff divers
in the sudden shock of sea.

An infinite microcosm, still young, still growing,
arches its neck into and through the light.
Pulsating angrily as beached jellyfish,
congealing into one stinging mass
on the shore.

Encapsulated worlds conceive themselves,
generate fertile personalities.
Branches of light, newborn,
flex a mutant, eight-fingered hand.

Hand becomes fist,
then shape-shifts to become a single orb,
dilating and contracting
its pulsing, violent pupil.
Magenta waves descend,
coursing ecstatically as let blood,
blinding swiftly like too much darkness.

Flight Through Montage

A blonde woman
Wearing yellow wings
Leaps over a Rockefeller balcony
Into the sea.

The best flowers
Bloom at night.

Crushed cigarettes
Stink in a Mexican ashtray--
Unseen man lights another,
Waiting for a call that never comes.

Near Milan
A butterfly is pinioned
In the grip of a black leather glove.

Bright pigments mix
Into hallucination
Of future days.

Meanwhile,
A black-shrouded angel
With white wings
Brings me down to earth.

Lynne M. Vail is a sophomore English major.

POEMS BY MARY KANE

South Africa is a Metaphor

What if the metaphor were printed in the press
Blackandblue and bloody fucking white
Blackandblue on bloody fucking white
Ironic? Black ole words on background white?
Power! Power! who's got the power?
Same moneypaper whites. It's them's got
the last word: no white, no words.

What if the metaphor were printed in the press
Big bold black against pulp paper white
Oh, thou winged whites, in splendor spoken, stopping
to blow away with bullets blacks who slipped and spoke.
The Blacks, the ugly black print, wouldn't have
wicked words worth spouting if it weren't for the whites.

What if the metaphor were printed in the press, our press,
And everybody start screamin and hollerin
about the horror and the injustice of the metaphor
Only nobody saw it. Nobody noticed that
it was a metaphor. That it is a metaphor.
Ain't nobody could miss seein the metaphor's link,
Oolala, that perfect p-p-p-p-p-piece.

To Be Read Aloud

I am the silence.
Awake, Unnoticed I wander
through bars and bus stations,
classrooms, cafes and crowded
kitchens and cafeterias.
Unheard,
you think me not there
beneath the music
of the juke boxes, transistors and
horns
beside the voices shouting, whispering,
lying, laughing and
singing
But I am
I lie comfortable
between uneasiness.
I fill
spaces
absorbing uptight vibes
of the unspeaking angry
and the nervous confessors--the waiting
I am the silence that
my mother can't stand
that she beats upon
senselessly
just for being.
I do not sleep
while you do
No, I nestle around you
watching the images in your dreams
not needing the dialogue
I am not
interrupted
as is so often said of me
rather, I am ignored
and I am often
despised
I am the silence watching,
hugging the night walkers
and the lovers past their nervousness
I speak to the surprise visitors
on a backroad in Northwest Ireland
who stop to listen to me
and at dawn I
introduce the birds
I am the peace
between each loud tick of
the kitchen clock
I am the silence that
speaks from your lover's mouth
the words you didn't get

Untitled

The cast you recognize as your own.
Five sets of accusing eyes
yours on loan from the catalogue of noticeables, nuts,
and family from the past.
The little psychotic (you know those ones
who always wanted to be something
they're not, but don't give it up. Instead they
torture themselves by serving one who is: the failed
musician turning pages for the pianist, his eyes two
darts shooting at you the creator)
Then there's the couple married late
in life, still smiling at each other, holding hands,
forty years old in church
eyes for only them
overlooking the little failure psychotic. And don't
forget the square faced poet woman waxed anti-feminist
sitting pretty with yuppie beau
Looking, All of them, at you, your eyes black, cruelly
cast
on your characters in the street.

Mary Kane is a junior English major.

FLUNKING OUT

Jeff Seiler

I am at college. I am very drunk. I do not care, not like you might think I don't care, like you think I just want to get drunk and pass out without caring about anything except the half finished bottle clasped in my fingers; it is because I care too much, I can't care. It is because if I cared I think I might die, so I don't, I just sit here and drink.

I am sitting-leaning on the fraternity porch against the cool roughness of the brick walls. It is night, a cool black night that feels like smooth glass, in which white imperfect stars smudge the completeness of the blackness. From here, where I sit, I can see a corner of the quad, though it is not 'the' quad but a small field on which the fraternity sits on the west end, next to the faculty parking lot, and across from West Dorm. The quad is a plane of grey, a carpet of grey I feel I should wrap myself up in, rolling faster and faster into the hidden security of the round roll.

I take another drink. A long drink. I think 'hiding,' I think the word 'security'; I examine them, not as entire words, not like in a dictionary, but as dissected pieces of words. "Hi Ding," I say to myself knowing deep within the truth of the word, as if the word were made for that purpose, to mock me. I shiver. I feel the liquor in my stomach, feel the queasiness of drinking too much too quickly. The other word 'Security': I think this 'secours' is French, only I don't know any French, but there is this word mocking me again, withholding its meanings. I guess, remembering back to some high school French to some Lady named Mademoiselle Glickstein, and think 'secours' means idiot. There 'idiot' I-ty, the 'idiot italian,' I think again this, 'Hi Ding.'

The fraternity is quiet inside. I listen at the bricks and almost hear nothing except for the wooshing noise in my ear, as if I were listening to, instead of noise of the fraternity, to the hollowness of my own head. I think, everybody is studying, there is no one to make any noise. Somewhere, in a dorm, on the second floor down at the end corner there is my room, and inside in the stark yellowness of the ceiling light glinting off the white grey of the walls, off the metal bed frames, the plastic of the desks, is a part of me. On the desk, beneath the arch of the architect's lamp, sit my books in a skewed columns like ancient Roman columns waiting to finally erode, to finally

topple. It is where I should be, even now should be, only I'm drunk. Probably too drunk even to stand, though not to feel.

I feel, I don't know how, old, worn. Like time was stolen from me, pulled so slowly from me that I never knew it was going, never cared, until now it's gone. And not just gone, not just like all time goes or has gone or will always go, but gone because it was not used. As if almost I had slept the time away, had cared that little, and now awake, a piece of my time is gone. And there are no explanations.

I jerk the bottle to my lips, tilt the liquid back, tilt it back like it holds life itself, and let the fountain pour down my throat. But it can't all run in and I have to puke it out, waste even that. And then, sitting-lying, my head on the dimpled cool concrete that smells of dry ash, I begin to sober. I feel pain. I wonder at the pain, till I wonder past the pain, and start just to wonder. I wonder about things, though nothing with shape, as a person with anesthetized arms might try to feel the shape of an object and can't. Then, finally, something forms.

I wonder about a postman, I wonder about a letter he is about to deliver; a very thin letter in an envelope with the school emblem emblazoned in raised print on the front. He will deliver it to a metal mailbox flaking bits of black paint and sagging slightly forward. And, after the letter has sat in the mailbox for a short time, my mother will walk out the front porch, carefully closing the door behind her and locking it, and she will walk down the steps on her short fat legs, her round body rolling slightly from side to side. She will walk down the crooked flagstones of our house, on either side of which limp dark green grass grows, down to the mailbox and remove the mail flicking through the small pile until she gets to the letter and stops. She will stop. her plain face pinching slightly causing her eyes to look almost crossed, and she will stare at the letter, stare at the name, the address to make sure it is really for the 'Parents of.' Then she will shake her head, pass by the letter, keep on flicking until the end, then retrace her footsteps back into the house. And she will put the letter, by itself, on the kitchen counter, alone on the brown linoleum. Later, when my father comes in with his tired face, his clothes full of the dust of rock or tile, he will enter the kitchen and see the letter immediately. And the letter will stay there, untouched, until after dinner. Then, my father will push back from the table, and taking the glass of red wine from dinner, he will say, "So what came in the mail, eh?" to my mother. And she will reply, her eyes staring at a plate or window or clock, she will reply in a small simple plain voice, "Oh, just a letter from

'The' college. And she will reach around, without having to look, but through some inborn directional motherly device, and grab the letter and give it to my father who will read it, his face not changing shape but somehow darkening in color as a chameleon will when confronted with danger.

I wonder about all this. I wonder about explanations, but there aren't any. There are only words. And when my father comes in his red beaten pick-up with the dents on the rear-right panel. When he comes, and still, even then, knocks reverently on the door and awkwardly stands within its small walls that he had said once, "were of good make." He will want to know about the letter he has tucked into his back pocket. He will not ask, but just pull the letter out and hand it to me, still in its envelope, and then stare at me, looking up and down at me as if he had not seen me since I was a little boy and was astonished at how tall I had gotten. And wait. Wait as if he could wait forever, had always waited forever, and a little more of any forever was of no import.

And it will be my turn. I will look at the room packed into a few boxes, leaving only its shell: the bed, bureau, desk, look at the boxes holding my belongings like they had no right to be in boxes but should still be outside the boxes, tucked in their usual places, only they aren't. And I will think back to the night I was drunk. And I will say, "It doesn't matter. I don't care. You always wanted me to help you with your work, anyway."

And I will see my father, mine who always looked so tall so strong who held me once the day grandfather died and said, "You must be strong," him, I will see his shoulders sag, and his head will turn quickly away. And from over his shoulders he will say in a low voice like a life's last gasp, "You disappointed me."

Jeff Seiler is a senior English major.

POEMS BY MARY ELLEN OLSON

Untitled

I left today to visit my mother
(who is cool and white and above me)
and returned dodging
thick bolts shooting off
a metal sky
that strike and dig deep
into my soft head
the way the apple sank deep into
Gregor's back.

And I'm crazy now,
the forest aches and screams
and tears with outraged arms and
hard ripping nails that rake
and bubble warm blood--
I need to clutch
and bite and crush that cold
machine sky
banging my head.

But anger gone I'm dead
and quiet beside a window--
bitter sour tears cooling my face
which twitches and shakes
with memory and my brain
throbs from hair pulled and endless screaming--
And I am tired and sleepless
and completely unlike the moon.

January Stars

Dancing
with rainlight
swept through open windows;
swaying note by note
with George Winston
under dark time stars
(5.99 from the catalog)
plotted point by point
into ceiling
constellations.

Later, with you gone,
those stars beckon
like your eyes;
shimmering,
and the rain
dances at my window
and I sway slowly
to sleep.

Twisted in moonlight
melted by Venetian blinds;
I wake--
one sweaty foot
caught deep in the covers;
and everything bare and black
save the small red spot of the alarm
and bold numbers
that thoughtlessly train our
universe

Untitled

At 19 my soul exists in a foreign body.
Sitting by this window it dawns
on me that i have broken seven
commandments...going on eight.

I've never liked playing by the rules
And besides, I've never seen these tablets;
traced their message with a long fingernail,
smoothed the top of the cold, moss-grown stone.

Purgatory worries me though. At night
I shrink from languid monsters whose
Arms drape about me; in horror
i sink into Hell's brown slime.

Eyes open and the big light forces the old milk
stench away, the gurgling stops, and but for
the clinging, greasy film on my skin and
the snarly nest of my hair i am safe.

The wind paws at my clean lacey curtains
and tickles a soft finger about my neck.
I don't know the meaning of my hell;
I don't understand the Hell in my life.

Untitled

What i mean to say
is that i am a flower
sucked in rain-made mud;
form flayed by wind,
eyes teased by dust and blind,
limbs fresh and green and reaching.

What i mean to say
is that i am a flower
forced fragile,
And that my silky sweat
spins sweetly through fields
but is sweat.

Understand
that the softness that draws you
secretes stringy veins
and blankets the black mesh
that twists fragments of my soul
into liquids and cells.

What i mean to say
is that i have become,
that i am twilight,
and linen, and the bitter demon rain,
And that long necked crystal vases
with wide rims cannot hold me.

Mary Ellen Olson is a sophomore English major. She wrote
"January Stars" in English 246.

POEMS BY JOSEPH P. GILLOTTI III

Hahnenkamm

A warm, grey cloud
Of snow blankets the village
Narrow streets, nestled shops
Chalets and inns

Small quaint quiet
Life hidden in the Alps
Before roaring fires, great hearths
Where skis stand dripping dry
And accordions play

But higher up in the peaks
A true cold, bleak firs
Choral winds or gentle fog
Of snow falling

Lonely nervous
Existence explodes out the shack
Drops a racer like
Lightning to a wild ride and yells
And cowbells clang

The Strief track begins, Mousefalle (a cliff drop)
All over the steep upper part, whistling past
Catch nets and haybales, taking air off the
Steilhang a shattering bump diving, cutting
Hard right then tucking into the trees
A long middle road never fast enough
Cascading down across the side hill
Edging, scraping, chattering down
Top speed around ninety into the
Compression, knees to jaw the
Final schuss under banner
Stopping the Swiss timer.

The long slide into the paddock
Crowds, ten deep
Cheering to a beat around the
Snow fence, as
From the mountainous
Valley of risk, their
Hero (the Austrian) is delivered
A glorious, daring victory in
The downhill.

Staring

who swept the
mines and not the tears
and the sea was black
and oil chunked
someone in a high place
misspoke near a microphone
Wall Street turned to gold
and rusted, a strong go
protesting nuclear arms and plants
injecting arms, poisoning plants
without music as aural loses to
visual people go blind
they hear only worse things, sometimes
through a hot black and grey
haze, the world sore and stinging
Cosmonauts invading Central America
fighting leftist, dramatic, dogmatic
tactic in a leafy rain forest
no hope poor people on
old crumbly streets
and giant modern towers shimmering
fiscal trump cards planning the
savings of loan futures, sexy
horses trample down soft, green
lawns on a polo shirt aboard the
Concorde with French jazz distracted
by a curvaceous nylon-clad performer
dancing hard on high heels
without politics, policies or police, or
criminals spoiling the good time
for wasters drunk on beer
interrupted by a commercial in a
jewelry box conjured up by
computer graphics, mega-byte
technoid man-machines displaying
no anger or emotion only confusion
purring quietly in large, flat, rooms
behind securities, air conditioned

rain down then straightened out
in minds flashing, minimizing
the Suez and MacDonaldis and deficits
Pentagonal concerns, Potomic novels
interrupting satellite transmissions
President's bombs on
the media-scape which is
oh-so promising.

Until it shrank and
disappeared
inside itself.

Joseph Gillotti is a senior marketing major. He wrote these
poems for English 246.

FOOD FOR THE GODS

Josephine M. Cannella

On Sunday afternoon, we were to go to the town fair. But first we had to go to Mass, and then we could go to the fair.

For a four-year-old going to the fair, Mass was longer and more tiresome than usual. I sat between Mom and Dad, who held my hands in their laps. Their hands were always warm, and mine were always cold. Father Bill was talking about the Kingdom of God and Heaven and eternal bliss. After Mass was over, I asked Father Bill if Heaven was really in the sky and if we really get angel wings and everything we want when we go there.

"Well, Tina, it's hard to say for sure since nobody who's ever been there has come back to tell us. But my guess is that when you're in Heaven, you won't be wanting the same things you want now. You won't want anything at all, because you'll be very happy anyway."

I didn't understand how you could be very happy if you didn't have all the things you wanted, but I was afraid to ask any more questions. Mom smiled at me, though, as if to tell me, it doesn't matter. We'll take care of you. We'll keep you happy. Then she picked me up and said, "Come on, little one, we're going to the fair now!" I forgot all my questions and brightened my spirits with the thought of this other mysterious event.

The nine of us packed ourselves into the red Ford station wagon. I had to sit in the "way back" because I was the youngest. Bethy had to sit with me because she was the next one up. Joey, Marjorie, Louise, and Susan sat in the huge middle seat, and Benny got to sit up front with Mom and Dad because he was the oldest. Bethy told me when she went to the fair last year (I couldn't go then; I was too young), she had popcorn balls and rode on the "fairies' wheel." Usually she and I got into fights, but not this time, because I just sat wondering about popcorn and fairies. This would indeed be a wonderful place.

Finally we were there, climbing out of the station wagon like so many circus clowns. The park was filled with people and bright colored signs and a strangely sweet smell I had never known before.

I was to walk with Marj because she had the most patience. She showed me the Midway where you could win a bear by throwing a ring on a bottle. But I couldn't see the

bottles or the bears. All I could see were people's legs. If you weren't afraid, you could go into the Gypsy's tent for your fortune. But Marj said she was too afraid, and I wasn't allowed to go in alone. We heard old men under a tarp calling out numbers. Marj wouldn't tell me why. She put me on a plastic horse, but it made me sick.

I asked for a popcorn ball and a fairies' wheel and she laughed at me. "I'll buy you a popcorn ball, but a ferris wheel is way too expensive!" Then she picked me up and turned me around and pointed to the left, saying "That's a ferris wheel, Teeny, not a fairies' wheel. Do you want to ride on it?"

"Wow!" I exclaimed when I saw the giant wheel with baskets on it. I couldn't see it before; I was too small to see much at all. Marj carried me to the candy stand and bought me a popcorn ball. Then she ran with me over to the other side of the park where the huge machine was.

We had to wait a long time. The popcorn ball was sticky, and I kept licking my fingers, but I had promised myself I wouldn't eat it until I was on the ferris wheel. When we got to the front of the line, Marj gave the woman two tickets and we sat in a chair with a door in front. The woman locked the door and said, "Now you stay in your seat, young lady. I don't want anybody fallin' out!"

Suddenly all my hopes were turned to fears, and the huge machine at the middle of the wheel looked like a nasty monster waiting to eat all the little children who didn't stay in their seats. Of course I won't stand up, lady, I thought bravely, but I didn't have the nerve to say it.

We moved up slowly as the woman locked more passengers into their chairs. As we got higher and higher, I quickly forgot my fears when I looked down below. This must be how God sees us, I thought. I took a bite of my popcorn ball and looked up. Nobody's legs were in the way now. I could almost touch the clouds. I wondered if I could see Heaven if we went any higher. I took another bite of my treat.

I remembered what Father Bill had said that morning, and I thought Heaven wouldn't be any good if I couldn't have a popcorn ball. I decided I would eat only two more bites of it and then save the rest so that when I died I could eat my popcorn ball in Heaven.

I took one bite. Then the machine, the ferris wheel, started moving much more quickly, around and around, so that we went up to the top, then rushed back down again. "This must be what it's like to fly," I said to Marj, picturing the angels following the same patterns of flight that we did

in the ferris wheel. But Marj just tried to look at her eyebrows. I took my last bite of the popcorn ball, and when the ride was over, I would never eat anymore of it.

That night I hid the confection in a shoe box in the back of my closet. I kneeled down and blessed Mom and Dad and Marj (for being so patient), and everybody else, even Bethy. I asked God to bless my popcorn ball, too, just to make sure it would be o.k. to eat when I got to Heaven. I slept well that night.

Some time later, Beth found my popcorn ball. She had been in my side of the closet looking for her old pair of shoes.

"What's THIS?" she shrieked, holding up the ant covered remains of my ambrosia by the tips of her thumb and forefinger.

"I wanted to save it so I could eat it when I go to Heaven, like on the ferris wheel," I replied with a little horror at the sight of it.

Bethy started laughing, and she ran to tell all my sisters and brothers about how "Teeny-weeny Tina's saving popcorn balls for Heaven!" I stood there in my room, in front of the closet, crying confused tears that fell like salty rain on the sweet little world of the ants.

Josephine M. Cannella is a senior English major. She wrote this story in English 216.

Babcia

She sat in a lounge chair under
The basketball hoop of the gray garage,
A thick blue blanket covering her legs.
November wind tossed her cotton-soft hair
And lifted orange and brown leaves--
Dried leaves that scratched against
The driveway when they landed.

Through tiny glasses she watched the man next door
Rake the brown leaves into the road
While his children, on their bicycles,
Skidded down the sidewalk
Into the piles of leaves...
Perhaps she had forgotten we were there,
My father and I.
She looked down at the tiny gold watch--
Its band over tissues so it couldn't cut
Her skin,
The way it wanted to.

The wind howled and sent leaves flying.
She looked up at the sky
"Maybe snow soon?"
And to my father in Polish--
"When is she going back to school?"
She could remember her school days
And even the poems she had memorized.
"But what happened yesterday?"
She was ready,
To go inside, she said.

I carried the blanket.
My father helped her up the steps.
She sat in the nearest chair,
Waiting to catch her breath.
"Thank you for coming to see Babcia,"
She held my face in her
Wrinkled hands,
"Jencuya": Your're welcome, I said
And walked the two miles home
Alone
Crunching through dried leaves.

Babcia (Part II)

I brought her a pale yellow crocheted shawl
On Christmas Eve.
She smiled and said
It was beautiful.
I told her my roommate's Grandma made it
Special for her--
So she wouldn't get cold
Sitting in her bed.
She rubbed her cheek against it
And couldn't believe how soft it was.

I wrapped it around her shoulders
And tied the ties into a bow
Beneath her chin.
Her warm fingers touched my face
And she kissed my cheek.
"I like it company,"
Behind her tiny glasses
I saw her eyes fill with water.

She turned to my father
Sitting next to her on the bed
And spoke quietly to him in Polish--
She wanted to know if ZJadek and Uncle John
Were buried in the United States.
My father only answered "tac": yes, and
My eyes began to sting.
They were buried in Connecticut,
Her husband and her brother.
She was there last spring
When we planted flowers.

I turned to the window
And watched the white snow
In the dark blue night.

Christine Jopeck is a freshman English major.

MARY ELLEN OLSON

Untitled

My Pop
pumped iron
pissing poison
on red benches
that melt
skin.

My Pop
pounded fist
and beat his blood
blue

My Pop
shattered boulders
and bones
then swept off
somedays
for paydays.

Now me
under bar
grunting up weight--
bubbling blue,
burning that
weary glow
from his green eyes.

PATRICE MCCURRY

Going to School

Sitting at breakfast in this quiet kitchen
Listening to the 10 am chatter
mixed with the tweaking and chirping
into the room, gently blown,
my coffee spills drop by drop
over the rim and into the saucer,
the cup, possessed crockery,
shaken, convulsively, invisibly
by my knee jiggling angrily
under the crowded table.

10 am is too late
too late to linger over breakfast
on a week day.
In this quiet place
which confuses with its idleness
I am too heavy with words
or, really, I would go back.

I would go back to the 5 am darkness
morning and coffee, black
with little glints of reflected light on their surface.
Silent faces.
There can be no quiet in such a silent place
So much is said by puffy eyes, resting
on the thick rim of the mug.
and silence still as we climb
down
the rickety sticks of the wharf
and up, again,
and swing across out over the oily water
silent glee when our black rubber boots clump
onto the red, wet, wood and stood
black feet shadows dripping water.

The long beach curves away
and we follow.
Along the edge the sea
stealthy, silent,
slides up like a puppy, and licks
our black boots, glinting wet sunlight.
At school, there was milk.

Patrice McCurry is a junior English major. She wrote this poem in English 146.

SARA NELLER ELEKTRA, TX

HOW CAN A HEART EMIT NEON SPARKS AND FLASHES
IN COLORS THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST?
SHE IS DANGERHIGHVOLTAGE, A FIREHAZARD, CRAZED
DEAD ELECTRIC CONTRABAND QUEEN.
SINE WAVES OVER THE OCEAN; A TOWN IN NORTH TEXAS:
ANYWHERE: ELEKTRA'S FORBIDDEN POWER
ZAPS OUT
FLYING
INTO THE NIGHT-DAY SKY
IN STRANDS OF ELECTRIC BLUES,
AND GREENS, AND PINKS
LIKE HAIR

Sara Neller is a senior English major. She wrote this poem in English 246.

CHAPTER'S END

Daniel Thomas Jones

It had been a long year. My fall semester I had almost flunked out because I had thought that I wanted to be an engineer. My spring semester has been spent fulfilling requirements of the School of Business Administration. I wasn't quite sure if a major in business was right for me.

My father and I drove back to Danbury in a rented van that was filled with my sister's and my own worldly possessions. My mother and sister drove back in the car because there was not enough room in the van for everything. My father seemed preoccupied. He asked me about school, and I asked him about his work, but there was little conversation.

We arrived at a house that I hadn't seen since spring break. It was the same old place. A large, tan, suburban home on a well kept acre. We emptied the van into the basement and went upstairs. I greeted our dog Spunky, who was fast approaching fifteen years of age. He had cataracts and was getting senile, but he still had some energy in him. My parents went to return the van to the rental agency.

My sister and I were left standing in the kitchen, contemplating the work it would take to move our kitchen things upstairs and refill our empty rooms. Brenda, who was making Dean's list, is considered pretty, and was in a good mood, having just taken her last final exam. I saw a stack of papers that were stapled together in a remote corner of the kitchen counter. I walked over, casually picked it up, and flipped over the cover page. I read some legal jargon that translated into "your mother is divorcing your father." I felt the adrenaline rush through my body as I stared blankly at the page.

When I recovered I handed the document to my sister and said, "Take a look at this." She took a little bit longer to look at it than I had. "Interesting," she said, looking a little scared. I suppose I did too. Nothing else was said, we simply began moving our things back into our rooms and waited for our parents to return.

I was shocked, because my parents had always gotten along well, but I knew that I had considered the possibility of their divorce before. I began to wonder what had made me think about it.

I remember that over spring break my father had mysteriously fallen asleep on the couch quite a few nights,

and had spent the night there. Could this be the reason for my thoughts of divorce? I knew that these thoughts had occurred before then. There was something more.

Maybe it was the fact that my parents never did anything besides take care of the lawn. A couple of years ago they had taken dancing lessons. They never went out dancing though, they just sat at home. They saw an occasional movie, but never did anything special.

My mother began keeping close contact with a friend of hers that she had gotten to know while we were living in Tennessee. Joanne was divorced and living in Nashville. She had come up to visit my mother a couple of times during the previous year. My father was usually out of town on business when she came to visit, and she and my mother would go out at night to have a couple of drinks to talk. My mother visited Nashville a couple of times also. I began to get a feel for why I had thought of a divorce.

Just then I heard my parents arrive back home. I started to get a sick feeling in my stomach. This feeling intensified when I heard my mother calling for my sister and me to come downstairs. We went down and found them sitting in the family room. The room is large, and our parents were sitting apart. Spunky was lounging by the door that leads out onto the deck. My sister and I sat down, knowing this would take longer than a minute.

"We have something very important to talk about," my mother said in a shaky voice. Her eyes began to tear.

We know," I replied in a voice almost as shaky as my mother's.

"You know? How do you know?" my father questioned. I explained to them that we had seen the document in the kitchen.

"Oh," my mother said in an almost relieved tone, knowing she would not have to use the word divorce.

My mother did most of the talking. She said that my father didn't live at the house anymore, that he hadn't really lived there in quite a while. They had decided to wait until the end of the academic year to tell us, so it wouldn't disrupt our studies. My father was being transferred to Maryland, I learned, and my mother was moving to Nashville at the end of the summer. At that time the house would be sold. Spunky would have to be put to sleep.

They asked us if we wanted to know anything about the circumstances surrounding this decision. I immediately said

"No, I don't care to hear about it," and went back upstairs. I had to get out of the house. I called my friend Eric, whom I hadn't seen since spring break. I didn't tell him about the situation, but he said he would be over to pick me up and go do something.

I heard Eric pull into our driveway from my room. By the time I got downstairs my mother had already greeted him at the back door. He and my parents were in the family room making small talk. I hastened the end of the conversation by saying "Let's go." I said goodbye to my parents, but looked only at my father. I stepped out into the cool evening air, knowing he would be gone when I returned.

Daniel Jones is a senior economics major. He wrote this essay in English 249.

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