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This 10th Anniversary issue of WRITING UCONN was made possible by funds from the English Department and The Aetna Chair of Writing. We are also grateful to the Connecticut Writing Project for past support. Denise Beaudoin typed the manuscript.

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.

Editorial Board: Kathy Daniels, Geoff Gordon, Kate Hanna, Jeremy Kohler, Larry Migdol, Chris Okonis, Jennifer Runde, Darren Sechrist, Laura Whaples, Jack Zaientz, students; Joan Joffe Hall, faculty

Michael Anthony Robertino
Night Trip

What he wanted was an iced tea. On a hot July night and just off work he usually went straight home, but tonight...he had other plans. For the past few days he had been going into a local fast-food restaurant for coffee and, lately, to see Enrique

He took to Route 16 rehearsing those familiar lines: "Hey, Dude"...No, that won't do. Sounds affected, as if I'm desperately trying to fit in.

Man, just be cool. Act normal. But this time was special, he kept saying to himself.

Here I am, a grown fool, infatuated with a kid, driving out of my way...for what? What I know, I know.

His window rolled down just enough to let in the bucolic night. The bluish twilight swelled. Hesitation pushed through his body. Anxiety warmed his mouth, that sometimes metallic foretaste, that biological warning that urge to stay or skate
Cool thing, the Milkbottle Game, housed in a solitary shack directly center on the main mall.

Hear the hum of carnival ride engines, oompah organs grinding, reeling and mixing with baby cries,
teenss laughter, mirroring the geriatrics all tied to generations of eclectic pasts and presents.

Got it, bard? Got the drift?
Dig the Milkbottle Boy tending the Game.

He works his post, wooing the crowds, luring them to take potshots at imitation milkbottles for a buck a pop. "Step up! Try your luck!" shouts the Milkbottle Boy, his blush lips mechanically moving, maniacally expelling his rehearsed lines.

"Step up! Try your luck!" echoes the game crier.
"Here--first one's on me. You can do it. Win at the game, man! Win, man. Here's the ball. Take it and throw!"

With one foot atop the counter rail, the other firmly planted on the ground, the Milkbottle Boy stands, hunched over his uncovered knee, his leg exposed, crossed by an arm soft with yellow hair.

His whiteboy complexion is wholesome, his eyes are rapping, his lips invite us to play the Game.

Flocking amusement-parksters shoulder their way along the promenade, matching jocular nonsense. Madness galvanizes the air. We're there with you, Gameboy.
Rubi Krayeske

On an Island, Alone

I wake up and you
Have pulled my sleeping bag inside
Yours and are breathing your heavy
Dorito-Oreo-smoke-wine-beer breath into
My face and it is blistering my skin
And I feel your fingers clawing up
Inside me scratching at my heart and
I know this has happened before
Because I recognize the way your face is drawn
Tight and the hostile memory of your
Panting and I’m almost sure I want
To scream or break free but
You are a dead weight on top
Of me filling my world with your
Stinking air and I thought I trusted you
And I squirm and struggle and I make
Noise and you just figure that I like to be
Woken up on a desolate island with a fist
Jammed into my womanhood and fumes
In my face and am being frisky and sexy
And I say no but you don’t understand
And make yourself a part of me
I don’t want to share.

Iris Cavallero

Bubbles of Memory

Memory is defined by Webster’s dictionary as:

Memory – the power, act, or process of recalling to mind facts previously learned or past experiences.
Memory – refers specifically to the ability or power for retaining reviving in the mind past thoughts, images, ideas, etc.

When I am trying to recall my childhood memories I can feel how my mind struggles. It works like a natural machine, as if to reproduce my lost events all over again. It is a paradox how my senses do not really sense but virtually they do. My eyes attempt to draw a picture, my nose tries to sniff a smell, my tongue aims to retain a taste and my ears endeavor to hear sounds.

After this great action occurs within my body the outcome is still very limited. The recent recollection is still very different from the actual event. Like a guest passing by it stays in my mind for a short while, creating an ambiguous vision. This vague notion of a memory is very similar to the notion of a dream. This notion conceals the charm of memories.

Now my hands are ready to make an effort too. They fumble in order to feel, creating perishable text bubbles that vanish after a few seconds.

My Father and A Golden Apple Tree

I was so frightened when it first happened to me. I was sure that a giant plant would grow inside of me. A very small seed of a golden apple (which is an orange in Hebrew),
just slipped into my throat, straight into my stomach. I had immediately remembered the germination project from kindergarten. The way we put pea seeds in a small box on top of wetted cotton balls, how we watered them every day, and finally how they sprouted, turning to plants. I was even more frightened after this thought occurred to me. I rushed to my father to tell him about the terrible accident.

"A big orange tree will grow inside of your body and its branches will come out of your head, just like a real tree." That was what he told me. At first I was very confused and quiet, but then my father laughed and patted my head. I raised my head and looked at him carefully. He had such a smile, and a look in his eyes that cured everything. There was no need for him to tell me that this is not true. I knew it and I joined his laughter.

**My Mother and a Camomile Tea**

I was six years old when I was standing naked in the bathroom, waiting for my mother. I could hear the tea pot whistling. I could also hear my mother in the kitchen pouring the boiling water, making an extract of a camomile tea. Then I heard her steps, and long before she entered the bathroom I could smell its strong aroma.

"What a strange smell," I thought to myself, when my mother entered the bathroom. "It is not too hot, right?" I asked her.

"I mixed it with cold water, it is just fine," she answered. I bent my head back, yielding my hair to my mother's dedicated treatment. She lifted the cup and poured the liquid on my hair.

"Oops, it is still too hot for me!" I said and jumped away. So my mother added more cold water and we tried it again. It was still hot, but I could tolerate it.

"Done!" my mother said. "Now you have to wait 5 minutes to let the extract act." Then she went away and I was left to wait in the cold bath. This was when I discovered that 5 minutes can be a long time. I really liked my hair. I really liked its color as well. I know that the camomile herb has an important characteristic of retaining its blond color. Yet I didn’t like to sit there shivering, calling my mother every few seconds to check if the time had passed. I especially didn’t like its strange smell sticking to my hair.

Today I am 26 years old, and I am fond of herbal tea. It happens and I even drink camomile tea. While doing so, my smell sense turns sharper than my taste sense, and I have this strange feeling that it is more appropriate to pour the tea on my head then to draw it near my lips.

**Bed Boat**

Ellie, my young sister, and myself were playing in the bedroom. We created a sailing fantasy. My bed served us as a big blue ocean. I was lying on my back covered with a blanket. I was about to become a ship, and my sister waited in her bed for the signal. All of a sudden, I stretched my arms and legs up as if I raised the pole and extended the sails. The vessel was ready to cruise, the only thing that was missing was the skipper.

This was Ellie's part. Indeed, Ellie came aboard, on me, and together we sailed across the sea. The more we discoordinated the more the sea was rough and dangerous, but as we became mellow the journey was smooth and cozy. Restrospectively, it was a great way to stimulate our night-time dreams.

**A Memory with Myself**

I don't know whether it was really such a common name or whether it was just my fate to encounter all the other "Irises" at once. The fact was that I hated my name. It was the time of my elementary school, and everywhere I went there were a few other "Irises" around. If someone wanted to call one of us, they needed to indicate if it was Iris A., Iris B., Iris C. (myself), or Iris Z.
"Iris is a flower" folks used to tell me, and I thought to myself "So what! there are millions of such flowers..."

For a while I wanted to change my name. But then at high school, "Iris" suddenly became very important to me. I realized that "Iris" is a part of me and that I should look for greater reasons for loving it. During my visits to the public library I devoted time to research for the origins of "me." So it happened and I found a precious little book that revealed me the latent origin of my name:

"Iris was a lovely maiden who left a trail of color as she carried messages from the gods to the earth. She was the goddess of the rainbow. The word Iris itself may mean a flower, a part of the eye, or a combination of brilliant colors." I wrote these sentences down and the words inscribed deep in my memory. Now, I wonder about the new notion that my other memories had just acquired as a result of expressing them in writing.

"Cicero believed in writing things down--unlike Plato who said doing so would destroy memory." As for this moment my belief is with Cicero. The contour of my memories clarify. Yet they are still being drawn by an ink-less feather in my mind.

Darren Sechrist

i was talking with allen ginsberg

i was talking with allen ginsberg at a station in the metro and
he was howling about how i was shooting down droplets with my own back bow

i said to him

man, you aint seen nothing you beat down old shit
you’re still livin but not on my time take off the fucking clown suit, you made your point
about 400 years ago
sit down
with your clapper in one hand and the remote in the other
your show is over, ya get it? now rewind, no super slo mo reverse angle instant replay
cause i have arrived
i'm on every tv in america and all eyes gelicate on me
with my magic betty crocker light bulb oven toasting up crispy smack home-made crackle words
and stringing them together like the retreads at the death deep ground hole they will throw you in
i wait in that whole, the burning phoenix hungry
oh, and by the way, you're not fucking walt whitman, okay
i am waltwhit amiri barac emily dick in son of sam i fucking am
no i can't spell and i don't punctuate and it doesn't matter
cause i'm gonna pass it all off like it's part of my style
i rise out of your ashes i eat poets like air

Iris Cavallero, a Junior transfer student from Israel, majoring in Set Design, wrote this essay in English 105.
Geoffry Gordon

I Became a Man

I can tell by the way
I carry chairs.

High, with arms
Outstretched,

Careful not to hit
Children on the head.

Boys aren't concerned
With little children.

I can tell
That I am a man

Because I no longer mind
Having Mom and Dad around.

"Hi Mom and Dad,
It's good to be home."

They smile.
Their boy has done well.

At night
I sleep with purpose

I drive responsibly
I read the paper.

Without work or wife,
A man, nonetheless.

Geoffrey Gordon, an 8th semester English major, wrote these poems in English 246.

Blue Collar Pickup

On Thursdays, I drove it to Woonsocket,
Where Rob and Larry emptied
Into its battered bed,
Unassembled garage doors,
Boxes of locks and springs
From the warehouse.

Its blue tailgate didn't match
the rest of the red and white truck.
Someone would always comment:

"Downright patriotic, that truck."
And it was loud, too.
Like the Fourth of July.
"Heard ya comin," they'd say.
The exhaust pipes were blown up.
"Ain't your old man gonna fix that thing?"
And I'd tell them the family motto:
"If it's broke, don't fix it."
We laughed about it every Thursday.

Most other days my father drove.
We'd go from site to site
With silly putty in our ears
And the AM radio cranked way up.
We hung our arms out the windows
And flew our hands.

When we were on a job,
We'd sweat and swear
And break for the coffee and donut truck.
And we were blue collar.
We rode in a pick up.
Me and the old man.
Nicole Pearlene Dickens

Life is black and white and in between

When I was young, I used to sit on my grandmother's front porch in her black neighborhood in East Orange, N.J., and watch the Clifford J. Scott band, followed by its football team, march by on their way to a game. They walked down the middle of North Clinton Street talking, cheering, and having the best time. I marveled over the mass of color of red and gray uniforms and brown and black faces, wishing I were one of them, laughing with them.

I was separated from my own people by the glass door of my grandmother's porch because I had no experience living and going to school in a black environment.

I was living in Scotch Plains, a small, predominantly white suburb a half-hour away. Students, both black and white, were bused throughout the districts of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, N.J., to attain racial balance. The 15-minute bus ride was filled with laughter, stories and secrets. I had no idea that my Chinese friend, my black friend, my white friend and I were experiencing something unusual. We were just going to school.

I grew up aware of the fact that I was black or African-American; I learned that from my family. But I had little contact with blacks outside my home. Elementary school had been integrated. In high school I was constantly reminded that I was one of the "lucky five" blacks in my class at the exclusive private school. Many different nationalities were a part of my world.

But after 15 years of attending integrated schools and spending a year as an exchange student in Spain, I found myself in the doorway of Weaver High School, my first black experience in school. At Weaver I learned an entirely different way of life. I was eager to get up in the morning and go to school. My teachers, guidance counselors and principal were of top quality and sincere.

However, I discovered that we could never truly be taught diversity or harmony among people of different races and ethnic backgrounds without living it. Although black is beautiful, it is a beautiful part of the integration of races and cultures.

Weaver High School rounded my learning experience as well as my person. But I had been educated in integrated schools, in a black school and in a white school in a foreign country. I gained the diversity of cultures that my family background lacked.

Many of the students at Weaver have known only other black students and young people. School offers no change, no barriers to be broken, no widely varied answers to unthought-of questions. It is scary to learn there is a "beyond Weaver," "beyond Hartford," "beyond Black." That is when a person discovers that he or she knows nothing of life. Life is more than exams and recitations. Life is the face of someone new and different. Life is an open mind, willing to accept the new and fascinating. Life is black and white and in between.

No matter how fabulous the curriculum may be or how industrious the students are, they will never lose their ignorance of people and learn to adapt if they are not given the opportunity to live, grow and acquire knowledge in integrated, diverse situations.

For a person to be called educated, he or she must be aware of all worlds. He or she must have an interest in every unconquered terrain, be open to new and different information, ask questions, be a good listener.

But Weaver High School needs to enroll students of all races and ethnic backgrounds. My young black colleagues must lose their feelings of inferiority and embrace opportunities to compete as equals. They must take on the challenges that winning and losing may bring. We need to be scolded in a foreign language, shocked by racism, to be confronted with and debate ideas that never crossed our minds. Otherwise, discouragement, hatred and self-pity will continue.

Until Weaver High School is integrated, students' educational experience will be incomplete. Growing up, I lacked exposure to my black contemporaries. Most of the
students at Weaver lack exposure to their contemporaries of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. None of us—black or white—should be separated by a glass door.

Kristin M. Kapsis

Angie came back from New York, Saturday, but did not stop for five minutes. I saw her at the club and believed for an instant that it was a smile from a divine mouth, her arms outstretched, black eyes like stones from the ocean, sparkling on my skin. She flashed her hands to me and said, "My nails are made of silk!" I wanted to marry her, or wave to her name as it was written in the constellations that hung from the sky like diamond necklaces.

Nicole Pearlene Dickens, a 4th semester Journalism/Spanish major published this essay in the Hartford Courant Commentary section.

Kristin Kapsis is a Freshman.
Jaime A. McGrath

Untitled

Somewhere among these leaves I will find a stick of a certain shape that some lucky tree no longer needs. As my hands shuffle about, my beautiful long blonde hair, which, like today's sky, has dark smears and strands, thrusts and waves behind my movements. I give today a name. Someone passes. He probably wonders what the guy in the loose green button down shirt looks for in the leaves, his jeans bent like prayer begging, searching through nature's November garbage, formations & weather, finding one, a Y-shaped stick, fragile, a divining rod for my special purpose ...no one could know.

Passing the man leaning down below a tree, I think just that, wearing my black leather over my black skin, my feet shuffling through the leaves when I cut across the short creases of November grass interrupting the sidewalks and streets. Fuck spring, anyway. The crinkling noise resembles the sound of the bed last night when he shifted his weight to fit his hand over my breast, a fable, plausible, listening.

It rained last night while I slept. The world was stained a darker shade this morning.

The illiterate ground speaks mud inscribed, too weak for labor, but my eyes are aroused now I pass under a tree that sends a drip to land on my head. Cold Surprise. My feet only stroke the matted leaves, and I realize that I will never know "why I dream or where I go" but this perspective after rain at this moment in my head suggests that I will know enough.

Jamie A. McGrath is a 5th semester English major.
Katherine Hanna
The Idea of Bliss

Ellen awoke. She lay on her bed, under her frayed and ragged quilt, arms down flat at her sides, legs together. Her top lip was touched with perspiration. The phone continued to ring, and she rolled over to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Ellen. It's Jill. You're so glad you didn't go to Marc's party last night...I smoked a pack and a half of cigarettes--I know I'm trying to quit so don't say anything--and I didn't get to bed until six this morning...I had way too many gin and tonics and have the worst headache...I swear to God I have a brain tumor. I'm not even kidding...but the good news is, I lost five pounds because I've been too busy to eat--I've just been drinking coffee and taking vitamins...or not...Oh, so Keith was there and of course I just made the biggest ass out of myself...why do I think I can fit into these dresses...and more importantly, why do I think I look good?"

Sunlight illuminated the gauzy drapes and made patterns on the ceiling.

"Lenore's getting a CAT scan," Ellen offered.

"What? OH..." She heard the hiss of a match erupting into flame, then a long inhale. "Mmmmm...Brian stole my Zippo, so I have to use these matches. What did you say? Oh, CAT scan. Jesus Christ, Ellen, I know I don't really have a brain tumor, but thank you for playing into my paranoia. Look, I gotta go. I'll call you later."

Ellen replaced the receiver, kicked back the quilt, and walked into the bathroom. She scraped the sparse red hairs from her shins and calves, whispering "lunch with Keith, afternoon date with William, poetry reading tonight," over and over, as if memorizing a shopping list, and smiling as the water washed the soap out of her hair and down the drain. "99.44% pure."

The restaurant was downtown, near the newspaper where Keith headed the features department.

"How are you?" They were sitting in a corner, tuckd in near a potted tree. Ellen faced Keith, the plant dark and leafy behind him.

"Good, good...hey, didja see that thing I had in the Sunday magazine?" The waiter brought their lunches--Keith's pizza and Ellen's vegetable tray--and disappeared. Ellen started to reply, but Keith was waving to somebody deep in center of the restaurant. She scooped up some hummus with a triangle of pita and slid it into her mouth. "Mmmmm good," she mumbled, rinsing it down with a sip of water. "So Lenore is getting another CAT scan."

Keith's gaze slowly surrendered the crowd and rested on her. "Huh? Oh yeah, did ya read my story?" Ellen stared at the pizza sauce congealed in the corners of his mouth. He wiped at it, streaking red across the backs of his hands.

"Mmmmm. Yes. I heard somebody say it reminded them of John McPhee." Ellen snapped a carrot stick in two, dipped it in hummus, and ate it, her eyes on Keith. He was putting on weight, filling out his small frame. She saw herself reflected in his glasses, and tucked a loose piece of bobbed red hair behind her ear.

"D'you think so? I don't think it was that good--I played fax tag for a while, trying to get some of the information. I ended up just fudging the numbers." He laughed. "Didja really like it?"

Fluorescent lights gleamed off chrome everywhere, the counters, the lids of clear glass jars.

"It threatened me."

"What?"

"It intimidated me as a writer."

A smile took over Keith's face--a full smile, pushing his cheeks up to his eyes. His body relaxed. "Wow, thanks, Ellen. That means a lot to me. Because you're a great writer. I mean it." He leaned back in his chair.

Ellen bit a celery stick in half.

"Thanks."

"No, I'm serious..." he trailed off,
watching somebody walking, behind her, in the deli. He waved, then nodded over her head, made what she supposed was intended to be a surreptitious lewd gesture, raised his eyebrows, and laughed. He leaned back again, even farther, exposing a thin strip of pink flesh between the bottom of his shirt and the waistband of his pants. Arms stretched back, hands clasped behind his head, he asked, wide open and laughing, "How come all my friends want to fuck you?"

She took the subway to the park, and met William under a huge chestnut tree, its branches weighted down with spiny fruit. "How are you?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm alright, I guess..." He stooped, and gave her a small kiss on the forehead.

"How have you been? Have you been writing?" The all-purpose questions, to get things going.

"Yeah...I'm planning out my next series of poems...it's going to deal with religious themes...and their impact on the Modern Man."

They walked through the park, toward the stables.

"I was just reading something about the idea of bliss as the struggle for satisfaction—as opposed to the satisfaction itself..." Ellen looked up at William, his thick hair and blue eyes, and wondered if she agreed. "That makes an interesting Heaven, you know?" They walked into the barn, across wet concrete, the smell of wet straw thick and heavy.

"No...it's going to be more specific than that...I'm going to be dealing with specific Bible myths, quotes..."

She paused. "Oh, like 'do not cast your pearls before swine'?"

"Mmrm...let's look at the horses."

Ellen pulled a plastic Ziploc of apple slices out of her leather shoulder bag and attempted to arouse interest from a reclining Morgan named George.

"George, c'mere George...the grocer told me these apples were fresh this morning..." George rolled an enormous eye at her, and after a moment rose from the sawdust and hay. He walked slowly over to where she stood, apple slice in hand, and sucked the fruit up with his enormous lips.

William stood, large hands on narrow hips, facing another stall. Ellen moved on to the next horse and made small clicking noises to attract the stallion's attention. After a moment, she fed the horse a thick piece of apple. "They're so wonderful" she said.

"No," he said, "they're not...they're only nice because they want you to feed them...Ellen, you're doing it all wrong. You should wait for them to get up and come to you before you even let them know you've got an apple." He stood, facing the horse. The light coming in through the slats criss-crossed the floor and illuminated the thick curls in William's hair.

"Well, of course," she replied, feeding horses until her apples were almost gone. She gave the last slice to William with a smile.

There were messages from Lenore and Jill on her machine—they played out, long and excited, echoing off the hardwood in the dining room—Ellen half listened as she opened her mail, a notice from the Star-Bulletin. "Dear customer, we are writing to inform you that, for your convenience, we have renewed your subscription for another six months. You will be receiving a bill for forty dollars in two to three weeks. It is our pleasure to serve you."

She put on a bodysuit and a long skirt with dark flowers, rewound the messages, and made a cup of tea.

"Ellen...? Hi, it's Lenore. Maybe I'll see you at the poetry reading tonight...?" She'd probably beg off, some new ailment, some tumor or lesion.

"Hi Ellen, it's Jill. I'm napping, so don't call me. I'll call you back later, maybe tomorrow. Except I have that big meeting and I have to go grocery shopping...Oh, I heard about this fantastic sounding alfalfa tonic...except I could never remember to take the damn stuff...so it's just coffee for me...anyway, I'll call you when hell freezes over."

"Ellen...?" It's Lenore. Listen, I'm not going to be able to make it...I have an amazing headache...but I hope your reading
Ellen walked the six light-dappled blocks to the bar where the weekly readings were held.

The walls were all bricks, stones, and streetside windows; the tables made of old doors, the benches low. Ten or fifteen people sat drinking beer, shuffling through notebooks, scribbling. An empty stool and microphone waited at the far end of the bar. Ellen pushed open the front door. A few people looked up, William among them, drunk. He acknowledged her with a slight nod of the head. She sat down at a large table, and began rummaging through her bag.

"Cool," somebody near her said, "an audience."

William approached the stool, weaving through the bar unsteadily on long, skinny legs. "Ah...for my first poem..." his voice grew fuller, louder, "I'm going to read one I wrote...this afternoon...*ahem...*She entices the horse with her slit apple--Eve again..."

Ellen closed her eyes and listened to the poem over the murmur and clink of the barroom.

"...she offers its erotic plumpness--the stallion stirs, rises..." A car drove by the window, its headlights moving over and across her; moments later, Keith came down the back stairs. He gave her a big smile and a wave before sitting down at the bar.

"...would Adam have ever come if she did not tempt, reclining, hand out? They say she is a vacant chamber; I call her stable. The latch closes behind me, even me.

Ellen's shoulders twitched, and she reminded herself that he was a published poet. She supposed she was asking for it.

Applause cut the smoke from the air--for a moment, the orange streetlamp glow coming through the window fell full on William's face. He turned to speak with Keith, who had pushed through the crowd and was shaking William's hand furiously. Keith pulled out a reporter's notebook and began scribbling, dragging William away from the stool.

"That was incredible..." said a man to Ellen's left. "I've never heard such a brilliant exposition on the erotic pull of female passivity. Really very impressive, you must admit."

Ellen watched Keith and William talking in the corner--Keith, all blonde and red, bent over the table, scribbling frantically, while William rubbed his own chest through the soft wool of his dark grey sweater. A newspaper photographer snapped a shot of William, his poet's fingers pressed together in front of his lips.

"For the Sunday magazine," Keith explained, as he squeezed back through the bar and past her table. "It's gonna be a great story. Thanks for introducing us. Catch ya later."

A waitress approached the table, bearing a large bottle "from the man in the red nylon jacket." Leave it to Keith to wear red to a poetry reading, Ellen thought. She filled her glass with the pink and bittersweet wine, baring her teeth at the memory of his belly peeking out at her during lunch.

There were no messages on her machine, and Ellen slipped into bed, her head whirring slightly. It was a little after one in the morning.

Ellen awoke, the full moon streaming blue light through the curtains. The phone was ringing--it was three A.M.

"Hello? Hello?"

"Hi." It didn't sound like Keith, or William.

"Who is this?"

"Would you talk while I bring myself to orgasm?"

Ellen paused. "Who is this?"

Breathing, staticky silence.

"Who is this?"

Breathing, crackling.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Shhh...it doesn't matter..."

"Oh," said Ellen, laughing. "Oh, it's you."

Katherine Hanna, an 8th semester English major, wrote this story in English 247.
I realized right there all those colors are in me too.

PASSION

Lost Poems 4

Langston

Wrote of dreams deferred,
How they explode when left unstirred.
The dried up raisin in the sun,
Was prophecy in '51
It was written for the Harlemites,
But L.A. proves your poem right.

PRESCIENCE

Maya

and still she rises
cause she's a
woman who knows
Just why the caged
bird sings.
She looked at
me when she told
the audience about
her Arkansas.

DETERMINATION

Countee

Although I am but eight and ten,
Not close to old or wise,
I understand again, again
Your pair of starless eyes.

Yesterday I was the child,
En route to Baltimore
When I saw words "NIGGER NEST"
Writ 'cross my chamber door.

HONESTY

ms. shange
as i hrd a bunch of girls read yr stuff on
stage in drama class/
i hd yr picture in my hand & i squeezed it so
tight i got a
paper cut when i let go/ lookin at my hand i
saw my blood/it

Tanya Mears is a 3rd semester English major.
Bouvier:

The day keeps on. Procrastination makes its own grand logic, prototype for the inroad, until it ends up, now, the one thing you still have to look forward to.

These are your machines, erratic orbits, coming away from the far away, grazing this and this other together, drawing lines between the planets and a detailed map from memory where the places change themselves around to match it.

We are hardly involved.

Bouvier: A contest bereft of referees, you say, and I am my only opponent? Very well, as mass is interaction, we'll turn hearsay, supposition into instant lore. Yes, we can make legends of discovery on the fly, adjusting single rules to find out sweeping phenomena for me, say, mudpuddles in the middles of oceans. Or, for you, a single, perfect tree. But why lay siege the unassailable, isolating its walls from all supplies to hole up camp and crack a taut resolve, if we'll only expose ourselves as the patterns in these boggling whorls?

Pinespore: All that I may utter, like you, in answer, is born of leavened mornings, moving up from a January indignation, up to desire, out of stillness, is resting nowhere, except in our success. I say,

Pinespore:

Gleaning the Winter Seedling

Eclogue:

Self-similar transitional packets, haphazard in groupings, non-Euclidian, not symmetrical, fractal as snowflakes, we swirl like ideas out to the turbulent gases of starfields, somehow, tracing repetitive forms, the seasons, subsequence, little compact cases, just varieties of uniform browns.

I call you wise Pinespore, inherent embodier, encompassing one protected sun-relationship, the full quotation of rain, and what the wind, today, has for more suburban commitments, but what can you tell about me? I tell the principles of least action and least time, a sum of histories, in phase, that travel all paths at once, making most relevant herds and herd mirages, flashing your tail of vision as a light streams quickly by. these contributions can interfere with field behavior, (call it static), like boy scouts who lend my grandfather a hand. and as "bid" becomes true palindrome, the event you plan your day around gets cancelled.
Because we are here, uncertain, and because we must.

Adelaide had a dog named Dump. She'd sit out in her back yard in the summer on a green lawn chair, and the dog would just sit next to her, baking his coal coat in the sun. He would just sit there all day, dripping his wet pink tongue out of his panting mouth. Once in a while Addy would reach into her iced tea and pull out an ice cube to rub down Dump's back. He'd swing his huge head around and wink at her, then he'd yawn with an exaggerated high-pitched whine. Propped beside Dump there was always a radio pumping out the beat of heavy metal tunes. Addy said she liked them best cause, "People gotta move to music like that." But she and Dump never moved. Well, she'd bounce a foot, or take a swig of her iced tea, or a drag of her cigarette, but she never really moved. All she really wanted to do was lie there all summer to burn the acne off her face while my mom and I stared at her out of our windows.

Mom said I wasn't to associate with Adelaide because of Dump. "He bites the fingers off girls," she said, while scrambling the eggs. (I rolled my eyes.) "Besides, Adelaide plays that damn music too loud. Doesn't she have anything better to do but lie there like a sloth all day?"

"How should I know?" Annoyed, I sauntered upstairs to shower. I stayed home from piano class that Tuesday because I had a physical—couldn't start school in the Fall without it.

Last year I went to Silvermine Jr. High, so did Addy, that's how I met her. She and Dump were standing in front of her house the morning of the first day of eighth grade. I guessed she had moved in about a month before I'd seen her in her back yard. I never really got introduced though, because the day Adelaide's family showed up with a moving truck, Mom went over alone to bring brownies. She came back ten minutes later, and slammed the screen door behind her. "Indecent," she muttered. "Don't bother with them, dear,"
they’re plebeians.” So I never bothered to
make any effort to meet our new neighbors.
But a month later, on the first day of
school, there was Adelaide and her big black
dog standing outside of their house, not ten
feet from me.

“The bus stop’s over here,” I called out
to her. She pretended not to hear me, she and
her dog just staring ahead with mean faces. I
picked up my bookbag, and jogged to the end of
her driveway. “The bus stops in front of my
house cause it’s on the corner,” I panted.
She looked at me, shocked, then took the
headphones out of her ears. “What?”

“The bus stop isn’t here.”

“I’m not waiting for the school bus.”
She took out a pack of Marlboros, and placed
one between her lips. “Got a lighter?”

“Are’nt your parents home?”

“Naw, they’re at work. Don’t ya smoke?”

“My mom doesn’t work and she looks out
the window at me. How are you getting school
if you don’t take the bus?”

“My parents don’t give a shit if I
smoke.”

A maroon Camaro pulled up in front of
us, pumping with the strong base beat of some
metal-head song. The car seemed like it was
alive.

“Gotta go kid; c’mon Dump.” She opened
the door and the dog jumped in to sit beside
some guy I could hardly see; the tinted
windows made the interior dark, and he blended
into the car. She jumped in.

I looked at my watch. “Well, if the bus
doesn’t come for some reason, do you think you
could…”

“I’m sure your Mom would drive ya.”
Addy smiled with big gray teeth.

“Yeah, but just in case she, well ya
know. Can’t I just hitch a ride with you
now?”

“I’m already gone.” She slammed the
doors. The Camaro’s back wheels spun up the
sand, and screamed away down the street, the
back zig-zagging like a fish.
But that was last year.

“Mom, where is my blue sundress with the
roses all over it?” I called down to her, as
I stood in a towel in front of my closet.

“I don’t recall, dear.”

Tightening the wrap of my towel, I bent
down and into my closet--a jungle of clothes--
knealed on one of my lacrosse cleats, and a
pain shot through my leg. Then my towel fell
off. “Fuck!”

“What did you say Susan?”

“Nothing.” I wrapped my body back up.

“Fuck,” I whispered, kneeling back to find my
sundress. I dug through the pile and came
upon a pair of jeans that had been lost for
about a month. In the pocket was an old
crushed pack of Virginia Slims. There was one
that wasn’t broken. I had drawn on it, though.
Written in pencil down the side was:
V-I-R-G-I-N-I-T-Y, vowed one day that I’d
smoke it once I lost mine. I put it back in
the pack, wrapped it up in a stack of tissues,
then in a bag, and stuffed it up on the shelf
next to my diary.

“Sue, hurry, you’ll be late for the
doctor’s!”

A car horn blasted in Addy’s driveway
next door. I ran to my window to see if she
and Dump were still lying out. She pulled a
concert tee-shirt down over her greasy black
hair, and ran to her boyfriend’s car. He was
seventeen, and still in the ninth grade.
Admittedly, I was kind of scared of Woody; he
was so weird--never once saw him out of his
car. And when he was in his car, all I could
see was a big smile with a gap between the
teeth--like a whole tooth had been knocked out
or something. He was a real dirtbag. But I
never told Addy. He was from Clinton, where
she used to live, and he picked her up the
whole year of eighth grade, and drove her and
Dump to Silvermine then he’d drop her back off
so she could deepen her tan.
I knew all this not because I ever hung
out with Adelaide, but because I’d watch her
out my window. I’d also talk to her every
once in a while, out of my window.

As I said before, Mom didn’t approve of
Addy, thought she was “Poor White Trash,” said
she did drugs with Woody at eleven every
morning--Mom watched Addy too. Only she stared at her through the bay window in the kitchen--never bothered talking to her though. She would gossip over her bridge hand about Addy and Dump. "She smokes cigarettes, and rides in that vile car with that druggy boyfriend of hers."

Addy didn't do drugs. I knew because one day last year while I was waiting for the school bus I saw a "Say no to drugs" sticker on her math notebook. She said, "My real father died cause some drugged up asshole crashed into him."

"Susan B. Esty, you had better be ready to go in two minutes or you won't get any dessert tonight!"

I laughed and finished the cigarette I was sneaking out of my window, then popped a piece of Extra wintermint. I had started smoking in the beginning of the summer, but Mom never cared to know--guess I was pretty sneaky about it though. Not like Addy, who would smoke in front of a nun.

The beat of Woody's car speakers thumped as the three of them tore off down the road. Then Mom's footsteps clicked up the stairs.

"Close your window. That nasty girl's cigarette smoke is polluting the whole neighborhood."

"O.K. Mom, but it's hot in here. Why can't we get air conditioning like everyone else?"

She hung up my towel, and shot a look at her watch. Then she gasped. "Late! What will Dr. Holmes say?"

I slipped my hurricanes onto my feet. "Calm down, Mommy. Start the car, I'll be out in two seconds."

She looked at her watch once more, quickly, then huffed out of my room. I opened the window back up.

"Oh shit, my hair," I said, fingering the curling ends, and running to the bathroom mirror. Blonde hair curled perfectly, but lip gloss was needed, and just a little blue mascara. A song streamed through my head--wasn't quite sure of the words, but I hummed the tune anyway.

Mom's car horn beeped in our driveway, but I knew she'd wait. One more coat of mascara and my blue eyes glowed. Dr. Holmes thought I was cute too. But it didn't really matter, seeing as he was an adult and all.

Mom must have actually draped herself cross the horn, it went off for so long. "Jeeesus Christ!" I screamed back, knowing I couldn't be heard.

The pink neon phone rang on my nightstand. I sprinted to it, managing to pick it up on the second ring. This was perfect: one ring would seem eager, any more than two: not home.

"Hi."

"Mrs. Esty?"

"No, stupid."

"Oh, Suzie, you sounded so old," my friend Debbie said, drawing out the word "old."

"What's up? Did you have an awesome time with Tom last night, or what? Tell me all!"

"Later. Get ready for this, Suzie, Tom and that cute guy in Tom's geometry class, Chris, wants us to meet them at the rope swing. Chris even stole a bottle of Peachtree Schnapps from his dad. We can make fuzzy navels! Can you believe it, Suzie? What bathing suit are you going to wear? Chris totally thinks you're cute!"

Adelaide's radio pumped in her backyard. She must have forgotten to shut it off. "I can't, I have a stupid doctor's appointment."

"Blow it off, this is Chris Henneberyl"

He was cute, in the tenth grade with Tom. Last week at the beach I saw him talking to Heather McKale, the most popular girl at Silvermine. I just couldn't give up a chance like that. "But my mom is in the car waiting for me."

"Tell her your doctor is sick. We'll pick you up in about an hour. Look for Tom's rabbit. Bye."

Mom's heavy footsteps pounded up the stairs, then she stood in the doorway and sarcastically leered at her wrist. "Susan Bertha Esty, you have an appointment for a physical in fifteen minutes. I am making strawberry shortcake for dessert tonight and you can't have any."
"Mom, Dr. Holmes' office called to say he had to cancel all appointments today cuz' he's sick." I twirled a blonde curl around my finger and shifted my weight to the beat of Addy's radio.

"Now isn't that peculiar, a doctor being sick," she said. Then with a sigh: "Well, he's only human. Actually, I guess in that case I'll go shopping, sad you had to have missed your piano lesson for nothing, dear. I'm so sorry. Will you be O.K. alone here for the afternoon?"

"Maybe I'll go to the beach with Debbie. If that's O.K. with you?"

"Of course, dear. Your tank is in the second drawer." She kissed me on my bangs, and slid away.

I shifted through my frilly tanks, pink, kelly green, peach with white ruffles covering the chest, until finally, the black bikini I had bought at the mall last Saturday. I tried it on in front of my full-length mirror. I looked perfect. My breasts perked under the smooth spandex. My sides curved slightly, perfectly inward. My legs were strong from lacrosse. "Heather McKale choke on this!" I said, flipping my hair and popping my gum. "Chris won't be able to control himself."

I too my jean shorts, and pulled them on. Then I found a low-cut, white tee-shirt that had daisies lining the neck. Hurricanes back on, and I was all set.

Fifteen minutes ticked by. Half an hour. I pulled up my desk chair to the open window. The breeze was strong and warm, and it felt good the way it weaved through the tendrils of my hair. There was even a faint salt smell that had blown in from the sea. The radio from next door played a smooth, sad song. I remembered thinking it was odd for Addy's favorite heavy metal station to play love songs. But then I realized it wasn't really a love song at all. Actually, it was a ballad about a girlfriend of the singer's who had been raped and killed. The breeze cooled, and a shiver climbed up my spine. Goosebumps on the backs of my arms.

Where were they? The digital clock by my phone read 12:35. Did they forget me? Didn't Chris want me? That bitch Debbie wanted both of them to herself. She always had to do things like that cause she wasn't as pretty as me. I picked up the phone and started dialing her number: 2-4-4...

A car pulled into my driveway. "Finally." I leapt into the bathroom to put one more coat of lip gloss on, and I blew a kiss to the 14-year-old in front of me. "Go for it," I said seductively, then giggled because I sounded like a movie star. Bound down the stairs, skipping every other one. Ran through the living room, the family room, kitchen, mud room, front door. Maroon Camaro. There was Woody's maroon Camaro in my driveway. No Rabbit.

The passenger side door swung open with a painful creak, and the music was released. Heavy metal thumping--heart beat in my ears. "Addy!" I called, but the music drowned me out. Dump leapt from the open door. Adelaide's calloused bare foot stepped out afterwards, and she stood in front of me, petting Dump.

"Woody said he'd give you a ride today," she said.

"What are you talking about?" I stepped back behind the screen door and bounced it off my knee.

"I saw you smoking out of your window again this morning--Woody did too. Said he wants to officially meet you, thinks you're cool." The music pumped the car. The exhaust billowed out from some pipe in the back. I shifted weight to my other leg, and let the screen door slam.

"I'm going out with Debbie Marshall today. Her Dad is picking me up and taking us out to lunch."

"Why're wearing your suit then?" I looked down. The black bikini bled through my white tee-shirt. Addy bent down into the Camaro. She nodded, then stood back up. "Woody says he likes black bathing suits."

"Thanks."

"Wanna go for a ride? I have a new pack of smokes, and we can go for a drive down by the beach."

"No." Addy looked old. She couldn't
have been 14--looked more like 17 or even 18. But she was starting ninth grade with me in the fall.

"You wanna go out with Chris Hennebery, doncha? He won’t be good to ya, kid. Woody here treats me like a real woman. Nice car too, eh? It moves real fast."

"I'm really very sorry, Adelaide, but Debbie's father will be driving in any second, and Mrs. Marshall works for the police office so..." I popped my gum, and looked up and to the side. I could feel the bottoms of my feet sweating.

Dump yawned and lapped at a puddle of oil-water on the ground. "Suit yourself, but Woody's not one to ask twice. I'm going to lie out, see ya." Dump ran across my yard to his own. Addy stepped in and kissed something dark inside. Then she saluted me, and walked back to her green lawn chair. Her music played louder than ever.

The Camaro revved, and sped out of my driveway, then it went away. I was sinking down to a squat I took in a long deep breath. I decided not to wait at the bus stop that fall. I'd make Mom drive me. She didn't have anything better to do. I just couldn't deal with Addy anymore. She was just so gross.

I called Debbie again. Her dad said she had just left, she'd be a little late.

Five minutes later, Tom's Rabbit pulled in. It was a little rusted on the left side, but the rest was bright green.

Debbie leaned over Tom and the steering wheel. She waved. "C'mon, Suzie, we're late as it is!" Chris sat in the back, swigging off a big bottle then laughing like there was something hilarious going on. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and waved it towards me.

"C'mon, babe, you gonna keep us waiting all day? Sit back here with me--you sure look hot, kid."

I covered my chest with my beach towel. Tom drummed on the steering wheel to the new U2 song on his radio. "I really can't go today," I called through the screen door.

What!" Debbie pierced me with her eyeballs. "I really can't go today. I tried to get in touch with you but my stupid Mom is making me go to the doctor's. She found out I was lying, and she's coming back to take me. She rescheduled for me."

"Suzie," whined Debbie, in a long high-pitched 14-year-old way.

"Sorry." I slammed the front door, and leaned against it until the Rabbit pulled away. Debbie would call me later to tell me how much Chris Hennebery was going to absolutely hate me. But I didn't care. It really wasn't important.

I walked back through the mudroom. Then through the kitchen. Then the family room, the living room, and up each one of the stairs. I walked slowly, and stared at my Hurricanes as they clicked on each step--carefully, because I was dizzy. I probably should have gone for that physical. There was probably something seriously wrong with me.

The window in my room was still open, but the air was thick and salty and warm. My sundress was in a ball near the bed. Propelled against the dresser was my lacrosse stick. Adelaide's heavy metal music pumped in with cigarette smoke, and I could almost see it--grey, smooth and streaming in through the window. I went over and touched it--thick and warm and flowing. I let my hand sweep through, then I reached for the window and shut it.