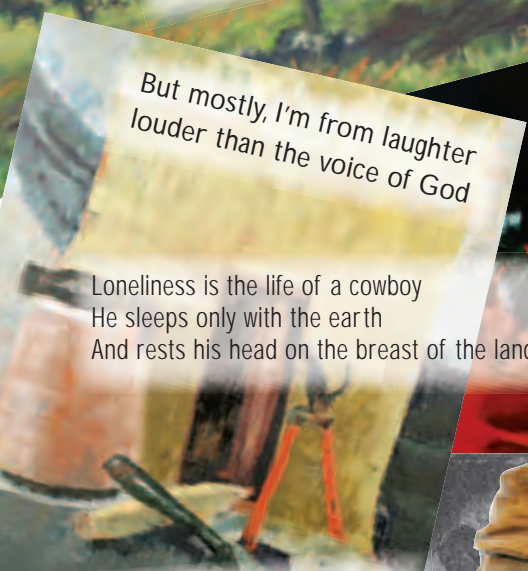


Gurgling, pink,  
butter pat of a being.

Sometimes poetry is like  
difficult music.  
Dante did not inspire me.  
But Mahler chases Dante  
down the rabbit hole.



But mostly, I'm from laughter  
louder than the voice of God

Loneliness is the life of a cowboy  
He sleeps only with the earth  
And rests his head on the breast of the land

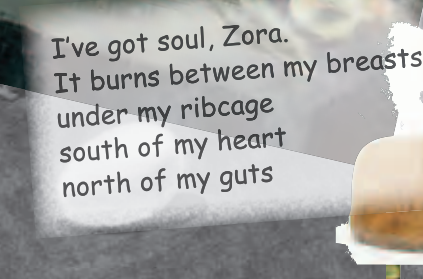


I remember falling  
upward and inward  
into you  
as you reached for me.

Because she raps  
And he rocks.

Because she says y'all  
And he says you dudes.

Because when their hands touch  
The colors blend to dirt,



I've got soul, Zora.  
It burns between my breasts  
under my ribcage  
south of my heart  
north of my guts



...whispered it ... "Lunch, lunch, lunch!"  
... the syllables squishing together and  
smacking apart like warm, cheesy macaroni.



The smell mixes with the dry dust, pinches my nose, and settles like a staple between my eyes.



th







TAPESTRY II – Mono, Dry Point, Intaglio, Foil and Polymer Prints  
*Janine Schmidt, Senior*

## January Blues

Fingers, fumbling with words,  
numb against the keyboard,  
clack like ice cubes into a chilled glass.  
Phrases lose their meaning,  
turning with the inevitability of the seasons  
to fruitless topics of warmth:  
odes to hot water bottles,  
thermostat sonnets,  
lines that beg for light.  
The sun struggles through clouds,  
barely grazing the earth where,  
illuminated, through the haze  
of my heated breath  
and through the window,  
veined with ice,  
I expect to see birds fall,  
one by one,  
off the laden branches,  
frigid bundles of feathers  
thumping in the snow....



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WINNING POEM OF THE  
ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS  
UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE POETRY PRIZE

"January Blues" by Monica Walen, Senior

Final judge, Jackie Bartley's second full-length collection, *Ordinary Time*, won the Spire Poetry Prize and was published in 2007. Other books include *Bloodroot* (Edwin Mellen Press), and five chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in a number of journals including *Gulf Coast*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Image*, *JAMA*, *North American Poetry Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*. She has been a six-time recipient of residencies sponsored by the Ragdale Foundation and has also been granted residencies at Mary Anderson Center for the Arts and Seaside Institute's Escape to Create. She received a creative artist grant in 1993 from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and participated in the Creative Writing in the Schools program for a number of years. An adjunct assistant professor of English at Hope College, she lives in Holland with her husband and two crazed Dalmatians.

*Jackie Bartley's comments about the finalists, runner-up, and Monica Walen's poem follow:*

The dilemma of selecting a prize winner in a contest like this is that I know I'm reading only one or two pieces by writers who clearly all have unique poetic abilities. To choose, I must turn away from the finely tuned blend of rhythm, respect and remorse in "Humanity Blues"; the punch-perfect pitch of "A Personal Ad"; the mature turns from abstract to particular in "This Moment"; the inventive tensions of "The First Storm"; the strong narrative adaptations of "Texas Dust"; and the alluring balance of narrative and magical realism in "Butterfly Kisses." I must even set aside "Parisian Dance" and "The Match," two poems in a similar voice, each of which display a skillful control of line break, internal rhyming and lyric intensity. I can only offer each of these writers encouragement and gratitude for putting their trust in the difficult and necessary art of poetry.

And then there's the difficulty of selecting a runner-up, of saying, in effect, "almost, but not quite," when I truly admire the ambition of "Mahler's Fifth Symphony." It's a poem that delights in the beautiful tensions between knowing and feeling, that employs metaphor and allusion, well-tuned internal rhyming, and Ovid-like transformations to delight and instruct.

But, since I must choose, I'm happy to have "January Blues," its sure blend of sound and sense. I'm pleased by internal rhymes like *fumbling/numb, meaning/seasons, grazing/haze*. I'm delighted and surprised by fresh images like *thermostat sonnets, /lines that beg for light; illuminated through the haze/of my heated breath; the window/veined with ice; laden branches/frigid bundles; thumping in the snow*. I admire how the line breaks sustain a graceful, but tumbling cadence, how, in the last three lines, the words themselves thump with the muted, plusive heartbeat of winter.

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The Academy of American Poets, founded in 1934, supports American poets at all stages of their careers and fosters an appreciation for American poetry.

The annual prizes for university and college students are funded by alumni interested in encouraging young writers. We are grateful to Aquinas alumni Dr. Tony Foster and Linda Nemecek Foster for making the prize available for Aquinas College students.

## Smoking

*Special thanks to Seamus Heaney*

Across his finger and held up to his lips  
The soft cigarette hung, orange at the tip.

On his tattered blue chair my thumb rubs the mark  
Of that sandpaper circle burned in the dark:  
My father, smoking. I see the stark

Lines straining across his rough cheeks  
Hallows out, puffing another breath of life away  
His skin yellow beneath the lamp  
Where he was smoking.

The ashy air thick and grey, the smog  
Around his head was swirling mystically.  
His finger tapped the side, shook the brilliant embers down  
To the dusty bones piled in the glass dish  
Needing their gritty powder on his fingertip.

Lord, my dad could burn a pack a day,  
Until the night he quit.

My father would fill the driver's seat with stench  
And be the only man dousing it outside of St. Michael's church.  
Once my seven-year-old hands prayed for him and Mom  
At Mary's May crowning. He collapsed  
From the kneeling, then regaining his sight  
Gasping and coughing hoarsely, bouncing cigarettes  
Across the carpeted aisle, rolling away, far away  
From his empty palm. Smoking.

The warm sink of hazy ash, the crave and lust  
For nicotine, the familiar fog that lingered long  
Vanishing as a magician's trick aged and gone.  
And my heart was proud and my mind awed.

Across his finger and held up to his lips  
The soft cigarette hung, orange at the tip.  
He set it down.

*- Kathleen Carty, Sophomore*

## Glas

by Kathleen Carty, *Sophomore*

Green is the color I was born in. Green leaves among the orange, making my Irish flag in late October. Green grew with me as I ran over the grassy earth, weaving around the trees in the forest of my backyard. “Glas,” they whispered with reverence the first time my ancestors beheld the hills of their Celtic homeland. Green was laced through the words of my grandmother’s beautiful brogue as she spun stories of generations before me.

Green soaking fields were worked by sturdy hands searching for the green soaking tops of cold potatoes still at rest in the dirt. Thatched roofs on little stone cottages constantly carried the fragrance of the moist green turf that made them. Shoeless schoolchildren ran and skipped over the rolling green fields that swelled into hills underneath the cattle’s hooves. Fuzzy green moss clung to the walls of medieval castles, climbing up the ruins to the princess’s immortalized window. Proud green banners twisted and ruffled with billowing breezes through the small town square for all Catholics who join in the chorus “up the republic.” Here at weddings and wakes befall dances to green songs in the tin whistle and the bodhrán that enchant the world with our tales of love and loss.

And a green ocean, where ships set sail to a new home and tears bid goodbye to the old. These ships my grandparents boarded, leaving their green world to give me the golden future that America promised. Years later I sit wrapped in my green sweater, warming me against the chilled autumn air. Now I have discovered why my love for green is as familiar as my cherished memories. Green breathed life between my lips. Green has chosen me to be its home.



OCTOBER DAY – Pastel, *Jean Allemeier Boot, Senior*



UNTITLED – Oil on Canvas  
*RaNae Couture, Senior*



## Lalepi

*by Alison Bohne, Sophomore*

There were bite marks along the edge of the “P.” I leaned over the side of the bathtub to pluck it from the water. The letter was soapy and slippery in my hand, perfect to squelch onto the tiled wall. Lukewarm water ran down my arms, seeped into my clothes and weighed on the dangling tendrils of my hair. The misty-eyed infant in the water scrutinized the easy dexterity of my fingers.

My sister. Gurgling, pink, butter pat of a being. I didn’t understand who she was. She was mine in the same way the foam letters floating in the tub were mine. The idea that her existence could be completely separate from my own was preposterous. She amused me. I could cake bubbles on her head, and she would laugh. I could line up the letters on the bathroom wall, and she would watch as if she knew how to read.

I spelled all kinds of things on the walls while my sister took her baths. Sometimes real words and sometimes not. Today the word was “LALEPI.” The second “L” was formed from a piece of broken “V.” I didn’t think it was a real word, but the sound it made was pleasing enough. I liked the lilting cadence of pretty words settling on my ears and forming behind my teeth. The limited vocabulary of a seven-year-old child hindered my options, so I often made them up. Lalepi tasted like strawberry sherbet on my tongue. Or maybe it reminded me of the smell of a clean baby, like pulling back a flower petal and smelling the secret nook within.

My sister slapped the water with open palms and stuck another letter in her mouth. I was still missing the “I.” After a moment of searching the multicolored flotsam of letters, I realized the “I” was in her mouth. She was gnawing away like a rodent with a melon rind, watching me watch her with absent eyes.

“Hey, you wanna give me that?” I coaxed.

She popped the “I” from her mouth and gave it to me without protest. Simple. Quick. I wanted the letter, so she gave it to me. I stared at her. Her tiny fingers nudged against mine as I accepted her offering. A sweet twinge of gratitude and wonder seized me by the shoulders. This little thing in the tub was not a toy or a pet. She was an existence separate but intertwined. A person I might share, fight and talk with. A person I might know.

All at once, Lalepi meant so much more.

## Untitled

*by Mike English, Sophomore*

It was midnight and the rain came down sideways. There was a man in a trilby and a trench coat meandering down the street. In his mind he was Philip Marlowe and his stride had purpose. Reality was not so kind. His swagger had a boozy lilt. Once he had instilled in his own mind the confidence of a seasoned private eye, he began to hum, and, finding this quite droll, to whistle. He made his way from one lamppost to the next, slowly following the curve of the sidewalk as it ascended a dark suburban hill. Merrily, he tipped his hat to each post he passed as if greeting some young heartthrob. The stretches of darkness between each streetlight were long, and it is a wonder that he was able to navigate them so deftly in his inebriated state. The drink was heavy on his mind and especially on his memory. In blissful oblivion he strolled, and as he stepped into each patch of light, the novelty of the situation struck him in such a way that he unleashed a charismatic grin at every pole he came upon. As he neared the crest of the hill and his breath grew short, a sort of *déjà vu* began to set in and the spell of the liquor weakened some. He leaned against a lamppost, catching his breath lest he submit to the blackness of the night. The man began to say, "Thank you, miss," but stopped himself. As the words formed on his lips, he realized their ridiculousness and consequently became privy to the external reality which anyone watching him already knew. There was no one out that night however—why would anyone be out at this hour? And in such weather! But the man was embarrassed all the same. He shook his head and strained to regain his mental faculties. As he did this, he instinctually pulled from within his coat a pack of Camels and a book of matches. Pulling a match from the book, he entertained the thought of lighting old strike-anywhere matches with his thumb—one last wistful, romantic nod to an era that has long since passed. It took a few tries to light his cigarette in the rain, and the contrast of this pathetic reality with the utopia of intrigue he had inhabited moments before, brought him new resolve. Quickly he determined where he needed to be, and without further delay he set off puffing towards his destination. His step was now rigid, almost like a march, and any intoxicants still flowing in his bloodstream were kept at bay through force of will. He had to get to a phone, and call her before it was too late.

## Ivory

The smooth, pale keys  
Elegant under my fingers.  
Middle D resonates  
A quarter-step too high.

It doesn't matter.  
I am safe.  
I am calm.  
I am content.

Contemplation is difficult.  
Meditation I can do—  
I need help to contemplate.

It will come.  
I am ready.  
I am waiting.  
I am faithful.

The door clicks behind,  
The candle flickers ahead.  
I am in the presence.

The lamb comes.  
I am overjoyed.  
I am hopeful.  
I am unworthy—

but it doesn't matter.  
I have the kneeler.  
I have the psalms.  
I have the ivory

beneath my fingers.

- *Karen Harag, Senior*

### the street sweeper parade

i found an old creased photo of you  
a laugh frozen on your face  
do you still think of that night when

i stole your favorite scarf, the one that  
smelled of smoke from the time we slept  
in the park, made a fire in an empty trash can,  
roasting day-old marshmallows we found  
under your bed, star-gazing face to face,  
dewed feet in the long grass,  
kissing, hearing twin hearts beat in the  
cricket symphony night.

we spent all night talking on my front porch;  
you kept bumming lucky strikes from me.  
2 a.m. we were the only ones up to see the  
parade of street sweepers grumbling  
mechanical thunder.

last night i thought i could  
feel your face on my chest pressing on it leaving an  
impression of your smile. woke in an empty bed  
2 a.m. blinking red on the clock.

- Robert Nussbaumer, Senior



SKATER GIRL – Ceramic Sculpture  
*Stephanie Garn, Junior*





BLUE BOWL – Watercolor  
*Rebekah Riske, Senior*

### **The Diving Board Moment**

*by Amelia Crist, Sophomore*

In a twilight overflowing with phosphorescent fireflies, you stood with me upon a bowing spring board. Entangled in arms like rope, hanging above crystalline depths, we sway and shine like a lighted chandelier, made brilliant in watery refraction. Astronauts about to be weightless in orbit, we tremble on the brink of space, abandoning the solid earth, seeking a more liquid position. Laughter ricochets off the still, chlorinated aqua blue, as our chests shudder under the fresh assault of summer laughter. Smiles mirror mutual piratical expressions, shading suggestions of trickery and dubious intent. Beguiled by gravity, vertigo crescendos over our combined form, emptying the sky of our presence, tumbling us down into the reflected world. Does time stop in that breathless descent? Are there seconds that lapse, air exhaled, eyes that blink? No, there is only our silhouette, outlined against a mirror sky, as we dance a wild jig, pirates, propelled off the gangplank, momentum carrying us into manmade sea.

## Solitary Star

The first sunrise could have been  
the end of the world—or maybe  
its beginning.

A solitary star, etched into deep blue—  
unrelenting—will not give up  
its view of eternity.

The perfect place to watch  
time unfold—to watch the world be born  
and witness its collapse.

- *Kara Madden, Junior*



UNTITLED – Photography  
*Beth Yahne, Junior*

## The First Storm

*(Inspired by Billy Collins' "The First Dream")*

The rain is poking at the windows tonight  
and as I glance at fingers on the glass  
I start to envision the first storm to cloud the skies,  
how frightened the first witnesses must have been.

They would have fled their crackling fires  
hastening to the safety of painted caves,  
huddling at a damp, cold boulder base,  
for this was long before Noah and his Ark.

The strongest warrior might have braved it.  
As water came cascading down the jagged rocks,  
thunder pulsed through the flashing skies  
and winds howled louder than the lonely wolf,

he would have clenched his mighty, callused fists  
stepping into the storm with a fury, warlike cry,  
a champion to be standing in the perils of the storm,  
squinting his heavy brow as rain soaked his beard.

But suppose the first to emerge was a woman  
with small, graceful steps and an inner strength  
that carried her courageously into the mud?  
She would have loosened her furs, once held tight  
about her

looking upward as the rain caressed her forehead,  
flowing down her young, muscled back,  
a sea of skin-waves rippling across her chilled body;  
and if you, a stranger, were bold enough to join her,

you may have been the first person to fear the power  
of freedom in simple passions like the rain.

*- Emily Peiffer, Junior*

## Butterfly Kisses

A young girl races to the story time bench.  
Her heart soars when she sees her grandfather's old smile.  
He throws her into the sky and for one moment she flies  
Like a butterfly.

As the flowers grow closer,  
She flies down and lands carefully upon a petal.  
Listening to her grandfather's stories,  
She sips nectar.

Days grow longer and older.  
The butterfly's spirit ages wearily.  
Stories are seldom told by the sweet old man,  
Her grandfather.

She flies to his rescue  
Sheltering the nectar of everlasting life  
In her green wings.  
Rain slowly showers down from her blue eyes.

"Come closer, and I shall tell you a story  
About the broken wings of an old butterfly."  
His wings sputter out of control;  
Crimson splatters the white daisies.

They place the master storyteller in a box,  
His broken wings hidden beneath his strong frame.  
The little butterfly flutters to his grave  
And kisses the cold stone.

*- Elizabeth Leduc, Junior*



## Hail to the Frack

*Dedicated to my friends in Letterfrack, Ireland  
To: Kevin, Ben, Damien, Rory, Geared, Hazel, Roshinn,  
Adrian, Kenneth, Jackson, Niall, Aidan, and Gillian*

Hail to the men, women, locals of the Frack!  
Men in warm sweaters, and tight knit hat.  
A pint in one hand, a smoke in the other,  
people on foot, make wary of that.

They'll call to you from the benches below,  
and ask old Tom to drink a bottle or so.  
Smoke twenty Benson, in a gold pack,  
saunter to the pitch and then head back  
to the Den to pick up the cue and slap  
a few Euros on the table. Give the next a  
game or two, fill the triangle red, yellow  
those of the skill, the unbeatable beaten on  
whiskey-swayed nights, smoke billows thick,  
an ink black sky-line, that stumbles amid  
salty bay spray, a faint orange horizon across  
a shattered glass bay.

*- Marie Snyder, Senior*



## I'm from 1956

I'm from under the ancient crab apple tree,  
twisted and bent like a wise majestic grandfather,  
headstone to the ancient people who lie beneath in the back corner,  
two light-years away from the dusty gravel road.

I am from the deep over-your-head quack grass  
behind where our ducks live under a tar paper half-shed,  
quacking their brains out as they waddle furiously away  
from Sassy, who honks and waddles furiously from Prince  
who barks and runs because he can't do anything but bark and run.

I'm from homemade cookies and holes in my socks,  
suckotash, and puna<sup>1</sup> soup.

I am an explorer, taking endless safaris down the snaky path,  
secret, mysterious, undiscovered by all—'cept Anna, Jeffy, and me.

I'm from dragging Kathryn down the path with Anna and Jeffy  
where a snake scared the hell out of her.

It came from nowhere and landed in her hair.

I'm from laughing, and having moments of mean.

I'm from clothes that hung on the line.

I'm from wearing clothes, always stiff from Aetna Cement's kiss of dust.

I'm from scratching and wriggling in cement clothes that tore at my skin.

I'm from wandering by the river, killing time, not getting home til dark—  
climbing the lime hills, jumping on Cotter's half-drowned  
fish Shanty, balancing on the railroad tracks always unafraid,  
fishing for carp that pulled Paul into the deep ditch.

I'm from sneaking by Peek-a-Boo Parker's house.

He never killed anyone, though we heard he had.

He never killed us, but I heard he crapped on the floor in his house.

He and his brown naked house went up in smelly flames together one day.

They say Peek-a-Boo was already dead. They didn't have to bury him.

He used to be a photographer with a helicopter,

Taking aerial shots of women through their windows until he fell  
on his head out of his plane—then he just peeked, I suppose.

---

<sup>1</sup> Puma soup is a blend of pea soup, creamed corn, milk, and tuna—our standard lunch fare.

I'm from Irish—fiery spirits, too much whiskey,  
wild dancing, soda bread, potatoes, parades  
and stories taller than you and me standing on each other's head.  
But mostly, I'm from laughter louder than the voice of God.

I'm from Catholic, where God yells a lot and will probably  
send everyone to hell unless you go to the little box,  
tell the shadow something bad even if you have to make it up.  
Three Hail Mary's, three Our Father's, and three Glory Bees—  
oh, and an Act of Contrition.

I'm from Catholic where I learned early that vomiting in church meant  
you could go home and watch television.

I am from my family, who invented talking and hilarity,  
powerful tales to frighten the neighbors who thought we were all nuts anyway  
because we had so many kids, and maybe, just maybe, 'cuz  
when Daddy knew they were at their windows snooping,  
he opened wide the kitchen window and shouted in his deep bass Polish voice,  
“Maria, wyrażać w dół ów nóż i czynić nie zabić mi dziś!”<sup>2</sup>  
I'm from sanity and insanity—strong, proud, and good.

I'm from walking on sidewalks paved with a gazillion May flies  
that blow in off the Bay like magic on one night every year,  
where you can hear every church bell in town, and the firehouse  
reminds us it is quarter to noon with it's people-stopping scream.

I'm from 1956, where you can dial up the time lady at 112 and she drones,  
“At the tone, the time will be 11:45 and 20 seconds.....BEEP!  
At the tone, the time will be 11:45 and 30 seconds.....BEEP!”  
Sometimes I tell her, “SHUT UP!”  
But she just keeps talking and beeping and talking and beeping.  
I think she died.

I'm from under the ancient crab apple tree in the back corner,  
two light-years away from the dusty gravel road,  
where I hope God can't see me.

- *Rosemary Steers, Senior*

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<sup>2</sup>Mary, put down that knife, and don't kill me today!

## Palms

Because she's not his hue.  
Because she draws  
From different roots.  
Because she raps  
And he rocks.  
She can't rock  
And he can't rap.

Because she says *y'all*  
And he says *you dudes*.  
Because she's from slaves  
And he's from masters.  
They should pass  
With their eyes  
Cast downward.

Because when their hands touch  
The colors blend to dirt,  
Mud, filth, and grime.  
Because their love  
Is like the mutt,  
A single protrusion  
Amidst masses of purity.

Their brothers, their equals  
Have been blinded  
By recycling centuries of  
Greed, bigotry, and hatred,  
Erecting walls with  
Bricks of assumption  
And prejudice.

But them, they see  
Nothing but skin—  
Two palms firmly grasping  
One another in honest embrace,  
A man and a woman.  
They are two humans and  
They are alive.

Her hand is his  
And his is hers,  
Warmth that spreads  
Throughout their bodies,  
Not letting go  
On any set of terms  
But their own.

- Kyle Austin, *Sophomore*





STILL LIFE IN COLOR – Oil on Canvas  
*Holly LaFave, Junior*

## Texas Dust (Sestina)

Texas brought me down to earth  
McMurtry's voice echoing in my ear  
A lonesome dove flying through the dust  
Of a storm sweeping across the land  
Quenching the dry plain  
And the heart of a lonely cowboy

I await a cowboy  
Who travels to the far ends of the earth  
And across the vast plain  
I listen—silence ringing in my ear  
My body his only undiscovered land  
Dreams of his touch turning to dust

Settling upon his brim, the dust  
Swirls around the cowboy  
His thoughts turning to the land  
Where his love sits on the barren earth  
Caressing his cheek and whispering in his ear  
Her longing to live a life, simple and plain

But it beckons, this wide-open plain  
His skin accustomed to the fine layer of dust  
The coyotes crying close to his ear  
Loneliness is the life of a cowboy  
He sleeps only with the earth  
And rests his head on the breast of the land

But isn't it time to land?  
To settle far away from the plain  
Feel the coolness of the earth  
And let the rain wash away the dust  
That has collected on the heart of this cowboy  
His true love's lament no longer falling on a deaf ear

Silently I praise God as the horse's neigh reaches my ear  
I see the dark silhouette defining the land  
This is your last round-up, cowboy  
Take a long, last look behind you—the plain  
My love will blow away the Texas dust  
And quench more than the thirsty earth

- *Bona Van Dis, Junior*



MAGIC – Photography  
*Beth Yahne, Junior*



METAL – Sculpture  
*Pete Kaiser, Senior*

## The Shop

Dust collects  
on a workbench  
designed to construct  
memories and dreams,  
a neglected tool closet  
stands empty  
to a much smaller one  
with an array of tiny  
tools for small hands.  
The florescent light that used to  
shine so brightly casts dusty shadows  
over an empty room.  
My hands remember cardboard,  
the feel of the simple saw  
cutting through a block of  
cedar  
*Let me use the power saw,*  
my grandfather would say  
*I don't want you getting hurt.*  
An empty room rebuilds a memory,  
and my grandfather's words echo  
off cement walls.

- Steven Howell, Senior

## A Personal Ad

i am a wishful thinker  
cup is half-gone drinker  
my hourglass forever lingers  
always out of time

i am a shape-shifter  
down the lonesome highway drifter  
the unanswered question sifter  
always never here

i'm not a rock star  
just sing songs and play guitar  
don't care much bout gettin' far  
always out of tune

i am an iconoclast  
writing poems and cutting class  
welcome light and shun the past  
always out of line

i am a changed man  
one who lives without a plan  
take what i have do what i can  
always see it through

i am a ghost-buster  
hopeless soul and over-truster  
all the courage I can muster  
always fades away

i am the wispy fog  
ragged as a homeless dog  
my epitaph upon on a log  
always left to die

i am an inmate  
locked up 'til the present date  
who can tell me my own fate?  
always pushed around

i am a broken heart  
cast to play this dismal part  
doomed to fail before the start  
always i'm betrayed

i am the green leaves,  
the thrift-store t-shirt sleeves  
kissed by none on new year's eve  
always flashing dull

i am the new beginning  
always coming back

- Kyle Austin, *Sophomore*





RED TREE – Conte Crayon and Pastel  
*Jean Allemeier Boot, Senior*

### **The Match**

*scritch*

a trail, a tail of sparks dances out a path

while a phoenix

burning on a miniature pyre

flares to death, or life—

lunging, voracious

a pyramid of gold shot with blue

a heart, coal black in a lilac shroud

towers and climbs, and then

the cowed nimbus of flame

sliding silently forward

gasps briefly

a momentary surge

the inevitable end

*pfft*

extinguished

- *Monica Walen, Senior*

## Cleansing Night

She sits under  
the moon's white light,  
the stars asleep  
beneath the fog.  
Her eyes search deep  
into the night;  
her lips release  
a midnight song.

She sits upon  
a wall of stone,  
Her fingers twined  
in tender moss.  
The dampness seeps  
into her bones,  
the swinging bottle  
wets her lips.

There she stays  
in filtered light  
scattered on  
the forest floor.  
What she looks for  
she's not sure,  
but darkness does not  
judge her song.

The light acts as  
a cleansing bath;  
baptismal font  
drips through the trees.  
Here is comfort,  
true release,  
her midnight song  
that brings her peace.

- Kara Madden, *Junior*



CHELSEA – Ceramic Sculpture  
*Chelsea Nix, Junior*

## The Great Pea Soup Rebellion

by Emily Peiffer, Junior

Even though I was sitting on a booster seat, I still felt too small for the table. My eye level was just high enough so that I could peer into the bowl that contained my demise.

Anyone who knew my mother knew that not only did she love to cook, but she was good at it too. When we compiled a family cookbook, almost every other page was a recipe with her name on it. Needless to say, over time she acquired a variety of crafty nicknames—Martha Stewart, to name one. But suddenly I was feeling some severely serious doubts about my mother’s straight-A cooking record.

Mom *claimed* that the bowl of goop sitting in front of me was pea soup. I didn’t see any peas. In fact I didn’t see much of anything identifiable. There is a wide variety of pea soups in the world. Split chunky pea soup happens to be the goopiest, most mysterious, most discolored type of pea soup (or any soup at all, for that matter) in existence. It certainly wasn’t the consistency or color of any pea I had ever seen. Fresh peas, particularly after being cooked, turn a beautifully bright, happy green with an ever so delightful texture. But this—this was muck green. Swamp green. It was a swamp. There was a swamp in my bowl. If I attempted to eat this soup, who’s to say that I wouldn’t have been transported to a bigger swamp and eaten by alligators? A kid can’t take risks like that.

So I was *not* going to be touching that soup. I gripped my spoon upright in my hand as if I were waving the flag of kid-dom, defending our cause against disgusting foods everywhere. I knew that this resistance was my chance to contribute to the war effort.

Most kids play with food that they don’t like, but I didn’t even take that liberty. I didn’t dare. I just stared at it. If I put my spoon in the soup and swirled it around, would it not be the equivalent of a witch stirring her mysterious evil brew? And then the pea soup could turn into something even worse (if that was possible). Maybe I would turn into a green pea-soup-colored frog by merely inhaling its fumes. Surely I didn’t want to *look* like pea soup for the rest of my life. So I just sat there and stared at it instead.

Mom complained that I wasn’t eating. But why would I want to even think about eating *that*? People made fun of kids who ate boogers. Surely, that’s exactly what was dwelling in my bowl. Even kids who ate boogers made fun of other kids who ate boogers. It was the lowest of the low, and I wasn’t about to stoop to that level. A kid still has pride to consider.

Dad finished his soup and commented on its superiority of pea soups. He raved of its excellence. “You should eat some,” he said. “It’d be good for you.” Yet I couldn’t get past the concept that it would be just as healthy to go out in the backyard, mush up some dirt and leaves in a puddle and call it soup.

It would probably be the same consistency anyway. And who knows? It might even taste better.

I began to shift in my chair. I didn't want to sit there forever. There were limitless possibilities of more entertaining things I could be doing with my time. Mom and Dad had already left the table. I made an attempt to move from my chair but Mom stopped me. Obviously she had seen me with her x-ray vision. "You haven't eaten any dinner," she said. "You can't get up because you're not done." I couldn't back down now. I shook my head, "I don't want any." I must maintain the resistance, or my existence as I knew it could be over. The soup was probably emanating some radioactive substance. If those plastic green army men and G.I. Joes were to become a soup, this might be it. It would surely taste like cooties and plastic—radioactive, cootie-ridden war plastic.

One bite, she said. That was all. If I took just one bite, I would be free. If I liked it, I could eat it. If I didn't like it, she would make me a PB&J sandwich. Without crust, too. Oh, that was tempting. What I wouldn't give to trade this goop for a sandwich. I looked at the soup. I could do it, right? Mom and Dad went to go watch TV. I was alone with my pea soup. I could do it. One bite, that was it. But...that was just *it*. One *bite*. One dislikable bite can have terrible consequences on one's gag reflexes. For example, one bite of chocolate made my friend's dog vomit. Not to mention that my cat has created hairballs that vaguely looked like what was lurking in my bowl. Frankly, it probably wouldn't look much different if I *did* throw it up.

I was sitting alone in the room for at least 30 minutes before Mom came back in. "Have you eaten any yet?" she asked. I could've lied. It would have been a very good time to lie. I could've said that I had tried it, but didn't like it and wanted a sandwich. But if she knew I was lying (like she so often somehow does) I would've gotten into more trouble. I slowly shook my head. "Get up. Go to bed," she said.

Another frighteningly disgusting dinner. Another victorious day for the resistance. I trudged up the stairs alone and went to bed, my stomach growling. Breakfast was only a few hours away. I could make it through the night. My troops were supportive, staring back at me with beady button eyes. Proud smiles were stretched across their fluffy, snuggly animal faces. Maybe tomorrow I would win the battle. Maybe *someday* they would finally understand that every meal should consist of macaroni and cheese with a side of candy. Perhaps someday they would understand this wisdom that I possessed. They certainly had a lot to learn.

My friend offered me some pea soup, fifteen years after my first non-existent experience. I finally tried it for the first time in my life. I guess it wasn't so bad.

## Mahler's Fifth Symphony

Sometimes music is like  
hard poetry—obscure,  
obfuscating, obsidian,  
familiar sounds making up  
a foreign language. Its students  
bend in sore-shouldered concentration,  
straighten up with lofty analysis.  
Adagietto, rondo, fugue—  
do they find beauty here, I wonder,  
or love only the intellectual ideal?

Sometimes poetry is like  
difficult music.  
Dante did not inspire me.  
But Mahler chases Dante  
down the rabbit hole. This is no distinguished poet  
holding smugly onto Virgil's coattails, but a  
running  
tripping  
shrieking  
slipping fugitive  
pursued by a maniacal swarm of  
flutes and one first violin. A devilish tritone  
pulls at his pant leg, beckons him into the blood—  
his heart explodes, and woe  
of woes, in this hell  
it is impossible to faint.

And when lofty students long secretly to stretch  
and scratch, perhaps they have focused  
too hard on hard poetry  
and lost the pulsing blast  
of trombone on skin, low brass battling  
to escape their chests.



Maybe they have missed  
the blinding crash  
of cymbals, frozen, suspended  
above sleeping heads—  
two bright halos  
waiting  
like some unlikely sign  
from Paradise.

- *Kyla Sisson, Sophomore*

Runner-up, Academy of American Poetry  
Contest for Colleges and Universities



UNTITLED – Oil on Canvas  
*RaNae Couture, Senior*



TEMPTATION ENTRAPMENT – Oil on Canvas  
*Holly LaFave, Junior*

## **Mrs. Ramsay**

Assembling order from chaos—  
so meticulous—  
her hands caress the apples  
in the fruit-bowl—  
first red, then yellow,  
a social artist literally at work.  
The art work will be loved  
and admired for a brief  
moment,  
a captured memory that  
fades as a grain of sand in an hourglass.  
But the image will remain in the thoughts  
of the artist.  
The red wine flask positioned opposite the white,  
the orchestrated conversation that  
ensues upon her red canvas,  
all dance and sing to  
the tune of Mrs. Ramsay.  
The world without  
still seems surreal and unimportant  
to the loving artist;  
all that truly exists lies tangible before her.  
After they drink of  
her essence, the time must pass  
to be reconciled again—  
tomorrow.

- *Steven Howell, Senior*

## The Little Fire Engine That Couldn't

by Stephanie Gerling, Junior

It all started with a tank engine named Thomas.

"Mom, can I watch TV?" I asked.

"Sure, honey, but only for an hour," she answered, "So make sure you pick a show you really want to watch."

I knew that *Sesame Street* was on soon.

And so was *David the Gnome* and *Gummy Bears*.

Those shows weren't good enough. I didn't want to watch Big Bird give me the word of the day. I didn't want to see David gnome-kiss his wife, Ruth. I especially didn't care about Gummy Bears bouncing here and there and everywhere. I was waiting for something great. For something entertaining. For something that gave inanimate objects a face and a voice and a story.

I was waiting for Thomas the Tank Engine.

As soon as the big hand was on the 12 and the little hand on the 4, I plopped myself in front of the TV and watched Thomas and Company choo-choo and chug up and down the tracks. I loved this show. I breathed this show. I wanted to be just like Thomas. I wanted the big, metal wheels and the smoke stack and the steam and the coal and the train tracks and the other engine friends. I wanted to *be* an engine, but not an engine like Thomas—I knew I couldn't compete with his beautiful physique and gorgeous caboose—I wanted to be a new addition to *Thomas and Company*. I wanted to be a fire engine.

"Stephanie, what are you doing with that?" my mom asked as she pointed to the cup of water in my hands.

"Putting out a fire!" I screamed.

"What? Where's the fire?"

"Here!" I screamed as I filled my mouth with water and then spit it out all over our living room carpet.

"Stephanie Ann!" my mom yelled. "Why would you do that?! Go to the kitchen and get paper towel and clean this up."

"Mom, fire engines don't have hands! They have hoses and ladders and sirens and flashing lights and red paint...but no hands!"

"Then use your ladders and sirens and flashing lights and red paint to pick up the mess." I obeyed only because I knew fire engines were good engines and would never do anything wrong. Fire engines helped people. They put out fires. They saved kittens from high branches. They were the prettiest and best car-truck-engine-things with sirens. I knew that. But my mom didn't.

"Mom! There's a kitten in that tree!" I said at dinner one day.

"Where? There aren't any trees in the house," my mom said.

I pointed to the stairs where my cat, Flakey, sat perched at the top.

“Okay,” she sighed, “Go save it.”

“WEEEEEEEEEE-OOOOOOOOOOOOO WEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-  
OOOOOOOOOO! WOOOWOOOWOOOWOO!” I yelled as I jumped off my chair and sped towards my cat. My loud siren startled my cat and she hurdled down the stairs and into the basement, but in my mind I saved her.

I put up the fire engine gag for months until finally my wish came true. Or, at least, part of it did. On Christmas morning, as I eagerly unwrapped my presents, I saw a small red truck peaking out from one of the branches. I abandoned the gift I was unwrapping and snatched the hidden toy. It was a fire engine! A fire engine with a ladder and a siren and flashing lights and a hose and red paint! I could finally live out my dream of becoming a fire engine!

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When I was three I wanted to be a fire engine but my parents told me I couldn't be an inanimate object.

When I was eight I wanted to be an archeologist but my parents told me that it would be boring and I would get dirty.

When I was ten I wanted to be a crime scene investigator but my parents told me that I would see a lot of gross things and use maggots to determine how long someone was dead.

When I was twelve I wanted to be an air traffic controller but my parents told me that I would have to be very good at math and move to Houston.

So now I'm twenty years old and I'm an English major and I'll most likely be poor the rest of my life.

Sorry Mom and Dad.



UNTITLED – Ceramic Sculpture  
*Lauren Rogers, Freshman*

*Broken Bicycles*

On the road again  
just the two of us  
in your old station wagon

We go everywhere  
Ohio turnpike, New York skyline  
we yearn to see it all

We're going away, far away  
from this stagnant place  
filled with tired dreams and broken bicycles

Stop to watch the children play  
they yell and jump on tire swings  
like we used to  
days when you pulled on my swinging braids  
I never knew that things would change  
I wish everything could stay the same

- for a little while -

We're going away, far away  
from this stagnant place  
filled with tired dreams and broken bicycles

Sitting on the beach at Jersey shore  
as boats float by and people run past  
the breeze ruffles my hair, you turn and smile  
thinking of our awakened dreams and new blue bicycles

We're far away, so far away  
from that dusty, sleepy place  
filled with tired dreams and broken bicycles

- *Mary Carlson, Junior*



## **Ballad of a Veteran**

A wall remembers  
the names of those men  
who served and died,  
men who attained great honors,  
fought courageously for their country  
and their fellow Americans.

But a wall does not remember  
jungle rot, endless rain, and  
the relentless beating  
of the blades of helicopters.

It does not remember  
the grief of lost comrades,  
the dead lying among the living,  
pain and loss of limb.

Those who stand closest to the wall  
become the true memorial.  
They hold their memories in great reverence,  
so that the great lesson  
cannot be forgotten.

A wall remembers names,  
and nothing more.

- *Steven Howell, Senior*



STUART – Ceramic Sculpture  
*Stuart Christians, Senior*

***Pink!***

Pink, yes you are pink  
that flush of a color means more  
to me than daylight  
Pink is pure forever  
Pure, more than that silky foam  
Resting upon my upper lip  
Sweet it may be, but milk—  
never as pure as my pink.

My gentle pink, such like  
the songs of angels before  
the eastern sun,  
and the dove that soars  
on wings of a [hush!] lullaby.

Pray, let us hear  
Your squeals my bunny child  
see the rouge of your cheeks  
and the curiosity of your eyes.  
To the skies and below you see  
Truth and dazzle me oh pink!

Just as a strawberry is as crisp  
as the air around it  
and lovely like the lily  
Pink is that burst of flavor  
Delight, let it roam!  
Not only a fruit  
A passion, an art!  
A wonder to my spirit  
Oh sensuous pink!

- Jane Kraemer, *Sophomore*



STILL LIFE #2 – Oil on Linen  
*Elizabeth Hertl, Junior*

## Magaera

Down in the shire,  
a short way west of here,  
there lives a beauty  
purring to the babble of grass  
and turning glittering eyes  
upon butterflies.  
She hums among the fields of barley,  
dances in the rain,  
stops for every pretty flower  
and charms the fellows  
down the lane.  
She rides a painted horse  
with a blue ribbon and a braided mane;  
they pass beside the willow trees  
where she has carved her name.  
And every time her name is uttered,  
the world seems to whisper back:  
"Magaera keeps our world alight,  
Magaera shining bright."

- *Cristina Sills, Senior*



CAMPUS TREE – Conte Crayon and Pastel  
*Jean Allemeier Boot, Senior*

## Humanity Blues

I've got soul, Zora.  
It burns between my breasts  
under my ribcage  
south of my heart  
north of my guts  
and it squeezes my lungs 'til I think I'll die.

I've got blood, Langston.  
It's not deep like the rivers, but like the ocean,  
the salt-tears Atlantic  
with the cries of whales  
and its path of bones  
strewn by a hand that was and wasn't mine.

I've got the blues, Billie.  
I've got aches and pains that slide under my skin  
same as you.  
I've got a rhythm and a people and a sorrow  
same as you.  
My rhythm is clumsy and frail,  
but it's mine.  
My people are bloody and pale,  
but they're mine.  
My sorrow is the breath of life that suffocates my soul,  
but it's mine  
and yours  
and everyone's.

I've got the blues,  
but I can't tell a soul.

I've got the lonesome human blues,  
but no one will ever, ever know.

I've got a song I want to share  
and a skin I didn't choose.

But everybody know that  
white folk can't sing the blues.

- *Autumn Sabol, Senior*

## **This Moment**

*With thanks to Sharon Olds.*

We simply can't describe what it is we expose  
in this moment of driving aimlessly together  
through an evening of twilight in my fast car  
with the sun roof welcoming the moon, in our summer skin,  
my neck strung with mutely glowing pearls  
pulsing in the dusky shadow. We whisper about our dreams  
igniting stars;  
we can't decide what was airplane or  
solar flare and what was combined dream. The road  
is freeing; each turn reveals  
in this moment its illustrious never-endingness.  
I think of the tears I shed in your absence,  
my loneliness distorting memory. We murmur about  
forgiveness—when I abandoned expectation and saw you as you are.  
You are tucked into my passenger seat, your eyes  
an enigmatic green, your wrist bending,  
compressed, along the subtle curve of your rib.  
We talk about the future,  
your hopes igniting dreams of my own.  
Even if we could,  
we would not analyze it,  
the turn onto another forested road when I reverently  
turn the music low and you start to dream against the glass—I love  
to drive and dream with you, only to dream  
my dreams to a drowsing boy/man, your  
limitless silhouette overflowing the chair and  
languidly spilling into my space, the  
unrestrained soft curl of your hair—it cannot be taken away.  
It is the shadowy twilight; we travel surrounded by it.

*- Amelia Crist, Sophomore*





BLACK, WHITE ABSTRACTED STILL LIFE – Oil on Canvas  
*Maureen McKenzie, Senior*

*Make Believe*  
by *Connie Hight, Junior*

A witch, Spiderman, a princess, a ballerina, Harry Potter, Shrek, and a ghost all streak by, the plastic bags by their side heavy with candy but not slowing them down. My husband and I laugh as we watch the children disappear into the crowd. Even though it is Halloween and children typically dress up as fictional characters, scary creatures, or their latest hero, they are oddly out of place among the desert camouflage uniforms of my husband and the soldiers in his National Guard unit. Still, this being Halloween, the uniforms themselves could be costumes and the adults wearing them could be trick-or-treaters. Unfortunately, this is not make believe. In real life, the military does not recognize holidays when deploying their troops, especially a holiday such as Halloween. Wanting to make life as normal as possible, the families of the soldiers have brought their children dressed up in their costumes to see their father or mother off to war.

Slowly, my husband and I make our way through the parking lot seeking a quiet spot in which to say a final good-bye. The air is crisp and painful as it hits my lungs, the night sky heavy with blackness. I am thankful that it is not raining as is usual for Halloween night. I am amazed there is still something that I am thankful for. We stop next to an old military truck with a flat tire and a dented door parked alone like a lost child suddenly aware that his mother is no longer at his side. I lean against the truck. My husband presses his forehead against mine.

“Are you going to be okay?” he asks.

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask back.

Taking in shallow breaths, we continue to lean against the truck, foreheads pressed together, unable to force words that are not needed to be said. A small child dressed as a bunny walks by holding the hand of her father. Off to our right is a fairy princess, to our left a soldier tossing a Frisbee back and forth to his son who is dressed as a football player. In the distance, a woman is crying. My husband plays with the wedding band on my left hand, twisting it around and around.

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask my husband.

“Are you going to be okay?” he asks back.

Suddenly, the black night is lit up by headlights moving toward us at the back of the parking lot. Brakes screech as the buses that are taking my husband and the other soldiers away come to a stop. All else is silent. A soldier gripping a clipboard steps forward.

“When we call your name, we will also call out a number. Report to the bus with that number posted on the front window. Abrams, 2. Allister, 1. Anderson, 1. Baxter, 3. Benson, 2.”

With each name that is called, the silence is filled with more and more good-byes, promises, and tears until it is almost impossible to hear the voice of the soldier in charge of calling out the names and assigning the buses. With our foreheads pressed together, we wait for my husband’s name, our name, to be called. All too soon, we hear it.

“Hight, 3,”

The noise from the crowd disappears as if we are standing there alone, like on our wedding day when we eloped and paid two strangers twenty dollars to be our witnesses. That day, no one else in the world mattered to us. This day, no one else in the world matters to us.

“Are you going to be okay?” my husband asks me.

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask him back.

Not answering the question at all is easier than saying “yes”—something that we both know is not true. My husband pulls away, kisses my forehead, and then my lips while his hand continues to play with the wedding band on my left hand, twisting it around and around. Taking a few steps back, he continues to hold onto my hand until only our finger tips are touching. All too soon, we are not touching at all. The noise of the crowd returns as my husband makes his way toward bus number 3.

“Mommy, make daddy get off the bus!” cries a girl dressed as a witch.

“Honey, write to me as soon as you can!” yells out a wife.

“We will play football as soon as you get back!” shouts a father as his son boards the bus.

In front of me a woman falls to her knees, crying out from the pain. I step around her, looking for my husband on bus number 3. I find him with his forehead pressed up against the cool glass of the bus, his breath fogging up the window. I watch him as the remaining soldiers board the buses. He does not move. I know that he can not see me in the dark but pray that he can feel me.

The engines of the buses roar to life as the doors slam shut, separating us in our Halloween costumes and them in theirs. We know that ours are make believe, theirs are not. As the buses pull out of the parking lot one by one, I look at the people around me. The pain is overwhelming, pressing against my chest, making it difficult to breathe. I play with the wedding band on my left hand, twisting it around and around. No one moves. We all stare at the empty parking lot once occupied by the buses, our lives suddenly as empty as those spaces.

**My Name is Egg Fu Yung**  
**or**  
**Why I Never Learned to Cook**  
*by Kyla Sisson, Sophomore*

There are two things wrong with clam chowder: one is the clams, and the other is the chowder. However, I swallowed this canned concoction dutifully at my father's house, chewing up and down on the rubbery pink circles until, befuddled when they remained unchanged, I washed them down with a spoonful of whitish paste. It always strikes me, looking back, that my father, a self-proclaimed connoisseur of texture, found this meal palatable. On the other hand, he also enjoyed tapioca pudding.

My dad taught me that food comes from one of three sources: a box, a can, or a take-out restaurant. Staples at our house included instant oatmeal, instant mashed potatoes, and instantly available Hot n' Now, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pizza Hut specialties. Cooking was work, but food was fun, suitable for parties and comedy routines. So we left the cooking out.

"My name is Egg Fu Yung!" my father would say, attempting an oriental accent as he piggybacked us up the stairs. This sent my brother and me into fits of giggles.

"Who?" we asked, urging him on.

At meals, my dad would raise his eyebrows, widen his eyes, and pop open his mouth like a baby bird while we fed him spoonfuls of his breakfast. Forget about taste: food was funny.

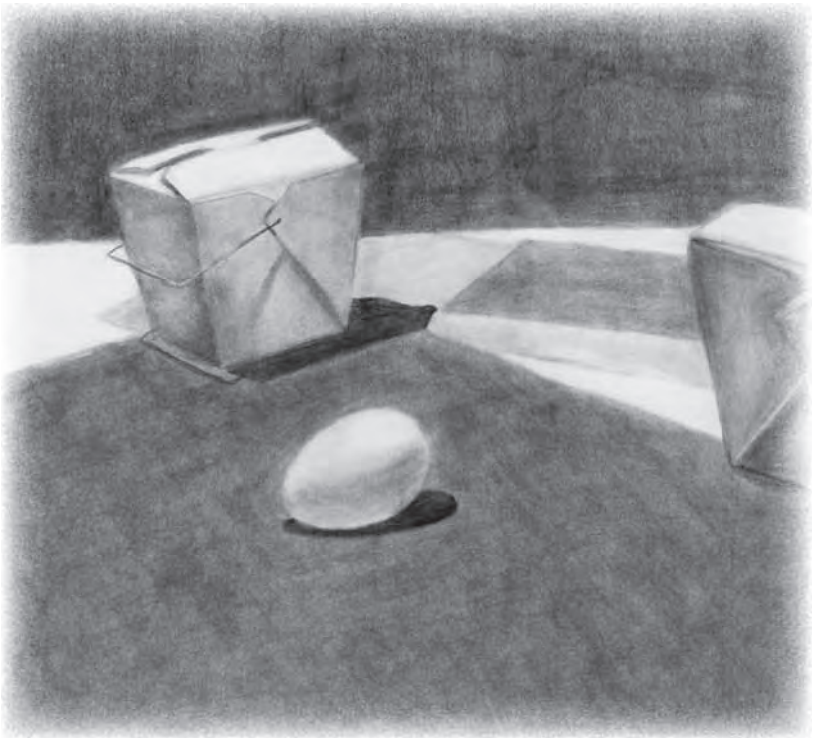
One funny food word I loved was *lunch*. At afternoon recess, I skipped around the sunny concrete singing it to myself, whispered it under my breath while I stood in line for the midday meal, "Lunch, lunch, lunch!" as we marched along, the syllables squishing together and smacking apart like warm, cheesy macaroni.

Kraft macaroni and cheese, that bright orange substance from the bright blue box, was one of my favorite meals. Not only was it the embodiment of lunch (I've never understood why Kraft calls it "Dinner"), sending out subliminal messages through its very name, it also had its own dance: the Macarena. While the macaroni boiled in its sacred pot, I gave thanks to the Lunch Gods by thrusting out my arms and swiveling my hips over our kitchen's brown linoleum, celebrating the gift of elbows, shapes and spirals.

When the noodles had swelled and the final specks of cheese powder were tapped from the packet, I settled in to enjoy the extravagance. Each elbow slid neatly onto a tine of my fork and was eaten off in a bright orange row. The best noodles were the ones packed with cheese powder. When one of these, the Kraft jackpot, was discovered, it was necessary to stop and savor the sharp, tangy burst of cheese flavor. All too soon, the bottom of my bowl would be revealed, and then I vigorously scraped my fork back and forth against the cheesy surface, kid code for "Please, sir. I want some more!"

My father obviously delighted in this sign language exchange, because he would immediately occupy my fork with more macaroni.

These days, macaroni and cheese remains one of the few dishes I know how to prepare. My father, on the other hand, has had a conversion experience. Although he never learned to cook, he married a slave to this discipline. The time-consuming meals prepared for him have turned his palate to more sophisticated tastes. He now prefers gourmet cuisine to KFC, Pinot Noir to Mountain Dew, and al dente pasta to Kraft Dinner. My training, however, was complete long ago. While my friends make blueberry muffins and stir-fry from scratch, I am content to eat microwave popcorn and dry cereal, to revel in the magic of “Just Add Water!” and to leave cooking to those other unenlightened souls.



CHINESE BOXES – Graphite on Paper  
*Laura Oudendyk, Sophomore*

## The Cranes

by Alex Jacobsson, Junior

Lying on the backyard deck, I feel the end of summer wash over me. The sun is giving off the last of summer's warmth, fading with the colors of the leaves. As I lay on the deck, I try to soak in my environment. I recall a song from the musical *Oliver!* in which the title character wishes he could box up a day and save it for another, something I try to do now. Maybe if I focus hard enough, I can make the long winters of Michigan warmer with my memories.

Inhaling as I lie there, I feel and smell in the same instance. The scents of the harvest season seem to stroke my face, carried gently on the fresh, warm summer air. Leaves, barbeque, fresh water, honeysuckle, cut grass, and wood smoke fill my lungs and intoxicate my mind. My mind seems to deceive me, for I imagine a hint of citrus is carried on breezes from the south. Either that or my sister sitting nearby is wearing her Orange Crush body spray again. Alisha is engrossed in a novel as she sits outside with me, paying little attention to all the scents of the air.

I stretch up from my sprawled out position on the deck and gaze out around me. The sky gleams like a crystal-blue dome above my head, creating a shelter around my world. Open fields surround my home, encircled by the fading forests of pine and oak. If there weren't other neighboring houses in sight, my house would be very alone. I feel at times like a king in my hilltop home, an island in a field of once wheat. If only there was wheat now to shine like gold in the sun. But time has eroded the fields, creating a dreary collection of lanky grasses, thistle, and weeds. Imagining the golden field that once existed, I feel my body slipping back onto the deck, caressed by the sun as my dreams begin to take over.

Creativity seems to always haunt me in my free time, urging me not to procrastinate but instead chronicle my experiences. I choose not to now by just surrendering and fading into a state of semi-consciousness. The sounds around me seem to combine into a symphony of fading farmland, lulling me deeper into my dreams. There's laughter of people in their yards, shaking of cars on the nearby state road, rolling of a tractor, the screech of a farm's rooster, stereos' thud, and dogs barking in annoyance.

I feel like I am almost asleep when I hear a new sound, a mysterious song slowly filling the air. The song is lonely, unearthly, mystical, hollow...bone chilling. It is a sound from another world, another time, another place. It fills the sky briefly, overpowering all other noises. My eyes flip open, gazing upward where I sense the sound came from. Was I

dreaming that trumpet-like sound, or did it really occur? Alisha has stopped reading and is also gazing upward, so I know I must have heard something real.

A low rhythmic *thump-Thump-ThUMP* begins overhead, coming from the other side of our house. It grows louder, but still remains soft and light as a figure glides over the rooftop. The troubadour is long and slender, gracefully poised on the wind, with wings billowing out to the sides. One wouldn't imagine a bird this large could glide so gentle downwards into my open field, and yet the figure does. Like a mighty crusader rushing into an unknown place, he trumpets his arrival and those of his followers. A dozen or so of the birds land gracefully on twig legs and strut slowly across the field singing their wondrous song.

I cannot describe the sound; words do not do it justice. It is a hollow bellow that reverberates with energy and strength. Time itself is held for an instant by the sound as past becomes present. It fills our air and souls and makes us want to weep. Weep for we are only human, never to know the true majesty of the animal world. We will never spread our wings and soar through the glittering sky, nor will we open our mouths and sing a song like that of the crane. I turn to my sister and realize we are both enchanted by the birds, watching them as they strut across our field, moving slowly in our direction.

Wishing I could be closer to them, I slide off the deck and slowly begin to move towards them. I want to be one with the cranes, to feel their world for just a moment. *They must feel so free*, I think, *able to fly wherever their wings desire*. If only humans had such a gift; instead, we are grounded in our lives, slowly digging ourselves into a comfortable trench. We will never know the freedom of the crane nor be able to sing his song.

As I draw closer, the group suddenly notices me. The leader pauses while poised gracefully on one leg, eyeing my alien form as I begin to evade his personal bubble. He cannot trust me, for my breed has done so much harm to his kind. I notice the feathers on his head are like a crown as he tilts his in inquiry: *Why do you approach us?*

*I only want to be close, to feel what you feel for just an instant.* As if in response, his head seems to nod. His followers are eyeing me too now, beginning to edge back away from me, but he seems to stop them with his gaze. He throws back his head as I watch, and I feel his song wash over me, feeling time slip away. Then with a gust of the wind, the cranes are gone. I watch their figures float over the forest, gliding towards the sun. The song rings out, trumpeting freedom across the land as the cranes journey on without end.





BROKEN HOME – Mixed Media  
*Amy Brumwell, Senior*



## Falling

I remember falling  
upward and inward  
into you  
as you reached for me.

I remember the moment  
I lost all feeling  
and sense  
of bone in skin.

I remember being found  
in art without its frame  
and poetry released from rhyme.

I remember notes  
scattered and silent  
and sunlight  
in the basement of your father's house.

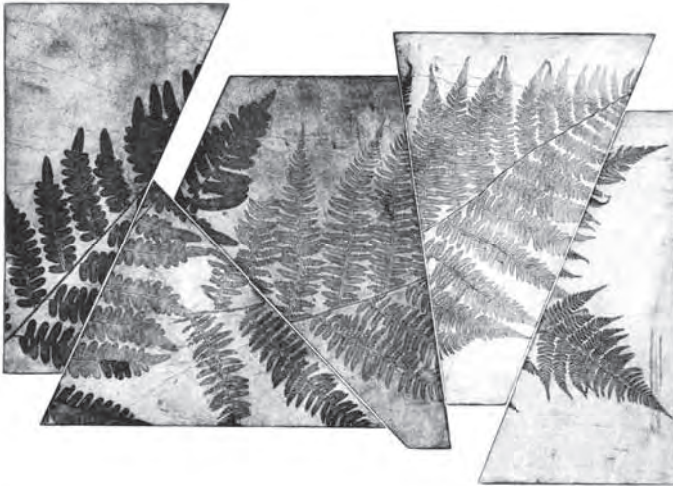
I remember  
scarred knees  
and the breathlessness  
of the wind  
as I fell.

- *Kate Gubert, Freshman*

## Parisian Dance

First *step*  
lightly through the  
brittle crowd, dark-clothed and  
silent, mourners  
with nothing to mourn.  
Then *shuffle*,  
eyes upward, twining through mazes of  
high-tiered buildings, relics of history,  
proud beneath their worn facades,  
watching the movement of time and  
the motion of wanderers and  
you, as you pass.  
And *slide*  
past the wide-eyed tourists  
who gaze at the buildings, and  
gape at the natives, and  
cluster in groups, lost children in  
a world they don't yet understand.  
And *bow*.

- Monica Walen, Senior



BROKEN LEAF – Intaglio Print on Cloth  
Janine Schmidt, Senior



RED PAINTING – Oil on Canvas  
*Margaret Schmitz, Sophomore*

## For Your Own Good

by Alison Bohne, *Sophomore*

Aramis is a proud fellow. He is taller, faster, stronger, and more elegant than I could ever hope to be, and he knows this. If I want to groom him, I've got to cajole him into cooperation.

I trickle my fingers over his hot velum skin and speak to him, low and mockingbird soft. The first hesitant bars of a song about nothing. My voice always skirts the edges of a tune when I speak to him. It's a private tone, as thick and pervasive as leather polish and sweat, and he is my only audience. I don't take the final plunge into something lyrical, but my delicate murmuring is syrup to his ears.

His response is a wobble of his bowling pin ears and a glossy sigh that savors of musk and the peppermint candies he has just crunched down. His breath stirs the crisp petals of my bangs, delivering a quizzical nickering of interest and suspicion. He knows what I mean to do. My hand is whispering down the length of his flank.

I lever my shoulder into his side, trilling and humming broken strands of poetry that I compose on the spot. His withers are warm and twitching at the duel sensations of my milk pouring purr and the subtle imposition of my body's will upon his balance.

He rocks his weight onto three legs. I scoop my hand down and under, pulling his remaining foot up in one soothing sentence. He bleats and shuffles, peels the rubbery husks of his lips back to expose corn kernel teeth and grumbles as if in accusation. "*You tricked me.*" The words are in his swaying ears and bouncing pupils. "*Wicked girl. You tricked me with peppermints and kissing words.*"

He jerks. I seize. We have an ungainly battle, powerful horse versus brittle-wristed girl, and my voice rising in pitch and urgency. My boots scuff up plumes of powder-fine dust. One small spasm, racing irresistibly through the lattice of muscles in his leg, and I am almost outmatched. I tip into him again, twittering through a cement press of teeth, and my will triumphs.

The prize is his knobby leg, bent like a kinked icicle, and his upturned foot in my palm. There is a pungent clod of damp straw and filth packed into the bowl of his hoof. The smell mixes with the dry dust, pinches my nose, and settles like a staple between my eyes. I have to pick this all out of his hoof before infection settles in. He hates the entire process, but a lame leg would be far worse than a few moments of discomfort. I raise the pick to scoop out the debris, and I sing softly, just for him.

"Aramis, my boy, this is for your own good."



MEANS TO A MEND – Oil on Canvas  
*Kim Harris Vanderlende, Junior*

## Oh Mein Papa!

*by Rosemary Steers, Senior*

On hot summer days about 5:30 p.m., I would sit on our ratty old curling-gray-paint wooden porch with its age-rotted pillars, excited for a glimpse of the Bay City bus. It dropped Daddy off after work in front of the Woodside Bowling Alley. High energy and a need to run without restraint were waiting in my shoes to get the go-ahead to release my feet from the steps and run to meet him. I could run faster than anyone in my class in those days. I had to wait, wait until he crossed Woodside. Woodside was the busiest street in Essexville in the 1950s. Why, we must have had thirty or forty cars go down that street every day back then. When he crossed the street, he would raise his hand. This was my safe signal—get ready, get set, GO! Then I could fly. Faster than the day before, or the day before that, or the day before that...always trying to conquer an inch more than each day before – a game I played with myself. We would finally meet on Hart Street halfway between Smith and Woodside. He didn't talk much. I did. I would tell him about my day although it was mostly sand and shovels—I could make Sissy Kemp eat real mud pies—and fights with the neighborhood girls, and how Mary Ellen Bennett jumped out of Ellen Markey's bushes and tried to kill me with a bear hug. Those two little brats used to call me "skinny wiener" back in those days when I was skinny. I knew I was Daddy's favorite, the youngest of eight children. Now, with five children of my own, I know we were all his favorites.

We ate dinner pretty soon after we got to the house. That's something we did every day because Mother was home and thought and planned and talked about food most of the day. Feeding people became large in her life after she went blind. I think it saved her from going insane. She said it was probably a good thing she was blind because if she weren't she would have been making trouble and nagging people to go places. I believed her when she said that. I know better now. Daddy didn't want to go anywhere after work except to his chair and paper. He was sick in those days, but I didn't know until I was twelve and they took him to the hospital.

Waiting for dinner, he sat in his chair and read the paper and books, more books, and more books—lots of books. He had an insatiable hunger for learning. I guess he missed that growing up when he quit school after eighth grade. I think that made him feel good—smart and accomplished after working all day at the Post Office sorting mail for that mean old Rube Logan. After dinner, Mother washed dishes. She didn't let me do dishes or cooking because she said those were two things she COULD do, and I could do cleaning which was hard for her. I hated cleaning. I still do.

I remember one time when my brother, Bob, bought a hi-fi player after getting his first paycheck from Robert Hall's Clothing Store. It was so fine. When one record was done, the hi-fi would magically go clickety-clack-shoosh-whomp, and drop the next record on the spinning thing. The long pole with the needle on the end seemed to know just when to move up, over, and down onto the new record, and you could pile a whole lot of records on that beauty. Only sometimes all the records came down at once, screaming like someone was being murdered in that box; then everything fell on the stick with the needle, and on the record that was playing. Then I'd get what-for for piling too many on the pole. It was one of the most incredible things I had seen when I was ten. It was much finer than the Victrola we had before.

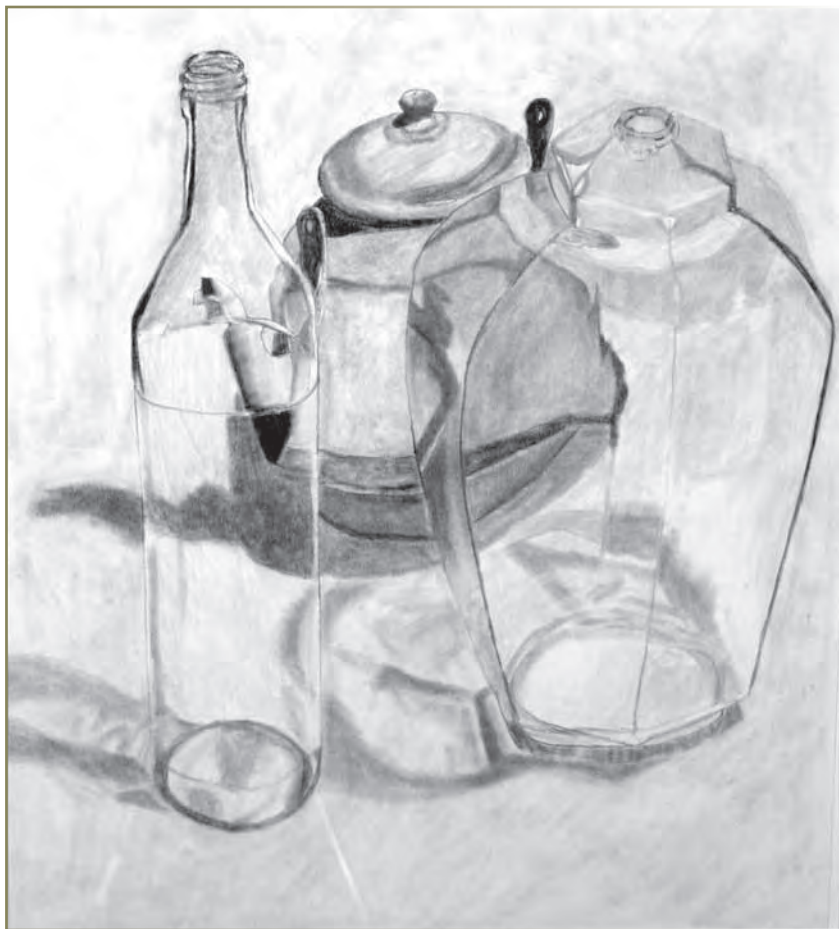
Bob had an Eddie Fischer record with one song my father loved, "Oh Mein Papa." Funny that he liked that song because his father was a drunk who lived in alleys and jail cells. But when "Oh Mein Papa" started playing, he went into a dream-like state. He would sit there thinking, I suppose. Then sometimes when my mother (who went blind before I was born) felt her way through the living room to go upstairs, Daddy would say, "Come on Mary, dance with me!"

"For Pete sake, Stanley," was her stock reply, but he would ignore her protests and sweep her up tightly in his arms, and they would dance. Oh my, they could dance! Their faces became young and new and they looked in love. Imagine old people being in love.

And so, on some hot nights in a living room where the walls were peeling pea-soup green paint and the once-finished wooden floor had been worn thin with burn marks and ink stains recording memories of homework, too many kids, and Boy Scouts who learned how to make fires by rubbing sticks together in our house, Mary and Stanley danced into a world where only they existed: she in her wet, stained apron that covered a worn and milk-toast housedress; he in one of the few shirts he owned, and pants he would wear for a week before changing because they couldn't afford drycleaners. They were both catalog gorgeous in their other world, before we kids came along—Stanley a tall, blonde, blue-eyed Adonis, Mary a small, thin raven-haired Irish beauty.

But on those nights when Daddy felt good, something magical happened in that shabby pea-soup, stained-floor living room. I remember how velvety-smooth safe and chocolate-cake good it felt watching them dance, their own thoughts perhaps traveling back to a time when they had their own life and their own private love. What a powerful love it must have been.

*Oh, Mein papa, to me he was so wonderful. Oh, Mein Papa, to me he was so good.*



TEAPOT AND GLASS – Graphite on Paper  
*Owen Fifield, Freshman*



## Untitled

*by Mike English, Sophomore*

She gazed up at the empty blue sky. But her gaze was a guarded gaze—retracted by the inescapable intuition that this land would never be her home. It's true: here she had finally found happiness, but there was a hollowness to it all, something she dared not explore. This new life was fragile, and she feared that questioning it would cause it all to fall apart and turn to dust just like every good thing she had known before. She tried to put these thoughts out of her mind, but today she was slipping. Today she was tired, and she could not help herself. As her bright blue eyes, with their pin-prick starlit twinkle, began to condemn this empty sky and prosaic horizon, her thoughts took her to another place. She recalled the churning sea that was the sky of her childhood—an ever-changing kaleidoscope of clouds. She sighed and remembered the brisk winds and pervasive dampness that even now felt like home. This was where she belonged, someplace where one could really feel cozy inside. And someplace one could feel as free as any madman out in the thick of the storm. Someplace that had a forest brimming with mystery and a sea that could never be tamed. A place with life. That's what was missing here! These people don't even know what it is to live. These smile-robots and humdrum homemakers. A car whirred along the freeway in the distance, brought her back to St. George and with one long last drag on her Virginia Slim, she blinked, packed herself away again, flashed her veneer smile and clicked her heels across the parking lot.

## Imprisoned Villanelle

I feel their angry eyes on me.  
Like fingernails on sunburned skin,  
those vicious eyes, bloodthirsty.

Grey uniforms and boot-black feet  
marching with their iron grin.  
I feel their angry eyes on me.

My eyes are down, I want to flee,  
I must stay calm; the veil is thin.  
Those vicious eyes, bloodthirsty.

I hate them, but they won't know I'm angry.  
They hate me for my ancestry and kin.  
I feel their angry eyes on me.

If only they knew my plans to be  
free, escape the crumbling city so dim.  
Those vicious eyes, still bloodthirsty.

I will keep my head down, eyes in front of me.  
I'll pray that they won't send me in.  
I feel their angry eyes on me.  
Those vicious eyes, bloodthirsty.

- Rachel Koval, Junior



FERN – Intaglio Print, *Janine Schmidt, Senior*

## Sampler Twenty

A compilation of writing and visual art by Aquinas College students  
(Grand Rapids, Michigan), spring 2008.

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