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### The Vehicle, Fall 2008

Philip Gallagher

Amanda Veale

Grace Lawrence

Steven T. Cox

Mary Lieske

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Archives

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Fall

# The Vehicle

Fall 2008



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## Hop Scotch Bebop

Jake Dawson

Sweet silly slumbers of jazzy June  
jabber and jive to mumbling melodies  
—soothing diddle of dragonflies  
scatter hum drums of hopscotch bebop  
to beats of pitter pattered jump ropes

as last calls for lemonade introduce  
fuzzy buzzed street lights soliciting  
dichotomized ditties betwixt  
metronomic movements of  
hopeless Huckleberrys' hollering  
down Beat Street.

Pink, purple, baby blue hues  
dance around zig zags of zoot suit butterflies  
flutterin' to a jump jive and wail of  
backyard barbeques, cricket concertos,  
and cooish meows from Cool the cat.

Shaded sun slaps sweaty palms with thumb nail moon  
a gregarious greeting galvanizing shimmered stars  
as salutacious symphonies begin the night time overture  
—Fusty fugues flow and foam from  
night time owls conducting furious  
flights of fireflies, polyphonic parades  
of harmonic hickory bugs, and budding  
breezes of percussive chirps leaping  
leaf to leaf.

Bulbous bulging bullfrogs bellow  
billowing ballads—a Barber Shop Quartet—  
while whistl'n Dixie lick'n fingers  
from homemade fly pie.

Alabaster beams bob back and forth  
between rusty rooftops retiring  
hopscotch beboppers to bed time bliss as  
luscious lullabies lift their sweet souls to  
that thumbnail hammock on the moon.

## Empty Room

Amanda Veale

backyard peach tree shadow full  
on bare floor

dirt smudge toeprint  
well-ground in carpet grain

and the drip-drop of a ceiling leak  
not muffled now by usual things

and the dents and the creases  
those things left behind

and the peach tree—  
the peach tree is bursting.

## Mantis (from memory) Muddy Shoes

Gina Marie LoBianco

For the love of bicycles chained at light post light foot  
Brown sneakers and londoning sunset leaving the tick tick tick tick...  
To sidewalk cobblestone counting down cigarette smoke  
Two Marlboro's- where I first saw you- they were Lights.

Crickets mimic bicycle ticks to yr ghost where you'd been- Mantis  
And now souls shuffle around us and I see two butts carelessly  
Flicked to the ground of the same species and I think about you and  
About me and what things that might mean for us  
I check  
Every time I pass that sidewalk; scan  
Same time of sunseting Old Europe  
Put yrself together pack a day  
Like ghost of Christmas Past caroling in chains  
Left me just a footprint made of bubble gum  
And bongo drums muling androgynous complains  
Let them laugh at my hoping high  
The skyscrapers flat foot passerby's  
Cause I've never seen such a silhouette of Autumn  
Leaves so haunted by its own prayer  
And the ghost of ragweed pesticide that always comes back  
To claim its footprints crickets  
Mocking bird movements  
An attempt at keeping time  
How those legs rubbing in the dark  
And they master the deaf desolate whine  
But this mantra, Mantis, chisels sun from our eyes

Sound of brakes & mosquito bites  
Smoke to the filter in the dirt along with yr pangs  
Waiting for you still, Mantis, the people are  
Starting to lookit me kinda strange  
And the martyrs bet on horses to kill the  
Time they cannot tame  
But we are stained-brown -shoes  
Sidewalks in which we've made alla the grooves  
Long distance my ma's putting an end to God  
"Ritual & Dogma"  
And where were you that day?  
Mantis- Don't you ever pray?  
Don't you get tired?  
Don't you ever want to throw the cure away?  
We are the ones that they invade!  
And rocking chair crickets creak  
Munching Tum's like candy canes & waving prescription papers like  
American Flags & labels for the Saved

And the horse shoe miseries that Mantis squints to obtain  
Made wishes on the airplanes/  
And the horse shoe miseries that Mantis squints to obtain  
Sung to sleep by earthquake gaps  
Yr vacant tune so far away  
And a little less audio able this time of day.

Safe

Save a dance, the Mantis hands

Stay a while'

So that when the ghost of pharmaceuticals comes out of exile

And Jimney's puppet is drained

O the sound of the thing

Convinces the prophets that only the haughty remain

A daisy in a mud puddle

Sympathy seeking Eskimo's steal spokes

And build sand castles out of flames

The second coming specter serenade

In

Yr

Place

Safe

A while waiting

For any time that you have saved.

Ghosts as real as remembering

Time's impregnable belly for now...

Bicycle racks any time of year

I couldn't be anywhere else but here

Sidewalked & crosslegged & crushed & dream

Still just a Mantis (sure as a cough come back)

A mental moon hallucination brown shoe eclipse ring

Trampled just crazy can't dance.

If you want it that bad, check the garbage can...

**MEMO**

*Samuel Cloward*

**MEMO**

Re: Communication

We have shut  
and locked the  
open door policy.

We will decide  
what you have to  
complain about.

Thanks, MGMT

**MEMO**

Re: Cafeteria

The prices  
in the cafeteria

will raise  
beginning next week.

It will now cost  
a week's wages to have  
the mashed potatoes

Thanks, MGMT

**MEMO**

Re: Payroll

You are now expected  
to do the work  
of three people  
and you will  
receive  
no extra  
compensation.

Thanks, MGMT

**MEMO**

Re: Family Benefits

We have decided  
that you will  
work for free.

We are going  
to sell  
your families  
into slavery.

Thanks, MGMT

To a Little Black Girl  
Susan S. Johnson

...to see a girl  
...by her  
...over her  
...of your  
...of your  
...of your

You, Morning Girl,  
Will work in  
Nights and Day  
The support,  
Of your

MEMO  
Re: Corporate

We have just merged  
with every other  
company on the planet  
and are in charge  
of the world's  
work force.

Thanks, MGMT

You, Evening's Daughter,  
of your mother's embrace,  
through your father's shadow,  
into your effort of working  
Solitary and sublime  
and delicate  
gather together  
to build the under  
of nations  
that may, one day,  
show that the ultimate  
to every  
hell within  
And the fighter of the  
Bravery, to look upon  
To hear the tales of her  
And hold her equal to Lady Liberty.

MEMO  
Re: Human Resources

It sucks to be you.

Thanks, MGMT

Oh, Ducky Daughter,  
The life I see in you,  
...into a creek,  
...into a thicket,  
...a concrete  
...and being  
...into an answer.

## Math

Mary Lieske

I'm falling into a sea of numbers  
connected by dots and lines and waves.  
They tumble over each other –  
end over end –  
inside their planes  
attempting to find  
the solution.

The pool of ideal numbers,  
constants and variables,  
mixes together  
in a meeting of  
weird, amicable,  
friendly, sociable;  
formulaic dances of swimming divisors  
that fall into line  
step by step,  
stroke by stroke,  
into row after row of marching numerals.  
Solitary and sublime  
and deficient  
gather together  
to build the underwater caverns  
of equations  
that may, one day,  
show that the ultimate answer  
to everything  
lies within  
mathematical reason.

It is a river that slowly -  
slowly -  
narrows into a stream,  
then into a creek,  
then into a trickle;  
a concrete equation  
refining and defining itself  
into an answer.

**To a Little Black Girl**  
*Justin Sudkamp*

That's what you will be named  
"Black Girl"  
Due to the chocolate color of your skin.  
Despite the shadow  
Of your Mother's pale hand.

You, Morning Child,  
Will walk in-between  
Night and Day  
The supposed, endless gray  
Of Life's Mosaic.

You, Evening's Daughter, will grow.  
Out of your mother's embraces,  
Through your father's shadow,  
Beyond your own stride.

I hope you find strength  
To march for the manacled  
As well as the slaver.  
Understanding enough,  
To sing for the strangled,  
And the tightener of the noose.  
Bravery, to look upon Mama Africa,  
To hear the tales of her forests, plains, deserts,  
And hold her equal to Lady Liberty.

Oh, Dusky Daughter,  
The life I see in you.



**Government Office**  
Samuel Cloward

The room is full of people.

I take a number: 36

The counter on the wall: 54

I'm advised I must wait  
till my number  
circles round  
again.

Poor ventilation  
causes the air to be  
warm,  
stagnant and  
humid.

A woman begins the first  
of a series of  
coughing fits.

I see particles from her mouth l i n g e r  
in the still air.

A man across from me sneezes.  
I see particles from his nose s u s p e n d e d  
in the humidity.

The man next to me wheezes and wheezes and wheezes.

A headline on the newspaper lying  
next to me reads:

"Flu Vaccine Ineffective This Year."

At the counter  
a man  
argues with  
a civil servant.  
He needs a different  
form than the one he was told he needed the day before.

A policeman monitors  
from near the entrance doors  
eager to escort the man out.

Two other employees  
stand  
talking  
ignoring  
the waiting crowd.

First

*Kellen Fasnacht*

Before I could  
slip my key  
past the lock  
you came  
rushing  
whispering my name  
begging me to wait  
because you could not  
not tonight  
in the silver  
puddles of this  
this granite  
skyline

(We collide)

like the slow  
descent of  
autumn leaves  
floating  
falling  
settling  
gently upon  
the fading  
summer green,  
resting together  
exchanging breaths  
in the late  
october air

(I open my eyes)

and you're there  
smiling  
blushing  
waving  
good night  
through the soft  
applause of  
hovering moths  
their velvet wings  
reciprocating iridescence  
independent of everything

except each other

## Seeking Artichoke, Call Me

Amanda Veale

If you were a pomegranate  
I'd throw you away,  
your complicated pieces  
would muddle my day.

If you were a green bean  
I'd steam you flaccid,  
spoon you for a side  
and pass you on rapid.

If you were a peach  
I'd blend you smooth  
pull pit, peel fuzz,  
purée for my use.

If you were a pickle  
I'd have you on a stick,  
pre-speared, sequestered,  
easy to lick.

But if you were an artichoke  
so gently I'd tender—  
prune spines to find heart,  
love you all through dinner.

## Trumpet

Sarah Fairchild

My window  
meshed screen  
does not cut the melodies  
rich notes, heavy and fat with Jazz

A little time away from you  
I had to steal a little time, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Look out, baby

Low down dirty and bad  
Work treats me so  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Look out, baby

You ain't know nothing but the blues,  
Lord have mercy,  
what low down dirty and bad really is  
Try one day at home! Then you'll see  
What you know but work round this house  
You think work treats you so bad?

**That's the Stuff** Call Me

A Jake Dawson

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Don't know  
Just what I'm goin' to do

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Got a lot on my mind  
Think I need go have a drink

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Work treats me so  
Low down dirty and bad

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
I had to steal a little time, baby  
A little time away from you

*You give me that look out baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood song,  
Lord have mercy,  
You ain't know nothing bout the blues.*

*You got a lot on your mind?  
You know what those boys done today?  
I need the drink if anything.  
Lord have mercy,  
You ain't know nothing bout the blues.*

*You think work treats you so bad?  
What you know bout work round this house?  
Try one day at home! Then you'll see  
what low down dirty and bad really is.  
Lord have mercy,  
You ain't know nothing bout the blues.*

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
Heart aching  
Dreams gone down the drain

*How come you get to steal a little time?  
When am I goin' to get mine?  
Sometimes I just don't know what to do!  
Lord have mercy,  
You ain't know nothing bout the blues.*

*Your heart may ache  
Got a lot on your mind  
A job treats you low down dirty and bad,  
What about me?  
You best look out, baby,  
I'm in a dangerous mood  
A woman raisin' a home  
Now that's the stuff of the blues.*

The nightmares look and taste real,  
Your black eyes ring in my ears,  
Long after morning arrives,  
My dreams of you are real.

## Your Hair is Thinning

Amanda Veale

And I think of the smoke from your  
cigar in the café that winter when you  
were a stranger and I  
only loved the smoke the way  
it blurred in your breath—

And I think of the spray on Long Island  
where it was grey at sunrise and  
the mist was cold which  
made us want everything  
and touch to ease the wanting—

And I think of the rabbit down left  
around the nest after we  
watched the fox in our oaks and sighed—  
And I think of the steam in your teacup,  
the fog you like on the morning ground,  
and Lulu's fur stuck on your sweater—

And I would like you to shave it but  
then all of this would be gone.

Look out, baby  
I'm in a dangerous mood,  
I had to steal a little time, baby  
A little time away from you

You think work starts you at end?  
What you know how work round this round?  
Try one day at home? Then you'll see  
what low down dirty and how really is.  
Lord! how steady.  
You ain't know nothing about the waves.

## Unable

Donica Miller

In my dreams you are drowning.  
Arms and legs thrashing about,  
gulping, swallowing a gallon of water,  
the word "help" impeded by gargling,  
gasping, choking.  
Unable to help, I cry.

Your eyes (deep like the water in which you struggle),  
they drew me to you  
so long ago.  
Inside of you, I was safe.

Your spirit haunts me as if it were lost  
trying to find its way back to a body that's dead.  
Night frightens me.  
For fear of unspeakable terrors,  
my eyes remain open  
long after the moon appears.  
I cannot sleep before dawn.

The nightmares look and taste real.  
Your black cries ring in my ears  
long after morning arrives.  
My dreams of you are alive.



DwIFoFErREINdT

Philip Gallagher

I slept in a different world  
a Gypsy Witch's domain  
Where Drew Carey didn't give away prizes,  
and slept in a hammock all day.  
Jerry Van Dyke was drowning  
in lakes of sky and puddles of earth  
While black boots waited in white closets,  
and bodiless maidens wailed.

.....

I slept in a different world  
a house without windows or doors  
The fleeting impressions were crimson,  
and the veil of waking was white.  
Semis rolled throughout the night  
down roads leading to nether realms  
While little children prosthetically played  
with posable mechanical limbs.

.....

I slept in a different world  
I stay there every night  
Walking in a clearer place  
filled with fantastical delight.  
When at last my stay is over  
I awaken back to daily life  
in a world where living is work  
and men march to military fife.

Visitor's Morning In Earth

**Leftovers**

Amanda Veale

*Fanfully Bright*

Her shoes are displayed  
on a decorative shelf,  
molds of stompings  
stinking still of country earth  
menacing living room's fancy.  
Her watch is forgotten  
underneath unwashed hankies,  
to tick lonely through nights  
louder than anyone's dreams.  
And her blind black cat  
waits under porch steps  
mewing mourning songs  
to prey,

crying for

her body

that was slit and stored and slipped  
neatly beneath the earth  
by a Mohawked teenage boy.

The Non-Mural

**the bog**

*Grace Lawrence*

the smooth glass surface is untouched  
black as night  
and miles deep

white stars shoot across the top  
moving steadily  
in all directions  
pure unadulterated chaos

i want to dip my hand  
and feel the thick black ink  
drip  
drip  
from my fingertips  
to hold the small stars in my palm  
white bright light seeping between my fingers  
before returning to the blackness  
untamable

it sounds dangerous  
so instead  
i throw the rock

waves ripple across the never ending mass  
that once was peaceful and  
i am unable to contain my excitement  
for the cataclysmic events  
that just unfolded before my eyes

## Visitor's Morning On Earth

Steven T. Cox

*Painfully bright.  
What manner of world is this?  
Such luminosity,  
Such heat.  
How do the natives of this world  
Not go blind?  
How do they keep from going  
Insane?*

*Perhaps they do go blind;  
Perhaps the heat boils their sanity away.*

*For what other reason  
Would beings of such intelligence  
Occupy their time finding ways  
To destroy each other;  
For what other reason would  
They convince themselves they  
Must be alone in so vast a universe?*

*We would do well to avoid this place,  
My brethren; the natives here are dangerous.*

*It seems we were wrong in our thinking;  
How intelligent can these creatures be?*

The Non-Mortal

**"The Moon Man"**  
Philip Gallagher

Victor's Morning On Earth  
Steven T. Cole

The bright glass surface is polished  
back as night  
and white deep

Family night  
What matters of world as they  
Start tomorrow

white stars shoot across the sky  
moving steadily  
in all directions  
and unobscured by clouds

Just a ball  
How do the waves of the world  
Not go blind?  
How do they keep from going  
insane?

I want to dig my hand  
and feel the earth  
drip  
drip  
drip  
I want to hold the small stars  
in my palm  
before they are swept away  
before they are swept away  
before they are swept away

Perhaps they do go blind  
Perhaps the heat kills them early  
Perhaps they are swept away

I want to dig my hand  
and feel the earth  
drip  
drip  
drip

For what other reason  
Would things of such intelligence  
Occupy our time finding ways  
To destroy each other  
For what other reason would  
They concern themselves they  
Must be there in so vast a universe?

Waves of light across the river  
and the moon shoes  
I am unable to contain my  
the dusty  
them in  
I drag  
moon shoes,  
wearing my  
the river,  
Walking on

We would do well to avoid this  
My friend, the waves have  
I am unable to contain my  
the dusty  
them in  
I drag  
moon shoes,  
wearing my  
the river,  
Walking on

Walking on  
the river,  
wearing my  
moon shoes,  
I drag  
them in  
the dusty  
spray.  
The water  
splashes  
on my face  
like cool  
pebbles on  
wet glass.  
I'm refreshed  
and fatigued  
by the lack



## Searchings

Amanda Veale

My blood drifts to me  
from an obscure and lazy river  
cradled in the wooly hands  
of the pulsing Kentucky bluegrass.

Here there are mountains chiseled into  
the shapes of men who wear  
their stone hands to fists of calluses,

there are trees bent so to the wind and singing  
that you would take them for women,  
had no one told you otherwise,

and there is Aunt Peen—  
veiled child born wrapped in legend—  
who is the river and the river mud—  
smooth tan clay and endless water—  
from which it all came  
and to which it all will return.

I saw her once in a dream  
sitting in a rusty blue bathtub on her porch,  
dust caked deep between her bare toes,  
gnawing her famous cornbread.

She smiled a terrible white flash,  
and a yellow snake bit my ankle.

Since then I've feared yellow snakes,  
and cornbread,  
and blue bathtubs,

but I still wade into rivers barefoot,  
hoping to stir my blood.

## Becoming Wise

Amanda Veale

At five  
a flash of hornets  
stormed my backyard fortress,  
and fell—a graceful arc—  
upon the apple rigged as a trap  
for the legendary  
neighborhood circus bear.  
I cowered and closed my eyes  
and died  
and awoke brave  
and dried of the dirty drench  
hard play had won me.

At six  
birds began to drop  
in great clans  
stiff breasted from treetops.  
I wept a tear over each  
and planted them  
with plywood placards  
under the furthest pine tree  
where I knew our lazy dog  
would never pee.  
Then my mother told me about maggot  
sand I fell ill  
and died  
in the hotness  
of hard-edged delirium  
and awoke  
casting harassing looks  
at graves everywhere.

At seven  
the springtime was angry  
and aloof  
and filled with tumult.  
When my brother  
spotted a tornado  
crested our hill,  
I quit hope in spring



Searcher and died.  
I awoke in the sunshine  
knowing about lies.

My blood shifts to me  
At eight  
the night grew large  
and witches crept  
within its shadowy folds.  
I fell one night to their nest  
and died  
silently  
in their claws.

When I awoke the next morning,  
whole-bodied and grinning,  
I was immortal.

and there is Aunt Petri—  
wailed child born wrapped in legend—  
who is the river and the river mud—  
smooth tan clay and endless water—  
from which it all came  
and to which it all will return.

I saw her once in a dream  
sitting in a rusty blue bathtub on her porch,  
dust caked deep between her bare toes,  
growing her famous combread.

She smiled a terrible white teeth,  
and a yellow snake lit my drink.

Since then I've feared yellow snakes,  
and combread,  
and blue bathtubs.

but I still wade into rivers barefoot,  
hoping to stir my blood.

Becoming Whole  
Aunt Petri

At eight  
the night grew large  
and witches crept  
within its shadowy folds.  
I fell one night to their nest  
and died  
silently  
in their claws.

When I awoke the next morning,  
whole-bodied and grinning,  
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and combread,  
and blue bathtubs.

but I still wade into rivers barefoot,  
hoping to stir my blood.

## Perennials

Amanda Veale

At your funeral I saw  
that they forgot to scrub the soil  
from your fingernails, and  
it reminded me of your marigolds,  
how you planted them knowing  
they would bloom only one season through.

You should have planted hollyhocks  
and lilies—life with a chance  
of blooming after the thaw.  
But I'll have to let them go.  
I'll have to watch your triumph  
brown, freeze away in the dirt.

## Soldier

Mary Lieske

### 1. Present

He's happy to see the city smile  
with sunlight and fluffy clouds;  
and even the noise of neighbors fighting  
reminds him that this is home.  
It will not last for long,  
but this is what he has yearned for,  
ached for,  
fought for.

### 2. Rain

He's sad and the city cries,  
the streetlights dim with tears.  
Gutters gurgle with sore throats,  
to swallow rocks and sticks,  
and there's a hush out on the road  
that only he can hear.

### 3. Past

He was shy and the city laughed,  
encouraging him with song and dance,  
telling him that his blush was cute  
and that he shouldn't be embarrassed.  
And even now, when the time is right,  
he can call upon  
that remembered innocence  
to ease his troubled mind.

#### 4. Dark

He's afraid and the city tenses,  
the air heavy and thick.  
And the alley he sees is no longer  
the safe home of cats and trash.  
Every shadow lashes out, like an enemy  
threatening his home;  
every noise echoes like a whisper in his ear  
telling him to run.

*The scene is not yet over,  
the battle not yet won.*

#### 5. Future

He's old as the city moves,  
finding newer boys,  
younger, stronger, unspoiled boys,  
who blast their horns into the night.  
He's cradled in the arms of a hospital bed  
as he watches the city that he loves,  
watches it move on without him,  
never-ending cycles of light and love  
and darkness.

He lies there under the yellowed ceiling,  
counts the yowls of shrieking cats,  
and dies.



**New Life**

*Jennifer O'Neil*

I saw a cardinal  
On a branch today,  
Standing out from  
The stark, bare oak.

Bright crimson, he  
Reminded me of life,  
A life I had  
Forgotten still exists.

A bit of snow dropped  
On his brilliant head  
And he squawked in  
Surprise.

The sound penetrated  
My window and I  
Closed my eyes, wanting  
To remember only that.

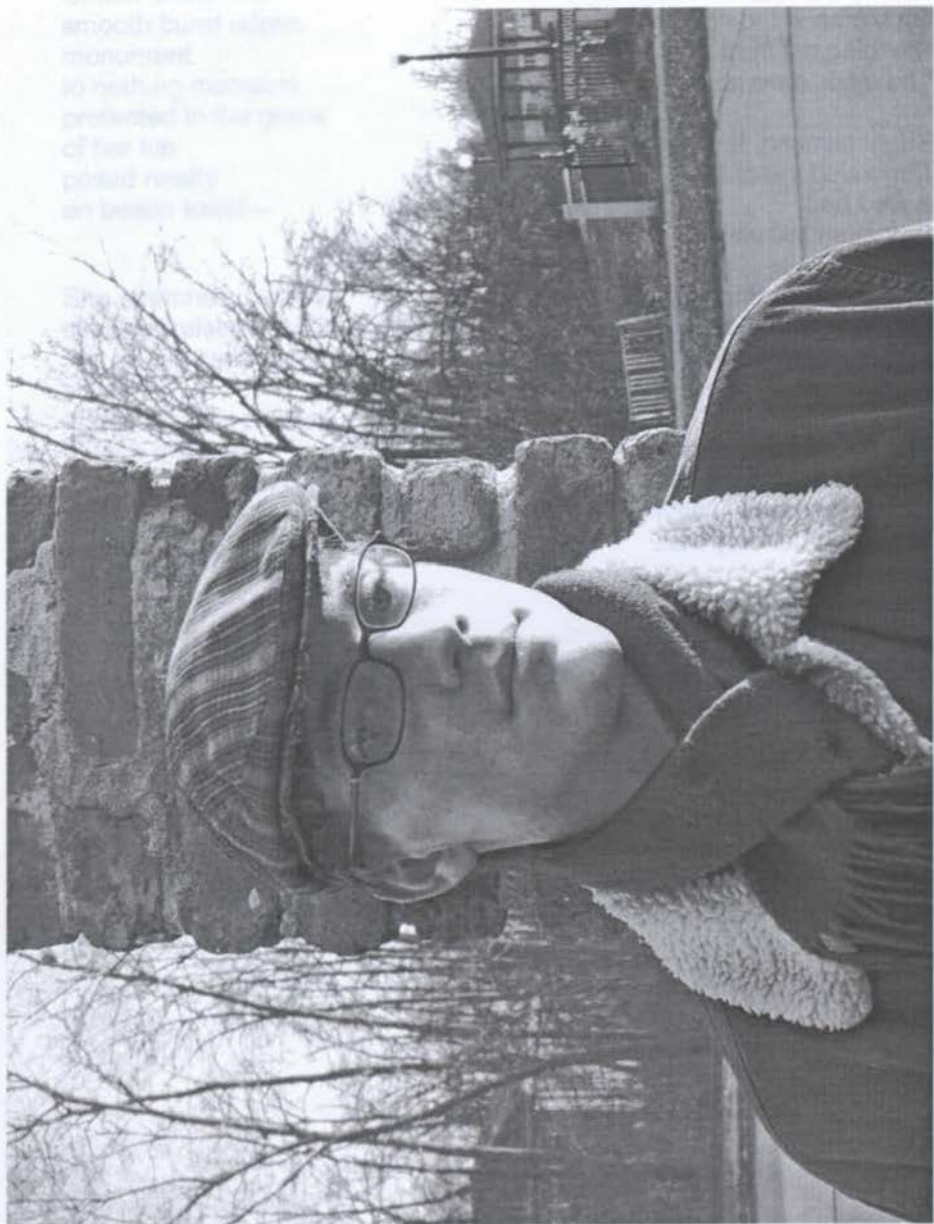
I opened my window  
And let in a cool breeze,  
Another sign of  
Returning life.

The branch on which  
He sat had started  
Already to bud, growing  
That new life at last.

Be

Megan Mathy

Under a heavy  
smoothly burnt  
monument  
to nature's  
protected in  
of her top  
pointed really  
on beam's



**Dance Partners**

*Samantha Sauer*

crit&M neg&M

ISSUE 1

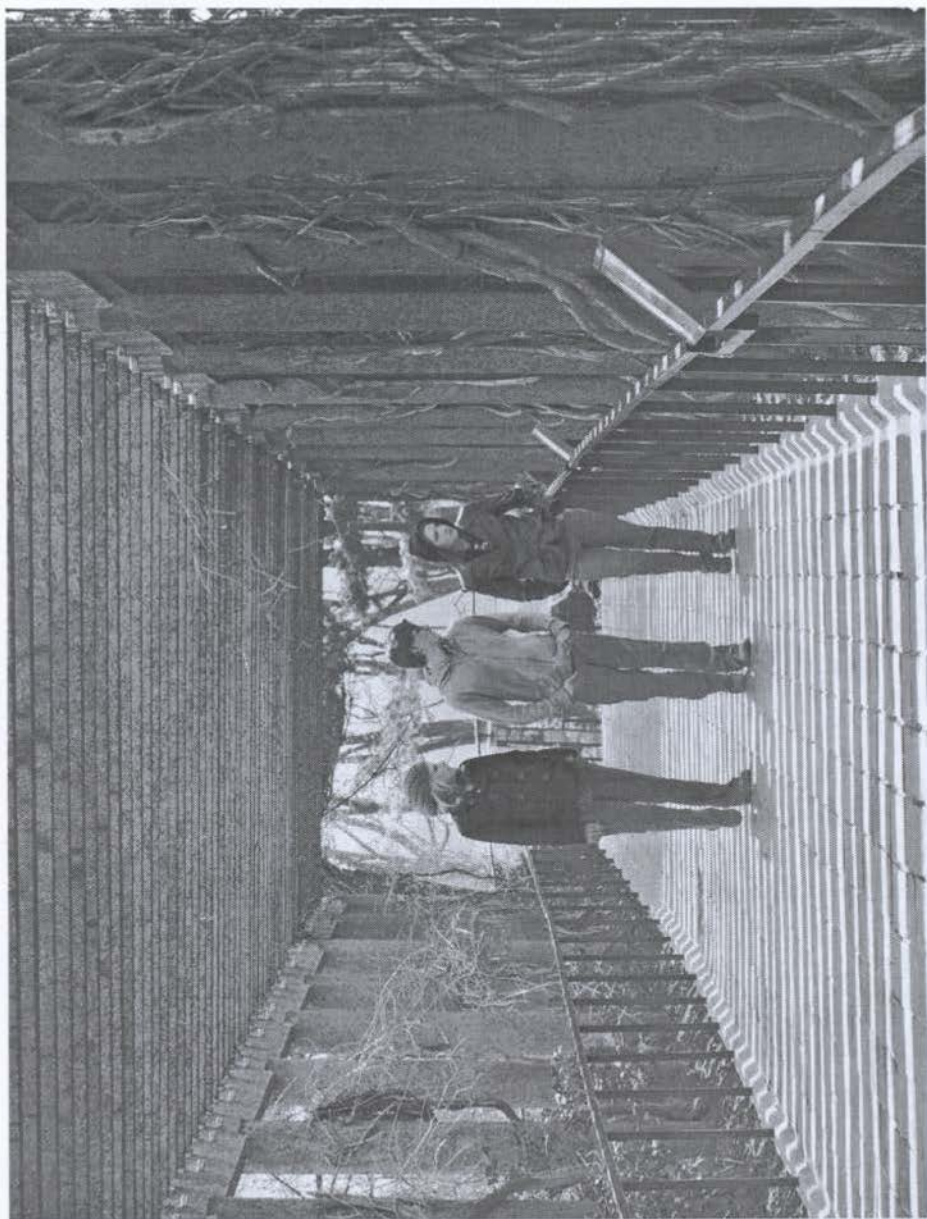




I Still

Megan Mathy

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Incandescence

*Sarah Fairchild*

Stone Crane

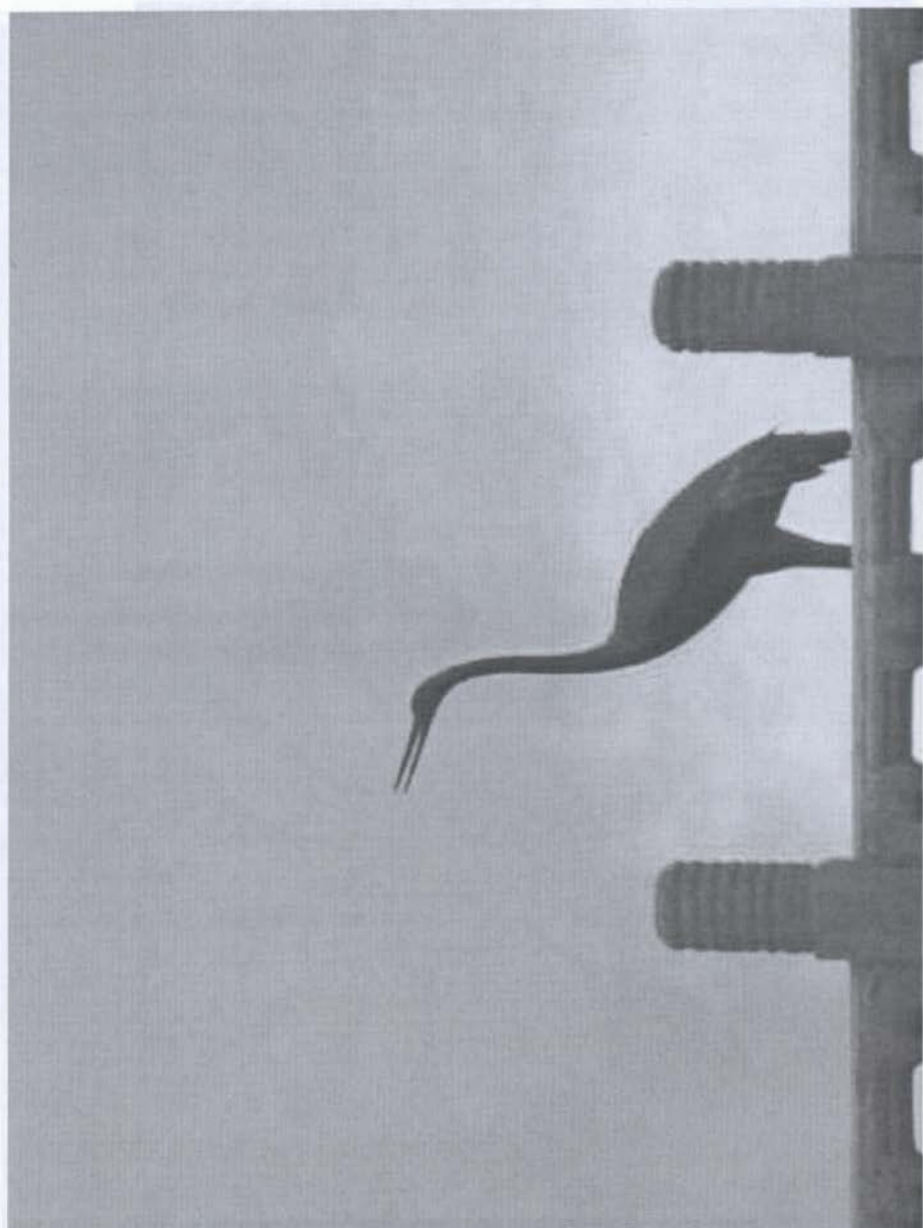
Boston Heights



**Stone Crane**

*Brendan Hughes*

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**The Road Taken**

Wangfeng Forest Park, Zhangjiajie, China

*Samantha Sauer*

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You Crane

Megan Mathy

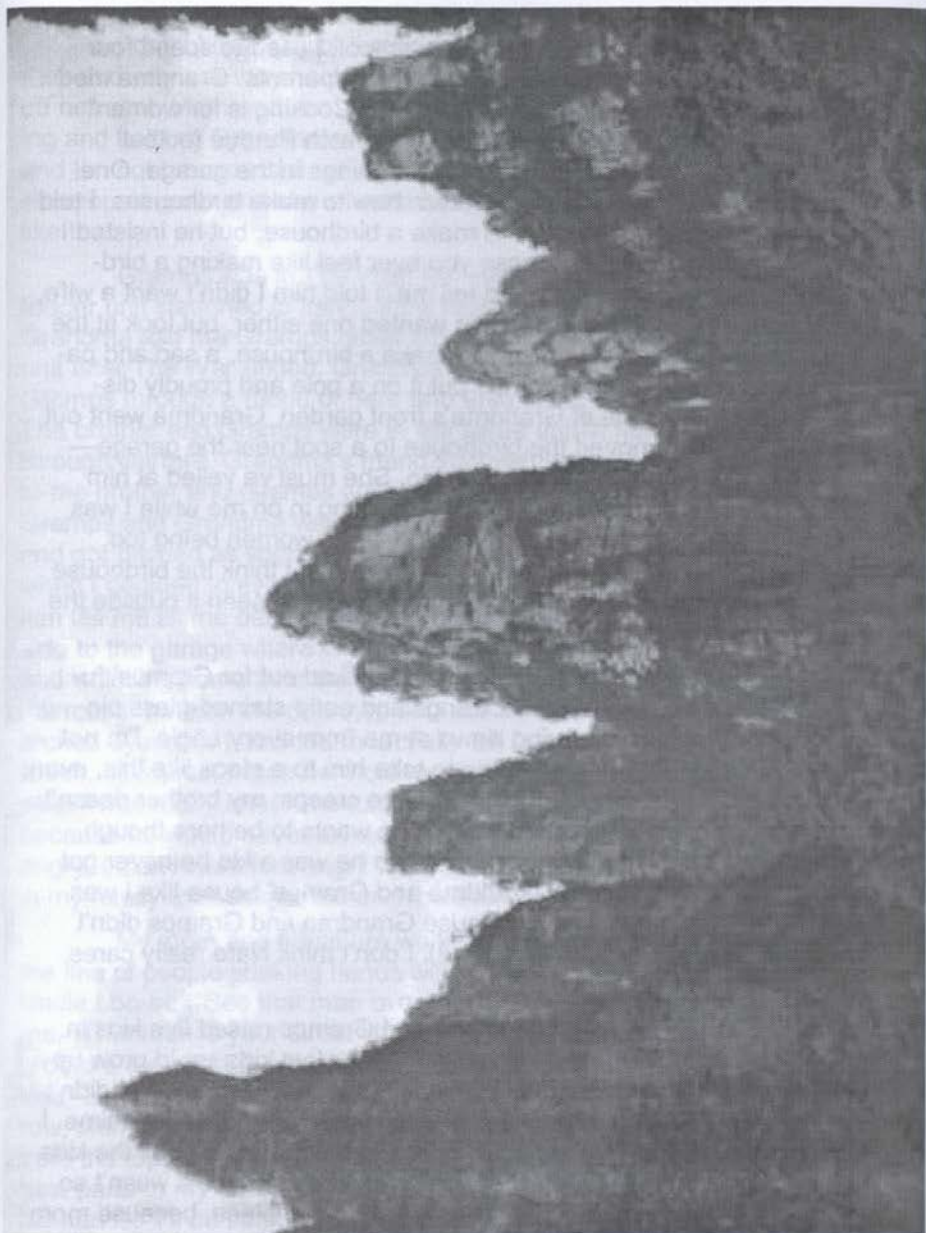
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## Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, Zhangjiajie, China

Brendan Hughes



## A Birdhouse for Grandpa

*Leslie Hancock*

Before I graduated from high school, I used to spend four weeks or more every summer with my grandparents. Grandma tried to teach me to cook (Gramps hated that—"Cooking is for women" he'd always say), and Gramps made me watch Purdue football games or do woodwork and help him fix things in the garage. One summer, he decided I needed to learn how to make birdhouses. I told him I didn't want to learn how to make a birdhouse, but he insisted I make one anyway. "Just in case you ever feel like making a birdhouse for your future wife," he'd tell me. I told him I didn't want a wife, and he laughed and said he never wanted one either, but look at the witch he has to live with now. I did make a birdhouse, a sad and pathetic looking thing, and Gramps put it on a pole and proudly displayed it in the middle of Grandma's front garden. Grandma went out the next day and moved the birdhouse to a spot near the garage—back where it wouldn't ruin her garden. She must've yelled at him about it because I remember Gramps barging in on me while I was watching Nickelodeon and complaining about women being too damned picky about their flower arrangements. I think the birdhouse must've eventually fallen apart, because I haven't seen it outside the past few years when my family visits.

I don't like the church Grandma picked out for Gramps' funeral. It's like a maze with tall ceilings and eerie stained-glass pictures of a dying Jesus staring down at me from every angle. I'm not sure Gramps would've wanted us to take him to a place like this, even if he did grow up Catholic. It gives me the creeps; my brother doesn't seem to like it any better. I don't think he wants to be here though, regardless of the morbid windows. When he was a kid he never got shipped off by our mom to Grandma and Gramps' house like I was forced into (I told him it was because Grandma and Gramps didn't love him as much as they loved me). I don't think Nate really cares about Gramps the way I do.

Grandma still lives in the house she and Gramps raised five kids in. It's a tiny house and I never understood how five kids could grow up in that place without wanting to kill each other. Hell, Nate and I didn't even share a room and we were at each other's throats all the time. I guess it was a good place for Grandma and Gramps after all the kids left and they had the house to themselves. Well, maybe it wasn't so good to have those two holed up in such a small place, because mom says they fought like wild badgers and should've divorced a long time ago. I was only around once during one of their fights. Aunt Pam was

visiting during the time I was there, and she practically shoved me down the basement stairs before slamming the door behind me. She didn't tell me until after my high school graduation that she made me leave so I wouldn't hear any of the nasty things Gramps said to Grandma. After times like these, I wasn't sure myself why Grandma stayed with him.

I don't know any of the people at Gramps' funeral. Who are they and why are they here? Grandma looks like she's about to droop off her seat. Mom and her sisters are all bunched up around her, crying and holding Grandma's hands. Grandma hasn't started crying yet, and I'm not too sure she will during the funeral, but she might after everyone's gone and she's home by herself. Grandma can be funny like that.

Gramps was in The War. He was a military grunt in a cannon fodder unit stationed in Italy. I think most of his unit died because Grandma told me Gramps never contacted anyone he knew from his unit after The War ended. Grandma also told me she had met Gramps through a friend of hers who also had a brother out fighting. The brother and Gramps were in the same unit in Italy—friends through warfare. Grandma's friend suggested they both write letters to the brother and Gramps while they were away during The War. Gramps and Grandma wrote letters back and forth for a few years and got hitched as soon as Gramps came home. I was about nine when I decided to ask Gramps about his fighting career and make him tell me all the details—the more blood the better. On my way outside to the garage where Gramps was whittling at a chunk of wood and whistling some tune that went out of fashion in 1940, Grandma intercepted me on the doorstep and asked what I was up to with an arched eyebrow. I decided to tactfully tell her it was a secret mission, which, of course, made her hold me to that spot until I 'fessed up what I was really after. She told me never to ask him about The War, because he would never tell me anything, and I would only make him angry. I didn't want him angry with me, so I never asked. Nobody else in my family ever asked, either. Now I kind of wish somebody had.

My mom and aunts are walking away from Grandma towards the line of people shaking hands with Gramps' close family members. Uncle Loo-ee ("See that man over there, Tyler?" my mom had asked me. "That man is your Great Uncle Loo-ee") and another of Gramps' brothers are already shaking hands and hearing "I'm so sorry for your loss" from each person in the line. Grandma sits by herself in the front row, staring at the open casket where Gramps' big nose sticks out from the top. I'm afraid of Gramps' casket because I might see the best parts of my childhood covered in makeup and folded between his hands. "I'll be back later," I mutter at Nate before starting the odious task of tripping over people and chairs to get out of the aisles of seats. Nate shrugs and mashes buttons on his Game Boy. I wonder if



he'll have enough time to defeat Bowser and rescue Princess Peach—or whatever the hell he's doing—before the visitation's over.

About seven months ago, six months before Gramps' heart started failing him, he and Grandma got into a bad fight. It must've been a lot worse than their normal fights, because Gramps got into their car (I can't think of the last time Gramps drove a car), drove about a block, lost control of the car and slammed into the side of someone's house. The house took a lot of damage, but so did the car and Gramps. The car was sent to the junkyard; no one would've wanted to buy it, even if they had fixed it up, because the car was so old. Gramps was sent to the hospital in an ambulance and was kept there overnight. Aunt Pam was nearby and stayed with him in the hospital that night. Pam told my mom that Grandma was in shock the whole night and couldn't make herself go and see Gramps while he was connected to a bunch of machines. Pam also told mom that Grandma wouldn't tell her what the two of them had been fighting about. Gramps wasn't in the hospital as long as anyone expected. He recovered quickly and moved around just fine. The doctors told him he couldn't over-exert himself because he might wind up in the hospital again. I didn't know exactly what was wrong at the time the accident happened because mom was too upset by the whole thing to tell me. Back then, I was angry at Gramps for being stupid and driving the car into someone's house—he promised me that car would be *my* car when I turned 16 and now look at what he'd done to it—but now I just feel upset with him because he wasn't able to keep a grip on himself. He made Grandma sad and worried over a stupid fight.

Grandma is still staring at the casket. I don't think she even notices me. She seems like she's in a trance and I'm afraid of snapping her out of it. Nobody has come up and said anything to her since mom and my aunts left her there. I don't think anyone knows what to say. Somehow I've managed to walk up the aisle and get in the seat next to her without looking at Gramps; I'm not able to look at him yet.

The last time I saw Gramps was when he was at our house for Christmas. It wasn't even a month ago when he was still snoring on our couch during his naps after lunch. Nate and I didn't do much with him because we always got shooed out of the first floor and into the basement while the women talked and cooked in the kitchen and the men grunted at one another as they watched a football game in the living room. Grandma seemed to be doing everything she could to make Gramps happy and would ask him constantly if he wanted something to eat, or if he would like to take a nap on the couch, or if she could get him anything at all. I think being fussed over by her annoyed him more than the times she bickered with him over petty things and gave him the cold shoulder the rest of the day. Though Grandma pestered him through the rest of the Christmas visit, but he

still seemed to enjoy himself well enough. A week later Gramps died from heart failure. Another week after that the whole family, some I've never even seen or heard of before now, gathered together in this church with all the Jesus windows.

Grandma finally notices me, I think. I don't know how long I've been sitting here now, but it feels like forever. She rests her hand on my knee and says in a quiet voice, "It'll be okay Tyler; Grandpa is in a better place now. We'll always feel him in our heart if we look for him there." Gramps would've laughed at her for saying something so cliché. Grandma stood up after a few silent moments between us and started walking towards the casket. Halfway to Gramps she stops and looks like she might fall over. I quickly move to her side to wrap my arm around her—when did she get so much shorter?—and walk with her to the casket. Neither one of us wants to see him there, but we stand and gaze at him because we know we have to. I'm waiting for Gramps to open his eyes, grin at me and say, "Chin up, Ty!" when Grandma says to me, "Tyler, you should come and visit this summer. I think your Grandpa would like that."

"Yeah. Sure. I'll visit, and I'll make you a new birdhouse. Maybe this time it'll look nice enough to put in your garden," I say, knowing a second birdhouse attempt will look just as bad as the first. But if Gramps taught me anything, it's that it'll be alright if the birdhouse is a little rough around the edges.

## Gardener

*Krystina Leyva*

The gardener kneels alone.  
There is an intoxicating rush of colors and smells.  
There is the mildew and moist dirt,  
The faint perfume,  
Of the bluebells, periwinkles, and orchids.  
They push away his frustrations,  
Into workable silence.  
He clears and sorts through the foliage,  
Separating the imperfections,  
From the beauty.  
His hands work second to nature,  
No thoughts necessary.  
He is long, lost, and forgotten,  
The only mark of existence,  
The imprints in the soil.

Grandma is the only one who really didn't think she even knew me. She probably thought she knew me and I'm afraid of snapping her out of it. I was the only one who had anything to her since mom said my aunt had her name. I don't think anyone knows what to say. Some of my friends managed to walk up the aisle and get in the seat next to her without looking at Grams. I'm not able to look at him yet.

The last time I saw Grams was when he was at our house for Christmas. It wasn't even a month ago when he was still sitting on our couch during his naps after lunch. Mom and I don't go out with him because we always got kicked out of the first floor and into the basement while the women talked and cried in the kitchen and the men gawked at one another as they watched a football game in the living room. Grams seemed to be doing everything she could to make Grams happy and would ask him constantly if he wanted something to eat, or if he would like to take a nap on the couch, or if she could get him anything at all. I think being fussed over by her annoyed him more than the love she bickered with him over petty things and gave him the cold shoulder the rest of the day. Though Grams tolerated her through the rest of the Christmas visit, but he

**The Reasons Why**  
*Mary Lieske*

*Celebrate for joy the reasons why  
the dog cannot stay inside her fence.  
She is not content with cages,  
and goes to find her friends when they do not find her.  
She greets me with love and joy each time I see her.  
She sneaks out to roll in the mud.  
For running in the snow and playing in the streets,  
for bringing back the ball,  
for not minding the feet that trip over her,  
for never growing up,  
we celebrate her life.*

*Cry out in frustration and sorrow  
for the dog that cannot stay clean.  
She tears out trash and makes muddy trails on cream carpet.  
She praises the moon and the squirrels with her voice at night.  
For leading when she should follow,  
for following when she should lead,  
for never staying in one place,  
for behaving like a child,  
these are the reasons we cry.*

## Dining at the Mortuary

Amanda Veale

Today a young belle suicide  
I straightened and slapped  
on my stainless steel table,  
soothed rigor mortis  
with serums and strokes  
but so stiff I had to snip  
muscles to make her lie back  
and look calm.

I worked cream into every crevice,  
renewed skin's supple repose,  
slipped cotton beneath drooping lids,  
into sagging nose and slack mouth,  
down throat soaking up purging fluids.  
The mouth I wired shut and shaped  
into a faintest grin  
and the eyes I glued  
into slumber's easy close.

Veins opened without protest  
and blood drained quickly from heart  
while I pumped pink chemical fluid  
from syringe into nearby artery  
Color plumped upon her cheeks  
via magic dye.

Vagina I packed  
with gauze to be engorged In  
spare fluid.

(Here I stopped for a brownbag lunch—  
eight small carrots  
warm tuna fish sandwich  
on soggy rye bread,  
a green apple,  
one cup cherry jello  
—and reviewed my work.)

Gases I drew out  
with pointed metal tube  
punctured through navel  
into stomach, bladder,  
large intestines, lungs  
and filled them fresh  
with formaldehyde.  
Holes were patched and mess  
was washed and dried.

Last touch to tender her look—  
sun fire red curls spun on hot iron,  
apricots seeded on cheeks  
and dusk blossomed on lips,  
nails swept to circles and shined  
and fingers glued polite on belly,  
wax piece to replace hole in head,  
and a wisp of a white dress  
to make her look just like

a dried dandelion  
wished upon and waving  
in the wind.

## Blues Mad Fools

Jake Dawson

*Well it's Monday mornin', and my woman's locked me out  
Oh Monday mornin', and my woman's locked me out  
I aint got no money, no food, no place to go*

Acoustic bard tell'n broken heart tales,  
sway'n and croon'n to a pale tune  
whispers of those broken blues.

Rough chords S

L

I

D

E

Off old strings plucked  
from mahogany.

Fingers trip over faded frets, ring, ring, ring,  
Stomp! goes his foot to the beat of that tune,

Play that tune you blues mad fool!

*Well, I'm a feelin' all empty sweet darling  
Come on baby, let me come on home,  
Oh my sweet little baby, won't you please let me come on home,*

Tan handed poet crafts his sentimental verse,  
bobbin and noddin to a gloomy tune  
whispers of those mad, mad blues.

Rough chords—

prunk

chunka proodunk

Chunka

proodunk chunk

CHIP! off his shoulder.

Chomp! goes his hands carving those ivory keys,  
dancing over black bricks of melody,

Play that tune you blues mad fool!

*Now I see baby I see that I was wrong,  
I ain't got no excuses, no reasons for right and wrong  
I am just a man baby  
Walkin' out is just what I'm made to do*

A beat conductor drives that rhythmic locomotive  
slapp'n and tapp'n that old snare drum, boom'n  
thick notes from old moon shaped drum,  
Rough beats—

Choom-cha-doom

Cha choom-cha-doom

Cha choom-cha-doom

Heaves and sighs that heavy train.

Crash! goes his hands and feet,  
hitt'n the brakes to that old blues train

Play that tune you blues mad fool!

*Well, I'm a feelin all empty sweet darling*

*Come on baby, let me come on home,*

*Oh my sweet little baby, won't you please let me come on home,*

Huddled fingers slide and sway

whin'n that old Tennessee tune of the bluegrass whisky blues  
a catch and release of bent over hymn

Those rough chords—

Waaaaaaa-wedo-wow-wa

Waaaaaaa-wedo-wa-wa

Howls that  
harmonic  
choo-cha-  
doom train.

Wowaaaa! Goes his hands and lips,

All aboard this heavy blues chug a lug!

Play that tune you mad blues fool!

*Well, I'm a feelin' all empty sweet darling*

*Come on baby, let me come on home,*

*Oh my sweet little baby, won't you please let me come on home,*

Do that thing fellas!

Hey, Hey let your sorrows run free!

Play that tune you blues mad fools!



## Good Woman

Jake Dawson

I remember those days

When you said

I was a good woman

that was when you used to  
kiss my forehead before you left for work  
and make love to me when you got home  
and protect me instead of walking twenty feet behind  
and  
that is when you always held my hand,

that was when you  
wouldn't give up no matter  
how many time I shot you down at  
that bar on Beat Street,

that was when I  
gave up and finally said  
YES!

that was when you  
tried to play that  
old blues harmonica with  
Honey Edwards and  
were terrible—I didn't say anything,

that was when I  
slept in your bed  
and we didn't  
do IT!

that was before  
we started to  
fight all the time.

Now three months  
have passed and  
you call about three time a week  
now,

I lay awake at night  
a sleepless dreamer  
tossing and turning  
now,  
when you call I  
always pretend to  
have someone on the other line  
now,  
where did it  
all go wrong?  
You said I was a  
good woman, but that was a  
different place and different time.

## Good Man

*Jake Dawson*

I remember those days

when you said

I was a good man

that is when you used to

sing me to sleep with your silly little lullabies

and scratch my back when I got home from work

and walk beside me on the sidewalk instead of twenty feet ahead

and

that is when you always held my hand,

that was when we

was jiving and jabbering to

Keb' Mo' and King at

that bar on Beat Street,

that was when I

could not stop staring

at you,

that was when you

introduced me to

Honey Edwards and he learned

me the blues harmonica under the

old streetlight,

that was when you

slept in my bed

and we didn't

do IT!

that was before

we started to

fight all the time.

I lay awake at night  
sheets on a cold bed  
that used to be warm  
now,  
when I call you  
always got someone else  
on the other line  
now,  
there ain't no more  
of what it used  
to be.  
You said I was a  
good man, but that was a  
different place and different time.

## And I Miss You

Donica Miller

I'm glad you never grew old and weary,  
But I never had the chance to tell you  
that I wanted you to walk me down the aisle.  
Now you'll never see my Wedding Day

But life goes on  
And I miss you.

Memories flood my senses:  
Smell of your after-shave,  
Rough tickle of your beard,  
Deep rumble of your voice,  
Faint whiff of peppermints

I remember  
And I miss you.

Days pass and storm clouds gather  
Not ominous, unthreatening.  
A low reverberation of thunder  
is soothing, not disarming,  
not aggressive, not bad.  
I love the early summer because showers  
come and pass so quickly

The sweet shimmer of summer rain  
And I miss you.

Days pass and the Sunshine  
presses his lips against my cheek,  
Warm, gentle kisses.  
The summer breeze caresses my skin,  
Whips and whirls my hair  
Uninvited and unasked.  
But soon the days will grow cold again  
and I dread the sight of white snow falling

I cherish summer's warmth  
And I miss you.

I think of my unborn children  
and how you'll never see them grow.  
You'll never get the chance to say,  
"You act just like your mother did at that age."  
The greatest sorrow I know is  
considering the undeniable truth:  
Those children will never know you.

I acknowledge this truth  
And I miss you.

Some days it's hard to breathe  
Because my thoughts revert to you  
In each situation that confronts me,  
good or bad.  
I drift away in empty thoughts  
and get so caught up  
And I forget to remember  
that you're really gone.

And then  
I really miss you.

## Motivation

Mary Lieske

Four walls, one exit, and a window.

Four drawers, one closet, and a bed.

How dull my apartment is, all numbers and shapes and sizes with no reason to their placement, no explanation for their purchase beyond 'I needed it.' There are no pictures of my great-aunt who died when I was young, no reminders of her special candy recipes, nor any signs of my little sister's eighth grade graduation last week.

It's just me, my cats, and an old bedroom.

Yes, there is the kitchen that is a part of my suite, and the bathroom and the sitting-room-turned-study, but I spend most of the time I'm not working here, in this bed.

I stare up at the ceiling and don't bother to count the cracks anymore—I've done it so many times before that I've memorized the number. I don't tell the landlord about the noise from upstairs or about the noisy dog downstairs who's gotten loose again and is yapping at my door. He's frightened the cats again; the girls are cowering in the closet while the one male cat is either hiding or lazing under my bed — it's hard to tell with him.

The phone rings, and I don't answer. Why should I? What good would it do? If it's Mum, she'll wonder why I'm not at work, or out finding myself a good girl. If it's someone else, I don't want to hear it either. I'm not sure why. Maybe I'm tired, or maybe I'm just lazy. Maybe I'm fed up with my lack of a social life —although I feel no urge to correct it.

Whatever it is has me up and leaving, keys to the apartment in one hand as I shrug on a heavy winter coat. I gently shoo back the dog to get out of the door and lock it behind me. I don't know where I'm going.

I don't know that it really matters.

## Entropy of Your Shirt

Amanda Veale

You left your shirt  
under my bed  
or on my floor  
where later I toed it away.  
It was a stupid shirt,  
Hawaiian pattern,  
mocked your big body  
and pale skin.  
I am writing to say  
that it is decaying,  
and you should collect it  
at your earliest convenience.  
I am allergic to dust  
and mold  
and to memories left  
under my bed  
without anyone to come  
and clean them away.



A girl in a blue  
shirt  
sits in a bar

quietly, calmly, watching  
sweat drop  
from cold beer.

it pools on the  
dark  
Wood counter top.

**"Mavericks"**

*Philip Gallagher*

but the girl in  
blue  
sat quietly, alone.

and cold beer getting  
warm  
I said, "why am I here"

Polished to a brilliant  
Shine  
with nicks here and there

she sits there dressed  
in  
her best blue blouse

that she bought twenty  
years  
earlier to go out in  
in the corner of the  
horseshoe

she sat, silent  
while re-sellers and farmers  
talked  
of acquisitions and work

stories of trucks, new  
tractors,  
and other sold stuff.

hung in the air with  
wisps  
of cigarette smoke

and the pungent smell  
of  
stale alcohol

cons spoke loudly of  
running  
from the police

while middle aged drunk  
women  
danced to music

out of place—as I  
watched  
liquor pour

**Untitled**

*Philip Gallagher*

It's 10:15 p.m...

the door  
is wide open

Everyone's comin'  
in

the place  
is really hoppin'

Old friends meet up,  
shaking familiar hands.

Costume rhinestones

**\*shinin\*\***

on

Older ladies' necks

balls\ /up

-racked-

V

And

broken- sprawling on the table

Door spinning... "Hello Joe!"

Crown

Royal

blowin' (in the air,)

smoke ~rollin'~

**the law's sayin' no**

rough riders say,

"Hell Yeah,"

Mixers

pouring

down

"I've never had it, but it tastes Great!"

"Try it,"

"...ok..."

ringing...

phone ringing *quiet*...

Reflection is jamming'  
playin' good ol' tunes

the place is

jumpin'...

Somber face stops me.

"...Who was that?..."

"What's goin' on?"

"a stand up mom's...

dyin'

...gotta week to live..."

"...Chemo's not workin'... doc says, "make final arrangements."

Click, quiet, depressed look

on once happy face...

The band rocks on,

happy people dancin'

but sitting at

the bar

things get serious

money burns up like

Zig-zags

And liquor pours f

a

s

t.

It's 10:16 p.m.

### Spotlighting the 2008 Chapbook Winner Glen Davis

Each year, beginning in 2007, Sigma Tau Delta and the Vehicle staff have offered Vehicle award winners the chance to compete for their own chapbook—a small volume of their own work to be published during the Fall semester.

This year, winners in the categories of “Best Poetry,” “Best Prose,” and “Best Overall” for the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 editions of *The Vehicle* had their work anonymously judged over the summer. Glen Davis was awarded the honor of having a chapbook published and it is the pleasure of the Vehicle staff to feature one of his pieces, “Lessons”—which won second place in the category of “Best Prose” last Spring and is also included in his chapbook—along with an interview with Glen in this edition of *The Vehicle*.

## Lessons

*Glen Davis*

The cigarettes flipped and tumbled in the air as they made their leisurely arc over the table and into the grass. I watched this happen every day, the careful rolling of a single pinch of tobacco. I watched him delicately tuck one end to keep the tobacco from falling out and into his mouth. I knew about cancer even then, but as soon as I could, I was going to roll and smoke tobacco just like my grandfather. I wanted to inhale the smoke that had been killing my family for generations.

To be fair, my great-grandfather wasn't aware that smoking would kill him. Even my grandfather wouldn't find that out until after he had smoked for most of his life. He started when he was ten. I was eleven when I realized that I, too, would become a smoker. I wouldn't actually start smoking until I was thirteen, but everyone knew I was going to do it. I'd been getting the lectures about not smoking since I was eight, always from someone holding a cigarette. My own grandfather gave me the lecture once while lighting one of his hand-rolled cigarettes.

"Never start smoking, it's a terrible habit. I wish I'd never started." There was a quick flash from the lighter and the lecture was over.

He quit for almost two years at the end. He died from cancer before he could make the two year anniversary. My uncle quit after they removed part of his lung. He was already terminal by then, and even he said there wasn't much point in it. There was a book of matches in his hand when he died and a small pile of cigarette ashes on the picnic table in front of him.

I watched both my uncle and my grandfather get sick, all the while rolling and lighting my own cigarettes. My father has emphysema now; they check his lungs every year for spots. He quit smoking early, early for my family. He was forty five. He claims that he's never felt better, and that quitting was the best thing he ever did. He says this as he hungrily watches my cigarettes flip through the air and land gently on the grass.

I tell my own son to never start smoking. He's three now, at least ten years too young to start, but I tell him every day. I tell him how his great-grandfather died from cancer before he even got to meet him.

I try not to smoke around him. I close the garage door, hide it from him like an addict. He doesn't understand the lectures, but I keep telling him anyway. I tell him about his grandfather and about his great-grandfather. I tell him about his great-grandfather's hands. How well they could hold a chisel and a plane, and I show him the tool box that those hands made. I point out the perfectly formed dovetail joints, and the perfectly smooth planed surfaces. I make him feel the joints and I let him play with the dangerously sharp chisels.

and spokeshaves that live in that box. Most of all, I tell him about how I wished my grandfather would have showed me how to use those tools. I tell him about how much there was to learn from that one grumpy old man. I tell him about how all I ever learned from my grandfather was to manufacture cigarettes and flip them into the air when their usefulness had expired.

There just wasn't time for anything else.

## Interview with Glen Davis

By Rebecca Griffith

**The Vehicle:** What sorts of things do you tend to write about? Why? Where do you draw inspiration?

Glen Davis: I don't really get inspiration. Every once in awhile, I see something and I think, 'That would be a great story to write.' Most of the time, however, I just feel like writing and I have nothing to start with. When that happens, I just kind of write down the first thing that comes into my head. It might be dialog, it might be a description, and might just be random words. The initial writing usually brings up some questions. If it's dialog, I might ask who would say it and in what context. If it's description, I might ask why it matters. In what context would this description have meaning? Eventually, I get a picture that I can work with, and sometimes that turns into a story. More often, it just turns into a few hours of writing, and that's okay, too. If I'm amused for those few hours, I don't consider it wasted time. I can still use pieces of the stories I don't like, and often these pieces seem better when they show up in different stories. The characters and settings seem more concrete for me because we've known each other for a longer time.

I seem to write about death a lot. I'm fascinated by it. I think it comes from my interest in horror movies. I've always wanted to write a really good horror novel, but so much has already been covered. I don't know if I actually have any original ideas anymore. I'm not willing to spend time on a new zombie or vampire novel. What could I cover that hasn't already been written? I think the horror influence is apparent in my writing, but I do try to cover it up a little. Eventually, I am going to have to write a haunted hotel story (I've already started one), but I have no intention of it being of interest to anyone other than me. I just kind of feel like I have to do it.

**V:** Do you have a philosophy concerning writing?

GD: I think my philosophy towards writing is pretty simple. The writer's job is to present information. It doesn't really matter whether it's a research paper or a story—the end goal should be that the reader can understand it, and, to some extent, participate in it by reading. Readers are often hindered by flowery language and complex sentence structures. If the bigger words really do add something important, or if manipulating the sentence structure adds a different reading to the work, then I'll add it. If it's just there to make me feel more like a writer, it should get deleted. I think that writers should focus on the reader and not themselves. That's probably the closest thing to a writing philosophy that I have.



V: Who are your "literary heroes"?

GD: As I've already mentioned, I love horror stories. I've seen most of the movies, and it takes a lot to really get to me. This rules out a lot of writers. Stephen King could do it once, but I don't know if his recent work really gets to me. I saw *The Shining* when I was nine, and it was amazing. It's still pretty cool now. This is the movie that probably got me interested in horror. I like King's early stuff, but the new stuff just doesn't seem to work as well. I still read it, though—it's compulsory, I think. Clive Barker has some really good stuff. Again, I tend to like his early stuff better.

I don't only read horror novels, but I do seem to keep coming back to them. I admire anyone that can tell a really good story. For me, it seems to be all about the story. I often find that I really like a book, but it's the story I like and not necessarily the writer. When I pick up a second book by the same author, I'm often disappointed. I can't think of any authors that hold out through every work they've written. If I found that I liked everything an author wrote, I guess that writer would become a sort of hero for me.

V: How would you describe your writing style?

GD: I'm not sure that I actually have a style. I don't write a lot of long stuff because I'm a very disorganized writer. I tend to write flash fiction because it doesn't require me to remember things for very long. In writing longer works, I have to keep notes. I often have post-it notes with characters' names and details on them that I can put on my monitor while writing. If I don't have these notes, characters tend to get new names every few pages, or a mechanic might become a bar tender. It's a lot of work for me to make sure everything stays consistent. Flash fiction is a lot easier in this respect. There is a trade off, though. I don't have to remember anything about the characters I use, but I have to get some kind of message or emotion to the reader in just a couple of pages. I find it very challenging.

I'm not sure I really answered the question there. I think I might still be trying to find a style. If you have one I can try out for awhile, let me know.

V: What do you see as a writer's role in society or culture? Do writers have specific responsibilities to readers or is their work meant mainly to entertain?

Responsibilities? That's a lot of pressure. I think the primary role of a fiction writer is to tell stories. That should be the main focus. If a writer can tell a really great story that people want to hear, then that is a

good thing. If that writer can, at the same time, put a message in there that stays with the reader, that's a really great thing. As a writer, I don't feel it is my job to be a moral compass for my readers. If that were the case, I'd probably have to stop writing such creepy, horrible things. I think that there are things in my writing that might influence a reader. If the reader gets something from reading my stories, then that's awesome. If they really only get a good story out of it, then that's okay, too. I think it's important for a writer to try to get some kind of deeper meaning in there, but this deeper meaning should never cause trouble in reading the story. The story has to be there first—the message is secondary.

V: When did you first know you wanted to write?

GD: I had a really boring, but well paying, job as a machine mechanic when I got out of high school. I was good at this job, so I tended to do less actual repair on the machines, and more of just sitting around waiting for something to break. I really wanted to read, but reading on the job was discouraged. It was common practice, however, to keep notes on the machines and their setup. I started writing little stories in the margins of my notebooks to pass the time. They were awful. I wasn't a big fan of spelling or punctuation back then (still not that great at it), but the stories were amusing and it passed the time. Writing is just like anything else. If you do it long enough, you get better at it. I kept doing it and the stories got better. Eventually, I liked one of them enough to let someone else read it. I just kept on writing whenever I got bored. It became a way to avoid doing the things I didn't really want to do. I don't know that I ever really thought about becoming a writer. It just sort of happened.

V: What has been your most positive experience as a writer?

GD: For me, the most positive experience is reading something I wrote and seeing more in it than I intended to put there. I love when I see connections that I didn't intentionally write in. I can take these connections and make them more prominent. That is an amazing feeling for me.

V: How about your most negative experience as a writer?

GD: I think the negative experiences come when I really like a story, but readers just don't seem to like it. For instance, when I submitted

to *The Vehicle* [Spring 2008], I sent in three stories. Out of the three I submitted, the one I liked least was chosen [for publication]. That's kind of sad for me, because it means that the other stories missed their target. I still think they are better stories. I just failed to present them in a way that the reader could identify with.

I usually don't let other peoples' opinions affect how I feel about things. If the readers don't get it, it's because I didn't get it down as well as I should have. The story is as much for me as it is for them. If I like the story, it is a good story. The reader just didn't get it, and that's my fault as a writer. I should have presented it differently. That's about as close to negative as I really ever get.

V: What advice would you give to other writers hoping to hone their skills? What was the best advice you yourself were given?

GD: I usually give writers the same advice someone gave me about playing the guitar. The only way you'll ever get good at it is to practice. I still can't really play the guitar, but then, I never really practice. I'm starting to become a pretty good writer because I write a lot. I get better each time I do it. There are no shortcuts. If you are willing to do a lot of writing, you will eventually get good at it.

The only advice I ever got about writing that I remember was from a writing teacher at the community college I went to. She read something I wrote, and really liked some parts of it. She pointed those parts out to me, and I had to tell her that the parts she liked weren't strictly the truth. She looked at them again and said, "Then you're a really good liar, maybe you should do it more often." She mentioned fiction writing, and it turns out you can lie all you want as long as you're writing fiction. I'm a really good liar, and I kind of feel like I should focus on my strengths, so fiction is definitely for me.

V: Where do you find yourself doing most of your writing?

The setting is unimportant for me. I've met people that have to have everything just right—they have to have a desk and a room with no windows so that they can stay focused on their writing. I avoid all of this stuff. If the story I'm writing isn't more interesting than watching the birds outside my window, then it isn't worth writing. I do a lot of my writing outside. I have a table on my back porch that I can sit at and write, or I can put a lawn chair in the front yard and write out there, if it's nice outside. The trouble I have most often is the limitation of my laptop battery. I usually have to find a way to plug [it] in somewhere. Once I start writing a really good story, I just kind of lose track of time. There have been times when I have written for a whole day. When

the laptop battery goes dead, it just kind of interrupts my thoughts. I try to eliminate this kind of distraction, but if a squirrel, bird or bug catches my attention and makes me stop writing, I'm okay with it. I probably needed a break anyway. It means that I'm not really focused on the story anymore and something needs to change. I need to find out where I got bored with it, or maybe I need to work on a different part of it. I use interruptions as a means of judging my stories. If it was a really great story, would that stupid squirrel have taken my attention away from it?

## Contributors

Samuel Cloward—"I'm a really cool guy."

Steven T. Cox (The Non-Mortal)—An English lit major considering a Creative Writing minor who transferred from Parkland College. "I've been writing, with a primary focus on science fiction/horror, for four to five years, but, until now, have not been published."

Jacob Dawson—First year Creative Writing graduate student who is at work on a novel.

Sarah Fairchild—Freshman English major with a Creative Writing minor. "I like to write poetry, preferably short contemporary sorts. I'm a total bum."

Kellen Fasnacht—Junior English major with an Education minor. "I'm from Charleston, IL. and have been sober since October 10, 2007. I've been consumed with happiness ever since."

Philip Gallagher—"As a poet, I have been down many paths of creation. I have walked the roads of bliss, hardship, and confusion that the great masters themselves have trodden. I float through the senses. I am the enigma, the voice of life born out of the chalice of mechanical construction. I have created, deconstructed, inverted, and twisted language with the torsions of possibility. I have paid to be published, I have been convinced to publish, and I have sought publication on my own. For ten years I have waded through the poet's sub-aquatic world of desperation to avoid drowning or being swallowed by the void. My

My thanks go out to those who have encouraged me, guided me, and find solace within me.”

Leslie Hancock—Senior English major with teacher certification and an African American studies minor. This is her first time being published in *The Vehicle*. “Creative Writing is a hobby for me.”

Brendan Hughes—Senior Theatre Arts major with a minor in Asian Studies. His featured photographs were taken in China while on study abroad in May 2008.

Grace Lawrence—Junior English major. Hobbies include reading, listening to music, and watching *America's Funniest Home Videos*.

Krystina Leyva—Junior English major with teacher certification. Loves reading short stories, avant-garde literature, and studying Spanish.

Gina Marie LoBianco—Senior English major.

Mary Lieske—First year graduate student in English. Her areas of interest include Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance literature. She lives just outside Cincinnati, Ohio with her family.

Megan Mathy—Junior Mass Communications major.

Donica Miller—First year graduate student in English. Her areas of interest are the Gothic novel and Medieval romance. She

enjoys spending time at home with her family, including her husband Jeremy and dog, Neo.

Jennifer O'Neil—First year graduate student in Literary Studies with a Creative Writing emphasis.

Samantha Sauer—Sophomore History major and Film minor from Sycamore, IL. She has an interest in studying abroad and writing and plans to a lot of both in the near-future.

Justin Sudkamp—English major with a Creative Writing minor. "I blame my mother and father for introducing me to literature and music since the cradle. Thank You."

Amanda Veale—Senior majoring in English and Psychology.

# Submission Gu

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Submissions are accepted before midterm each semester. As specific dates vary, please watch for flyers, posted throughout Coleman Hall.

Please e-mail [TheVehicle@gmail.com](mailto:TheVehicle@gmail.com) with any inquiries.

## Reading Event

All readers of *The Vehicle* are invited to attend a reading event highlighting this semester's talented writers. This Fall, the reading is scheduled for Thursday December 11 at 5pm in the Effingham Room on the third floor of the Union. Glen Davis, winner of the 2008 Chapbook contest, will be the featured reader of the evening.



“I am writing in the garden. To write as one should of a garden, one must write not outside it or merely somewhere near it, but in the garden.”

—Frances Hodgson Burnett