

The Crucible

A Collection of Student Work

The Crucible Correspondence

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Preface

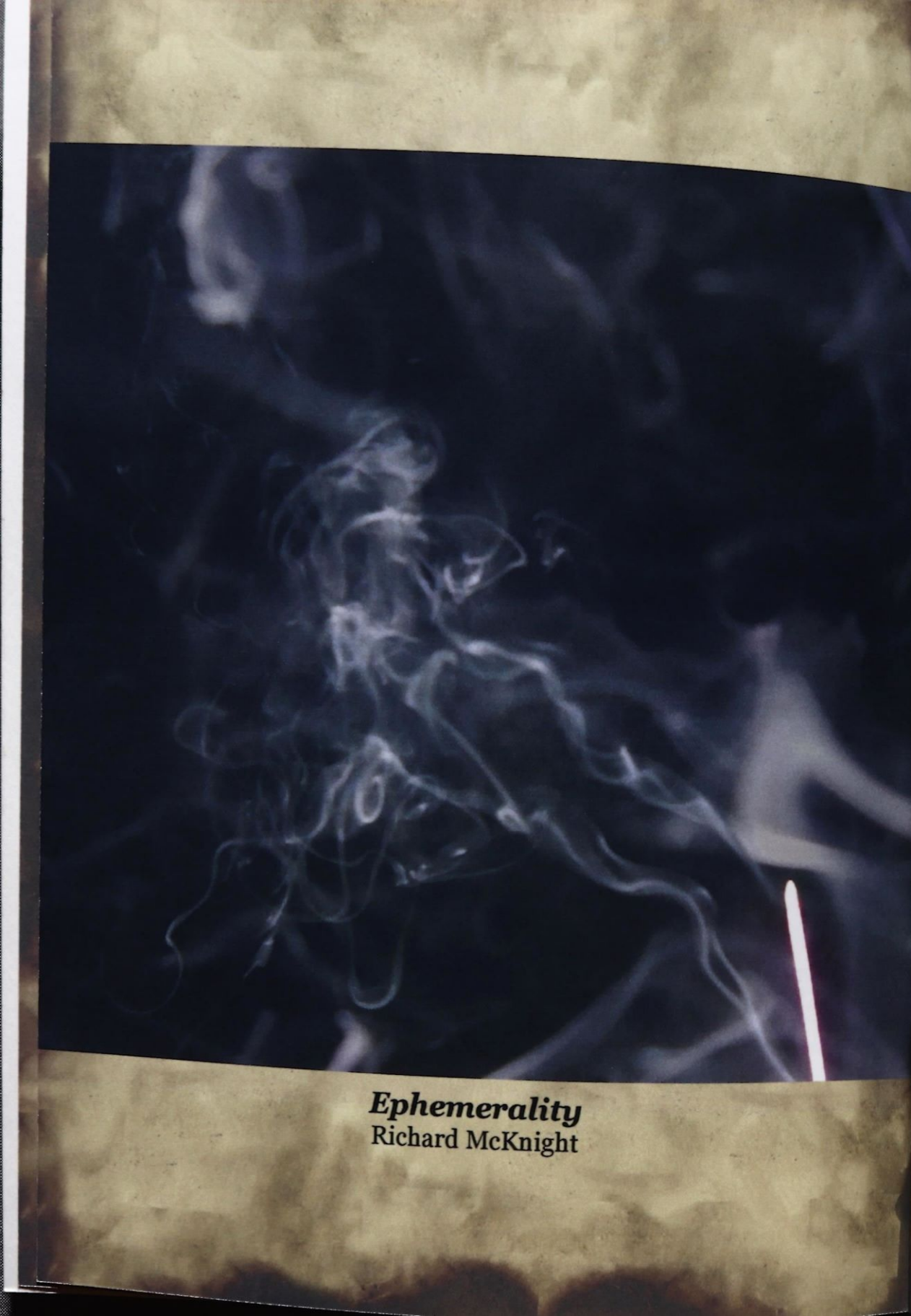
by Spencer Myers and Karis Ritzman

Art and literature are active communication. What you hold in your hands is a collection of experiences and images created by people who want to tell you something. Just like a good conversation, a late night text, or a message from someone in need, each piece carries an emotion and a message.

Don't let the static nature of text or images fool you into thinking that the work now stands alone, when the truth is that behind every piece is a human being pushing it towards you. Because we publish only work of Lock Haven students, these creators are each one a classmate, an acquaintance, or a friend.

Back in the golden age of letters, correspondence meant primarily the mail sent between two people. In modern times, we associate it more with the similarity between two ideas or objects. Our hope for this edition of *The Crucible* is that it can occupy both definitions.

By communicating what we feel through what we create, we can start to see the constant connections we share with one another.



Ephemerality
Richard McKnight

Prelude

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We are especially indebted to the efforts of the English and Art Departments. The continued efforts of these departments have generated a bountiful source of works to choose from. Some of the literature in this issue of *The Crucible* was written in Professors Maddox-Hafer and Washington's creative writing workshops or in composition classes offered by the English department; some of the artwork was created in studio courses in the art department. Classes such as digital photography, electronic art, drawing, and printmaking are taught in the John Sloan Fine Arts Building.

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College: Life of a Freshman

by Alan Ninan

The week of fun and experimentation is over--
drinking Starbucks, fighting the hangover of the weekend,
rushing the work that we thought we didn't have.

Due Dates,
quizzes,
storming the sleep-deprived
"adult."

"Make good choices" plays in my head like a broken record as
I take a shot of whiskey.

The days pass by like lecture conversations;
waiting for the weekend to walk away from work for just a
second,
find a new persona in my chemical imbalances and bottles of
wine.

Who am I?

Cup after cup of Starbucks,
I call myself the next-generation white girl,
or am I just a sleep-deprived college student?
My body aches from the heavy sandbags my eyes carry,
strap them on my back and carry the books that cause my
pain
weighing down my back but increasing the knowledge in my
mind.

I am a fiend for knowledge.

that's why I live in the library.

Judge me for who am, but I'll be making more money than
you will.

But where are all my friends?

4.0 but no one's got my back.

Socialization is for the weak *He* says.

Study and achieve greater goals than your predecessor, *He*
whispered.

He consumes your thoughts, ideas, desires.

Derogatory thoughts encompass my insecure, childlike mind
as I stare at the mirror, changing from outfit to outfit,



Spirit
Wesley Charles

impressing people who really don't care but judge.
Society knows just what to say about you
but never stops to think who you really are.
Live my life with **no** emotions, **no** emotions,
no strings attached and **no** further conversations
shushh... Don't get feelings involved; that's what split both our
parents apart.

Pent up pain and tribulation closed by a corkscrew of past
relations,
drops seeping out through tear ducts.

No Emotion.

No Time.

Two planners deep? Am I crazy or organized?
By the blank stares of my peers, I assume I am crazy
I just wanna be planned and prepared for an education that I
am paying \$80,000 for.

So next time you ask me why am I so prepared,
don't be surprised that I shove my student bill in your face.
\$1440 are placed in your internal bank account each day.

No time for people.

There are so many names and faces; everyone just becomes a
blur--

"dude," "pal," and "buddy" are nouns that replace those I don't
know.

8.6 billion people in the world and you still think your name
matters?

The reality is you decide your worth, don't let others define you.
Let your every word be original; plagiarism is illegal.

The Artist by Karis Ritzman

The breath of the night air chills my body. Without your arms to grab me, I wrap my own around me, enveloping myself in an embrace like you used to hold me in. The corners of my mouth twitch upward. Even with all my self-hatred, it was still more loving than any time you touched me.

A smile sliced across your face when you trapped me in the cage of your arms. You held me there, suffocating me into the pillows while you huffed above me, panting out phrases like "you like that," and "tell me I'm the best." The feathery dust filled my lungs, and in return, my tears drowned the cotton case.

I sigh. Red is such a pretty color, don't you think? It's so bold, so fresh, and it splatters across the snow so strikingly. It's a beautiful slash across the peaceful landscape, and I feel so happy knowing you helped me make it. I could almost take a picture.

You laughed at me as my stomach emptied its contents onto the sheets after I felt your warm spray dribble on my back. "See you around, I guess," you said, leaving me to clean the crimson from between my legs. "Can't wait 'til next time." My hand reached behind me and I touched the mess you left on me. I gagged again, but there was nothing left for me to heave, and all I could think was "how could I let this happen?"

This is the most content I've felt in a long time. It was so refreshing to be above you, hearing you cry for once. And now we've painted such a lovely portrait together. Not quite a still life--a still death, maybe? Yes, that word fits the expression frozen onto your face the most. This knife formed the perfect brush, the snow, the canvas, and you... You're the paint.

The Captain
by Keith Meredith

Whitman shall educate me,
for I am a blank piece of paper
wishing to be covered in his ink—
of knowledge and wisdom from his story-telling
about the poet that I wish to be.

I want to be that poet that he writes about,
dying to go down in his-tory as his greatest work of art.

I am that poem, his poem, spilling from the carbon and
iron gall of his pen. Coloring my body, his page, his
canvas. He's an artist, a magician, so elegant bringing words
to life, so enchanting.

"As he Ponder d's in Silence," swimming in
thought, his thought. As he writes with a
delicate stroke of his hand across the page,
like da Vinci as he paints Jesus and his followers.
He composes what was meant to make him famous;
I was built and rebuilt, until I satisfy what
was meant to be... a masterpiece--

a poem, and I am built with metaphor. Dressed
with style, dancing like burlesque, free-styling leading
to our mind-articulating emotions, his emotions
for your understanding, my understanding
to clear-up who I am, who I am meant to be,
his-
story, his diary, an autobiography
saying the things that will make you think differently of him,
but
don't forgive him, but maybe judge me

because, I am a poet,
his poem... his-
story.

Scout on Pa
Nov 21 1911



many, much, that want
every body say that her
pleasing is But if papa
dads not get were soon of
will has to stay, my grand
wants us to live with her

Carriage
Emily Appolonia

Grief

by Michael Eubanks

The door closes like a
hammer blow. It seals me in,
like a tomb, air and life
drawn out with grim finality.

The room is too quiet. The silence
roars like thunder. It echoes
to my core, reverberates with the sound
of my own heartbeat. It shakes me.

This place is full of you, your presence
is everywhere, and so
is your absence. My emptiness
overflows. It stifles me.

I search for some distraction,
but it's too late. I'm caught
in your gravity, the gaping
black hole that my hope can't escape.

Father's Day
by Carly Heider

Happy Father's Day,
my personal superhero;
you deserve to be honored on this day
just as much as Mother's Day.
Today,
it's my turn to treat you to dinner.
I'll even drive this time, too.
Take a break, sit down, *relax* -
something you never do.
I think you've forgotten how.
We may be the only
mother-daughter pair here,
but you deserve the Father's Day special on the menu
just as much, if not more, than the fathers around us.
It's the least I can do to repay you
for being there every inch of these years that I have grown.

Twenty years
of booster shots and vaccines,
teeth-cleanings and cavity fillings,
glasses and contacts and braces -
You were there to hold my hand every time.
You were the one who rushed me to the hospital
when I fell off the bed and snapped my arm.

You slept in hospital chairs overnight
as nurses monitored my breathing
after so many asthma attacks.
Every time my lungs failed,
it was you who sat with me for twenty minutes,
countless times over twenty years,
while a machine nursed my lungs back to health.
You were the first to see me smile a new, sparkly, straight
smile after two long years of being a metal-mouth.

Twenty years of sacrifice;
I work this hard every day -
all school and work, no time for play --
for you.
Twenty years and two kids
by yourself.
Endless hours spent at work six days a week
just to feed us every night.
All the clothes you didn't buy,
the hair-appointments you cancelled,
your Saturday nights out that you spent in
when I was heartbroken or sick
did not go unnoticed by my eye,
nor were they ignored by my heart.

Twenty years old, and still
with every crisis, every heartbreak,
every major decision I may make,
on my bad days and my good,
yours is the first number I dial
because I know you will pick up the phone
like any super-parent should.

Happy Father's Day, Mom.
Now enjoy your food.
Today more than any day,
you are "Dad" too.

Enough

by Akiya Shirk

"I want doughnuts. I can smell them, and I wanna doughnut so badly, B."

"I don't care if you want doughnuts. The cash register needs to be tended, and if I could, I would turn off my olfactory sense so that I don't have to listen to your whining anymore. Please shut up."

Will sighed and made a point to push the desire to look at the doughnut rack, and B involuntarily shifted the eyes towards the glorious stand five feet and two lanes over and up.

"That's not helping, Will."

"But can't I just get one doughnut?"

"We have one hour left of work and then we can le-"

"Oh look! It's that handsome fellow! Can we go talk to him? What's his name?"

B held back the zings of aggravation, tugging at his frontal lobe, even as he felt her speed up a little down below. Will was always so flighty, it was like dealing with

a hummingbird – his movement was dizzyingly fast. Keeping in tight control was a challenge, and B failed sometimes, much to his discontent; failure chiseled away at the already receding self-confidence. Those were the times he couldn't remember who she was down there, that lovely drummer, even if he could feel her working at his command.

Will continued to babble away while B attempted to help push the correct buttons on the cash register. He was all but unneeded for such a simple task, but he tried anyway. Only 45 minutes left. Will was still babbling as she silently hummed below.

I snagged the strings to my apron and yanked it off, chucking it in my bag. The automatic doors swished gently shut, but it would have been more satisfying to hear them slam. Eight hours of scanning wilting vegetables and mindlessly pushing cash register buttons make it hard not to hate a supermarket job. The desert sky probably glittered with unseen stars, but the smog, parking lot lamps, and every bloody TV under the moon were blocking them out. I stopped looking for them years ago.

The drive home wasn't really satisfying either, but that's not really news. Neither was the fact that every light in the house was off when I got home except for that eerie flickering glow from the TV that contributed to the starless sky. Even the suburbs lived in a light dome. I shuffled up the concrete steps and opened the door, which gave a loud, uncooperative squeak, announcing my arrival. The enormous lump on the couch shifted in the shuddering light, and a beer bottle nearly fell out of a fleshy hand. I couldn't hold the grimace off my face when I quietly padded past and the stench of booze snuck up my nostrils.

Sometimes I was grateful for the late shift at the supermarket. It meant he was already asleep by the time I got home, and I could go to my room without having to explain, yet again, that I get paid bi-weekly and that I didn't have money for him. My arms and sides were also starting to go back to their normal pale color, thanks to the new schedule. As long as I wasn't around, his hatred for life only aimed at himself.

I snuck past the kitchen, not bothering with dinner. There probably wouldn't be any food there worth speaking of anyway. Once in my room, I breathed a sigh of relief and flopped – quietly – face down on to my bed without changing

Sweet on Pa



Reclining Lady
Bridget Laudenslauger

...and I can play
my, nice, that what
every body say that she
playing is nice but if papa
don't get work, son of
will have to stay, my grand
wants us to live with her.

out of my jeans and t-shirt. I knew I should set my alarm before I zonked out but my arms felt like lead, as did my chest and shoulders. I breathed in my own scent through my pillow and held it for as long as I could before exhaling, flipping onto my back and staring at the cracked plaster ceiling. My eyes drifted shut without my noticing. What wouldn't I give for a chance to change this?

~

B felt the shift in perspectives. He felt the body set its rhythm at his command when he sensed the darkness from the eyes. He pensively allowed the images to spark through his lines, keeping himself at a bit of a distance to ensure everything ran according to...well, the way he knew it should. Will did nothing to help, as usual, except keep up his banter. He was as random as always; the only difference was in the speed at which Will desired things. It was a slow wave, like a deep sound through the air, with peaks and dips at regular intervals: much more tolerable.

Will and the drummer from below were very close like this, and she liked to follow his suggestions a lot of the time. B was not very fond of this close relationship. It created more chaos for him to fail at controlling, but he tried

not to let it get to him for the moment. When the body caved into his rhythm, he controlled everything. Will was encouraging her to pump pseudo-adrenaline through the veins with an image of a secret escape through a window, the sharp feeling of keys in a pocket, cold midnight air unnoticed by cautious, tensed-up shoulders.

That gentle beating vibrated down below.

~

Morning came all too quickly, in my opinion, but that's been my opinion since Mom died suddenly of stroke three years ago. Life has been steadily becoming unbearable since then.

The bathroom was grimy as I painted a face on for work, following the familiar motions without a thought. Last night had not provided a very restful sleep, causing me to wake up early without the help of my alarm, and I would feel it later today. My boss would probably notice it too, and that was never good. That tiger-lady didn't have the patience to breathe at a normal rate and always seemed to huff her way around the employees, badgering them about efficiency. It was going to be a very long day at work later. Too bad I couldn't fully hate the idea of not having to be at home.

I smelled the burning pancakes before I entered the kitchen. It made my eyes water a bit, and I started wishing I had woken up even earlier and fled to the library before work like usual so I wouldn't have to deal with him. I don't know how he had gotten up so early from last night's booze fest, but there he was, standing at the stove burning some pancake batter into submission. He looked up when I entered the room and gave a rather disfigured grin, bloodshot eyes all puffy from lack of sleep. Skirting edgily around him, I made for the tiny table and sat down.

"Daddy made pancakes!" he said. I stared at him.

"I don't like pancakes."

"Well you better eat some goddamn pancakes and get your fucking ass to your job."

He slammed a plate of blackish slabs on the table in front me and I tried so hard not to flinch away from his proximity, though my insides were immediately turned to stone. I could still smell the alcohol layering his unshowered skin. There was no way I could eat anything this morning.

"I'm really...not all that hungry. I think I'll just go to work."

Two steps away, he stopped, spatula in one hand, gritty nails on the other. He scratched his scraggly chin without turning around to look at me. I froze.

He whirled around, and a clenched fist nearly broke my jaw.

I fell out of my seat to the floor.

Will was silent. Or at least, that's what B thought at first. He had been chattering away about something like going to work, if a little nervously, but with no less speed than normal when he simply stopped talking, and B was left alone.

Before he realized what Will was actually doing, there were sparks radiating from everywhere. Real adrenaline coursed through every vein, and all nerve endings were making it hard to control anything. He simply couldn't move any of the muscles, even the eyes. There was a stillness that created so much chaos, he got stuck in one spot.

B tried to find Will, searching every axon, but specific spots yielded nothing until he broadened his focus and realized...Will was everywhere. In fact, he had never shut up in the first place; he had simply started screaming at the top of his ability, long and without stopping. It was so high-pitched, it could hardly be heard, but B was pretty sure even

the outside ears were picking it up. It wasn't even a word, but the very essence of something B didn't like. It was the one thing that always made him lose control of something or another: Fear. Will didn't know it, but when he felt fear, he could do whatever he wanted without B to hinder him. And so he did. The high keen of flight was getting louder and sharper.

"Will! Hey, it's okay, buddy. Relax - just try to calm down. Maybe we can talk through this situation, and we won't have to be afraid or get hurt," B said, but the keening got dramatically louder.

B winced. All control snapped: Will took over.

I bolted. My anger, fear, and pain screamed in my ears as I crashed through the screen door and flew down the concrete steps, digging the car key out of my jeans pocket while my legs pumped as hard as my heart. I could feel him yelling at my back, and suddenly my heart was racing my legs. I've never been able to start that clunky heap of metal we call an SUV on the first try, but by some merciful grant from above, the key cranked the engine into life and I threw it in gear, burning rubber on my way

down the road. I didn't look back. My arms were aching, my jaw was throbbing, and my chest was heaving so badly it took me a minute of weaving through busy street lights to notice the tears streaming down my face. I must have driven for hours, but I don't remember stopping at any gas stations, nor do I remember actually leaving the city. I drove until I could see the columns of dusty red rock rising out of the dusty Utah earth, and I kept driving until I was passing the desert's giant gravestones. I didn't look back even once.

B was worried beyond normal. It was like something was missing, but he couldn't figure out what. Was it the chatter? Was it the constant, annoying desire? That was certainly gone, but B still couldn't figure out why it was missing, or if it was supposed to be missing. Will's terrible scream had finally started dying away when the eyes saw a vast, empty purity of blue and ruddy brown, but B could not quite place when Will had disappeared exactly. He had been a little busy trying to manipulate far too much at once. Nerves had been firing at a rapid pace, the muscles fighting his every command with a truly worrisome tenseness, and the eyes would not stop leaking. He was trying in vain to

restore everything to homeostasis, but his attempts hadn't started working until Will calmed down. Now all he had to do was give off the necessary sparks that kept everything running smoothly.

The drum below was exceedingly audible now. It wasn't distracting, but in fact, familiar. She was much more relaxed now than she was before. When Will had let out that shriek, she had beat so hard, B had to work specifically on not letting it get out of control, even if everything else was running rampant, like those damn legs. It's like they had a mind of their own or something. Now, however, she was humming along as usual, but with a strange likeness to...Will! B finally had found him: he was hiding in the humming, and singing the same tune. In fact, B couldn't tell the difference between the two anymore.

He made the face twitch into the tiniest of smiles, and he hadn't a single clue as to why he did it.

~

The car needed gas, presumably again, and I pulled over at a gas station the color of the arid earth. I had enough to fill the tank, purchase a small map of Utah and a bottle of

cold soda, and still have some left over. The minimart was pleasantly chilled, but I rather liked the feel of hot wind on my neck as I rolled down the car windows, stacked my feet on the dashboard and gingerly pressed the soda bottle to my sore jaw bone. I breathed in deeply for what felt like the first time in years. I breathed freedom. Anxious freedom, but a freedom nonetheless, and it made me smile just a little. The lead was off my chest and shoulders, and I felt a peaceful little jump inside. I had finally had enough, and now that the dry land stretched before me, I wondered why it had taken so long to do what I wanted. I opened the map and traced a road to a new life with my fingertip.

Frostbite
by John Sosnowski

My heart cracks at the sight of the ice,
shaping itself, a swell around dead flesh,
chilled to the bone in a lightless landscape.

My hope sinks under warm running water,
drowned in my own negligence.

I failed to free the lifeless hunk from the cold.

My shame cannot be blanketed.

Dinner's going to be late tonight.

The freezer-burnt roast is still frozen.



Cold Leaves
Bethany Hemma

Insert Title Here

by John Sosnowski

Associate Professor David Sherman was pulling yet another late night in the office, but it wasn't out of dedication to his career. He slouched in his office chair, dress shirt untucked, stroking his goatee. The first paragraph of an essay on Nietzsche in the Digital Age lingered on his computer, and he nursed a glass of cheap Scotch, straight with no ice. Everyone else had surely checked out by this hour, so he felt secure in pulling the bottle of rotgut out of its sanctuary in his file cabinet's bottom drawer. Secretively drinking at work wasn't ideal, he acknowledged, but anything was better than being home.

Professor Sherman hated himself for having married Sheila, the French-major-turned-housewife with whom he was smitten throughout his undergrad years, ever since they met at a keg party as freshmen. She had no appreciation for philosophy, the arts, or really anything of intellectual depth. Hell, she was a straight C student who could barely speak French even by the time she graduated. But there was something about that perky, fun-loving brunette he just couldn't

resist. He fell in love with her because she was a foil to him; whereas he was the brooding intellectual, she had a light of spirit that seemed to never go out. She, meanwhile, never got tired of his rudimentary three-chord acoustic guitar pickings, and figured he'd be pretty accomplished. She had always wanted to be with somebody who was going to be great. It was some kind of a Marilyn Monroe complex. So he married her shortly after they graduated from Arizona State. He knew this would complicate his dreams of a life of teaching in New York City, but it seemed like a fair deal at the time.

Now, as he stared at the screen of a PC issued by small, public North Tacoma University, in a cramped office he shared with a professor who always checked out before 3 PM, he lamented nearly every aspect of his life. They say "publish or perish," but perishing didn't seem so bad after all. He was beyond caring about even the thought of full professorship, and questioned whether there was anything new to say about 19th Century Weimar classicist philosophy, anyway. He'd come to see academic writing, especially in the humanities, as little more than a mill of intellectual regurgitation to no constructive end. Still, he stared at this infant paper, as it stood christened "Insert Title Here" as a placeholder, in vain hope of rediscovering the love he once felt for his chosen field.

The passion died somewhere in between watching students sleep in his classes, reading term papers which used excessive block quotes to reach the page limit, listening to the 1000th farfetched excuse for frequent absenteeism or late work, tuning out Sheila at the dinner table over her crappy meatloaf, and commuting in his used Hyundai sedan listening to classic rock radio for lack of a better idea. But he sat at his desk and attempted to work. Staring at a blank page here was better than doing it at home, with his wife rambling about celebrity gossip and the girls at the hair salon, and that infernal Chihuahua Trixie yapping at him.

The cursor hovered over the Firefox icon on his taskbar, bridging the paper in progress with the half-dozen or so windows of pornography he'd left open. Porn used to do something for him, but now it was just a habit to stare at video clips while sipping his Scotch. In this way, porn and philosophy had become one and the same for him. He'd scarcely played his guitar since the time he'd begun grad school years earlier, but the old thing was in his car trunk from an open mic night he'd almost attended the previous evening. An impromptu practice earlier that day proved he still had it, at least as much as he ever did, but something inside couldn't let him take the stage. He missed singing and playing, but he couldn't stand the thought of being a star for just a brief set, then rejoining the reality of his empty career and home life.

The alcohol helped him along, but an inevitable tipping point had been reached. Sherman made a drastic, impulsive decision as he finished his drink with a quick swig. He was going to New York, that night, to live, without so much as a goodbye to Sheila. He didn't care that it was the middle of the fall semester and someone would have to cover his Philosophy 101 sections, he didn't care that he'd probably max out a credit card on gas as he crossed the country in his clunky Hyundai, and he didn't care about the acute threat of homelessness. He certainly didn't care about his mortgage or how his wife would make do now that she probably couldn't coast by on looks anymore at 34. He was going to start making music again, and hopefully land on his feet playing gigs. He'd probably wait tables, too, to make ends meet. Even if shit hit the fan, he'd find a way. The threat of failure in an unforgiving city was still better than the spiritual death he was living through every single day. Nothing scared him anymore--he'd already been to his personal hell. He left the building wondering what Nietzsche would have to say about all of it, before acknowledging that he didn't really give a shit.

On the way out of town, past the exit where he'd normally get off to return to his suburban condo, he stopped for gas and impulsively bought a pack of Camels and a CD from a bargain music bin by the counter. It was an old favorite of his, *Katy Lied* by Steely Dan. He popped it into the CD player as he made his way to the interstate and skipped to the ninth track, "Any World (That I'm Welcome To)", because, he thought, any world he was welcome to was indeed better than the one he was coming from.

"Insert Title Here" remained open on the office computer, for how long before they realized he wasn't coming back, he'd never know. It was ironically fitting, in that he'd shed the titles of husband and professor for singer-songwriter, bum, or whatever else was to come. Life corrupted... would you like to initiate Auto-Recovery? Life successfully recovered... Insert Title Here.



Sunsetscape
Richard McKnight

Find a Penny, Pick it up

by John Sosnowski

Richard Connor, corporate accountant, age 43. Date of death: August 5th. Cause of death: run over by a truck on 37th Street near the Park Avenue intersection. Time of death: 12:45 PM on a Wednesday. Sympathy from bystanders: nowhere to be found. Not in the Big Apple. Jackhammers continued to drone in the background, and vehicle horns honked in frustration at the hold-up caused by the body in the middle of a busy Manhattan street. Other than the truck driver panicking about possible litigation, the NYPD officer writing up a report, the Emergency Medical Technicians hauling him away, and a few gawkers on the sidewalk, the huddled masses yearning for another month's rent money are indifferent to the scene, hardened by big city life.

EMT Carlos Hernandez recognized Connor, as he'd broken his leg after slipping on ice the previous winter. He'd spent the entire ambulance ride complaining about how high a copay at the hospital he anticipated, with not even a "thank you" for the ambulance crew. The few eyewitnesses willing to stick around and talk to the police all had the same story to tell: jaywalking across the street during a rare break in traffic, the tall, wiry man stopped mid-stride to pick up something small, like a coin. At this point,

he halted in the middle of the street and never noticed the truck rounding the corner, coming straight at him a little too quickly.

What no one noticed was that this was no ordinary penny. Entirely too shiny and new-looking for a 1972 coin, the specimen from the Denver mint also carried a defect: a botched mint mark reading "DD" instead of the proper single D. Screw-ups like this are highly valued by coin collectors, but this one's managed to stay in circulation for forty plus years. This is probably because no one managed to hold onto it for long. I'm sure you know the old adage: "find a penny, pick it up, and all day you'll have good luck." But you'd do well to remember the addendum that it's only good luck if it's heads up. The particularly frugal Richard Connor would've done well to remember this before greedily snatching up a shiny Abraham Lincoln in the street. The penny didn't stay put for long, however, as Chuck, always a man of minute superstitions, picked up the pretty penny. He had no way of knowing, however, that this penny was worth more than he bargained for.

Isabella De La Rosa, cleaning lady, age 75. Date of death: June 26th. Cause of death: massive heart attack on a 37th Street sidewalk, shortly after crossing the street around 3:30

PM. Circumstances were similar to those which would befall Richard Connor several weeks later: an uncaring city went on with business as usual as the woman lay dead. Some good samaritan actually cared enough to call an ambulance upon seeing the older lady collapse on the sidewalk, but it was too late by the time Chuck Martinez's ambulance reached the scene. He'd seen enough in his near decade on the job not to get broken up about much, but this one hit him particularly hard. Ms. De La Rosa was like family to him. A good friend of his mother's, she lived a floor above him in the Spanish Harlem apartment building where he grew up. As a teenager, he used to take out her garbage. Chuck couldn't fathom how a heart attack could've befallen her; she was always a health fanatic, never smoked, only drank a glass of wine a day, and vigorously walked anywhere she headed; she'd often brag about never needing a MetroCard. Little did he know, though, that she'd also been stealing money from her employer, Hernandez Funeral Home on 109th Street, for years. So what difference was a penny lying tails up in the embalming room one day? It was a penny that rode in her coin purse for about a month, a penny that was accidentally dropped as she fiddled with her coin purse while crossing the street, moments before she died. A penny with a botched mint mark reading "DD."

Timothy "T-Money" Henderson, drug dealer, age 30.

Date of death: April 16th. Cause of death: gunshot wounds.

Chuck Martinez had a feeling he'd get a call like this. He'd worked for years to finally get daylight shifts on the ambulance crew, but, team player that he was, he agreed to pull night shifts for a couple of weeks until the new guys were trained, ending the work shortage at his dispatch and putting the out of whack schedule back in order. He didn't miss graveyard shift in the least bit because violent crime calls like these were the norm. He'd seen shootings, stabbings, and overdoses, and learned through his first eight years on the job that getting used to seeing these things night in and night out wasn't the same as accepting it as a fact of life.

They tried their best to save Henderson as they rushed to the nearest hospital, but the blood loss was too severe. Another senseless killing, probably from a rival gangster or dealer. As Henderson was pronounced dead on arrival, Chuck took a hard look at his face and realized why he'd seemed familiar. They'd attended P.S. 135 together. Chuck recalled he'd had a nickname, "T-Dollar" or something ridiculous like that, and they'd worked on an 11th grade history project together. Well, if the term "together" is used loosely – honor roll student Chuck did all the work while

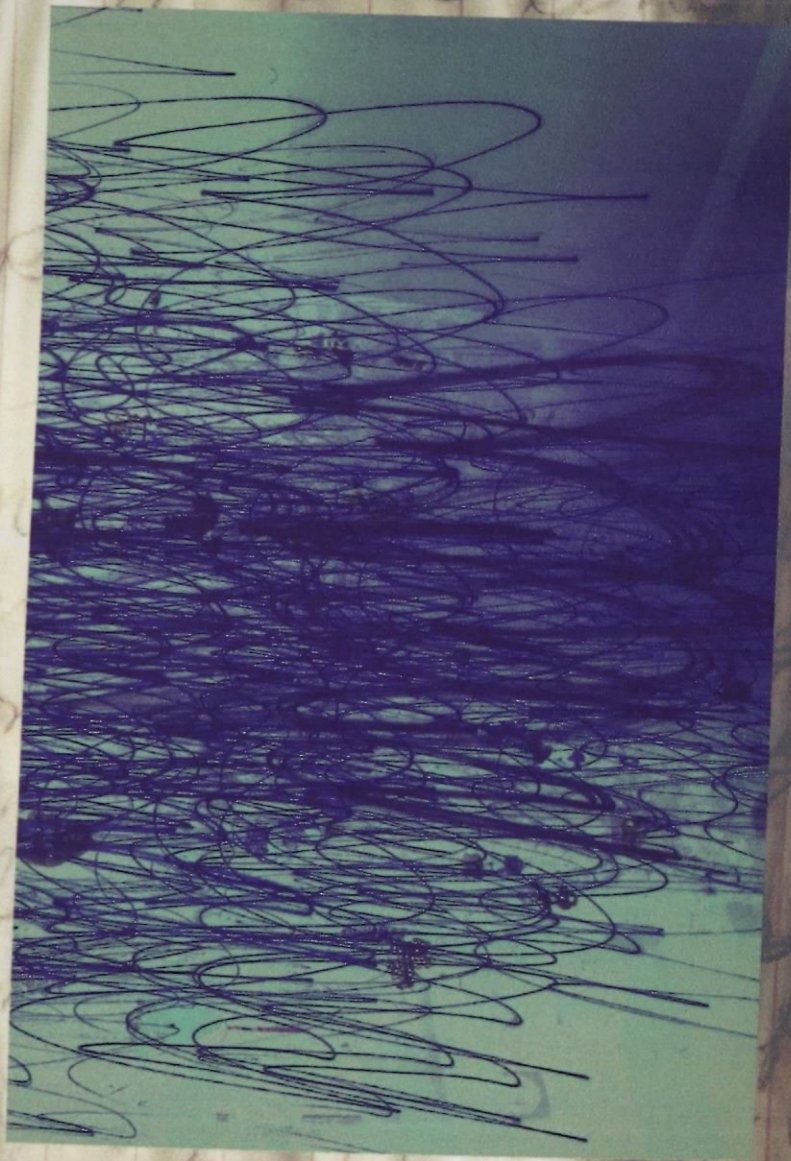


Father, Brother, and Dear Friend
Joanna Harlow

T-Something-or-other was chronically absent from school but managed to show up on presentation day. The pairing was assigned, but Chuck had taken it in stride because at least the hoodlum never actively gave him any trouble. He thought it a strange coincidence to see the guy like this all these years later. Police cleared Timothy Henderson's pockets in search of ID and confiscated the rest as evidence, but they'd missed a penny he'd picked up face down earlier that day just for shits and giggles, a penny that found its way onto the embalming room floor as the body was dressed for his funeral.

Carlos "Chuck" Martinez never realized how many near misses he'd had with the ominous DD penny, nor the power of the seemingly mundane object. He accidentally threw the penny in the garbage that night along with a convenience store receipt for a bottled Pepsi and a lottery ticket he'd bought on a whim – the Powerball jackpot winner. Model citizen Chuck Martinez invested most of this into community betterment and continued to live a fairly normal lifestyle as an EMT. Why did the death dealer coin spare him? Some might say it's because the dark, shiny penny only went after those guilty of the sin of greed, while others would say he was the lucky one who found the penny heads up. We'll never know.

August 9th: Die-hard sports gambler and garbageman Fred Carlson just can't get a break lately. He lost \$200 on a Yankees game, got a horrible night's sleep because the already-late game went into extra innings, and just had a trash bag break open. But on the bright side, there's a good-looking penny shining through the debris.



Submerged
Michelle Albert

Rain
by Alyssa Agerton

The air is chilly, but not chilly
enough to push father and
daughter off the weathered porch.

She wraps her hands in the bottom
of her oversized t-shirt,
plunking down beside him.

While they are silent,
the world is not,
their cast iron glider creaks,

water drops plummeting,
the ground awaiting
to suck, absorb, replenish,

puddles forming where
Earth is slow to drink.
Thunder roars over hillsides

to join the rain, now
dive-bombing Earth,
landing hard with thuds and plops.

Brothers and sisters
gathering in birdbaths,
drain pipes, gutters.

Micro rivers forming,
lining the road in front of
their old brick house,

now surrounded by clouds
of creaks, hovering in vast
silence, observing the two

souls who are
observing
the rain.

November 2005: Age 14

by Alyssa Agerton

Feel the strength: pressure moves
from shoulder to elbow, to hand,
to knife, pressing in and sliding out.
But the blade catches skin, halting

the process; the knife, your life, your
work, all are dull. Get out the stone,
sharpen the edges. You're running
out of time, finish the job.

Wife and child, home soon, heels
clacking, laughter bouncing up the drive,
disappointment on their faces. Do you think
this carnage is what she wants to come home to?

Innards, guts, goop, and muck
on countertops, flung on refrigerator
doors, sticking to bright white tiles,
covering everything in slippery contamination.

Mop up, sponge up, wipe up this
mess. Pull yourself together,
feel the strength in your shoulder move
to the elbow, to the hand, to the knife.

Take the lifeless, the naked, and dominate
it, make it yours. Stuff it with your hopes,
dreams, desires. But don't you dare forget
the breadcrumbs and spices.

July, 1998: Age Seven

by Alyssa Agerton

Children anticipate warm Pennsylvania rains. Meandering over misty hillsides, against backdrops of azure-amber sky, a product of the rising sun. Rain

cloud creeping, as if connected to the dawn, wet drops fall, dripping down necks, navigating their way over spines, back and forth like the laziest of rivers,

pools of water gathering to play on scalps and shoulders, soaking into sweaters and purses, compelling early risers to scramble for shelter.

Nearby, in a small town where the county fair rolls in but once a year, the rain is signaling for its brothers: thunder, lightning.

Stampeding over hills, declaring their arrival with fanfare music like that of a dozen cookie sheets escaping the hands of a clumsy

grandmother to clamor to the floor. Mothers teleport onto porches, hands and hips connected, to call in their flocks. No puddle jumping with electric currents running in the air.

Everyone: gather bright yellow rain slickers, yank on hand-me-down rubber boots. Distribute charcoal striped and lavender dotted umbrellas. The rain has settled contently in between the hills.

Bus Stop!

by Jarrett Thompson

Eyes wide open, breaking free from the sockets;
deep in thought, a process I am not used to.

5 AM on the corner of right and wrong,

I see all the charred faces, white lights.

The bitter cold of the morning rattles my bones.

Loud music in my ears, smooth jazz,

horns, ragtime chords, trumpets.

Hollowed spirits. Louisiana men

playing card tricks in the streets.

I am uneasy, cold from thinking;

the tenderness of the bass

drum and guitar prepare me for release,

less tense, though I am anxious to

get to my destination.



The Gate
Joanna Harlow

Wild horses trollop at my feet.

They were ponies on an island. 1911

Rainbow-colored people, gifted minorities,

toe tapping, knee-slappers, pale faces.

This bus filled with singers

with song, happy blues players, and

gap bands, floetic songstresses on stereo,

singing sweetly on key.

Writers write to inspire readers; readers

read to contradict society.

The joy of today is merely yesterday's
midnight misery. To my left a man sits;

he is free from his holding cell.

To my right the bohemian rests his feet,

his baggage looks heavy. The bohemian

and his bag board this bus,

questions existing, travels resisting,

misters and misses, mistresses,

masters all the same.

How do we get out of here?

The road is a never-ending pathway:

white lines, chalky split lines.

Signs are everywhere pointing

towards somewhere, yet the bohemian

has no destination.

I'm a sinner; I know who I am,

each glimpse of me faster than the other,

my legs cramped between life and death.

The bus seat is nothing like home,

it's velvet upholstery,

catnip to the vagabond:

blues and whites, chiffon,

gaudy color schemes.

I close my eyes, in my mind I hear my mother:

hush child, you'll make it through the ride.

The voices all around me chatter,

one voice on top of the other;

the bohemian bus philosophy born.

The writer keeps himself alive along the ride with words.

The convict, free, contemplates his next move.

The woman in the front watches me watch the road;
she looks at me through a reflection in the window.
Together our eyes enter the city; inside of them is fear.
What will become of us once this bus ride is over?

Our thoughts are no longer singular;
linked somehow, even the fascist
atheist thanks the atoms for safe travels.
The city big, we of the world,
gulped like a sugary sweet. One at a time
we tap-danced off of the trailway,
unafraid of the eyes that greeted us. Hello..... Hello.

Box Car Vodka Blues

by Jarrett Thompson

There is a controversy seeding in me;
the lines drawn on the palms of my hand
tell a story and Ain't I a lover?
My head, filled with hopes and dreams,
I put more time into planning my
then than I did my *now*.

My heart is filled with your blood;
my pressure beats to your rhythm,
creating symphonies, aesthetically and vocally.
I reminisce on the day we met, how good it felt
to love you and me at the same time and Ain't I a Lover?

Man said that men ain't supposed to show emotion;
love is the act of doing without reciprocity.
Man said that words are the gap

between man and woman; because while
she holds onto every word,
man moves to brainstorm.

Here I am,

sitting in a dark room, alone, aging.

I'm 35, and I haven't found anything to live for.

I write to keep my thoughts intact,

I read to memorize the rhyme schemes.

It is not too often that I leave my cellar;

the rays of the sun burn my skin.

The cold of the night stops my heart,

I stay in one place so that I can write.

I write best in my mind when I am asked to recite a rhyme,
when I am required to state an ideology.

I ramble when I am alone in my cellar thinking about my
own shortcomings as a man.

Here is when I feel most alive because I know

that while there are people of the world marching in one accord,

I am of the world beating my own drum and writing my own lyrics.
I wonder what is wrong with love that it is not befitting enough
to please any prospect. I ponder if love became so available
that no one person desires the very thing that is at their fingertips? Love.
Why is it so easy for a child to look at an old box of matches and
imagine a race car?
Why is it that I can see myself in this cellar as bones rotting,
I imagine myself as a part of the ground.
I can hear the leaky faucets and squeaky pipes
I see the playful mice.
I can see the cob-webs forming on the wall
as the basement spider weaves his way up and down
the center of the web where the stout of the web began.
I look onto a blank piece of paper and begin to write;
this will be a letter to my depressor.

"Dear lover, you said
that no matter when the
season changed, I could
look to my left, then to
my right and it would
be your scent blowing in
the wind. I did not suc-
cumb to this life inside
of a cellar without first
experiencing the world.
My love, I was assured
that it would be your
image in the sky guiding
me towards the North
Star where you'd shine
in case I get lost in you.
I followed you! I let you
lead me here writing
angrily because ac-
cording to your words
my love wasn't obvious
enough. It wasn't femi-
nine enough or it was
too masculine. My love
wasn't skinny enough,
all the while slim enough
to please you. It gets cold
down here in this old
cellar and all I can do
is recount how bad you
were but so God damn
good all at once."

I remember the first day we met;
you made me feel like I was a marvel but I wondered
if that was a good thing. Built like a Cadillac
with a smile as big as the red sea. I'll never forget
the way you would clasp your tiny hand inside of mine as
if my hands were that much bigger than yours.

Afraid to let myself love you back,
I hid from you and now I write to keep you alive in my mind.
This cellar is where I house all of my insecurities,
my fears, my love of love, and my passion for you.
I will never leave this unless I am leaving it for you.

again, I have a kind
a year in days taking
songs, and I can play
very nice, that what
every body say that her
playing is nice but if papa
don't get work soon I
will have to stay, my man
wants us to live with her

Writer Biographies

Alyssa Turner Agerton graduated from Lock Haven University in 2013 with a degree in English Literature. She recently moved to South Carolina with her husband and two cats. Her new favorite place is the local public library, and she is currently spending her time rereading "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" for the fourth time.

Keith Meredith is a senior. He studies English with a concentration in literature. He wants to go down as one of the best writers of his generation, and strives to be a better writer every day. He won't stop until he feels that he is one of the best writers of the 21st century.

John Sosnowski is an English Writing graduate of Lock Haven University. Currently experiencing life in an odd post-graduation limbo, he has resolved that he'd like to be a librarian when he grows up. Despite his chosen academic and professional fields, he believes he just might love music even more than literature.

Akiya Shirk is a senior studying English writing and editing. She loves reading, but when she has free time, her favorite hobby is to ride her pet dragon, Oppa, through the midnight sky in search of star dust mites that she uses for making delicious truffles. She also enjoys letting her imagination entertain her for hours. Oh, and her name is pronounced "ah-k"eye"-yah," but she never gets mad when someone pronounces it wrong. Cheers!

Alan Ninan studied health science at LHU as a freshman, which inspired his work.

Carly Heider is a junior double-majoring in Secondary English Education and Special Education. She is originally from the Pittsburgh area. She works part-time at Ruby Tuesday and volunteers twice a week at the Salvation Army's after-school program. Her friends and family would describe her as a quirky, kind, hard-working person. She loves to read and write, and keeps a lot of her poetry to herself because it is all so personal. She is also really into those indie movies that nobody ever hears about (like the kind that win Oscars and you have no idea where they came from because they were never in theaters).

Michael Eubanks is a non-traditional student studying English, with a writing concentration.

Karis Ritzman is an English major with a minor in environmental studies. Writing has been a love of hers since she was a child, and she enjoys creating stories on dark, uncomfortable topics.

Jarrett Thompson graduated from LHU with a BS in Interdisciplinary Studies and a minor in English.

Artist Biographies

Michelle Albert is a senior from Coal Township, PA, majoring in Graphic and On-Line Design. She enjoys creating both print and web design along with digital photography. Her designs are inspired by past and present art movements and styles, along with racing, fashion, and music.

Bethany Hemma is a senior major in two-dimensional art, specializing in digital photography and printmaking. She enjoys nature photography and capturing the essence of what is untouched and not manipulated by man. She dabbles in portrait photography on the side. Her aspirations include her continuation in photography and traveling overseas.

Joanna Harlow is a BFA student and English major, as well as the contributing art editor for *The Crucible*. A former film student, she is always looking for ways to manipulate her medium to create an expressive atmosphere and a space for the mind to wander or a story to begin.

Bridget Laudenslager is a senior majoring in graphic design at LHU. She is inspired by family and the world around her.

Emily Appolonia is a junior and a graphic arts major. She enjoys working with Illustrator, pastels, and graphite.

Wesley Charles was born in Brooklyn and raised in Philadelphia. He is of Haitian descent. Art started out as being the cool thing in school when he was younger, since everyone was doing it. As time went on, Wesley began to love creating his own art and pushing himself to become better.

Richard McKnight is a senior from Scranton, PA, majoring in Graphic and Online Design. He enjoys photographing and manipulating incense smoke and constructing designs with his electronic drawing tablet. Outside of class, his artwork explores the temporary states of life and the macabre.