

NORTHERN  
*eclecta*

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

Volume 1 • 2007

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## *to the reader*

**F**ounded in January 2007 by the Literary Publication staff, Northern Eclecta aims to represent the creative talents of North Dakota State University undergraduates. This journal was created through the efforts of a class that served simultaneously as the document's staff.

Northern Eclecta features fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and photography. One of our goals was to represent a diversity of talents and interests. We wanted to include a variety of works within those genres themselves. Before each section, the content editors will offer their insights into their selections. In Volume I, we are also pleased to have transcended languages by publishing three Spanish poems.

Another goal was to create a unique title and distinctive design. After much deliberation we decided on Northern Eclecta—a name meant to embody both our geographic region and the eclectic mix of artistic work we wish to represent. Ironically, we soon after discovered a species of moth named *Bucculatrix eclecta*. We felt it would add an interesting element to our design, and its silhouette adorns the cover and inside headers of the journal.

Creating this journal was an educational process. Carbon World, the previous journal published by the English Club, had never been produced by more than a small group of individuals. The presence of an entire staff was an exciting yet challenging adjustment. Most importantly, this setup allowed us to produce in a semester what would have previously taken a year or more.

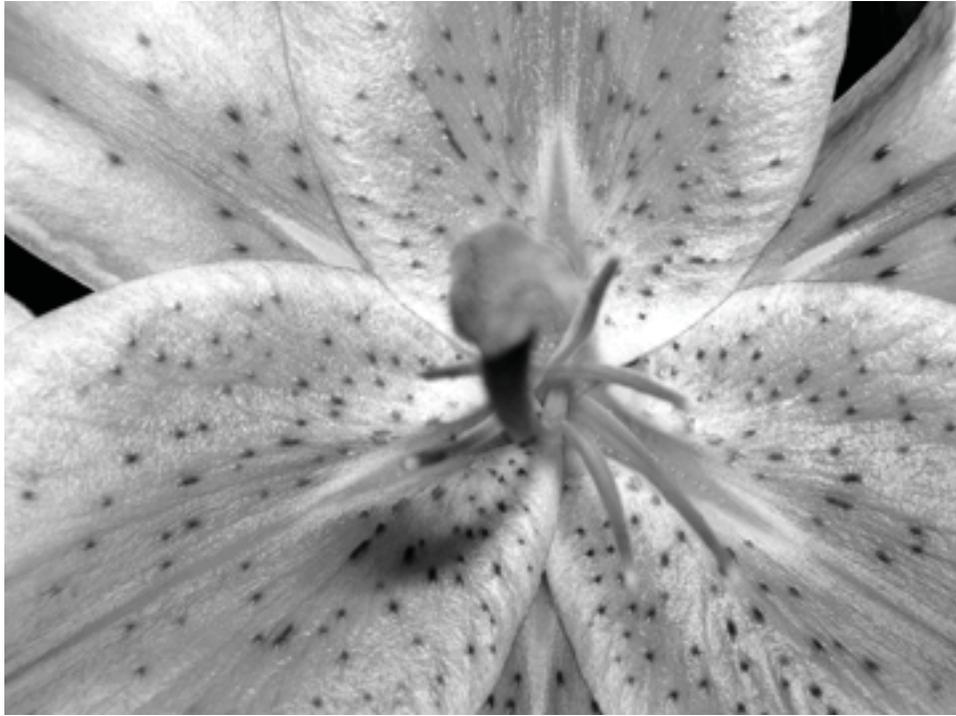
Without the array of student submissions this year's production of Northern Eclecta would not have been possible. The volume of submissions received exceeds that of recently published NDSU literary journals. Accordingly, we would not only like to congratulate those whose work was published but we would like to acknowledge the hard work of every student who entered works for consideration.

Northern Eclecta continues the legacy of promoting creativity at NDSU and advocating the arts in our student community. As you read through Volume I of Northern Eclecta, we hope you will appreciate and enjoy this manifestation of artistic imagination.

—RACHEL ERSTAD

—ROBERT HOSHAW

EDITORS IN CHIEF



## GAZER OF STARS

JESSICA NYMARK

*fiction*

In selecting which works of fiction would appear in this journal, our fiction department was guided by Gertrude Stein's search for "something being coming out of them." We wanted pieces that were not only amusing to read and well written, but also had striking workings beneath the surface.

In "Drugs and Empty Blizzard Cups," we found a well-written story that offers a window into the everyday lives of a variety of fully fleshed characters. In the tradition of Hemingway, it shows the tip of an iceberg and leaves the rest of the story to be told in the imaginations of the readers.

"To Yell Without a Point," though economic in terms of length, offers something different from the traditional (we know, we are over generalizing here). The characters jump off the page and make even the most cheerless reader smile.

"Natae" at the onset seems like a well-written, sappy story of undergraduate romance. Al Contrario, it does not take long to see there is something far more sinister or creepy going on in this short story. With most undergraduates experiencing some such cloy encounter with the opposite sex (Facebook?), we saw this story as easily relatable in its theme, and playfully mirroring what for some is a distressing reality.

—LUKE ARMSTRONG  
FICTION EDITOR

# Natae

DENNIS OWEN

Seventeen.  
Eighteen.  
Nineteen.  
Twenty.  
These are really small.  
Twenty-one.  
Twenty-two.  
Twenty-three.

\* \* \* \*

It was a brisk fall day. The sky was gray, and all the colored leaves had fallen off the trees. There was a slight breeze, but it was behind us.

I was walking down the sidewalk with Natae, my girl. We were walking to class. We had just left her dorm, where we were studying before class.

I reached behind her and grabbed the hood on her blue sweatshirt. I pulled it up over her head. She smiled.

"What if I don't want my hood up?"

"Tough. Not much you can do about it now, can you?"

I grabbed both of her little wrists and gripped them in my hand.

"Fine. I guess there's nothing I can do."

I let go of her wrists and wrapped my arm around her shoulders.

"I don't know about you."

"I don't know about you either."

"Hmm!"

I grabbed her hood and pulled it down, then petted her head once.

"Now what are you doing?"

"Just trying to send you mixed messages," I joked.

We arrived at our stop, outside her building. We stood at the bottom of the front stairs.

"Thanks for walking me to class."

"You have a good day."

We hugged and she said she would call me later. I left and let her go to class.

\* \* \* \*

Seventy-two.

Seventy-three.

Seventy-four.

I dropped one. I looked back and forth, running my hand up and down the carpet. I found it.

Seventy-five.

That was number seventy-five.

It was an important one.

\* \* \* \*

It was a nice day outside, one of those weird days in the late fall that is really warm. The sun was shining and everybody was happy.

Natae and I were at a fast-food restaurant for lunch.

We couldn't stay very long because she had to go to work. I skipped class to be here but I didn't care.

We sat across from each other at the little two-person table in the corner.

"Do you want to pray really quick?"

"Yes, I can do that," I said.

God, thank You for her. I promise not to hurt her.

(That was my private prayer.)

She smiled at me when I was finished. She started unwrapping her cheap hamburger. I leaned forward and grabbed a stray hair that was stuck to her sweater.

"You're shedding again."

"Oh thanks. You're just jealous, I think."

"I think you're right."

Natae tossed her hair back, and smiled at me again.

"You're such a tease."

"How so?"

"Teasing me with your hair."

"Like I said, you're jealous." She shrugged her shoulders.

I smiled at her and we started eating our lunch. The place was cold and Natae didn't want to be there long. The place was starting to crowd with people. Construction workers in dirty overalls came in groups, high school kids came with their friends, making a joke out of everything, and businessmen came in their suits, contradicting the quality of the food they were receiving.

So many people were coming that it was hard to hear what Natae was saying. She shifted in her seat and looked behind her. She turned back to look at me, putting her hair behind her ears.

"Well, I better leave or I'm going to be late."

"Yeah, I suppose. I better not keep you."

"Thanks for having lunch with me. I'd like to stay longer but you know how it is."

"If you want to stay longer why don't you just skip work?" I joked.

"Just not show up, huh? Is that what you would do?"

"Probably."

"Well, I guess I'll just have to live vicariously through you then, because I'm still going to work."

We stood up, dumped our food, and left.

\* \* \* \*

One-hundred fifty-seven.

One-hundred fifty-eight.  
One-hundred fifty-nine.  
One-hundred sixty.  
That's how much I have now, one-hundred sixty.  
I close the little box and put it under my pillow.

\* \* \* \*

I was in Natae's room, sitting with her on the bed. We just finished watching a movie together. We were too lazy to get out of bed, though, so we just sat there, me holding her in my arms. The television screen was static, the credits finished long ago.

I petted her hair and she talked to me. Sometimes I grabbed her hair and held it in one hand, and sometimes I ran my fingers through it.

It was getting late.

"What are you doing tomorrow?" I asked her.

"Class, work. I think I might get my haircut in the morning."

"What? How are you going to cut it?"

"I don't know yet. Maybe I'll cut six inches off, get it above my shoulders."

"Don't do that. Your hair's lovely." As I said this I ran my fingers through her hair again. She touched my hand lightly but that's all.

"I just want to do something different. It won't be that big of a change."

"I don't know. I think you should keep your hair the way it is."

Natae sighed and then said, "I don't know. I might not cut it. We'll see."

"Okay."

We said nothing for awhile. I stopped touching her hair and reached for her hand. I grabbed it and squeezed. She didn't squeeze back.

"I should probably let you go," she said finally. "I know you have work to do."

"Not too much. I can stay here for a little while longer."

We continued sitting on the bed, a blanket wrapped around our bodies. We talked for a little while longer, then she yawned a couple times in a row.

"Oh man, I think I should let you go now. I'm getting really tired."

"Alright, I suppose."

We stood up and stretched. We put our shoes on and she walked me to the door of her dorm.

"I guess I'll see you later," she said, standing a few feet from me.

"Yes. I'll see you tomorrow?"

She yawned again and shrugged her shoulders. "We'll see. Have a good night."

She stepped forward and I hugged her, my arms wrapped around her shoulders, touching her hair one last time.

"Good night, Natae!"

\* \* \* \*

Two-hundred twenty-five.

Two-hundred twenty-six.

Two-hundred twenty-seven.

I have a substantial amount now, but I still need more.

Two-hundred twenty-eight.

Two-hundred twenty-nine.

\* \* \* \*

I sat in my room, late at night. All my lights were off except my blue and red Christmas lights. I was at my desk, piddling around on my computer. Earlier in the evening, my friend Brian came by.

"Hey, what are you doing tonight?" he asked.

"I have a lot of homework I need to do. I have work to do on a group project and a test to study for."

"Well, we're going to go out tonight. You're welcome to come if you have time."

"Yeah, I'll see."

"So...you probably won't, will you?"

"No."

"Alright. See you later!"

I didn't really have any homework to do. I really had no reason for not hanging out with my friends.

But I did have an excuse. Natae left on Monday for a conference. Tonight was Thursday. She was supposed to be back tonight. I haven't talked to her the whole time she was gone. She said she would be very busy with activities and such all day and night. She promised, though, that she would call me when she came home. I didn't want to hang out with my friends because I was waiting for her call.

But seven o'clock passed. Then eight o'clock. Then nine. She should be back by now. I wanted to talk to her badly, I missed her so much, but I didn't want to make it look like I was overly eager—obsessive, even—to talk to her. Best to let her call me on her own time.

Ten o'clock passed. She still didn't call. I was starting to think that she didn't want to talk to me. But I knew she did. Something must have come up. I will wait for her a little longer.

Eleven o'clock is gone. Natae still hasn't called me yet. She said she would! Even if she only called me for thirty seconds to let me know she was back in town I would be happy. Why is she so inconsiderate? Maybe I should call her.

I dialed her number. Her phone rang once.

Twice.

Three times.

Four times.

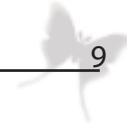
Five.

Six.

"Hi, this is Natae. I'm terribly sorry but I'm not available right now. Please leave me a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Have a good day!"

Beep!

I hung up and slouched in my chair, sighing. Maybe she'll call me tomorrow.



\* \* \* \*

Five-hundred and sixty-three.  
Five-hundred and sixty-four.  
Five-hundred and sixty—  
Oops. I think I grabbed two by mistake. Let me check.  
Wait, now I have three. Where was I?  
One.  
Two.  
Three.

\* \* \* \*

Ring ring! Ring ring!  
My alarm clock was going off. I sat up in my bed, looking around in the dark. I reached for my alarm clock and pressed the snooze button.  
Ring ring! Ring ring!  
It was the phone. I reached for the phone on the table at the end of my bed. In the process of lifting the receiver off the hook I pulled the rest of the phone off the table. I put the receiver up to my ear.  
"Hello...?"  
"Hey sweetie. Are you sleeping right now?"  
"Huh? No, I'm still up."  
"Good. Can you walk back to my room with me? I don't want to walk through the parking lot alone."  
"What time is it?"  
"Quarter to one."  
"Why are you up so late?"  
"I couldn't sleep, so I drove around for awhile."  
"What was keeping you awake?"  
"I don't know. I'll tell you in a bit."  
"Okay. Where are you right now?"  
"I'm outside your door."  
"Okay. I'll be right down."  
"Alright. See you in a bit."

I got out of bed as quickly as I could. I was always excited to see Natae, no matter what the occasion. She sometimes called me at night to walk her through the parking lot if she was by herself. She worried about some man jumping her and assaulting her. Which is fine, I didn't mind walking with her. It made me feel loved and important to be her protector.

I put on the previous day's pants and a sweater and bounded out of my room. I walked swiftly down the hall, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes. I walked down the flights of stairs and exited the apartment building. Natae's vehicle was parked right in front of the door. I got in and smiled at her.

"Hi Natae."

"Hey, thanks for coming."

"No problem."

She drove away to the parking lot, which was only a block away from my apartment. Her room was on the opposite side of the lot. She parked her car and we got out. She locked the car and then reached for my hand. I grabbed it tightly.

"Your hands are cold," she said.

"I know. It's all part of my plan."

"What plan?"

"To have you warm my hands up, of course."

"Of course."

We walked slowly to her dorm. The night was cold and I realized I should've worn something more than a sweater.

"So why couldn't you sleep?" I asked her finally.

"I'm not sure. I guess I've just been thinking about a lot of stuff, recently."

"School?"

"That, and what I want to do for a living, and our relationship."

"Really? What are you thinking?"

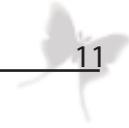
"I really don't know. I just want to make sure I'm doing everything right."

"You are, don't worry."

I leaned over and kissed her cheek.

We arrived at her door and stopped.

"Don't worry about anything right now. Things will turn



out okay.”

“I know...”

Natae frequently worried about things. It didn’t concern me too much. She’d get over it by tomorrow.

“Thanks for walking with me,” she said with a smile and a slight shrug of her shoulders.

“My pleasure.”

She stepped forward and I hugged her. I wanted to hold onto her as long as I could. I held her tightly and smelled her hair.

“You know what my favorite smell is?” I asked her.

“What?”

“Girl.”

“Girl?”

“Yeah. Your hair always smells so nice.”

“Well, good thing I’m a girl, right?”

After a few seconds, she made to pull away but I held her close for a couple more seconds, petting her hair.

“Well good night.”

“Good night, Natae.”

I walked back to my apartment, went into my room, and went back to bed.

I was awake for at least a couple hours, thinking about Natae and our brief encounter tonight. I savored every moment, replaying all the words she said in my mind, committing them to memory. I remembered the way she looked when I first got in her car, when she got out, when we walked, and when we parted. I remembered her smell, and her touch.

This girl captivates my every thought.

\* \* \* \*

Nine-hundred and thirty.

Nine-hundred and thirty-one.

Nine-hundred and thirty-two.

Now I have enough to get started. I need many more, though. I have to keep collecting.

Nine-hundred and thirty-three.

\* \* \* \*

I took out my little wooden box. I opened it up and looked at my collection. They were all so beautiful, and soft. I was ready to begin the assembly.

I started with three, wrapping them around each other. I tried very hard to get them to stay together but it was almost futile. My fingers were very big compared to them. They were hard to see, as well. I had to have all the lights on in my room. Even then, they were very fine and my vision blurred them as it tried to focus on them. But eventually I got the three together.

Then I started adding another. Then another. Then another.

The longer I worked on it, the faster I became. After an hour I had maybe fifty put together. Fifty? That doesn't seem like very much. It's going to take me all week to finish it at this rate. But no matter. It will be worth it.

\* \* \* \*

I was finished with my creation. I went faster than I anticipated, finishing it in two days. It wasn't nearly as big as I hoped it would be. It would probably take me several years to finish it at this rate. But for now, it was good.

I put it on, wearing it like it was a part of me. I looked at myself in my mirror and smiled. I looked pretty good. I was happy with the work so far. I grabbed my camera and took several pictures of myself in various poses, with several different outfits on. I was excited by how well it turned out. I have waited for this day for months.

I saved all the pictures on my computer. I took my creation off and put it back in the box on my desk. I closed the lid. It was very late at night again. I was very tired because I had been up all night long the previous night. I turned off the lights and went to bed.

\* \* \* \*

There was a knock on my door. I was in my room studying.

"Come in!"

The door handle turned but didn't go anywhere; the door was locked. I stood up, walked to the door, and opened it up. To my delight, Natae stood in the doorway.

"Hey sweetie!"

"Oh hi, Natae! What a surprise to see you here!"

"I know!"

I stepped aside and let her come in. "Why are you here?"

"To surprise you, of course."

"Of course."

"I brought you some muffins."

"Yes!"

Natae frequently came by my room with baked goods or some other small gift of appreciation. We sat down and ate our muffins. She told me about her day and about yesterday and I told her about mine. We sat on the couch, my arm around her waist, her hands holding my free hand. We chatted this way for maybe an hour, saying little.

After awhile, Natae stood up and walked to my fridge to get something to drink. She grabbed a soda and then sat down in my leather desk chair. She spun around a few times, stopped, looked at me, crossed her legs, and drank her pop.

I smiled at her and we continued talking. Then I looked past her and my heart started beating. Sitting on the desktop was my little wooden box. How stupid I was to leave it out! I should've put it away. I guess I was up too late last night and I forgot it was out this morning. I hope she doesn't turn around and see it; I certainly hope that if she sees it she doesn't inquire about it.

We talked for maybe twenty minutes and Natae didn't notice the box. However, when she finished her soda, she did. She crumpled the can in her hand, turned around to face my desk, and threw the aluminum can into the trash under my desk. Then she looked up and saw my box.

"What's this?"

Without waiting for my reply, she grabbed the box and opened it. We were always comfortable enough around each other to do such things. I will probably marry her someday.

She opened the box and gasped, then made a face. "What is this?"

She reached in and grabbed the long braided lock of hair. She held it by one end with her index finger and thumb, as if it was something vile. She looked at it for a few seconds, then stared at me.

"What is this?" she asked again.

"Umm, it's hair."

"Obviously."

I was very uncomfortable. I sat up on the couch stiffly and didn't look her in the eye.

"Why do you have this?"

"Umm, I don't know."

"Where did you get it from?"

I didn't answer. I didn't want to answer. I got it from her. It was made from her own hair, hair that I have slowly collected off of her shoulders over the past several months.

She looked at the lock of hair again, then at me, then the hair. She put it back in the box and dropped the box on the desk. As she did so, she bumped the mouse of my computer. The computer was sleeping at the time so the screen was black. The mouse moved and the screen came back on. My stomach turned. On the desktop was a picture of my face with the braid tied into my hair. I had set the picture as my background last night, out of curiosity. I forgot to change it back. How stupid I was!

"What are you doing in this picture?" Her voice was flat.

"Umm, wearing your braid..."

"My braid...What do you mean?" Her voice got quiet and her face looked kind of sad. She stared at me directly, and this time I couldn't look away from her.

"It's your hair. I have been collecting it from you for months."

She covered her mouth with her hand and was horrified. She almost looked like she wanted to cry.

"Why would you do such a thing? You think that's attractive?"

"Umm, no, I guess not..."

I was originally planning on collecting enough hair to one day make a wig and wear it, but I didn't tell her about that. That was beyond creepy. More like disturbing.

"I need to leave."

"Natae, let me explain. Don't leave."

She stood up and walked towards the door. She slipped on her shoes and bent over to grab her purse, her hair falling over her face.

"Aren't you going to let me say anything?"

She turned around and looked at me. She looked at me only for a second, with intense hurt, then looked away and grabbed for the door.

"I need to be away from you for awhile."

She opened the door and walked swiftly out, not bothering to close it behind her. I stepped out of my room after her, but she was already running down the hall.

"Natae!"

She got to the end of the hall and went down the stairs. I walked back into my apartment and closed the door, locking it.

I walked over to my desk and picked up the box. I walked over to my couch and sunk down into it, slouching. I opened the box and looked at the braid of hair. I was afraid to touch it. After a time, I closed the box and walked outside.

## To Yell Without a Point

ALEXANDER HORAB

Children have a way of turning even the most simple of things complex beyond all belief.

"You were out!"

"No WAY!"

"She was at least three feet away!"

"She was on base for, like, five seconds!"

"I was safe."

She was ignored. Phoebe stated again, "I was safe, you didn't tag me." If it weren't for a fluke silence in the feud, she would have never been heard.

"What did you say?"

Her faced scrunched, but she calmly stated, "I was safe by a mile." This may not seem to warrant the disbelief that occurred, but Phoebe Dodders was not the type of girl who "calmly stated." She had a howl that could make wolves blush. More importantly, the final play in a recess baseball game certainly merited more than a simple comment. In spite of it all, she remained hushed.

Allen, a particularly brave boy with pudgy cheeks, inched towards her and without a second of warning, pinched her on her upper arm.

"Ow."

She was visually upset, but her voice seemed like it was dubbed after the fact. Her cry of pain was said as though someone asked her the weather, or how old she was. She was becoming quite nervous, realizing she couldn't scream. Allen

deserved a clobbering for his bravery, but there were much more urgent matters at hand; she couldn't scream.

There were at least fifteen minutes left of recess, and she didn't want to waste another second of it whispering. Phoebe turned around, and sprinted for the school as quickly as she could. Making the sprint to the school in under thirty seconds, she almost laughed that anyone would have considered her out. This only jogged her memory on the real problem at hand, and she darted even quicker.

Once inside, she realized that she couldn't trust a teacher with this sort of problem. This in mind, she ventured to the school nurse. His name was Dr. Bradley. Of course this wasn't his real last name, but he insisted that his surname was something to never be uttered in his presence.

The doctor was a forty-year-old man of an extraordinarily tall build who was cursed with arms and legs that stretched much farther than any reasonable person could ever need. It had been rumored that his limbs were that length from birth, and the rest of his body grew into them.

She opened his office door, and was immediately acknowledged by the good doctor. His body bowed very close to her, and with wide eyes he queried, "What seems to be the problem?" Had Phoebe not known who he was, this would have been a most frightening sight; however with his personality it was charming to say the least. She leaned her head up, almost a mirror of what he was doing, and stated with the utmost serenity, "I cannot yell."

"Pardon me?" asked a curious and confused Dr. Bradley.

"I was running around, and I was safe on base, but someone said I wasn't and we started fighting but I can't yell. I need to get my voice back to how it was."

Dr. Bradley was at least as brave as an elementary school student, and emulating Allen only minutes earlier he pinched her on her other arm.

"Ow."

Her facial expression was a peculiar mix of scared and furious. This was only complemented by her ability (or curse) to not show excitement or anger.

"This is a confusing thing. I'll have to check a few things."

With this he began an increasingly bizarre set of experiments, including measuring her arm, weighing her hair, giving her hands an eye exam, and every single combination of exams one can imagine. At last he shouted out, "Of course!" He grabbed her by the cheeks, and opened her mouth as wide as it would go.

"It's just as I thought! You have run out of exclamation points!"

"What? What do you mean I've run out of exclamation points?"

"It's very simple. Those little lines with dots underneath. I'm sure you've used them before because there aren't any left."

"But, how can I run out of them? I wasn't aware I even used them."

"Well, of course you use them. How else do you think you punctuate your sentences? You apparently used too many today, and you've run out."

"So I can't ever yell again? Do I have to go through the rest of my life toneless?"

At this point she became very nervous and began to think back at how frivolously she must have used them. The thought of herself as the quiet girl in the corner gave her shivers.

Dr. Bradley, noticing her obvious anxiety quickly jumped in, "No no no. You can, but you will have to get some more. I'll just write a note to your mother and she can pick you up some more. She must not have put enough in last time. Your mom can put some more in you tonight."

"I don't remember my mom ever buying exclamation points."

"Well, they must come from somewhere. You think you can just get something from nothing? If there were no ways of punctuating sentences how do you think we could tell the difference in what you say?"

The honest truth was she never really thought about it. It was the sort of thought that made no sense and perfect sense at the exact same time. It really was greedy for a thought to take up both.

"What if I can't wait until tonight? What if I trip on the way home? Suppose my parents throw me a surprise party? What then?"

Dr. Bradley stood very still and moved his hand around his chin. Phoebe believed this must be some sort of way to get the brain working, because he always seemed to do it before an idea. With his mind working in order, he ran to the back of the room, and began rummaging through a plain wooden chest.

"No, it doesn't look like I have any more exclamation points. You see, children often run out in the spring, running about you know. I must have given the last ones away not more than a week ago. But, I do have some parentheses. Do you need to make some side comments? Or wait, I have plenty of commas. You know, I don't think children these days use enough commas."

"I don't want any of those, I want people to listen."

This again resulted in the ceremonious rubbing of the chin. Once thoroughly polished, he reached into his desk and grabbed some note cards and a marker. After a minute or so, he reached out his mile long arms and handed her five or so notecards. On each of them was a different word, ranging from "perturbed" to "astonished."

"You see, when you want to show how you feel you simply hold up one of these cards. That way everyone will know what you meant. You see? You see?"

"I do see, but I don't want to. I want everyone to hear me. How can they know what I mean if I am across the hall, or trying to get their attention?"

"Well...I suppose if you need to get attention. One second."

Dr. Bradley reached into his drawer and carefully removed a pair of scissors and a ruler. After removing some unnecessary corners on piece of loose-leaf paper, he had fashioned a very crude flag.

"When you need to get at a distance, you wave this flag around. Once they see this flag, they will certainly come closer to investigate. Then they will be close enough to use the cards. Simple, yes?"

At this point, she realized that she wasn't going to be getting what she wanted. Phoebe picked up the cards and placed them in her pockets, and firmly gripped what looked like a flag if one really squinted. She looked down, and wondered how she would make it through the day. She couldn't yell, but she could certainly complain.

"How could this have happened to me? What kind of day will I have without yelling? Why did this happen to me now? What could be worse than running out of exclamation points?"

There was nothing.

It's very hard to get an answer without a way to end your question.

## Drugs and Empty Blizzard Cups

ROBERT HOSHAU

One car. One lonely car was parked by the curb in front of the hardware store on Main Street, a gruesome rufous pickup proudly exhibiting a Confederate flag in the back window. There were more sparrows in the streets than people that afternoon—drab little brown birds picking at pieces of food wrappers and crumpled Dairy Queen cups which had collected by the rusted sewer drains. There was one who witnessed this tragedy nearly every Saturday, and he often stood, as he did now, behind the six-foot tall picture window of the archaic pharmacy building. A young man—eyes heavy from boredom—stared frostily out at the emptiness. Still in high school, his youth was disguised by the soberness of his appearance. He thought to himself how the town was like those discarded Dairy Queen Blizzard cups, forgotten and decaying. It was a place whose citizens, many over sixty-five, were among the forgotten. A once proud generation now was wasting away in low-income apartments and a nursing home. The old Mom-and-Pop businesses were unable to compete with the giant retailers of Brainerd. Like many of its citizens, Norway Brook itself was past its prime. Jobs were scarce at best. The town was dying.

“Oh, Bob, would you come back here please?”

The young man cringed at the meek and raspy voice fizzing from the back room. He walked around the penny candy counter and flashed a fleeting glare of contempt at the old-fashioned soda fountain, its stainless steel eminence an

attraction for locals and tourists alike, all of whom had ironically worked as a "soda jerk" once upon a time. The machine droned in defiance, as if knowing that as long as the current owner was in charge its fate was secure.

June sat hunched on a metal stool on which she had accumulated pieces of paper towel and piled them up under her for cushion. The shredded scraps were hanging precariously now as she looked up with fatigued eyes behind thick glasses. He couldn't help but feel pity for June. A genuinely sweet and compassionate woman, she was once a well-respected pharmacist in the community. June's downfall had been the recent strokes she had suffered. Now, her mind had been so affected by her condition she was unfit to practice anymore. Everyone saw it...except her sister, Ester. Unfortunately, Ester was the owner, head pharmacist, city councilwoman, soda fountain aficionado, and biggest bitch of the town.

"Oh Bob...oh I mean Rob." June laughed like a parrot with the hiccups. "Would you help me? I can't get this through!" She gestured emphatically.

He towered over her diminutive yet plump frame. The spine of her neck was now a hunch nearly even with the back of her head, and in order to gaze up at him, she had to rotate her head clockwise like an owl. Her hands were wrinkled, and the tips of her fingers purple. They looked like shriveled prunes, and when she typed on the keyboard, she could only hit...one...single...painful...letter...at...a...time.

"What's the problem, June?"

"Homer Bailey is coming soon." Her haggard eyes were wide with fear. "And I can't get this through!"

"You do it. Please." The woman bowed, pleading for a savior to arrive and put an end to the misery she obviously endured.

He hesitated for a moment. Once again he was asked to do what he wasn't being paid to. He was not a pharmacist; he was a clerk, soda jerk, janitor, sales manager, jack-of-all-trades and paid diddly-squat worker.

"This prescription needs to be called in..." he said at length. The jingle of the front doorbell announced an arrival.

"I'll be right back...It'll be okay. I'll get it when I come back."

Two individuals stood by the back counter, dreamily staring at the cursed soda fountain. Their appearances reeked of "Joe and Jane Tourist."

"Hi! We're just admiring your old-fashioned soda fountain! Wow, this is soooo neat." The woman seemed completely in awe. The fountain purred like a content kitten. "You don't see too many of these anymore. That's so cool, isn't it, honey?" The couple put their arms around one another, as if this was an intimate moment on their honeymoon.

"No, you sure don't." Rob feigned a smile.

Sunglasses hung from a chain around her neck, a white tank top with "Pequot Lakes Beanhole Days" printed in large green letters across her chest, and shorts slung just a little too low for someone her age. The man was hardly any less conspicuous. He wore a Hawaiian shirt, blue jeans with a wallet bloated with cash bulging from his back pocket, and sunburn on his arms and neck that had long ago began peeling and was now flaking like bad dandruff.

"We're looking for a pharmacist. Are you the pharmacist?"

The woman's voice was so sugary he thought he might vomit from the richness rolling off her tongue.

"No, I'm not. But I can go get her for you if you'd like to talk to her." He looked back at June, who was ducking around the corner like a hunched over troll, shaking her head vigorously.

"Uh...but I guess she has gone in back for a while. Is there anything I can help you with until then?"

"Our little baby is sick." Her mouth puckered like a dried pickle.

Rob did his best to grunt sympathetically.

"Our infant son came down with a sinus infection." The husband broke in for the first time. "We're on vacation from the cities. Our doctor is going to call a prescription here shortly..."

As if on cue, the woman's cell phone rang—one of those annoying rings that reverberates throughout the entire building.

"Hi, Dr. Closterman!" She seemed to be shouting at the top of her lungs. You're breaking up! Yes, yes, that's much better! Oh, you're so kind for calling in on Saturday....Yes. Uh huh. I'm at the pharmacy now!"

Yeah, these people think they're hot shit, Rob thought to himself.

"What's the name of this place?"

"Norway Brook Drug." Rob was still trying desperately to maintain that fake smile.

"Yeah, it's spelled the same."

"We're at Norway Brook Drug! Yes....We're in Norway Brook, Minnesota! God's country!"

Oh what the fuck....Seriously. Give me a fucking break, woman. For someone with a sick baby, they're sure happy as hell.

"He wants to talk to the pharmacist. He's going to write a prescription over the phone for our baby."

She looked at Rob with a sickening grin—one that betrayed her true feelings, which were that these rural people were incredibly adorable, but altogether dumbass inbred hillbillies. Rob had no choice but to haul June from the security of the back room. He could taste the astonishment dripping off their brows, the disbelief that this woman was indeed a pharmacist. The poor old woman stuttered, struggling mightily to overcome the effects of the stroke. For that, Rob had to admire her.

"Just talk into the phone, ma'am. Yes....You'll be able to hear him on the other end. He's gonna give you the prescription for our baby."

He stood there, wanting to feel as helpless as June. Instead, he did all he could and assisted her with taking the call. After a painful eternity the message was relayed. Confusion reigned, and his patience had run thin, and the couple promised to return shortly for their precious commodity to this "dear little store" with its "Hamilton Beach malt machine" and "penny candy." For a moment, the peaceful solitude returned. The once lonesome ticking of the clock was welcome, its outdated form hanging crooked on a wall of sea-foam green paint peel-

ing away in flakes. The condition of the building, however, was no comparison to the embarrassment Rob had just endured.

June was on the verge of crying. "You do it! I can't."

She was shaking from the phone call, and her already pale skin had entirely emptied of its color. Rob looked at the prescription scribbled in June's coarse writing and the insurance card in his hand. Gripping the paper tightly, he creased his brow and stepped into the pharmacy, furiously entering information into the computer. June's face showed of relief and regret. In her own mind she blamed herself for her failure. He smiled at her. June's confidence in her young employee was not enough to compensate for his inexperience, though, and no matter what he tried, he was unable to process the prescription through the insurance. It wasn't long before the bell on the door rang again.

"What do you mean it's not ready?" The woman's voice was dry ice sizzling on bare flesh. They had returned, and their sugar maple demeanor had quickly fizzled.

"I—the pharmacist can't get it to go through the insurance."

"How much is it?" The husband demanded. He looked as though he was about to jump the counter and strangle Rob with both of his hands.

"It's expensive....Over thirty dollars." His voice quavered.

"I'm sorry, but we don't...have the prescription." June had reemerged on her own from the back, disgrace strewn so strongly across her face Rob couldn't bear look at her. "My sister is coming up from Pequot."

"What's she talking about?" The woman demanded, addressing the young man.

Perspiration pooled under his arm pits. They no longer had the patience for this old washed-up excuse for a pharmacist. The façade was gone. Rob and June were officially dumbass inbred hicks.

"You mean that now you don't even have the medicine? Oh my God, I can't believe this! What kind of pharmacy is this?"

"Her sister owns the place. She owns another pharmacy in

Pequot Lakes. She'll be here shortly."

"Give me the prescription back," the woman seethed.

"We're going elsewhere."

"I understand." He said solemnly. "There's nothing I can do. I'm sorry."

"Sorry doesn't cut it!" She blew thin, wispy hair from her face. "This pharmacy is a disgrace. You're a disgrace!"

"I know. I know. I'm sorry."

He couldn't even bear to look at the husband, whose hands were clenched into tight wads of something worse than fists, something prepared to tear Rob to shreds if he did anything but show remorse.

Fucking tourists. Fucking shitty-ass job....

"We're taking this prescription elsewhere." The husband stated. His tone dared anyone to challenge that decision. Rob wasn't about to.

"I don't blame you...." Diminished to a boy about to receive a spanking, he slunk into the back room, retrieved the scribbled piece of paper—the words not even legible—and handed it to the woman, who snatched it with force from his fingers. The couple stormed out, and Rob shut his eyes, grateful once again for the silence.

Ester arrived fifteen minutes later, an ugly ogre of a woman. Ire was hot upon her lips, and she proceeded to verbally abuse the helpless June. The old bitch yelled, and then the old bitch ranted and threw paper and bottles across the back room. She spoke of her sister in ways no one should to a sibling. June left and went home, a wounded dog with her tail between her legs. Rob had returned to his post in front of the window, staring absently out at the rotting avenue. The rebel pickup was still there. The sun had sunk a little lower in the sky, and it was beginning to cast faint crimson shadows on the shopping block. Most of the sparrows had moved on, but otherwise Norway Brook was the same it was two hours ago—devoid of activity.

"She was gonna give away that prescription for free!" Ester came storming out. "Rob! Don't let her try that again!"

He ignored her.

"Oh! What does she think she's gonna do at home? She'll waste away and be dead within three months!" She poured some Coke in a glass and threw it down her gullet.

"People these days! They just cannot wait. I don't understand them!"

She would never understand, and within, Rob was seething. She was to blame for all of this. If not for her, June would be at home, relieved of her death sentence to live out her days in agony and disgrace. In that moment, Rob despised his boss more than ever. For the first time since Ester spoke, he turned to her, glaring.

"I've had a crappy day. I'm going home."

On his way to his car, head down and muscles twitching with seething rage, he walked over a freshly tossed Dairy Queen cup, the ice cream watery and sticky. Flies were already buzzing around its carcass. Balling up his fists, he stopped, turned, wound up his leg, and kicked the cup. Chocolate droplets were sent flying through the air. It splattered the brick wall that had baked in the July heat all afternoon like a runny fecal stain. Before he got in his car, he thrust his middle finger at the shit oozing down the side of the building. Even as he did so, he knew he would be back here tomorrow.



TREES  
MELODY NEER

*poetry*

**W**hen reviewing work to include in Northern Eclecta, we were searching for poetry that addressed unique subject matter or gave new insights into familiar subjects. We avoided poetry that included many abstractions or lofty ideals, opting instead for pieces with concrete imagery and poetic devices. In an attempt to create an eclectic blend, we have included some poems that employ rhyme schemes and/or meter as well as a range of free verse. We hope you enjoy our selection of work from these talented North Dakota State University poets.

—REBECCA MELLEM  
POETRY EDITOR

## Key and Deed

The call once came right to my door  
It did not knock but only stood;  
There was no breath and no reprieve  
Instead it left its key and deed.

—STEVE HARTMANN



## The Luxury of Literacy

what lazy muse entices man now?  
 jaded afternoons with Pen and Paper:  
 file cabinet of the mind—  
     emptied.  
     eradicated.  
     engulfed by the ego  
 of Word's promised immortality.

a thousand years of oral tradition—  
     erased by Paper's untimely death.  
 chests swell;  
 a bravado of presumed knowledge  
 stolen from Syllables that failed to yield it.

reading  
     and writing.  
     writing  
         and reading:  
 where does knowledge fit into the mix?  
 the thinness of Paper cuts the mind—  
     idleness dripping from each wound.  
 motivation fades with the Ink of last year,  
 memory's task entrusted  
     to Papyrus.  
     Pen.

fact and fiction, wrangled into  
     Paragraphs.  
 politicians rival gods,  
 as Pages turn into wages  
     used to buy one's stake in history.

has writing this evil nature so easily afforded it?  
or is Ink another scapegoat,  
    caught.  
    crushed.  
        crucified for mirroring man's mortality  
a single stroke too clearly?

—JESSICA MAMMENZA

## Shedding roots to bloom near windows

Our ears iron Georgia's night-grass/hiding-  
and-seeking with Asian vines in a cemetery/  
hunting diaries of the bodies God has delivered  
and we'll never free  
[be]

their headstones  
are twined in dying Kudzu/arms starving  
for moon-cake  
my brother asks  
why foreign soils Southern  
farms (they call them acreages now) if they  
must quilt in dirt/in dark/ to awake alive?

I press my finger to my lips to quiet him. Listen  
to the dead, I say. They know why weeds and  
we are chased.

He touches the words on graves. I wonder, he says,  
if stars are lit so one day, we can all find our own.

—M. JEANNE GETTE

## Children of the Sand

Lonely late summer marked the anniversary  
A lack of progress was the progress  
We learned to support them  
But to protest their cause

The parents warned us not to let  
The cat out of the house  
They punished me for throwing sand  
They will not let me play

Is it true our loved ones are the hated ones?  
Who speaks of war at a time of war?  
They fall—a scream—a cheer—the same  
Shall we mourn or shall they rejoice?

Oh Children of the Sand, help me understand

They all said apologize  
For throwing so much sand  
But I just kicked and ran I away  
Not sorry for their eyes

The sand box is no place for  
A cat—no place for one at all  
We must decide which to keep  
The one we love the most

Oh Children of the Sand, I do not understand

I am not crying because I'm  
Sad—this sand is in my eyes  
I am not sorry for what I did  
This sand is in my eyes.

I do not play so well  
You see—not so well at all  
We throw the sand it's everywhere  
The cat is out again

Oh Children of the Sand, will we ever understand?

I woke up and looked around  
But my cat my cat was gone  
I looked around most everywhere but  
My cat our cat was gone

My tears they are in vain  
You see my cat my cat is gone  
I told our mom just how I felt  
Curse this sand this rain

Oh Children of the Sand, you do not understand

My cat is gone the sand is mud  
The rain can only fall  
Towards the earth the mud—the hate  
Could it be my cat is gone?

I have no cat no sandbox now  
They took them all away  
I prayed to God but he is just  
He's just like the moms

Oh Children of the Sand, do I finally understand?

I understand that kittens will  
Always turn to cats  
And cats and sand they  
Just don't mix—never with the rain.

I understand its hopeless now to always get along

Oh Children of the Sand  
You do not understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
Please learn to understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
There's much to understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
Help us understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
Too much to understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
We want to understand  
Oh Children of the Sand  
We need to understand...  
...No Children of the Sand...  
...No...

—LUKE ARMSTRONG



## My Asylum

Oh, how quaint, they say,  
As if I am not in this room every night and day.  
I know this room, I know no sky,  
I know the dreams in my mind, while dreaming I die.

I know this jacket  
Is how you sadists restrain;  
A far cry from a pair of tails  
And a glass of champagne.

Crazy, is what they do not say,  
Though I can see it in their eyes.  
Oh, how quaint, how nice, they pray?  
In tongues, I reply.

A creak and a whisper,  
An empty question lingers.  
A humming fan, a brown leather chair,  
A set of tapping fingers.

Emptiness.

Why am I here—  
In the dark with this beast?  
The flame of potential  
Burning his feast,  
Flickering along this ancient wall.

Jot with your golden pen!  
What do I know?  
What do I see in my reflections?  
You mean what has remained,  
After these bolts and jolts,  
And torn connections?

Ask me doctor.  
Of knowledge and empathy.  
And wear that mask,  
That you save for me.  
So you can hide, so you can hide,  
When you murmur insanity.

A dim light  
And a drafty corridor.  
I close my eyes,  
And pray for no more.

And what do I want?  
What do I want, you ask?  
I woke up this morning,  
And closed my eyes to escape this day.  
In this room, in my room.  
In my mind there is asylum.

Like a fishbowl in the sea.

Oh, how quaint they say!  
I've been here for years, do not tell me about this place.  
Their façade is hollow and cheap,  
Like this care on your apathetic face.

Oh, how you must wish to grin.  
How quaint they say! I believe, they assume.  
Join them in brimstone,  
You cursed Doctor Boom.  
Hide in your generation.

Oh, how quaint! You say!

I once had dreams.  
I once had a purpose and a smile, I assume.  
I once had things to say, but, now it seems,  
All I have are these haunted empty rooms,  
Vacated by the voices I once heard.  
The voices we all heard.

Did I tell you, Doctor, I once wrote a masterpiece?  
I wrote a masterpiece, in the solemn still of night.  
But in the morning, I burnt it, sweating and screaming naked,  
Coaxing my loins to the intruding light.

Then I bathed in the smoke  
To prepare for a quest I would make,  
With the small squares of paper,  
And the bottle I would take.

Once I smiled insecurities,  
As the warming beauties sat listening  
To the music of upstairs  
As they teased me, glistening.

Once, no twice, with a woman in a dress,  
I took a chance, and took my time.  
Then I blamed the caress  
On my phantom mind.

Am I a liar?  
Is this truth, or another dream?  
Why do you ask? I am a liar.  
That is how you make it seem.

I don't believe you believe that I believe the gravity  
of this situation.  
No. I don't believe that you believe the gravity  
of your insinuation.

Have we lost it all?  
Those things that used to mean Birmingham,  
And Attica, and I Have a Dream, an Inn in Stonewall,  
And Civil War, and Boston Tea Parties,  
And even Woodstock?  
And even Woodstock?

No. All we've lost are words.  
And something has to change.  
But me? Really?  
And it's me they call deranged?

I want to wake, sick after drinking cheap poetry and  
cheaper merlot.  
Yes, with pain I want to grow sober  
And wake on the grave of my best friend,  
In the dead of lonesome October.

I want to unearth the graves  
Of the names and celebrities of my youth,  
And arrange their bodies in a circle.  
I want to feel young, again.  
I want to be young, again.  
I want to breathe the ghosts of Hollywood.

Yes, yes, go on, and why?

I want to wake screaming and sweating in my small cottage,  
Melting from the fluorescent shimmer of that wavering symbol  
On the church across the street where werewolves offer  
Foreign sacrifices to their domestic Gods, and then  
chivalrously shrug off the Screams  
To return to my epic silence.

I believe that I would like to lie panting  
Beneath a heavy matter,  
Debating original versions, and original flavors.  
When does original mean new, and when does it mean old?

Yes, yes, go on, and why?

Flipping a coin,  
I will take the punishment that is dealt for hopping around  
the issue at hand,  
As if it was a line between a fire and a furnace.  
Screaming, sane spectators declare, "pick a side, and take the heat."

I want to grow intoxicated in Mexican courtyards,  
Wearing a white robe and hat,  
Shooting at a Nazi piñata;  
To awake in the purgatory between morning and evening  
next to three señoritas,  
A loaded pistol, the unbearable joke,  
And the sound of American Cartoons dubbed in Spanish.

I dream that I have exchanged my scotch and bourbon for  
champagne cocktails,  
Cologne for perfume,  
And lust for lust,  
Tasting and kissing my Shame away,  
To wake up finding it on top of me with its friends:  
Sobriety, Persecution, and Scorn.

Doctor, I don't think you understand.  
You do not understand at all,  
Doctor, I truly mean,  
"This is not what I meant at all."

I meant something epic.  
Something that can be painted  
In old subway tunnels and  
Tin walls in ghettos.  
Something that answers:  
Is there a reason behind it all?  
Behind this cyclical fight  
Against what is wrong  
And against what is right?

Will my friend fighting  
In sand end up any  
Different than his father  
Fighting in jungles?  
I mean, will it be a movie?

Do you understand that I want  
To cover myself with crisp leaves  
In early September and wake under the first dry,  
Depressed, and gray snows?  
Just to see a change?

You do not understand,  
That if I had the chance to go through it all,  
That I would not change, but  
In the end I would again wish I had.

Please, go on, tell me more.

Leave your incessant sympathy,  
And empathy,  
And remarks at the door.

Time is up.

I may not be here tomorrow, as I have said  
These last many years.  
Shed your tears.  
Forget your fears,  
And sob beneath your desk  
As if it all was so clear.

Send to me to my room  
And put me in my place.  
But I've got one last thing to say to you,  
So let me leave my trace.



In the end, my pointless words  
That once seemed so fair and true  
Will seem so cheap and foul,  
And I will realize  
That despite my dreams,  
I will never Howl.

—DAVIN WAIT

## Their Eyes Were in the Night

In a land of ash and sand  
Where buzzards sing above the dunes  
Night unveils its doleful hand  
To wax anew that wrathful moon

A sea of stars like spider eyes  
Lay high on peaks of mountains' teeth  
To watch the Demon as she lies  
Sleepless while she broods beneath

And as she rests in wicked dwell  
The grasslands sigh such tranquil balm  
For in her eyes subsides the hell  
As her body eases in the calm

Tonight the lull will lay like stone  
As the wind withers in the deep  
And from their holes the weakened roam  
For the Lioness drifts into eternal sleep

—KIMBERLY BALEGA



## Mystery and Wonder

The earth and sea with diff'ring chords resound,  
A tune no man nor medium could sigh.  
The stars sing praise of nature's worth unbound;  
Divine accord of earth, water and sky.  
While passing alone 'long a dusty lane,  
I do not feel, beneath my feet, the sighs  
And groans of the earth under the world's strain,  
Or see the stars revolve before my eyes.  
I stretch myself out on a grassy spot  
'Neath a spreading elm, and think on life's worth.  
I do not feel the tilting planet's plot,  
Nor hear the rumbling unrest of the earth.  
Tonight, my heart beats to a greater strain,  
One with earth, I join creation's refrain.

—JAIME JENSEN

## Where Gods Walk

Drenching the ground,  
In front and behind.  
An upside down ground,  
Where gods walk,  
And water is white.  
I look into the ground,  
The billowing duck,  
Or a puckering face—  
Eating a lemon?  
No—Waiting for me.  
... maybe my baby.  
I love the cloud,  
because it is  
whatever  
I want it  
to be.

—JEREMY KES



## Oscar

I sit here drinking a coke  
and we talk about Iraq  
the rising cost of education  
new curtains then Janis Joplin  
I jump midstream  
    to licking frosting off of a spoon  
        sitting on my aunt's lap  
            Then I leap upon Oscar, our Shetland pony  
                I ride double with my brother  
                    always in the back,  
                        he doesn't trust me  
                            to hold the mane  
  
"hey, we gotta see that movie."  
I nod, then lift the coke to my lips

—RACHEL ERSTAD

## Heartide

My heart swelled, coursing current on a beat.  
But between two beats, I hesitated.

Took a breath,  
tapped the ash from cigarette,  
and inhaled slowly through my nose.

In a moment,  
between heartbeats,  
my lungs filled with air, my mind started to drift away...  
Between deserts and rivers where I lived and died in love,  
the greatest rushes among the rapids of daily romance that  
carried me  
from countries across seas to now-familiar waters  
returning to me in mental map.

Now a destination seems clear,  
after years of fighting a current so strong it threatened to carry  
me away,  
rip me in the undertow.  
A destination that was passed in winter,  
hidden among the sterile blank of snow and cold,  
then returned to in spring, where first rain reveals beneath so  
cold a hope  
a truth that burns with the truest of intentions.  
A love that may yet last, despite life's tsunami of adversity.

A love as clear as crystal.  
Water just isn't that clear these days.

—CHRISTOPHER PIRKL

## Across an Ocean

Across an ocean, where much older places are,  
where little villages have cried and sighed longer  
and harder than mothers for sons turned soldiers do,  
where spaces are rented and ghosts must roam and moan,  
there is a puzzled girl in a blue dress, not far  
from the inn room door. I did not mean to wrong her,  
though she saw it all from her dark brown frame, her blue  
dress clashing and jumping off the wall. The slow drone

of that little room must bore her, but I know she still  
remembers me and she to whom I said goodbye.  
If she was sleeping, I know we woke her, slamming  
the door beside her, screaming, threatening. Her gaze  
remains the same, but in her mind our sharp words drill  
and drip with pain. She almost flinches from when I  
smashed my hand on the wall beside her face, cramming  
the plaster closer together. After all these days

that crude notch probably still is not fixed—too small,  
unlike the mark on our hearts, hers and mine, that's all.

—J. LOKEN

## The Searchlight

It is late as I approach my window.

I watch the shadows of the trees race away from the headlights  
of a passing car.

If there was no light would there be any shadows?

I close the blinds and turn away from the window.

The darkness of the room surrounds me.

I leave my room and walk down the hallway.

The jingle of my keys rings out like the bell of a buoy rolling on  
the waves.

I wash my face with cold water and stare into the mirror.

I have become the searchlight.

I chase the shadows off the rocks.

I do not bow to the storm.

I stand alone.

—JONATHAN ODERMANN



## Beautiful Like the Plague

You bottle your strychnine  
In the place where it's always night  
While the rats of doom wait  
Patiently whitening their teeth

Your table's always set  
With saucers full of secrets  
Because the sailors like you best  
Their eyes silver-flaked with passion

You enter the room  
Imbued with perfection  
And with an emasculating glance  
You sterilize the gene pool

You make sure the sailors  
Get their burial at sea  
Just like the mermaid  
Who breathed too deep

If I were a prince and you held the key  
I'd say your politics were downright Florentine  
Because you're as beautiful as they come  
But you see to it they don't come often

—BENJAMIN AUSTINSON

## Revolting Dawn

Revolting dawn. Stolen from pleasant scenery  
Of a night sequestered by a celestial glance  
Striking land on the dawning of the solstice.

Remain. Inhibitions will evaporate after  
The last glint of pristine rain comes to claim doubts  
And the unprecedented intrigue resounds.

Once clouded by guilt the night emanates anew,  
Engulfed by simple cathartic realization.  
What a glorious night not to be alone.

—SCARLETT CARLABY



RONCHAMP  
JUSTIN MIEDEMA

*Spanish poetry*

**T**he contributors of the Spanish poetry were students of Dr. Carol Pearson's Spanish Conversation and Composition class. The 300-level course studied Spanish literature and the formal concepts of Spanish poetry. Dr. Pearson believes the process of writing Spanish poetry better pronunciation, phonetics and inherent characteristics of the language, and can lead to a greater appreciation of syntax.

Poetry has a very strong tradition in Spanish literature, and it was a popular form of dissent for the people against numerous governments. Like the English sonnet, the Spanish sonnet is comprised of 14 verses, but that is as far as the similarities extend. Spanish sonnets do not follow iambic pentameter; syllables are counted, but there is no distinction between stressed and unstressed. Spanish sonnets have eleven syllables per line. There are two types of rhyme in Spanish poetry: rima asonante (assonant rhyme) and rima consonante o perfecto (perfect or consonant rhyme).

There are five ways to measure Spanish verse, and when analyzing Spanish verse, one must determine which form the poet has employed and count the syllables accordingly. The last word of each line must also be categorized to aid in the correct placement of written accents.

We hope that you will be able to enjoy these poems in the original Spanish because no translation can truly capture the meaning of the original; however, we have also included an English translation for those readers who may need help with the Spanish.

—EMILY JACOBS  
SPANISH POETRY EDITOR



## Soneto

El sol, el cielo, así espumoso  
Las estrellas brillan el día  
Los sueños, la idea de paz es mía  
Mientras muchos años pasan con gozo.

Pero el dolor y el sufrir tan grueso  
Para esos quienes conocen la rabia  
Y no sabían qué trabajar haeice  
Sentirse atascando en un pozo.

Rezo. Espero. Creo. Trato. Hago.  
Se duda. Se elude. Se dimite...  
A todas las ideas llamadas pago

Las luchas son solo un ambiente  
La vida vendrá con relámpago  
Pero solo construye un Puente.

-AMBER AABERG

The sun, but sky so filled with froth  
Stars shine out in daylight.  
I dream an idea of peace  
As many years pass contentedly.

But pain and suffering weigh heavily  
On those who feel rage  
And cannot work their way  
Out of the hole they're in.

I pray, wait, try to believe. I do  
In doubt avoid and give up...  
All the ideas called home  
Struggling in the same environment.

The battle is part of the air we breathe.  
Life comes with lightning,  
But only to build a bridge.



## El bosque

Anduve por el bosque de mi mente  
El suelo cruje bajo del zapato,  
El aire huele de árboles del pino.  
Naturaleza duerme brevemente.

Los pájaros cantan orgullosamente,  
Los árboles esperan en silencio,  
El sol filtra hacia las hojas rojas,  
Como canción cantada suavemente.

Las raíces bajas consolidan mi paz,  
Que animales y plantas crecen de...  
Descubrí la fuente de los humanos.

Ni plata ni oro cambió mi mente,  
Lo que creo en el alma por lo menos  
Regresa al bosque finalmente.

—DANIEL HAZER

I walked through the forest of my mind  
the ground crunches underfoot  
the air smells of pine needles  
nature sleeps briefly

birds sing proudly  
the trees wait in silence  
the sun filters through the red leaves  
like a song sung softly

low roots consolidate my peace  
that animals and plants grow from  
I discovered the fountain of humans

neither silver nor gold changed my mind  
that which I believe in my soul at least  
returns to the forest finally



## El amor secreto

Esta es una carta de amor para ti  
Yo te amo con todo mi corazón  
Quiero besarte a ti  
Tu alma es la causa de mi atracción

Tus labios y ojos, eres perfecto  
No siento penas con tu sonrisa  
Tus acciones merecen mucho respeto  
Con su amor, soy una poeta de belleza

Pero no sabes que eres mi hombre  
Ni siquiera sabes mi nombre

—BETSY SAND

This is a letter of love for you  
I love you with all my heart  
I want to kiss you  
Your soul is the cause of my attraction

Your lips and deep eyes are perfect  
I don't feel any sorrow with your smile  
Your actions deserve much respect  
With your love I am a beautiful poet

But you don't know that you are my man  
And neither do you know my name.



FOGTREE

LANA WATERS

*nonfiction*

**T**he nonfiction pieces that are included in this journal were chosen by an editorial committee composed of two individuals. We looked for distinctive pieces that showcased the abilities of students at North Dakota State University as well as the experiences each author was able to share.

Danielle Troske's piece "Where I Come From" details specific moments that speak of growing up in a small town and how that childhood impacted her life. She uses a conversational voice that allows a reader to become involved in her everyday experiences.

Rebecca Mellem's piece "Bearing the Dead" is an intimate look at the death of a child. Her candid and raw emotions are captured in the tone of her work.

Individually these pieces exhibit unique style and capture the essence of what we strived to convey through this journal.

—DAVID WALLER  
NONFICTION EDITOR

## Where I Come From: Home of the Frogs

DANIELLE TROSKE

**N**estled in the northeast corner of South Dakota, Turton lies along an inky stretch of highway between Doland and Conde. The legend in Turton is that when French settlers immigrated to the area, their uniforms resembled something of a frog. Once the township was settled and a school system established, a mascot had to be chosen. Naturally, Turton opted to be home of the frogs.

In reality, our mascot is really a toad, but who wants to be the Turton Toads? Whatever our mascot looks like, we embrace it wholeheartedly. Due to dwindling enrollment, the Turton school system disseminated after the 1965-66 school year—my father's kindergarten year. Regardless of this, the residents of Turton still hold tight to the mascot whose banners once adorned the now non-existent school building.

Every year, Turton holds a celebration called St. John's Day in June. It originated as a church festival to honor St. John the Baptist, whose feast day falls on June 24. The event consists of a free-will donation supper to raise money for the Catholic Church in town. Throughout the years, the celebration has evolved into a two-day festival consisting of a softball tournament, supper, and dance. The event is known all round the county, although I don't know why. All I know is that I, along with the rest of the Turtonians, look forward to the event each and every summer.

When I was growing up, I mowed a lot of lawns. In a town of sixty people, job opportunities are limited, and mowing

lawns worked out well because it could be done on my own time and I might even get a good tan out of the deal.

My favorite time to mow lawns was in the last few days before St. John's Day. As I rode around town on my trusty John Deere lawnmower, I would smile and wave at everyone I passed as I made my way to our tiny ball field. Most people I met along the way were out in their own yards, mowing the grass, trimming the foliage, or tidying up lawn ornaments. An inherent excitement permeated the air; the impending celebration quickened everyone's pulse and made each resident walk a little straighter and smile a little broader in the days beforehand.

The best part was on Friday before the event kicked off though, when the entire town smelled sweetly of freshly cut grass.

Banana. My family has a video from years ago. It's one of those captured memories that a family only digs out once every five or six years, if even that. I don't really remember the last time we watched it, but there is one scene that always stands out in my mind.

My older sister is about six-years-old at the time, and I'm around four. My sister is tall and skinny, with a childish protruding belly sitting atop her tan legs. She has short, curly brown hair, big brown eyes, and a gummy smile. I reach her bony shoulder, with squat, chunky legs and a round belly that sticks out slightly due to poor posture. I have a square, full face with round cheeks. When I smile, my eyes disappear into my head, and my face is framed by mousy light brown hair cropped into a bowl cut.

In the video, my sister and I are running around our basement family room, laughing and giggling the way only children do—with reckless abandon and pure enjoyment. My dad is filming us, and Kayla suddenly runs up to the camera and yells, "Banana!" Of course, I immediately imitate her actions and do the same thing, squeaking "Banana!" just as she did.

After a couple of times of yelling this, she scrambles up our basement stairs, my squat body in tow. When she reaches the

top, she lies down on her stomach and slides to the bottom in an action we deemed “Pump-a-dumping” because of the sound our hands made as they thumped down the stairs. I follow suit, mimicking her every action and every move.

As we grew older, my sister got involved in extracurricular and athletic activities, and of course, so did I. I don’t know if mimicking her every action in childhood triggered something in me that drove me to be involved in everything she was, but it had to have been something. As I got older though, I became competitive and strove to not only be involved in the same activities, but excel in them. I worked as hard as I could to be better than her in athletics.

My father has three daughters and no sons. I don’t know if he thinks it’s horrible to only have daughters, but we try to console him with the fact that at least we’re not “girly girls.” You know, the type of girls who are involved in ballet and cheerleading and wouldn’t dream of being caught in a gymnasium other than to watch the football players come in from practice. We were all athletic and successful in sports, which hopefully offered some comfort to my sonless father.

My dad pushed us all very hard to excel in sports, but I took his motivation to heart the most. I wanted, more than anything, for him to think I was a better athlete than Kayla, in the hopes of raising my status as “the middle child.”

You know the situation...the firstborn is revered for being the pioneer, the one who martyrs himself or herself because he or she has to “break in” the parents. There are a million and one pictures of the “first” everything. And the youngest is doted upon because he or she is the baby of the family—the youngest gem who completes the picture-perfect family that had always been envisioned. Their “first” and “last” everything is documented because it will be the last “first” and last “last” for the parents as well before the child leaves home and empty nest syndrome sets in.

And the middle child, as in my case, is the one stuck in the middle who was supposed to be the coveted son my father never got. So I guess I felt I had something to prove. Anyway, in high school I was pretty successful in sports, having been to

state tournaments in all three sports I participated in.

After I'd graduated, my father was discussing his three daughters with someone else, talking about our athletic accomplishments. In front of me, he said that Kayla had been the most athletically gifted of all three of his daughters. I'd never been so disappointed in myself.

There is a picture in my childhood photo album. Kayla and I are about the same age that we were in the video. In the snapshot, we are lying on our backs on the floor, looking up at the camera. Kayla is smiling impishly at the photographer, and I am staring lovingly at her over my shoulder. She is picking her nose.

Hubert H. Humphrey Auditorium. I graduated from Doland High School after attending elementary, middle, and high school there. Doland and Conde formed an athletic co-op in 1990 and never looked back.

Hubert H. Humphrey, the 38th Vice President under Lyndon B. Johnson, attended high school in Doland. When our school was remodeled some twenty years ago, an auditorium was built and named in his honor.

This gymnasium saw my first encounter with athletics as an eight-year-old and my final walk as a high school student during graduation. Each time I return, I am reminded of the countless games, ceremonies, banquets, and dances that make up my high school memories. The laughter, the tears...all of the memories embedded inside of me are directly linked to that one place.

During senior year, volleyball was my favorite sport. I thrived on the competition and intelligence required to succeed in the sport. Unfortunately, my team was not very good and we weren't expected to do well. I knew it, the fans knew it, everyone knew it. My only consolation was that the tournament was to be played in Doland, in the Hubert H. Humphrey Auditorium.

After winning our first game easily, we took on a much more talented foe and longtime rival. During the final game of the match, we fell behind; the damage had been done. Our

opponents led with spirited tenacity as they inched nearer to the game point. Defeat was imminent, and I watched my last volleyball match slip slowly away. Tears welled up in my eyes, but I fought them back as hard as I had fought the entire game to win. As the final volley played out, I saw the ball drift slowly toward the floor. I knew it was over. As the ball bounced off the tiled floor and rolled away, I dropped to my knees in disappointment, the tears spilling down my cheeks. The same gym that had seen my first games as a volleyball player had just seen my last.

Basketball was a different story, as we went into the state tournament undefeated. We won our first game and advanced to the semi-final round, taking on the only other undefeated team. The tournament was held in Huron, South Dakota, and their school colors were orange and black, just like ours. Even though it wasn't our gym we were playing in, it sure felt like it with all the blaze orange insignia decorating the auditorium and the locker rooms.

In the locker room before the game, a tangible tension filled the air. My classmates—the seniors—had dreamed about this moment since we'd started playing together almost ten years before. Everyone knew this was the championship game disguised as something else. We were the best two teams in the state. Whoever won this game would go on the next night to win the championship. It was intense.

Gone were the chattering, laughing girls whose locker room antics included rapping and dirty dancing. In their place was a group of twelve pensive, contemplative athletes on the cusp of greatness. Never before had our schools had a girl's team be undefeated, let alone be playing for the opportunity to go on to the championship. This was our moment, and we knew it.

Our coach entered the locker room, the heavy door banging shut behind her with a deafening thud. As she gave her speech, I looked around the room at my teammates, at my friends. These girls had witnessed some of my best and worst moments as a person and as an athlete, and they were with me during the greatest moment in my high school basketball

career. After our coach finished her speech, we joined our hands and knelt to pray.

We didn't win that night. It was another moment in time where I saw my dream slipping away from me, and there wasn't anything I could do about it. As the clock expired, I cried again. But these tears were different. This time, I wasn't disappointed in myself for my own selfish, egotistical reasons as I had been at the demise of the volleyball season. This time, I cried because I'd let my community down.

The support the communities had shown throughout our season was really awe-inspiring. Girls' athletics had never been popular in our towns, so having a constant following was appreciated by all of the players and our faithful parents.

The previous season, various community members had shown their support by traveling throughout the towns and by videotaping local businesspeople who wished us good luck in our contests. We watched these videos before the games for additional motivation. The next season, our fans traveled in caravans to hail our entrance to a town and to see us off the bus and into the gym. They also held pep rallies before each of our postseason games. Needless to say, we knew they supported us.

After the game ended we sat in the locker room, physically and emotionally defeated. Our coach praised our effort in the game, saying she'd never seen a team fight so hard for something. Despite the loss, she told us what all coaches tell a defeated team. She said to leave the locker room with our heads held high because none of the hundreds of community members who'd traveled to watch us thought of us as anything but champions.

Later that night, I was mingling with the crowd, accepting consolations and congratulations on a very accomplished season, when a community member that I didn't know very well approached me. He was a nice man whose youngest son was a few years younger than me. He congratulated me on the season and my accomplishments. Then he said something that has stuck with me ever since then. He told me that our team was really special, because we'd "put Doland/Conde back on

the map, which is something that hasn't been done in a while. We couldn't be more proud of you."

For my dad, who is an avid sports fan, the game that night was amazing. He said it was the biggest and best game he'd ever been to as a fan. No team before us had ever been in that big of a game ever. He said it was different from the year before and the years since, because that year everyone expected us to be a great team and we were.

My last basketball game wasn't played on the tiles of Hubert H. Humphrey Auditorium, but it had been played in front of the community members who'd supported me ever since I'd started playing basketball.

Michael. When I was younger, my little sister, our neighbors, and I used to drive out to the Catholic cemetery and play. The cemetery is located on a small hill with a gravel road bordering its sides, creating what looked like a waterless island. Groves of evergreen trees dot the immediate outside three edges, with an open side facing the setting sun. We used to hop on four-wheelers and drive in careless circles around the gravestones, disregarding the sanctity of the cemetery and the respect it deserved.

My father's older brother, Michael, died of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning when he was eighteen-years-old. My uncle had gone out with some friends one weekend when he'd come home from college, and when he returned, he parked in the garage as usual. The story goes that he had left his car running as the garage door was shutting and fell asleep. My grandfather found him the next morning.

Mike's headstone stands next to the grave markers of my great-grandparents, Frank and Lucy Troske. Lucy died on September 3, 1969, and Frank followed four years later on February 22, 1974. Mike died on September 7, 1975. My birthday is September 6. My grandma's father died on September 6, 1953. I often wondered when I was younger why my birthday had to fall near such tragic dates. What did my great-grandma and grandparents think when I was born on that date? Would I be a glimpse of sunshine on a formerly bleak date, or would

my birthday be a constant reminder of the loved ones they lost so many years before?

I remember the first time I saw the grave. During our outings at the cemetery, my friends and I would wander through the headstones, glancing at the names and wondering about the people they had been. One day I decided to seek out Mike's grave, for a reason I still don't know.

On that hot summer day, I wandered aimlessly for awhile, searching for a familiar name, the dry, crisp grass crackling underfoot. For what seemed like forever, I hunted for that headstone. As I was just about to give up, I saw Lucy's marker, adjacent to her husband Frank's marker. I paused for a moment, staring down at the names of the great-grandparents I had never known.

And then, there it was.

Next to Frank's, not a large marble slab but instead a small, trapezoidal marker rising out of the ground, stood Mike's headstone. It was simple and beautiful, the glossy black writing cutting deep into the marble. Michael Troske. That was my uncle. My uncle, who I'd never know. I considered, for a moment, what it must have been like for my grandparents, my dad, my aunts, and other uncle to lose Mike. I couldn't even fathom what grief they must have gone through. In true Midwestern style, they don't really talk about losing him. They make casual reference to him, telling an occasional story, but we outsiders really don't know anything about him.

Sometimes, when my father and grandpa drink too much, they talk about Mike. Actually, they usually end up debating about whose fault it was that he died, as each likes to take the blame upon himself. My grandpa says it is his fault for letting Mike go out that night, but my father contends that he heard Mike come home but didn't bother checking on him when he didn't come into the house right away.

The summer after I graduated, I worked in Aberdeen and lived with my grandparents. One night, I got kind of curious and decided to rummage through their storeroom to see what I could find. I came across a box of cards, and as I began reading them, I realized they were condolences sent to my dad's

family after Mike died. They offered the usual explanations of “God works in mysterious ways” and “What doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger,” and other clichés that might make sense of the awful situation my relatives were enduring. As I sat staring at the words on cards that said the next day will be better than the last, I began to cry. I cried for what my family had gone through during that tragic time, and I cried for the uncle I would never know. After that day, I admired my family members a little bit more for having come through such a terrible situation the way they did.

If any of us girls would have been born boys, we would have been named Michael, naturally. When my mother was pregnant with me, the doctor told her that my heartbeat and the way she carried me indicated that I was a boy. I can’t imagine my dad’s anticipation at the prospect of having a son, especially one who would be named after his brother.

I also can’t imagine his disappointment when I—a fat, red-faced little girl with a thatch of dark, black hair and a squished face—came screaming into the world one day before the tenth anniversary of his brother’s death.

Going Home. I love my life at college. I love the independence I enjoy up here, as well as the people who have become my Fargo support system.

Yet, every time I plan a weekend where I am going home, a marked anticipation hangs in the air. I set out on my two-and-a-half hour drive with excitement. I hit the North Dakota/South Dakota border—one hour down. I keep traveling south on I-29, rolling plains and various cars passing by me.

Once past Sisseton, there’s nothing but the prairie and sky leading me. Then I see my exit, an hour and a half to go. I always take the “back way” home, which involves a less frequented highway that twists and turns through the Crocker Hills before finally leading into the sleepy hamlet of Turton. The last few miles pass by agonizingly slowly, each mile inching me closer to the home and people I love.

Finally, I’m there. I turn by Frog Field, our baseball park that is only used once a year. Continuing on, I approach the

old gymnasium, a monstrosity of a building perched on a rolling, endless hill. Two wooden frogs mounted on the side of the building smile at me as I pass. Across from the gym is my aunt's new house, a hearty structure with a large picture window facing south. I round the curve. I see my grandparents' double-wide trailer, and then my house.

As I pull into the driveway my dad's black lab, Zeus, bounds up to me, his long, lithe body awkwardly approaching me. I greet him with an aloof smile. He is a dumb dog and will never be my precious English springer spaniel, Lady, who died last Thanksgiving.

My hometown is completely unique, full of people and places that have shaped the person I am today. I don't know how I can ever repay them for all they've given me, but I hope to someday. I used to say when I was younger that there was no way I would ever raise my children in a small town someday. The truth is, now that I'm older and have realized in retrospect all the advantages I had growing up, my children would be lucky to grow up in a place like Turton.

# Bearing the Dead

REBECCA MELLEME

“But burying infants, we bury the future, unwieldy and unknown, full of promise and possibilities, outcomes punctuated by our rosy hopes. The grief has no borders, no limits, no known ends, and the little infant graves that edge the corners and fencerows of every cemetery are never quite enough to contain that grief. Some sadnesses are permanent. Dead babies do not give us memories. They give us dreams.”  
From *The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade* by Thomas Lynch.

To My Uterus:

You wake me from  
my unsleep, wrenching  
my insides, to ensure  
I won't miss the desolate  
blue of morning-night and  
silence of the sparrows:  
small distractions from the  
still body I carry.

## Horrible

After a traditional ultrasound appeared suspicious, “could be Downs syndrome, could be nothing” we were referred to Minnesota Perinatal Associates at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis where a specialist could perform a level II ultrasound, to “get a better look” where we were told “it looks like Trisomy 18, that’s pretty horrible.” I contemplated the vast array of meanings “horrible” could take on in such a vague reference. Horrible=a baby with no head? A baby with severe mental, physical, psychological disabilities? A baby with permanent colic?

Trisomy 18 (also called Edwards syndrome) technically refers to the trio of 18th chromosomes present in the genes of infants affected with the genetic disorder. For Ari, the characteristics were clenched hands, short breast, nasal, arm & leg bones, extra amniotic fluid, ventricular septal defect, a kidney abnormality, extra fingers and toes, unusual head shape, and on and on, the doctor kept talkingtalkingtalking. My mind stopped trying to grasp the larger picture and wondered what he’d look like, what special services we’d need, could I keep working with a disabled child at home...until through the monotone “not compatible with life” hollered at me. And then “do you want to terminate the pregnancy?”, life-sustaining measures not recommended, 5-10% of infants with Trisomy 18 make it to their 1st birthday, a few children have even lived to be teenagers, 1 woman reached age 33 before Trisomy 18’s complications killed her.

Why hadn’t I heard of this disorder that affects (depending on the source) 1 in 3000 to 1 in 10000 live births? Perhaps society wants to keep quiet those things it cannot fix, there’s no treatment...except love the baby while you have him.

## The Box

In the hospital, parents who leave the birthing center without a baby are given a box to place the few memories the baby left behind.

My box is blue;  
(I'm sure baby girls have pink boxes)—  
it holds a few generic mementos the hospital  
or parents of other deceased infants have donated—

“In Memory”—

Mommy Don't Cry, There Are No Tears In Heaven,  
an angel pin, a baby book made especially for these situations,  
a replica of the blue and white gingham gown that covered  
his shriveled body,  
the blue hat he wore, stained with the fluid that leaked out  
of his skull all the day we spent with him.  
the blue fleece blanket, the one his sister chose, soaked in  
his blood,  
fake id bracelets (real ones are unnecessary—no one tries  
to kidnap a dead baby),  
a few wisps of his black, black hair Brandon snipped,  
the 3D plaster of Paris molds the nurses tried so hard to  
make when you're used to dealing with 10 fingers and  
10 toes, apparently an extra half digit can really throw a  
bubble in the plaster...

Mostly, the box is full of the smell—the raw, earthy perfume of placenta, of amniotic fluid, blood, everything that couldn't be cleaned away, the most exotic, refreshing, heartbreaking aroma my nose ever loved—his scent. Since his death, countless times, I've opened the box just to absorb him, bury my face in his blanket or hat, and I'm back in the hospital reclined on birthing bed while he rests on my jelly tummy. What is the olfactory phenomenon that transports us right back to a memory? Gradually, the smell is fading, I suppose one day

soon, I'll open the box, and his scent will be gone, and I'll just be a mourning mother holding a silly memento.

All the pictures we'll ever have of Ari are in this box too... it's been 10 months since we buried him, and my husband has not had the courage or, maybe he's not been stupid enough, to pick up those photographs....Perhaps he knows that once he sees the pictures, all faultless images of his son will be erased, no longer will a tiny pinkie-nail-sized nose live in his mind, but an image of exposed layers of dead tissues, peeled back after rotting inside me for days...it's hard to let go of the idealized images that somehow make this loss less.

The day in the hospital when I should have been worrying about holding my son, I played PR rep to make sure the grandparents, aunt, uncle, mom, dad each got a picture with the miniscule boy...flawless like a doll in all his deformities. I forgot to get a picture with my dad... which was funny, if that word's allowed where death has just been...because my dad rocked and rocked and rocked "his little angel in heaven"... I would have wrestled him for my baby, except his head might have toppled off...

As we left the hospital merely 9 hours after Ari was born, I clenched the box to my chest, afraid if I relaxed my grip, I might throw it at something or someone....I was carrying 100 cement blocks; never were empty arms so heavy...my husband asked to carry the box, (proud like he'd carried our daughter), but without its weight to lean on, I would have been a heap in the parking lot, a heap of hopeless, childless mother.

#### October's Opal

Ari's October's birthstone is the opal. The Romans believed it was the symbol of hope and purity. They the opal "Cupid Paederos" (a child beautiful as love) and thought it kept the wearer safe from disease. Isn't that what we call irony?

Atonement

Dead babies run in my family.

My mother and my mother-in-law each had 3 miscarriages.  
I almost tasted loss—suffering through a “difficult” pregnancy with my daughter—

2 years later: my son: stillborn.

Genetic counselors, perinatal specialists, doctors:

“it’s nothing you did,” nothing I could have done.

But with the responsibility on parents for how their children develop;

How can I let go of the fact that I paid for my sins...  
my promiscuity?

Why are my thighs stained with fetal blood?

Trisomy 18 wombs carry large amounts of amniotic fluid.

Did the flood which drown the delivering doctor wash  
away my sins, even if my tiny, tiny 2 pound boy carried  
that weight?

I wonder what sins my mother was atoning for.

What evil did she commit to make the doctor doing  
the D & C-

(her 3rd and final miscarriage/stillbirth in its 12th week)

—ALONE—my father dropped her off at the hospital,  
went to work,

sucked my younger sibling out,

without warning held the bloody fetal alien up—

“here’s your baby.”

And what of my husband’s three unborn siblings?  
Why wasn’t the oldest brother, lifeless before the second trimester,  
enough for his mother’s sinful debt?

JuneNineteenthTwoThousandSix

Stubble-skinned men in hard hats  
prepare the gravel path for pavement,  
as if a smooth street makes visiting the dead easier.

Tall grass, only as old as a growing season,  
shadows your bronze plaque.  
I should have come sooner; a  
respected place is a neat place. But

grief is easier to ignore far from here.

Stooping to pull dandelions and  
lanky infant grass,  
sweat pools beneath my breasts,  
streaming down, like milky tears  
my body cried for you,

Overhead, three F-16s roar  
I wonder if the pilots care  
you, my little lamb, are  
8 months dead today.

The New Car Theory

"You could lose a child like that, once and for always in an  
instant and walk around forever with a lump in your throat,  
with the question of what might have been weighing you down  
every time you measure the happiness in someone else's face."

—John Edgar Wideman, "Welcome"

Have you ever noticed when you buy a new car or get new  
jeans that suddenly that road is crowded white Grand Ams and  
black Suburbans, and everyone is wearing stonewashed Gap  
jeans: whatever you just purchased? When you're pregnant,  
you notice all the other pregnant bellies shopping for pickles

and ice cream. Or when your baby dies, there are babies, babies, babies, and, ah, more babies: your maid-of-honor keeps emailing you ultrasound pictures of her twin boys, or your daughter's godparents have their 2nd baby when you should have been the first to have 2 children, or all of a sudden, all those friends who never wanted kids are calling to tell you "guess what?" Somehow, you fake happiness, even though you can't breathe enough to say congratulations, which is okay because what you might say is "HOW COULD YOU?" "DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL?" "COULD YOU HAVE A LITTLE SYMPATHY?!" So, while you pretend to listen to all the details about check-ups, ultrasounds, indigestion, colic, nursing, sleepless nights, ear infections, you start thinking about how for the rest of your life these babies will grow up being the same age your dead son would have been. The rest of your life will be consumed with trying to fake a smile at first days of school, First Communion, summer vacations, graduations, weddings, grandchildren because all those moments will simply be "what might have been."







*contributors*

AMBER AABERG, *Soneto*, 58.

Amber is a junior majoring in criminal justice.

LUKE ARMSTRONG, *Children of the Sand*, 35.

Luke is a third-year senior at NDSU not majoring in math. His fondest NDSU memory is of the day he sold his TI-83 graphing calculator on Ebay after finishing his math generals. After college he plans to embark on a life that involves as little math as possible.

BENJAMIN AUSTINSON, *Beautiful Like The Plague*, 52.

Ben is a senior English major at NDSU.

KIMBERLY BALEGA, *Their Eyes Were in the Night*, 45.

Kimberly is a third-year student who, after discovering that NDSU does not offer an underwater firefighting degree, decided to major in English, with a double minor in journalism/broadcasting and zoology. She aspires to become a published novelist one day and also desires to work in a field that combines her love of writing and the conservation of wildlife. She also finds the whole concept of writing about one's self in the third person to be very entertaining.

SCARLETT CARLABY, *Revolting Dawn*, 53.

Scarlett Carlabby is the pseudonym for a senior who is studying natural resources management.

RACHEL ERSTAD, *Oscar*, 48.

Rachel is a senior from Scobey, Montana, majoring in sociology and English.

M. JEANNE GETTE, *Shedding roots to bloom near windows*, 34.

Meg Jeanne Gette studies English writing through NDSU. She is a music writer for the High Plains Reader, a local arts and culture paper in Fargo. She has published a short story in *Winter: A Season of Writing on the Prairie*, as well as poems in *Lovechild* and *Red Weather*.

STEVE HARTMANN, Key and Deed, 31.

Steve is a third-year computer science major from Oakdale, Minnesota. The poem is the result of a spontaneous thought, which he decided to write down.

DANIEL HAZER, El bosque, 60.

Daniel is a junior majoring in management informations systems.

ALEXANDER HORAB, To Yell Without a Point, 16.

Alexander was born in Fargo, North Dakota. He is in his second year of school with hopes of pursuing the field of mass communication. Although he is unclear on his exact hopes for the future, he would like to continue to write, at least as a personal hobby. He is also very uncomfortable writing about himself in the third person.

ROBERT HOSHAW, Drugs and Empty Blizzard Cups, 21.

Rob is a senior English and zoology double major from Pine River, Minnesota. The characters in this short story are based on actual people. In high school, he worked in a very similar environment in a small town pharmacy.

JAIME JENSEN, Mystery and Wonder, 46.

Jaime is a sophomore studying biochemistry. She is from Devils Lake, North Dakota.

JEREMY KES, Where Gods Walk, 47.

Jeremy is a sophomore majoring in English Education from Lakeville, Minnesota.

J, LOKEN, Across an Ocean, 50.

Jeff Loken grew up in Grafton, North Dakota, and is a senior majoring in English at NDSU.

JESSICA MAMMENZA, *The Luxury of Literacy*, 32.

Jessica is a 21-year-old from Horace, North Dakota. She is currently a junior at NDSU, pursuing an English degree with a minor in psychology. Her interests include protecting the environment, collecting vinyl, and spending time outdoors with her boyfriend.

REBECCA MELLEM, *Bearing the Dead*, 77.

Becca is a senior psychology major with sociology and writing studies minors from Fargo, North Dakota.

JUSTIN MIEDEMA, *Ronchamp*, 54.

Justin is from Grand Forks, North Dakota; he is a senior pursuing a master's degree in architecture here at NDSU. The photograph, taken summer 2006, is from the interior of Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France. The chapel was designed by world-renowned architect Le Corbusier in 1954.

MELODY NEER, *Trees*, 28.

Melody is a sophomore majoring mass communication. She is taking classes at both NDSU and MSUM through the tri-college program. Melody aspires to be a photo journalist with an emphasis in sports but also enjoys landscape photography for fun. She currently lives with her parents and two brothers in Mapleton, North Dakota, a small town ten miles west of West Fargo.

JESSICA NYMARK, *Gazer of Stars*, x.

Jessica Nymark is a freshman at NDSU currently studying pre-pharmacy. Black and white photography is a love she acquired in high school at Fargo South. The photograph was taken of a stargazer lilly. The flower symbolizes trust, loyalty, and majesty, and happens to be her favorite flower.

JONATHAN ODERMANN, *The Searchlight*, 51.

Jonathan, from Medora, North Dakota, is a junior majoring in mechanical engineering. He had this to say about his poem: "The Searchlight' captures the emotions of night when I faced the question of what made something right or wrong. On that night, the dangerous shadows of wrong were warded off by the light of righteousness I wielded, and on that night I never felt more alone."

DENNIS OWEN, *Natae*, 3.

Dennis Owen is a pseudonym for a senior in broadcast journalism from Devils Lake, North Dakota. Aside from writing, he enjoys other creative pursuits such as cinematography, painting, and origami. He wrote this story after asking, "What would happen if I kept my girlfriend's hair instead of dropped it on the floor?"

CHRISTOPHER PIRKL, *Heartide*, 49.

Christopher "TJ" Pirkl is a sophomore from Dickinson, North Dakota, pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre at NDSU. Christopher feels fortunate to be counted among the other literary minds contributing to Northern Eclecta. His free-form poem, "Heartide," is dedicated to its inspiration, Jessica Baseflug.

BETSY SAND, *El amor secreto*, 62.

Betsy is a freshman majoring in psychology.

DANIELLE TROSKE, *Where I Come From: Home of the Frogs*, 67.

Danielle is a junior majoring in journalism and management communication with a speech communication minor. Her hometown of Turton, South Dakota, is the subject of her nonfiction essay. Danielle is a member of the communication honor society, Lambda Pi Eta, and Editor in Chief of the student-run newspaper, *The Spectrum*.

DAVIN WAIT, *My Asylum*, 38.

Davin is a junior originally from New York Mills, Minnesota. He is currently studying English and history with the intent of teaching at the high school or college level. The original draft of "My Asylum" was written his freshman year. Davin's major poetic influences are: T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, W.H. Auden, Langston Hughes, and Allen Ginsburg.

LANA WATERS, *Fogtree*, 64.

Lana is a freshman majoring in journalism, broadcasting and mass communication technologies. Lana was serving as a Marine Combat Correspondent in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in October 2004. While covering a story on Marine training, she was inspired to take some pictures of the surroundings.



**T**his volume of Northern Eclecta represents what we hope will be an ongoing publication at North Dakota State University. Its goal is to provide undergraduate students with a place to publish their creative and perhaps even scholarly work as well as to give students an opportunity to learn the process of producing a publication. Students enrolled in English 213, 313, and 413 during Spring Semester 2007 were responsible for the content selection, design, and production of this issue. These classes will be offered again during Spring Semester 2008, and students who are interested in editing, design, desktop publishing, and graphics are encouraged to enroll.

**S**ubmissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, and artwork created by students who are enrolled as undergraduate students at NDSU during Spring Semester 2008 will be accepted from January 9 through February 28, 2008. If you would like more information on this process, please send your inquiries to [NDSU-Write.Stuff@ndsu.edu](mailto:NDSU-Write.Stuff@ndsu.edu).

**F**inally, if you would like to help with the publication of student writing, a process that emphasizes the importance of literacy both for those who submit their works for possible publication and for those who edit and produce the journal, we would welcome donations in any amount. Checks can be made payable to "Northern Eclecta" and sent to this address:

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