

Verbal Equinox

Weber State University Writing Journal

Fall 1999

What is the Writing Center?

Ideally, it is a place where students can come to collaborate, learn more about writing, and become better authors. The Weber State Writing Center boasts fourteen student tutors who are available to help students with any questions or concerns they have regarding their writing. Although tutors do not edit students' papers for them, they are always excited to offer suggestions or act as a sounding board for students at any stage of the writing process. Whether students require help with picking a topic, creating an outline, cleaning up introductions and conclusions, or writing their bibliography, the Writing Center is always a great resource.

The Writing Center is funded by student fees; thus, students who do not take advantage of it are wasting their money. There are several ways to benefit from the Writing Center. The best way is to bring a paper in during office hours—Monday through Friday from 9:00-4:00, and Saturday from 10:00-1:00—but



students can also submit papers online if their schedule does not permit them to talk to a tutor personally.

If you would like more information about The Writing Center, please come to room 261 in the Student Services Building (next to the testing center) or visit us online at <http://weber.edu/writingcenter>.

-Terah Brudvik Partridge

Speaking Out:

A new addition to the Writing Center this year is the charming Victoria Ramirez, assistant English professor at WSU and Faculty Director of the Writing Center. Ramirez was responsible for teaching the

Methods and Practice of English Tutoring class that helps new tutors prepare and explore different tutoring strategies. She responded to a series of questions.

• *What has been your favorite part in working with the tutors of the Writing Center?*

-Vicki replied that the students' commitment to being the best tutors they can be was what had definitely impressed her the most.

• *Why is a Writing Center important?*

"We are not living in a very literate society but rather a society that does not always prepare for the demand of written expression in universities.

Ramirez added, "There is a great need for writing across the curriculum because writing is best when it has not been the focus."

-E.G.

Distances Traveled; Lessons Learned

I run seven miles
down quiet residential streets,
up steep paved hills,
along a rocky mountain road
(the city's yellow trees glow against
gray skies).
When we meet.
I tell you the distance I ran.
I even describe the route
by street names and landmarks

You nod knowingly, even say you
are impressed,
for you are familiar
with those streets and places
and the distance—seven miles—
which you know
is 28 times around the outdoor
track, 56 times 'round the indoor,
70 city blocks, or your drive home
from work.

But you can't know the strain of
the steepness on my muscles,
or how I stretch and reach and
catch my breath on the down hill,
or how I squint to keep the salty
sweat-sting from my eyes.

You came at 40 miles per hour in
your car with climate-control.
Shocks and struts smoothed the
ride.
The stereo silenced the outside
world.

And here we sit; we have arrived at
the same place.
But, oh, how different were our
journeys.

*-Sylvia Newman Pack,
Writing Center Coordinator*

The Writing Center Contest

Congratulations to our annual writing contest winners! The contest was open to all WSU students (except, of course, Writing Center employees) for fall semester 1999. This year we are happy to say there were nearly forty entries. Cash prizes of \$50 dollars for each first prize winner, \$35 dollars for each second prize winner, and \$25 dollars for each third place winner served to whet the writing appetite of our entrants this year. Thanks to all who entered and to the writing contest judges.

And the winners are . . .

Non-Fiction

First Place:
Emilie Turner
Second Place:
Joseph Otieno
Third Place:
Melanie Argyle

Fiction

First Place:
Melissa Paul

Poetry

First Place:
Kimberly Maw
Second Place:
Jewell Loveless
Third Place:
Emilie Turner

First Place Poetry Winner:

Notice: No poetry will be written this weekend

I slide contacts into gravel-eyed thickness
and crush ink through paper,
inspired by the desire
to unglue myself from you,
Elmer's in my hair.

Food sogs in the sink uneaten
like marsh at the edge
of a rotting lake.
I lick the top of the O.J. can for you
& cough-syrup shudder.

I finally threw your toothbrush away,
its blue-handled
crushed needle bristles
made a clunking rebound
off the toilet.

There's no poetry in dirty sheets,
or those cockle burrs that multiply
into little prickles as you pull at them,
your fat black hairs
jammed in my pillow.

The only rhythm comes
in the ringing,
when you call to pull me deep again
deep as a blue dream,
intimate as a shared razor.

So now, unglued
unpoemed
I chemically induce jarring sleep,
staring at the stars you hung,
smelling your T-shirt.

-Kimberly Maw



Second Place Poetry Winner

Driving Home

This time it is different. Abandoned highway,
broken white lines through the rearview, shoved
together in the center of the black hole

where I was a mile ago. 8:11 and no cars. Occasional
lamps dull the darkness in their pools of dustier
hues. Over a rise comes

one car, one light . . . Perdiddle, I wish . . .
I wish this harsh ache gouging this heaving
cavity out of my chest would . . .

go away, and the thought is pushed off center, my
wish wasted. The cavity is a perpetual fixture, I should
be accustomed.

The moon is as white as a hole in the sky, watching
from behind the curtain.
I am behind this wheel,

obligated to stay so until a destination
is reached. So many carless miles . . .
The ache returns and I dwell on it.

Which is worse, an abandoned highway (no cars) or
a lonely freeway (passing cars)? I think of
the two semis in the white wind storm, huddling

at 45 mph in the slow and middle lanes. No place or time
for high clearance vehicles, I thought. I think,
but they had each other.

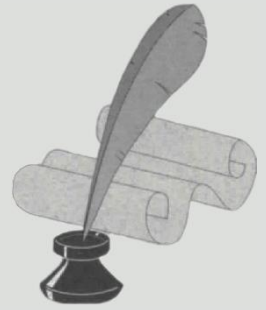
-Jewell Loveless

Third Place Poetry Winner

Stains Signifying a Life Lived

Sequential ink stains
tattooed gut
evidence of perseverance
pain who she
used to be
I kissed each flower across her belly
faded
over years spent
My hands cupped her sides
at ribs end
I looked up seeing
her hands stained with my fluid and blood
Nothing will wash off
these stains
that celebrate our life lived

-Emilie Turner



Fiction

"Heat"
by Melissa Paul
Page 5

"The Solitude of
Glory"
By Jake Christensen
Page 7

Non-Fiction

"Football"
by Joseph Otieno
Page 4

"Ecofeminism"
by Emilie Turner
Page 4

Poetry

"The Plant in the
Corner Started
Talking to me"
by Ryan Decaria
Page 4



Non-fiction Winners

Ecofeminism —Emilie Turner

The following are excerpts from a much more expansive paper on ecofeminism. This portion of the paper is discussing the harm capitalism places upon nature, as well as women and the relationship this harm holds between women and nature. It will be better understood by explaining the term ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism is interested in the interconnected oppression of the environment and women, and states that feminism is necessary for effective environmentalism just as environmentalism is necessary for effective feminism

...The reasons "industrialized" humans are buying things that are not necessities is because they have been desensitized by all of the man-made things that flood their senses every day. Therefore, they don't have a connection with nature; they have a connection with industry and mass production. In turn, industry and mass production is what they understand and respect. This ultimately leads to industry taking precedence over nature and the environment. Mahatma

Gandhi, a man with a beautiful connection with nature and human beings alike, was asked by a British journalist whether or not he would like India to have the same "standard of living" as Britain. He replied, "To have its standard of living a tiny country like Britain had to exploit half the globe. How many globes will India have to exploit to have the same standard of living?" (Gaard, 72-73).

...Now that we've discussed the effects of capitalism upon nature and the environment, let's discuss its effects upon women. Capitalism has favored a male-dominated work force from the beginnings of its American existence. Being that it is male-dominated, business and industry get the credit for upholding society. In the earlier part of this century, women's roles were to raise the

1st

family and take care of the husband by feeding him, washing and ironing his clothes, having sex when he wanted to, etc. Women were raising the next generation of children on their own, yet men were the ones who were admired and in control. It is arguable that women as child raisers upheld society ill those days, but capitalism was (and still is) rampant and denying them the credit due.

...And since the men's role of bread winner allowed for the purchase of these extravagances that capitalism made mainstream, they became the more respected and powerful sex. While women's roles of raising the family lost more and more honor as capitalistic industry grew on because the product of their labor was not a materialistic gain.

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Football —Joseph Otieno

"The idea is that is one team has the 'ball', the other team has to pound on them until they give up the 'ball'."

... The scores were tied and one man got a hold of the pig skin. In an attempt to rescue his life, he took off, dodged around everyone and everything (much to the spectators' excitement) and it seemed to me like he was headed for the exit gates at the end of one side of the field. He was like a deer being chased by a pride of lions. The survival instincts this man had enabled him to reach the end of the pitch and to my bewilderment he stopped. Everyone in the stadium was on their feet cheering. I, on the other hand, was wondering why he had

stopped when he was so near to escape. The match ended and I was told that he had made the winning touch down.

...After all is said and done, I think football is a very entertaining sport, watching men living out the basic male instinct of survival and protection. Watching them bash themselves senseless in the name of chasing a small strangely shaped ball, and even taking it further, making strategies for doing this, fascinates me. On the other hand, I also stand firm insisting that the money spent on it, and the casualties it inflicts scarcely justifies its existence, and even more specifically its popularity and acclamation.

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The Plant in the Corner Started Talking to me

So true, the times don't change in plastic, and the weather always reflects your mood in the absence of windows.

Without clocks, seconds and minutes vanish, and hours are longer away from love and nourishment.

And you're right, plant, that I am too worried and too lazy, but exits don't seem to lead me anywhere.

I don't blend in as well as a plant in a corner, where green on white is camouflage, where dirt is valued beyond conversation.

The plant likes to spill onto the floor at time like these, hard-pressed for some distraction from itself.

I want to empower the plant, for friendship, but it declines, whether out of fear or comfort I hope someday to know.

It is way too quiet in here, I tell the plant as I leave, but it doesn't even move a leaf to wave or curl up and die.

—Ryan Decaria

Fiction Winner

Heat

—*Melissa Paul, First Place Winner*



The heat was that dazzling sort that happened only in the Mediterranean. On the coast the heat would make the whitewashed buildings look charming and the turquoise sea would seem cool and endless. Inland the heat was different. It made everything brown and tired. Even the wheat was tired, tired of laboring away in the sun and dust. The only shining things were the steel rails. They were polished silver by the monotonous passing of trains.

Marco hated the heat. He hated the way it burned his skin and his fields. Most of all he hated it because it meant that train-waiters would sit inside the bar where his woman worked. Marco worked all day in the fields. His wife worked all night in the bar. They had no children. When they were both home they could only sleep. Sleep sleep until it was time to rise and work again.

Even the mornings were hot now. Marco only saw his woman when she came to wait on the tables that cowered in the shadows of the bar. The tables were afraid of becoming like the wheat.

Marco was surprised to see a couple sitting at a table outside the bar. It was midday now and there was no shade. He did not like the couple. They were too clean, the dust couldn't touch them. The dust wasn't good enough to spend itself on their clothes. The girl had a

hat. It was so large that it could have made enough shade for half the table. Instead of wearing it she put it on the table. Marco hated her because she didn't wear the hat.

The girl was staring at the hills. She looked at them like they were nothing. She looked at them that way because she didn't live in the valley. She didn't understand that Marco looked at the hills and saw walls. He would never see the other side of the hills. He could hardly see his woman, and they shared a bed.

In a moment she emerged. She came through a beaded curtain as strong as any iron bars. It had a power to separate Marco from his woman. He hated it. Marco smiled at his woman. She had been beautiful. Her hair was like a wild horse. It was black and primitive. Her eyes stared at Marco as she spoke to the man at the table. The man ordered two beers. She sometimes asked people stupid questions so

that she could look at her husband a little longer.

"Big ones?" she asked.

Marco laughed. She was smiling at him. She looked at the man and the girl. Marco remembered that he hated them. Now he hated them more because they were interesting. They were interesting enough that his woman spent precious seconds looking at them instead of him.

His woman went back into the bar. He sighed and started to work again. He couldn't look at the man and the girl. He threshed the wheat and pretended it was the girl's hat.

The beads on the curtain stirred. Marco's ears had learned the sound. He looked again at the bar. The woman was holding some beads in her hand. Marco's knuckles turned white where they held his scythe. He wanted to scream. To curse the heat and the dust and the girl and her man.

The man called out and his woman came again. She

looked just as startled as Marco at this second chance. The man ordered two more drinks. They were expensive. His woman asked him another question.

"Do you want it with water?" she asked.

Marco and his woman were both smiling. The man and the girl were talking. They were deciding if they wanted water or not. Marco waved at his woman. It was his signal that she had asked a good question. They would laugh about it over their dinner tonight before they fell asleep. His woman left and brought them their drinks.

Marco started to work again. He didn't hate the girl so much now. He still hated her hat. The girl and the man were arguing. She got up and walked around the station. She looked so cool in her beautiful clothes. Marco promised himself for the thousandth time that someday his woman would look like that. Too good for the heat. Too cool for the dust.

The man ordered another beer. It was a good day. He ordered again. Marco was smiling by the time the man and the girl were having their fourth drink. He wanted to talk to his woman more than ever. His woman came out to tell them that the train was coming. She had never done this before. Marco was proud because she was so smart. It was hot. Marco hated the girl's hat. He loved his woman.

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Conspiracy Theories

A comic strip by E.G.



Famous Quotes

Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence-whether much that is glorious-whether all that is profound-does not spring from disease of thought-from moods of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect.

-Edgar Allan Poe

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have a personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

-T.S. Eliot

But all art is sensual and poetry particularly so. It is directly, that is, of the senses, and since the senses do not exist without an object for their employment all art is necessarily objective. It doesn't declaim or explain, it presents.

-William Carlos Williams

The Solitude of Glory

-Jake Christensen

“There's still nine minutes until the clock strikes midnight General Chamberlain. I think we've made good time,” the young locksmith said anxiously. He had met Chamberlain in town, become aware of his status as a veteran, and offered to escort him to the battlefield that evening. Now they had arrived at the appointed spot, halfway up the crest of a rocky hill, almost two miles south of town.

“Thank you, Mr. Chamberlain, for allowing us to accompany you here,” the locksmith's wife offered. “It is certainly not the place we would have thought to welcome in the new year.”

Still he was silent, rapidly descending into a world of memories that belonged only to him. He turned and acknowledged the locksmith's beautiful wife. They both seemed very young to him.

“I very much appreciate your assisting me on such a cold evening. I shall meet you here in a half hour if that is fine.” His words were said with a genuine courtesy, but did not carry a tone of request.

“Yes, General, that should be fine. We will be over on the north side of the slope should you need anything.” Every word of the admiring young locksmith seemed to exude awe at having accompanied a war hero to the spot of his victory. But, being anxious not to get in the way, he took his wife's hand and walked hastily away from the carriage.

Once in solitude, with only the breezy chill of winter to court his senses, Chamberlain began to make his way towards the summit. As he climbed, he could feel patches of frost give way beneath his boots. Often a leafless branch would tickle the sleeves of his overcoat. With every step, nature rose up to meet him. Snow had not fallen in at least a month, so the hike, though taxing, would be reasonable.

The cold also aggravated his old wound. From hip to hip he was still aware of exactly where a bullet had ripped through his waist 35 years prior. The wound had not been received at the battlefield he now visited. It was

the token of a later struggle. However, by virtue of its severity, it held as high a place in his personal memory as this battlefield—the place historians had appointed as his hallmark. During an awkward step over a large rock, a sharp burst of pain speared into his abdomen. With it came the first clear memory.

Only a colonel then, he remembered. Dressed in a faded blue uniform, he had carried his regiment's nag headlong into a stiff wind of bullets and shrapnel. There had been no fear, even after collapsing to the ground with a seemingly mortal wound. Battle inebriates a man with courage, he reminded himself. He had come to believe that the horrible wound was God's price for enjoying battle. What a paradox, he thought, my greatest hours, and my darkest moments, one and the same. The thought almost made him chuckle.

Chamberlain glanced at his watch, checking the time. His thought shifted to the locksmith's young wife. She had been so attentive as he described the significance of this battle, during their ride from the town. Yet he hadn't seen one particle of empathy in her eyes. Perhaps empathy was beyond her young reach, he thought. At least one or two young ladies in town had asked to accompany him to the battlefield as well.

Chamberlain doubted if they cared much for the significance of his journey though. He fancied that they wanted the war hero's kiss when midnight arrived. They were of a generation for whom New Year's Eve was a lime to look forward, not back. And if they had any true appreciation of the passing era, he did not detect it. To him, latent fascination in no way indicated sincere interest. He chuckled again, stilled only by his need for breath to climb.

The minutes were passing by quickly now. The summit, only a few yards distant, was still hidden by darkness and the Pennsylvania forest. He could see more moonlight, wading in pools on the many granite monuments. After all these years, the hill still entranced him. With each visit, the feelings it produced grew stronger. Each time, the illusory images

seemed the more eager to welcome him back.

Now the memories of fallen friends came flowing forward. He thought first of Vincent, his superior officer at the battlefield. The man he had held in such admiration was struck down early in the fighting. “Death cannot rob dignity of its heirs,” Chamberlain declared to the night. For him, Vincent still stood firm on the crest of the hill.

In the panorama of memory, which night could not overshadow, many more of his friends appeared and disappeared in an order that was quite random. Images of the fallen were always the strongest. Some fell in unison, to a seemingly surgical barrage of bullets. Others fell like Hamlet, with the audience paying attention to their every dying twitch. Though he occasionally courted sorrow and loneliness, they did not accompany him on battlefield visits. In these places, only reverence and solemnity were present.

Suddenly the flood of memories dissipated from view. As his night vision came into focus, Chamberlain emerged from a distinct line of trees on the crest of the hill. In front of him, a valley of boulders stretched down and away from the summit. There was enough moonlight to make out a clear view of the granite landscape as it dipped and rose in random patterns, almost like turbulent sea. The vast valley of stone, nothing but cold and grey, hardly seemed to fit its adopted name of Bloody Run. He stood there in silence, reminiscing a bit. Mostly he just gazed as the cold breeze blew across his face, causing his mustache to quiver slightly.

While he stood there, trying to catch his breath, his thoughts shifted inevitably towards the future. The optimism of the young couple struck him again. Did they realize their tiny place in history? Could they? Perhaps the young locksmith would fight in a war of his own someday. He knew the countries of Europe were ever at odds, even more turbulent than the opposing

Glory

continued from page 8

states had been a half century ago. And America, like a philosophical Rome, reached outward-if not for land, then for causes. But Chamberlain also sensed the country filling with an idealism not all too healthy. What opportunities awaited them? What risks? Would he tarry long enough to know any of them? Or would he only belong to the decades in which history had given him tenure?

The end was closer than the beginning. That he knew. Around him stone memorials suggested a generation who feared being forgotten. Perhaps, he considered, his story had been told one time too many. The young ladies in town did not think so. He chuckled again. In his old age he had become more of a ladies' man than in his college days.

The first sounds of the new year interrupted his introspection. In the distance, he heard a gun fire. A second later he heard several more. The warrior within him moved instinctively towards the sound. A little further down the hill individual voices could be discerned. Nearby, a joyous laugh came from the young locksmith and his wife. Chamberlain glanced down at his watch, which still declared, if only by a minute, the old year.

Around him the vivid memories seemed to retreat into the forest, leaving him alone. Before they could dissipate completely, he spoke out loud, hoping to be heard by Vincent and the rest. "Happy New Year, my friends." And then, his own watch concurred with the celebrating farmers. It was 1900.

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