Essence fine art and literary magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who share and express personal feelings, philosophies, and views through artistic media of photography, printmaking, painting, life drawing, poetry, and short stories. The works within are considered by the Essence staff members, some fine examples of creative art and literary expression. The Essence staff expresses appreciation to all its contributors and readers for sharing in this student publication.
THE WORST IS OVER

Aaron Smyk

Thomas Smith was a bookish young man. He dressed very sharply and carried a parasol with him wherever he would go. He would say that it was to keep the stars from crushing him when they fell.

At the moment in time currently being written about, Thomas was exiting the library. It was raining, so naturally he took out his parasol. As he began to walk, he noticed a girl who had also just come out of the library. He noticed she had brown hair, corduroy pants and a black jacket. However, she did not have an umbrella.

(And they'll read it and they'll all think, "Oh writer, you're so novel, what clever ideas, I saw them coming from a million miles away." Abandon this, it's going nowhere)

Because Thomas was such a gentleman, he approached the young lady and began to walk next to her, holding the umbrella over her head. He asked her how she was doing, she replied that she was fine, and thanked him for his kindness.

Thomas nervously shook. She had such a lovely mile. He opened his mouth to win her over, but all he could think about was saving enough money to buy a new car. It also occurred to him that he had no idea when his mother's birthday was, but he hoped it was not today.

"HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE UNTIL THEY FALL?" THE YOUNG LADY ASKED.

"UNTIL WHAT FALLS?"

"THE STARS, OF COURSE"

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME?"

"..."

AND THEN THEY FALL.
"...I AM FALLING AND FADING FAST..."

Daylight
I see that horizon
In your eyes
It stretches
Reaches
For my hand
And I take it
Because I trust
Because I know
Because I see
Truth in you

Daylight
Your rays
Touch my face
Wipe away
The tears of old
The memories
The pain
And replace them
With renewed sense
Of self

Of love
Of dignity

Daylight
Your force
Crushes
These old walls
Carefully constructed
Around my heart
And put
In their place
A hope
A peace
A sweetness
And a love

Daylight
I am falling
And fading fast
Stumbling
over words
And smiling
absent-mindedly
My heart beats
In rapid time
When your hand
Touches mine.

"...BECAUSE I SEE ..."

Daylight
I see that horizon
In your eyes
It stretches
Reaches
For my hand
And I take it
Because I trust
Because I know
Because I see
Truth in you

Daylight
Your rays
Touch my face
Wipe away
The tears of old
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And replace them
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Daylight
I am falling
And fading fast
Stumbling
over words
And smiling
absent-mindedly
My heart beats
In rapid time
When your hand
Touched mine.
I walk through the woods with a feeling of horror.
At times I'm controlled, controlled by a strong, wretched spirit.

As I look up into the sky, all I see is darkness.
These spirits live within me, playing with me.

I wonder if we are actually alive.
Is it a sign?
A memory from my past or a glimpse of what is to come?

As clear as a nightmare, but where does it go?
Like a droplet under the bleeding.
Is it a sign?
A memory from my past or a glimpse of
what's to come?
As clear as a nightmare but withers away
like a droplet under the blazing sun.

Is it a warning?
A red light flashing like a traffic
light for my life.
Or a sign pointing me in the right direction?
Useless clutter in my mind or needed for my
own protection?

Is it a vision?
A forewarning, a premonition?
The meeting point of the past and the
future's head on collision?
Have I seen the glitch in time and space;
Has my mind known this place?

What is de·ja·vu?
Shakirah Bey
untitled

Julian Payork

The unconcerned sun
Beats down on sandy soil
Daring to try the unprotected,
Not a child is left indoors
As the masses retreat to an oasis
Of mindless tanning and surfing.
Briskly attempting to keep up
With my giant elders,
I trace my parent’s footsteps,
Dunes ahead of me.
A naked speck of pure white sand
Requests my presence
For medieval fun of
Castles,
Dungeons,
And plastic fork and pails.
Fun filled hours
Upon hours pass me by
And more unoccupied sand
Beckons my call.
But my skin has reddened,
And the sun’s rays are starting
To retreat to their own haven.
I glance up at my namesake
And hand over not only the plastic,
But the reigns to this kingdom of sand.
A present for the sweetest of days.
You’re not here,
And the image of you
Tucked away safely in my mind
Grows fainter by the day.
Time is gradually stealing you away.
Please forgive me,
Your eyes aren’t blue,
But I never was your girl.
I catch your scent sometimes
When the waves crash against my feet,
And heaven slowly slips through my fingertips.
Glancing up at the naked trees,
Another reminder of the lingering cold and ice,
Awaiting their arrival
Until Mother Nature decides to clothe her kin.
I count the days religiously,
Ninety-seven more and I’ll be there
Hoping to see your face.
And if you give me the chance
To get close enough to know your taste,
I promise you that I’ll never forget
Your eyes are green.

patiently Waiting
Juliann Payonk
OR

MAYBE

NOTHING

Andrew Januszak

Or maybe nothing, regardless I don't feel like I can trust anything anymore. I feel like like I've been punched in the gut, or maybe the hippopotamus. A star is a concrete phallus, stay on the ground but don't dote on the dappled mailboxes you passed fifteen minutes ago.

Rebar.

Elasto commando. Shrink rap the umbrella's foreskin. I just need a drink and a time-machine. I bet everybody would say that if they could. So I can go back to the farm and the days when I was a tree, when I was a sign on Sharadin road, when I would spend my time diving for gestures in bird shit. Pass the moon. Eliot was a cockroach right? No? Gluteus Domingo.

Right as ring I drink for elephants and playgrounds. I was just about to go to bed. Bryn thinks he's alone but he's wrong – he's got paper towels, diaphones, and the goddamned refrigerator.

besides who needs jumping? Linoleum doesn't fit

oh, wait linoleum equals new developments.
that willow tree
i've seen it before
it's there in my lifeless days
and haunts my dreamless nights

i often see it weep,
that willow tree
i cry with it
erasing all hope in me

that willow tree
i've seen it
i won't someone help
it's there in my lifeless
screams, i hear it
and haunts my dreamless
that willow tree
is dying slowly, slower

i often see it weep,
that willow tree
its branches reach for the
ground
which once gave it life
that willow tree

erasing all hope in me
that willow tree

won't someone help
its branches reach for the
ground
which once gave it life
that willow tree
SHATTERED
ETERNITY
Sarah Brown

a silence surrounds that which noise once encompassed

A shattered soul bleeds like a heart once loved

Nothing lasts forever.

Eternity is only a conscious thought

For what lies beneath is untouchable by human hands.
Relentless efforts to loosen my grasp on insecurities
Is not by any means an easy task.
Ignorance plays a part, but only a minor one.
Fear plays the leading role.
To be that knight in shining armor
To be that king who will loosen his shackles and rise above his people
Is a time passing opportunity.
To believe in what is true, is to believe in what is real
Just as I will vanquish to the stars
All that puts love to shame.
Degrading pursuits of finding peace is an idea that holds no hope.
A lack of meaning and potential escape all that is promised.
But for all that I know
I know that nothing lasts forever.
Remembrance of what I once felt, heard, and touched
Is at best all that seems real.
Because in the end
Whether it be through hollow promises
Or through the potential of love and hope

Nothing lasts forever.
OIL AND WATER

Jodi Carbett

My father once pumped gas for Mohammed Ali in 1978 when OPEC sheiks shut off the faucet to their fossil fuel. Jimmy Carter, the Peanut Man, kept smiling despite his bad luck. Ali gave my dad two one-hundred dollar bills. License plates had to end in an odd number on that day; Ali’s shaded black limo flashed an even number. Dad bought us the window outfits at Junior Colony.

So, during those dusty summer afternoons, mysister and my bare toothpick legs dangled from the station wagon’s roof while we counted cars snaking through gas-fumed mirages on Route 183. We believed in black-limos. At times, admittedly, we grew bored and pitched stones at Barbie doll martyrs. But before our sandwich suppers, we became little nuns praying that the oil would not run out like in the Hanukah miracle.

I learned about money and oil at ten-years old. I am America.


I believe in clean water. I am America.
UNTITLED

inky black robe of stars  Catherine Hefferan
wrap around the city
amber glow of huddled
figures
cobblestone & sweat
handsome Johns of tall persuasion
dance with Janes of pearly skin
dare they let the secrets of the other
lover in
doors held tight with unspoken
wants
baby cries for fear of need
noon sleeps alone tonight
secrets hidden in
hearts unknown
a spider tramps soundlessly
across the kitchen floor

crack of pale blue moonbeam
whispers near the door
silent tears
silent fears
all is kept inside
forgotten psalms, childhood games;
and wickedness reside
untitled

Catherine Heffernan

If I could have prose flow
forth from my mouth like
soft tulips onto outstretched
hands
and yards of delicate cotton tulle
to be worn,
radiant and glowing
the juxtaposition of heart and
home lays on the kitchen table
one solitary fluorescent lightbulb
illuminates the heavy muted silence
bursts into static noise
pulls on the heart but not in my mind
which is still wishing for
soft tulips and pinky flower prose
THAT WILLOW TREE

that willow tree
I've seen it before
it's there in my lifeless days
and haunts my dreamless nights

I often see it weep,
that willow tree
I cry with it
erasing all hope in me

that willow tree
I've seen it
it screams, I hear it
that willow tree
is dying slowly, slower

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that willow tree
I've seen it
it screams, I hear it
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is dying slowly, slower
Carissa Capwell

Simple yet beyond description
Love is the basic component of life
A word that was a mystery to me
I began to doubt its existence
For maybe it was just a legend
Made-up by magical fairies
Or an evil game to taunt our hearts
For it was never real

Then suddenly and without warning
I came to realize the truth of it
For it did exist yet often remained hidden
By the eyes of a shallow soul
Cause most when they look at another
Only see the shell of the person
And not the feelings they possess
Nor the dreams they envision
Nor the fear they try to hide
Nor the love they ache to share

My confusion disappeared
As I looked deeply into his eyes
And my pain turned into hope
As he said “I love you” for the first time
But I did not reply to such a bold statement
And he said he understood my caution
Yet I am sure he could not truly comprehend
That I didn’t know the meaning of love
Or maybe it was just that I was unsure
Of the intensity of love
And how it did change my life forever
In the moment he spoke to me from his heart
I asked you three times:  
my husband, do you love me?
Three times, my husband, with dry eyes, you said:  
oh, yes, my wife, I do love you.

Yet I'm dead no year,  
you cold, unfeeling man,  
when you're married already to some arrogant,  
little hussy, whose daughters you treat as your own,  
while yours lies in cinders and ash.

I asked you three times:  
my daughter, do you love me?
Three times, my daughter, with wet eyes, you said:  
oh, yes, my mother, I do love you.

Now my precious, little dear one,  
you huddle, cold and alone, in the dark and dirty ash  
or on the cold, hard grass of my grave.
You weep while those wenches treat you as a slave  
in your own home while your cold, unfeeling father  
looks on and does nothing.

I told you three times:  
my daughter, you must be good:  
you must have faith and prayer and trust  
in the Lord, our God, and he will reward you.

Oh, my naïve, little dear one,  
you sit at my grave, three times daily you come  
to weep and to pray and to dream of a better, brighter day  
when your prince will come to whisk you away  
to his bright and shining castle in the clouds.

You said three times:  
my mother, I will have faith and pray and trust  
in the Lord, our God, to take care of me and  
keep me from danger.

Now, my foolish, little dear one,  
you are impatient in your faith  
instead you try to make your own luck  
and so you ask of me three times  
for a dress of fine gold and silver  
with which to woo the prince.
Three times I cannot deny you, daughter, so,  
three times I grant your plea.

The truth:

Now look what you have, my foolish girl,  
you have riches and a husband, yes, he has a kingdom, too.  
But, my dear daughter, you are bound by all the rules and standards  
of a class and a society who only oppress you  
and it will wither your fine spirit—the one that  
took you over the pigeon house and up the tree.  
Your days of freedom, my dear one, are as dead and gone  
as your forgotten mother who lies in the grave  
and once watered by your tears.
Lengthy and lavish
Black and tan coat
Spread out on a bed
Of the laziest of daisies.
This devilish paw lies frozen
But a leap away from
Innocent blue foul.
Closed pearls are dreaming
The most magnificent of days;
Pouncing amidst towering weeds
While swatting at now disturbed
Pollen flying through dewy air.
A childlike pile of feathers
Unknowingly near to peril
Continues its sport
While the tiger inside
A jumble of fur
Lies sleeping on a bed
Of the laziest of daisies.
There are moments in which it seems it could be time for the shifting of lies, for the heart to be more afraid. I am frightened, but still ... what has happened to me? And others still.

Mee Arnette
you can choose to admit it
or
continue to deny it
but nevertheless
i know you
better than you know yourself

you can continue to do
what you’re doing
thinking you have
it all
under control
but nevertheless
i know you
and
i can see what you’re doing
and why
even though you can’t

I care so much
too much
and give you advice
to help you out
but
you push me
away
because you think you know
but nevertheless
i know you
even when you think i don’t

you used to know me
better than i knew myself
with every word
every touch
the one person who could
take away all my pain
with a single hug
in your arms
i knew
everything would be okay
because we had each other

even now
remember
always
when you’re feeling
down
and confused
first
look to yourself
next
look to me
because
forever and always
i will know you
better than you know yourself
Inherited a gun
from her mother
it’s an enticing little
Nae West
to tuck inside a garter belt
or under a bed.
She hid it where she sleeps
with one bullet
for one more thing
that frightened her.

Mother’s inheritance
was from a woman
who would not
admit to, or allow for
dreaming.
But, both were seduced
by candy sweet
store front window gifts
from men wearing
white hats to cover a black soul
and each laid down
their generation of
dances in distress,
forming the cavern between
a girl’s sunshine and
an old woman’s rain.
Inherited a gun
that was a widow's gift of
sweet self-protection
and stylishly cool
even in the Seventies.
It laid on the
golden harvest tablecloth
Nana unwrapped
her son's nifty gift
at a Christmas Eve party.
The seven-year-olds
ogled it while
sucking on candy canes
waiting for the fake
Santa to come.

Funny what we remember
when things go wrong.
It was a toy for thirty-years,
and with a pop
they delayed and stopped,
"Daddy, I'm sorry."
Her half-grown grandson
played with the worst
Christmas ghosts
that ricocheted off of all the
living and dead mothers
smoking with
his father's cynically righteous
"what if?"

Inherited fear.
That little weapon
of American pride
and vanity
she bluffed confidence
and hid her white-hot wounds
in the illusions of
tame little toys of
self-preservation.
And in the moments
of any mother's distraction,
she passed on
to her oldest grandson
he peppered acridity of
an old woman's rain.
In retrospect things, they will tear us apart. Sometimes it’s sunny outside but then it gets fucking dark. The monitor hums. Great Saltimbanque. Fan spin hand corymb flat reach ever nefertitti. We stood outside and said have a drink. don’t fix the windows and paint the barn. Have a drink. Explain the multiplicity of destructive discourses and the disagreement between those who make them. Rubber baby. (Not waking state) walked up to a beach that had no sand where the ocean touched it and instead there was just a concrete wedge that led into the abysmal depths; there were skulls everywhere.

Fear is something. This poem would be better if the words could fall off the page when you picked up the sheet. It’s a beautiful day today, just like your face, but that’s just an approximation with thirty eight stupid symbols. Flood. The world turned with shadow and foresight. Watch those binary oppositions we can’t have those. Consequently we can’t have forks and spoons and elephants either. Spontaneous is universal is spontaneous universal. She was sitting on a blanket outside the barn and the police started shooting rounds into the air. I guess because she had a cold. Then erase the last two lines because you can’t recollect, or don’t care to.
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1976 AND BEYOND

Chuma Okafor

In the fourth day of the sixth month
In the seventy-sixth year
Of the twentieth century
An old spirit was freed
Once more from months of confinement

In the lonely path
Of an inevitable school
A solitary learner walked
Mastering nine different lessons
Nine different times
And bearing nine different names

In the first day of the ninth month
In the second year of the twenty-first century
An old spirit was sealed
To the light simultaneously
Here and in the hereafter
Being the ninth among them

Alone I come
Alone I lived
Alone I shall depart