Essence fine arts 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, 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.
Lizards bathing in the grass at night
a young cry, new territories are explored
no longer innocent crossing the bridge
a bridge of uncertainty can be taken only once
never going back, shattered in the moment
these lizards would never be the same
neither better nor worse, just changed
exposed to something new and fascinating
together on a journey, in the moment, only them
the stars are brighter, the grass is softer
the water splashes louder than ever before
clarity of the world, all things seem important
there for a reason, that was before unknown
one time, one place, one destination
known only to the crossers of the bridge
Lazing amidst a whitewashed stall,
four walls embrace daily secrets;
ecchoes of descending rains.

Ceiling stampedes of feet are out
ridden by toe splashing dance.

Sheer-water drops in sync with ROAR
and tile stores thought of incessant
sock heaps, naked pages within.

Paws paint strokes of intent at door,
lathering lashes float knocking.

Tresses lag a faucet’s ceasing,
reflect on Sunday morning trials
of cleansing one’s incompetence.

Imaginary mice scatter
heater, ramparts, edge foam exit.

Stagnant suds mingle with last drops,
frozen exit onsets thwarting
as mirrored steam fills up her sighs.
Dragonfly, oh, dragonfly
Sting me so that I may wake from my blinding stupor.

So in love, oh, so in love
I know not what I say or do.

Held a prisoner in shackles, decisions are not mine.

Captive and intrigued, so genuine, so unique.

I am a toy puppet controlled by thoughts of another.

Gripped firmly by its talons,

mesmerized by utter beauty, I am taken to a state of nirvana.

Thinking of you settles my mind, and drives me wild all at once.

No good can come from us being apart too long.

like a fish out of water, we need each other to survive.

You resurrect my soul from a state of utter chaos and misery.

knowing with complete certainty our travels will never cease

until we are joined once again.

Eternal sunshine and mountain fresh springs glisten from the moonlit starry night.

Everything is opposite and nothing is quite right,

but all is fair in love and war.

Try as I may to win your heart, all attempts appear futile.

Whether to let the tides turn, or come right out and be shut down.

I shall not falter, determined, I am, no one else will do

I need you, I love you, I want you, I love you.

Only you will make the stars shine once more, allow the sun's rays to beat on my skin.

The green grass to play about my toes, and the wind to blow through my hair

The rain never felt so good running down my face, as when I stand next to you, watching you smile.

Still a whole person without you, I am only truly complete with you.
She reminded me of oranges that summer. Ripening in the sun, her skin was citrus-sweet, the roundness of her shoulders glowed like fruit.

Some days she was lemon-lime, shimmering at noon in a bright yellow halter-top and a hint of a smile. I stole pieces of her to savor later:

amber eyes and last year’s green bikini pulled over something new. Round, I rolled her name over my tongue, tingly,

watched her unpeel her clothes in layers, as her hair hung, streaked with orange and gold, as she bent.

I saw oranges. The balls of her feet, kicking over the slope of her spine, her neck dipped as she slipped through a straw.

The roundness of her new thighs, the arc of knees tucked up against her chest. Her cheeks shone, Oranges.

Licking her fingers as pulpy juice slipped into her palm, her short hair turned orange at the tips as she dislodged her wedges from the thick peel.

Citrus hung in the air around her, invading my breath so I swallowed her sweetness.

I thought I had been in love with her that summer, her palpable skin, smile, scent. But I realize now it was just oranges.
It's a Good, Bad Thing... Imagine

It's a good, bad, thing... imagine

john kolbek
Please hurry I need a fix of those words that you spill from ya lips
I just can't resist... to listen
it's like you blew my mind a kiss... these men of poetry I love
I get so weak and I'm a fand for their expressions
it's like they were sent from heaven above
to ease my pain
and turn this angry woman into a gentle dove

Mae Keener

P.S. I'm taken Ms. Del, K. West, Taylor Mali, Shyde, Tone Arcey, and Tallie Kweli
Seriously... can I get a line? Shit, I would wait in line for hours on end just to hear your words
that originally spilled from your pen. I just can't get enough, and I don't want rehab. so if u
thinkin' 'bout sendin me... TOUGH! CCZ! AIN'T GON!
transportable identity conducting middle-management disciplined
pieces to fill puzzles skillfully echoed in hollowed-molded
systems purpose (propaganda) chocolate land constructed on microms.

UNPACKED projected flowersapsed growing doorknobs. Under halogensun — edible — makable steel skeletons pinned together in
frozen January air to digits binary.

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instant access opinionated blog spot by pad melting
Monet under acrylic bridges — search engined reading
counting 74 lily pads (making sense?) crane lifted twenty-
foot two-ton comfort-zoned commercial kilner blocked
white painted square with smart classroom. (movable
Mahoney) desks inscribed grafted — Bob Merley the origi-
nal Rasta — cut both and off limits questioned
brevity interviewed five year foreman recursively explaining
the sinkhole sucking tons of concrete sucking ideas into
ambiguous blackholed cormmates unresponsive
will the middle ground no man land entrenched All Quiet on
the Western Front barbed wire blocking buttlight bells
ring. men run to basement bomb shelters (students
in unpainted lines leave the building as if life was at drilled
note under Gaza Bips arms dealers rich with $32,000
homes painted feet stopping tear — frustrating
failures in class spaces high school castes information
deliberate barriers broken understanding freed
seamless efficient transmitted extracted
from tiny pictures of autonomous machines.
The moon hangs in the belly of the sky, a sliver out not to fill the aching

hunger

of night.

Darkness expands thickly

and pillages the sky,
dirt

leaving the firing moon

a lonely peace left

behind.
A childhood sits behind me like a fading shadow. Walking through the current streets of life at night, I continuously pass underneath alternating street-lamp shining. It’s raining. It’s one of those gray evening days where scenery holds no definition... there is no contrast and everything feels somewhat fuzzy. I welcome you my fare gray day... for I too am feeling fuzzy. Today, my thoughts flutter with your rain absent of defining lines or boundaries. My emotions fall, collecting in puddles similar to your falling drops. Waking through the streets each step I take to avoid these puddles. I step aside deep with a sigh of frustration... for today my feet just can’t get wet, I’m tired. I have no patience for such sloppy soggy steps. But it was during these thoughts that my shadow happened to be in the forefront of my vision— I saw it shifting from large to small and about the time that shadow stood reflecting small on the crystalline concrete image of a reflecting me. I thought about my past— my preexisting life... my last childhood. I thought about it silently in my past. I thought of the days when I sought out each and every collected puddle out there large enough to create a splash. (Back then) I searched for dreams. I chased— unknowingly—discomfort in search of days worth counting as my own. Days worth building muscle, breathing hard and failing tried. These thoughts expanded with every breath I took... but Sniff! I was nearly onto something and I wish I had a pencil and some sort of paper-pad. ... Ooh. SPLASH!!! Fuck this! I’ve stepped inside one more goddam puddle contemplating again my thoughtful puzzles. What is this shit... why am I pissed? All this energy spent on wishing the past did not exist. I have one long list of ongong complaints... Santas, all I wish for my Christmas list this year is...
My green hunk of junk rumbles up the off ramp and towards the small town of Beverly, Massachusetts. It feels late, maybe 11 o'clock, and I've lugged this van of guitars all the way from D.C. I wrapped up a two night gig at a local hotel down there for a few extra bucks. The bills don't stop coming, even with a wife and baby on the way. Doctors say it could be any day now, and I couldn't forgive myself if I missed it.

It's January. In the middle of a frosty New England winter. I slam my hand down on the dashboard several times, cursing my broken heater. From behind me a guitar comes loose, and I reach around to secure it. I've been playing since I was old enough to hold one. It's the only thing I can say I'm good at in my life.

Guitar was always my safe haven, my escape from the ordinary. But it wasn't easy; I spent countless hours practicing growing up. We practiced to learn, I always say.

I roll into the dark empty streets of Beverly, a quaint ocean-side village. Nearing my third floor apartment, I gather my things and park on the desolate street. I hop to the side walk, inhaling the cold winter air. It's a smell of ocean water mixed with sweet bread from the bakery nearby that I have come to love. My wife is still awake when I climb the old stairwell and enter our apartment.

"I didn't think you would make it, and I'm scared to have this baby alone," she says, ironing pants in the kitchen.

"Well, I'm back now. I throw an arm around her and kiss her forehead. "Besides, we needed the money," pausing for a moment, "Why are you ironing this late?"

"Keeps my mind off the pain," she answers. She had opted for a natural birth. With no medicine, the pain must be excruciating. Leaving my bags, I enter the bedroom and sprawl out upon the mattress. I can feel my eyes closing under heavy eyelids.

I see my father. He is giving me my first guitar. It is a recurring dream I have about my fifth birthday. I thought it was the best gift a boy could get. The dream always seems fuzzy and bright in my mind, like too much sun shining in from the window. He reaches over and touches my fingers, how to pluck the strings. He was in love with the sound from the first moment. "Guitar isn't easy son, it takes practice." He would say to me. So I would sit for hours, plucking one or two strings, over and over. Until he would say to me, "We... * * *"
Cold, well, sloppy, grey day how I grew tired living in and out of circumstance to circumstance and bouncing back out of relucant hibernation with all resilience 
mustered. These are the words that come to mind while I ruminate over life, the truth of my consciousness.

"Gabriel, Gabriel!" I've always heard them say, those grey, muffled, background images. I've rarely reached out to touch them. I can't believe in them, I want to believe there is no God, no God, no God, I've seen the way they've looked at me, I've heard them criticize me from 
believing that they feel and think as I do. But I can't, I can't bring myself to believe in a lie. I've seen the way they've looked at me, I've heard them criticize me from

My childhood was comprised of the same soul-perveting situations which either make or break any child of my generation. Mother distant, father drunk, sister mis-
headed to toe, reaction to action. More often than not, I want them to leave me alone, but they don't.

College was no different and that's why I'm here. College dropout extraordinary, just like Kanye. Does that make me cool? I don't know. Everything cool is a re-

slum, a reformed piece of a former movement. These modern day indie kid status, which used to be human prior to having the life and heart sucked from their

stayed bodies by labels, droning and mundane music, and low self esteem. Finally the skinny bitches weren't awkward but, instead, Nouveau-tal. Finally, vision

less became cool via the plastic black Buddy Holly color glasses.

I see all of these negative things because I am the source. I know what being alone, four walls, one window, little library, feels like. Feels like home.

After having been in college, the supposed Haven of Academia, I want to move as far from it as possible.

Once, on a sojourn to Mexico, I was happy and free of the post World War American dream of bondage.
His bed has been unmade for weeks, wrapping him up every night in the incompleteness of what he is not so sure is his life. He sleeps sprawled in the center of the bed while the fitted sheet and mattress pad curl around his ankles. He leaves his blankets in a pile ofalarm-scattered dreams every morning and returns later in a sequence of late-night collapses. So his bed remains unmade.

Several miles away, her bed is a series of right angles: Pillow to mattress, mattress to wall, sheets over corners, blanket to floor. She sleeps every night on the right side of the mattress facing the wall, her knees a right angle to her waist and ankles. She does not use an alarm; her body concludes her dreams at the same time every morning and her first task is tucking her sheets in and smoothing her blanket over her pillow. It is whatever season it is.

November, like a John Mayer song, sinks into the sky and evergreens and poppies show their true colors. She sleeps just a few minutes away from him. They take showers in the same water, so hot that steam fills the bathroom and for a second it is a jungle. They wake up to the same morning air, cold around their ankles. They fall asleep together at the same time every night, her frame bent around emptiness, he is sprawled but centered making room for the no one who is next to him. They dream about each other but don’t know it.

Somewhere far away, her grandmother is asleep, too. Tucked in her single bed, the roommate snores from across the bedside table and silk flowers. The grandmother’s dreams get longer by the night. They have become thick stories that replay her life in chapters: the farm, kitten heels, a daughter, a granddaughter. Tonight she is dreaming about Thanksgiving, it is not for a few weeks, and she doesn’t make the rhubarb pie anymore, but she wants to see her granddaughter. And her dreams are what she wants these days.

In her dream, the grandmother sits at the long table with her granddaughter. The white linen tablecloth glows like the moon. Her granddaughter is beautiful and very, very young, still. She knows her granddaughter does not believe she’s young—she wants to believe she is old. It is true, almost twenty is old, but not when you are almost ninety.

The grandmother feels her eyes wrinkle and quiet moisture grow between her eyelashes. This always happens when she watches her granddaughter, follows her growth, sees who she is becoming. As her granddaughter talks, she spoons crimson cranberry sauce onto her plate. In her dream, the cranberry sauce is bright and burning, on the china plate, it is spooned into the shape of a wavering heart. Underneath the granddaughter’s sweater her heart blazes the same color.

The dream takes the grandmother away from Thanksgiving dinner and into a bright room with tall windows shining ribbons
of light onto

many small, empty tables.

A boy sits at one of the tables. The grandmother knows this.
something college-aged boy would think himself to be a man,
but to the grandmother he is still a boy.

In the dream, he sits Indian-style, but hovers a few feet above his chair. He is reading
a textbook about color and wavelengths and prisms. When the boy raises his head
to smile at the grandmother, his eyes are the color of stained glass, bright blue
and purple and green. The grandmother asks the boy why he is alone,
but the boy shrugs to her as he hovers in the air, and blinks his eyes.

The grandmother knows a look like that. She is almost ninety and she has learned
that at any age, some eyes and wavering hearts will always mean the same thing.
Because she is ninety and because she dreams what she wants, she plucks
the boy from the sunny room and places him in the candlelight table
with her granddaughter.

Her granddaughter's cherry-colored heart swells like a fruit and her eyes
shine blue. Next to her, the boy's eyes glow green and his heart beats
vermilion. The grandmother moves their shy, spindly fingers to
touch each other's. When their fingers meet, their hands grow
together like evergreen trees.

The grandmother smiles and tells them
to wake up.
A Momento for Friends

Juliana Paynek
Mommentary Solace

Sour Girl

timothy john partisiano

Mommentary Solace

Julien Peck

Sour Girl