

Apogee

1997



The Highest Point

High Point University

Apogee

1997



High Point University

Alice E. Sink, Advisor
Veronda Bryk, Editor

Apogee Practicum Staff

Leslie Floyd
Kristen Long
Hala Qubein

Jennifer Gauntt
Kate Mannion
Sarah Ragsdale

John Hollberg
Amanda Paugh
Katy Whitton



All work
© 1997
by the authors

Apogee 1997

Table of Contents



| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Continue</i> by Dann Panchit | 7 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by Jennifer Paulson | 7 |
| <i>A Friendship with You</i> by Michelle Seaman | 8 |
| <i>Sunrise</i> by Juah C. Bernedo, Jr. | 9 |
| <i>I, the boy and the Demon</i> by Jessee Morris | 10 |
| <i>Une Fleur</i> by Veronda Bryk | 12 |
| <i>The Touches of the Sea</i> by Renee Kurtz | 13 |
| <i>The Crossroad</i> by Nasi Kajana | 13 |
| <i>A How-To Guide to Kissing</i> by Nancy Mayfield | 14 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by J. Grafton Chucci | 15 |
| <i>Ode to the Lonely</i> by Philip Carroll | 16 |
| <i>The Voodienne</i> by Sarah Ragsdale | 17 |
| <i>Why</i> by Sean Mintz | 17 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by David Grattage | 18 |
| <i>Love Always</i> by Kathy Castor | 19 |
| <i>I Am</i> by Jeremy Dowd | 20 |
| <i>Emotions of Loneliness</i> by Heather Sittler | 20 |
| <i>Skin Against Skin</i> by Charles Arron Davis | 20 |
| <i>You, Forever</i> by Dann Panchit | 21 |
| <i>D.N.A.</i> by Jason Melia | 22 |
| <i>He's Got the Whole World in His Hands</i> by Estalita Gumbs | 22 |
| <i>Prologue</i> by Sarah Ragsdale | 23 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by J. Grafton Chucci | 26 |
| <i>The Marines</i> by Veronda Bryk | 26 |
| <i>The Search</i> by Ashley Snyder | 26 |
| <i>The Plant upon the Table</i> by Jeremy Dowd | 27 |
| <i>A Modern Proposal</i> by Heather Sittler | 27 |
| <i>Thunder and Lightning</i> by Chris Huff | 29 |
| <i>The Light</i> by Jennifer Paulson | 30 |
| <i>The Murmur . . .</i> by Bryan Lach | 30 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by Kate Mannion | 34 |
| <i>A Disillusioned Child</i> by Robin A. Pedrick | 35 |
| <i>[Untitled]</i> by Andrew T. White | 36 |
| <i>Reflecting</i> by Holi Wynn | 36 |
| <i>Life: Who Should Have It?</i> by Brandt Hansen | 37 |



★
Apogee 1997

Continue

by Dann Panchit

I turned the page of me
Unto the one of us,
And I continue.

I moved on through the book
And I am now speeding
Through my life—
Without you.

I hold nothing on me of you
But our friendship,
And I have no second thoughts
Of the possibilities.
I've pushed through
And continued.

I'm going on
To what will be there for me
And to whatever challenges
I plan to conquer,
Certainly nothing related to you.
I've passed that phase.

It took time for me to love you,
And a lot of time to forget.
But now I can really say:
"You were no more than a friend,
And I will continue as yours
Until the end."

[Untitled]

by Jennifer Paulson

Speak to me of the Dark Velvet Desire,

★
Apogee 1997

of the liquid needle that pierces your skin like
flaming ice,
shooting its precious poison
deep into the depths of your soul.
You never bleed.

Speak to me of the Cold Marble Sky,
of the ice castles that are your home,
hard and cold,
unfeeling, unrelenting,
but beautiful nonetheless.

Speak to me of the Warm Forest Green,
of the blanket that he wraps you in at night.
It breathes life into you,
even as you sleep a deadly sleep.

Speak to me of Everything,
of all that I want to know,
of joy, pain, and sorrow,
and of tomorrow,
when it will be just another day
in Your World,
and the rest of my life
in Mine,
where you never bleed,
and I bleed too much.

A Friendship with You
by Michelle Seaman

Like a gift you send your smile
to me.
You wrap me up in trust, openness,
and honesty.
Your thoughts, they are moving
and deep.
It was destined for two friends
like us to meet.
I adhere to your happiness.

★
Apogee 1997

You soothe my anger.
I relish the laughter
for now and long after.
With your wink and stare,
the world smiles at a friendship that's rare,
for a friendship with you
is a cherished day in the sun.
Your warmth and caring
is comparable to none.

Sunrise

by Juah C. Bernedo, Jr.

Standing at the cliff,

I wait.

The rain falls from the sky
soaking me to the bone.
Are the angels really crying?

And I wait.

The wind chills my very soul
and cracks my heart.

Yet I wait.

The dark clouds look like
and angelic council
waiting to pass judgment.

I still wait.

Would it be easier to step forward
into the arms of Gabriel,
or

wait for her
to arise above the clouds
and disperse their union.

Still waiting.

Patience is my weapon.
And only time will tell.

I, the boy and the Demon
by Jessee Morris

I. Exposition

I am walking along through a valley of green,
surrounded by the path on a poet's dream.
The fields are all combed to a perfect serene
and the sky is the color of the ocean's sheen.

I walk with the comfort of a dear close by,
strolling and rolling as we laugh at the sky.
Her hair is the blonde of dry, golden rye,
and her voice is as soft as an angel's cry.

The thoughts of the boy are as clear as glass
as he stares in her eyes to the girl's tender past.
He loves in his soul where time doesn't last,
his heart fills like sails in the wind on a mast.

The two are clad in their best Sunday whites
and their eyes shine forth like bright starlight—
never the fear of the oncoming night,
which slowly drains away their carefree life.

II. Oncoming

And the fear wells inside as the anticipation grows,

the rumbling in his chest sets him froze.
He is a prisoner of and to his own compose,
as delicate as the petals of a bloody-red rose.

A pinnacle arises from the ground,
spraying earth all around,
lying here and there and about in mounds,
while the realm of evil lays about.

"My love, my child, how high has thee risen?
Above the horizon's widths and depths,
into immortal damnation where my heart has wept?"

III. The Beckoning

I lay below where the ground is torn,
and above rose god's greatest thorn.
Inside my heart did mourn
my loss of feeling—I felt forlorn.

Above lay my dear with blood-stained cheeks;
the sight of her crucifixion has made me weak.
Her body hangs limp and is deadened and meek,
her expressionless eyes are barren and bleak.

The tears flow softly with little remorse,
for I know my destiny has run its course.
The sorrow that I feel bears an infinite source,
where the angels do sing in gentle chorus,

where the lone poets cry and the children are led,
when taken early by the cherub of dread.

The song that he sings I know all too well;
it spills from my lips as I walk from this hell,

on toward the purple setting of the sun
to leave night to cover what my fate has done.

★
Apogee 1997

The early next morn will arise gray and pale,
unmasking the evil that the night had veiled.

Une Fleur
by Veronda Bryk

What if I were a flower
blooming in the spring?
The process would have been
difficult,
with the sharp cold of the
mornings and the trampling of
little animals.
The ground would have been hard
and sometimes too wet
and sometimes too dry,
making my push into existence
somewhat hostile.
I'd have fought the crawling insects from
invading my space
and the flying ones from
stealing my innocence.
The wind would have tried to
knock me down,
and the sun would have tried to
burn me up.
But I'd stand and bloom against the odds
into a brilliant purple or red,
an intense burst of color onto an otherwise
dull plain of monotonous brown or green,
proving that the earth's impurities cannot
keep a strong flower from arising
and making its glorious mark on the
world.

★
Apogee 1997

The Touches of the Sea
by Renee Kurtz

A glance in your eyes sets fire to my soul,
a soft touch as tender as the breeze caresses my
heart;
for one brief moment I am swept away by the magic of
the Sea.

Why do you have the power to allure me?
Could it be your enchanting charm, splendor'd
magnetism,
or is it your pleasurable enticement?

My entire body is drawn to you
like following a sweet, savory path,
propelling and guiding me to dauntless everlast.

Be it the way your waves meet the sand,
kindly, compassionately, almost as if you feel the same.
It is your way of gently holding and passionately
keeping,
for one brief instant you have hold on all of me.

The Crossroad
by Nasi Kajana

Here I am stuck again,
Stuck at the crossroad,
Where many questions are risen
and answers are none.

What am I doing here?!
How did I end up like this,
one more time.
Where is my personality,
motivation.

★
Apogee 1997

Life keeps cycling
and dragging us through
our destiny which
we create.

Yes, we create our destiny,
our fear and happiness.
We create the crossroads
and we get stuck in them.

How do we get out?!
Do we get out?!

It is all by means of
wanting to live life,
fighting to live life.
Being able to see tomorrow,
being able to live tomorrow.

This is the point where
lights of the crossroad change.

Red, red, green, green.
It's my turn.
Left, right, straight, go,
move out of the empty crossroad.

The crossroad of life.
Where I am stuck,
where I have been stuck.
Life lives beyond the crossroad.

A How-To Guide to Kissing
by Nancy C. Mayfield

If you wish to kiss me for the tear upon my cheek
Kiss me also for the tears that I could never weep

★
Apogee 1997

If you wish to kiss me for the starlight in my eyes
Kiss me also for the nights I filled with lonely sighs

If you wish to kiss me for the softness of my hair
Kiss me also for the time these false curls weren't there

If you wish to kiss me for my lips so ruby red
Kiss me also for the times I bit them till they bled

If you wish to kiss me for the smoothness of my skin
Kiss me also for the person that awaits therein.

[Untitled]

by J. Grafton Chucci

A bird takes flight circling the sands of the beach; on the beach a shell is spotted; looking at the shell I can see the rings that make up its very existence. I wonder if the human experience is that easy to read. Do we wear our lives on our sleeves for all the world to see? Is each passing day nothing but a ring of time? The bird circles, swooping down to snatch a fish from its home. I watch as it flies from sight—the fish fighting for life but to no success. Like the days of torment in our lives, we are swept away and left struggling for life. How do we ever overcome adversity; what makes us get up each morning to face this world? I look closer at the shell, running my hands across its surface. Blood begins to trickle from my fingers. The edge I thought to be smooth is razor sharp. Taking comfort in the pleasures of this world can cut deep. You reach out to a kind soul, only to be repulsed by the pain they inflict. I sling the shell and curse its existence. Walking along the ocean, it calls to me as the bird comes back to circle. The tide hitting the sand calls toward it. The waters are shark-infested. Life takes an evil turn and it bites when you feel the safest. One foot in the water and one on



Apogee 1997

the sand, careful never to be too trusting of the allure of the ocean. I feel the sand escaping under the pressure of my weight. The ocean eats away at the earth trying, to devour it. People come and go as I stand there watching the bird circling. Time fades like the sand, never to be replaced. From the womb to the grave is a short journey. From the time we are born we begin a descent to death. Little by little I sink into the ground as the surf pounds at my feet. Looking into the sky, I wonder if the bird is marking my time with his circles. Are those the rings of my life? How can this be? Life is eroding and I can only watch, never really knowing when the ground will swallow me up. Watching as the bird circles.

Ode to the Lonely
by Philip Carroll

I know a girl.
She's the apple of my eye.
Just being near her,
My spirit soars on high,
But she stabs through my soul
As she passes me by.
I want to tell her my heart,
But I dare not even try.
So I just look away
As she passes me by.
Many who know us both
Do their darnedest to try
To bring us together.
I cannot say why.
Alas, they all fail,
Their hopes do not fly,
So I continue to die
As she passes me by.

★
Apogee 1997

The Voodienne
by Sarah Ragsdale

Priestess
you crouch below me,
unaware of my presence,
cold concrete your altar and chair.

Sister,
do you feel the earth spinning
madly beneath you?
Is it the rhythm of
Father's drum
that makes you sway?

Does your magic go with you,
or are you going home to
a lonely place
where no one understands you,
where your magic is aborted
at conception?

Are the voices you're hearing
(and berating)
spirits sent to devil you,
or are there demons
at the bottom of
your paper cup?

Why
by Sean Mintz

My dreams are like space, with no limitations.
Why is it so?
Real life is like earth, war among nations.
Why can't I know?

★
Apogee 1997

There's an anger inside me, I've lost control,
Why can't I see?
Fear plagues my sane mind, gripping my soul.
Why must it be?

I'm on my knees today, loneliness holds me,
Why isn't it good?
Should I find another way, somewhere else to be?
Why, maybe I should.

[Untitled]
by David Grattage

I.
In my enchanted mind I feel a yearn
To fill an emptiness so I kept.
But then a vision in a crimson burn
And onyx jewels, in a dream I'm swept.
Her every step is like a summer breeze,
The gentle touch, the calming sensuous smile.
My heart is locked with a desire to please,
Beauty of poets, gardens paths a wil',
Clouds afloat like heavenly blossoms seeds.
Inspiration in words with a gold,
A single embrace melts sweetest of sweets.
I reach to touch, but the image grows cold,
Bonded to others like two sep'rate lines,
A tragic bliss stays the moment in time.

II.
A looking glass moment in somber fields
Close together but can never touch.
Passion curls, velvet sways with glowing shields,
Lose my focus, cannot get too much.
Though I know they will forever glow,
The soul abyss, when abandonment feared.
Torrent tears in washed away flow,


Apogee 1997

Unbearable hole with spirited sheared.
A sacrificed love to keep the warmth close,
Friendship of smiles, laughs, and tears—but apart.
The evening road, memories in pain dispose,
Morning rays, faith reborn, humbling the heart.
In final devotion and mourned adieu,
Dreams of Eden, I pray God from my pew.

Love Always
by Kathy Castor

If I told you right now, I love you,
Would you change your mind and stay?
I know you don't love me too
Because of the way you just walked away.
How could you just turn your back and leave?
I care for you deeply. If only you could believe.
You left me stranded in the night.
You left me searching for the light.
You've left me guessing what to do,
But it doesn't matter . . . pain is nothing new.
I'll probably never find true love,
Not with this murky rain cloud up above.
The tears have been pouring like the rain.
With a few more drops I'll call it Lake Pain.
I wish I had time for one more kiss.
Your sweet, innocent face, is one I'll miss.
You stole my heart
But remember, you chose to part.
You'll never know how I really feel.
Please remember my feelings were real.

Love always,

★
Apogee 1997

I Am
by Jeremy Dowd

I am the knocking at your door
I am the pounding in your brain
I am the thoughts inside your head
That make you want to go insane
I am the conscience that you fear
I am the nightmares in your dreams
I am the one who stands before you
Or at least that's what it seems.

Emotions of Loneliness
by Heather Sitler

My room exists with its child-like quality in the draft of cold reality for the rest of my life. It provides a safe haven where I will always return for comfort from the unknown and the known alike. I cherish its warmth and its coolness, its darkness and light. The shadows creep forever on the walls. Each corner is a dreamland, never forgotten. Each object within it tells me a different story. The walls have seen my many emotions and have hugged me in the time of need. My dream is to die here, in my own place, my haven, but who is going to marry me and make love to me in my childhood room? Hopefully no one, but I will always have one request upon my death—not to die in a strange place, but instead, to die here.

Skin Against Skin
by Charles Arron Davis

The high cobwebb-ed corner,
and the rage bellow echoes
Frozen in time

★
Apogee 1997

in solitary confine . . .

Meant to cook her dinner—
the butter crisp new potatoes,
and steaming center cut steak.
Blue flowers on the table.

Instead it was the slap of skin against skin,
and the crack of the door jamb breaking under foot,
a knife of broken, splintered wood,
and the rose of a forgotten memory on the wall.

You, Forever . . .
by Dann Panchit

Your innocent eyes
Forever haunting me.
Your enchanting voice
Forever speaking to me.
Your beautiful face
Forever locked inside
My mind.

I can hear you now,
Calling my name.
I like it a lot,
But I hate this game
That you play.
Your hands are holding on to me
When I want to run,
But I don't understand
Because I wasn't the one to leave.

I let you go
When the time came,
But now it seems to show
That you've returned again.

★
Apogee 1997

You, forever within me.
You, forever who I see.

D.N.A.
by Jason Melia

Sunlight and times Crazy G's dropping mad rhymes
days past, years gone fast
truth, lies, Nicole Simpson dies
knowledge brings power and the man of the hour
election, detection, talk of the resurrection
peace reigns violence brings constraints
psychology, biology, a shrinking world with new
technology
regress, contest, a changing time brings much protest
names and schemes, who knows what this all means
fads and trends, this stuff never ends
and old gray poet, back then he'd known it
coke and smoke, our own president took a toke
AIDS and cancer, who's got the answer
Generation X get ready because we're next

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
by Estalita Gumbs

From north to south, from east to west
He's got the whole world in His hands
From the rising of the sun
to the going down of the same
He's got the whole world in His hands.

Who is he?

He is our heavenly father and king
the one to whom we joyfully sing
He stilled the water, He calmed the sea

★
Apogee 1997

He sent his only son to die for you and me
He is God.

He made **the whole world**
with all good gifts around us
all things bright and beautiful
all creatures great and small
all things wise and wonderful
the lord God made them all.

With what?
His hands, of course
And here is where he keeps
the tiny little baby
every living thing including you and me
the sun, the moon, the stars
the things we believe are ours.

We are all **in His hands**
He's got the whole world in His hands.

Prologue
by Sarah Ragsdale

Night seemed to wrap around me, velvet and soft, as I stepped from the stone lintel into my lush garden. The small pebbles of gravel whispered beneath my pink slippers, completely unheard by every living creature on earth. The first quarter of the moon rode above the crest of the old shed where I had replanted and nurtured the roses that surrounded me. Scuttering clouds passed and repassed, barely shading the interior of the sturdy garden walls from the silver glint of its light. My robe floated around and behind me, mingling at my waist with my auburn curls. In the distance I could hear the plaintive bleat of a lamb,



Apogee 1997

separated for a moment from the reassuring warmth of its mother's side. A rustle near my foot bought a fleeting glance—a rabbit or a field mouse, no more, yet it brought on the first finger of doubt. I glanced around me furtively before pushing the low wooden gate away from me and allowed it to swing back on its expensive, silent hinges.

A different world waited for me. The low, modern road carved into the lush landscape before dropping off to my left to the faint dusting of electric light from the village pub over a mile away and the blink of a beacon light far off in the harbor.

Allowing my gaze to drift up and to the right, up the steep hill that crested higher and higher until it seemed larger and wider than any skyscraper or ancient temple, I saw a dim shimmer and pointed my feet and my attention in its direction. It took just a few moments of light, rapid breathing, watching each step before I took it on the uneven terrain, before the dizziness that I had expected began to wash over me like a drug, and the world seemed to tilt wildly for an instant, and then I looked up.

He was there before me, the moonlight shining down from behind him, silhouetting him in my darkness, the illumination belying only his cascading hair, gold against silver, and the inevitable triangle that was his body. The wind that stirred the tendrils of the hair at my temple lifted for a moment as he stood, positively and utterly still, caught it seemed, almost by surprise by my presence, when he must have watched my entire climb.

I could feel the blood begin to drain from my head before I heard it, urgent and tender at once; his voice was unchanged.

"Clara," he breathed, the sorrow reaching out to me from just that utterance. There was no word suitable to describe the total alienation that forced through his lips. Before he had finished speaking that one word, I felt tears slipping down my cheeks and over my nose

and chin to drop forgotten down my throat. Sobs burned, trapped somewhere in my stomach, and I was reaching for him, wanting him more than anything in my life, wanting him indeed more than the air that couldn't find its way to my parched lungs. Just to touch him, to reassure him, and myself, that the pain wouldn't go on, that it was over.

What was over?

At once the confusion set in, and just as I turned my bewildered face to him, the bells began to ring unmercifully, the din echoing in my head repeatedly. I felt them begin to wrench me away, and then it happened.

I felt the cotton sheets clenched in my hands before I was aware of anything else. Dazed, I swam to the surface. Opening my eyes, I found not my moonlit lover, but impossibly bright sunlight and the bug-like digital eyes of my alarm clock, from which came the blaring, artificial noise which had brought me back. I groaned and started to turn over, feeling hungover and drugged. Every muscle in my back and arms was screaming, as if I had indeed pulled myself hand over hand up a steep hill. My heart still thundered in my chest. Reaching up to put a steadying hand over it, as if I could still it, I felt them. Tears. They had poured down, drenching my pillow and somehow making their way to the crevice between my breasts, as if I had sat up in my sleep to rock away the pain.

Like a dull headache, the memory of it all clung to me. The same dream had followed me, night after night, from one country to another, one bed to another, for over eight months, and I knew no more than I had in the beginning about the dream or the man or why he called me, so sweetly, Clara.

★
Apogee 1997

[Untitled]

by J. Grafton Chucci

The blank canvas holds the dreams and
aspirations of all who gaze upon it
Those few tireless souls who dare to
unlock its secrets can conquer the
very yearnings of all who only
choose to let others interpret their
most intimate longings
Where your life can only be expressed
by what you leave behind could a free
soul born with the intrinsic nature to dream
all the hands of few to mark the pages
of our lives.

The Marines

by Veronda Bryk

...Five years in the making a friendship that never works.
It's funny because it should.
So what happens?
What happens?
I really don't think anyone knows or even cares.
So I don't care.
I don't care.
But it's here again.
Go for it.
Go with it.
Good to go.
Gone again???

The Search

by Ashley Snyder

I stopped looking for myself today. I realized that I

was here the whole time. I've spent years wandering, striving, searching to find the "real" me when I only needed to look inside. I was there; even if it was not who I wanted, I was there.

Then I pretended that the real me had escaped and that I had to go find it because the search was more important than the find.

Because the self that was inside did not live up to my expectations. I then realized no one lives up to my expectations. And the lines of "right" and "wrong" that I have based my moralistic self on blur to the line of "how it is" in you, and in me, and in every human who is true to himself.

The Plant upon the Table

by Jeremy Dowd

The plant upon the table
Happy and green
Full of life for all to see
It sits there all day
People come and go
But trash upon the table can also grow
And ruin such a happy thing
One so innocent
One so green.

A Modern Proposal

by Heather Sitler

Hey hon,

How are you? I just got off the phone with my sister Becky. She says "hi." Actually she said, "Tell that boyfriend of yours to take you out more often. You're always home; whenever I call, you're home. It's just not healthy." But I translate that into a regular

Apogee 1997

greetings and salutations. You know how she is. It's just her way. Just because she's miserable, she expects me to be, too. She blames it on Mom. Funny, 'cause I think Mom is the only sane one in the whole family. But let's not get into that.

So, how have you been? Is your boss still giving you trouble? Maybe if he didn't gamble so much his wife wouldn't have left him. Maybe we should introduce him to Becky. The way I figure it, if they're miserable together, they'd be out of our hair.

Have you talked to Jesse yet? He's getting a new car. I don't understand him—he barely makes enough money to rent a shack, yet he wants a new car. That ought to be some car. Oh well.

So, have you decided yet? I mean, not to rush you. I know that you hate that, to be rushed I mean. But it's kinda urgent that I know. Everybody wants to know what we plan to do. Everybody. Even Casey said something to me about it. Imagine the nerve. Like she can talk. She's such a gossip anyway. Remember that rumor about Steph and Dan? That was all Casey. Poor Steph . . . for the longest time she was getting crank calls and recipes for blueberry cobbler in the mail. Who would believe that someone would actually use blueberry cobbler as a sexual food anyway? I guess a lot of people. Maybe if you tell me yes, I'll smother your body in cobbler, too.

I guess really I just wanna know because I'm nervous not knowing. I've never asked anybody anything like this before—it's a big step for me. Not to scare you, but your answer to this could totally change my feelings toward life. I wanted to call you, but a letter gives me just enough space in case you say no.

So, just let me know when you've made your decision . . . I'll be waiting. Just consider this—I'm not

★
Apogee 1997

asking for a life-long commitment. If you say yes and it doesn't work, just cancel your membership to MCI Friends and Family. I won't take it personally. I love you,

Me

Thunder and Lightning
by Chris Huff

Thunder and lightning,
leave me in awe.
Thunder and lightning,
beauty without thaw.

The thunder booms,
the thunder rolls.
Every one different,
the voices of souls.

The voices are heard,
but does anyone listen?
Why do they return,
what is their mission?

The lightning flashes,
the lightning strikes.
They flow through the air;
no two are alike.

One represents danger,
another pain.
Too many feelings
driving me insane.



Apogee 1997

The voices never stop,
the feelings always flow.
They seem to come from above,
but they really come from below.

The Light
by Jennifer Paulson

In the shadowy recesses of my mind, where everything is dark and cold, something moves. I shrink back, expecting a new terror. But no, I hear a noise; a match is lit. I stare at it. It burns with an unusual light, one which I have not seen in a very long time. A gentle warmth starts to grow in the center of me. Strange how such a small flame can produce so much heat. I see two candles standing before the lit match; for so long they have remained unlit. One is Hope and the other, the larger one, is Life. Hope is lit and the match is extinguished. The warmth starts to grow and I reach toward the candle. A smile flickers across my face. Lifting Hope, I relight the fire of Life. The warmth has encompassed me now. The room is no longer dark. Enraptured by the candles, I almost overlook the exiting figure, the one who lit the match. The figure turns, and in the flickering candlelight I see You. You smile at me, then turn and leave. I sit back, content with the memory of a smile. The candle burns on.

The Murmur . . .
by Bryan Lach

Senses . . . as they begin to function after falling silent for who knows how long . . . their journey back to the instant seems to last an eternity. Struggling to regain consciousness sifts away to the whispers of sensations crossing the black void of nothingness into

the present. The sounds, once as if an echo's last breath, now dance in swirls of increasing clarity. It is said the last of the senses to leave the dying is that of hearing. Could it not also be the first of those being born?

Breathing seems animated now That sound, where does that sound come from? It seems to match the rhythm of my laborious breathing. I sense the soft support of the bed below That smell, what is that smell? The pungency burns the insides of my lungs with its sterility. Pressures foreign to me now begin to pound my arms, they don't seem to move. I heave my torso into pulling my arms free they are like tons of steel, unyielding. The sounds . . . much clearer now . . . first the bells and buzzers . . . now voices . . . they speak so fast . . . why won't they slow down? . . . the sounds are so difficult to separate . . . and then . . . The Murmur.

The sense of sight begins with the slightest shards of light . . . broken pieces here and there . . . begin to connect to form bolts of luminance that explode. The harsh reality of the overhead florescents begin to blaze into my being. The cacophony of sounds now swirl unceasingly . . . activity everywhere . . . the soft rubber wheels of the tinkling equipment and medicine carts on the tile floor . . . the constant echoes of doors shutting . . . the hurried commands of faceless strangers frantically passing nearby . . . and now this machine that continually belches air into and evacuates my lungs with a mechanical wheeze the likes of which only Victor Frankenstein would approve. Why can't I move my arms? My legs . . . they, too, have the heaviness . . . they will not respond to my desperate efforts. Green . . . so much green overpowers me. I see my eyelids flutter as they begin to separate. My bedroom isn't green, is it? The blip of the electronic metronome with the lines running continuously across it are now in rhythm with the pulsing in my chest and the sides of my



Apogee 1997

head. Pierced . . . Why have they pierced my veins?
The pain now settles into every joint of my body . . .
Where am I?

And again . . . The Murmur. It now grows from a
faint whisper . . . It blossoms in my ears as the very
sweetest nectars ever savored. So much peace . . . so
much tenderness . . . oh, so gentle. Someone is here
with me. But whose voice is it? It dances in my head,
blending with the essence of a strange perfume . . . so
enticing. My eyes continue to strain to focus. I try to lift
my hand toward this siren. The pain is now
excruciating. Why have they bound my arms by my
side? And my legs, I can't move my legs . . . Why
won't they set me free?

The vision of an angel is something of which I have
only dreamt. Eyes . . . piercing the soul with
compassion and love. Hair . . . flowing in gentle wisps
around a cherubic face. And then the smile . . .
radiating in an instant all that was ever good in my life.
The Murmur now develops into my name. And now her
touch . . . radiating goodness and mercy through its
contact. My hand is now surrounded by both of hers
. . . she whispers my name so exquisitely . . . I want to
stay here forever.

As one first crosses into reality from nowhere, the
brain struggles to recapture the very last memories
prior. Assembling these images into cognitive
information sometimes takes forever in an instant.
Suddenly, the anguish wells up as the realizations
begin to take shape. I am in a hospital . . . is this the
Emergency Room? I ask, for my restricted movements
allow only a skeletal view of my surroundings. The
lights continue to glare their harsh reality . . . the green
of the room mixes with the colors of the monitors and
their never-ending blips and bleeps and lines that
represent my life. "This is the Burn Ward, " I was
compassionately reassured. "The last bed in the
hospital with an EKG hook-up . . . Critical Care was

Apogee 1997

already full when you came in last night." So, I haven't been here forever; this isn't a dream. "You weren't in good shape last night . . . but now you are better." Better? Better than what? "You weren't breathing when the paramedics brought you in. We call it respiratory arrest." Why would I have not been breathing? "We had to start you on all of this equipment after we got you going again." What could she be talking about? I don't seem to remember a thing. "Your mom and dad are waiting in the chapel until they can see you. That's only if you feel like seeing them. I want you to take your time. I will let them come in only when you are ready. I am here to protect you."

The Murmur now became a melody that pealed in my ears like that Christmas so long ago when we traveled to St. Mary's Cathedral to listen to the bells on Christmas morn. "Would you like something to drink? I bet you like cranberry juice, don't you?" What was the name of this hospital . . . and how did my parents find out so soon? "The sheriff's department called to inform them that you were an emergency en route to the hospital, as their responsibility to notify the closest living relative states."

The anguish and terror that engulfed my psyche after learning of the events that led to my present condition were more than I could handle. The only emotion stronger was the pain reflected in my parents' eyes as they learned of my venturing to the abyss and back again. The vision of them still lurks in the darkest of recesses. They are witnessing the tangled web of tubes and wires of the life support apparati pulsing life into their only son.

The Murmur now transformed itself into the tender voice of a charge nurse named Rachel. Her voice and her smile soothe the agony that once embroiled my entire being. I know not how or why I got here! The magnitude of my injuries continues to introduce itself to its new master. The once enormous pain now begins to

subside, much like a low tide at sunset. "The morphine switch is here on this controller for when the pain is too much for you." Rachel, fairest angel of all, can you tell me why I am here? "There was a terrible accident." That voice, once so calming and compassionate, begins to tremble. "You were involved in a head-on collision with a bus load of children on their way to school." What? my insides shriek with disbelief. Why have you become so distant? "The bus careened off of your vehicle and into a gulch beside the road. There were no survivors." This cannot be! How could this impossible aberration have occurred? "Your blood alcohol content was three times the legal limit, and you were doing more than twice the posted speed limit. Seventeen children will no longer spend Christmas mornings with their families. The driver, also lost in the accident, was the single mother of twins; I think they were nine or ten."

As her Murmur turns into a howling roar all around me . . . Rachel stands up and pierces my soul with the eyes that now blazed, not with the compassion of earlier, but with a new and horrid caste. As she turns to leave me in my self-induced rage and escort my parents into the room, I hear another Murmur from her. "I hope it was worth it." Or, at least I think that's what she said.

[Untitled]

by Kate Mannion

My thoughts are unclear and distorted;
An enlightening may be too hard to take.
Ideas and pictures running rampant,
making me suffer when I wake.

I long to board the train of thought
which exits at my station.
The endless tracks lead my distant mind

towards unwanted contemplation.

Stalling and stopping at every turn,
I struggle to catch up.
My mind is racing, my heart's pace is quickening.
My body wavers and then wakes up.

A Disillusioned Child
by Robin A. Pedrick

The things I held so precious
I find are not what I thought they were.
The people I thought were gods
I see are only
Ordinary people
With their human faults.

How could I have been so blind?
Was it an enchantment,
A spell cast with wondrous magic,
Or only wishful thinking?

They say that this is growing up,
But if growing up hurts this much,
Why can't I stay a child?
Is that so bad?

I cling to my happy world of fairy tales,
Knights in shining armor,
Gnomes, trolls, dragons, and unicorns.
A world where good triumphs over evil.
Always.

I fight to hold on,
But I feel it slipping through my finger tips
As I am forced to enter
Another world

I don't think I'm ready for.

[Untitled]

by Andrew T. White

I've seen what is in my mind through the doorway of my dreams. The wicked sights and twisted thoughts are never what they seems. The flashes of light, the images of lovers. Never a true face appears, always some other. The skin peels back, exposing the flesh, bone, sinew. Does this mean what Hell had made is now born anew? Imagine the terror of seeing a body of bloody muscle before you. The lipless smile and the bloodshot, lidless eyes, the chattering of teeth. What fictitious shadows that my mind, like a kettle overflowing, spews onto underneath. The picture of a kid with his hands pulling his cheeks to the side, exposing the teeth and gums, pointer fingers tugging at the flesh of the eyes, making a grotesque face as he drums. Making a pitter-pattering against the constant chattering, the torturer torments and vexes my dreams. But as I said, the death in my head and the chattering you will find is not always what it seems.

Reflecting

by Holi Wynn

I reflect . . .

Time passes and those
moments are gone

Never to be retrieved, only
remembered, only reflected upon

From each moment, another
is born

After each step another follows,
and another . . .

★
Apogee 1997

Continuously moving, but
never am I lost
The path is always there,
behind me
I can look back, my
reflection is there

Life: Who Should Have It?
by Brandt Hansen

I have a deadly disease
but I will never die of this disease.
I am 49 and waiting to die.
I want to defy
the disease that put me in this cage tearfully.
They found a cure for my disease 30 years ago.
Wearily, we are allergic to the cure; my relatives were
the first to die
from the cure. Now I wish they would give me the cure
to see my own demise; my name is John Jones I have
been a lab animal for 49
years. I have AIDS and it is abominable.
What about all of us who sit here unlawfully in
cages while they wait for us to willfully die!!!!!!!!!!
I am a chimpanzee the 20049 please kill me
I beg you!!!

1900-1901

...

...

...

...

...

...



