Writer's Bloc

Fall 2013
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Dearest Reader,

Welcome to Writer's Bloc. If this is the first time you've ever seen it, then congratulations! You've just picked up one of the most interesting publications you'll ever encounter. Writer's Bloc Literary Journal is a semesterly publication designed by an amazing group of undergraduates at Cornell University, each of whom cherish that which lies within. But when we talk about “that which lies within”, it indicates more than the poetry, essays, and short fiction we pack into these pages. That which lies within is the fire of the mind, the fire of life that makes up the core of each and every person whose eyes graze these pages, and all of those whose do not. It is that motivation we feel, that urges us to feel, hear, tell, and understand, and it is something we know is potentially coming forth from the core of each and every person.

It is the sole reason this publication exists: to provide a medium through which this particular quality can be, but in a special context. Because “that which lies within” can also be something entombed in a cage, in whichever metaphorical or real sense you wish to choose. And for this reason the drive of Writer's Bloc itself is to exist as a creative outlet for fellow Cornellians, the ones who study from Auburn Correctional Facility as students in the Cornell Prison Education Program.

If you don't know of CPEP, then you've likely just discovered two amazing things today: a program that offers one of the most noble, soul enriching gifts you can bring someone (the gift of a quality education for people who have zero access to it), and a publication that is interested in showing off to the world
the powerful humanity that lies within each and every person, including those
who many people have been socialized to ignore. That which lies within can be
a furnace, a prison, a forest, a lie, death, or the softest infinite murmur of love.
It can be the enemy, or it can be the righteous indignation that keeps the
timber at bay.

The issue you are looking at received its pieces according to the prompt the
Writer's Bloc staff decided on earlier this semester: If you had an arch nemesis,
who might they be? What might they be like?

It is just a general idea, meant to be open-ended and to prime the minds of our
readers and writers in a fashion that welcomes us to a perspective we may
have never considered: one where our enemies don't define us, even if they
are us, and instead are products of our own perceptions. From the staff and
friends... we thank all of you and look forward to another good year!

Shane Kalb, President
The Staff

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Cayuga and Auburn Correctional Facility Administration and Staff

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Get Involved!

Visit our website:  
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Quentin Lewis
Hey, put extra sauce on those two big macs and make sure there's lots of salt on those fries and super-size everything. Don't forget, NO ICE in the Coke!

Now, listen Baby bro, that dude Ski is my worst enemy, I don't want you on that block no more. Ski may try to get at you to get at me, you understand that?

Why do you eat that garden-salad crap, anyway? If I ate that rabbit food I'd be throwing up all night, cuz you need real food in your gut before that Ciroc starts flowing. Aw man, where's my damned cigarettes at? Shoot! I left'em at the house. Do me a favor, run in this store and grab me a pack and keep the change for yourself. Oh damn! Look at that shorty over there, I'ma try to get her number while you in the store, take your time in there Baby bro. And here, take my phone in case Sharlene calls. Tell her I'm busy taking care of lil John's birthday cake order like she asked. If one of us don't answer she'll swear I was wit Ski's lil sister again and you know how crazy Sharlene can get.

Yo! That honey was all up on me, she wants to hook up tonight. I know lil John's party is tonight, but as soon as things wind down I'm gonna find a good excuse to get out of the house, you know what I'm sayin. Whatchu mean you wanna walk home from here? You want exercise? You gotta be kidding! Whatchu mean I'm bugged out and Ski ain't my worst enemy? You can't be serious. And why the hell do you keep telling me to look in the mirror? There's nobody behind us, Baby bro!

STOP! Calling me Baby bro, I've had enough already. You really can't see without pointing every little thing out to you—can you? You're at risk for high blood pressure and diabetes, yet you continue to smoke, your diet's terrible, you never exercise, and you're always drinking. Forget about the drug dealing and guns you carry around and the constant cheating on your wife. Don't you see I'm different now? I 'm a man who exercises regularly, attends college to be a dietician, and only have eyes for my wife. I'm not your Baby bro anymore. And if you still haven't figured it out, to find your worst enemy all you have to do is adjust your rear-view mirror.
Wake
By Lucas W. Whaley

A vacuum which tugs me
The enemy forces me in
Towards its horrid blank abandon
Twisting and squeezing
The enemy envelops me
Crushing until I am all but empty
Vaporizing what’s left
The enemy incinerates
Reveling in the vacancy it creates
The enemy is a spectre I can’t fight or see
Because
The enemy is this absence where you should be
Karmatic Law That Binds

By E. Paris Whitfield

Nemesis… Frienenemy,
We would surely share the semblance of the same smile…
Only—my eyes would shine with sincerity,
While yours would smolder with fragments of envy.
Nemesis,
Frienenemy…

We’d both travel, and carry arm loads of life…
however, I will continue to climb those barriers
You’ve se, hoping to reach those distant high roads, with my head held…

Nemesis, Frienenemy…

Instead of praying you’d have a slice of this misery, pain, suffering –
Valley of Death, you’ve sent me, to.
I will continue to persevere… And live each moment of the day, as if
those freedoms I seek were already here.
Without seeing, I’ll know you will clumsily stumble on those low-exitless
roads in fear…
Hearing, from beyond those graves, whispers of the truth, being sung
into your ear.

Nemesis, Frienenemy…

For ever single year that you’ve stolen…
It shall be repaid by future generations – of yours, yet to be born.
Its Karmatic Law that you have sowed.

Nemesis, Frienenemy, until you ask for forgiveness, none will you have,
And you’ll remain hidden in the webs of your lies you have woven…
Those exact same ones you’ve set for my demise.
Yet, regardless of you—I am still free holistically, and I am alive.
This is how I can still wish you well… In spite of who you’ve become,
your soul should not have to pay the price,
by burning in Hell’s afterlife.
Eventually, for me, you’ll become a vague memory…
But for you, Nemesis/Frienenemy, in your mind – I’ll be everywhere,
I’ll be in all you do and see…
I've broken a few mirrors now and then,
By luck, by fate, or accident.
I've seen enough, whichever way,
To know the face
I find there for commonplace.

No enemy, or at least not a proper nemesis.
I can be my biggest obstacle,
God knows I get in my own way,
But it's not the same.

A nemesis throws down the gauntlet,
Trips you, slaps you, draws first blood
Challenges you, insults you, mocks you to quit
And wherever you go there's no running from it.

But it makes you better, stronger.
Rise to the challenge, fight back,
Not the glass but something real.
A nemesis makes you do and makes you feel,
And sometimes you even win.
time pushes time ahead, again
joyous festivities anew
reviving spirit
-Nathaniel Washington,
May 2013, Auburn, NY

phones, commotion, wind, order
pounding concrete with no rest
day one, day two, three
-Nathaniel Washington
May 2013, Auburn, NY

howls under the moon
been lost from his pack for days
his call goes unheard
-Omowale
7 May 2013

it’s cold
but she’s hot
standing in line
-Jamel Murphy

leaves fall, the wind blows—
she holds on tight to her purse—
he gives her a smile
-Michael McCoy

the skies are gray
I can’t leave
and you can’t stay
-Demetrius Molina
7 May 2013

aged—tasteless kisses
wind blowing, cold heart slowing
consume winter mist
-Raymond VanClief

smoke drawing a crowd
feet shuffling and stomachs full
surface for fresh air
-Jason Bethea
the sun is on fire—
sweat accentuates her frame—
he can barely breathe
-Michael McCoy

a long bus ride
with heavy restraints
a gloomy summer day
-Demetrius Molina
7May2013

flowers start to grow—
he reads a letter and cries—
he’s making a rope
-Michael McCoy

electricity
innate pain, great endeavor
wettest summer ever
-Raymond VanClief

a two-way street
on summer’s eve
the bitter with the sweet
-Demetrius Molina
7May2013

can I get higher
than a kite in the summer
in a cloudless sky?
-Jamel Murphy

instead of leaving—
the coldest winter ever
but it’s over now
-Jamel Murphy

tight shirt walks the company
pin drops can be heard
with him, the night knows no noise
-Omwowale
7May2013

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Stranger Than Death

By Lucien Chin

When it’s all said and done and we leave this earth
will it be paradise for us or just corpses in the dirt.
Since man’s inception we’ve questioned where we’re destined post conception.
Our obsession with this question manifests itself in the provocation
of sacrilegious proclamations and religious wars waging
amongst the faithful living of various dominations.

But the answer to that great unknown is unknown.
No one knows where we’ll go
let alone when we’ll go
which is what makes Death my biggest foe.

Death has stolen many we hoped we would grow old with.
His cold touch, grim clutch on those around us leaves us frozen
and mainly leaves us hoping that in this life that we’re sowing
we are able to weave a fine enough stitch in Earth’s historical clothing.

Death is stubborn, there’s no persuading him.
No sense to engage him in empirical debating and fruitless aiming
to get him to practice the practice of being a little more patient.
So let us not indulge in procrastination—why’re we waiting?
Go out and build yourself a legacy
for that is truly the essence of reincarnation.

Take my perspective into your perspective
it is my thesis that you can reverse death
by the beautiful impressionable footprints you have left.
For example, Martin’s marches and Neil Armstrong’s gargantuan steps
will be perpetually followed, which I call the twitter effect.
I seek not to frighten you of death
that is not the matter of my intentions
I'm attempting to stray you away from baneful existence.
Let us not be caged in banality's prison
or look back on our book of life
wondering why the allegorical pages are missing.

Let this oracle be of categorical importance
and not just labeled horse s*!
Let us all swing freely from life's perpetual pendulum
My message to everyone:
Live to be historical and you'll remain forever young.

So Death is my archnemesis, second to none
but his father, Time, is on that list right after his son.
As I sit here alone, just me and my thoughts,
I realize I'm not alone... its me and my thoughts.
Somehow I feel I've been internally scarred,
Surrounded by silenced walls and held captive by steel bars
Steel bars, which threaten my sanity.
Sitting here in thought, I become conscious of my own vanity.
Within me, I sense a small burning that grows into flames.
Sparked by my sudden awareness that you are to blame,
For my shattered dreams and my broken spirit,
For my torn heart... can you hear it?
In my life, your influence was great.
Guided by your voice as if only by fate.
The truth is I tried but I failed
I couldn't keep you at bay... your persistence prevailed.
The shield I put up... you slowly broke through
Seeing in me the same thing inside you.
You knew of my secrets... the ones I wish stayed in the dark,
You knew of my weakness and preyed on my heart.
You would whisper in my ear... softly urging me on,
Telling me to do things that were wrong all along.
You fed me lie after lie without any remorse,
Believing in you is what altered my course,
Into a boy who departed in the wrong direction,
Only to arrive at a life of correction,
With hidden tears from life's lesson.
Reflecting... as I look in the mirror at your expression,
And at that moment I made the connection
I recognized that you are me... inside my reflection
As I sit here alone just, me and my thoughts
Reminiscing on life before the conviction
Feeling like something's missing, through all the restrictions.
So, under these conditions, I ask myself, "Who is really the victim?"
The Fates Loom
By Cyril Winebrenner

Sparkles of blue, in your tear-filled eyes
Heart silent, fairies guide your sight from the skies
Around a clearing to a man’s shadowy path
Ravens screaming, wolves howling their wrath
Into sorrow he screams, wind whipping his wild mane
Loss and betrayal have filled him with everlasting pain
Your heart lurches in your breast, with a sympathetic soul
Never before have you felt love that could make you whole
Now standing there, you wonder, could he be the one?
Wind whispering, your tear-filled eyes return to the sun
In your breast you feel a beat and pray to your god above
Need makes you slowly approach, the promise of unconditional love
Entering the clearing, all sound fades into an eerie hush
Before me you stand, gazing around at nature’s beauty, full and lush
Resting your head against my chest, my arms wrapped around
Eternity before us, if we want it, yet you make no sound
Never again, you promise yourself, would you freely open your heart
Now you stand in my arms, and never want to part
Evermore will I cherish, love and honor you, I give my word
Reality fades with our kiss; the mother witnesses, she has heard
Of the Sun and Waves

By Kimberly Wiggins

Sunny skies
Golden glistening sand
Gentle clashing waves
I hate the beach

Blistering heat
Itchy sand
Salty water
I hate the beach

Sun burns
Sand induced rashes
Grabby aquatic life
I hate the damn beach

Painful peeling skin
Disgusting polluted water
Sand in terrifying places
Why would I want to go to the damn beach

Cancer inducing UV rays
Scorching sand
Freezing water
No, I don’t want to go to the beach

Picnics with family
Children laughing and splashing
Masterpieces made of sand all around
WAIT! NO WIFI.
Fuck that shit, I hate the beach
Sun on my face
Sand between my toes
Water gently, soothingly lapping at my breast
THANK GOD
It was only a nightmare
For a second I thought I was at the beach

Summer sun
Soothing sand
Crashing waves
The beach, I’d love to go
BITCH PLEASE
I hate the beach
Believe

By Christopher Shepard

I have a need to believe– the desire to seek a better stay
I have a thirst to drink my fill– a hunger to have my cake and eat it too
I push the envelope – give birth to ever new possibilities

Rise above the oppressive labels that seek to hold me down
Resolve to absolve all past mistakes and hypocrisy
Sift through lies to gain all kernels of truth

My life becomes the fable to put your children to sleep
For my own hero I’ll look no farther than a mirror
The reflection of a unbroken man standing tall

Intact, creative, remaining ever true
I am beyond the confines of prison walls my steps resound
My concepts challenge the lexicon to capture ideas profound

I will be content with nothing less than all
When my time comes to explore the other side, I will walk with
A purpose driven stride
Between There. And Here.

By Michael Shane Hale

There. Right then my heart opened, blossomed really. Just as the petals gave way to the brilliance of the wisdom of the moment, The pain of shame and disgust made the horse of my mind bolt.

The awareness that I was the one in the news that day, I, society’s enemy.

Under the control of the state, I settled down with the green of condemnation And the mysteriousness of how hands that had their role to play in a death, fumble clumsily with a puzzle piece, a moment in time that cannot be pressed into an orderly display. This piece set all others in disarray.

Entropy and chaos parent remorse (and more mysteriousness of how to embrace this thorny puzzle piece). Its edges are hard and anything not worthy, not authentic disintegrates. No phony baloney, blame games here.

If decisions decide our destiny, was I destined by a single decision or was it by a lifetime of unconscious choices that I had committed the crime?

Dying to the conceit that brings bodies under the control of buildings. Vengeance, that strips away tender flesh as easily as husks on an ear of corn, leaves nothing but a kernel of truth. Planted deep in the sands of time the song of sorrow strings painful truths leading to an epiphany of sorts.

The first break in the bread of affliction is served to me. The bitter sweetness of this unleavened, strange fruit digests and disentangles Needs from tares.

The edges of the puzzle piece dissolve with an act of compassion. You find your purpose and your family in those you serve. Here.
Untitled

By Quentin Lewis

You’re going to destroy my existence
Take me away from my family and friends
   Turn me into dust
Cut me short of breath and health
Destroy my personality
Leave no trace of me
Take me off the planet
Make my kids mourn and mentally scar them
   They will question God
Why must everyone die?
   Fight death!
   The arch nemesis
although you won’t win
your spirit will reincarnate into another body
Prepare to fight death again
   The ultimate enemy
An Elder’s Shame

Golden tresses spread upon the earth
Open wounds, soul deep dragging down
Devotions forgotten by those who used to kneel
Desire which once burned bright, ashes upon the wind
Evil, madness, insanity, are all I am attributed now
Sunlight to shadows, Birth to Death, Peace to Chaos
Sundering the firmament which was my life
All for the jealousy of a brother cast aside
Broken, shamed, and shunned were our goal
Overland, over sea, march and file he returned
Victory assured for his children were forged in his image
Eternal cycles eternally broken, never again to be the same.

Mothers Tears

Golden flames flickering across the earth
Old torments lost to the choir of the new
Demons and Devils overrunning the land
Desire, Devotion, Dreams, all now fallen ash
Ever since his blood flowed onto the stones
Stains upon the soul scorched forevermore
Sins seared upon the flesh with wet lime
Balance case aside to the will of man
Entire lands overrun for the sparkle of a gem
Lost children, Forgotten mothers, enslaved
Only hidden wisdom and weights in gold
Withstood the slaughter of her children

By Cyril Winebrenner