



**Writer's  
Bloc**

**Fall 2013**

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# Letter from the Editor

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 enemy 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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## Get Involved!

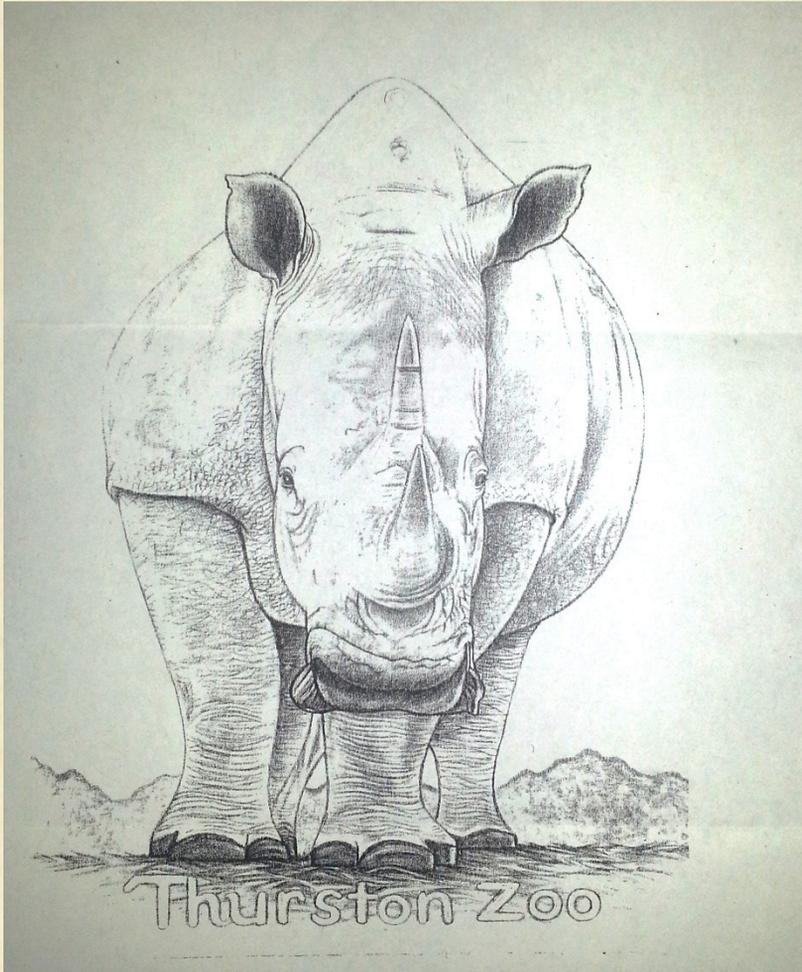
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Quentin Lewis

# Adjust Your Rear-view

By Leroy Taylor

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

6

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...

# What Is Not Reflected

8

By Erin Barlow

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.

# Haiku Poems, Auburn Writing Workshop: Spring 2013

time pushes time ahead, again  
joyous festivities anew  
reviving spirit

*-Nathaniel Washington,  
May2013, Auburn, NY*

phones, commotion, wind, order  
pounding concrete with no rest  
day one, day two, three

*-Nathaniel Washington  
May2013, Auburn, NY*

howls under the moon  
been lost from his pack for days  
his call goes unheard

*-Omowale  
7May2013*

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  
7May2013*

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*

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

-*Omowale*  
 7May2013

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

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

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

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

the sun is on fire—  
 sweat accentuates her frame—  
 he can barely breathe  
 -*Michael McCoy*

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

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

# 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.

## Just Me and My Thoughts

By Demetrius E. Molina

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

14

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.

18

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

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