Out of the Middle

2011 Poetry Journal of the Midwestern Region of Sigma Tau Delta
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Congratulations to the writers featured in 2011’s Ex Medio—the literary journal of the Midwestern Region of Sigma Tau Delta! This debut edition features just a sampling of the impressive talent of students from the Midwest with contributions from other regions. A special thanks belongs to this year’s editorial board for their time and expertise in selecting poems—an absolutely unenviable job when one considers the high caliber of works submitted!

Watch for next year’s call for submissions and an invitation to join the editorial staff for the 2012 edition!
pencil-leg jeans
and too-big shoes
walk down Main Street;
nonprescription horn-rimmed
glasses pan over boarded-up
shop windows
sultry lips sip cigarettes,
cast tiny orange shadows
-
at the old folks’ home
they wonder
were we like this?
but nobody can remember
-
champagne nights and
tequila sunrises
not a care in the world
-
at the old folks’ home
they say
it’s all fun and games
til somebody wraps his car
around a tree
and they laugh
and laugh
and laugh
because they’ve forgotten
what they’re laughing about
-
black slacks and Chuck Taylors
stroll up church steps.
say hi to jesus for me,
says a
scraggly beard
winter coat
Rolling Stones t-shirt
stain on the sidewalk
and the slacks keep moving.
-
champagne nightmares and
tequila mistakes
half-remembered
... somethings.

bless me, father, for i have
sinned
says the black-slacks
Chuck Taylors
white shirt
shadow in the confessional
tell me more -
says the grate.
what do you have to confess -
says the grate.
i forgot.
get out.
say hi to jesus for me.
get out.
-
champagne toasts and
tequila eulogies
dearly beloved we gather here
today
to mourn
... somebody.
-
black suits
black dresses
steep in rain and tears
granite headstones read form
psalms
proverbs
the gospels
somebody reads eliot -
the hollow men.
somebody lights a joint.
-
at the old folks’ home
grey suit
black tie
coaxes a song
out of a beat-up Baldwin -
what a friend we have in jesus.
some sing along.
others can’t be bothered.

Ian Matthews
Tau Theta
Olivet Nazarene University
Footprints of Worthy Measure

Bradstreetian finesse with the word.
Sublime spinstress of the golden phrase.
A discouraged, encouraged mouse in a maze.
Pen you mighty sword.

A valiant, dalliant dance between tree and ink.
Arranging those promised word bouquets.
I know what your mother would think.

What you have set forth as essential,
Now,
Is the rapture of being alive
With a new embryo of language life that is growing inside.

Your compassion for language grew genetically from a mother.
Contractually bound you adopted me, so mine came from another.
You are the Sheppard I always need to call mine.
Too late?
No.
Just in time.
I am never the lesser, yet you are always the professor.

On many terrains you have left footprints of worthy measure.
Too embedded to remove. To thick to mop. Too caked to scrape.
I am of but one of their permanent possessors.

I have been a willing victim intoxicated by your academic sloe gin.
You have ensured that there is at least one other to put the flowers
Mother’s Gone Again

There’s a white-hot flash
and a storm at hand

seconds ticking on the second’s hand

a brush with blues and blushes pink

a dragon breathing who never sleeps
and the house swivels on its seams.
The Implied You

Please don’t come before I am ready.

Please don’t come at night while my eyes are closed, and my brain is busy swimming down a meadow, becoming river, reorganizing my fruit in the refrigerator so friends I haven’t seen in years can come visit, to say goodbye.

Please don’t come while my mother makes pancakes for dinner, like she used to.

Don’t knock on the door dressed as a young boy, in a baseball cap, when the batter is only half-gone and dripping from the spoon onto a hot griddle.

Don’t wedge your way between me and the door, eager for pancakes like all young boys. My stomach growls for that family meal, summer evening, six o’clock, more-play-time-later—the very essence of pancakes.

But if you come I have to share, I might find myself sitting in some stranger’s house having to eat another meal. Their curry. Their out-of-a-box stuffing.

Come, instead, in the morning, messenger for the sun. Slide through the curtain blinds squeezing between the slats and land on the blooming bells of my Shadow Dancer Betty. Crawl over the boy next door, skin freckled, and onto my face. Prize open my eyelids at just the right time. Become the dream yourself. Be the alarm I never set.

Come then, when I can hold you in my brain. Hug you, let you fall out all over the desk. Come when there is pen and paper and I will shower you into being.

Amy Horvat
Alpha Delta Omicron
Marietta College
breakthrough
to be a child once again --
to talk amongst my imaginary friends
while sipping on iced tea;
i cannot tell you what time has done to me.
and now we speak in lowered voices
scattering like sheep
from the noises;
seeking comfort in blood-stained sheets,
waking to strangers,
and the cycle repeats.
Oxford

It’s cold and raining colleges:
Corpus Christi,
    Balliol,
    Magdalen,
    Oriel,
    Christ Church.

Use your skeleton key to open the large iron gates
where a short spectacled man named
Godfrey serves tea at three

They don’t tell you but
there’s an ale crusted pub in every college
so most mornings you’ll wake up hungover
from too much lager’n lime
finding it hard to study art or literature and
when you go to the famous Bodleian Library
you’ll discover it has no books.

In the ominous Examination Hall
entrants wear black caps and ball gowns.
It’s said they had a séance calling up Lewis Carroll
to read Alice in Wonderland.

I’m not sure if he came.
Winter Wear

I was too broke
to buy earmuffs,
and you lacked the cash
for a scarf,
so we grew them, like farmers:
crops of string-curls
clapping over my earlobes,
itchy brown chops
wrapped 'round your chin.
But I’m chopping off
my hair-hat,
and you’re shivering
for a shave—
so when it snows,
you’ll have to hold
my hand tight,
like a glove.

Sarah Haas
Alpha Nu Omega
Southwest Baptist University
Museum of the Oceanic

Legs firmly planted
in a rolling sea
high above the sky
when the world was dark
and my mind was light

Winding through the rooms
of a dark oak museum,
meet not the ancients,
but the vague exhibits
and the roof
which holds the salty sea

The knowledge of its
curious placement
remains unknown
Unless to find people
in vastness where once
there was no one at all

The sea of my dream is
as small as it is large

On the first floor,
there’s a reproduction of
the echoing sounds of a hallway
that exists in another time.
On the second,
a photo gallery
of photos not yet taken

Grand staircases of the museum
lead to its rushing rooftop
and its overhang of water
that never falls
into the green valley below

The sea of my mind is as small as it is large
Its charging waters require unwavering legs
and unwavering feet
firmly planted on the shingles

Ericka Cherry
Sigma Mu Gamma
Rockhurst University
July 4th

I stepped from my cookie-cutter chrysalis
and felt gravel crunch under my bare feet.

Curling my toes, I shouted into the cracked
bell of the world “I think
therefore I am someone just like you!”

No one replied, so I walked down to the
corner Cream and Bean for a cone.

My flabby breasts flopped on my chest.

I pulled stray urticating hairs wrapped in silk
from my cheek. A girl laughed.

I crawled into the grave, rubbed
mud through my hair. I picked up a maggot
and inserted it into my ear.

I told George Washington the world needs him
again. He cracked his back. “The world
is too late to mean much to me.”

Then rigor mortis set in.

Amy Horvat
Alpha Delta Omicron
Marietta College
Art Credits

blur:

Mother's Gone Again

breakthrough

The Implied You

Museum of the Oceanic .......... photography and design by Emily Spunaugle

Oxford .......... photograph courtesy of Tim Stephansen, design by Emily Spunaugle

Footprints of Worthy Measure

Winter Wear

JULY 4th .......... photograph courtesy of Tim Stephansen, design by Ian Matthews