

Welcome to Ex Medio, the journal of the Midwestern Region of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, Enclosed are a variety of excellent submissions, all centered on a unique element of Midwester, culture: the seasons. The sections of this publication focus on spring, summer, fall, and winter, with photography and art submissions accompanying these works in a complementary fashion. I proudly present this publication, representing some of the best writers our region has to offer.

Jeffrey J. Jett II Midwestern Student Representative 2012-2013

## **Table of Contents** Spring "Elephant" by Samantha Crane "The Bridge to Childhood" by Maesha Schultz Summer "Into the Valley" by Tim Arrington "Reflective Sunglasses" by Tim Arrington Fall "Torchlight" by Jared Moore "Fall" by Emily Van Houten Winter "Ghosts" by Jessica Wallace "Seasons of Life and Death" by Samantha Crane

All paintings credited to Catherine Bailey (Fall). All photos credited to Ciara Hall (Except Fall)

## The Elephant by Samantha Crane

The elephant balances delicately on the tight rope as the players dance below
Eyes riveted on the floor, no one speaks, they hardly breathe. The girl continues her waltz alone

A stumble here, a misstep there. Through a life too hard, no hand to hold.

Abused, abandoned, nowhere to go; yet on she struggles without a home:

Are you ok, a puppet asks, hoping for silence in response

The elephant totters now, leaning too far right, desperately trying to regain control I'm fine, she snaps. Back off, she cries. No, she whispers.

The elephant tumbles now, crashing to the ground

The puppet exits stage left, the other players quickly follow

The girl, alone beneath her-elephant, remains:

The Bridge to Childhood by Maesha Schultz

Two bikes rest beside the rails of a bridge their riders casting pebbles far below. Sun glints upon the water like diamonds sparkling, like crystals, or pure white snow. Breezes wave nature's green and yellow flags while minnows swim in pools of frosty foam. A serpent slithers farther up the stream Fearful of the invaders near his home. The woman, glancing at the sun, smiles, varmed by memories of her childhood: arefree walks, friendly talks, and make elieve--

a youth full of joy in this peaceful wood. Eyes, rejoicing in anticipation,

er smile rests gently upon her son.

Into the Valley by Tim Arrington

The valleys of death and mountains of light
The dark nights, sunny days, deep caves, and
Flowing clouds occur more often on the page
Than the Good Lord intended them to.To. Be. Sure.

Write of the grassy pleasant valley or the ominous,
Foreboding mountains, as
Tolkien did; of peaceful
Calms before the storms,
thunderous showers and
Days of pouring rain and
moist, well-lit caves.
Of warm, soothing rain in the
blistering summer.

Reflective Sunglasses by Tim Arrington

Sometimes I think that's all I am

Or all I wish to be.
A pair of shiny sunglasses

For all the world to see.
For if the world did shift its gaze

From busyness to me, They'd see themselves for what they are That's all all need to see.

## Torchlight by Jared Moore

When my grandmother died, I didn't react: I was a pretense

picturing her: set lips still limbs. Her funereal certainty in her widening distance.

I see that distance in the leaves, a turning fire acting out a desperation which ends but only in the ways days end,

are recreated, and must invent themselves again in the brief light. I had hoped to take

a picture of the failing beauty. a tree, burst, enveloped and trying each leaf sharp and delicate, barely gone-

barely there—like a vision—it spoke of opened arms, a legacy which would carry the weight of the sky

when every leaf was offered away. Only its death could quarantee its frosted wreathing. A death was its responsibility

to its future progeny, and I thought it must have been that sight that sent Moses trembling

when He-Who-Makes-Things-Fall brought the Promised Land to His children's knees, a burning pillar with which

to follow, a flowing land my grandmother greeted with some deter readiness, still heart, open arms

## Fall by Emily Van Houten

1 --I ask for white tea, having a revealed ineptitude for while others mourned her. I kept on theology, I reached for my own swithy definitions, sick of times

> I thought wheelbarrows full of leaves meant I should read. Thanks Keats. Thanks for white pages licked by devils in black coffins belonging to flies drowned in tea.

Further theological intake meant I was eating gnat-covered butter sticks and dry oats, as did the autumn horse tied to the troth, tied to the novel bound in leaf-red strings. Shy,

splendidly shy, I've stood in my own pulpit groaning for the eschaton, crying 'Glory, Glory!' And 'Hallelujahl' sings Beethoven, unChristian and famous. I stood, then I crouched behind the pulpit -- now I'm holed up there, as a carved gargoyle in the icon, the masthead:



**Ghosts by Jessica Wallace** 

I once heard somewhere that writing is like communicating with ghosts.

As I write, I imagine the words vanishing off the paper and into the air.

If this is true—if my words are finding their way to the ears of ghosts, then who are these ghosts?

I recall mine.

An old man: tall and thin, with slightly hunched shoulders. His eyes are prone to light up about something silly—an antic, or a joke or a fake nickel hammered into the wood floor in front of the old t.v.

An old woman: heavyset, with long dark hair, yet to go gray. She has an affinity for pretty things and pretty dolls and garage sale treasures—a small change purse or a comforter covered with roses, edged in lace.

Do we each write to our own personal ghosts? The ones who safely haunt us through words we read and songs we hear and the weather we feel?

Or do we write to every ghost, even the ones that we will never know?

I imagine shopping lists and to do lists, work orders, and paychecks, newspapers and poetry and books—all floating and drifting and spinning through the air, reaching the ears of ghosts who are quietly waiting for the mundane and the profound of the living.

Seasons of Life and Death by Samantha Crane

When the woman opens her eyes, she sees nothing. When she tries to listen, she hears nothing. She smells nothing, feels nothing and tastes nothing. But she does think.

She does not know her name or what she looks like, but alone in her mind, she begins to construct a life.

I believe I am 35, she thinks to herself. I must be married to a man named Joe. We have two kids, Macy and Lucas. They are twins, and they are 12 and they must be beautiful because I have to be. Joe is a doctor, I am a stay at home mom and I am happy. I like to paint. My hair is brown and my eyes are green. I am taller than average, but not by much. I think I have laugh lines. And I must be happy.

The kids play soccer; they do not fight very often. They are happy, and I am probably happy too. My husband stays after work more than I would like. He misses many of the meals I prepare for him; he doesn't always look at me when he gets home. I don't know if I'm happy. The kids often look at me with scorn in their eyes; many times, I don't have time to wash my hair and don't really feel like it. I sometimes wander the streets at night and imagine a new life for myself. I don't feel happy.

Suddenly, the woman can see a white light filling the edges of the vision she has now regained. She hears a low buzzing, smells something sharp and intrusive, feels pain and tastes iron. As shapes begin to form above her, she can see the color blue floating lazily by, cut gently by clouds of white and gray. She rolls to her side and sees glass, metal and groceries strewn around her, trying to huddle closer to her fading warmth. She hears sirens in the distance. She looks further up the road and sees her reflection in an overturned car. She is not a she, but a he. Strange she thinks, that I am dying with someone else's memories.

Again, her sense of taste fades. She no longer feels or smells. She can no longer hear or see. And with one last thought, he suddenly remembers.

My name is Mark.

Submission Credits Ex Medio Editorial Board Samantha Crane McKendree University **Emily Van Houten** Cornerstone Ciara Hall University Stephens College Jeffrey J. Jett II (Midwestern SR) Mashea Shultz Missouri Southern State University Northern Illinois University Jared Moore Northern Illinois University **Aubrey Larimore** Missouri State Jessica C. Wallace University **Bradley University** Catherine Elizabeth Bailey Western Michigan University **Tim Arrington** Missouri University of Science and Technology **Emily Van Houten** Cornerstone University