

Spencer Anhalt
Kayla Boumeester
Sabrina Bruehling
Andy Davis
Ellen Erickson
Lauren Follansbee
Gaia Fisher
Alexander Hardy
Hannah Olson
Cale Radaj
Brian Tripp
Erica Thiem
Calahan Skogman
Melissa Reeves
Carly Frerichs
David M Briggs

the CATALYST
VOLUME 9 FALL 2013

“YOU’VE CHANGED, HAVEN’T YOU?”

A publication of *The Catalyst*
Volume 9 – Fall 2013

STUDENT EDITORS:

David Briggs
Carly Frerichs

FACULTY ADVISOR:

Dr. Natalie Eschenbaum

WHAT WE ARE:

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse English Club publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UW-L. Each semester, the student editors pick a new theme and accept submissions about and outside the chosen theme.

THIS SEMESTER'S THEME:

Since 1978, *The Catalyst* has been a part of the UW-La Crosse community, providing a high-quality, student-run journal for student-created art and writing. Every semester has seen a brand new collection of tremendous creative works by our student body, and with each new class comes new writers, new artists, and new perspectives on life, the universe, and everything beyond, both great and small. After thirty years, our proud publication printed its last paper copy and transformed into a completely online collection, allowing for greater access for readers and many more types of creativity on display, including music and video. This year, we are overjoyed to return *The Catalyst* to the printed page in addition to its continued online presence. While we celebrate this change, we can't help but reflect on the many ways we've changed as a community, as a university, as a publication, and as people ourselves. This semester's collection features reflections on the many changes, both good and bad, that color our lives, our history, and our future to come.

WORD OF THANKS TO:

Natalie Eschenbaum for her help and support, both material and moral, as our advisor

Kelly Sultzbach for her continued support of *The Catalyst* and fearless leading of the UW-L English Club

Rob Wilkie for all the tech advice and help

Maren Walz for helping us to learn and grow as a publication

Amy Sloan and Deb Hoeth for helping us publicize and for providing more support than we could ever ask of them

Everyone who has submitted to *The Catalyst* in this publication as well as in the past

The UW-L English Club for helping keep us afloat and providing any support possible

And, of course, all those who read this publication and support the amazing creativity we have here at UW-La Crosse!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

Sisterly Bonfire	<i>Kayla Boumeester</i>	4
In Awe: Mistaken Identity	<i>Gaia Fisher</i>	9
Everything	<i>Spencer Anhalt</i>	11
Shadows	<i>Cale Radaj</i>	15
This Backward World	<i>Hannah Olson</i>	17
Gone	<i>Calahan Skogman</i>	19
Poetry	<i>Erica Thiem</i>	20

PROSE

Contemplations	<i>Brian Tripp</i>	6
Crying at Wal-Mart	<i>Andy Davis</i>	22

ART

(Wo)man's Best Friend	<i>Lauren Follansbee</i>	5
Yes! Beauty Arose Anyway.	<i>Sabrina Bruehling</i>	14

MUSIC

Lowest Hanging Fruit	<i>Alexander Hardy</i>	12
----------------------	------------------------	----

PHOTOGRAPHY

Fall Moon, Drop It!, Triangles Through the Time Continuum	<i>Ellen Erickson</i>	8, 16, 24
	<i>Melissa Reeves</i>	10, 18, 21

THE CONTRIBUTORS	26
------------------	----

In the open field of the backyard,
a Willow stood proud next
To the abandoned muddy sandbox infested with sunflowers,
It laughed at the lonely yellow swing set rushed from its tears
for the Willow won our attention every time.
It was a tree house, a castle, a hiding place.
The Willow was anything we wanted it to be.

They set it on fire.
Dad with gasoline, Mom with matches.
Crackles echoed, sparks bellowed into space,
searching for a safe place to bury its ashes.
The heat reached us thirty feet back begging
for salvation, for an answer.
I heard screams of our childhood
burning alive.

My mother's tears, not enough selfishness
to put up with her unhappiness.
My father's lumpy suitcase wondering why it was him
Who gave everything for his family and would do it again.
They grieved for the torture we will face
The exchange of words not meant for us.

The bitterness, the growing hate we will
witness the rest of our lives
until we understand and stop asking why.

Through my fingers I peeked down at you.
Your glossy eyes, wide, afraid,
reflected the entire tree ablaze. That day,
we stopped being children.



The sky was a dark grey, the color of freshly poured cement. The aroma of the static permeated the air, as if signaling that the super charged sky could split open at any time. The wind had died down about thirty minutes ago. A storm was definitely on its way. All around him leaves rained down, crimson as the sky on a summer night. Winter would be here soon. The chill in the air was proof enough of that.

A drop of water fell from the sky, landing on his cheek. Looking up at the sky, he surveyed the clouds. They were racing by, as if trying to escape the imminent storm. Why was he even out there? He couldn't, for the life of him, remember. In fact, the more he thought about it, the less he remembered, even about himself. Who was he? Sure he knew his name. He knew what he ate for breakfast that day, and remembered his friend's faces, but how did any of that define who he was? As far as the universe was concerned, all he was was a bunch of cells: one organism who wasn't even worth a fleck of dust in the grand scheme of things.

Maybe that was why he had made his way up to this hill. Maybe he had come out here to be washed away by the rain: to wipe his slate clean. Drops began to hit him more frequently. Yeah that sounded pretty feasible. The rain could wash away his doubts: wash away his insignificance. And when it stopped, perhaps he could start fresh: make a name for himself and prove to the universe that he was here for a reason. He would show everyone, himself included, that he was worthy of receiving the gift of life.

The wind had picked up considerably since his inner tirade had begun. Leaves now danced around him in the heavy gusts. A loud crack reverberated through the sky, tearing open the clouds and unleashing a torrent of rain down upon the earth. He stood up, opening his arms wide, letting the ice-cold water engulf him. This was it! He could feel the rain, washing all of his doubts and insecurities away. After today, he would be a new man. The man he always wanted to be. He smiled for the first time in days, weeks, hell, probably for the first REAL time in months. With every drop of rain came a new surge of happiness and hope. Anticipation for the future literally made him shudder.

A flash of lightning cut through the air, illuminating the onyx clouds. The man could feel the happiness burning through his body. In fact, he really felt warm, which was strange since the rain was so

cold. He looked to the sky one more time. When had he gone onto his back? He took one more breath, letting the refreshing air completely fill his lungs, before everything went black.



Broken. Slowed down outside a TA in Barstow.
The truckers all a no-go. They're headed South, not Northward,
and I need to get to Portland. To tell you in new founded tones
why I've sunk so low in futile stains of parched forms.
Fingertips on death's shores
pleading for a heartbeat to wrap around this angel's throat.

I know, I've been prone to scattered footsteps,
But I'd rather rest my head upon your skinny chest
instead of random darkness.
I know I've been the hardest catch to part with, but
These bruised planetary eyes have stretched the states and
The dopest shine still emanates within this cramped apartment.

So even though I won't stay. Because the farthest corners of the
Universe beckon me to follow change, I'll be back another day.
To spawn, again, the
Brilliance cast by fumbled glances.
On picket fences I'll sit noticing your absence
within the beauty-stashed scenery;
Greenery cluttered then
Gone.

I'm spun
On turbulent withdrawal gazing morning stars
in June's dew-struck canopy in awe of simple lust at dawn.
If I could push, pull, or pluck you from your stuttered crawl,
We'd bloom through this plaster scene til the muck is gone.
When your soul falls;
Dissipate then drawn to melody.
Tumble-tucked in memory,
The upward ember tendency.
I'm entering,
as smoke screen amidst your amber eyes.
Your repeated passerby,
through an asterisk skyline.



Everything

Spencer Anhalt

everything passes
like that moment in that movie
where our melancholy messiah
stands still
and the city surrounds him
people pass
in time-lapse
everything

One day I'll walk barefoot on the sweetest sands of time
And who knows?
Why it falls so fast between my toes
Because each grain is so fine, and just like mine

All the moments turn to memories on the shorelines they get washed
away
And the seconds turn to sediment and disappear into the sea

I take the lowest hanging fruit off of the branch
Because I always take the easy way out
And I won't say no to the closest open road,
But I keep turning my head to every open door
I can't figure why the hell I make it so hard on myself,
But I guess that's just what gets me where I am
One day I'll have enough of all this stupid selfish stuff
It's just a shame that I won't take it while I can

I'd like to climb the mountains out of molehills I have made,
I'd be the first
I'd like to excavate a covey cave, it'd be the proper place
To die

All my worries wisp right off with the snowy powdered fluff
The cornerstones of my concerns held high high high above the bluff
and well

Time will freeze
And so will I
Forever still
And cold as ice
Frozen to the ground
I'm sitting here just chilling out

Waiting for a love as warm as yours
To come thaw me out
And pull me down from my tomb up in the clouds
Cause down to earth is where I'd rather be
If time won't just stand still then the temptation and the guilt

Will come to terms with these contradictions inside me

I take the lowest hanging fruit off of the branch
Because I always take the easy way out
And I won't say no to the closest open road,
But I keep turning my head to every open door
I can't figure why the hell I make shit so hard on myself,
But I guess that's just what gets me where I am
One day I'll have enough of all this stupid selfish stuff
It's just a shame that I won't take it while I can

For music, go to:

(<https://soundcloud.com/alex-hardy-10/low-hanging-fruit>)



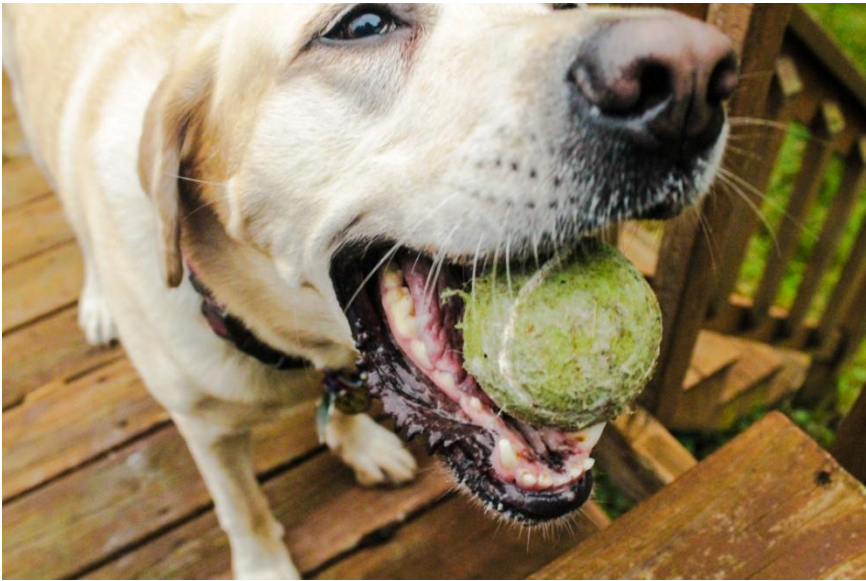
A Shakespearean Sonnet about picking up the pieces.

Shadows may change year by year,
but the past stays the same.
Memories may fill you with fear,
but you aren't to blame.

You fell into darkness,
into the depths of despair.
You had no one to impress,
and no one to care.

But you had a spark,
a light to show you the way.
Determined to make your mark,
you turned night into day.

Look at you now, so strong and true.
Reflect on your past... you've changed, haven't you?



Where demons fly with feathered wings
Ethereal and bright
Where angels do unholy things
A'creeping through the night

Where sinners climb the golden stairs
And reach an open gate
Where saints must drop their white affairs
A'trading love for hate

Where trav'lers, poor and vain, do yearn
For a safe place to hide
Where the fire flows and waters burn
A'raging side by side

Where, I wonder, are they destined?
And how and when and why?
Where fear flourished; hope was lessened
Dark shadows filled the sky

Where bravery sits idly by;
Strength denies its duty
Where Mother Nature starts to cry
Mourning for lost beauty

'Tis where I stand, 'tis where I fall
Alive and dead the same
'Tis soon the time to end it all
But who will call my name?



The battle isn't over, it's not over till you die.
The feet still beat the ground.
The sun has set on all that's known, I know,
I want to hide.
Give it time, just give it time,
The dreams will pass us by.
Well where's the destination,
Say just where we're going.
Purse your lips.
I'll hold your hips.
Momentous moments slowing.
So when do you feel lost,
So when do you feel pain,
Apart from you, I never do.
I whisper that's insane.
Which movement do we capture.
Gone, Gone, or Gone.
How long, until breath do us part,
She laughed.
I believe the word is death.
I know, but I can't breathe.
Baby, I can't breathe.
Tears came, and all that means is,
Baby, I can't breathe.

The words never
Come like I beckon,
No matter how hard I try.

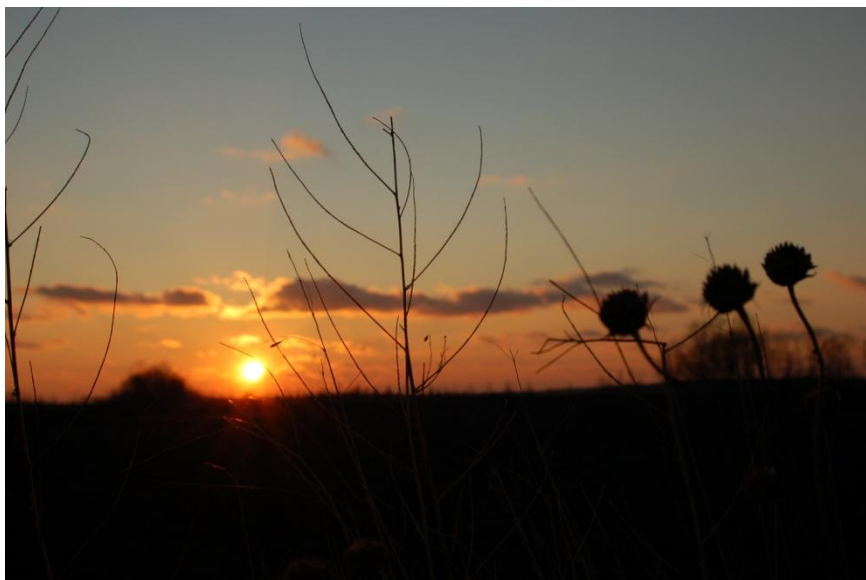
They are contentedly
Just out of reach,
Enjoying my squabble.

*Art, they whisper, is
Innately imperfect, so
End your poem badly,
Screw up your painting,
Make the most horrible
Noises around.*

*At least you have made
Something; creation has
Occurred, and for that
We are incredibly proud.*

*So what if your poem
Lacks an ending or
A line is too long
Or incomplete?*

*Let it be special
On its own:
We are all unique.*



They seal coated the parking lot at Wal-Mart last week and I ended up in tears. I realize how silly that sounds, how little sense it makes.

Last Thursday the cartridge for my printer ran out of ink, or whatever they run out of these days. I was in the middle of a project and the obsessive-compulsive, type A, Mister Hyde portion of my personality wouldn't let me rest until it was finished. Even as the digital desk clock ticked over to 1:43 in the morning I was wondering where to get a replacement. Where I live, maybe where anybody lives, Wal-Mart is your best bet for middle of the night anything. I called them.

The automatic switchboard referred me to the electronics department, where no one answered. It transferred me back to the automatic switchboard that referred me to the electronics department, where no one answered. When it attempted to transfer me back I broke the cycle and hit zero. The phone rang, and rang, and rang until a young female voice answered. "Wal-mrrrt, whur can I drek yur call?" A lack of sleep or a lack of interest slurred her words.

"Someone in electronics, please..." She interrupted me with a grunted thank you and sent me back to the electronics department, where no one answered. I hung up. It was the middle of the night. What did I expect? Never one to give up when something really doesn't matter, I pulled on my tennis shoes and headed out.

Wal-Mart in Winona, Minnesota at two forty-five in the morning is a surreal place. It's an artificially lit world of excess consumption. Everything a person could want, or an inexpensive substitute, waits to be swallowed up by the insomniac shopper. Bacon and video games, toilet paper and bocce ball sets, flat screen televisions and cheap women's undergarments: What did this say about the state of humanity? Why did we need this?

I pondered these and other questions as I found my printer cartridge and made my way through the self-service check out. My credit card and I needed no human contact. We were alone in the world of commerce. I dropped my purchase in the plastic bag and headed out. The first blast of warm spring air stopped me in my tracks. The moist breeze carried the smell of new tar.

Thirty years ago I spent a summer working in another artificial world. For three months I spent the great majority of my waking hours

in a theme park. It was a land of false fronted buildings selling manufactured memories and rides filled with pretend danger. Everything was designed to enhance the guest's experience or make it easy to clean up after them. Part of my job back then was to clean up after them, and that meant that I spent many evenings in a partially lit wonderland. Park Ops, the real clean up experts, would scurry around like uniformed worker bees, making the park look new. One of the things they did, on a regular basis, was seal coat the miles and miles of blacktop walkways. On any given night there was a good chance that the smell of fresh tar would linger around a corner or two.

I had a terrible job that paid poorly. I worked long hours for no recognition and little satisfaction. There are few good memories, except for Darlene.

Darlene worked there, too. She came from South Carolina. I was smitten by the southern girl with her reckless charm and flirty attitude. My infatuation for her turned into a summer romance. No future was discussed. No promises made. We just enjoyed each other.

I staggered to the metal bench next to the door and sat down. I closed my eyes and smiled as I remembered the nights I had bribed the Ride Ops guy from Dubuque to let us climb up to the maintenance platform on one of the big coasters. With the rumble of the trains behind and under us we had sat and smoked and talked and kissed. The lights of our kingdom spread out under us. We were some sort of royalty, blessed.

My smile faded.

I had never regretted letting go. It was the time and place that made it something special. It had come and gone and left its mark on me, a good mark. I accepted that; that wasn't what hit me.

With my eyes closed, thinking back to those nights, I couldn't remember what Darlene looked like. I could remember the lights, and the feel of the metal decking, and the sound of the screamers as they looped the loop, and the smell of the warm tar; but I couldn't remember what Darlene looked like.

So, there I was, crying in the Wal-Mart parking lot in the middle of the night.



THE CONTRIBUTORS

SPENCER ANHALT is studying English Education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He hopes to teach high school English when he completes his undergraduate schooling. Also an avid writer of poetry, Spencer has hopes to be published sometime in the future. Spencer is a house cat who, in his spare time, enjoys watching movies and drinking lattes or Red Bull; he is constantly searching for new music and people to share it with.

KAYLA BOUMEESTER wrote this poem last year about her parent's divorce. This monumental event in her childhood caused many things in her life to change and has been the most influential impact on her life thus far. Titled 'Sisterly Bonfire', this describes how it felt to see her life change before her eyes as well as her sisters'.

SABRINA BRUEHLING is a second degree student at UWL. Even with all her paintings around the house staring her in the face, she didn't realize what she wanted to do until she finished her first degree in Biology at Viterbo University. Finally, she's majoring in Art and Philosophy and cannot wait to keep learning as a student and growing as an individual. "Yes! Beauty Arose Anyway" is an acrylic painting she completed during her first degree, but she finds it is still pertinent to her life. Stay tuned for the painting skills she will acquire in the next few years!

ANDY DAVIS was born a long time ago in the black dirt country of central Illinois. After wandering in the wilderness of the Upper Midwest he ended up near La Crosse where he has a family, a day job, and responsibilities. He also attends an occasional college class, writes, and publishes under a variety of aliases.

ELLEN SANDRA ERICKSON is a freshman at UW-La Crosse. She is going for business and photography (surprise, surprise) in hopes of owning her own photography business. Her family members are her biggest fans and biggest critics, and she can't thank them enough. She danced ballet for 12 years and she was also a power lifter in high school. She enjoys ski ball and shopping. She hopes you enjoy her photographs!

GAIA FISHER says, "My love, Gavin, had moved to Portland, Oregon for a music career in August 2008, so I decided to go on a hitchhiking adventure. I traveled throughout the U.S., meeting wonderful people and camping in the most beautiful places. In late January I was in the Ozarks with a group of friends doing some rock climbing. I missed Gavin, so I packed my things and headed toward the West coast. I was quickly offered rides with semi truck drivers all the way to Barstow, California, where my luck ended. It was early February at this time, and most trucks were headed south or refused to take on a hitchhiker. So, I bought a coffee at the TA, snagged my notebook and pen from my pack, and began writing this poem. Gavin died of cancer two years ago. He was my best friend and muse."

LAUREN FOLLANSBEE Ever since third grade, Lauren knew art would be a huge part of her life. Throughout grade school, she entered her art-work into visual art competitions and won one national and two state awards. This has helped to encourage her with her art today. Although she finds herself very busy during the school year, she always manages to find time to paint and draw in her dorm room. She is also planning to pursue a minor in art as she recently decided that it is the route that fits her best.

ALEXANDER HARDY

HANNAH OLSON

CALE RADAJ About his poem, Cale says, “Shadows always remain with you, wherever you go. If you change, so do they, both physically and emotionally. Physically for obvious reasons, but also emotionally because of how you carry yourself. When you are sad, or ‘fall into darkness,’ your shadow reflects it.”

MELISSA REEVES is a sophomore at UWL. She has been doing photography as a hobby for about four years. In the past, she has always done nature photography, but recently she has taken interest in capturing photographs of people. She created a blog dedicated to her work this summer including pictures from vacations and portraits of friends and family. She soon hopes to start another blog consisting of her Alpha Phi sisters.

CALAHAN SKOGMAN just wants to help make the world feel more alive. He is a part of the basketball family here at UWL. He loves Jesus, acting, writing, and music. He started writing poetry when he was extremely young. He used to try and make it impossible to understand. His mom would say things like, “It’s beautiful, but what does it mean? Do you even know what it means?” He’s kept something like that with him still. He knows what his work means for himself, but he rarely tells people what it means when they ask. He wants them to feel it for themselves, and for it to be what they need. He wants it to mean whatever it means for them. It is, and can be, whatever they want it to be. To him, that’s poetry.

ERICA THIEM is in her 2nd year here at UW-L and is a Psychology major. In her free time, she loves to write and will occasionally find herself writing poems. When she saw that the theme of this year’s Catalyst was about change, it really struck her. She feels like she has changed immensely from the person she was last year, and so promptly sat down to write about it. Yet she could not find the words to express herself like she wanted, and this poem is what she came up with instead. She hopes you enjoy it.

BRIAN TRIPP About his short story, Brian says, “This is a short story about a man who contemplates who he is, what his existence means, and how he can evolve into someone else.”

