wooden teeth
Leah Rosen and the staff at SASS Communications, The Student Association, The Marvin Center Governing Board, David McAlarney and the English & Creative Writing Department, and The G.W. Review.

Wooden Teeth is published twice each year and is open to all members of The George Washington University community. Undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, alumni, and staff are encouraged to submit their poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and art. For additional information, please refer questions to:

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Submissions can be left at Marvin Center 431 or sent electronically. All submissions should be typed with name, phone number, and email address. Limit of three submissions per person per semester. If you choose to submit via email, please send a new email for each submission. No literary work is returned, but art will be returned at the request of the artist. If art is not claimed after four semesters, it becomes the property of Wooden Teeth. For more information, including deadlines and selected pieces from this issue and others, please visit our website listed below.

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON DC
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island

I once brushed my hair with your comb
and then shed your curls darkly:
you found your way onto my various fabrics.
you once placed your gum into my coat pocket
and then teased me into thinking.
I had taken it; you filled me with this kind of helpless denial
that bit me up without being significant.

des, my fragmented thoughts,
as I shield my eyes against the tropic sun.
here on this island to which you've banished me—
the palms sway.
the sun envelops.
the sea whistles.

and, of course, it is empty
save for me.
you have not even left me a shining frog
nor a welcoming seagull.
I have hidden my head in the sand hoping not to be seen,
and lo, I am not.
I long for a man's comb
and I long for gummy pockets.
but I am here on this island,
and you do not visit me anymore.
amanda huminski *Something Funny*

Every other weekend you stay awake past

Twelve playing Monopoly with your father

At his aluminum kitchen table. You sip

Soda, he smokes Marlboros and
tells jokes that make the pink
rise to your cheeks because you are fourteen

And have never seen a girl naked.

Your father's cheeks, rosy for other reasons,

Shine as he slaps his knee.

You buy a house for Vermont Avenue,

He mortgages Boardwalk.

Monday morning, when you are back home,

He'll leave for a long haul to Cleveland,

Meet a waitress who giggles all the time,

And he will move to Ohio in Spring.

For years, you will tell his old jokes
to your friends, but there will be some

Rhythm, some timing you lack,

And they will be as unlaughing

As you at fourteen.
Jessica Arconti If you love music, then you know

Antidotes
Feel each note
B flat, A flat, C-D Rest,
Sound pounds G D C sharp
in my chest. Down to my
toes. A clings so sweet, with
D flat, C sharp, F—
Repeat. B resonates, inside
My heart. My blood pumps
A minor-7 and D
Sharp. Can't hear noise
outside my
Bed. Just stroke the keys, and breathe
instead. I writhe, and sigh
and fall apart.
My bones, they heal
in darkest dark
to A flat B flat
end C sharp.
Photograph of My Mother

cristina sciarrata Twenty-five

On the couch
in their apartment
on Van Ness,
my mother leans back
into my father;
his left arm
casually slung
over her shoulder
and falling almost to her
navel. Her stiff cotton
dress is a smoky
almost green—
turquoise diluted
in a jar of water.
Skin like butter
browning on cast iron.
Her eyes are dusted
with embers—
shades of obsidian—
striking
contrasted by the
redness of her
mouth. The lines

of her neck
are stretched
taut against her blithe

smile. I study
the image, probing
for clues, but there is nothing—
not the reticent apostrophes
her shoulders form,
not the complacency of
curled fingers in her lap—
that heralds the coming
of the older version,
the woman who will shed
her skin and emerge—
callous, acerbic, craven—
something altered.
natasha simons Unstuck

Today in the subway station, a man said, "Goddamn this country." The platform shook slightly. "I hate this country, and I think a lot of you know the reasons why." He never shouted. In his tone I heard the end of his world, of my world. "It is an evil and Godforsaken country." There was a dread and a certain sort of realization, of reading footfalls, and then he pulled his gun. Three seconds went by. My train had already arrived. The woman I'd been standing next to and shared a stick of gum with went down. I stepped away as she fell, stepped onto the train before I felt my own footfalls descend, and the doors closed with a whir and an automated voice. A shot that did not land in a human being lodged in the metal door of the metro train, and I felt its round shape with my palm.

That night there was an item on the news, and the anchor said twenty people were killed. I thought for a minute, did he reload. What kind of gun. But I don't know anything about guns, and it appeared the news had already delivered those pieces of information. They were now waiting outside the prison for the man's arrival. He was shaking the same way he had that morning, as if his spine were degenerated. He explained, "It is an evil country." He had not shot himself as many of his colleagues were prone to do. He pointed his fingers in the air. He never shouted. He said, "Bang."

I took my mother's tenth call to tell her I was alive. She only loved me when she thought me to be in danger, or at least that is what I would claim at her funeral. You are always getting into trouble, she fretted.

Last time: towers, planes, flame. Little shadows who jumped out of fiftieth floor windows. Trouble.

Now I lived in a playacting city, a city in which people came to accept being grownups. Washington was a place for those who couldn't handle New York, or didn't want to, or enjoyed ritually disemboweling themselves before Congress.

You should care more, said my mother who gave me a bloody nose when I was twelve because I wouldn't take the dog out in a blizzard.

I promised I would.

I took my boyfriend's twentieth call to tell him I was still alive. He breathed sigh after sigh of relief and then asked me to come over. Coming over entailed a thirty-minute metro ride, a ten-minute walk, and at least one faked orgasm. I submitted. The metro was the same as always, except today I had to go through a different transfer station. The one I usually used still needed to be cleaned, most likely with Coca-Cola solvent.

People were still riding the subway. People were still taking up seats. I screamed because there was continued on page 16
nothing else to do when faced with everyday people. No one heard. Maybe I never screamed.

I think a lot of you know the reasons why.

My boyfriend wanted to know everything, but I had nothing to give him except a man with a plan and a woman I’d shared gum with. He wanted to make me food, tea, but I took the alcohol. Bang.

My boyfriend mentioned I could have been killed. I acted as if this thought was totally novel. I faked the orgasm and went to sleep. A day just like any other.

I had slept through two classes by the time I woke up and took a call from the school paper. They wanted to interview me. Finding out that I was present at the scene was probably their best work of journalism in a long time. I told them if they wanted to make up quotes and misspell everything as per usual, they didn’t need me to do it. That being said, I told them I did not need a psychiatrist. I’d done that before. Voodoo magic. Smoke, mirrors, planes, towers, flame.

I wondered if I would get an automatic 4.0 for the semester. This was almost certainly an urban legend, and yet it prevailed in even the highest tier of sitcoms. Funnily enough, I had had the same thought after plane, towers, flame—almost everyone at Stuyvesant had—and held out that hope all the way up to getting my report card. Then I realized the lack of effort in any of my classes had probably been a mistake.

I watched the man with the shaking torso on television. He had become silent, likely under the influence of an intelligent lawyer. His eyes continued to say, Bang. Reporters asked if he were sorry. He jumped in his skin and spoke: “They deserved it just like you do.”

“Clearly mentally ill,” said the vaguely ethnic reporter on the scene. I could see the producer check off a quota box after hiring her. Once I graduated maybe someone would do the same for me.

I kept measuring the one, two, three of the pause between normalcy and not in my head. I had done the same often enough, like when my boyfriend had told me he kissed some slut in a bar for just three seconds, promise babe. I measured it, timed it, I had to see it. I followed the girl once. She came out of the library and I followed her oddly disproportional figure to her dorm, cursing my boyfriend whom I did not love the entire way. I couldn’t blame her, not really. Parallel lines, after all, are of similar minds and never meet.

I think a lot of you know the reasons why.

I wanted to fool myself into thinking I did not know that in my life, there were reasons why.

Once I stopped being a mini phenomenon, life went on as normal. Leaves fell, it got colder, college continued revolving around the rich and athletic. Sorority feminists shared their totally irrelevant knowledge about Beauvoir in my Queer Studies class; one hastened to extend her opinion that the word ‘terrorist’ should not exist. Plane, towers, martyrs, not terrorists. Queer Studies went on being about gay people. I did my essays, I did not get a 4.0. Some university official, maybe my advisor, sent me flowers and a card that was blank, because Hallmark doesn’t make cards for almost getting shot.

I became clumsier, though—that did change. I kept bumping into lamp-posts and people wherever I went.

Their accidental touches sent small thrills through me, though I would have done anything to avoid them. I bumped into a man on the subway with zealot pamphlets so hard I nearly knocked both of us over. He reached inside his pocket. I screamed but it came out as a whine. This time someone heard. He said,

“Take it easy,” as he pulled out his handkerchief to wipe his glasses.

But death didn’t come easy, and it didn’t come that hard, either. It crumpled, like the woman next to me on the station platform. She didn’t say Help me and she didn’t say Please, but she crumpled and I stepped away. I stepped away from her and I will always step away, each time, until I hear my own footsteps descend. And the pale man with the shaking torso will smile, because he knew all along.
tarek al-hariri *Requiem to a Riverbed*

Earth shattered in shards
Like the beads from a necklace, helpless,
Divorced from a forgotten neck.
Such desert, what body,
Venous and dry.
On trampled soil like beaten flesh,
I walk waiting for the tears to come,
I wait,
But she is silent, sleeping,
Kneeling, I feel her skin,
I remember her, when as a child
I would sit by her banks
And she would sing me lullabies.
No more. She is silent, sleeping,
Maybe dead.
amanda huminski Small Things
She will not pet large dogs, eat pork, encounter anything
with so much flesh. They are not her language.
When she speaks, she only speaks of small things.
She tiptoes, always. On the checks she writes once a month
to the landlady, her name is a barely-there seismograph scratch,
a tiny earthquake. She sets down the pen and crosses
her arms in front of her stomach, wants to absorb them.

Once, chopping onions, she nearly sliced off the tip
of her left ring finger. As the doctor stitched the wound,
she thought about the tedious pain and how easy it is to lose
such small pieces of a body.

The scar is faded now, the finger mostly the same.
When she speaks (of small things), or writes in small scrawl,
she pauses sometimes, reaches her hand to her lips
as if to bite a nail. She slides tongue and teeth
across the scar and wonders if it was worth
reattaching.
Dear Noah,

Hope all is well with you. Dad says that you just completed a new mural. I've heard great things. Could I get a picture of it? Let me know.

I was just speaking to someone about your trip to Prague last year...about the challenge you took from that street guy, but I couldn't remember what it was in. Was it oils or pastels? She said that they do a lot of pastel in Prague, so it would make sense if it was pastel, but maybe that is because she does pastel. I couldn't say.

How is New York? Is it unseemly?

Best regards,

J.J.

--

J.J.,

I don't know if it was pastels or not.

Hailey was in town and asked after you. She thought you were at culinary school...because of the cheesecake. She confessed to me that she sat on it later that night. She was drunk.

Cannot possibly find a picture right now – in a disastrous state – will, perhaps, have one for you in the coming weeks.

Much love,

Noah

--

Dearest Noah,

What a surprise...you have flaked yet again. But seriously, let's have a photo.

Also, the fake guns you ordered for the show have arrived. I don't think they are going to work very well though. You may want to order new ones. Did you look at them before you ordered them, or is that also an effect of flaking?

Don't worry, I'm sure no one will notice when Lyle holds up a three-inch long pistol with an orange puff-ball on the end. How progressive of you, what an unconventional denial of reality.

I am very busy and important.

Your most appreciative and reverent brother,

J.J.

continued on page 24
J.J.,
Upon reading your last letter I cannot not help but be impressed by your outstanding rhetoric. Your ability with the written word is surpassed by none, excluding small children and tortoises. After yanking, I recalled the time you fainted at baby Jonathan's briss.
You hit the floor like a ton of bricks. Lying there like a dead manatee, I could not help but be disgusted by you. Normally I would have been worried, but I was so overcome by revulsion I couldn't bring myself to feel any sympathy.
In any event, I'm sure the entire family didn't think you were a total lame-wad for fainting like a choir-girl. Boy, you were a fatty. Good times.
Much love,
Noah

--
Hey Noah,
It was great to hear from you. I was just talking to Mom about how I am everyone's favorite and your name came up. I'm not sure in what context exactly, but I think it was something like, "J.J. who is that boy who was always around and one time decided to jump off the bluff during the annual summer party with a sheet tied to his back thinking it would work as a parachute?" It took me a while to figure it out, but I'm pretty sure it was you.
No big deal, it isn't like Eriz Burkowski, your grade school sweetheart, was there to see you make a fool of yourself and watch you cry as Cousin Lenny applied Bactine to your scraped elbow. I wouldn't worry about it or let it haunt you forever.
Bestest regards,
J.J. Silverstein

--
What's up Dude,
I didn't receive your last message... I was very disappointed. I so look forward to hearing your unique and complex perspective on the workings of the world. You fascinate me.
In any event, I thought you might be interested to know about my meeting with John Lucas. It was a blast...small world huh? We were having a drink and I stumbled upon the subject of fishing (mostly as a metaphor for man's pursuit of the intangible).
Anyway, I was telling him about the time we were at Bear Lake and I told you that the first rule of fishing was to be completely naked because fish are afraid of clothes. It wasn't until those girls from the cheerleading camp saw your bare six-year-old ass that you thought something might be awry.
Lucas thought it was hilarious. I can't recall the exact words he used, they were pretty muddled through all of the laughing, but I definitely heard, "Wow, your brother must be a total dumbass." I'm not sure about that. You can decide for yourself. All I know is: John Lucas is a cool dude.
Much love,
Noah

ES. How's the weather out there?
--
Noah,
The weather here is great.
I don't think anyone has told you this before, but, because I am your brother and I love you very much, I think it is time for you to know. Some people, well... most people, think that birthmark on your left shoulder looks somewhat like a large meaty penis.
This information may bring new significance to your conversation with Julia Sweeney on the beach at your middle school graduation party – when she gigglingly tapped you on the shoulder and said, "What's that?" and then ran away to laugh with her friends. She wasn't being coy Noah...she was making fun of your cock-shoulder.
You may want to look in the mirror for a few hours to make sure.
All the best,
J.J.

--
J.J.,
You are an orphan.
This is not a joke. I am just trying to help.
Do you remember the Silversteins from L.A.? Betty and Sam...the ones that smelled like wood-glue and hummuse? They are your real parents.
Betty was only sixteen when she had you and Sam dropped out of school the year before to become an assistant pool-cleaner. They couldn't raise you, so they pawned you off to Mom and Dad for a bid at a clean slate. Who can blame them? They were just kids, and God knows you were a damn ugly baby. After a few years they decided that you would be better off as a permanent member of my family.
I just wanted you to know that I don’t resent you for destroying what was once a perfect nuclear unit, and even though you are obviously not as talented, intelligent, or tall as we are, you are still welcome. I wish you the greatest success in life.

Go ahead, ask Mom and Dad.

Much love,
Noah

—

Hey Buddy!

I was just looking through some old photos I had in my drawer and came across that one with you and grandpa on your ninth birthday. You were such a cutie, even if everyone thought you dressed like a girl—a slutty girl.

Anyway, it’s the picture where you are giving a ‘thumbs up’ and smiling at your new pet goldfish Oliver. Remember Oliver? I remember how sad you were when you found him floating at the top of the bowl that one day. I felt really bad for you, but I think it is time for you to know the truth.

I killed him.
I killed Oliver.
And I liked it.

Seeing him writhe in distress as he gasped for air—or, I suppose, as he gasped for water—I couldn’t help but chuckle. I’m not telling you this to make you angry, I just want you to know that bad things do happen for a reason, and the reason your favorite goldfish Oliver died was because I killed him.

Have you considered therapy?

Best Wishes,
J.J.

—

J.J.

Is that true?

Much Love,
Noah

Noah,

Of course not.
Of course not,
J.J.

—

J.J.

I have included a photo of my latest mural. Let me know what you think.

Much Love,
Noah
natasha simons

boys
back when I was a virgin
everything was kitty-corner clear:

boys mattered
and boys were mysterious
something only my older sister understood

the first time I let one of them
put that thing between my legs

it was different
I mean, it never hurt
(like it does some girls)
but suddenly—

boys were men
there was a certain heaviness about my hips

and they could sense it
and they kept coming for it

so I kept spreading
j.j. silverstein

One Thing I Learned This Year

In French the word for happiness is "bonheur."

Women will not bring you bonheur,
But some men will find a way.

Money cannot give you the bonheur you crave,
But a tall shapely man named Morry will.

Sometimes I feel like I have, "Oh so much bonheur."
Sometimes I feel like I feel, "Way too much bonheur."

But, my friends,
There is no such thing as "Too much bonheur."

Power cannot give you your bonheur,
But your bonheur can give you power.

My bonheur stems from my core,
It grows larger every day.

That bonheur cannot be destroyed,
It cannot be taken away.

Sometimes I don't have any bonheur
But not for long.
chelsea kerwin The Escape

As never never land
overflows with peter pans
the ones who would not leave or stay
head south, their faces forward
into the dry and dusty winds.

When you go south in that big bright van, a sad survivor from the days of Woodstock,
when you go south, using words that I did not know you knew like wanderlust,
when you go south imagining that this is the last adventure of your lives,
when you go south to say to some beautiful girl, who is not beautiful just because she is exotic but because of her eyes and mouth and hair and because she reminds you of the better things about the girls you have known and the girls you have loved, that she is different from any girl you have ever known and ever loved and ever hurt,

when you go south to bring the girl into the van alone,
when you go south pretending that it is hard to leave her while you must be always roaming because this adventure is not only about women but about life and your soul shrinks every moment that you waste,
when you go south, to laugh and talk about things you will never forget, but will never laugh about again,
when you go south, smoking joints and eating brownies and believing with all your soul that there is nothing you are trying to escape,
when you go south knowing that every day is another place another moment another sight another way to stroke heaven's gate and wipe off suicide like it was grimy dust on your palms,
when you go south meditating while your friend drives but not able to stop thinking about the girl in California who told you that you changed her in a small and important way,
you will try to find her when your adventure is over, but the change will have changed back and you will not realize until it is too late that she lied for your happiness, for your wanderlust.
Family Values

Be nice to Jimmy Gounas.
Yiaia loves her nephew.
Even if he yells at us for wearing seatbelts.
Tells my grandfather
Not to trust “Made in China”
Or his doctor.
Jimmy goes to the healers
In Arizona tribes for treatment.
They say Jimmy went to Vietnam
But joke that he comes from
A different side of crazy.
Yiaia refuses to comment.

But Yiaia doesn’t know I’ve been told.
Fifty years or more
Her brother, the burly kind called
Uncle Gus came home and found
His first wife in their bed
Entertaining.
Uncle Gus’ gun knows this part,
Almost killed his seven-year-old, too
But Jimmy got away.
Crazy runs here
Through that blood and mine
But Yiaia would only deny it
Or serve me cookies and raspberry
Ginger ale while her crazy
Lurks beneath
Simmering on low heat,
Causing me to wonder
What else has been cooking in her pots all this time.
benjamin schuman-stoler *Dustball*

Through the stained murky green of my wine bottle, I watched a tight grey dustball on the wood floor skitter like a mouse.

I tipped the bottle like a telescope and tried to look at it through its length.
I blew
it flipped over its head and crashed horrifically into the wall, pieces scattering from a silent explosion into three littler, looser mice—

My breath, just.

Then asleep,
my killing for the evening done.
contributor

Biographies

**Erik Albrecht** is a sophomore transfer student majoring in Economics who has always had a love for drawing and design. Although he is currently taking an oil painting class, his artwork mostly consists of drawings produced from sharpenies and markers. His main focus besides GWU is an online paintball business that he has personally owned and managed since 2004. Tony would like to thank Emily Accetta who has inspired him to continue to produce new art work.

"Flow" by **Suzanne Fournier** can be found on page 28.

**Ryder Larkin** is a sophomore majoring in nothing and minoring in everything. Ryder realized over the past few years that he can't help becoming some sort of photographer. Ryder thinks the world is a blurry, confusing place, but has discovered that everything becomes simple and focused through the viewfinder of a camera.

**Amanda Frominski** is a Junior in the Women's Studies department and has a thing for raquetball.

**Aram Kaper** is a senior majoring in Fine Arts. She has always had a strong passion for art and design. She attended the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia for a semester. She plans to pursue her design career at Parsons School of Design after graduation.

**Chesley Kever** is a sophomore majoring in English. She is head over heels in love with words, but words don't quite feel the same way. She would like to thank Teacher Jamal for all the encouraging nods.

**Citrine Schlam** is a senior double majoring in English and Creative Writing and minoring in Psychology. She would like to thank her friends and family for continuing to put up with her very nerdy love of all things Creative Writing.

**Benjamin Shuman-Stocker** is a third year History major hailing from Chicago's North Side. Besides turntablism, post-midnight monument jogging, and making eggs, Ben spends a significant amount of time worrying about what will happen if he marries someone else with a hyphenated last name...

**Elizabeth Velazquez** is a senior Human Services and Psychology major continuing on at GW to earn her Masters in Public Administration. Her love of photography blossomed while backpacking through the hills and jungles of Thailand, and she just considers herself lucky to have seen the things she's seen, let alone documented them. She wants to thank her family, for enabling her traveling addiction, and her roommates for enabling her pasta and procrastination addictions.

**J.J. Silverman** is from Milwaukee. He has written in French.

**Nadine Simone** is prominently featured in the cover shot of this magazine. She would like to be a cosmonaut when she grows up.

**Alex Vinay** is a senior graduating in May. She is an English major and a Creative Writing and Sociology minor. She has been writing poetry since she was very young, but has improved her writing immeasurably through the many poetry classes she has taken at GW.

**San Ogier** is a certified Toyota mechanic from Saginaw, MI. He lives with his parakeet, Mel.