Leah Rosen and the staff at SASS Communications, The Student Association, The Marvin Center Governing Board, David McAlevey 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.

http://studentorgs.gwu.edu/woodenteeth/

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC
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Statement for Wooden Teeth at more than 30
a note from David McAleavy

When I arrived at GW in 1974, my Cornell MFA and one small book of poems in hand, my PhD almost finished (I defended it that fall), I found a small creative writing scene. There was one student literary magazine, called Rock Creek. Two outstanding English professors, Edward Weismuller and A.E. Claeyssens, occasionally taught creative writing courses—mainly something called "Narrative Writing," in which students worked on the "elements" of fiction-writing.

In 1975-76, thanks to her bequest, my colleagues and I set up the Jenny McKean Moore Writer in Washington program, which bonded the GW English Department to the Washington community; in 1976-77, we brought in our first writer in residence and began hosting occasional public readings by writers. (Of those colleagues, Faye Moskowitz is the person who most deserves credit for what has happened here at GW, but many people have contributed mightily.)

At some point in 1977-78, a humorous and iconoclastic editor-in-chief of Rock Creek persuaded his fellow editors to change its name to Wooden Teeth—thus creating the 30th anniversary being celebrated in this issue. In the late 1970's, there was a weekly open reading—which we kept up for 4 or 5 years—for students and the community, on Fridays at 5 PM, always followed by beer and more conversation at the Marvin Center's 5th floor "Ratsskeller" (renamed now as the "Hippodrome"), and a second student magazine, the GW Review.

In the 1980's we designed a more systematic, hierarchical structure of courses in creative writing, as our program started to acquire more full-time instructors—gradually including, by the 1990's, Maxine Clair, Jane Shore, Faye Moskowitz, Vikram Chandra, and Pati Griffith. (Chandra left us a couple of years ago, but he has been replaced by Herman Carrillo.) The establishment of the CCAS General Curriculum, with its requirement for study in the Creative and Performing Arts, pressed us to provide more courses, and with the general rise in academic preparedness and competence among the undergraduate population, these courses were—and continue to be—quite engaging and fulfilling, on the whole, for both students and instructors.

Now there are at least four student literary magazines produced at GW, more than 30 classes each semester in creative writing, and about 20 writer-teachers on the staff. Our selective English and Creative Writing major is running at capacity, and our reading series now features two "tracks"—evening readings.

Wooden Teeth 1 7
supported by the Jenny McKeon Moore endowment, and the "Jenny 2" series for local writers. Our activities now include an annual World Literature Residency and the new U.K. writer-in-residence program which we are undertaking for a three-year period with the British Council. Students at GW partake in one of the largest all-undergraduate creative writing programs in the country – in the world, for that matter. Increasing numbers of our graduates gain admission to the best MFA programs around the country.

The thing I most miss from the old days? Weekly open readings for students and the community, and the Symposium-like atmosphere we tried to emulate in the old Raskeller. Young writers need more than just a lot of courses and the opportunity to listen to established authors. I congratulate Wooden Teeth and the other student literary magazines for sponsoring open readings, and above all for giving students an opportunity to see their own stuff in print.

David McAlavey is the Director of the Creative Writing Department at the George Washington University. He is also the author of five books of poems. His most recent work, Huha Hallu, was published in 2005.
natasha simons

partnered

headbeams from passing cars bully the parking meters,
so their partnered shadows twist like bodies on the sand.
they writhe and are broken, their darkness caused
by the indifferent light of the monolith.

so we set off
or were set off
and you turned the dew of waking next to you
into condensation creeping up my pajamas.

I stopped sleeping naked in your bed.
I started sleeping less and
silently taking things back from your place.
I'd hoped you wouldn't notice my straight flush
in the reclaimed deodorant.

I will be laid down like produce.
I will catch up your fingers, but not your hand.
I will wake with loathing and lie down with chinks in my armor.
I will eat to stop my brain

but it will only fill my stomach
and fill it and fill it.

On the last day I touched you,
we were walking back from your apartment.
I was holding the symbolism of flowers,
and the last of my things—a tattered handkerchief—
stuffed down my back pants pocket.

Wooden Teeth
Reflections on a Presentation by John Mather:

j.j. silverstein

Nobel Prize Winner in Physics

I signed out my name
To the man on the stage,
But then he just stated
At my well parted hair.

He said things like this:
Space is like roda...

It rises and falls
In forms, to us, unknown:
Majestic in depth
Transparent -- but untamed.

It stretches itself
In time -- no matter what.
It vibrates in tune,
And waxes beautiful.

amanda huminski

University

We've got the inside track,
you and me. We're sitting on tacks,
you and me. Dream like life, hungover.
Sex, drugs, and honor roll:
one, two, three nights gone,
Monday we're back on track.

We've got the inside track,
we can win this thing.
This dream's like life.
This dream-like life.
This dream, like life, moves quickly
and chronologically.
Notorious nights and regular days.

You put down that Kerouac,
pick up that Aristotle concoction.
Nothing as real as we'd like it to be
or as sweet as we tell each other it is.
Jessica Deputato, *Those Early Mornings*  
*after Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays"

Each morning my grandfather rose at 0600 hours  
and plodded calloused feet across the lemon-slick floor.  
The planks would groan beneath him like a somber hymn  
and I'd stir, muttering curses through chapped lips.

I swear I could hear the sound of sloshed milk  
and metal clinking ceramic  
from my bedroom down the hall.  
Or was it the muffled buzz of unstridled t.v.?  
My mother had laid out his breakfast  
the night before, so we wouldn't be disturbed.

And while I knew he sat amongst drifting shadows  
waiting for the sun to peer over the kitchen,  
all I could do was draw icy sheets to my brow  
and sink deep into the mattress,  
hoping to disappear.
They say Arab fathers can’t love their daughters, but I always find what I want, in Baba’s laugh, if only for a fleeting moment. Ablaze and soaring, the dusty ashen feathers off into the sky, carried away until nothing is left. It is like looking into the water puddle where the walkway has given in, after every rain collecting its fill, a new mirror to see myself, until Sara runs and jumps into it barefoot. She stirs up a laughing cloud, fixing the sediment to the droplets of water and sending the pieces flying in every direction. A large firefly’s glow lights the grassy ends of emerald and navy where they blend. The tiny tea light is a quick micro view of the world.

When a firefly hugs your eyes like that, you feel like you know something more than you actually do. Baba tells us that some insects are good luck, that they can heal even the deepest cut, and that they are the best companions through rain. He says to us the praying mantis, who always prays towards Mecca, a true believer, and the spider, who was there to weave a web at the opening of a cave to keep the prophet safe from death. When a butterfly lands on you, it is a blessing from God, a ninka min Allah.

The fireflies are butterflies of the night. With a blink of an eye one blows his lantern out, until another glistening spark brightens the way again in some off-white hue. For another glimpse of that spark, no matter, at any moment, I don’t blink. The impulse to blink will prolong catching the token again, for years maybe. Maybe tomorrow? There in Baba’s ancient grin, frozen in what I live to find. There are fourteen yellowed white bones rattling in the big black gap that is Baba’s mouth. They are tarot cards, strung out over a red velvet tongue like some fortune teller without hands, sending me my future in an uprooted huffing Hab Hab Hab that I get out of Baba when I say the right things.

This October is cold and breezy. The leaves fall in shades of ember and mushroom. I am in a finished coloring book of the imagination, sitting by lantern on the wooden deck. When Baba laughs in the darkness like that, time has skipped three beats and gives me a chance to catch up.

Baba is chasing bugs in the cold, and the end of her nose is a white cherry in the middle of her strawberry bouncing cheeks, frosted from the wind and her running. Baba chuckles about the way she runs. She can barely grip the jar in her left hand. The glass glitters like the stars we can see in the Virginia suburb, through garden-sized trees. Her booted heels are flaring against the back of her short thighs, “Gotcha!” but she hasn’t, “Now I gotcha...gotcha!” but she hasn’t.

“Hab Hab Hab Hab Hab Hab,” Baba’s huff from the deck calls to her. The message from her Baba is a golden stroke of autumn breeze. I love you, it whispers, You are my precious opal firefly.

“I got it! Baba look, I got one! Nadya, Nadya! Come see!” The jar is lying in the grass, the Halal moon hitting it, a crooked smile above us. A single beam of light signals heaven, flickering off the glass. A tall white rose grows up to the sky, alone and brilliant.

The message from her Baba is a golden stroke of autumn breeze. I love you, it whispers, You are my precious opal firefly.

The tiny fairy fastens onto Sara’s wrist as if he hears her calling to him. She gurgles baby noises, cooing him closer with her hands. Squinting eyes tell me it tickles as he takes millimeter steps up her hand and over her index finger. He has paid his welcome and bids Sara Salaam with a flicker of his wings. She won’t have it. Disconsolate grows on her face as though she has pricked herself with Mama’s sewing needle. Her brows furrow a no, and quickly she motions to cup her hand and trap the thing inside. Where is her jar? She looks around, seeing the moon beam reflecting off the Earth; far from her she sees where she planted her white rose. She wriggles to scoop there, so that she might get her ready cage; but shakes her head lest her hands slip and her creature fly from her. She stays still, her hands are a globe, some human world formulated around her fairy. He is the one she had searched for, the one she leapt through the grass for, the one she feared would get away. A sad dim light pulsates now, in between her transparent baby hands. They are joined as a floating orb beating in the night. Other fairies receiving the signal are beating in a rippling random music for the eyes. The neon green lantern calls for help in the core of Sara’s imaginary world. She thinks of him, her fairy. Does he know how she dreamed of catching him? How much she loved him? How she wanted to name him there in the starry grass? She thinks to speak to him, to make him glow for her the way she could make Baba glow through his teeth.

“Hello,” she says. “Salaam Allaykum, Malaka,” she whispers gently, praying him peace, the best thing she could possibly say to anyone, she says it to her captured angel. No answer, so she peeks into the gap of her hands harder, into the biggest gap where her thumbs kiss.

“You would stay a while, Malaka?” His silence Sara takes as a no. Mama doesn’t answer when she is too tired, and Baba never answers when he is angry with her, and so certainly an angel not answering her meant something like absolutely not. Sara’s hands let loose a little accidentally while she has wandered away in her thoughts. At the chance of being free again, the fairy fans his wings and leaps to escape. Sara panics. She grabs for her life.

“No! Stay here!” she yells at him. Her hands are glowing now, neon green. One last gasping beat and then nothing. There is no pulsating rhythm. The
burnt out bug in her fist has smeared his glitter across her palms. She plops down into the pillowed grass beneath her, never mind the back of her pants grow wet with dew. Flopping down and staring at her enchanted palms, she examines the precious dust she has spilled. She watches her treasure surrender in the night. A black crumpled leaf twitches a stem in the corner under her pinky. She pokes at it with a finger until it stops moving and her fascination turns into a spinning hallucination of despair. Sara struggles to her feet frantically wiping against her vest and jeans and legs the glowing dust, madly rubbing and drooling from her nose. More and more, she spreads it more and more, her arms, legs, stomach, until she is glowing neon green there in the sea of green.

“Get off! Please get off, get off!” Sara whispers. The fireflies around her signaling back. They are speaking to her now, asking her, Where is our brother?

Sara runs towards the deck, to her Baba, fumbling up the steps, spattering sobs, the mucus from her nose glistening over her lip and a little up her right cheek where she had touched her face. She lands on Baba's lap, now glowing neon too as he huffs through his teeth a laugh to soothe her. Baba holding his glittering doll close to him in his hands, huffing his familiar sound for Sara. Staring out into the flickering, fleeting time she came from, out there beyond the steps of the deck. Baba holds his prize close. He says with his warm hand on her hair, “It’s okay, habibi. Stay with me a while.” He is looking at me now, his grown daughter, just shy of twenty, his sparkle coming off Sara in the dark irises of the Mediterranean, his eyes deep and far from me. They are fading with time, along with the moment I caught there. He leans into Sara, his maroon lips close to her ear, his eyes still mine, “I love you.” His whispers float on the cool wind through the tree branches. The resonating sounds weave an invisible web through my ears and into my head. “You are my precious opal firefly.”

I find, there again, the moment that pushes my hair back from my eyes and kisses my brow, coming and going at the same time.

“Shhh...my Malaka,” he whispers again, leaving me there, suspended, three beats shy of him, three beats shy of my Baba.
j.j. silverstein Mr. B's Blades

In the corner, a fat man sits waiting for service.
This is not the man I have come to see — no way.
"I am looking to have these knives sharpened."
I say it like I mean it.
I don't leave any "if, ands, or buts" about it.

"I suppose we can get that done."
A voice from behind — it takes me by surprise.
"Good..." I say, "Because that's good, because I wanted to have..."
My voice trails off. He gentles my things away.
He is tall — lanky. He is a knife man.

Separating the knives from my rubber-banded rap,
He picks out the largest: the lengthy butcher's piece.
Thrumming its blade with his machine-shed talon, he speaks:
"Well this is no good, you'll have to get these sharpened."
He understands everything.

He switches on the "Tri-Hone" — a series of screeching wheels.
It makes the sounds a knife sharpener should. I am confident of this.
There are ten more machines scattered here and there.
Larger than the "Tri-Hone" — they all look the same to me.
I imagine things are different for him.

I watch. enraptured, intrigued.
This is a fix-it that leaves no room for conversation.
The fat man in the corner inspects a new stain.
The sharpener turns: "Nobody likes a messy fat guy..."
The truth flows from him like water.

Maybe I misheard him through the ruckus,
The aural interference,
And the barrier of straightening steels.
Perhaps he said, "Nobody needs a snazzy new bays..."
He speaks in tongues, and I hear what I want.

A dog approaches from the shaded sidewalk.
It nuzzles my leg and begs to be pet.
Its skin is like leather, but I must oblige.
It is his dog and, for that reason, it is a great dog.
It is anxious about its facial growth.

Eyes on the dog, the fat man glares in wretched jealousy.
This fat man...what a Judas,
He does not care for my humble craftsman.
He is only using him for the free lawn-mower blade sharpening.
I know this in my heart.

"Well that's about it," he places my blades into cardboard safety sheaths.
He cares for my well-being.
"Three, four, five...that's seven — I also take credit."
He smiles, his grin brimming over.
He knows just what I need.
christina katopodisSantia Librada

I'm kneeling,
My fingers wound
Like barbed wire,
Knees bear the weight
Of my guilt;
What I didn't expect
To show you
Were thoughts in my mind
About sex:
I imagine his fingers
Softly gliding along the curve
Of my hip
And as I gave thanks,
What fruit I would taste
On his lip
And as I said, "Amen, Amen,"
His fingers stroking
And I bending,
Pulling
Grapes off a vine.
dana liebelson

*Minesfield*

If I could go home
stir this catatonic superhero
clean the squeaky rails
piss in familiar wind
use the antiquated gas pumps
watch the tumbleweeds gather
at the edge of the dam, and take
a pit stop, essentially,
I would gladly go back
to treading water instead
of sinking ever-so-slowly
into the mud that is already
an inch above my scalp.
Reflections on an Airplane

Jessica Deputato

On the runway, as others gape
at glossy appraisals of
Hollywood misfortune,
I imagine this metal beast
plunging toward earth.

The pilot reminds us
he’s activated the fasten seatbelt sign,
that we must calmly return to our seats
and assume the position recommended
for crash landings:

Oxygen masks dangle
overhead like translucent skulls;
the mother next to me
remembers to secure her own mask
before assisting her son;

And a fading woman advises
there is still time to save our souls,
praising the Sacrificial Lamb
and the Good Shepherd,
while pointing out the exits
at the aircraft’s front and rear.

But all this before a portly man
reclines onto my lap,
as if practicing for the Olympic Luge.
Before the calypso-tongued toddler
finishes his rendition
of Cream’s “White Room”
against my back.

Before the stewardess,
with caffeinated enthusiasm,
fumbles a fruit drink,
red liquid
streaming
down an ashen hand.
His body, naked clothes for his skin stands tall.
The lone swing set
—where I felt his first touch
sways in the distance.
His muscles, loose relaxed.
Slowly his shadow bends forward,
like the moon slithering sweat under the haze,
His flexed tip-toed feet,
incinerate the grass.
His hands plunk
nailing my white blouse
to the ground.
He makes of himself a
pyramid, upside down "v"
of geese swarming overhead
hips high, calves long and stiff
his peach fuzz gut looms over me, blunted
Suffocating.

Swan Dive Down

I stand,
arms pinned back, caught by his grip
a cobra coiled around; handcuffs to my wrists.
My shoulders dive downward as I
plunge.
The bars of my bangs bolt my eyes wide.
His breath tight as a muzzle
sinks on the ball of my neck
transforming my scalp red.
Back arches as he leans upon me like
my glass body will shatter if not secured.
His small scar that could start a flame
with a shadow dangles along
his pale shin,
ready to snap as his beak
curves beneath me
indifferent.
Jeffrey lamoureux

When I Saw The Big Dipper

We huddled up the hill to the graveyard where every tenant is at least one hundred years into their eternal residency. Having forgotten our flashlights we spoke loudly of the possibility of being overtaken by the shadows—dragged, screaming and pleading, into the ground—into the unmarked grave of a stranger's pickup truck. Obviously our voices would serve as our light, pushing back the limitless imagination of darkness, and assuring ourselves of our own continuities.

On and on we climbed, occasionally placing foot atop the ground barely insulating the dead from the infinite sources of fluctuation and decay of the purgatory in which we, the living, walk. Into the fields and above the town we ascended, the moon full and as bright as the sun. While we stood on the tips of our toes stretching our arms towards it, someone ran up the crest of the hill, leaped, and came down with the prize held tightly to her chest. We passed it around as we sat debating the images formed by its craters as you would argue the forms of clouds. We carved our initials into the dark side and fell backwards with the serene pleasure of holding a secret between friends.

When I saw the Big Dipper I tipped it over, spilling its contents across the sky and scattering the stars like the seeds of the dandelions we blew into each other's faces. Stars began to fall from the sky, fireworks with long disintegrating tails as they tumbled to the ground and became fireflies. We cupped hands around them and brought them to our ears: they climbed inside and poured golden light out of every available space in our heads.

I swallowed a grasshopper and turned my vocal chords into violin strings, finally breaking the barriers of language. Others made instruments from blades of grass and as we sang dogs awoke from their beds beside crooked, skeletal barns and joined the chorus. Echoes bounced off the flat tops of trailer homes and the slanted roofs of farm houses, the music rolling down the hill and stretching over the curves of the valley's topology. A microphone was placed at the radio tower on the horizon, extending our reach to another horizon and back into town.

I wish the rest of the town were here, they seem like people: unburied, still alive, lodged between the extremes of our existences. But this is where we can reach the heights of the sky and the depths of the ground.
kaitlin vignali

*For Ralph*

Blonde haired boy
With Mary Jane mother
Lick the bruised purple night
Of the thirsty desert sky
Trailing pinpricked bleeding fingertips
Through stars
Smearing streaks of red through Leo
Staring hard and high
With blackened, darkened eyes
Toward the east
Awaiting the washed out dawn.

American Spirits curling upward
Pursed lips and dirty fingertips
Grey wisps exhaled
Into kaleidoscopic shirts
Philosophies seeping into his mind
Creating a rhythm without any rhyme
A song for the kissed
A song for the gone
Strumming and picking down a nine-mile road
He'll follow her shadow into the dark.

And across the nation a strung-out trip
Pigs in the dawn with dogs at their hips
Rolling by tobacco fields
Streaming into obliteration.
Notes out the window
Caught on the wind
Following him into the strawberry fields
Lost in the day with the sun blazing high
Arrested development in the inked out night
In wavering green leaves they'll find where he lies.
contributor Biographies

Iesha Dequarre is a senior majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing and Political Science. Her interests include caffeine, the letter y, and convincing herself that May 18th is not a real day on the calendar year. She would like to thank her family and her creative writing professors for their continued support.

Amy Gynn is a sophomore double majoring in English and Human Services. When she is not in class or volunteering, you can usually find her drinking tea or running along the Potomac. She'd like to thank Barbara Helfgott Hyett for her spirit, passion, and creative insight.

Lesliea Leld is a 2006 alum, is thrilled to have her photography published in Wooden Teeth! She credits her success to having a lot of downtime while living in Europe and to finally owning a camera with a zoom lens and a working flash.

Arvind Nair, an avid writer in high school, entered GW as an Economics major. After two years of mediocre success in memorizing formulas, she switched to the Women's Studies program and rekindled her fondness for abstract thought. In her free time, you can find her playing Iron Chef with her roommates or pretending to study at Soho Tea & Coffee.

Jana Juruskovska is a freshman double majoring in fine arts and undecided. She would like to thank her parents for the opportunities they have given her this year. She would also like to thank her little brother Luka for being such a good model.

Christina Katopoulos is a junior majoring in English, minoring in Creative Writing and Spanish. Her dream is to earn a PhD in English Literature and teach at a university either here or abroad. She sends her deepest thanks and love to her family and friends who are always open to review and critique her latest work.

Jeffrey Lamoureux is a student of Anthropology from upstate New York. He likes to walk through meadows, protecting them from housing developments when necessary, and play music by the river.

dana lieblein is a sophomore in the Elliot School, just like everyone else. She is not a poet or a pessimist, but has somehow declared herself in Wooden Teeth as both. "Minifeld" came about while studying for a calculus midterm last year, which she did, in fact, do terribly on. She is considering writing a series of poems entitled "Useless words that replaced my good grades."

Shoomnbhai Patel is from India and has a passion for nothing in particular, everything in general!

Wanda Simpson is an English-creative writing major and pre-medical student at GW. She is a first generation Arab-American and is deeply inspired by her family and close friends who are all full of quirks. She insists it's both a blessing and a curse that she will never ever run out of stories because of those that inspire her, everyday. Nada would like to especially thank Professor Moskowitz for all her special advice and time on this one.

Misty Wong writes bad poetry.

Emily Averstede is from Milwaukee! He looks forward to writing in French.

Sonika Garg is a sophomore majoring in no-job-after-college. Her greatest love is chocolate. She someday wants to travel to California to see the great redwood trees. It has been a dream of hers since she was six. Her birthday wish is for all the residents of FSK to stop beating on one another because this is college and domestic abuse should not be a part of it. We're young, be happy.

Emily Bond is a sophomore majoring in Fine Arts and Art History and minoring in Business. She has a penchant for grumpy knolls and frolicking in inclement weather. She probably won't ever grow up, but if she has to, she wants to make a living from being a tortured artist and sail around the world on a yacht with her best friend, Andrew.