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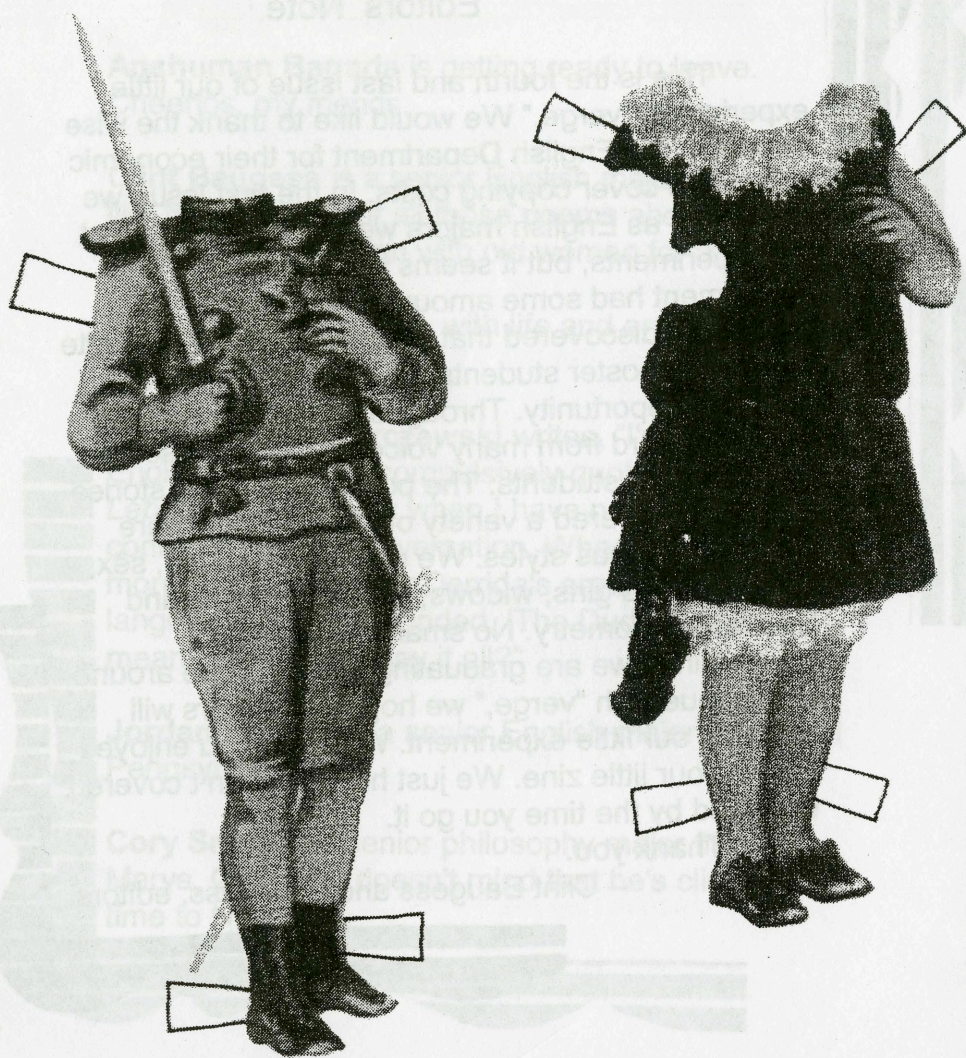
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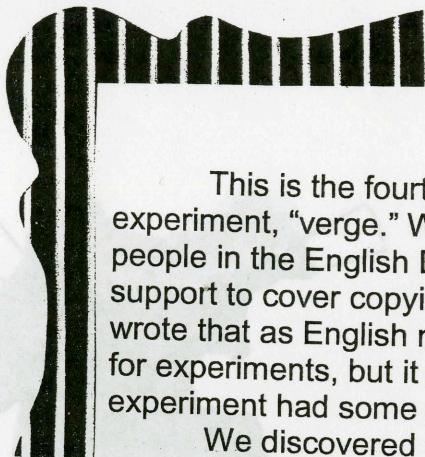
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verge

a literary magazine

May 1 / Issue 4



Editors' Note

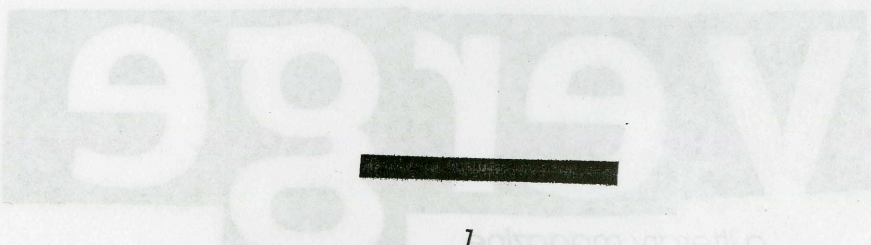

This is the fourth and last issue of our little experiment, "verge." We would like to thank the wise people in the English Department for their economic support to cover copying costs. In the first issue we wrote that as English majors we had no grant talent for experiments, but it seems to us that our experiment had some amount of success.


We discovered that Wooster students do write and that Wooster students will share their work if given an opportunity. Throughout the course of the year we heard from many voices – including senior and first-year students. The poems and short stories submitted covered a variety of subjects and were written in various styles. We read about drugs, sex, golden-haired girls, widows, grandfathers --- and Euclidean geometry. No small feat, we say.

Since we are graduating and won't be around to continue with "verge," we hope that others will continue our little experiment. We hope you enjoyed reading our little zine. We just hope it wasn't covered with food by the time you go it.

Thank you.

-- Clint Baugess and Liz Weiss, editors





Contributors

Anshuman Bagaria is getting ready to leave.
Cheerios, my friends.


Clint Baugess is a senior English major. He would like to apologize for all those poems about widows. He had an obsession with old women for a short bit.

Danny Caine is in love with life and enjoys writing poetry.

Matthew John Karczewski writes, "I'm a senior English major who compulsively quotes *The Big Lebowski*, especially when I have nothing intelligent to contribute to the conversation. When asked if I agreed more with Foucault or Derrida's arguments about language, I once repounded, 'The Dude abides.' I mean, doesn't that say it all?"

Jordan Magaro is a senior English major from rural Pennsylvania.

Cory Smith is a senior philosophy major from St. Marys, Ohio who doesn't mind that he's cliché from time to time.



Charnel Ground

"Ram naam satya hai"
(God's name is Truth)

The egg-shaped heads of my father and uncles,
but no need to shave my grandfather's head,
who is carried through the streets.
Women in white beat their chests,
their eyes too dry for tears.

At cremation, the fire's work is simple.
The skull cracked with a bamboo stick.

The cloth-covered remains
neatly tied-up with string
sail off into the Ganges.

At the street shop afterwards,
the smell of fried syrup.
And the cleansing bath
in the holy river
of laughter and small talk.

by Anshuman Bagaria

I wish I could paint with watercolors

but they way they run
makes me sad

little tentacles
breaking the levy
and streaming
through my
already painted grass
turning it brown
microwaving it, just like the hole
in the ozone layer

my paints

are radioactive
made in Nagasaki
by children with paper cranes
and gas masks

by Jordan Magaro

Beyond Repair

*Our love is gone. **Where does gone love go?***

*You need to **A bank?** get a real job.*

*Everybody knows **Can I make withdrawals too?***

*poets never make money **Maybe gone** and I can't*

*handle **love gets** a man*

*that's not **recycled** financially*

*responsible **5 cent refunds in Michigan!***

*Plus, all you do is sit on your **Or maybe the pulsating**
ass and think! **currents of** I can't*

*Imagine having **life absorb** children*

*with you **gone love, and all***

***I have to do** you're not*

*productive **to reclaim some is***

live.

*Are you even **LISTENING** to me?*

by Danny Caine

Speeding

you smell like cigarettes and victoria's secret perfume, beautiful. like your mother on the weekend, when she's not at the office, secretarizing for some staring man. your skin, smooth after a brazilian wax, like the steering wheel in uncle jack's porsche. we fly straight to fourth gear from first, usually, skipping formalities, only wanting speed, satisfaction. exhilaration. downshifting is my specialty. most times, though, it ends with a crash, looking for a sixth gear that is not there. at least we got to feel the wind in our hair, for a moment. you roll over, I cradle you. I sleep with my foot on the clutch.

by Cory Smith

Simply Passing Through

"Want some sugar?" I asked my brother, Eddie, as I dipped a yellow Tupperware spoon into an empty plastic bowl.

"No thanks. I'll take honey," he replied, tucking a napkin into the front of his shirt in an attempt to look like our father at the dinner table. At eight years old, though, he looked more like a chubby Italian mouse. With dimples blotting both cheeks and two front teeth that stuck out like whiskers when his plump face folded into a smile, Eddie was not only the youngest boy in our family, but he was also the most effeminate. At least according to our four older brothers, who, rather than invite him into the backyard to play football with them, made it a point to burst into my room afterwards, reeking of sweat and dirt, to laugh at him for spending time with me, his *girly* sister.

When they came in, they did so not all together, but in twos and sometimes threes. My white door at the end of the hall was like blood in the air, attracting the occasional pack of hungry wolves. They'd poke around my otherwise quiet room, picking up my music box or feather-laced pen, inspecting what they somehow sensed would never really involve them. They were like tourists in a strange land, interested but ultimately glad to go back to their own rooms where things made more sense. They were simply passing through.

I sometimes wondered if hassling Eddie was not their primary objective for intruding, but rather the inevitable result of seeing him before a backdrop of flamingo pink and among a jumble of teacups and dolls that were somehow more fitting for him than they could ever be for themselves. Although I was only seven years old, I was well aware of the fact that, despite Eddie's adamant desire to return to tea-time after such an interruption, he was truly bothered by their perception of him as a girly boy. The glow in his face would fade from his cheeks and eyes, and he'd usually say something condescending about the way I poured—why do you pour so *softly*?—or about the fact that the curtains in my room were pink instead of some other, less stupid, color.

"I'll be back," he said, smiling at me as he stood up from under the mattress that had been his stove. He could tell I looked disappointed. "We'll play tea, then," he whispered once our father had retreated downstairs.

Outside, the other boys had commenced their pre-game shenanigans, trying to see how high they could throw the ball into the air and still catch it. From between the parted pink curtains of my window, I watched as my brother ran around with the boys on the faded green rectangle of grass below. Watching Eddie was like watching a little piece of myself out there. With his ignorance of the game and of male companionship, in general, Eddie was like a girl in a boy's world.

The boys ran around him with the ball as he awkwardly chased them, always a foot behind, his arms stretched out and his face red and sweaty, despite the fact that it was almost below freezing. I smiled, even laughed at one point, feeling good that he looked as foolish as I would have had I been the one invited outside. But when the game ended and the boys playfully rubbed his head and grabbed him around the neck with their arms, I watched, quietly hoping he hadn't actually enjoyed being the slow, awkward, sore thumb of the bunch without a single ball thrown his way.

As my brothers and I rather walked toward the front door, I quickly backed away from the window to avoid being seen and returned to my tea table, where I began to set out the dishes. Once the dishes were neatly assembled, I pulled my hair back into a bun and then sat down at the table and waited for Eddie.

In the silence of my room, I could hear his raspy voice on the floor below. I could hear the other boys saying good things about him to my mother who was, as usual, expressing a vague interest by asking who won. I listened until their voices became indistinguishable and I could no longer tell which boy was talking. Only dry static on a station that couldn't be changed.

I sat in the silence of my room with my tea cups in front of me, my pink curtains behind me, and my family below me. As I began to wonder if Eddie would, as he had promised, come back to my room, I laid my head down and rested it against my forearms.

My immediate reaction was to lash out at him like our mother would when we'd talk with our mouths full at the supper table, but I knew that doing so could result in his not wanting to hang out with my anymore. And I didn't want that. So I'd simply and calmly agree with him about the color of my curtains—*I know, I told Mom I need to get new ones*—and pour a little less carefully when I'd serve him a refill.

Once Eddie finally got used to them abruptly disrupting our tea-time in order to have an easy laugh at his expense, he learned to fire back. Not to their faces, of course, but behind their backs, when it was safe. One day, after they slammed the door and went to their own rooms, Eddie looked at me with a squished-up face and said, "Man, they smell like cow crap!" It became a private joke between the two of us that once the boys had left the room we'd grab our noses and, in unison, bellow "Cow Crap!"

Although the couple hours after school were when we were most likely to convene for tea and put on well-practiced airs of maturity, it was not uncommon for Eddie to come into my room for other reasons. Sometimes he'd waltz into my room carrying his toolbox—a dilapidated Nike shoebox carrying a couple of Dad's old combs and a plastic hammer that Jason, the next youngest, could have been sure he'd thrown away—and fix something that he would claim was broke.

It was during one of these routine repairs that a knock outside the door jarred him from fixing the stove, which he had deemed "shot to heck" unless he could come up with some smart way to "get her goin'." He had, for too long, been our uncle's closest observer during the occasional house call.

My father cracked the door open and half-smiled the way he always did when he found Eddie in my room without having to look anywhere else. It was the day after Thanksgiving, and because my father was off from work, he thought a little outdoor football would be in order. Hesitant at first, Eddie finally decided to play under the condition that he could be on his Dad's team. Eddie knew that the boys wouldn't call him "Pretty-In-Pink" or give him wedgies with our father out there. Our father had that kind of power, that kind of presence.

When I finally looked up to find Eddie in front of me, I was shocked. He had entered so quietly that my first thought was that it wasn't really Eddie but rather an illusion brought on by my desire to claim him as my own. But when he sat down at the table I had set for the two of us, and asked if he could have some honey, which was his favorite, I graciously dipped my yellow spoon into the bowl and let it seep into his outstretched cup. His face was still red and his breathing a little labored, but once he took the napkin that had been placed beside his cup and tucked it into the front of his shirt, I knew it was the same old Eddie.

"So," I asked in an elevated tone, leaning up as I would when pretending to be Mom. "Do you think the weather will be good to us this winter?" I began to laugh. "That was pretty good, wasn't it? I do her voice like you do Dad's, but *his* is easier cause he talks more normal." But I could see that Eddie wasn't listening. Nor was he actually looking at me, as I could tell from his listless gaze. It was the glass unicorn behind me that had drawn his attention like it never had before. He stood, carrying the cup in his hand as he approached the object.

"What is this thing?" he asked, picking it up with his free hand to inspect it.

"It's my Yoony, silly," I replied. "I've had it for years. It's also a nightlight."

He set it down casually as if it were no longer of any interest to him.

"Weird," he said, not so much crudely as matter-of-factly.

He returned to the table and then set his half-empty cup onto the tray, marking his departure.

What was weird about it?

Was it broken?

But as he left, I couldn't muster the strength to ask if he could fix it.

by Matt Karczewski

My Mother is a Marvel

Today my mother called me to say
the forsythia was in bloom. Mother
believes in such signs:
when the forsythia blooms,
there will be no more uncertainty,
none of that joint-grinding Ohio snow.

Knob-kneed, she is led
by a young woman, a nurse
smiling. How patient my mother is
in the whiteness of hospitals,
her gown billowing around her,
a sail, full, ready
to carry her off.

Today my mother called me to say,
she called me to say,

and then there's a pause.

There is no impatience in this silence.

"The doctors say,
they say that without this surgery
I will die. No choice this time, kiddo."

I turn to look out the window.

And after a while we begin
To talk about other things.

My mother is a marvel,
a mystery no home medical
encyclopedia
could explain.

"The tulips have not bloomed yet,"
she says, her voice betraying a small
shudder, a
heart, hot and red, on such a chilly
morning.

I say, "They
are toeing their way out
of the darkness, mother.

The tulips, they are waiting
for May," I say as if these things
are as simple
as flowers.

by Clint Baugess

the end

