the red wheelbarrow
1983-84
Notes on the Contributors

Zagarella Contway (12th grade: visual arts major): "I can sleep comfortably with bulbous knocky things in my hair."

Chris McCann is a senior visual arts major.

Midori Daito is a junior visual arts major.

Zachary S. Dean (third-year student: creative writing major):
"Those savages, lacking other immediate alternatives, screwed the ground to exhaustion--"
--Jim Harrison

Lora Kolodny (11th grade: creative writing major): "Inside the bouncy Tigger is the rescuer who knows the way." from the Tao of Pooh

Guy Molnar is a Hall Counselor in Picasso House, and although he has majored, at various times, in many different subjects, he wishes that at least one of them had been English literature.

Marcus D. Olender (12th grade: creative writing major): "I'd appreciate you don't be feeling my pig like that."

Lisa Marie Priddy is a senior in the Writing Department. In her free time, she enjoys killing gophers and indulging in bouts of unrequited love.

Oliver Ray is a senior and neglects his telephone.

Fiona Drayton Russell (11th grade: creative writing major): "If I were a zote, I'd go around sticking my head in tin cans."

Jonathan Sklar (12th grade: creative writing major): "I hate cruelty to animals except once they've already been digested."

Jessica Belle Smith (11th grade: creative writing major): "I am a Scorpio, secretive and mysterious, so I won't tell you anything else."
Poem for J.

You've seen how I try to make myself disappear:
eyes sunk into small black pockets,
lips two blades of ice. Beautiful, you say,
you think it is true.
When we are together, your chest is a calm lake
above me, smooth, sexless, your ribs
rubbing mine.

On the plane going north, a woman thinks
I am a boy. Jeans, a flannel shirt,
hair cropped close: it is deliberate,
you know, like the cigarette I hold,
the brisk nod I give strangers. My wrists twist together:
I am cold—at least, that is what I tell
the woman. "Such a pretty voice," she says,
"do you sing?" Before me, a blossom of Marlboro smoke:
I shake my head, smile.
But now I am here with you,
your scars invisible in the darkness. Words
are immaterial, your voice almost too soft
to be heard. It is strange, lovely,
and yet I do not love you.
Your poetry lacks something, a certain shame,
an apology, and nothing will make up for this: no trenchcoat
hiding your shrinking legs, no silly girl
like me. Tomorrow I'll be back on a plane,
but I will not forget this shock of discovery:
how good it feels to finally be a dying bird,
fluttering, helpless, as you climb my sharp vertebrae
like so many steps, your body shuddering,
face always looking up.

Jessica Sklar
2 Hunters

He loves to teach her things:
won't even let her go to preschool,
this girl who is so small and fair
with a silver laugh and icicle bones.
Canoeing away one day,
she looks back to see her mom and sister
waving from the shore.
They have fistfuls of saltwater taffy
but she doesn't care.
Smoothing forward,
the prow makes a V in the rippled green.
Colored leaves are floating on the surface.

Zagarella Contway

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Cover art by Midori Daito
Additional art by Chris McCann
The Driver's Ed. Teacher

My students are made of soggy cornflakes, and their minds are floating in the milk of dreams. They say the classroom is a small, dull bowl that cannot move.

Then they want their licenses to come to them like playing cards. I am the dealer of freedom. The king of hearts slides in on waxy wings--

dagger in hand he forgets safety, they forget safety and feel shackled in seat belts. But how can I explain:

watching my own hands on the wheel, my knuckles rising like dorsal fins, and the way my boy was cast from the car, a hook that needed to catch anything.

Later, how the bandages were the only things gentle enough to hold him. And that empty space in the passenger's seat.

I've been driving in circles trying to teach them, but I've forgotten what they must feel, with their hands that grasp, for the first few times, direction.

Lora Kolodny
The Dream

He is looking in the mirror.
He asks himself, "What do I think when I look in the mirror and pull back my shaggy hair?"
He sees an oval face and wishes it were narrower.
He tries to focus on both eyes at once.
He asks himself, "But what am I avoiding? I do not know what is behind those eyes."

He dreams of crafting the mystery of a cathedral
and gazing through his eyes as if they were stained glass windows telling tinted stories.
He speaks aloud, "The light would shine through
to the hollows of my skull. These are rooms dark and austere; the only light, stained blue and red,
takes shape in the dust from the ancient book I've just closed."

Oliver Ray

Excerpt from "The Boardwalk"

When I used to come to Florida for vacations, my grandfather played pool with me. He was very good, his wrists steady, and always sank the eight ball. We would go down every night to the rec room, and he would flick cigarette ashes into an ashtray while I took my turns.

When my grandmother died, my grandfather and I stopped playing pool. He would sit in his study and pretend to be waiting for a call whenever I asked him to join me. I went through his cabinets while he was out one day and found bottles of liquors from all over the world, samples from places he'd been to. I also found a collection of empty bottles in a locked drawer, shot glasses that rolled back and forth beside the mess.

He caught me there, reading the labels off the bottles, trying to pronounce the foreign names. He strode across the room and closed the drawer. "Shouldn't you," my grandfather said, "be with your parents at the beach?" He smoothed my hair with his big, smoky hands.

"I want you to come with us."
He shook his head and pushed me out the door.

"Listen," he said, beneath the frame of the doorway, "I can't go out into the sun." He rubbed his bloodshot eyes and smiled, "I'm afraid of my own shadow now," he said, then closed the door and locked it.

I rose from the ground and walked to a convenience store, brushing sand off my legs. I took a Coke out of the refrigerated case, looking over at the stacks of beer and wine coolers, when the manager called over, "Something I can help you with?"

"No, thanks," I said, stepping closer to the liquor. I read the labels slowly. Vodka from Russia, Rum from Brazil. This was probably where my grandfather had shopped.

"Damnit," he said, and walked over to me. "Look here, I don't like minors looking at my liquor."

I scratched my neck. "What?"

The manager wiped his hand along the stubble on his face. He looked tired. "Too many of you punks have been coming in here and swiping my stuff. I got mirrors installed now." He nodded up at the ceiling. "So don't you try anything. Now do you want that Coke or not? It's late."

"Yeah, I want this Coke," I said, my fingers tightening around the neck of the bottle.
The manager went back around the counter. "That'll be eighty-five cents."

"Here's your money," I said, tossing the money onto the counter. "And here's your deposit." I swung my arm back and hurled the bottle into the wall. It shattered in an arc across his white apron. I ran out of the store, going in a direction I hoped would get me lost.

I ran until my side hurt, and kicked up sand. I swung at a lamppost, wanting to hurt myself, to break something vital. I heard the sound of glass breaking, over and over.

I thought about my grandfather at a holiday party, drunk as usual. I heard laughter from his study and went in. He was crouched over his desk, rubbing a bottle between his hands. Someone I didn't know was on the couch.

"Todd," he said, standing up, "what timing. There's someone I'd like you to meet." My grandfather's slippers brushed across the carpet. "He's an old friend, the man on the couch said.

"I'm not sure he's my friend," my grandfather said, "but he's a friend." They both laughed hysterically.

Grandfather put his hand on my shoulder. "Why don't you go meet him?" he said, pushing me forward.

"Miller, Uncle," the man said, "Meet Todd." He smiled and held his drink over his white hair.

I looked back at my grandfather, who knelt carefully on the floor. "Things are different now," he said, pulling open a drawer. "Todd's getting older. He used to be this tall." Grandfather closed the drawer and Miller laughed. "Or maybe he was shorter," he continued, "we used to mark it somewhere." Grandfather crawled over to the lamp and lifted it up. "Too much dust here to see anything."

"Stand up and bow," Miller called.

My grandfather got up and fell onto the couch. I turned and walked out of the room. My father was getting ice from the kitchen.

"How can you let him get like that?" I punched the counter and sighed.

"It's a holiday. Todd."

"What difference does that make? He gets drunk on all the holidays."

My father pushed his glasses back and shook ice into a container. "Look, we've talked about this before. It's none of your business."

There is no doubt but that after a very short time here a student will ask you for a favor. Do not grant it! Interlochen students are notoriously manipulative, and undue attention to their whims will only perpetuate this dreary state of affairs. Suggest instead imaginative ways in which, had they only thought about it ahead of time, they wouldn't have needed your help. This will have the desired effect of freeing you from obligation, and will provide in addition the indescribably delicious sensation of making the student feel guilty. Besides, if you do decide to grant favors, the students are unlikely to be able to offer a really valuable service in return. They are rarely in a position to lend a truly interesting sum of money, to provide you with the name of a good broker, or to assist you in finding a larger, better, inexpensive apartment in the East 70's facing the Park, should you in fact ever get back to Manhattan.

Guy Molnar
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Snakebite

I slept in the forest one night, covered with dry leaves and sharp brown pine needles, dreaming of a boy I once loved, my hands pushed deep into the dark earth, drawing cold snakes from their knotted sleep in holes beneath birch roots to wrap themselves around my warm fingers.

See the small hole at the base of my back where it entered my body, a rattlesnake with blunt teeth, that chewed at the warmth of my blood. The hunger of too many months underground, it ate its way in, scales ticking against my bones as it broke through the muscle and began to swallow the vertebrae like small white mice. The heat of my blood in its long reptilian stomach quickened the rippling push of its muscles as it moved up my spine and up through my neck. Finally, its body fit like a plug in the ring of bone at the base of my skull, its head inside my head, its eyes behind my eyes, its flickering tongue, reddened teeth, its mouth slowly opening behind my forehead.

When I awoke, I found I could not rise from beneath the dead leaves, the snake's thin vertebrae in my back could not hold me. So I lay there, immobilized thinking of kisses gone cold with time, the snake slowly stiffening in the empty column of my spine, its rattle shaking deep in the darkness of my stomach.

Lisa Marie Priddy

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Interlochen Arts Academy
A Manual for Beginners, or, How it feels your first time

Interlochen Arts Academy is in the Michigan woods. The Michigan woods is a distinctively un-citylike area very near to absolutely nothing at all, approximately 1500 miles from midtown. It is virtually impossible to find even a Sunday edition of the New York Times here, and visitors are quietly advised not to even ask. Also, practically no one has ever heard of Julie Andrews or Stephen Sondheim or Brian De Palma or any other manifestations of civilization, but I'm pretending that such ignorance is due to their tender age, and not to our isolation. ("I do not approve of anything which tampers with the natural ignorance. Fortunately, in this country education has no effect whatsoever." -Oscar Wilde) Apart from that, I love it here.

In fact, I bear false witness against the students; I misrepresent them. They are focused, ambitious, sophisticated, intelligent; they are pretty amazing. (There are, alas, a few assholes, but I assure you that they are easily avoided.) Most of them do know who Sondheim is, or at least Andrew Lloyd Webber; they love Phantom, but I'm working on that one), and surprising numbers of them could identify Zubin Mehta, J.D. Salinger, Jerome Robbins, Sergei Prokofiev, Sylvia Plath, Roy Lichtenstein, Uta Hagen, and Tobias Wolff. They think Barbara Streisand is an old, old woman and that Chekhov doesn't really apply anymore and some even seem to think that Ronald Reagan was the greatest president who ever lived, but if one leaves such subjects...
Digging in Clay

This is not the black loam of the midwest plains, or the dry mud of Arizona and Utah. This is Virginia clay, dark orange in the three o’clock sunlight, lying in chunks in the ground. I go out into the fields carrying a bucket full of water, naked because I lack the sort of playclothes I had as a child. Digging with my hands in the middle of my brother’s freshly plowed field, I feel the afternoon wind on my shoulders, smell the freedom it always carried through the open windows of classrooms during the last lesson of the day. I pour water onto the earth as I dig, smoothing the sides of the hole like pottery, pretending I am shaping a bowl for my brother’s favorite horse, Ned, to drink from, even though all the animals have to stay in the barnyard.

Red clay smells so good I want to bury myself in this hole, but I’m still too strong to slide into the earth, another puzzle piece in place. I lie belly down next to the basin I have dug, rinse my face with muddy water, and push my fingers and knees into the ground, remembering my second grade teacher telling about the Indian battles fought over this land, and that somewhere, deep in the ground of our county’s fields, were Cherokee bones. I want to sit in the hole and bathe but I am too big, so instead I turn over and over beside it, carving a dry trough in the earth, turning my skin the color of Indian blood.

In a dream I am barefoot, leading Ned down a slick Blue Ridge trail, my body washed clean by a thunderstorm, and the smell of wet horse hangs in my clothes. I wake up to the stars and the weight of a horse blanket over me as I breathe in the dust that has dried on my face. Wrapping the blanket around me, I stand, feeling with my toes for the hole, but my brother has filled it in, thinking of his plow blades. I want to dig it again to see if he buried something, like I wanted to bury the nothing I have spent my life collecting, but instead I pull myself toward the pump near the cellar door of the farmhouse, let the icy water draw moonlight back into my skin.

Love Poem

Outside a hotel curtain, through the window, somewhere deep into a mid western night, a white windmill spins itself to dawn--.

Voices in bed, not mine... two friends, acquaintances, strangers meeting for a second time-- the room is dark, and the pale sink chokes low, like a priest clearing a sermon from his throat.

You hold a woman for the first time, and already feel the last. The final cry through a car window, the body drifting in the pool-- and the clouds moving in like a fleet of lost steamers.

Fiona Drayton Russell

Zachary S. Dean
Transplanting Flowers

My mother plants flowers
in a circle of damp earth,
pours seeds from a paper sack onto the soil.
spreads her hands across
their flat bodies, and
beneath her fingertips,
petals stir in quiet shells.

From under the oak tree,
near the tomato plant, I watch
as she cradles Marigold, Zinnia and Mum seeds
in her small cupped hands,
rubs the tiny embryos,
their birth and blossom staining
her fingers like dirt.
She wants to be as lovely,

wants to drink from the rain,
be picked and placed in a crystal vase.

Her dress falls,
catches on the wind and blows away, and
the sun shines on her rippling back
as her spine turns to stem,
chlorophyll spreading like a green blush
from the nape of her neck
to the backs of her knees.
hers slender calves and feet rooted
in the shadow of damp soil,
earthworms and fire ants burrowing
between her toes.

Later that night when the moon rises
the shadow of her blossom falls
through my window, sways at my bedside
as she did singing lullabies,
notes filling the room with perfume.

Jessica Belle Smith
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From her violet eyes, teardrops
fall like dew, and she
picks from the pile a Chrysanthemum seed,
slides it along her arm, absorbing the heat
from colored petals into her pale skin.

Strands of her hair
spread out and flatten, turn deep rose,
her face glowing, haloed with petals,
her smile fading into the dust of yellow pollen,
arms budding and opening into tender leaves
that quiver in the wind.

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"Why the hell not?"
"It's his life. What do you want me to do?"
I shook my head. "Anything. I don't care."
"He won't go to rehab, he won't listen to me, and he's not concerned with anybody but himself. If he wants to go off into a room and get drunk that's his problem."
Ice cubes scattered onto the floor.
"Then why are we even here?" I asked, cracking ice into the sink. "Why do we keep coming back?"
"Because soon he'll realize that we're the only friends he's got. And I want to be here to help him."
My father took the bucket and went out into the party. I opened the refrigerator and stood in front of it, feeling the chill on my legs. I closed it and opened it, until someone came over and told me to stop.

Marcus D. Olender
Guy Molnar

students, the faculty will bristle at the snub and will begin immediately to treat you with disdain, even contempt. If you sit with the faculty, they will begin to treat you that way in about a week. So go ahead and sit with the kids. It's much more interesting, and you'll save everybody a lot of time.

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When I used to come to Florida for vacations, my grandfather played pool with me. He was very good, his wrists steady, and always sank the eight ball. We would go down every night to the rec room, and he would flick cigarette ashes into an ashtray while I took my turns.

When my grandmother died, my grandfather and I stopped playing pool. He would sit in his study and pretend to be waiting for a call whenever I asked him to join me. I went through his cabinets while he was out one day and found bottles of liquors from all over the world, samples from places he'd been to. I also found a collection of empty bottles in a locked drawer, shot glasses that rolled back and forth beside the mess.

He caught me there, reading the labels off the bottles, trying to pronounce the foreign names. He strode across the room and closed the drawer. "Shouldn't you," my grandfather said, "be with your parents at the beach?" He smoothed my hair with his big, smoky hands.

"I want you to come with us."
He shook his head and pushed me out the door.

He shook his head and pushed me out the door.

"Listen," he said, beneath the frame of the doorway, "I can't go out into the sun." He rubbed his bloodshot eyes and smiled, "I'm afraid of my own shadow now," he said, then closed the door and locked it.

I rose from the ground and walked to a convenience store, brushing sand off my legs. I took a Coke out of the refrigerated case, looking over at the stacks of beer and wine coolers, when the manager called over, "Something I can help you with?"

"No, thanks," I said, stepping closer to the liquor. I read the labels slowly. Vodka from Russia, Rum from Brazil. This was probably where my grandfather had shopped.

"Dammit," he said, and walked over to me. "Look here, I don't like minors looking at my liquor."

I scratched my neck. "What?"

The manager wiped his hand along the stubble on his face. He looked tired. "Too many of you punks have been coming in here and swiping my stuff. I got mirrors installed now." He nodded up at the ceiling. "So don't you try anything. Now do you want that Coke or not? It's late."

"Yeah, I want this Coke." I said, my fingers tightening around the neck of the bottle.
The Driver's Ed. Teacher

My students are made of soggy cornflakes, and their minds are floating in the milk of dreams. They say the classroom is a small, dull bowl that cannot move.

Then they want their licenses to come to them like playing cards. I am the dealer of freedom. The king of hearts slides in on waxy wings--

dagger in hand he forgets safety, they forget safety and feel shackled in seat belts.

But how can I explain:

watching my own hands on the wheel, my knuckles rising like dorsal fins, and the way my boy was cast from the car, a hook that needed to catch anything.

Later, how the bandages were the only things gentle enough to hold him.

And that empty space in the passenger's seat.

I've been driving in circles trying to teach them, but I've forgotten what they must feel, with their hands that grasp, for the first few times, direction.

Lora Kolodny
2 Hunters

He loves to teach her things;
won't even let her go to preschool,
this girl who is so small and fair
with a silver laugh and icicle bones.
Canoeing away one day,
she looks back to see her mom and sister
waving from the shore.
They have fistfuls of saltwater taffy
but she doesn't care.
Smoothing forward,
the prow makes a V in the rippled green.
Colored leaves are floating on the surface.

Zagarella Contway
Poem for J.

You’ve seen how I try to make myself disappear:
eyes sunk into small black pockets.
lips two blades of ice. Beautiful, you say.
and you think it is true.
When we are together, your chest is a calm lake
above me, smooth, sexless, your ribs
rubbing mine.

On the plane going north, a woman thinks
I am a boy. Jeans, a flannel shirt,
hair cropped close: it is deliberate,
you know, like the cigarette I hold.
the brisk nod I give strangers. My wrists twist together:
I am cold—at least, that is what I tell
the woman. “Such a pretty voice,” she says.
“do you sing?” Before me, a blossom of Marlboro smoke:
I shake my head, smile.

But now I am here with you,
your scars invisible in the darkness. Words
are immaterial, your voice almost too soft
to be heard. It is strange, lovely,
and yet I do not love you.
Your poetry lacks something, a certain shame,
an apology, and nothing will make up for this: no trenchcoat
hiding your shrinking legs, no silly girl
like me. Tomorrow I’ll be back on a plane,
but I will not forget this shock of discovery:
how good it feels to finally be a dying bird,
fluttering, helpless, as you climb my sharp vertebrae
like so many steps, your body shuddering,
face always looking up.

Jessica Sklar
Notes on the Contributors

Zagarella Contway (12th grade: visual arts major): "I can sleep comfortably with bulbous knocky things in my hair."

Chris McCann is a senior visual arts major.

Midori Daito is a junior visual arts major.

Zachary S. Dean (third-year student; creative writing major): "Those savages, lacking other immediate alternatives, screwed the ground to exhaustion--" --Jim Harrison

Lora Kolodny (11th grade: creative writing major): "Inside the bouncy Tigger is the rescuer who knows the way." from the Tao of Pooh

Guy Molnar is a Hall Counselor in Picasso House, and although he has majored, at various times, in many different subjects, he wishes that at least one of them had been English Literature.

Marcus D. Olender (12th grade: creative writing major): "I'd appreciate you don't be feeling my pig like that."

Lisa Marie Priddy is a senior in the Writing Department. In her free time, she enjoys killing gophers and indulging in bouts of unrequited love.

Oliver Ray is a senior and neglects his telephone.

Fiona Drayton Russell (11th grade: creative writing major): "If I were a zote, I'd go around sticking my head in tin cans."

Jessica Sklar (12th grade: creative writing major): "I hate cruelty to animals except once they've already been digested."

Jessica Belle Smith (11th grade: creative writing major): "I am a Scorpio, secretive and mysterious, so I won't tell you anything else."
the red wheelbarrow
1983-84