

# the monitor

volume 16 issue 1

a campus collective

1 october 2009

## Hair

An ever winding stair.  
I wish I could describe  
Better the  
Locks of brown  
Untied hair,  
Which lay across your  
Shoulder so well.

-Peter Johnson

Hey readers,

This is a mini-issue of *The Monitor*, just to make sure you don't forget about us. We'll be back in full form as soon as possible. We just need to raise a bit more money to pay printing costs (hint, hint). Thanks for showing interest in alternative journalism.

-The Editors



Photo: Erica Halsey

## Home Again

The road is long, straight, and flat along this river plain,  
And in the distance bluffs rise above the cloud-splotched hills  
To show me their rocky faces.

I'm almost there as I cross the bridge over the river;  
Its currents churn slowly past as if to wash away  
My quiet longing for home.

A few turns later and I am on my avenue,  
Slowing down to roll past neighbor's houses.  
I take in the comfort of familiarity.

Our lawn is like a patchy forest,  
Overgrown and unruly and beautiful:  
The fortress of my past and home of my memories.

But now the king of the lawn, the Oak, is cut down.  
In its place is a flowerbed of marigolds  
And our forever-napping orange cat.

A sadness rushes over me at the loss of this grand friend  
Until I see the dogwood that had almost perished  
Under its gigantic neighbor's shade.

Its delicate flowers seem to float on slender branches,  
Reaching joyously to new heights  
With its newfound sunshine and warmth.

I'll watch this tree for a little while and remember  
To look forward to coming home each spring  
To see its white petals bloom again.

-Joan Williams

## The Case Against Lyrics by James Ginns

As a die hard metalhead every so often I am charged with the task of introducing people to the genre. There are a number of perfectly valid reasons for not enjoying this kind of music. A distaste for angry music in general; its extensive use of non-melodic elements, both in vocals and instruments; and its over the top, pound the shit out of you mentality. The one obnoxious objection I come across is "but I can't hear what they're saying!" Sonically, this issue is inherent result of a cardinal rule of metal, which is to never turn down the guitar. It is often difficult to hear the words of a clean singer with such prominent guitar, and it is easier than you might think to understand the guttural vocals when the guitar is absent.

But sonics are not my concern here. The thesis is that lyrics are unimportant, that they are just poetry set to music (and I can't stand poetry). And if you want poetry, you might as well take an English class or go to a poetry slam. Most lyrics come locked and loaded with an army of cliches, trying to attach to your memory in the most bland and generic way. I think my strongest case against lyrics is that often when I do hear some moving lyrics and go to look up the lyrics for the song, the actual lyrics are not as cool as the ones I originally heard. Some examples:

Acid Bath's "The Bones of Baby Dolls" I hear the phrase: "Tender liquid, screaming need/Heaven's gold beneath my feet." Tender liquid: a liquid easily harmed but also—as humans are mostly liquid—the weakness and sensitivity of being. Add to that the sexual innuendo of a "tender liquid". "Screaming Need"—the desperate call for something, whether received or not. "Heaven's gold" here being that which is received as a result of screaming your needs. Together we have the weakness of being screaming its needs. How empty and hollow is the promise of streets paved in gold to a living being. How terrible the shift from tender liquidity to solid gold. How inappropriately our most desperate desires are fulfilled.

Now here's are the author's lyrics: "Techno liquid, screaming meat/Heaven's gold beneath my feet" How disappointing. Let's continue: Naglfar's "Breath through me": Set my spirit free/allow me to see/death the mortal foe of eternity. "Set my spirit free" is an obvious reference to death, and "spirit" implies some form of after life. But if one supposes that the poetic voice is already dead, then "set my spirit free" is a request to leave the after world and "Allow me to see" confirms this. "The spirit here wants to know something other than existence, which is of course death. So death is the enemy of permanent existence (or eternity). "Mortal foe" can be read as a simple twist of words, or it can be taken to be believe that death—as something apart from eternity—is itself it too is fated to die. Lastly it could be that death and eternity are in constant battle (that is they are mortal foes). Now the song's actual lyrics, "Set my spirit free, allow me to see/Grant me the key to eternity." again disappointing.

If such sublimities are possible by my mishearing lyrics, in what position should one put actual lyrics? Scat. For those of you unfamiliar with this term, it involves the use of improvisational nonsense syllables. Perhaps there might be a moment of genius, like the proverbial monkeys who eventually hammer out Shakespeare. But in vast majority of the rest, it is my view that vocals should occupy their rightful place as just another instrument.

## You like this, yes?

Check out [TRUMANMONITOR.WORDPRESS.COM](http://TRUMANMONITOR.WORDPRESS.COM),  
Read comments, updates from The Monitor staff,  
and archives!