

The Lighter

Volume 49

Issue 2 *The Lighter Spring 2004*

Article 1

April 2004

The Lighter Spring 2004

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Recommended Citation

(2004) "The Lighter Spring 2004," *The Lighter*: Vol. 49 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

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the **Lighter**

Spring 2004

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the Lighter

Spring 2004

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Acknowledgements

The Lighter staff thanks our advisor, Walter Wangerin, for his guidance, and the Committee on Media for its support. Thanks to Benjamin Mueller for being a fabulous assistant editor and to Kevin Hyde for his smashing work as graphic designer. Most of all, thank you to the students who so graciously submitted their work this semester and to those who participated on the selection committees.

All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. **The Lighter** welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this magazine. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

Cover image:
Untitled, Lynne Albert

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Katharine Harmon
Kevin Hyde
Jon Kirsch
Jared Kotynski
Benjamin Mueller
Philip Nadasdy
Amy Sample

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Benjamin Mueller
Marikka Pretz-Anderson
Amy Sample
Heather Vargos

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Apple Recording Studio

Kimberly Bellware



second grade heart

Heather Vargos

in second grade
we all sat in rows on the gymnasium floor
and learned about our organs (a
february special). and
i discovered that the human heart
is not shaped like a valentine at all.
it is a thick, corded muscle
roughly the size of a fist.
it ached
a little, single-file back to class
with that ugly, tough animal
glub-glubbing away inside
its cage of my ribs.

Each Winter

Katharine Harmon

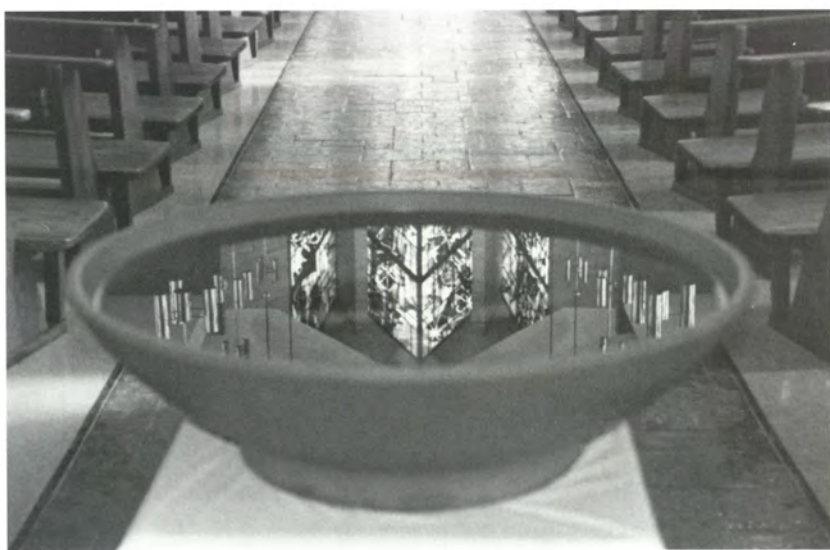
Perfect as wind-swept sand,
cold sighs creep
smothering the landscape.

No tinge of colour mars
the flawless blank of silence.

Glorious, wordless gasps—
illuminated an instant— then swallowed
into the crushing weight of deep.

Untitled

Jared Kotynski



Noctiphobic, really

Holly Denman

In this moment I can already see
The blood circling the drain Chipped tiles
and epitaphs.

(I have a fabulous imagination,
that's one reason I am such a fantastic
noctiphobe.)

I run a finger over the clean dark cracks in the shower
Awaiting the fluttering to surface in my throat
Ah, there it is.

God, it hurts to listen to the dripping down
Soap pounding down, waxing the floors
For a good fall.

I can see his face in the mildew on the curtain
Not an imprint, just an impression really
Does he see me?

Of course, he is looking at me with bulging eyes
And rubbing something gleaming metallic between
His fingers.

There is a ping of a note moaning in through the shower
And I shriek beneath the falling water
The curtain opens.

And that's the thing really, it didn't happen
But that won't stop it from happening,
And I see it,

I keep my feet close together, always together
I wash hidden skin beneath my breasts
I am bleeding.

Or am I? And why do I so like the sight of it?
It could still happen now, the waters on
I'd be right.

Life odds don't favor this in the shower
And of course it would never happen but then
It's happening.

Right now I feel it dread-rocking me, you know?
You can write that on my tombstone--
I told you so.

To the Women Sunbathing on Rooftops

Benjamin Mueller

"It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful." 2 Samuel 11:2

I.

That night it rained.
You tanned yourselves well
When the sun was out
Before the dark clouds came.
Before there ever was a wish
To be so tan, you were.
You played with the boys
Their boyish games
And you were one of them.
They punched you like a friend
And you bruised as they bruised.
But now you wear your darkened skins
With a different pride.
And as a man, I apologize to you,
For not being a boy anymore.

II.

In China, the women
Hide under umbrellas, afraid
The sun would mistake them for peasants,
Whose dark skin and calloused hands
Leave little to be desired.
But their beauty is white—
Hiding, though, when they laugh,
Their white teeth with their slender
White hands. Their skin soft
Like a perfectly ripened fruit;
Like a peach hanging untouched
From its bough for its picker's
Calloused hands to pluck
And cradle with pride.

III.

When I was young,
China was not so far away.
It existed in the darkness of my room,
In stories about warriors and wise men
Read to me before I fell asleep.
In the day we were the warriors
In the stories, and we laughed
When we forgot who we were.
Later, though, it got harder to forget.
On dates, in dark theaters,
We watched our women

While stories flashed past on the screen.
To us they were beautiful
In dark rooms, in parked cars,
Their dark skin was for us, we thought.
When we slept we dreamt;
Their taut skin we pressed
Ever so gently against our own,
And we imagined tasting on their lips
That first bite of a peach.
In the morning we boasted to our friends
Like warriors, but we hid our hands—
Soft and unscathed—in our pockets.

IV.

Bathsheba was beautiful, naked and tan,
Bathing in the air of an open window
When David saw her. I pictured her
As one the sun favored, as if it were an insult
To her creator that she bathe otherwise.
David, though, demanded a beauty of her
That was not his to know, and commanded
Uriah to sleep where his mistake
Would remain hidden. But Uriah,
Whose loyalty and piety stood
Outside the favored eyes of God,
Slept outside where the servants sleep.
Where those with calloused hands
Rise to the call of their master.

V.

And so, to you women sunbathing on rooftops
I promise when it is I who am commanded
To "Wash thy feet," I will
Sleep in the dirt of my own doorstep.
When the morning is rolling up its sleeves,
I will wash my wife's feet,
And promise to take her dancing
In the rain, in the night,
Where she'll teach me the games
She played when she was young and tan.

Stare-struck

Stacy Gherardi



Untitled

Amanda Johnson



Judith

Rachel Liptak

*God has sent me to accomplish with you things that will
astonish the whole world wherever people shall hear about
them.*

They are fools
to fight with iron.
I have heard the battle
beyond the walls--
the thud as sword strikes
creaking leather shell, seeking
the soft place to part
a man's soul from his body.
Screams intertwine,
a chorus of death
from our lips, theirs,
and in the veil of bloody smoke
lifeless leathered corpses
drop, the souls ascending
in that raucous din
of thrust, cry,
return to earth
from whence we came.
I cannot but wait.

No robe but the night
covers me.
Empty carcasses breathe
into the dark, their dwindling heat
misting the air.
He waits for me ahead,
though he knows
not why,
still attired in stains
of blood, earth, and sweat.
Receive me,
a widow, as your slave;
I come naked, humble,
and far wiser than you are mighty.
Sleep now, thou king,
and mind not as I take your sword
of iron into hand.

She sits on a stoop

Marikka Pretz-Anderson

She sits on a stoop.
Grey curls lap her shoulders,
rising and falling with each muffled sob.
An apron lies beside her,
battered and balled in the grass.

He sits by the hearth.
Oranges dance upon his weathered brow.
His eyes are swollen with tears
and hands blackened with ash.
A crumpled envelope lies beside him.

She sits in her room.
Reddish curls lap her shoulders,
rising and falling with each muffled sob.
Her eyes are swollen with tears
and hands blackened with ink.

He sits in a room
darkened by the intruding night.
The moonlight masks his unmarked face
and blankets blood-streaked hands.
A smudgeless sketch of love unborn
lies beside him.

Uncertain life

Nicole Kranich

Like a lump of lumber
you sleep in the next bed
knees knotted to your chest,
your short dark hair
like a red flag
against the snowy blankets.

Your voice resonates to reality
only when they call us;
sometimes I'm afraid
you're not breathing. They come
four times every hour,
just to check.

Sometimes I sleep through
their arrival and sometimes I
want to whisper *I am*
death and have come
for you when they approach.

At times they wake you:
they wish to feed your soul,
but not being ready, they feed
just your stomach.

Your callused feet, sensitive
to the coldness of the world,
wear white high heels that click
telling us, yes *I'm still alive*.

Sermon on the Mound

Kimberly Bellware



The Child

Michael Foland

Our shoes on gravel sound like broken wrists,
And we are drawing near to father's grave.
I hadn't thought to come this way until
This afternoon, until you happened by.

And yes this weather makes me think of him:
The sun that drops beyond those trees, unearthly
Smirking orange! But you meant our breath
That steams, free and lithe? Well, yes. Alright.

A rock has planted itself inside my shoe
And while I dig it out you drop and sprawl
Upon the grass, just like a grinning cat,
Just like you did when you were still a child.

Like when I'd sit upon the stoop and wait
While you would plunge your face into the snow
Just to feel the burn of cold and taste
That grayish flavor, subtle as a sigh.

But later on when father called us in
The pot of soup would scald your frozen face.
And I enjoyed and savored, laughed a scold,
Ate that bland stuff with a blissful sigh.

So let's get on our noisy way again.
You tell me of the sycamores they planted
Along the graveyard, so big and sprawling now,
The shaggy bark they drop could kill a child!

The final gradual rise along the hill
Curves about to drop us at the gate.
My breath is hard and heavy? Kid, I'm old!
Don't smirk, I'll be alright, I'll be alright.

The pulse that stomps inside my ears recalls
That song you used to play, your wrists slung low
Against the keys. The ending grave and strange.
An awful, broken chord to remember it by.

Untitled

Lynne Albert



María Guadalupe

Megan Nelson



Untitled

Jared Kotynski



Untitled

Jared Kotynski



Untitled

Jared Kotynski



Untitled

Breana Boellner



Untitled

Jared Kotynski

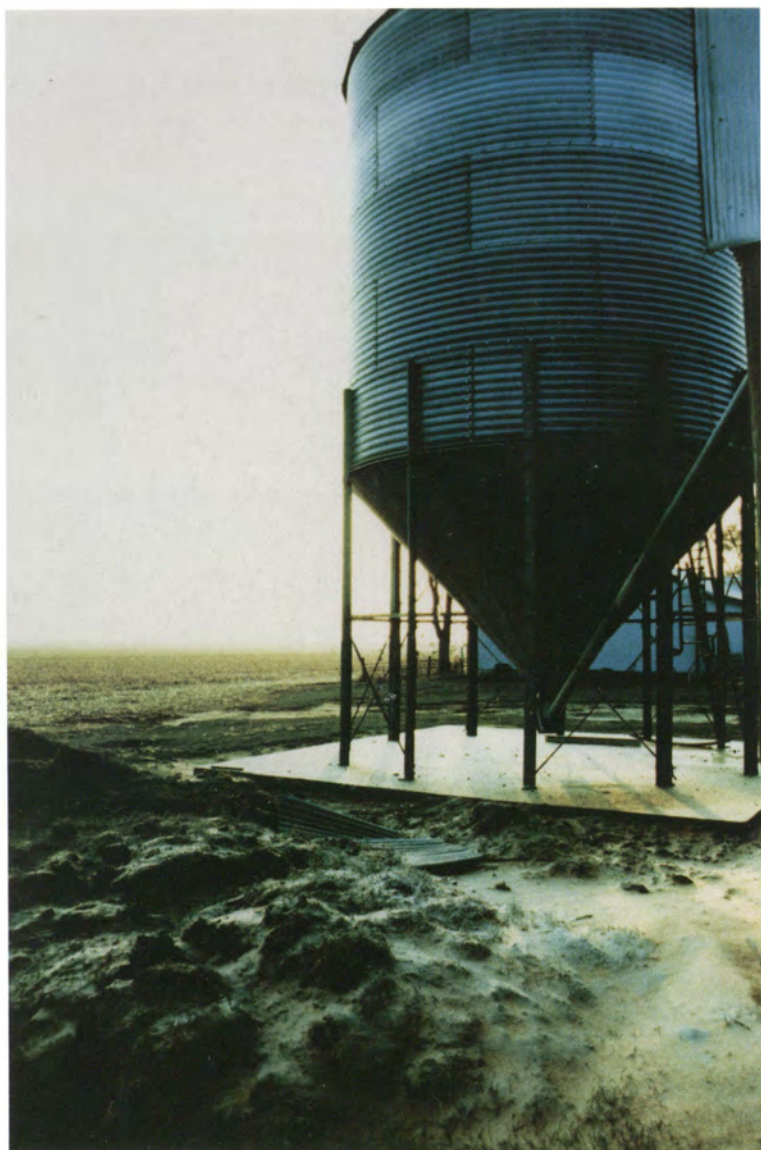


Untitled

Kathryn Ross



Untitled
Jared Kotynski



Untitled

Jessica Phillips



Moonlight Reveals Self

Nicole Kranich

Rummage through weeds
caught in your hair -
little leaves and branches
laying testament
to your journeys
you cannot recite.

Mute, deaf
your thoughts still
reach formation
by pleading
eyes that speak
volumes, even
louder than my son
and his blasted radio
he leaves on
in the twilight.

The same moon hanging
outside his bedroom
window that leads
a weary searcher
to mysteries encased
in frozen moonlight,
pale as popsicles
used to lure
innocent children
to wooded areas,
licking cherry-red
blood off branches
whipped like coffee
into tender skin, under
that same celestial orb.

Estne Nihil Sanctum?

Michael Foland

Oh, that's Latin, isn't it?

-Max Fisher

I broke my head open on the table.
Before my mother stitched it back together,
I lodged a watch inside the crevice.
And this when I was only nine years old.

After that I always knew the time.
And soon it was that time
When height makes men of boys,
And so at twelve I soaked my lower legs in water
For twenty-seven days until they bent.
I pinned my ankles underneath a rock
And clawed my way along the ground until
My knee was closer to my head than foot.

My newfound height was welcome
But had an unforeseen effect.
I now had to play basketball,
And underneath the rim an extra foot is good
But not without a muscle on the arm.
And so at age fifteen I asked my friend to find
A chest of drawers and drop it onto me.
He did so and I struggled for a week
But finally pushed it off.

Now strong and tall and punctual but restless still.
And so, in regrettable haste,
Three years after that I splayed my ribs,
Broke one off and gave it to a girl.
Ordered her to run away and told her I would chase.
Of course I let her have a healthy lead
(Owing to my longer legs and all).
But she was fast and kept all her self concealed.
So finally I gave up. A while back she told me
She had filed the strange thing down
And now uses it as a bookmark.

untitled

Jeff Dolecek

inside on the dark side of what once could be considered the correct side, i reel through thoughts that bought my mind. with a wandering wardrobe i feel that what is welcome in this life is something so much more sinister than either of us expected. souring sight lines divide the unscrupulous stage between viewer and user. sooner and sadder, than later could ever have imagined, i manage. but the advantage doesn't delineate down into the sober somber expressions that evade my incongruent understanding.

turn-table trap door and unprotected polytheistic inheritance. catch it in the complacent vacant upbringing of all middle American usurpers who with their hip hugging pants and perfect pantomimes of what they are supposed to care about and what they really do, gets crossed somewhere in the confusion of cable and comcast, crossing and re-crossing and cross referencing all the wiring laid to perfection with the pursuit of specialization. the one steam rolling thought in their innocent heads. forgive the martyrs of my enlightenment. for while they know what they did, they did not know what they were doing. brewing base contempt and misunderstanding for what keeps our continuity whole. droplets of mirrors melt the concrete, drive back to finish the complete instruc-

tion, blueprints for the destruction. cross the channels, wire together the hair of the knuckles, flip over the insincerity the defines our buckles... that don't do anything, hold up nothing, compliment nothing.

i'm not even sure anymore. and i don't know why. i can't see the color, but i can't care either. and if i did...if i did, i don't know what could it possibly matter? pushing out with inarticulate speech, understanding that i can't reach in. the eyes, they register the full spectrum and broadcast the intention left out by even the deepest intuition. flashes of fireworks and inherent blips of cosmic radiation guide my wonder, and i wonder. what a wonderful disgrace of creator and created we've welded to our walk. iron ideas with selfish origin sing from our mouth and die just slightly short of being heard. ears that cannot will not are not there don't hear the compassion curbed slightly passed recognition and yet, and yet...the forceful fear and symptoms of disassociation from the beginning explosion propel through telescopic imagination, our hope, to a place of perpetually undying peace and forgetful frets. momentary muses and sulfur fuses ignite the suspicion, once growing ever so slowly, but now ringing in concentric circles. emanating from magnetic webs of love and laziness the peak of reason wrings out its wrinkles and blinks. blinks again and yawns. good morning, how are you? a hand full of love and loose change is all i have to offer up. the common con-

ception of consciousness is only a hiccup. an irrational compulsive contraction.

so step forward and out of your shiny shoes. closer to me while i riffle through these records in a touchingly remarkable ruse. regarding you in nature, naturally, this matter could not have had a more eloquent explosion. orbiting above, high and higher, wavicles of pity and passion (and the rest) pass through the precision with which we reflect, interpret our retrospective experience. stopping and turning, folding and burning the quiet quivers of electrons engage your mind. unscrew your iris, and pass out through your pupils those waves that worry you most. take your time, pause for a moment, and decline to recognize the shiver in your spine. and with your welcomingly weathered hands put to your lips the solace in a bottle and enjoy the wine.

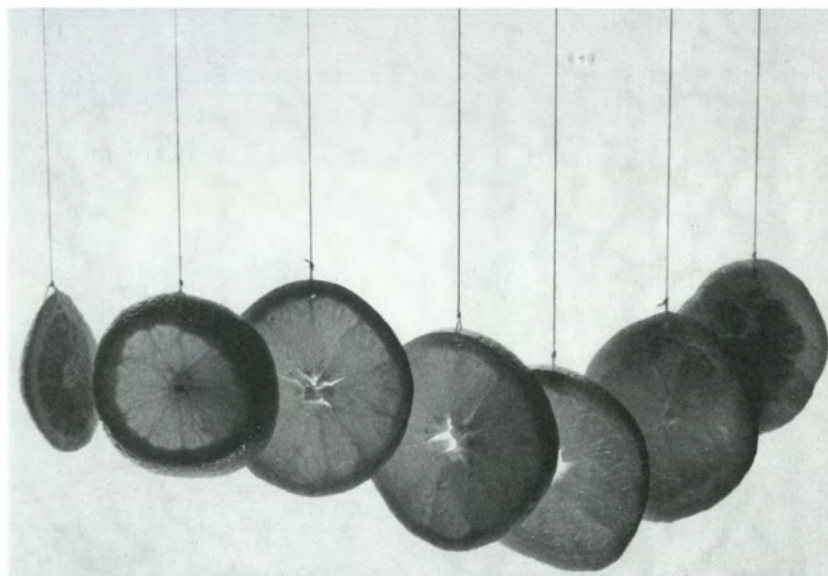
Screaming Mimis

Philip Nadasdy



Untitled

Jessica Phillips



Untitled

Jessica Phillips



A haiku for doctor crane

Holly Denman

My wise dentist says
No man loves you but your dad
Til you're twenty-five

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Michael Foland should learn how to write. Thanks to those who are mindful.

Megan Nelson is studying International Service and Spanish at VU. She thoroughly enjoyed experiencing both of these first-hand while studying abroad in Puebla, Mexico. This photograph is a tiny glimpse at what Megan was able to witness and experience during her months spent in Mexico. Megan became acquainted with little María Guadalupe in a small lake town called Pátzcuaro. María is peering out from her grandmother's kitchen. This shy yet attentive little girl said so little but shared so much.

Marikka Pretz-Anderson is a senior Spanish and sociology double major from Cleveland, Ohio. She spent her junior year abroad in Granada, Spain and hopes to enjoy similar experiences in the coming years. She enjoys reading, writing, running, sewing, pottery, photography, and most other things that do not contribute to gradual erosion of the human brain. Inspiration for "She sits on a stoop" is unknown, but most likely originates from her interests in social activism.

Shinsuke Takasaki

In writing, I shoot short-lived word bullets, hoping they'll turn into a lifelong paragraph. I write, write, and write. At some points of writing, in a wonder as to

for what I keep writing, yet still with a pen in the hand, something comes by in a queer timing that is unable to be fully written. It never looks gorgeous, fancy or whatever; rather it gives me a sense of the matter-of-fact-ness that I am just writing. Then I start to write again what has been there for a while and what I'm supposed to write.

In that sight, I go on to draw a whole bunch of ants on a white canvas. My dear ants, who don't know how much I love and hate them, spread over and move around on the canvas. Sometimes they look quite neat and well organized; sometimes they go messy and out of control. So lovely and so disgusting are those ants that I can easily miss the whole point of the ant feeding. My dear hands, to which I go back after I get a betrayal bite by the ants, direct them to an orchestra. Patient with the naughty ant players, the conducting hands gradually speak of me in a way sounds make music, and continuously take my photos as shapes and figures draw a picture.

Either in sequence or in a single stroke, the hands write me. This visionary-sound writing composes me-as-being so that I can breathe myself over and over: 1,2,3...phew...

Breana Boellner

In today's society our passionate battle is against entropy. All around us the citizen's of our country fight to keep our world from crumbling right beneath us. Sometimes it is nice to sit back and watch the beauty that can come from the natural flow of the world. Hello, my name is Breana Boellner, and I am a sophomore art major here at Valparaiso University. Photography has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember, so I easily came to the decision that this is how I want to spend my life... taking pictures of the amazement I see all around me. I can think of nothing better than capturing those special moments in people's lives, but more importantly, the world as I see it. As I was driving home from work one day, I saw smoke bellowing up from what looked like my neighborhood. At first I began to panic, however; once I realized that this was a controlled fire, I quickly jumped into the audience and began shooting pictures. Sometimes fire is not something to fear, but to look at with awe and wonder. Even these heroes who fight the elements day in and day out can look upon fire with the eyes of a child, and see it as a new beauty. Here they are able to sit back and watch the amazing phenomenon that they work so hard to prevent. For one day they could face a fire and breath fresh air, crawl on the ground and not avoid falling debris, and simply sit back and watch this house fall to the ground.

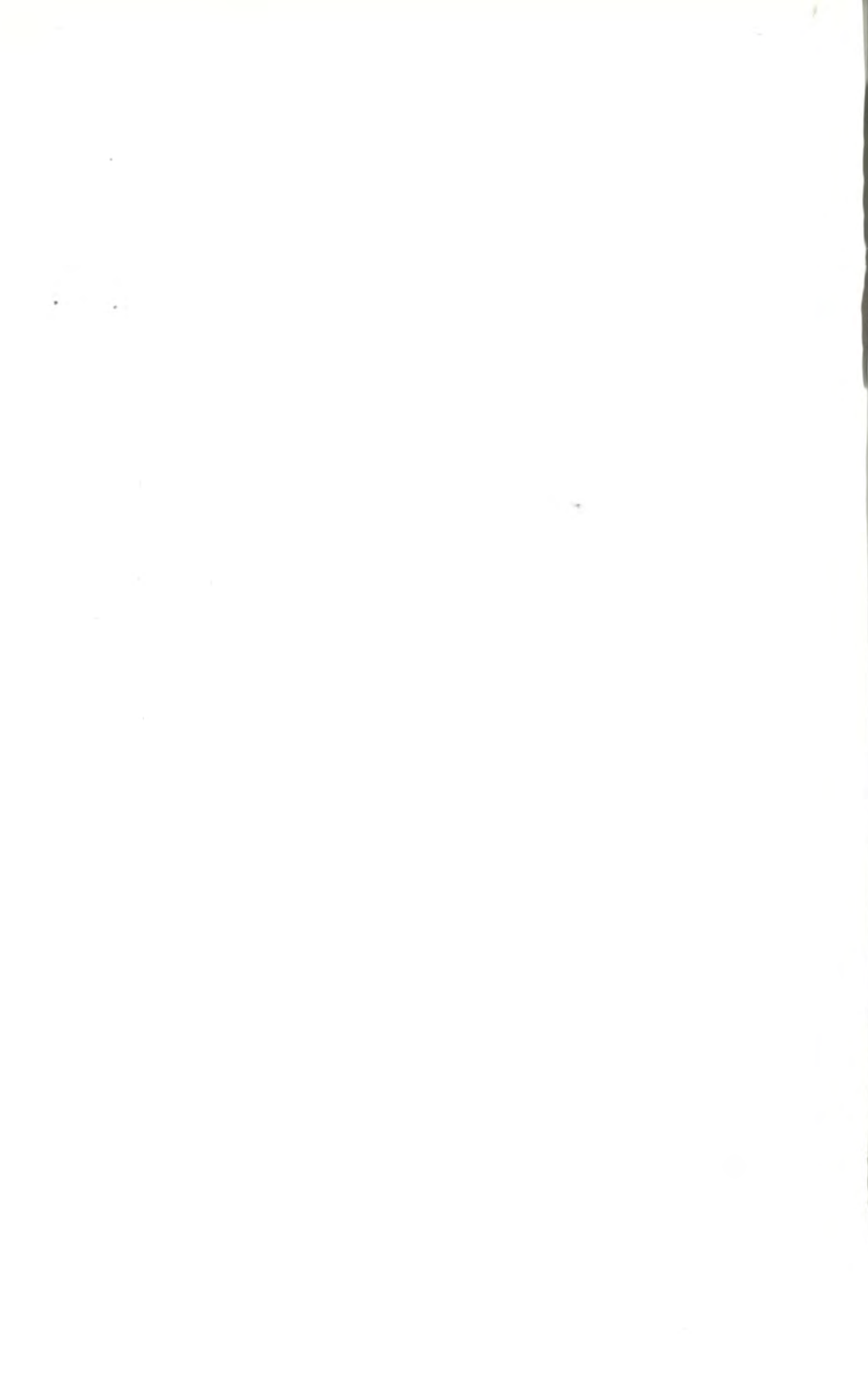
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Sharpen your pencils, focus your cameras, and fill your palettes because **the Lighter** wants your submissions for the Fall 2004 issue. Watch for flyers with the details and deadlines in September.

-or-

If you have a sharp mind, a keen eye, and a creative palette full of literary and artistic zeal, **the Lighter** wants you to be on the selection committee for next semester.

Any questions or concerns, contact the editor at **Ben.Mueller1@valpo.edu**



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