

Samantha Bernstein

For my fellow poets

who knew me first
through the words i chose and didn't laugh

when I changed my mind. We are
the harvesters of weeds, hardest

and most forgiving of flowers; you know
most of us won't make it, and if we're lucky

will spend a lifetime bent by the edges
of pavement and dirt roads, picking beauties

too common for a world obsessed
with rarity. If we're lucky we'll retain

this lack of clarity of which we all
complain. Meanwhile we sit, haloed by the ordinary

fluorescent light, our faces so far
unmarked by anything we've felt, as yet

another morning passes in lines
we struggled at night to find and I

love you all, for no particular reason
other than we're here; love you for

the joy I feel in asking: do we
have revisions due tomorrow? Just being able

to ask. Trudging to class: a senseless elation,
bliss that I am only my own creation. You,

my fellow poets, my schoolmates, have been
scattered into the path I happen to be walking

as I am young; today I asked: we
don't have to grow up yet, do we? What

is our responsibility? The world
has notions: do you feel ready?

Not me. I don't want to stop getting
high in my car and screaming along

to Modest Mouse songs, fatalistic symphonies
evoking all my stubborn love for our flawed species,

the music's exuberant misery a reminder
that my existential angst is a luxury

for which I am grateful, that my body
with all its imperfections isn't going

to get any better, that our youth, in all
its indulgent stupidity, is a valid state of being.

Why should we rush to join the pristine garden
when we have a world full of disorder

ripe for exploration?