

Waibel creates 'honest' poems through experience

"Poetry is an orphan of silence. The words never quite equal the experience behind them."
 - Charles Simic, Pulitzer prize winning poet



Steven Bender/DN

Waibel, a secondary-education major at UNL, writes poetry from life-inspired events. She said being at work, around family or friends added to her creativity.

Her words speak louder on paper than any other way. Unlike those students previously featured, whose artistic media included sculpture, dance, music, textile and paint, Emily Waibel is an artist in an expressive form that is sometimes overlooked: the written word.

Writing both poetry and short stories that sort through her own life experiences, the sophomore English education major takes readers on a visual and emotional journey of raw honesty.

"Some people don't consider writing an art form like painting, singing or dancing," she said, "but writers are just the same. Painters see a concept in colors and angles. Musicians hear concepts in notes. Writers just use words instead."

Last year as a student in English professor Greg Kuzma's poetry class, Waibel unknowingly gained attention with each assignment.

Kuzma called her poetry "extraordinary."

"She didn't believe us when we tried to tell her," he said. "I'm not a fan of pretty words but how hard the writer works to tell the truth of an experience. She's honest, and I'm grateful for her honesty."

Waibel's poetry, which was published in the 2000-2001 "Laurus," UNL's undergraduate literary magazine, unknowingly draws readers into a mesh of intense emotions about different experiences, such as a death disrupting a close family, shattered love and the beginnings of inner growth and change.

As the middle sister in a close family, Waibel said her parents, Bob and Kathleen, and sisters, Allison and Liz, in Tulsa, Okla., inspire the emotions behind

many of her writings.

"My family is very important to me," Waibel said. "They are all such beautiful people and have done such beautiful things with their lives. Through poetry, I want to communicate to them how much they have influenced me. They've shaped so much of who I am now."

Although Waibel said poetry was her forte, this fall she entered a short story fiction class and found the switch more challenging than predicted.

"I thought they would be more similar, and I love to read short stories," Waibel said. "But it is a struggle for me."

But the class' professor, Judy Slater, said Waibel excels at both writing styles.

"It's impressive to see someone who writes both fiction and poetry well," Slater said. "You can tell she's a poet because her stories are lyrical, but she also knows how to tell a story, which you sometimes don't need to do in poetry. I'm lucky to have read her work."

Waibel said her poetry is comprised of everyday "scenes" in her life, and she deals with difficult issues, which is hard to do verbally.

"It is a huge emotional release for me," Waibel said. "It's something I just have to do. I can't explain it. I am most inspired by memories that are slowly pieced together in my mind. Things that people around me say or do find their way into these poems."

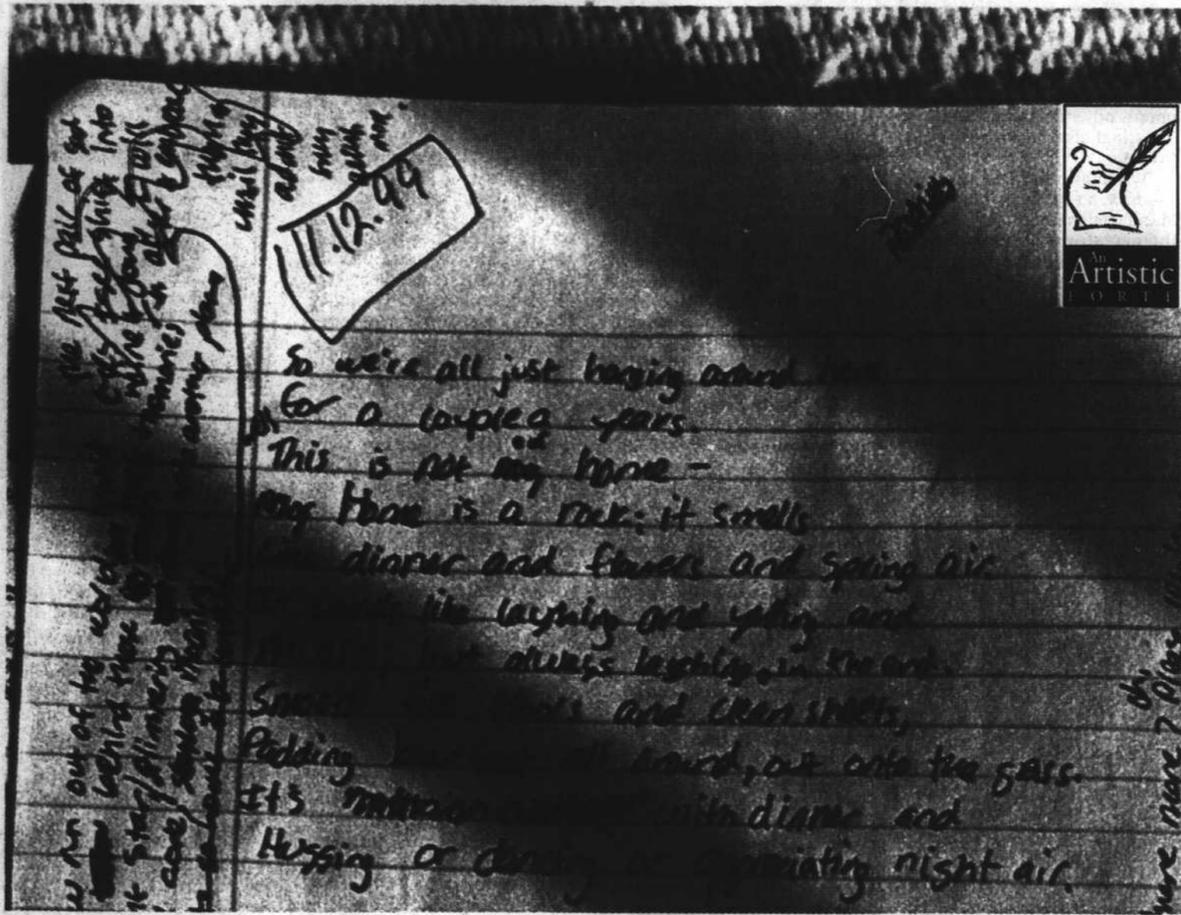
Kuzma said Waibel's poems took courage to write because they are about topics like grief and death; they're especially hard to present in a classroom setting.

"She dared to do it," he said. "Because of her courage, other people brought more of themselves to the class and weren't worried about protecting images. She showed people the benefits of being honest."

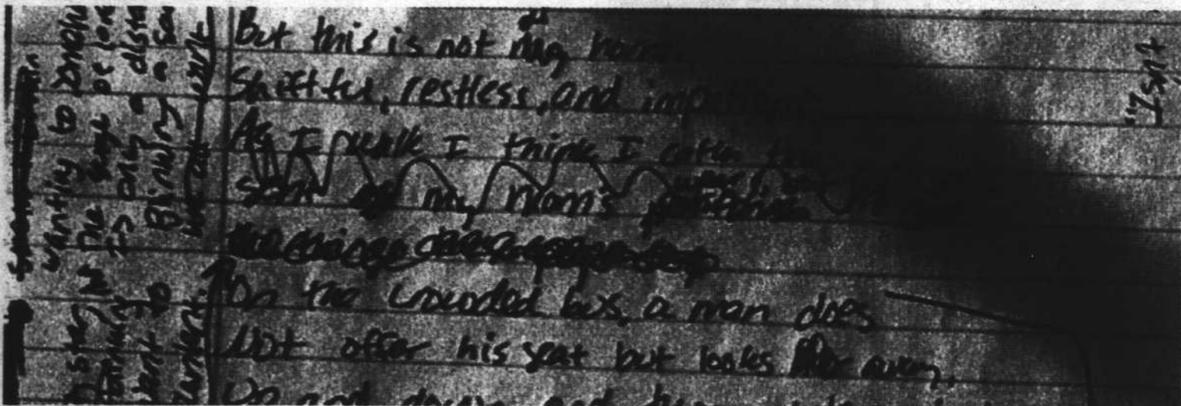
Her poems, which reflect memories of funerals, moving and the comfort of family, told the "truth of experience," Kuzma said.

"She stared into the dark void, and she didn't close her eyes or scream or turn away," he said. "She took us into a depth of awareness so compelling, the surface of the poem disappeared, and we were meshed into the vision of the poem. And nobody taught her to do that."

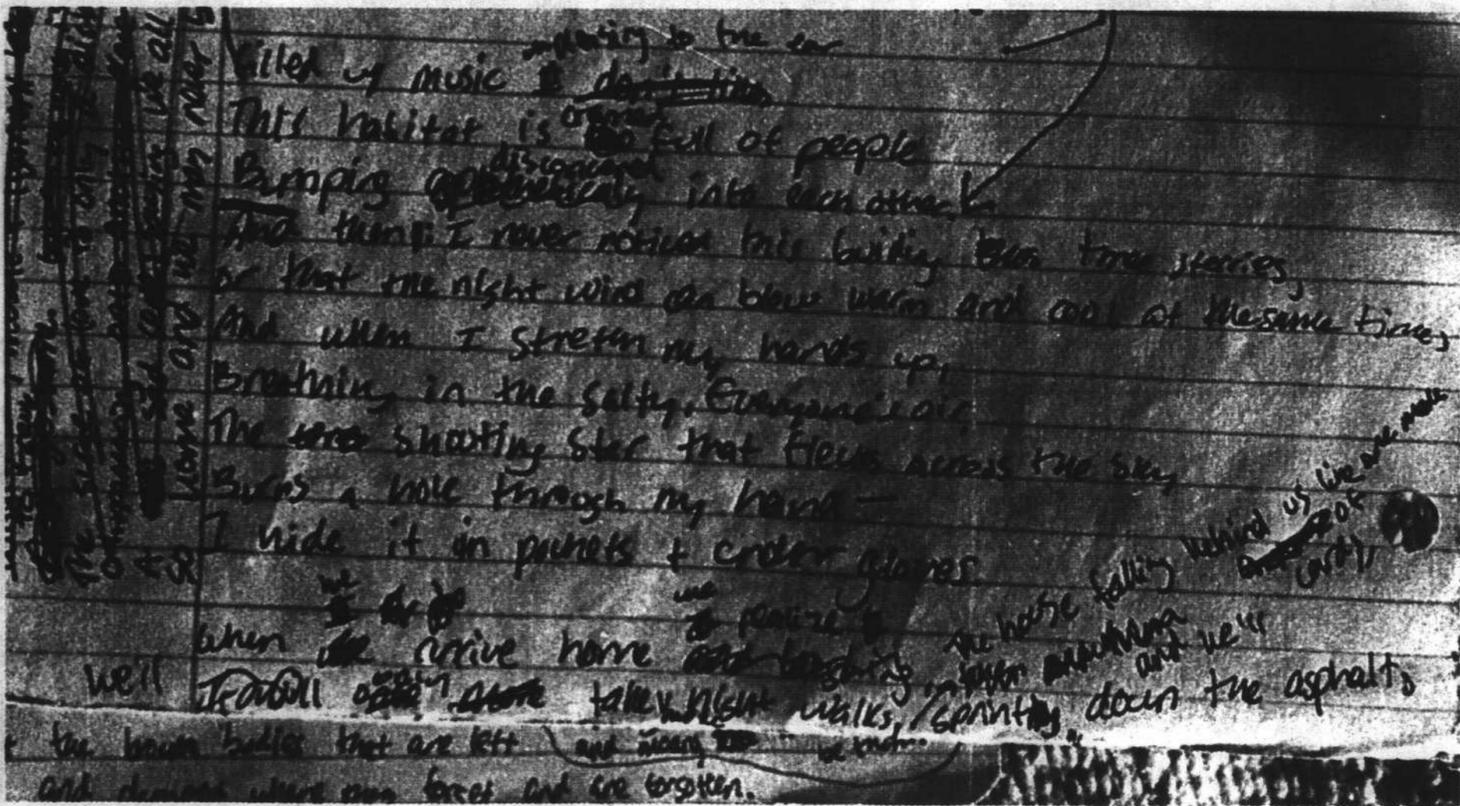
LEFT: A rough version of Waibel's poem "Landscape"



more than words



a story by melanie mensch



Rethinking 'Fight Club': The violence still irks, but potent vision remains

BY SAMUEL MCKEON

"I want you to hit me as hard as you can."
 - Brad Pitt, "Fight Club"

"I wanted to destroy something beautiful."
 - Edward Norton, "Fight Club"

Repulsion. That's my recollection of "Fight Club." At least, the first viewing of it on opening night, after anticipating it like few films in 1999.

It's the kind of rollicking, daring film vision that represents the height of craft. The surreal opening credit sequence. A quick hook at the top of a credit office building with the two stars. A clever, brilliant, deeply veined first act. The setup for something grand,

transcendent. A meaningful tome on the cathartic and dangerous nature of materialistic America.

Then, repulsion - the word that adequately describes my reaction to the much-debated fight scenes in "Fight Club," blotting out the commentary and singly drawing attention to themselves as set pieces of isolated, backroom fist violence of such a visceral nature that the blood scrunching between the cheek and the teeth of the fighter can be heard on the soundtrack.

There has been worse violence depicted onscreen - "Saving Private Ryan" contains 20 minutes of brain-rattling violence in its opening sequence basically deadening all plotlines arriving after it.

But has there been violence that more poorly served a film

Film Commentary

than this? "Fight Club," a clever, relatively gruesome novel by retired airline mechanic Chuck Palahniuk is about something. So is, I've discovered in many viewings, the film.

Those fight scenes are about - and solely about - the various ways one's body can contort with blood gushing in all directions. It lingers particularly long on how blood trickles along cold, hard cement.

In my initial review last year, I mentioned them (there's four or five major sequences, depending on what you call major) as the primary reason for an unfavorable opinion, while a colleague gave it a favorable one, choosing to stick on the tack that those who didn't like

"Fight Club" did not get it.

I very much understand the film, as much as one can, I suppose, after multiple viewings, and listening to director Fincher's and star Edward Norton's commentary on the DVD package. The fight scenes are still flinch-worthy, and it's questionable as to whether they add any real art to the production.

And yet, "Fight Club" is an essential movie for the 21st Century - one of the few out there - that skewers materialism with such a bold, fierce bravado, and certainly, you wonder what all the fuss over "American Beauty" was for. The latter has ice water running through its veins; it's detached, damning, judgmental. "Fight Club" has hot, black blood running through its two-hour-plus running time. It judges by showing.



Jerry Morgan/DN

This review, then, is a reversal of sorts, recognition of "Fight Club's" virtues while singling its long period of flawed, violent behavior as an anathema. Along with Paul Thomas Anderson's "Magnolia," which serves as a

companion piece, "Fight Club" is the most ecstatically made film of 1999 in terms of ambitious, cinematic showmanship.

Please see FIGHT CLUB on 6