
Cardinal
ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE
SINS.

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Cardinal Sins

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All SVSU students, faculty, staff, and alumni are invited to submit poetry, short fiction, essays,
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all from the tree of knowledge

*“Proof of the genius of ancient Greece is that it
understood baseball’s future importance.”*

George F. Will, *Men at Work*

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To Rita, Somewhere in California

Melissa Seitz

First Place Winner

October days
Michigan skyline stripped of blue
only gray clouds and
a handful of red/yellow/gold leaves
no promise of the sun
I think I'm dying.
And I wonder who
is driving my car
down US 27.
Stevie's blues ooze through my radio
Pay attention I tell myself
Still I speed through yellow lights
search the mirrors for police cars
chew granola bars for dinner
sip warm water from a jug
think about my husband and son
and practice my nonchalant look.
But the police car never comes.

Every Tuesday and Thursday night
I drive by some bar
parking lot always full
I could pull in,
see what the sign means:
"Creative Ice Cube Melting Contest"

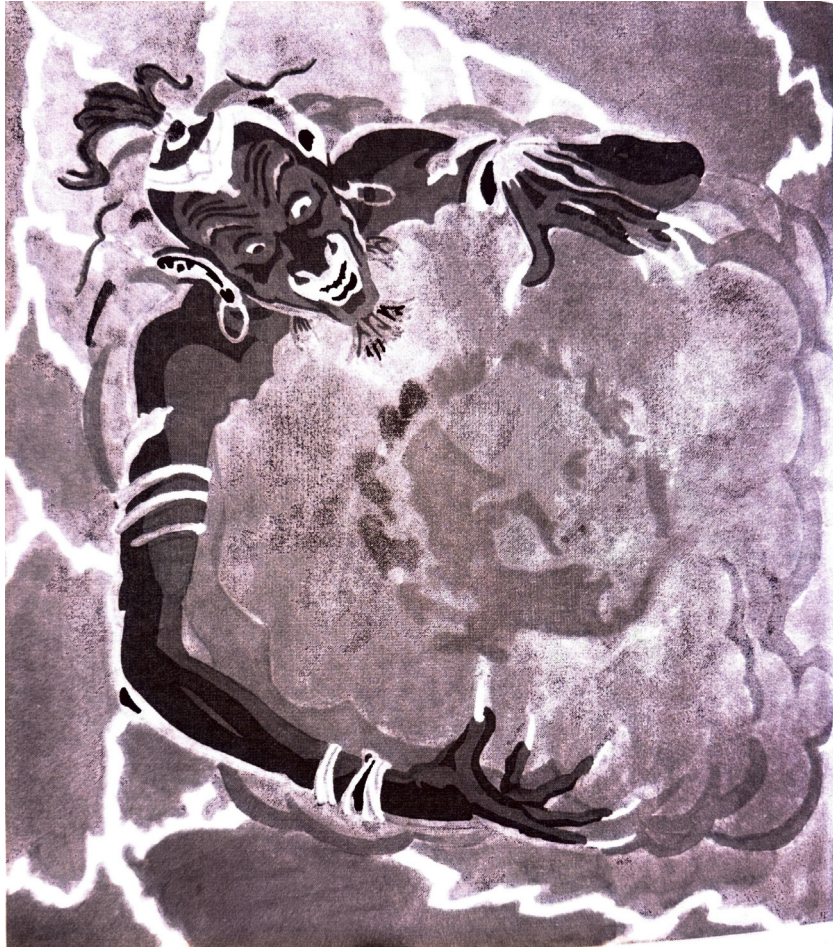
When you and I lived the bar life,
we only cared about who paid the bill
and if the music was loud enough
and how many guys we could beat at foosball
and if our headache would be as bad as the last one.
Maybe that was our contest:
Who could inflict the most pain,
Who could find the quickest way of dying,
and still drive home.

I Stand

Catie Butler

I stand
over a
cliff
where I
drop a
needle
to hear
the whir
and stir
it will
make

A voice
behind the
blackberry
bush
yells for
me to
find mother
among the
clouds that
lick the
pavement



Make A Wish
Ink & Marker; 9 x 10

James Simon
Second Place Winner

The Hawk

Kristin Majkrzak

I was driving
one day
mind-blank
along rural blacktop
unrolling itself
into a dusty blue autumn sky.

And then
in a sideways glance
I saw a hawk flying
so close
I could see the details
of her striped tail band.

We continued onward
side by side
she in her vehicle of skin and bone
and feather
and I skin and bone
and fire-driven metal.

Suddenly
our eyes met
in startled recognition
of shared hopes
and dreams
and kinship.

Reaching out
beyond our vehicles
beyond time
we soared
wing-tip to wing-tip
into the Great Mystery.

Scare Crow

Anthony James Phillips

Second Place Winner

A scare crow swaying in the artificial guests of passing cars, the denim man crouched on the bank of an overpass. Above, girders rumbled and hummed under Pontiac 6000s, and trumpeted spray paint rainbows of “Old Dan Loves You!” Below, the cars tore by like the Colorado River, ripping ashes from a Marlboro perched between his thin lips. His hair hung like an embarrassed mane, with sprigs like straw angling into a halo. His eyes strobed the grays, the mauves, and the other less distinctive finishes, on a faded blue matte as threadbare as his jeans. Drivers, intent on the road and children moaning in the back seat, missed him entirely, but through the veil of smoke, he watched them pass with mild amusement.

He inhaled deeply on the Marlboro, and tracked some ashes drifting onto his grass-stained Converse. He placed a finger to the side of his rounded, German nose, and looked for an instant like Saint Nick, ready to soar up a chimney. He poked into the corner of his eye, then twisted his knuckle into the deep set lids. A VW sputtered by and his arm twitched with the childhood instinct. “Slug bug blue,” sank over the ledge he crawled into, down the bank, and into the rattles of the cars. His face was emotionless.

He set his hands upon his knees where the threads spider webbed a lace. He gazed for a moment at a gaudy, die-cast skull ring that graced his left index finger. His other hand snaked the distance to the ring, and he twisted it back and forth, as if tightening a rusty nut. A sigh slipped out. Satisfied the torque of the ring was correct, he listened to the chorus of white walls and the grumble of muddy 4X4 Firestones.

Like a stick man, his limbs were straight edges stole from geometry class and his body was an enigma of right angles under the black stiffness of unwashed denim, patches, pins, and the folds of a washed-out tee shirt. The shirt’s block print blazoned “15 Reasons Why a Beer is Better than a Woman,” followed by “a beer is always wet,” and “a beer is good any time of the month,” without end notes. Between his jack-knifed legs, a two liter of Mountain Dew was propped, flickering like his eyes against reflections of speeding step side pickups, mini-vans, and econo-boxes. The bottle was nearly empty and collecting dust. The cap was on tight, but the pop, stagnated concentric rings back and forth pooled in the bottom.

As his cigarette burned down to a filter and a half inch of smoldering gray, he pinched it from his mouth. He looked at it closely, as if making sure it was exhausted. Flicking the butt toward the river of cars, he sighed again. His eyes narrowed as tiny sparks spun away from a tinted window and the blast of air that followed.

He fumbled with the copper snap that held his breast pocket. The jacket sunk in, hinting at a concave chest. He pulled a tattered red package from the depths, spitting lint and filmy plastic into the highway’s current. Squeezing the sides, the package bowed out, revealing nothing. His eyes narrowed and his brown brows arched up under his straw veil of hair.

He crumpled the package into a rough ball and dropped it onto the bank. It avalanched down and was crushed under the spinning wheels. Sighing, he tugged at his ring again, and tested the cap on the bottle. It loosened, then he wrenched it down with an unexpected savage twist. He threw a lop-sided grin at the oblivious Garfields in rear windows, and stretched out his spider legs. Ragged strings flagged in the breeze like protruding straw, his leftover stuffing.

He licked his lips and pronounced, “Piss on this cigarette tax,” and edged from under the graffiti gilded girders supporting the thundering of I-94. A swallow shot out from the overpass and swooped above the cars, into the overcast sky. “Boo,” the scare crow chuckled like a whisper, a molasses breath with all the answers.





I'm Free

Colored Pencil & Marker, 12 x 14

Rebecca L. Andrus

Third Place Winner

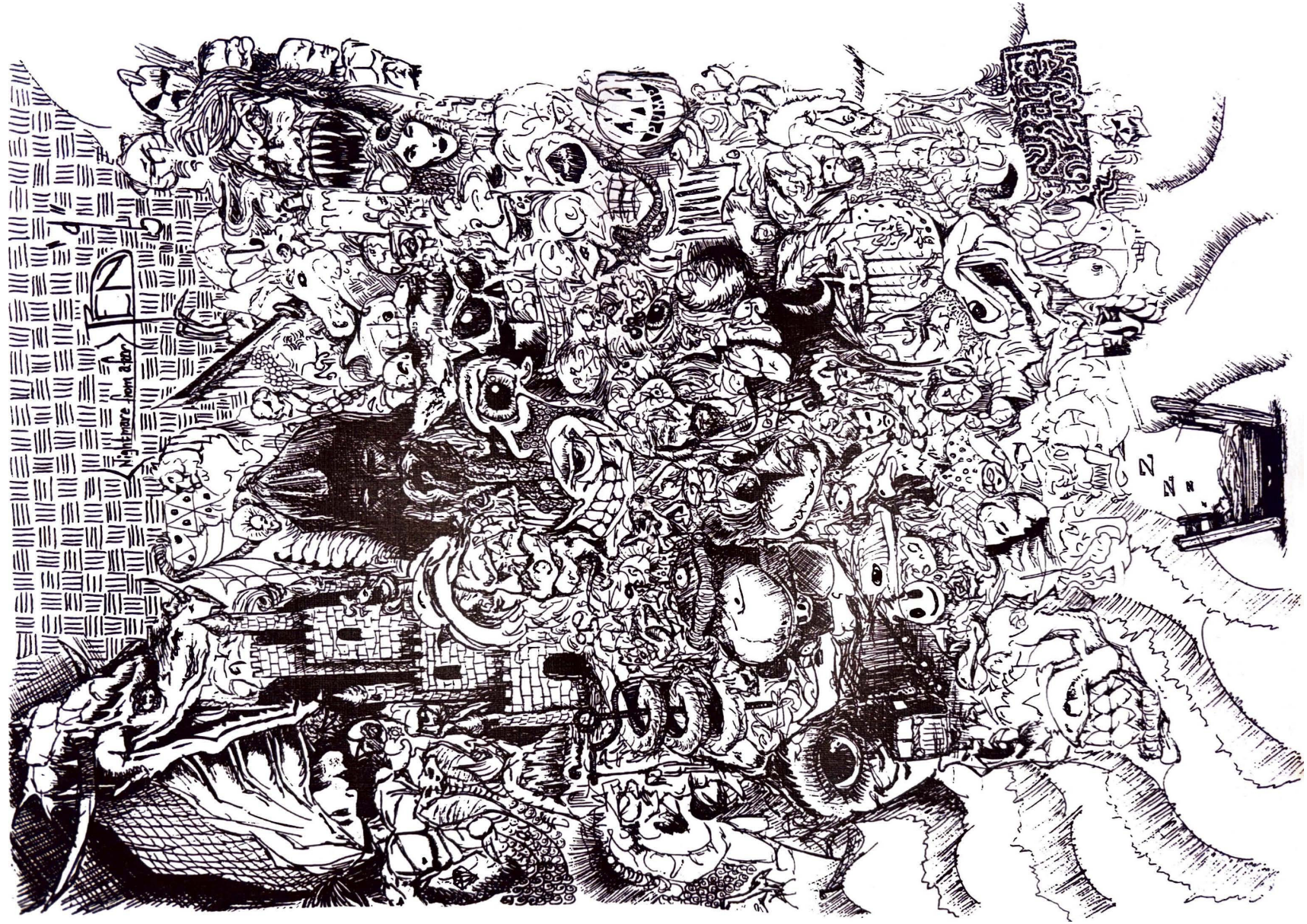
Grandparents

Kristin Majkrzak

Third Place Winner

Our granny,
who carried queenly ambitions
of a high class life
deep within her,
married a witty, unambitious man,
our beloved grandad,
who worked on the Southampton docks
and always had time for us,
his grandchildren,
showing us the ships in port,
picking slugs from the cabbage plants in the garden,
or just sitting
unhurriedly content.
(He loved to make the morning toast
and he always burnt it.)

One day
years after grandad's death
Granny told us that she'd had another suitor,
a sophisticated, very proper man,
highly approved by her mother.
Why then, we asked,
did she choose to marry Grandad?
She giggled like a schoolgirl
and said
"Because he was cheeky!"



Puppy
Ink, 11 x 14

Ben Miller
First Place Winner

Being Driven to Hospital After an Overdose

Laurence W. Thomas

I ask to be driven through town again
to see the lights, each a distended globe
in my eyes, fairy lights amassed along streets
of mardi gras garden parties.

Rockets on the fourth flare out
and fade too fast; these last longer
like staring at Christmas trees through fog
or focusing on a face in a steamy mirror.

I wish for this trip to continue
to see lights flash past from a carousel
swirling around from a ferris wheel
spinning faster like bubbles

in champagne rising as the pearl sinks
reflecting utopian visions
and hissing as bubbles fizz to the top
and burst to the tune of a stomach pump.

Step Back

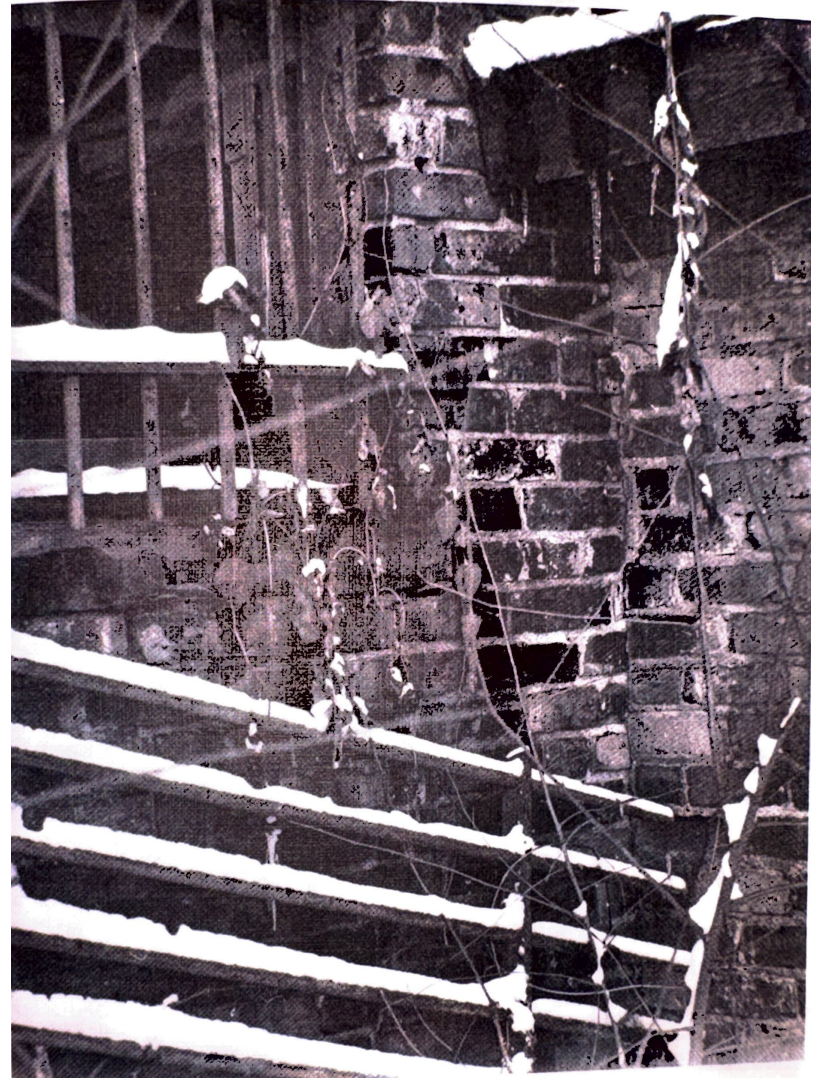
Marianne T. Desmarais

My fingers massage the rushing
rapids at my temples.
To beaches,
where waves break
like thunder
and spew
granules of sand into
precariously constructed landscapes
that look lovely
to the passer-by.

Crystal Wave

Scott Lange

A frigid breeze
blows gently to the shore.
I study the shiny expanse
until it becomes a misty horizon.
Water glistens under cloudless moon,
Like a mirror
reflecting lunar brilliance.
I listen intently
but hear no gulls or oceans roar,
Only the whispering wind
and icy crunch beneath my feet.
Crystals slither across the surface,
polishing with frosty efficiency.
I pause in silence,
senses acutely aware.
A surge in the distance
rolls methodically toward me.
Nearer and nearer
folding over itself as it comes.
Then just as the swell rises
to caress my ankles
It stops at its crest,
frozen in a persistent curl.
Transformed into a crusted mass
by the February air.



Untitled
Black & White Photography 8 x 10

Chris Henry

Amaris
Kathy L. Morr

With the wisdom of innocence
she is watching "The Jungle Book"

Contentedly engrossed, her eyes twinkle
from her seraphic and brown, two-year-old face.

The integrity and honest faith she displays;
She believes this cartoon.
She believes this world has Disney Justice.

How it pains me to know
she'll too soon learn
the ugly reality:
The world is not fair.

She's an innocent by-stander.

She's perfect love,
incarnate,
in her bear chair,
in my living room.
And,
there's an ignorant, educated world
that hates her.

I cannot comprehend
for when I look at her
in her multi-colored animal shirt,
the worth that is her
radiates so that

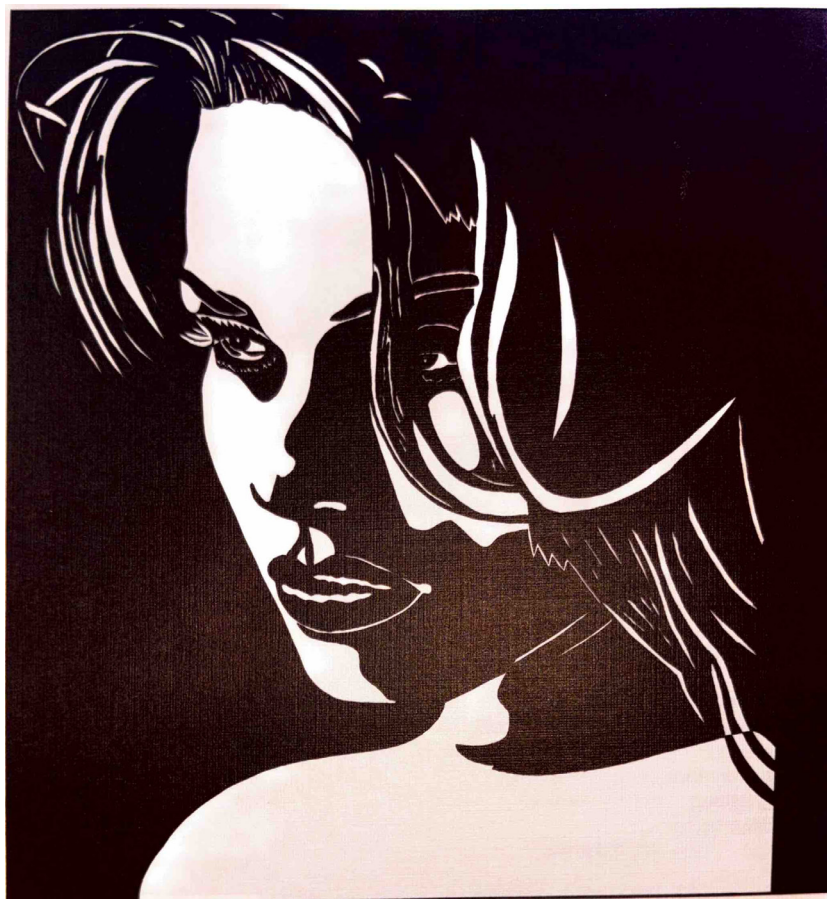
I can see truth:

What's noble, what's right,
What's pure and praiseworthy.

And I cannot see
color

Sleepsliding
Melissa Seitz

What's that?
You're talking in your sleep again.
I listen closely
to see if you mention
another woman's name
or perhaps that you
secretly crave whips and chains.
But,
what's that?
You're talking about hockey
(check 'em, deck 'em, wreck 'em)
or shoptalk
(spreadsheets, deadbeats, tax cheats)
But,
what of romance?
()?
what of mystery?
()?
I'm feeling the strain
from listening so hard to hear
something I can use to prove
beyond a reasonable doubt
that you are
dreaming and talking
about something
worth waking up for...



Guess
Marker, 10 x 12

Bryan Konieczka

Do It

Laurence W. Thomas

practically anywhere

in the parking lot fumbling for your keys
waiting for the newly-condemned to say they do

with your cousins or their cousins' cousins

if it feels good

when your family and friends are looking
along a path leading through a tremble of woods
to the lake where loons can be heard at dusk
and as you look into the distressed silk of the water
do it

at the Safe-Way where the milk runs cold
scanning old *National Geographics* for the bare breasts of Borneo
as you drive along forgetting the punctuation of road signs
the landmarks of housing projects

try it
thinking about

what's for supper baseball strikes erogenous zones sermons
the flora and fauna of tidal basins trimming your nails
glacial silences a critique of pure reason Robert Mapplethorpe
Susanna and the Elders the pimple on your ass Tom Waits

do it like the lady from Spain

when the envelopes are on all the fruit trees
as if you were doubling your salary
whenever there is more snow in your garden than string quartets
while other are up to their ears in oratorios
if you feel like a pea in a pod
sitting by a brick wall in the sun to get warm

Quarrel

Anthony James Phillips

Consider Cupid's arrow
Once he was Eros--
Master Passion,
Urge to life

But his skin was born anew
Flayed by the tunnel he slipped out
Wet, speckled in Venus' blood
Pink, warm, and baby-fat

His mid-wives--
Converting minds--
Burned crosses
Melted his once-throne
For a potty chair

In his romping youth
His arrow caught me
Through my throat

I
Was speechless
But, as all the transfixed must
I recovered
Who really cared for Homecoming, Prom?
Who wanted flowers, a dance?

His skill grew mercenary
As did mine
The next time, a bolt--
Windlass employed--
Took me through my hardened spleen
The barbed point was a dose
Of wicked wrenching

The blood drowns a year, a transcript,
And many once friends, in the unexpected
Tide

Who could have married so early?
Who could have decided?

But baby-face, diaper
Clad, pissy ass
In old ageless-fear
Got a gun

Not a home defense buckshot burper
But a hunting rifle, a sniper rifle
Tooled steel, rifled barrel, magnaported
Sensitive trigger, scope
Sighted in on--

Lead expands
In my blood-muscle
Unsure pulsing
Inflamed by this foreign object
Unsure if each beat
Is worth the irritation

Where is his divinity now?
In a stroller screaming "candy!"
I'm the sucker he licks
Diminished
Now, a stick to

Grip tight
In his pudgy, trophy-seeking fingers
A horn fragment, from a downed rack

Perhaps the bullet lodged-one with me
Can still feel the beat and
Taste of the sweet your
Lusty tongue missed
In your high velocity senility

And perhaps it'll change to gold
With the aid of my philosopher stone desire

Wildflowers

Marianne T. Desmarais

Faded curtains part for
spattered window
panes.
Dishes sit in weakened bubbles.
Her thinning hair
falls
finding rest upon chiseled cheekbones-
Head tilted back, her eyelashes embrace.

Bare feet impress the dewed grasses where
fields of flowers
grow
an artist's palette.
Light breeze on her cheek; a kitten's
kiss.
Honey-touched daisies and amethyst clover
Purrrr
and brush an innocent ankle.
She kneels to meet outstretched
paws--
their scented mews welcome her attention
her admiration.

Her eyelashes part.
The bubbles no longer cling to the glass,
but the clover in her hair
smells like rain.