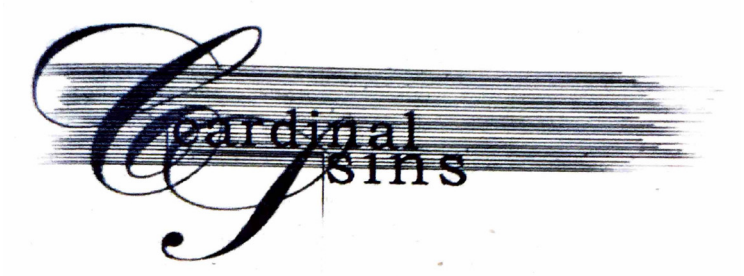
Cardinal Sins

Fall 2001 &
Winter 2002



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Winter 2002

Saginaw Valley State University

Volume 21, Issues 1 & 2

Fall 2001

Editor-in-Chief	Adrienne Lewis
Associate Editor	Erin Kilby
Graphic Design Editor	Nate Scott
Editorial Assistants	
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Graphic Design/Copy Editing	JoEllen Hildreth-DesRocher
Academic Advisor	Ms. Melissa Seitz
Advisory Board	Ms. Ann Garcia
	Dr. Eric Gardner
	Dr. Judith Kerman
	Dr. Vincent Samarco

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	Mr. Matthew Zivich

Fall 2001 - Special thanks to the Instructional Technology Development Lab and its staff for the use of their equipment and guidance, and the English Department for offering the “Producing a Student Literary Publication” course in conjunction with this semester’s issue.



(*Cardinal Sins* Fall 2001 Staff Members pictured left to right: Leigh Grant, Melissa Seitz, Adrienne Lewis, JoEllen Hildreth-DesRocher, and Erin Kilby.

Winter 2002 - Special thanks to the Instructional Technology Development Lab and its staff for the use of their equipment and guidance, to Ms. Shaun Bangert for providing QuarkXPress training to the graphic design staff members, and to Tim Inman, associate director of University Communications, for his unwavering support in the final stages of production.

To all those who contributed, thank you for sharing your talents and making the job of selecting material for these issues a difficult one!

Cardinal Sins is produced by the students and faculty of Saginaw Valley State University and published on campus by the Graphics Center. Works by students, faculty, staff, and alumni are eligible for submission. All submissions are considered for publication, there are no exclusions from receiving an award in any category, unless requested. Judging is done by blind voting of the editorial staff and advisory board. SVSU does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical appearance, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status in the provision of education, employment, and other services.

This book was designed and typeset by Adrienne Lewis, Elizabeth Ruediger, and JoEllen Hildreth-DesRocher in Adobe Garamond, with page titles in Arrus BT. Cover design by Nate Scott.

Fall 2001

Editor's Notes

This semester I wanted to take *Cardinal Sins* to the edge: New submission categories, a new theme, and a new look that mirrors what we are trying to do with our online version. Success came in small increments.

The new category of flash fiction produced a lot of great work that first in nicely with the length and type of publication we were attempting to produce. This genre offers a writer a challenging exercise in minimal word usage for maximum impact. Those contributors that choose to create within its confines should be commended for their efforts.

The new theme, or at least the purpose of having a theme, seemed to confuse many people. By having a thematic issue, we hoped that classes as well as individual writers and artists would be inspired to a) look at their older writing and artwork in new ways and b) write and create new pieces that reflect their perception of the theme. As our first theme we chose the cardinal sins, an obvious play on our publication's title. The cardinal sins (pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust) are those transgressions, also classified as deadly sins, which are known to give rise to other forms of wrongdoing. They have earned their place in the literary canon and have been utilized as subject matter by artists for many millennia. Although we did decide to open up the theme to include other topics towards the end of the first submission period, many of the works that were selected for publication continue to represent the original theme. Whether or not we decide to pursue a second thematic issue is still undecided. If we do, I hope that those interested in submitting will be challenged to do so.

Also new this semester was the fact that, for the first time in SVSU's history, a class on producing a student literary publication was offered by the English Department in conjunction with the issue. Taught by the publication's academic advisor Melissa Seitz, the class helped to foster new interest in *Cardinal Sins* and provided a staff who would consistently assist with all facets of the issue's publication. It is my hope that such a course will become a permanent part of the university's offerings and include faculty and students from both the Art and Humanities Departments as well.

As winter approaches, the *Cardinal Sins* staff is busy updating the publication's online version. Looking back, I'm uncertain whether we necessarily made it to the edge I was hoping the publication would teeter on this semester. I do believe, however, that we were successful in making it visible to many people through the issue's new facets. And after looking comes leaping.

Here's to that!

Adrienne Lewis
Editor-In-Chief

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Inward Season

Just days shy of August, Winter's hand casts
Her shadow on the pane. This nurturing rain paints
That grayness on the room. Such gloom forebodes
One more inward season.

Tonight I will shed shining tears for yet another
Child who's leaving. She will quake at the journey
She must take to find the tomorrow that will meet her.
I shed my tears for me.

There are yet two more to go and I know, despite
Their murmurings, they are gone. They can no longer
Buffer me from my shadow. At last, age calls to me--
I cannot start anew.

The depression lingers, nibbles at my mind-- a cancer
Never slain. The germ remained, has lain waiting,
Determined. Alone, amidst my books, again I face
Fear of life, unbidden.

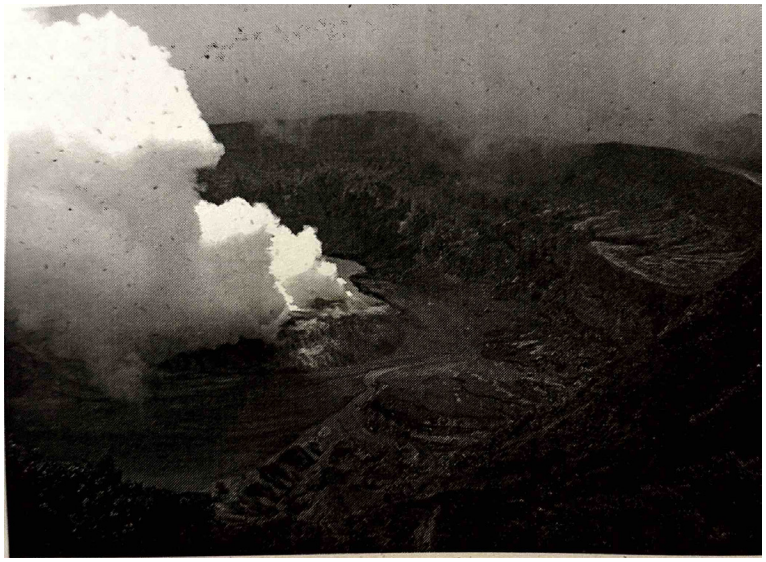
And what is death but a friend? It's life that
Lacerates, freights nuance with rejection, while we
Lie down among the poppies and breathe deep:
Cowardly lions all.

Mary Troester



Victoria DuRussel

Badlands



Dr. Judith Kerman **Crater of Mt. Poas, Costa Rica**

Mt. Pinatubo

Home is where the earth breathes
your name. A volcano erupts
I'm not afraid,
get lost in its beauty.
There is more danger in a car ride,
Black lava flows, becomes white
Turning red in the night

Oozing, flowing, spitting pyroclastics
Whetting appetites for more.
Bigger, better, enormous eruptions
Summit glaciers melt.
Mud flows deep
into the valley.
Plumes of steam release hints.

Activity and energy build.
The earth shakes,
Lava plug uncorked, flanks brown.
Clouds of ash released

Suddenly
Eruption! Ashfalls rain from its fiery bowels,
Summits collapse, typhoons arrive--
Rain and ash mix like concrete.
Lahars claim lives,
Summit gone, blanket landscape.

Today Pinatubo sleeps again
For better, for worse.
The life Blood-Providing land
No matter where we live
Magma brews.

Renee Lewis

The Man Who Could Break Rocks

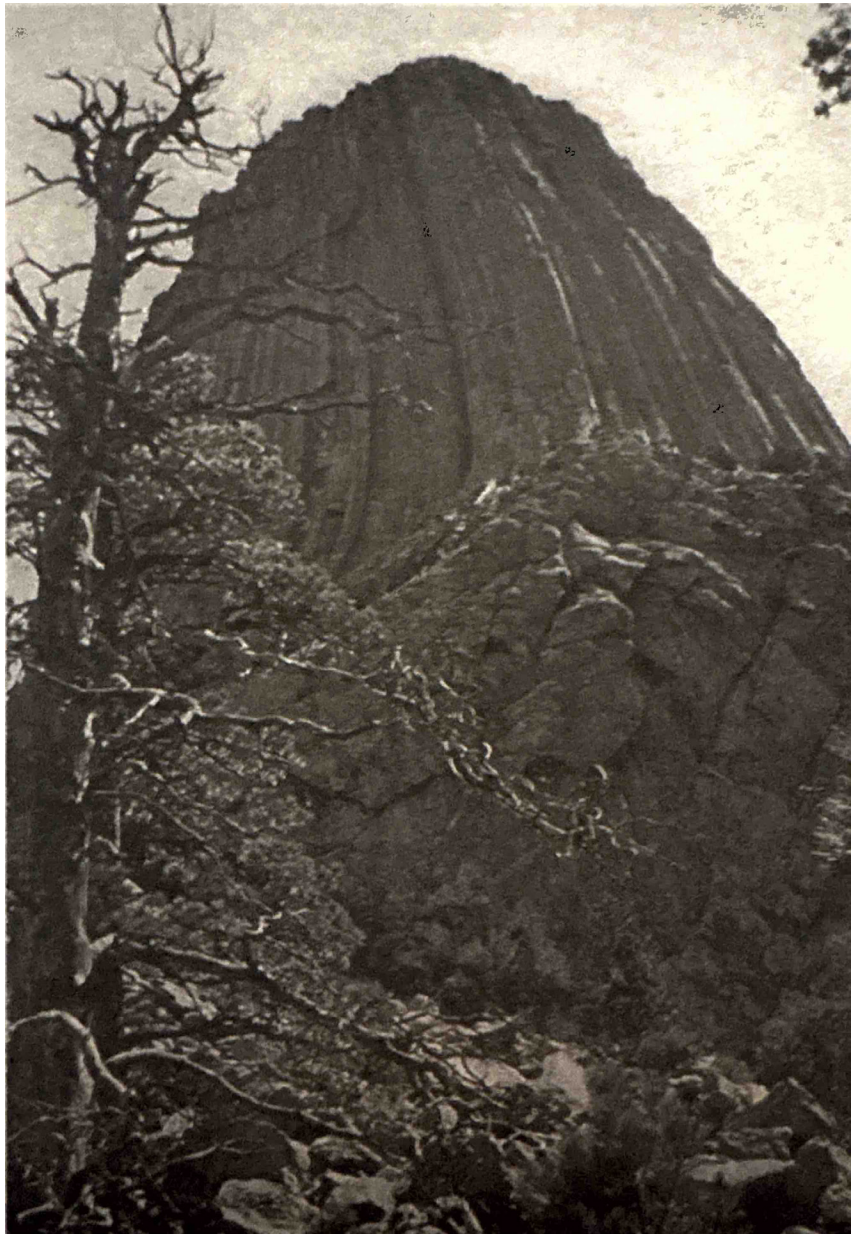
After our fight, I was sitting on the porch drinking cheap bourbon from a Tom and Jerry jelly glass when she drove away. I knew she would leave someday, it was just a matter of when, and when was today. Hell, I don't hold it against her. She's okay most of the time. I know it's me. I can rationalize it all kinds of ways: schizophrenogeic mother, bad relationship with father, troubled inner child, or maybe a big pimple on my nose when I went to my first junior high school dance. It could be any of that crap, or none of it. I don't know. Maybe it was that I couldn't break enough rocks for her.

I should be used to it now, people are always leaving, or dying. My buddy Bill from work left and died. That was in Desert Storm. It's hard to believe that was ten years ago. My Uncle Monte left for Vietnam. He came back but he wasn't the same so it was just like he was still gone. Even my grandpa died, and I thought he would live forever. He was a big man, the tallest in our family before or since, and he had huge hands. When I was 17 my hand still looked like a child's laid palm to palm with his. And his hands were strong. A carpenter all his life, his arms rippled with muscles even as an old man. He could break rocks.

I'm not kidding. I saw him one day when he didn't know anyone was there. I was coming around the corner of his workshop and saw him in the garden. He always had a great garden. I'll never forget the bitter-green smell of tomato plants in late summer. Anyway, he was holding two rocks. They were about fist sized and rounded, he must have turned them up when he was digging potatoes, and he took one in each hand and smacked them together and one of them just broke to pieces. Then he just smiled to himself and tossed what was left up next to the fence and brushed his hands off on his pants. For some reason I thought it was something I wasn't supposed to see and I slid back around the corner and waited for him in the swing on the back porch.

He joined me sometime later and I remember we swung back and forth for a while before either of us said anything. That was the summer I was ten and the next day I would get such a bad sunburn swimming at the creek that I wouldn't take my shirt off again all summer. We had a way of sitting together, he would sort of turn and put one leg up along the front of the swing. It was the leg that was held together with pins and screws from when his tank got blown up in 1945, and he put it up because it still hurt him sometimes. With his leg up I would turn and lean back onto his chest and look up at the board ceiling of the porch. I can't remember most of what we talked about, but it was always good and comfortable, smelling of the packet of pipe tobacco in his shirt pocket, and I remember looking at his hands that day, at his hard hands so gentle on my shoulders, and wondering if someday, for someone, I would be the man who could break rocks.

Michael Goecke
Fall 2001 Flash Fiction Award Winner



Victoria DuRussel **Devil's Tower**



Kelly O'Laughlin **Cesky Krumlov**

Sacred Heart

The drab, gray top of the water tower
always resurrected our spirits
as we caught sight of its metallic banner
on the yearly pilgrimage to Buffalo.
Tonawanda, the city sprawled
across its front, was the echoing mantra
as we spotted it one after another.
We never got off at this exit. No,
ours was a few miles up, on the right
where the tall church steeples loomed before the off-ramp
inviting cars into the safety of St. Francis' preserve.
The one time I actually went inside the parish was for a funeral.
The Sisters of Peace and Charity were fingering their rosaries
like magic talismans used to bring the dead back to life.
That surreal image of Christ in the entrance, heart ablaze in hand,
reminded me of some mad scientist experiment.
But where was the smear of blood on that passionate icon's robe?
There was a street called Tonawanda too, but to drive down there
past the buildings, the crumpled newspaper flowerbeds
and nuances of freshly covered spray paint, or sometimes the graffiti itself
with artists nearby, was unthinkable. Only during emergencies,
or if Uncle Ed was taking one of his short cuts to the Friday night fish-fry
did we travel this hollow domain.
The tail of the worn silver ichthus, stuck on his dash,
barely touched the miraculous medal fixed at its side.
When I pulled it off, that time we had to wait in the car
outside the Tonawanda liquor store
while my father and uncle went in to buy cigarettes,
the gummy adhesive clung to my fingers
even hours afterwards.

M.S. Chesnet

Morning Gospel

after R. T. Smith's "Illumination"

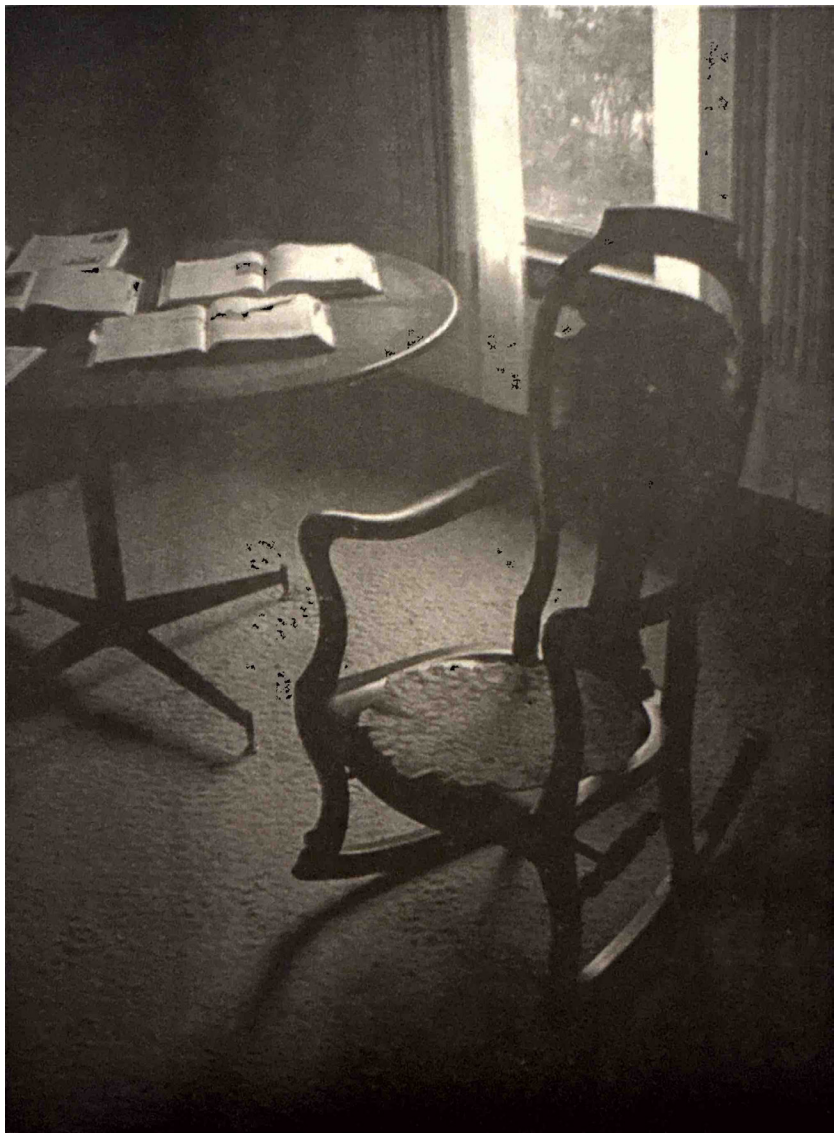
As if a young Sister,
knees pressed to a cold floor,
let her eyes

wander up and out through
a tiny window
so my eyes found you

leaving the deck chair
to kneel beside the wisteria,
dappling your knees with dew,

sparkling, spiraling, whispering
to every sweet leaf
I am home, finally home.

Dr. Eric Gardner



Dr. Judith Kerman **Rocker at Roethke House, Saginaw**



Victoria DuRussel **Heat Factor**

July 14, 1997 --Power Failure

We had escaped it before,
but tonight the storm took our power
it blew through
throwing a tree into the line
leaving us cooler but darker than before.
Then neighbors came out from up and down the street
flashlights, lit cigarettes
the occasional glint of beer bottle.
Across the street
the resident crazy girl
sang unintelligibly and off key.
Men stood in groups
laughing, shaking hands
with newcomers
while women guarded the children
running up and down the sidewalk
watching for another burst of sparks.
We waited
longer
longer
and watched the lonely candle flickers
inside windows
up and down the street.
It must have been this way long ago
before we ran on wires.
We wait for men in trucks
who send us back to tiny screens
microwaves
shades down.
We won't know what we shared
until far from now
we might speak of that failure.
The hottest day yet
the air on
then, it was gone.

Ann Garcia



Victoria DuRussel **Hot Springs**

Nevada Too

105*
Numbers only hint, allude, suggest my sizzling scalp.
Sol set in endless azure sky. Strong green growth clings.
Twelve miles from Vegas, there is this: this lunar landscape.

Eons ago, a river razed, cutting, cleaving caves
From sandstone hills. Reclaimed, retreating, the river
Rinsed the rock in red, remainder of her might.
Red Rock Canyon, a name as spare as the life eked out here.

Drained, desiccated, but not dead, a desert trades in details.
Its living hues are many but subtle. Sage green, silver green,
Drying green; small rodents of buff, brown or bronze,
Existing on enough, a shelter of leaf, drops of dew.

I wonder: What did the settlers think? We are so small,
We humans who hunger and drink, dwarfed by these walls,
Sheer drops, desperation. Were they ready or do their bones
Reside in the clefts, deconstruct into dust?

I have seen the excess of faux-Eiffel Towers, water-jets dancing,
A Moroccan bazaar, five-star meals: the Center Strip.
In this etched world, of stone, sand, and sun, I stand in reverence:
Of monolithic beauty—of this parched paradise.

Mary Troester
Fall 2001 Poetry Award Winner

Dogma

Stop asking me
if I knew her.
Dorothy. Dorothy. Dorothy.
Red shoes, gingham dress, and those pigtails,
like snakes hovering upon her shoulders.
She was not my friend.

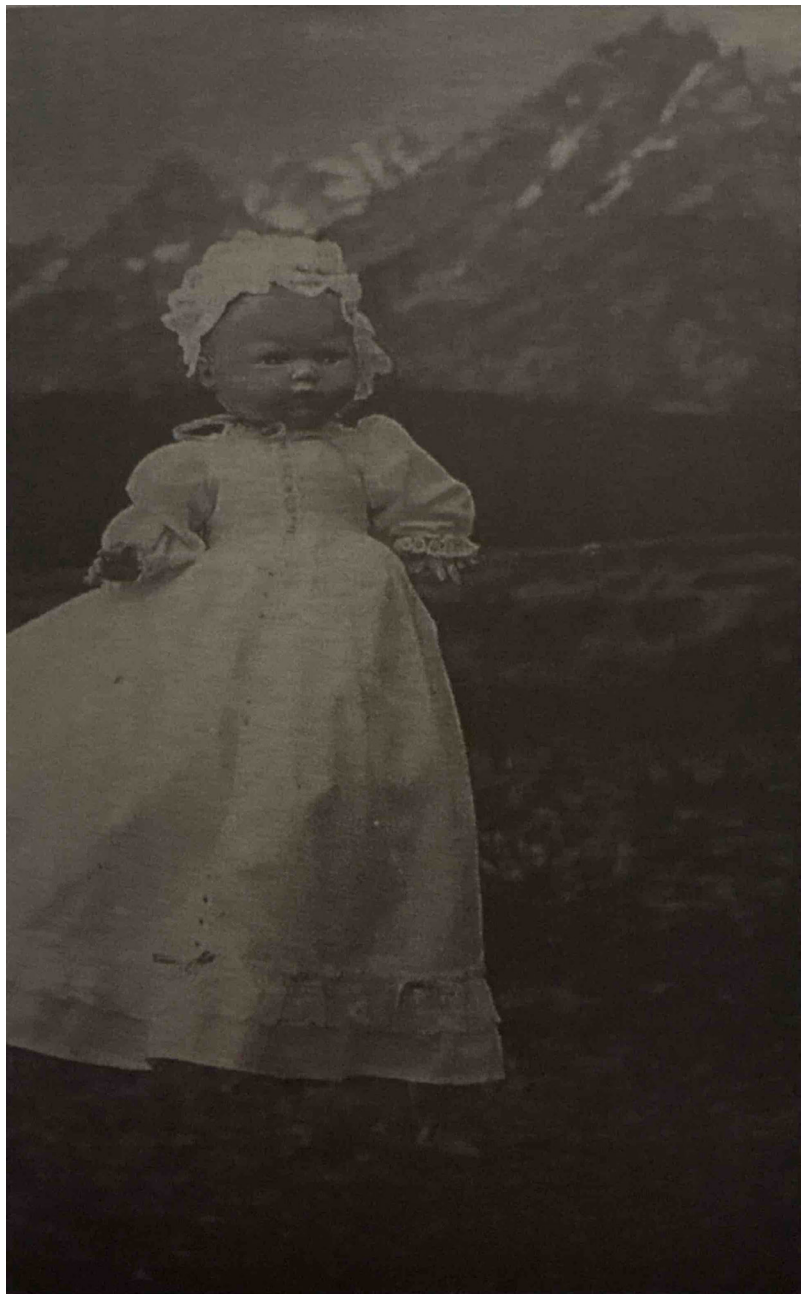
Yes, I lived in Kansas when I was young.
But for twenty-one years,
I crawled away slowly.
I won't tell you that story,
But the drama was minimal,
The weather: dry and hot.

You, through your fictional lens,
Drama, your aphrodisiac,
laugh and say that all Kansas girls are Dorothys.
Rushing to the cellar
when the tornado comes,
But never quite making it.

You examine my history
Believing that geography is destiny
And red shoes are not for the wicked.
But in your thirst for melodrama,
you have failed to consider the truth of the matter:
It was always about the dog.

If Dorothy's dog
Would have taught her the good life
And to pay attention to the weather,
like my dog did,
she would not have ended up
dancing with strange men.

Melissa Seitz



Victoria DuRussel **Child-like Splendor**
Fall 2001 Photography Award Winner

Eating Chicken

I can remember the farm I grew up on. Tractors in the soy fields. Pigs and chickens in the backyard. In my mind I see the fence with the hole that the dog dug. My brother Ray and I used to scurry under it for a quick getaway before the chickens would peck at our ankles after we fed them. Our legs and arms were always scratched up from the chicken wire snagging us as we achieved freedom from the smelly devils. In the middle of this fight for survival I can see our little brother Robbie sleeping in the pigpen. The pink piglets and their curly tails cuddled against him in the fresh mound of hay.

The neighbors and all of our relatives came over to gather the chickens up for harvesting. The men would swing the chickens around with their heads tucked under their wings, then release them and us kids would laugh until we had stomach-aces at those dumb birds stumbling around in circles. My cousins and I chased after these same chickens. Our fathers laid them on the cutting block in the backyard and axed their heads off, tossed them aside like they were ridding themselves of unwanted baggage.

I remember how scared I felt when those bird's heads would lay next to the block as their bodies flailed around the yard, blood squirting out of their headless bodies as if they were possessed by demons. Minutes later, when their lifeless bodies would topple over for the final time, they were carried in to our mothers who would pluck every feather. After the plucking came the boiling. This was Grandma's job. Huge kettles sat on top of the stove and one by one each of these chickens that once peered at us through the fence, were dropped into the boiling water. Now I was the one peering at them, wondering if this was going to be the one we would eat.

The first time we ate one of those chickens, it was fried. My mother told me it was the "mean one" so just sit there and eat because we "weren't getting anything else." I wasn't afraid to eat it, the birds that terrorized us every morning. Fact is, I was proud to eat something that we had raised. It made me feel like Laura Ingalls. A form of "living off the land" as my dad would say. Dad was always such a survivalist. Perfect in my eyes, there was nothing he couldn't do. What mom didn't know was that I only liked the white meat and she always gave me the drumstick. Funny thing is, I dipped everything in catsup and it all tasted the same in the end.

It isn't just the chickens and their headless bodies but the family that made this day such an event. The innocence of a little brother who slept through this with the baby pigs that, once grown, would be the next to meet the chickens' fate.

Renee Lewis



Dr. Judith Kerman **Poultry Market, Taipei**

Almost Better Than Sex

Endless encounters
In Starbucks
Variety is the spice of life.

Caramel Lattes, silky vanilla beans
In Starbucks
Thick caffeine enhanced temptations.

Snickers, Almond Joy, Milky Way Mochas
In Starbucks
Pleasing even the hard to satisfy.

Cream or sugar? Anything goes...
In Starbucks
Deep steam laden mugs, warming cold hearts.

Cappuccino, Mochaccino, Muchomochacappuccino
In Starbucks
Single or double, for here or to go, my place or yours?

Syrups as tasty as a pair of honeyed lips
In Starbucks
Swirly, sweet, succulent sensations.

Pam Breton

Candy Jar

The candy jar on the secretary's desk is more often empty than full. When it's full, it may hold chewt salt-water taffy, yellow lemon balls the color of Forsythia, or peanut brittle chips that crunch and then form sticky masses in your back teeth. Once someone's pre-teen kids contributed a handful of effervescent sour tablets like instant soda pop.

When it's full, the jar gets empty with a "zoom" like someone pulled the cork on champagne, an attack of sugar guaranteed to bring on diabetic shock, cardiac arrest--bring on the doctor with the defibrillator! I see him now in his white coat, maybe an austere intern in the middle of the night under the harsh lights of the E.R., leaning over me with his end-of-shift stubble and Auguste's red nose, growling, "You had to eat it all, didn't you?!"

Dr. Judith Kerman



Dr. Judith Kerman **Fallen, Havana**

Caritas

While downtown fattens
its holiday windows, the needy
shrink in doorways
among the fluttering wings
of newspapers and hungry birds.
A freezing mist
settles in the streets. The pigeons
cock their heads, beady
stares considering crumbs
almost too paltry
even for them. Strings
of Christmas lights
suggest a world kissed
by sacred love, but the hungry
know better. They are greedy
for the small tokens
that wealth flings--
a cigarette, a bed,
largesse from the wrist
but not the heart:
the generosity of fallen things.

Dr. Judith Kerman



Nate Scott **Uncle $am**



Nate Scott **Fa(s)t Food**



Dr. Judith Kerman **Glass, Jalisco, Mexico**



Dr. Judith Kerman **Che Postcards, Havana**

Night, In Red

Funny,
How the moonlight shatters
And scatters
The color red on my sins
When I am bloodless,
And sucking the life
Out of you,
and you refuse to notice.
Or is it complacency
That drives your arms
Around the legs of shadows
In my room?
Serendipity, your calling card,
As you dabble in your oils,
Whisper that you love me,
While you avoid the bloodshed,
And wait for your intoxication,
And the sleep that will follow.

Melissa Seitz

In the Falling

sky
closing
in
with
thoughts
of lightness
falling faster closer now hear through thoughts through wods and
sent back,
sky closing in and
moments taste moments feel
darkness
scent of you
like pale shadows dance now feel now skin now yours now mine
touch
sky falling in to into me you touch with hands pale moon rich rays
thought feeling with heart mind touch
the
sky
is

falling

Leigh Grant



Dr. Judith Kerman **7/11 and 24/7, Taipei**

Thursday Night

See you next week babe?

She sighs remembering his words, more like a reaffirming statement of fact to him than a question to her. She switches off the ignition to her car. Yes, of course, she had answered. Smoking a cigarette, she sits in the silent automobile thinking of him.

Yes. She always told him yes.

She had been telling him yes for the last seven months, thirty Thursday nights spent enclosed in the knotty pine interior of the Pines Motel in St. Ignace. Seven hundred and fifty dollars of twenty-five dollar nightly rates spent just to feel the way he made her feel; she was needed and wanted.

Glancing out the window to the left, she sees a white full-sized truck. The light from the vacancy sign in the office window reflects off the glossy enameled hood. The sulfurous color of the wavy mirror image reminds her of hot springs she saw once on a trip out West with her parents.

He's already here. The thought sends a surge of emotion through her abdomen. She smiles to herself, the emotions conjuring images of both young lust and the eruptions of that past vacation.

She takes a last long drag from her Marlboro before smashing it out, bending and twisting the filter into the dusty ashtray. Turning on the interior light, she glances in the rear view mirror for a quick reflection check. In the artificial light of the car, the smoke envelops her like a blue haze the way fog hugs the ground on cool summer mornings in Michigan. She runs her nicotine-stained fingers through her long blonde hair.

A vehicle pulls into the parking space next to hers. She quickly turns off the dome light and nervoulsy looks to her right. It is an aging maroon station wagon piloted by a disheveled looking young man. A tired looking woman is in the passenger seat reading a map. The man is talking to her and gesturing. The back of the car is filled to the top with luggage. Two small children, a boy and a girl, lean against one another asleep on the middle seat.

She cannot hear the couple's conversation, but she imagines them to be a long trip such as one taken twenty years ago with her father and mother. They are tired and need a respectable place to stay for the night.

She stares at them for a long moment wondering about their lives together; if they still feel the thrill of young love and if the children are as nice to each other when they are awake as when sleeping.

Then she remembers the shiny truck parked on the other side of her. She opens the car door, locks it, and walks quickly toward another Thursday night.

Darcy Czarnik

Pisces

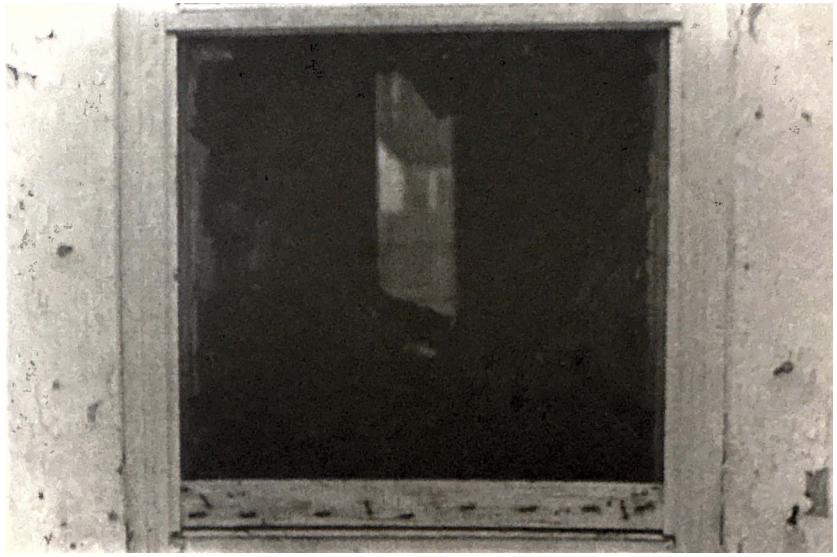
A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.

It's a mistake for men to leave women.
Women like their ways--
Once a woman knows she's not afraid
Of paint and plumbing and midnight calls,
Knows the neighbor will come but not intrude--
She'll cut her own grass
Pay the bills
Change the oil--
Just to make a meal of only green things
Or run the heat at 80
And answer to no one, no one--
For men are just an option,
Kind of like that bicycle thing.

Mary Troester



Victoria DuRussel **Stare**



Howard L. Radican **Shattered Window**

Choosing a New Name

Help me think of a pen name.
Something to call myself
when the words on a page can't come from me,
ramble a parody of someone else's life.
Should I pick a name I've always admired?
Or would I be revealed by the y,
its curved tail dangling
on the end of my new designation
like every cheerleader I've ever seen, and wanted to be,
hanging on some strapping football player, ponytail swaying.
Should I use a version of her name? Spell it differently,
rearrange the first and middle, and pray
he doesn't come across a poem in some magazine:
realize the impudence of trying to be her,
comment on the futility.

M.S. Chesnet

Easily

It slides out
like the small, perceptible gasps actualized
when you rub the nape of my neck, the curve
below my tattoo. empties my being
as quickly as surly utterances
shed in the midst of an argument.
reminds me that one look from your autumn eyes
guarantees you can have me.

M.S. Chesnet

Scar Tissue

On his left shoulder
below the tattoo of our names
and the glint of crossed swords
is a small pearl of skin.
In the dark, I feel its round edges,
imagine the white raised surface healing
under my fingertips. A miracle
between the stained cotton sheets
wrapped around our prostrate bodies.
Our continue forms remind me:
a tattoo of a lover's name is an act of faith.

M.S. Chesnet



Rachael Danckaert **V**
Fall 2001 Artwork Award Winner

Seed

Consider fear.
Consider this watermelon seed
that sucks from the earth
a thousand times its weight in water.
Consider: when you swallow it,
it will grow inside you.
Consider the thunder
that wakes my wife screaming
even when she only dreams it.
Consider how she prays for rain without thunder.
Consider that I am lying to you,
that you want me to lie. Consider
the things under the bed,
the things beside you in the bed.
Consider the darkness. Consider
that each letter on this page
is a darkness.
Consider why you taste them or resist them.
Consider myths of fruition,
of rain without thunder, of things in the dark.
Consider spitting this seed out, consider
where it may fall.

Dr. Eric Gardner

Cat Lady

If you've ever been around the area of Seven Mile and Woodward in Detroit, you've probably seen her. She's about a hundred years old, and I think that was the last time she took a bath, too. I had been doing some repairs to a crappy old house on a run down side street in that area a few years ago, and I was eating lunch in a greasy spoon diner right on Woodward Avenue when she came in the door, letting the noise of traffic in with her. One of the waitresses ran over to her with a large coffee to go, and hustled the old broad back outside. I guess the waitress saw me looking because she sauntered over, swinging her hips like she was looking for a bigger tip, and between popping her gum told me about the old woman. Her name was Mildred something, and she stunk to high heaven. That was why someone always met her at the door with a handout and rushed her back outside. I figured she was homeless by the mismatched shoes she was wearing. With the tattered hood of an old blue pullover covering most of her face, and a rumpled gray trench coat stained with only God knows what covering the rest of her, her shoes were about all I saw. I told the waitress, who was still hovering over me, coffee pot in hand, that I had seen something moving in the old gal's pocket. A cat, she said, the old lady had about a hundred cats, and she carried some of the little ones in her pockets. The waitress smiled, showing a chipped front tooth and gestured out the window with her coffee pot. She feeds about half the stray cats in this whole goddam city, she said. I stopped her at about half when she began filling my coffee cup and asked her to fix me a burger with everything to go.

Outside, the wind had gotten colder. I turned in the direction I had seen the old lady go and found her just around the corner in an alley, sitting on an empty plastic milk crate with two kittens on her lap and about six other cats walking in circles around her legs. She looked at me suspiciously, but thanked me for the burger. She broke off about half the meat and began feeding it, still steaming, to the two or three ragged cats that hadn't run off when I appeared. After they had wolfed down their share, she took her first bite. I love cats, she said, then grinned up at me so that I could see she only had about three teeth left in her head. Do you like cats, she wanted to know. I said yeah, and dug in my pocket and handed her a twenty before heading back to my truck. Crazy old broad will probably buy cat food with it, I thought. Damn, it was getting cold.

Michael Goecke

Candy Wrapper

I smell your sour breath over my shoulder
You think I can't see you, can't smell you
But I feel you

Slowly your wiry fingers wind through my hair
Many a man would envy you, envy me
They can wear my shoes

I strain desperately, trying to taste the moonlight
To get lost in it, in anything
But I keep finding you

So bathe me with your sweaty palms
And bake me on a skillet
But don't abandon me looking proud, feeling proud
For I am a product of you

And I am nothing

Jennifer Jacalone

The Late Show

It echoes every now and then. And I hate it. Hate isn't a strong enough word, as the night wraps around my skin and I scream in syllables that lose their meanings slowly--the clock-- tick tick tick--the room is stifling. All I can feel is darkness, like some small void that chose me and only me. I glance around the room, rumpled bedspread, stained and soiled, the stupid hours of sentimentality spent laying on that bed--I shudder--it's so pathetic, really.

The blinds are drawn tight, molding night into day into night and back again and I don't even care. As long as there's microwaveable food and talk shows I will stretch my days into that same old monotony that I have come to love. The room is starting to smell now, door shut tight for more than a week. I can't see my face in the mirror nor do I want to, the grime saves me. *Oh Thank God Thank God Ihatemyface*. Shaking I try to pass my hands through my hair. Stuck. Gummygluelike.

It's night now (I know only because David Letterman is adjusting his sportcoat). I lay in my bed. The blinds go up, the blinds go down. I pull them. Someone is shining a flashlight into my third floor apartment window. I raise my middle finger, hoping they get a nice silhouette. The light dances on the grimy mirror. Two young kids, high school maybe, scream in delight down N street. I turn away and cover my ears. NoNoNoNo.

It's morning now. (I know because Regis is playing with his tie). I lay in bed. This time the blinds don't go up. I can't stand the light. Later, caught on the edges of a darkening afternoon - I know because the talk shows are back on...brothersistertransvestitetwins.

And night after night it's a gaseous prelude to a night of whisperings, me wanting to feel the dark midnight like woolen mesh, easing over eyes into sleep. Almost in those ruts of life an anxiousness creeps in between beauty and her beasts, the yellowing afternoon my kryptonite, teeming with afterthoughts. And once again I find myself telling Regis and Dave little lonesome lies on the streams of being, pools of memory caught a woolen itch, eyelids shut.

Leigh Grant

Winter 2002

Winter Editor's Notes

There is something to be said for punctuality. The last issue didn't come close to conforming to the schedule set at the beginning of the semester. As the editor, I accept responsibility. Instead of making excuses, however, I would like to offer an explanation of how an issue of *Cardinal Sins* comes together.

First, there is a four-week submissions period at the beginning of every sememster during which poetry, flash fiction, artwork, and black & white photography are accepted. A staff composed of dedicated volunteers is also assembled and trained during these first few weeks of every semester. Like myself, these staff members are usually full-time students actively involved in other campus activities and organizations. Together, we set the schedule for the semester, actively solicit submissions, and discuss plans for the issue itself.

Since the goal of attending SVSU is graduation (imagine that!), a high turn-over rate for staff on a publication like this is a high probability. I've been fortunate, however, to have many of the same people from the past two semesters on the staff. It has made the process both easier, as people have grown into their niches and responsibilities, and more enjoyable as I've been able to work with people I appreciate and respect on a continual basis.

In addition to the fantastic staff I've had the privilege of working with, *Cardinal Sins* has initiated a collaboration with an Advisory Board comprised of faculty from several departments. Along with teaching a full load of courses, these individuals contribute their time and expertise during the publication's selection process.

Once the submission window is closed, and we have enough submissions to proceed (during the fall semester the submission period was actually extended two weeks), copies of the creative writing pieces are assembled into submission packets and distributed to the staff and Advisory Board for review. Sometimes as many as 80 works must be read in a week's time. While doing this, members of the staff also work to create a display for the artwork and photography submissions.

On a specified day, the staff and Advisory Board members meet to select the material for the semester's publication through blind voting on all entries. This meeting typically lasts three hours and involves a great deal of debate and compromise as the voting process doesn't always conclude with clear results. As the editor, I am ultimately responsible for breaking ties amidst the category winners, if any exist. This part of the job is not easy.

After the final selections have been made, the layout is designed and the text and graphics begin to be entered. This part of the project is a lot of fun, especially as you begin to see the empty pages filled and the issue finally come together. With the help of a lot of folks, including our graphic design staff, the Instructional Technology Development folk, and patient MAC lab attendants, we get the job done and the issue is sent to the SVSU Graphics Center via the fine people in University Communications, who make sure that alien-sounding things like font imbedding and postscript filing are completed prior to the transfer.

With a little luck and a lot of hard work, eventually the issue is printed. The work for the staff continues, however as we prepare for the semester's Post-Publication Reception and ready the online version for web publishing.

A few things I've learned through my semesters as editor are that graphic designers deserve a lot of credit for the tedious work they complete, staff and advisory learn to understand the broken gibberish you begin to expound after you've uncovered the fifth or sixth discrepancy in the issue and have no idea how to fix it, and finally that good people who believe in the publication's mission are invaluable and, thankfully, everywhere.

Adrienne Lewis
Editor-in-Chief

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Ice Dance

Mid February
and the frost has taken the branches
frozen still,

in the darkened afternoons where
the winter's image melts into memory
silence,
gaze into thought
that dark space between
the hollows of each moment

and drops
sit on the branches
if bend they break, snapping inside frozen moments
and sleet, rain, snow ornament

my breath swims up through the cold
a walk on unsteady ground
frozen sheath, sleeted rain
reminds me of the tears
trickle down, thought, memory, emotion
liquifying pain onto the quiet earth

steam from automobiles, sewers
warm the afternoon, infecting its stillness
never is anything so still
as when environs transform into
set of stage
knight's wood,
dance of ice.

Leigh Grant



Ericka L. Barnes

Ice Bound

La Morena in the Snow

Walking down the street he hardly noticed the filth of another New York City corner lost in its own grayness. Peter noticed small things, like the tiny old woman dancing in the alley with some pigeons. It was miraculous. It was simple. It was life.

Another evening was settling in and the puddles of rain played shadow games with the moonlight. Peter's eyes were focused on the string of lights that had just flashed down the street. And that's when it happened, in his least expectations, he rain into her. Beth. That girl from college that haunted the crevices of his mind, Beth, the girl, the woman that made the hairs stand up on the back of his neck. Beth.

"Lights, shadows, come into the night with me," she said. Brushing the dark, lengthy black hair from her shoulder Beth blinked her eyes that spoke more than anything she could ever say to him.

***

A young woman with striking black hair was posed on the cushion of a chaise lounge, completely relaxed, as though she assumed that position even in sleep. The light sweep of a painter's brush danced along a canvas. Out the window morning's light reflected in the rain. It should have been snowing.

"Yes. No. Just like that. Now, turn your chin to the left. Ah. Yes. That. That. Good," a voice came from behind the canvas. Not a sound came from the woman. She picked up a bright green apple from the still-life that was set up next to her chaise. Taking one long bite she savored the bitterness, brushing the top row of her teeth with her tongue. She barely gave notice to the voice behind the canvas.

"And there it is. Oh Beth, this is you, simply you, if there were anything simple about you my Dahling. And stop eating my still-life." The voice from behind the canvas stepped forward, a blonde man of substantial height and breadth, chiseled in every way, right down to the cleft on his chin. She took the canvas in her hands, turned it toward her pale face and studied the oils. It was magnificent. The shadowed outline of her frame, the quiet beauty captured in her face.

***

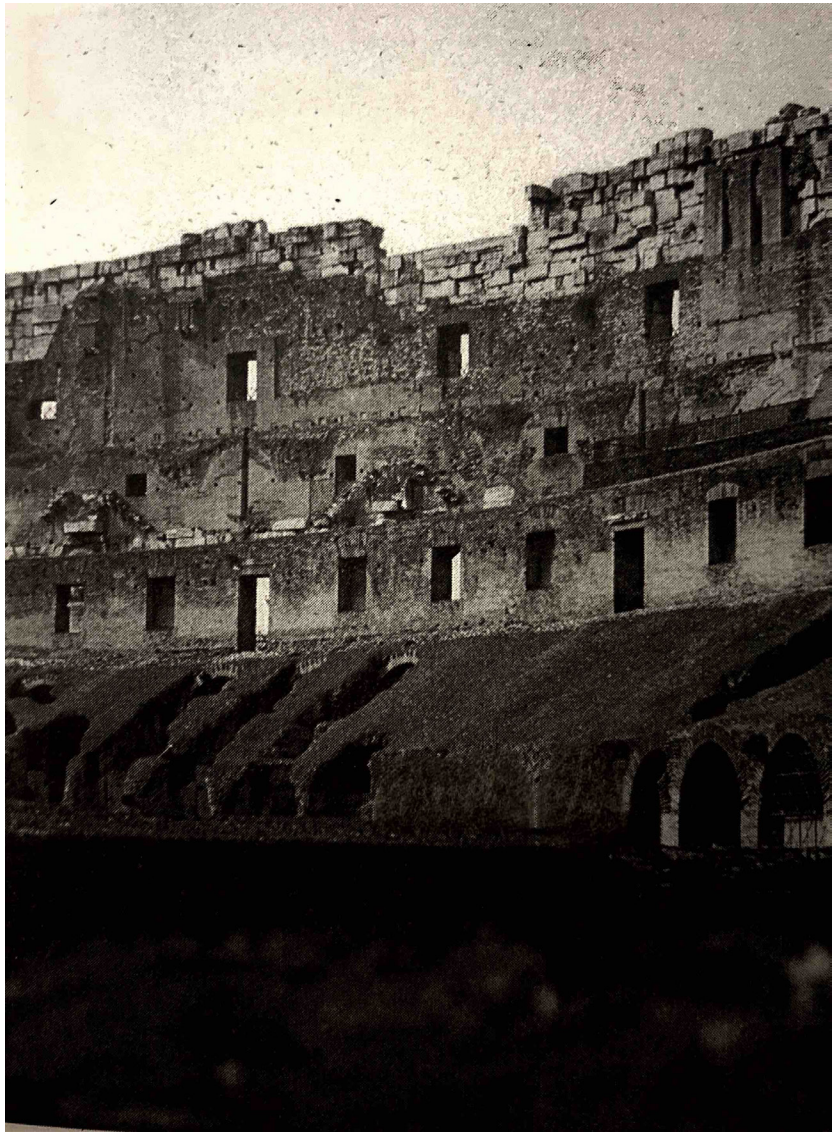
Peter studied the paintings on the walls—mediocre landscapes, typified still-lives—nothing that wavered him in the least. That is until he turned to the south wall, his breath stopped short in his chest. It was her. Long dark hair, unmistakable dark saucer eyes, porcelain skin.

***

A soft snow was falling on Sunday. A tiny lady was dancing with some pigeons, throwing bits of bread and grain here and there for them. The strings of lights on apartment windows shone in the night like promises. Two figures merged together.

"I see we meet again," Peter said, and Beth gazed into the sky and let the snowflakes collect in her long, dark, eyelashes.

Leigh Grant



Sarah Holdwick **1'interiur**



Sarah Holdwick **une tombe**

Salaam

There's a street in Bethlehem where the shells fly, then
Settle on the sands of the Dead Sea.
Where the arid sun beats down on Mohammed's
Loved and sacred few.

There's a street where a man, stepping
Out of his car, was penetrated by the ammunition of hagiography.
Where mingled red and blue claim
Power and dignity.

There's a street where this man stumbled over, looking
Into his daughter's eyes for the last time.
Where his bloody wounds seeped over, dripping evidence of
Murder and justifiable crime.

There's a street where retaliation extinguishes life, intentional
Punishment inflicted by those who hold such ideals gone wrong.
Where humanity is smothered by
Envy and greed.

There's a street where Allah's words ring out, commanding
Loyalty and revenge.
Where regal ideals result in punitive
Words and desperate actions.

There's a street where such fatality deems praise, demanding
Arduous respect.
Where martyrs claim righteous and holy war, to condone
Tainted and virtuous sin.

Kristen Garcia

Saginaw Seemed Majestic

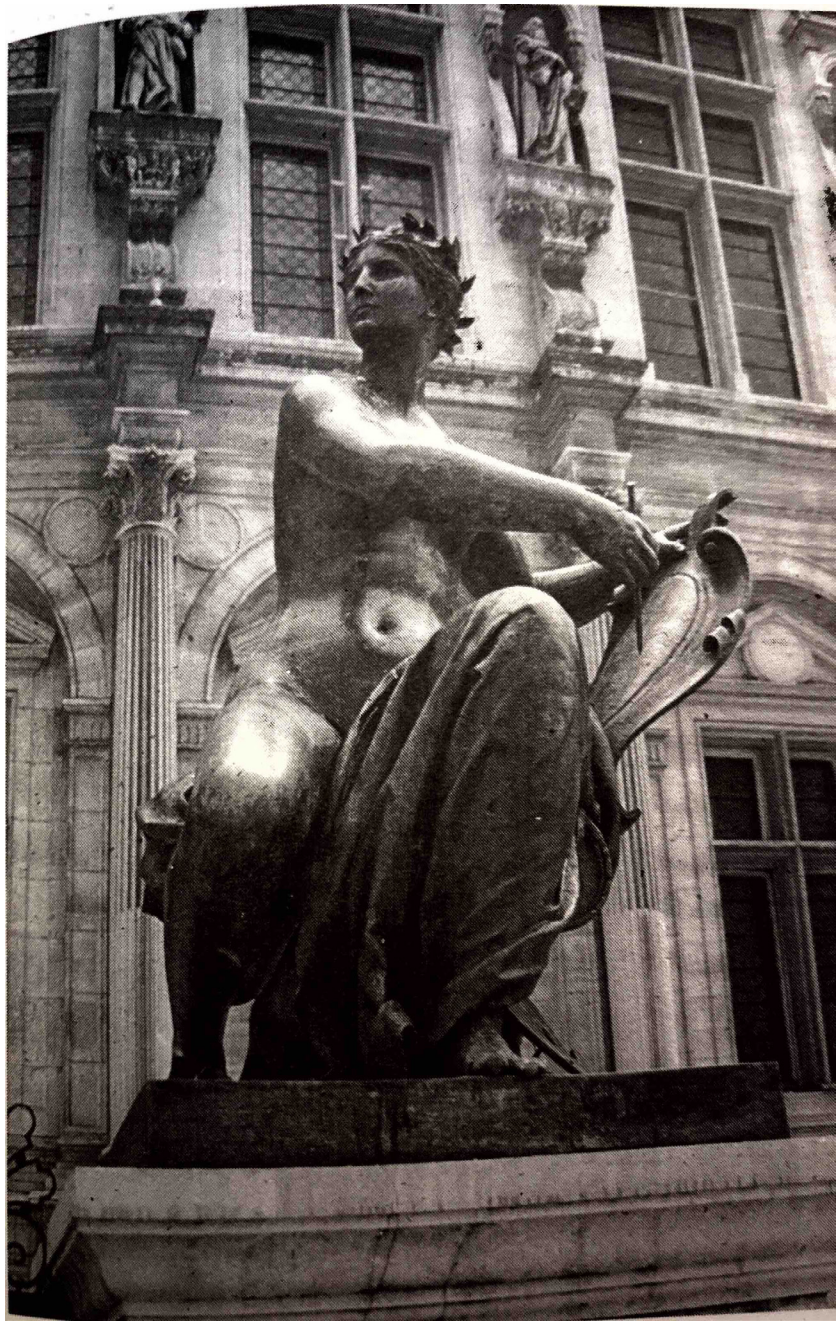
We had just broken from
the spells of dramatic entertainers.
Their skills unmet by the like,
across world and time.
This is where the dream began,
her company shared upon a train.

Saginaw seemed majestic
in her presence.
Our railed carriage ambled
above,
on par with sequoia tower,
skyscraper skyline.
Through fifty feet below,
the bricked walkways,
street performers, and
waterfall parks
lessened the appeal of
Paris, Rome, Madrid.

Her trademark blue sweatshirt
no less luxuriant than
hand-tailored gowns
of lunar spun celestial spun silk,
worn only in courts
of exotic, erotic, and imagined locales.
Its hood,
the symbol of throne
upon cerise locks.
And unlike the city,
in this nocturnal state,
freckled parchment of
Aphrodite's secrets,
sapphire oculi,
and coral lips that spoke
poem and prose
remained unchanged.

At the end of
a five minute track,
at which she rose,
pulled her hooded sweatshirt
taut against the cold and
left me with the words,
"let's again sometime."

Dion Mindykowski



Sarah Holdwick **1'hotel de ville**

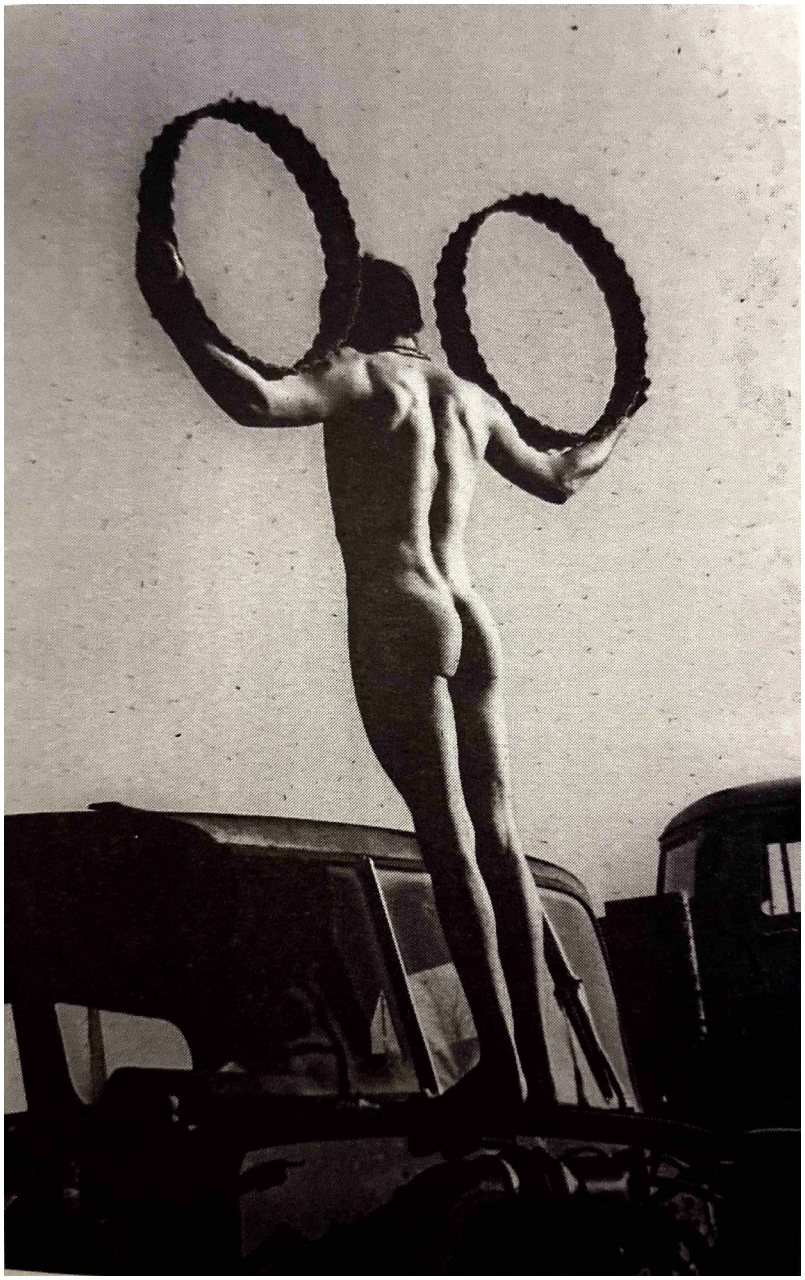
Vintage 2000

He had hands that would have reached the octaves well,
weathered hands,
earth beneath nails,
the hands that could hold a thought,
if thoughts had substance

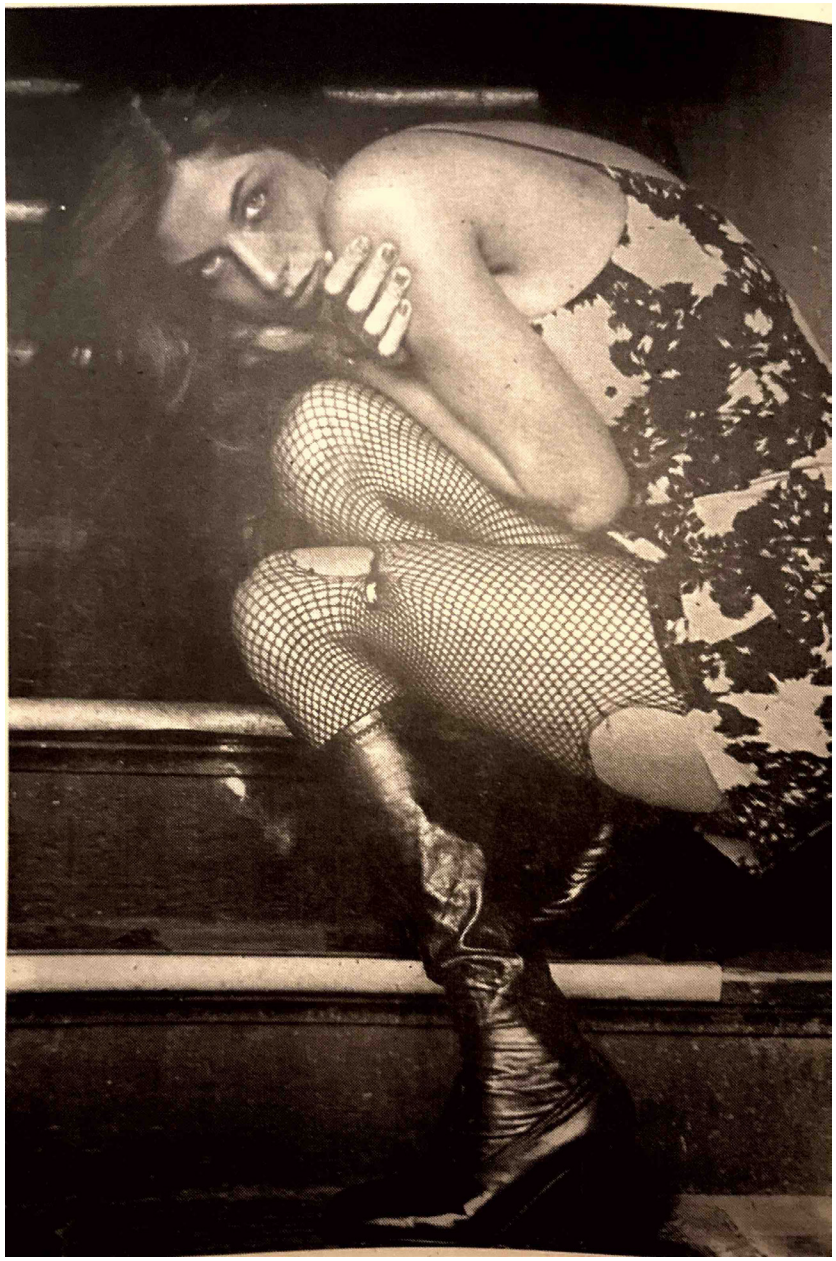
Tying the vines to the harsh wire
his fingers moved,
expertly, gently, living
lives of their own

And I said to him
teach me your peace
clusters of fruit,
the juice within
the rain I could taste falling from the sky
He took my hand,
placed coiled vine in palm
and smiled.

Leigh Grant



Lara J. Cromwell **Nude I**



Lara J. Cromwell **Self-Portrait**

Playing Possum

Tired of hindrance,
always strained to bide,
but not knowing what for,
she huddles arms, legs, and soul
underneath the blankets of tossed readings.
The south side of a building is her sanctuary,
from an inclement Godlike power
kicking white flakes in her face.
She wipes out eye mush and picks at a scab
with a calloused finger and nail which is cresting green growth on the edges.

Three men in leather coats approach her.
Is this what she waits for? It doesn't matter.
"What creation will I be this time?" she wonders.
"A failed whore?" "A straggler?" "Or maybe, I'll be nothing more than a smell."

"Clean yourself up." "Get a job." "...make me sick."
The men pass,
but their words bury her in the simplest practice euthanasia.
It's easy to sleep in those thoughts.

Paul Bailey

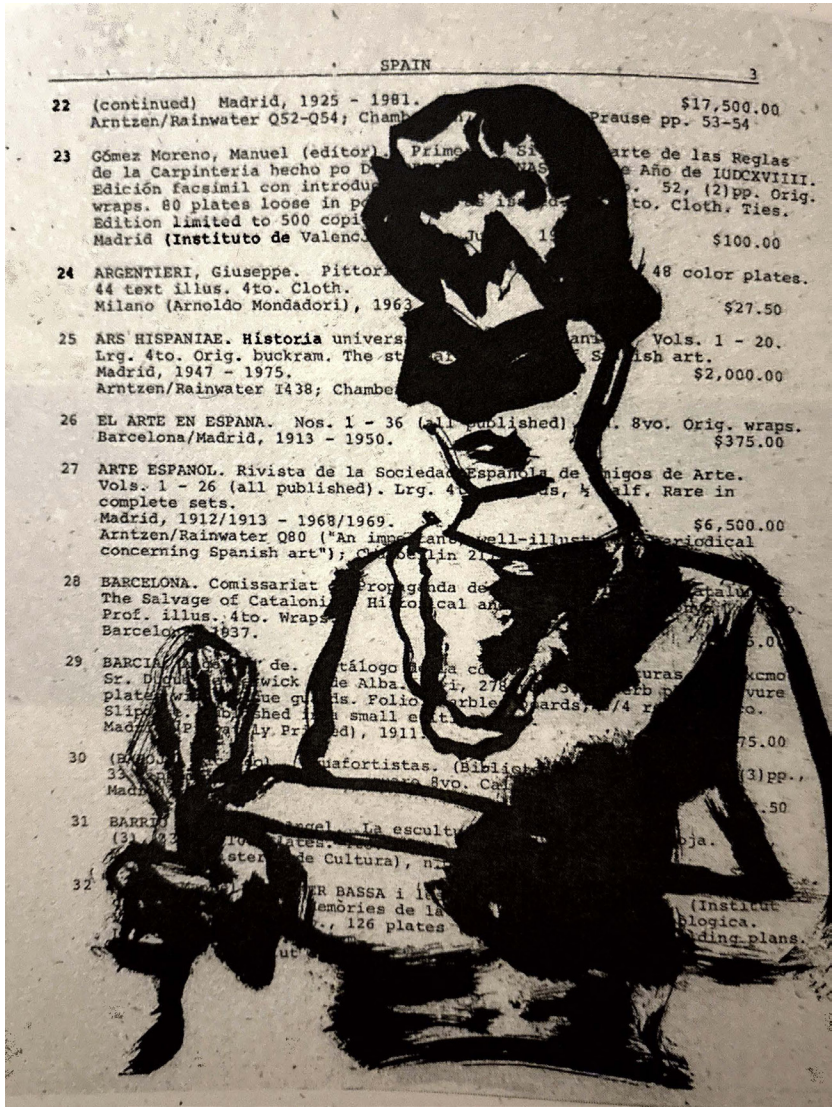
it

in it,
the midst of it,
the grinding swirling pit
of it,
among its innards,
its detailed entrails,
its guts.
am i scared of
it?
do i shudder in
its face?
its visage?
does it see
me, it
hear me, it
feel me, it?
and do i see
it, really
it?
from so low,
so deepened?
i make my bed
in its belly,
carving a subsistence
from it,
beginning to smile
at its red embrace,
the taste of it,
it. so far,
it,
so good, it.

Matthew Hill



Lara J. Cromwell **Eyes**



Mike Mosher

Paid by Crime I

Blackberry Stain

Like picking smiling fruit
blushing on the vine
you take inventory, bushels of opportunity

You can smear the concentrate of seeded crimson
Blackberry Stain, finger-printing conquests
like dark smudges
potent, thick moments, sickly sweet
tartness prickling the tongue
And you know it was a sweet-water year
free of frost, late autumn breezes
filled pages, darkened canvases
resonance of Sonatina left after desert

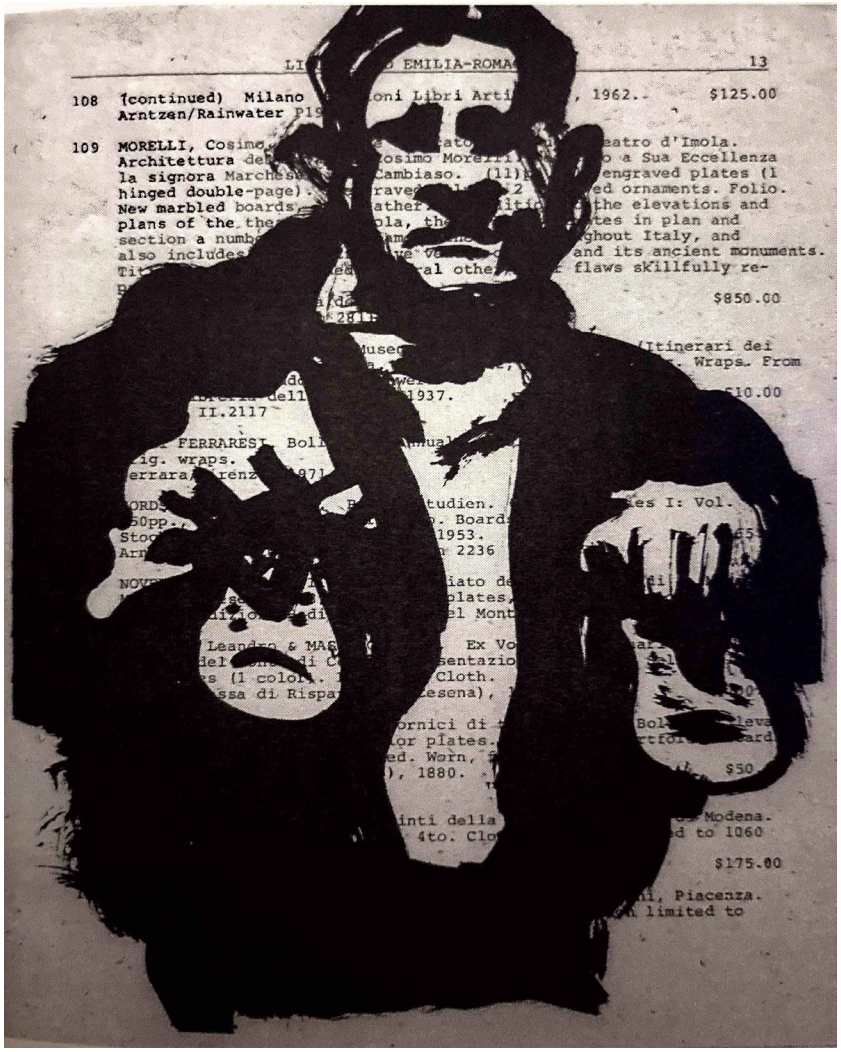
And in your furs of February, walking against the cold front
you feel in tightness between two molars-
delirious ache, you pry with index finger, thumb
and unearth a little seed, meekness
and again it's like picking smiling fruit
Bushels of opportunity
Blackberry stain

Leigh Grant
Winter 2002 Poetry Award Winner

I want it Black

They look for me, hunt for me
like children tipping rocks
searching for worms;
my fears are huge,
and when their fat fingers touch me
my only safety is to whole where it's darker.

Paul Bailey



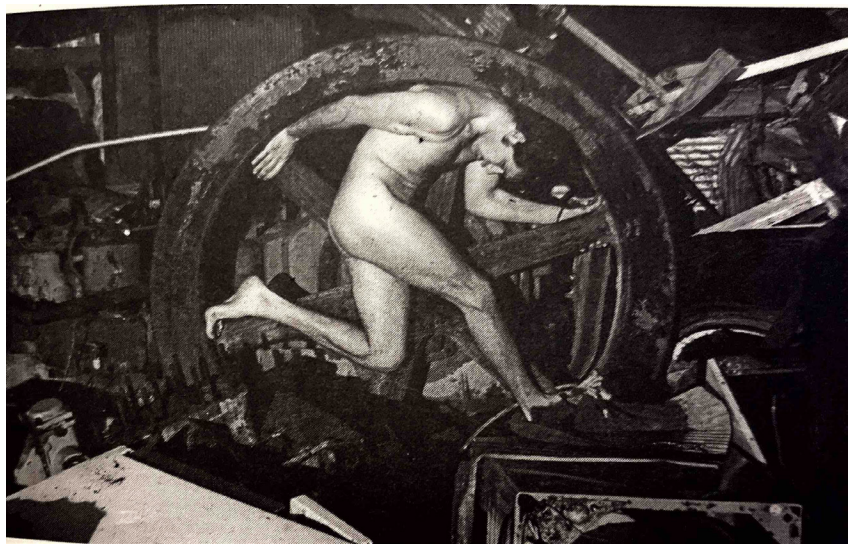
Mike Mosher
Winter 2002 Artwork Award Winner

Paid by Crime II

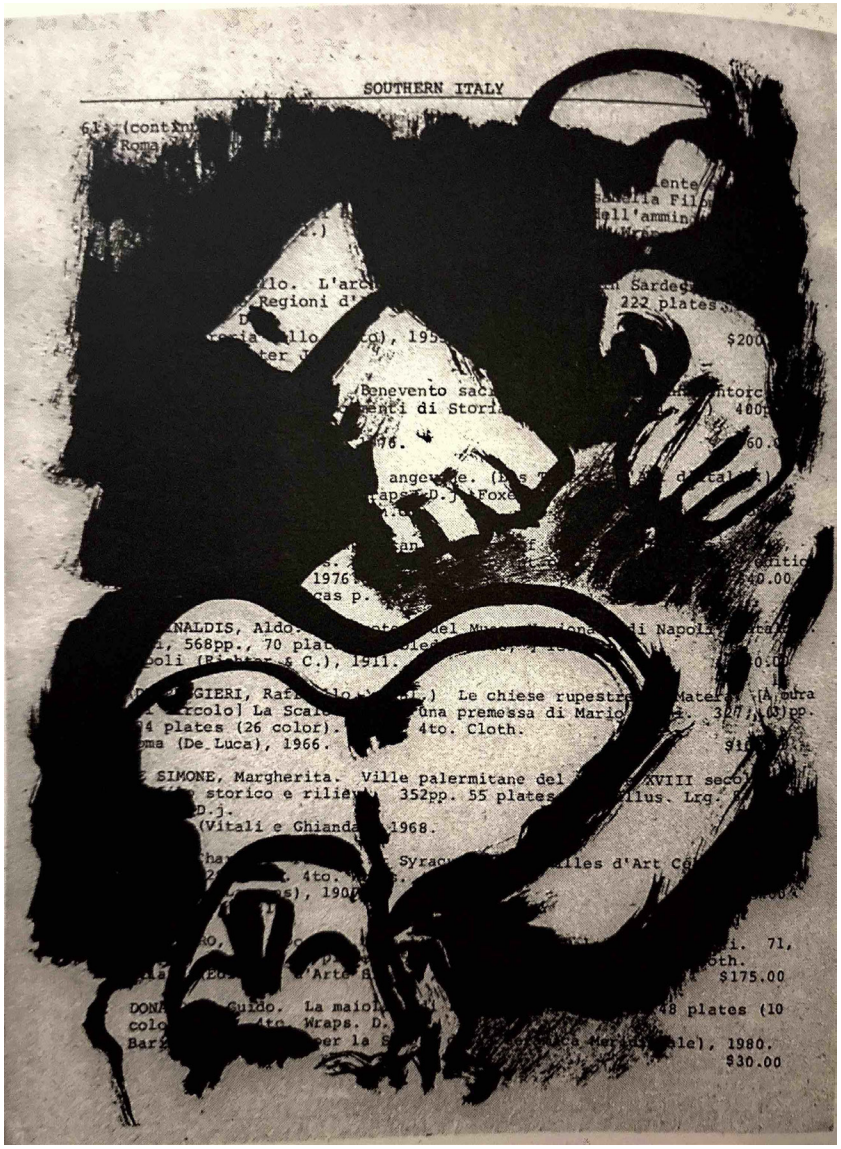
eight-thirty p.m.

spin, boy, spin,
whirl me out that door,
get me goin' 'till i
forget i was ever here.
this too-quiet-a place is
killin' me, lobotomizing
with an enterprising drive
to squash my skull.
i'd die, lie
give anything to swing
away for the last time.
time, yeah, that's the problem:
too-long-a time,
to slow-spinnin-a time,
a clock struck in slow.
my eyes rolled back into
black sockets, stuck like
stones in a frozen shore.
thaw, boy, thawm
get ready to cruise
when that thoroughly annoying
clock gets to the tock i want. . .

Matthew Hill



Lara J. Cromwell **Nude II**
Winter 2002 Photography Award Winner



Mike Mosher **Paid by Crime III**

praise jesus

so while the *zero gravity*
confuses the body
visions of *war* and civilization
sedate me
Oh . . . and we do like to *sedate* me.

I jump in the van,
head down
to the death penalty tonight,
and only tonight—*Thank you*,
at the local Church

Because I feel like that inmate
only . . . *ah* . . .with a van,
driving—complaining
about an affection of the stomach
that *no man* had been able
to mitigate or even explain,

Until the juice starts to flow,
as *strong* as
the "Praise Jesus."

Amy Stasiak

killing the hill within

you know the one:
the hatable hill,
the perfectionistic hill,
the this-place-is-filthy hill,
no tip for the poor waitress,
‘really, my tea just wasn’t just right, really’
the fix-yourself-but-i’m-fine hill,
man, the hill within

the fucking pseudo-nobility,
white upper-class, pompous, waspy,
sheltered, fucking brit hill,
‘chess anyone?’ ‘rugby, polo,
westminister dog show, u of m, lawyers,
doctors, fat caddy-driving bitches anyone?’
anyone?
shit, the hill within

the hidden-past, family-secret hill,
the mom’s-not-feeling-well-today hill,
the dad-can’t-help-it hill,
fuck it, the alcoholic hill,
the mysteriously-gone-aunt hill,
mock marriages, fronts, covers,
duck and covers, tail tucks, blinds, sideswipes,
boats with gold trim but no gas,
photo albums empty:
‘pass the corn’ (monotone) ‘thank you’ (meaningless)
‘so, how’s school/work/life?’ (meaningless)
damn, the hill within

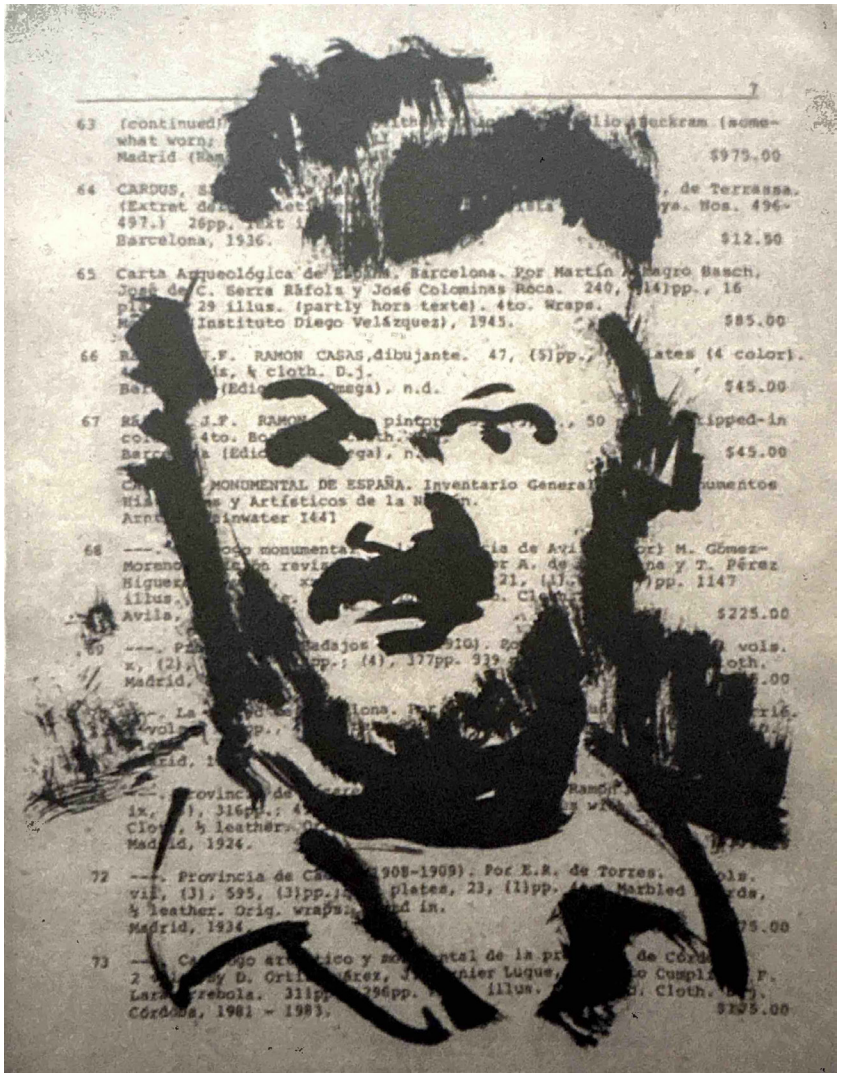
oh, the belittling, cocksucker hill,
selfish hill,
hell, the you’ll-never-be-a-real-hill hill,
a real hill, hell,
a real motherfucking miserable hill,
the i-tried-but-i-can’t hill,
the fucking-fix-yourself-but-i’m-fucking-fine hill,
fuck me, the hill within

well, gather up them waspy balls
old hill, and kill that bitch,
split guts, you fuck,
slit innards, hell, the hill within, you fuck,
watching buckets of shit,
bullshit, lies, drama, hate,
fake smiles, money clips, teeth caps,
fat hill gristle and piss spill,

the fat white pimp is dead,
the king is dead
and his kin, the cocksuckers of
all time

but now my gullet and guts are opened up,
anglo blood on a pressed shirt,
it hurts, but the dog’s dead,
that matted, rabid, tangle-toothed
mutt with the jangling hill tags,
he was an ugly bitch anyway

Matthew Hill



Mike Mosher **Paid by Crime IV**

Rock River

The first one fell, trickling.
Not sure, I watched for another
It came, then more
rapidly appeared. The force
behind them stronger than a pebble sorted and smoothed
by raging rivers My hands felt cold,
empty they wiped salty drops from his face.
My lips are mournful, not knowing
words to speak. Aching
my heart searching for a blankee to curl up in.
I am unable to control the wells
of my own soul focusing on the man
I dreamed of marrying as a child.
I see a different man, a weak
with a heart that requires prayers and bypasses
The strength of the Oak that once carried me is gone.
Now he weeps like the Willow. I am frightened,
know I must be the brave one, wish
my brothers were stronger
The doctors tell me this sorrow
he feels will not last, these streams will dry
with time. The sun will shine.
This Gypsum in my life
a weathering, crumbling,
struggling for a longer existence;
A new life, a second
chance to be the man he once was
to regain the power of the forest
as he travels downward.

Renee Lewis

My Girls

Giggling voices and high-pitched screams,
cookie dough fingers and snarly hair.
They are Choristers at church,
karaoke stars at play.
They are "You are the best mom in the world"
in one breath, "Its not fair"
the next. Hugs and kisses after bedtime
and Barbies tumbling out of closets. They leave
curling irons left on and make-up spilled in the sink.
Too tired for chores but not for scootering.
Hungry for ice cream shakes but not for lunch.
My girls are soft butterfly kisses
every day they leave to catch the bus.

Renee Lewis

Homecoming

While my hair was long, curls flowing
across my back, I played
On the hill behind your house.
You came by on a sled, throwing snow,
Pulled me as you sang Christmas carols.
We went on living on a farm in Vassar,
Young and old.

At seventeen I left you. Afraid, I smiled
A false lonely grin
Raised my head and looked out at the beach
Called to, I never answered
I never looked up.

Soon I stopped pretending.
My desire to return home to
be with you
Forever and ever and ever.
Why should I stare at the salty water?

At twenty you stood by me,
Held a single yellow rose, listened to my vows
The snow was deep, the sun bright as marigolds in the spring.
Hugging me on the courthouse steps you spoke;
"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on."
Two years later you departed.
You traveled to the Heavens as I lay in bed
Next to you, watching your last breath.
The angels made a noise overhead.
As they closed the lid, your ring is removed
From your still, fragile finger
and placed on mine
Your hand folded gently upon the worn pages of your Bible.
I place with cross-stitch sampler,
soaked with tears, next to your chest—
Kiss you good-bye.
You have been gone for eight years now.
In the frozen white, I wait.
The day He comes for me, please meet me.
Lead me home again.
Forever and forever
and forever.

Renee Lewis

Cronk

I can remember the little yellow house, simple and uncomplicated. Five rooms carefree: A kitchen with a goose cookie jar in the middle of the table and a window above the sink so high I couldn't see out, a living room with a wall furnace that was supposed to heat the whole house, how my husband would wake up cold and stand next in front of it while it roared and blew warmth. The peach bathroom had no shower just a tub. The blue bedroom, our bedroom, had a nightstand and picture of a world map hanging on the wall, the closer with its secret entrance into the last room. The smaller room, our baby's room, the bunny room decorated by my in-laws. A crib with a changing table and music boxes on the shelves waiting.

The old landlady, who lived across the street in a great green house, sat on her porch watching me out in the lawn of 920 Cronk big as a barrel, my face as green as her house. All the gardening tools any eight month pregnant woman would require to plant tulips in my hand: A smiple spoon. I fought with that spoon as it would bend and turn with every hole I dug. How sick I felt in the heat but in the spring this little yellow house would have big yellow tulips to show this unborn baby.

We brought our first daughter home to the Cronk house. It was Christmas Eve; the tree was up, the bassinet placed next to it. The landlady's son brought over a Christmas gift and rushed home to tell of that new baby under the tree. My grandma came and cooked meals for my new family, she cooked all my favorite: chicken and dumplings, river soup, lasagna, breads and cookies. My husband's little brother came to visit and he would squawk out "Cronk" in his best Gus the goose voice, as if he and the house had a secret joke between them.

In the spring the little yellow house had big yellow tulips surroundings it as if they were somehow the barriers, the protector of love and innocence. Since then a lot has changed for my family, but the house still stands, the tulips still wake every spring, brother Brad still can squeak out his "Cronk." If only time could go back, if only this house could once again blow its warmth. A life so simple and uncomplicated.

Renee Lewis
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