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Volume 23, Issue 2

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*Congratulations to Bryan G. Thompson, Catherine Weinstein, Willaim W. Rozek, Tracy Ludwig, and Adrienne Dyane Lewis, winners of the poetry, fiction, flash fiction, artwork, and photography awards respectively.

Editor's Note

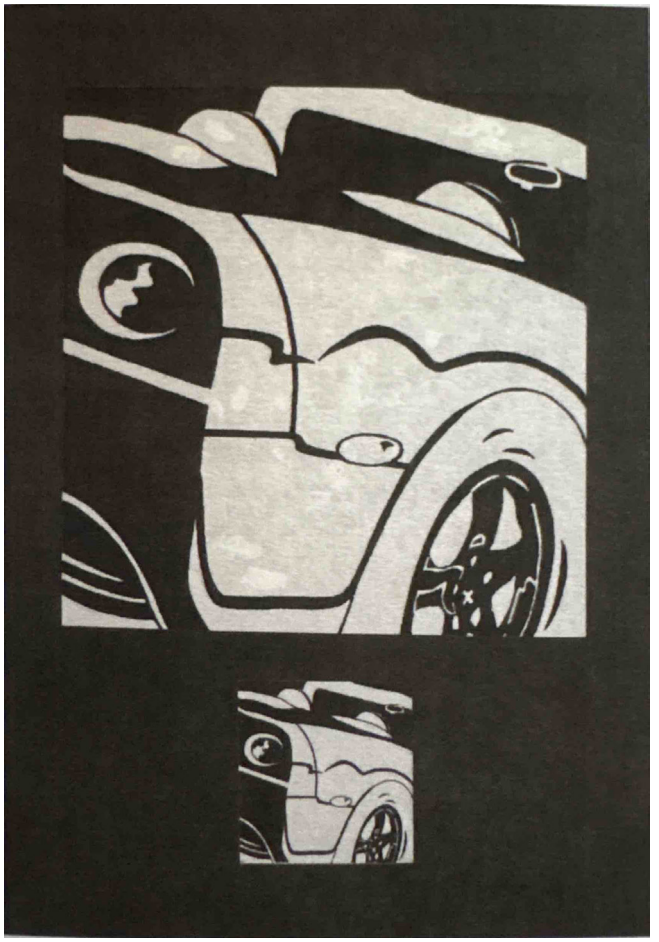
The single most effective way to capture someone's interest is to deny them, to forbid them to see. Out of this observation of human nature grew the idea for the lock on the cover of this issue. The lock really works in two ways: first, by providing that sense of the forbidden. thus drawing the reader in; second, by serving to "lock away" the explorations of pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth in the words, photographs, and artwork found inside. My hope is that once the potential reader succumbs to his or her curiosity and picks this issue up, he or she will find the contents well worth the risk of unlocking them.

The artists and writers of Saginaw Valley State University have accepted the challenge of unlocking those things which make each of us human. Through the mediums of art, photography, and words, they continue to reveal to us the beauty (and ugliness) of the world around us. They creatively find ways to show us how we interact with one another. They use their talents to explain to us who we are as a society and who they are as individuals.

I would like to dedicate this issue to my students, past, present, and future. May they never be afraid to unlock the myserties of humanity. May they be keenly aware of both the beauty and the ugliness around them, for without one you cannot appreciate the other. And may they always have the courage to seek out and unlock their individuality.

Lindsay S. Bryce

Lindsay S. Bryce
Editor-in-Chief



Vehicle for Fun
By Tracy Ludwig

Springtime in the Office
By Francis C. Dane

Fingers flying across the keyboard,
I remember to write something positive.
The sense of deja vu overwhelming,
As empathy for Sisyphus grows stronger.
I've written these words before,
But not for this student.

Data are, not data is;
"That" is not a pronoun for a person.
Split infinitive; here, too, and here, and here.
A singular noun requires a singular pronoun.
One main point per paragraph, please.
"Since" doesn't mean "because."

What's this? A novel phrase?
Well done; more like this!
A cogent argument as a bird sings
Renews energy; the summit is near
Wherefore art thou, thesis?
Save as comments—next?

water vein
By Kristen R. Garcia

I asked them to bury me
face down
palms pointing up
toward the satin
lining the lid

envisioning the moment
that material failed
when it flaked
snowing down to my
fingertips

I would experience
a lasting winter
gather the threads
in tightening bones
absorb

then when the sky opened
up with sunlight
I could share
water with my grandmother
grandfather
my children

raining from the vein
after the liquid
was taken out of me.

...the Other side of the fence
By Bryan G. Thompson

The old man who watches my
wife has the nicest front lawn in town.
Irish green and uniform, it
snickers at my crabby, patchy
excuse for a contender.
From my upstairs side window
I spy his rolling, nitrogen—
rich masterpiece unequaled by
my tireless efforts.
Try as I may to win this
Rumble in the Suburban Jungle,
the old champ lands a devastating
uppercut at the end of each round.
But,
whenever frustration turns to
anger in this heavenly window,
I look to his back-yard,
where, sweaty face pressed wrinkly
on the wooden fence,
he sweats, struggling to
glimpse the tanned upper thighs of
my wife, Ellen, as she unknowingly
tends to her garden.
I guess what they say is true.

found
By Amanda R. Conner

i felt betrayed by the winds of change
my rock became dust in my hands
strength left me as i awoke
yet in the tangled brush i found
a piece of shattered dream
so i cut
that which bound me to this earth
and i flew away.

Cold Love
By William W. Rozek

Winter arrived
Late last night,
A mistress cloaked
In a delicate
Pristine guise
Of cold crystalline love,
Adorned in frozen gems,
Set, from the beginning of time,
To deceive a trusting mind
Into thinking
That her soft,
White, viable flesh
Was capable of any
Human warmth...

At the Bottom of the Glass
By Lesley Stanley

She is like the lemonade he would crave during supper in the hottest summer evening.
The frogs would be singing from the pond in back, their patio door completely open. She would be across from him dressed in a little tank, her arms glowing rose from her afternoon walk.

I am like the richest coffee. The dark beans worth his money. He stops for a cup every morning, even on Saturdays and Sundays.
Its flavor lovely on his tongue and soothing down his throat.

But, he drinks his coffee
with her.
And I never liked lemonade... ever.



Crescent Eye
By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

Familiar
By William W. Rozek

Alone, on the third Sunday of September, having braved forward beyond all others, I pushed open the two large doors of the vestibule and stepped out into an early morning sun, one late summer day. Then I decided to walk the long way home, alone, down an old familiar side street, to wistfully wander through my memories, which had strangely been stirred by a certain sermon I had just heard. Oddly, and without concern for my new black shoes, I began to shuffle them through a myriad of dried leaves. But I quickly assured myself, from some lost childhood memory, that I merely wanted to hear, once again, that marvelous multitude of fine crisp cracklings.

And then it dawned on me, curiously enough, from that outer fringe of thought, that I could not seem to recall a single moment in my collective reflective memory, when I actually did not exist! Indeed, the mind remembers, but history records, and if I've always been here, then surely, I would've known Hannibal, Nero, Napoleon, perhaps Joan of Arc, maybe Mohammed, possibly Christ, definitely Caesar!

The morning air was refreshing; the walk was doing miracles for my aching joints. Now, with deliberation in my step, I continued along my autumnal path, enjoying familiar haunts. "In that empty lot, once stood the home in which I was born." We were not a wealthy family, my mother and I moved often, "... to get a better deal on rent," she always said to me whenever I asked her, "Why are we moving again? Please can't we stay, I just made some friends!" But that was long ago, and now they're gone, just empty lots of lost memories. And I don't know why I was thinking about childhood, I rarely do, for there were very few fond memories; all I remember was fighting for everything I ever wanted. "Such foolishness," I proclaimed! But this two-mile stroll from church to home was strangely invigorating, physically and mentally! For suddenly, I froze in my forward movement as I triumphantly surmised aloud, "Every moment of life, be it good or bad, unforgettable or forgettable, is lived for, fought for, and sought for the good of one's own self! Secureed wholly within the infinite wisdom of the soul of all eternity!" Instantly, I shut up. Embarrassed at my outburst, I quickly looked around for anyone that might've heard me. Thankfully, I was alone on the street and wrote this incident off as the rambling of an old man. Old men do that sometimes, talk to themselves. Normally, I only do that at home with my wife, Barb, who usually yells out, "Bill, you're talking to yourself again!" And I immediately stop and grumble something about the aging process.

I pondered over my verbal outcry; philosophical epiphanies are not part of my forte. I wondered why I even conceived the idea, let alone shouted it aloud in a public venue. But then again, I mused, “Gaining entry into a new realm of thinking is exciting. but I’m not that smart!” I said to myself, standing beneath the comfortable solitude of the city’s oldest tree, which has been standing her for the past 200 years across from City Cemetery, “Then again, what is life, if it’s not the sum of all experience? Memories? Could heaven be but a collective repository of personal memories? If so, then hell must be a place of terrible memories, or lack of. What if in the afterlife, one only takes with them the good things they’ve created in life?” I stopped speaking and shuddered to the soul. “If someone has done nothing in life, then heaven doesn’t exist for them.” Another cold chill shot through me. “Such nonsense,” I said to myself, pausing before I crossed over to the other side of the street. But as I started, I halted, not for any ridiculous revelation, but become of oncoming headlights. Instinctively, I knew it was a funeral procession. And as the black hearse slowly passed, it grounded my soul, for I could see clearly into the car that was following. Alone, in the backseat was a familiar face of an elderly woman...crying... it was Barbara, my wife.

the end

Los Sentidos
By Gladys A. Hernández

Los sentidos vamos a ver
y son cinco para aprender.
Y nunca estarán vencidos
quienes usen sus sentidos.
El oído nos permite
escuchar lo que se transmite.
Al sentido del gusto yo le encargo
que me diga si es dulce o amargo.
El olfacto me hace el favor
de informarme del olor.
La vista es un gran sentido
que me hace ver el colorido.
Y por el tacto yo confío
Si algo es caliente o frío.

Namesake

By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

Which way do we face to talk to the dead?

—Sharon Olds

It is hard to see you stretched so thin,
sheer against the wall of your fears, Dying
or living without the capacity to recognize
the curve of your daughter's belly
has emptied. Your mind
may not understand she has named her
after you. There is always hope
you will though. So the next time you speak
to your brother Edwin, long since departed,
when he visits you in the sleepless dark,
slips past nurses changing shifts
and the blood red tubes emptying
your latest surgical notch,
turn towards there trepidations.
look him in the eye and tell him you're not ready
to be lifted from this plane: where life rolls onward,
syllables forming the next generation.



Untitled #1

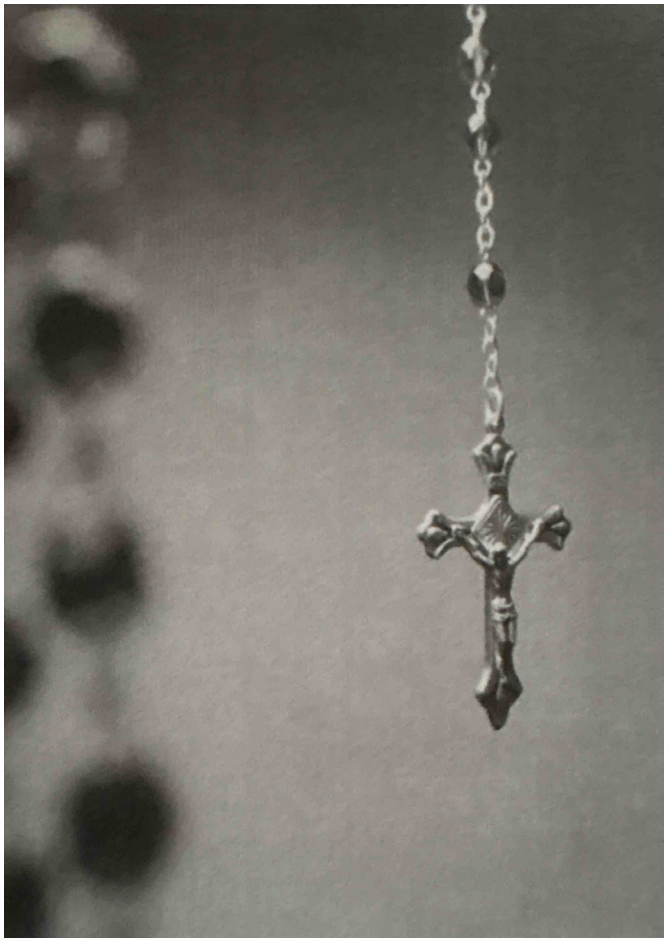
By Kelley Montagne

Lenten Promise
By Christopher Giroux

In my more optimistic moods,
I like to think
Hester Prynne could find some small comforts
in Ash Wednesday,
a day when a choosing (if not chosen) people,
minister and ministered,
the sinned against and sinning,
elect to wear that black smudge of a cross,
a communal mark of Cain,
a signal of exile and isolation
carrying the potential of
humility,
sacrifice,
atonement,
at-one-ment.

For on this day,
as the priest raises besmirched thumb to forehead,
mourners
instinctively pause,
bow,
glance earthward,
to avoid stray specks of dust
and the parched memories
of the huzzahs and hosannas, open palms, and swaying bodies
of a passion week
some three-quarters of a year prior.

Yet,
the more receptive
glean that these potential planks in the eye,
these splinters in the soul,
there charred remainders,
exist in a world where
earthly pressures transform carbon,
perpetual drippings render stalactite palaces,
and the merest of freshwater irritants,
in a darkened sea of night swimmers and egg-white oysters,
yield Pearls.



Focus
By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

No Place Like Home
By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

There is my mother, broom in hand,
chasing away monkey boys
at our gravel driveway's end. She is shrieking for them
to go home, or she will make them wish
they had never laid eyes on me. Laying in the bushes,
I can hear them taunting her,
the *Witch of Northwest Drive*,
buzzing back and forth, bursting into a blaze
of laughter between houses
as they run. I wish for my father,
to click together
a pair of ruby slippers like Dorothy wore—
she woke up with everyone she loved
at home. Dad never came to my rescue,
only her. Short little legs flying to my defense,
scattering the neighborhood carrion,
the lollipop gangs of my youth.

A Tiny Request
By Lesley Stanley

Would you like to
come over?
I have a full-size bed
with plenty of sheets.
We could live there,
then sleep there,
and the next morning, wake
to live all over again.



Untitled #2
By Kelley Montagne

One-Time Lover
By Lesley Stanley

He bit the corner of his bottom lip.
His dark eyes focused beyond the present,
possessed with a vision that was not.
The feeling was back
somewhere inside stabbing at my ribs
and upon my fingers, involuntary shaking.
I could only smirk.
I understood his tongue when he said
...come closer
I felt his craving
for me; it was heard in his breath.
It was all familiar
but today,
I let him pull out the elastic band
that held my hair.
Use his hands to
finger the hem of my shirt
pull off my socks
grasp my neck

I would hate him tomorrow
after I followed him into the blackness
of his comforter.

Helix

By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

There is nothing to pushing through
the curved ridge of an outer ear. The helix
twirls around our heads
on two sides, asking for it
to be done. You just lay still
and wait for the pinch,
and then the warmth—
blood seeping from the new hole.
You say, *That didn't hurt*
much. Later
you'll forget the comment
as you dodge advances, offers
to have it touched and kissed,
but for now it is true—
the whole process somewhat like a memory
of lost love in reverse.



Self-Portrait

By Sarah Holdwick

A Journal Entry of Another World
By William W. Rozek

Looking back in hindsight, I've discovered a simple axiom...truth rides on a thin timeline that weaves itself in and out of reality. Our physical plane of existence is established upon a rigid standard, measured by the five senses. And any time the "unexplainable" challenges reality for acceptance, it must first be categorized by a set of classifications: touch, taste, sound, smell, and sight. And if the "unexplainable" safely pigeonholes into all five sensory groups, it is therefore assumed that the "strange incident" may have actually happened. But if one or more criterion are not met, the likelihood of possibly happened; this is how science determines the authenticity of the "natural" and/or "supernatural" occurrences.

But there are so many mysteries in life that cannot be resolved, simply because they do not fit all the criteria of reality - but that doesn't mean they didn't take place. In the following journal entry, all five standards for "verification" cannot be measured nor proven. What I ask for is simple: whomever shall read this, please understand that the following entry did take place. I have no physical proof except for the fact of my intense sincerity, and that this "bizarre incident" drastically changed my life forever! I can only appeal to the reader's great sense of judgment and understanding and boldly ask the peruser to believe in my profound integrity as I now share the following journal entry:

"Journal Entry Logged: October 15th, 11:59 P.M."

There are other worlds, and I learned this lesson at a very early age. This blue planetary sphere holds but a single grain of all life that exists in the entire universe. Even on earth, countless organisms live, multiply, and die without a shred of acknowledgment from other life forms.

But there was a time, in that most inquisitive state called youth, when a particular thought seemed to haunt my subconscious and surface from time to time. Oddly, from my earliest memories, I never asked, "Who am I?"; rather, I wondered, "Where did I come from?" For me, this world has never been fully accepted as home. Oh, yes, my birth can be traced to a specific time, date, and year. I also have all the necessary credentials: a driver's license, birth certificate, social security number, all the usual factors to pigeonhole me as a citizen of Earth. But I'm not ascribing to the facts of reality; I'm alluding to that hidden intuition, for I've never felt 100% comfortable with people, places, or the gain of material wealth. Always feeling alien to every new experience in life, I continually sought a feeling of familiarity and acceptance on this planet; there were times in my youth that I even preadolescence, a child does not ask, "Why do I feel like a stranger in my own home?" But the answer to this philosophical question forever eluded interpretation...until this night.

To continue: As I grew older in years and stature, I soon turned inward to that uncharted universe of critical thinking and eventually reasoned, "Where the question lies, the answer must stand." I knew nothing of self-hypnosis nor of transcendental meditation, but I intuitively knew that my mind, my soul, and my physical being must become as one, one at peace, on one plane of existence, in tune with the universe before I would have my answer.

It was a warm Saturday evening, close to midnight. I laid back in my bed and tried to free myself of all problems. I took several deep breaths and concentrated upon one thought, "Please," I said softly, "Where do I belong?" Over and over I addressed the silence, repeating this single question, concentrating intently, allowing no other thoughts to enter my mind, and before long, I began to sense a new feeling of awareness...my eyes grew heavy; I glanced at the bedside alarm, 11:59.

Now, this world began to fade quickly as a surging sensation engulfed and pulled upward on every fiber of my anatomy. And as if being sucked into a black hole, a rush of molecules flowed out of me towards the darkness of space.

Minutes, hours, even seconds could've passed; time was not relevant to me as I sped through a silent vacuum towards a faint distant disc of light. There was no physical sense of awareness. But strangely, the closer I drew to the light, the more familiar it became. Tall gray mountains and deep dark valleys began to protrude from the surface of this onrushing circle of light. Impact was imminent upon a sea of tranquility. Faster and faster I was drawn towards this dry, barren sea of silt. But instead of crashing into a barrier of stone, my entire essence flowed through it as if being inhaled.

Passing through the surface of this gray orb at an incredible speed, and without feeling any gravitational effects from a sudden stop, I found myself standing in a soft self-illuminating cavern. I had never seen anything so stark and yet so beautiful; the stone carved room was of natural origin, and a gray-basalt color. And there, standing before me, were three small humanoid figures.

My eyes became riveted as I stared at what I thought to be the one in authority. He moved closer to me; the other two did not move nor speak. Their thin, horizontal lips manifested no expression, which also matched

their non-emotional stare. All three were dressed in what looked like one-piece gray jumpsuits; I could discern no seams in their uniforms. But on the chest of each one of them was a large block letter “H” with a red vertical bar through the center.

My eyes drifted to the pillared ceiling and floor for some fragment of reality, but my mind said it wasn’t so; this was all a dream I reasoned.

“No!” the word resounded in the cavity of my skull from the one standing closest to me, and then his thin lips turned upward in a friendly smile.

Stalagmites and stalactites honeycombed this ancient vault. A soft gray dust covered the floor. No visible source of light could be seen by my eyes, but the cave glowed. The walls were not carved; they appeared to be naturally formed, formed at a time when this natural satellite was given birth. Strange and unusual formations conveniently formed seats and flattop tables. I slowly sat down and calmly rested my arms upon my lap; my mind was reeling in confusion. Could all this actually be real? I looked down and saw my feet, and then I knew it wasn’t a dream, for I’ve never before seen my feet in any dream. I wiggled my toes; they were partially buried in the soft-gray powder. Any movement was effortless as I slid the ball of my foot back and forth on this flour-like substance.

I lifted my eyes, but before I could ask any question, the appointed one mentioned to the far-most side of this leaden-colored hollow. A mist began to form into an enormous shapeless screen as a star map appeared on the ghostly shroud. There were several brilliant suns with numerous planets orbiting around them. “There, there is the answer to your lifelong question,” the leader said, pointing towards a spectacular solar system. “See... home.”

I glanced at the other two humanoids; they continued to srand motionless. Once again, I heard the voice echo in my mind, “We are here...that you may rest on earth. Your final time is yet come, but this enigma you will one day understand...patience.”

I tried to comprehend. I had questions, but they never left me mind; for like an intense mental-magnet, my thoughts drew inward and returned to me. Suddenly, the three humanoids faded from view. The gray shelter of stone quickly grew dim as my eyes lowered. An earthly umbilical cord tightened in the back of my neck and snapped! And at the speed of thought, I was pulled instantly from my seated position backwards towards earth!

I don’t remember opening my eyes, but I watched the brilliant disc grow smaller and smaller upon a black velvet background. I could actually feel the rush of my atoms hurtling through space.

Earth’s gravity suddenly made me aware of weight, which had been

missing in that glowing grotto. The burden of flesh resounded through my soul as my eyelids burst open. And once again, I became an earth-bound creature of mass and density.

I was back in my own room, but I was sad. I rolled to my side as the numerals on the clock changed to 12:00. I was momentarily confused, but I believe that my lifelong quest had finally been revealed. Earth is merely a junction, a school of hard knocks. I still don’t know why I’m here, or why anyone is here, but I do know that I’m here for a reason, and that’s enough; for “that” rease is the lesson in life that I must learn, whatever that lesson may be.

“Journal Entry Complete: October 16th”



Butthead
By Tracy Ludwig

Burgundy
By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

This is the color she sweeps
over flesh each night. She wears it deep,
flush with shadows, curves she aches to feel touched.
On her spine there is an image:
Father, Son and Holy Ghost woven together
inside three points; leading downward,
their intercession hollows as she arches
brushing fingers over burning skin,
the personal stains darkness pushes through her
from where blood boils
deep red.

The High Diver
By Erin Rolfe

She dove with perfect grace and beauty.

Back curved as an archer's bow.
Arms swept back like a plummeting eagle
swooping down to capture its prey.

Her auburn hair fluttered carelessly behind.
Chest thrust forward, breasts straining against the
cotton shirt that concealed the bruises.

Her stomach clenched in freefall,
feeling exactly the same as when
her father slid his hand inside her pants.

Her face shone with a content serenity,
a child feeling the wind in her face.
A sixteen-year-old girl at blissful ease.

The pavement shattered her skull,
cracking it like an eggshell against a countertop,
ending years of horror, fear, and shame.

She dove with perfect grace and beauty.

Anew
By Bryan G. Thompson

My heart was a thing and
you were the American goddess
who touched it and turned it to
Greek tragedy.

We walked past white houses and
futile children who toyed with
days and into a darker, deeper
twilight brimming with confused moons.

Our hands separated as you used
yours to wash old, white bread from
our plates and I used mine to
throw over the last few pages of an old book.

Now I look under the window and
find the sliver of soap that was yours.
Yours to do with as you chose and you
chose to waste it away to nearly nothing.

No young voices life the banners of
this house that stands tall and waits.
Only old and deep, rising from my sore
chest and calling warily to a rusty dog.

On Fire Down the Aisle (Asleep at the Altar)
By Holly Morningstar

Beauty wailed in A-minor
and pinched so violently
she had to be carried down the aisle.
Her tantrums echoing in the walls and
the great cathedral ceilings of the church,
the local gossips affectionately called her Brat.

She was thrust into the arms
of her supposed sweet fortune
of a royal name and dark dungeon.
As one does a gift being returned to sender,
he cradled his wife awkwardly
as a brother and sister.

The lace of the child's white dress
contrasted vividly
with her angry, valentine - red
face, eyes, and ears,
like the scents of the lilacs strewn everywhere,
flirting with the aroma of the burning candle wax,
her rage deceiving her innocence.

She writhed against him
until finding safety
by nuzzling in his neck,
allowing the warmth to evaporate her tears
until they were no more than temporary scars,
puddles on dampened cheeks.

As an angel slept in her future's embrace,
there were no vows
only the hushing, sing-song lullaby of the priest
and a growing stain of drool on the groom's tuxedo.



Untitled #1
By Cheryl Dotterer

The Pride of Michigan
By William W. Rozek

Blessed with rich loamy soils,
Abundant in great fresh waters,
A mysterious river of energy
Flows through this Algonquian haven,
And throughout all who abide within...

For the inherent essence of the native child
Is a natural birthright that stems
From mother earth, which offers life itself
As the true legacy of ancestral spirits
Who forever dwell in hallowed grounds...

From the smallest of seeds
Have grown the mightiest of trees;
And from the humblest of dreams,
There have risen the noblest of cities,
Borne by the strength of its sons and daughters...

For throughout the ages, the deepest of lakes
Have been formed by single drops of rain;
And from the finest grains of sand,
Forbearance has created a wondrous land,
This land, upon which we firmly stand...

As every morning brings night, each dusk brings dawn,
Dreams are envisioned, new destinies unfold;
For the true native will always endure
In a lifelong journey of self-fulfillment,
With the confident conviction of one who is blessed.



machination #2
By Howard James Miller III

Liquefying Morality

By Adrienne Dyane Lewis

When He moved over the formless void,
it was water that started the chain reaction
to cause the descent of our species, the fall
of *Homo sapiens* into the endless fluid debate
over whether the glass if half full or half empty
and if I steal is it really a crime
if my mother is dying of thirst? Doesn't He understand
how He has left us, washing down our egos
with spite for Him? His creation gives a gainsaying nod
towards that little bite of apple taken
and so easily handed off
as she reached for a cool drink.

Balloons

By Catherine Weinstein

I lost about ten of them because I had left the window open. As I shoved more in , some got pushed out the rear and floated away, carried by the wind. One got caught in the neighbor's maple tree. The string it was trailing must have wrapped itself around one of the branches. 1 watched as the wind tore at it, making it seem as if this little blue balloon was desperately struggling to escape, to fly free on the breeze. It almost seemed as if I could see a little heart beating frantically inside. It bounced back and forth a bit, as I looked on, entranced, wishing to see it released. But no, it made a small popping noise, and the white string drooped down, still swinging in the wind like an empty noose in the gallows. Tattered bits of blue rubber floated listlessly to the ground.

I shook myself and returned to the task at hand, reaching through the hanging white vines of string in my car to roll up the window. I put the rest of the balloons into the backseat. They were blue, all of them blue. In the package, they were dark, but as they expanded, they had taken on a translucence that reminded me of a clear lake on a cloudless day.

I was careful not to let any more escape as I edged into the driver's seat. It was hard backing out of the driveway because I couldn't see out the rear window at all. That didn't worry me since it would only be a quick ten-minute drive to my youngest sister's fifth birthday party.

"Bring balloons," my mother had said, ignoring my look of disgust. "Lots of them."

Well, there sure are a lot, I thought to myself, chuckling at my little joke. This birthday would go down in history as the day when all the guests drowned in a sea of balloons. If I was going to bring balloons, the effort better have been worthwhile. After all, it would only be a short time before they either popped or withered and sagged before being thrown out and forgotten.

My mind was wandering as I drove. I found myself thinking about all the work that would have piled up for me from taking this day off, and I wondered how I would ever catch up. If it were up to me , I would have chosen something else to do on the first day off I had received in six weeks.

I was so caught up in my thoughts that I almost didn't see the flashing lights from the police car behind me. Calmly, I pulled the old station wagon to the side of the road and rolled down the window.

The officer was young and tall with bits of blonde hair that stuck out from under his hat and caught the sun. Something about the way he walked

made me expect him to click his heels together in salute should an authority figure pass by. I was almost disappointed when he spoke English with a northeastem accent instead of a German one.

"Going to a party?" he asked, glancing at all the balloons floating in the backseat of the car.

"It's my sister's birthday, officer," I replied, remembering that they liked to be reminded of their authority.

"I see. A few more balloons and you could probably fly there."

I tried to gauge his expression to see whether I was supposed to laugh at this and saw him staring expectantly at me. I tried to smile, but I'm sure it came out more as just a baring of teeth.

His tone grew cool. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to give you a ticket. That's obstruction of view, you know. Can't have you riding around like that."

"No, sir, of course not, sir," I said. Wide-eyed innocence wasn't working for me I realized, as I noticed his eyes narrowing into slits. He paused and appraised me coolly. "In fact, I think it would be a good idea if we got rid of them right now."

"Yes, sir," I said as I unlocked the doors.

He pulled out a pen from his breast pocket and rapidly clicked it three times. In the fist of his hand, it looked like a weapon.

"Out of the car," he told me. "Help me pop these."

I tried not to sigh as I pursed my lips together, got out of the car, and went to the back door, realizing the futility of all the effort I had put forth before. The officer went to the opposite side, and we opened the car doors at the same time. The balloons were packed in so tightly that with a sudden gust of wind, they flew right out of the car, streaming out of the gray wagon like a waterfall falling up into the sky.

"Go wait in the car," the officer commanded. If his voice was cool before, now it had turned completely frigid. I slumped down into the driver's seat of the station wagon, which now seemed almost cavernous with all the room opened up by the escaping balloons.

In the few minutes that it took for the officer to write me a ticket, the sky had turned from a bright blue to a dark gray. In my mind, I imagined that all those balloons had soaked up the color of the sky on their journey up to the heavens. I hoped that it would be a while before they burst. Maybe the heat of the sun would be what finally did the thin rubber in, and they would float around in tiny rubber pieces, crystallized once they got away from the burning star and finally free from the constraints of gravity. I longed to go

with them as I prepared myself for the berating I would inevitably receive from my mother when I showed up empty-handed.

A few minutes later, I pulled into my parents' driveway. Before I could even put the car in park, my sister was running up to the car her strawberry-blond hair and pink party dress fluttering in the breeze.

"Did you see them, Stacey? Did you see them?" Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes widened in the type of excitement reserved only for the very young.

"See what?" I asked.

"The balloons! There were a gazillion of them and they flew right over there!" She pointed to the sky right above the house.

"Oh yeah?" I replied in semi-mock astonishment, my lips spreading in a smile despite myself.

"Yeah, because it's my birthday." With that, she ran off to the backyard, nearly toppling my mother who was on her way to greet me.

"What was that all about?" she asked. "I'm assuming that was all your doing." She was glancing skyward to the place the balloons had flown overhead. "A bit dramatic, don't you think?"

"Well, you know me," I said as I shut the door behind me and followed my mother into the backyard.

Shrieks and laughter floated on the air as my young cousins engaged in a game of tag. I watched them, their arms outstretched, legs moving so fast it seemed that with a little more effort they might be able to take off on the breeze, following the paths of the balloons overhead. Aunts and uncles and other family members stood around talking in groups. Occasionally, I would catch them looking up at the sky, a curious look on each face as if they half expected to see more balloons drifting by. I even caught myself looking up at the sky a few times.

I noticed a break in the clouds that revealed a tiny dot floating in

the distance-probably a bird, one of the robins that frequently nested in the trees of the neighborhood. I wondered whether it would encounter my balloons and chirp in surprise as it marveled over something so perfect traveling peacefully through its domain.

Bringing the look of wonderment on my sister's face to mind, I took a deep breath, filling my lungs with as much air as they could hold. As I exhaled, I began to feel lighter. Any worries or frustrations that still remained in me at that moment floated away. They would come back, they always did, but for the time being at least I would be free. And that felt good.

the lookingglasseye: A Voyage of Years
By Howard James Miller III

She stepped forth onto the cold concrete step .
It's gray creeping,
crawling to embrace the city.
A spiderplex of webbing,
with which she was one,
a mere digit in a directory of lost souls,
one with pages soiled from use.
The stains like coffee on a napkin,
carelessly spilt in an urgent morning of presumed importance ,
looking for someone whom you could have loved,
if in that mere moment you could have found the strength and stamina.

With a jolted movement and a hardened stare,
she broke forth into the traffic.
The beauty of chaos,
insects of their own design,
with exoskeletons of pale porcelain,
translucent and shallow they gleam.
Shells of humans pushing and shoving,
in all directions, with no direction.

Her mood lay heavy on her like white weather,
the precipitation of ice,
insulating mother earth from the cityscape.
A computer chip grid of technological progress.
A stitched wound upon her face.
A deepened scar remembered so dearly from childhood,
playing in the garden .

It took all that she could muster to penetrate the crowd.
She envisioned herself a great gladiator thrust into the pit,
a miasma of paradox,
to bear a valiance that isn't,
to struggle willfully for someone else's.

She was looking for something akin to a beginning,
one which would last forever,
an infinite moment within the now,
for all eternity;
this concept,
she decided to call truth.

A Love of Two Parts Together
By Catherine Weinstein

I:
we crash together
twisting metallic emotions
meshed upon impact
forcefully against the other
ones that give support
careening down
lips, chest, abdomen
to that supple place
always between
our thoughts and souls

wind to glass
tire to steel
burning red sirens
resounding

2:
your being
a pit for my fire
built of polished stone
hand and sweat
the sealing mortar
holding me
for such sacred seconds
as diverse pieces penetrate
on a night together
as two building one

soil and shape
flesh and form
vivid hearth's fire
resounding

Hybrid

By Kristen R. Garcia

blood
spills into creases
to the outer edge
of mouth
fresh proteins
glistening
from inner soul

I wonder why
the painted clown
has a red smile
I wonder
        why a tear

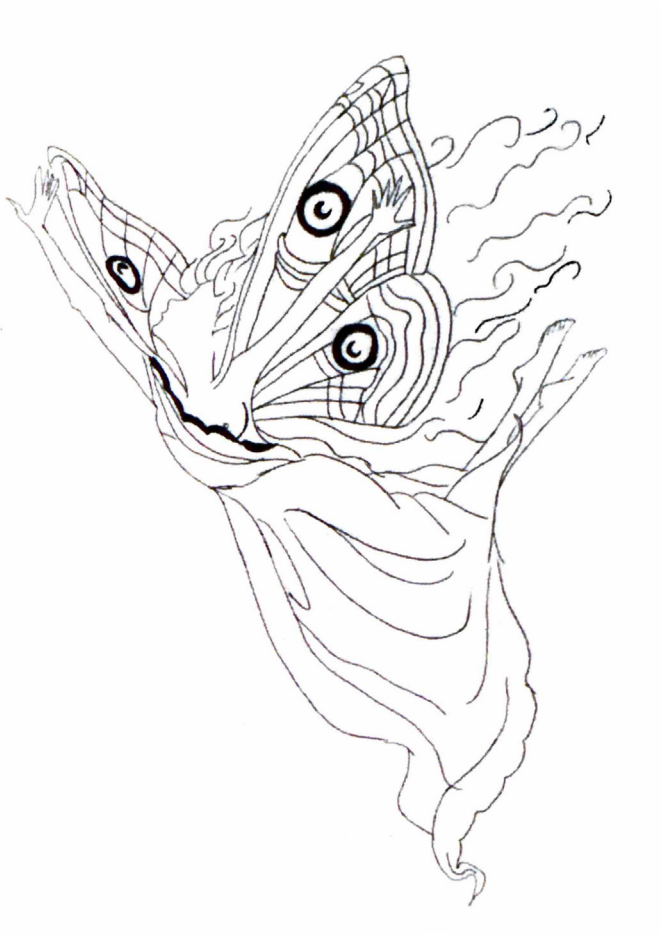
if I could paint
emotions
I would paint
the lamppost
near the street
then neighbor
        and neighbor
could see

they would imitate
my own painted mouth
painted eyes
        cringe
at the mix
        of blood, happy

why paint my face
why insert a smile
        a life

can't content mean calm
can't my lamppost read
        sleeping

and when I do sleep
let me dream of
wiping my lips clean
        and when I wake
let me see the world
dirty



Untitled #4
By Kelley Montagne

Autumn
By Amanda R. Conner

As she follows down the broken road,
twilight falls.
Reflected in her eyes, a raspy moon hangs on shattered tears.
Hand lifted to the heavens,
she prays to whichever god will listen.
A tattered spirit cries at her fingertips.
Legs, which have lost all strength,
give way to the crumpled leaves and angry wind.
Somber trees grasp for a solemn moment.
And in her final breath,
Autumn sleeps.

Biographies

Amanda R. Conner is currently attending SVSU as a pre-Occupational Therapy student. She is also a work study student for the English Department. She would like to thank Chris Giroux and Helen Raica-Klotz for their support.

Francis C. (Frank) Dane, Ph.D, holds the Finkbeiner Endowed Chair of Ethics at SVSU. He teaches Ethics and Research Methods and does empirical research on medical outcomes, organizational ethics, and academic integrity. He has published books, chapters, and articles in a variety of areas, but this is his first poetry publication.

Kristen R. Garcia will graduate from Central Michigan University this December with a Master of Arts in English Language and Literature. Her work has appeared in *Cardinal Sins*, *Cardinalis*, and *Cooweescoowee*. She also has four poems forthcoming in the *Paradidomi Review*. Kristen will be married in October and, after settling in Essexville, Michigan, plans to pursue a doctorate in order to teach university-level Creative Writing.

Gladys A. Hernandez is an Associate Professor of Spanish in the Modern Foreign Language Department. Professor Hernandez teaches elementary Spanish as well as Latin American Literature, Spanish Literature, and Spanish Civilization.

Sarah Holdwick has been attending SVSU for ages, has millions of credits, and still has yet to understand what life is all about, though she's sure she took that class at least once already.

Adrienne Dyane Lewis is an alumni of SVSU, and the recipient of the 2003 Tyner-Roethke Prize; her first collection of poetry (Coming Clean, Mayapple Press) was released in 2003. Currently, Lewis is the Executive Director of Rebuilding Together — Saginaw and a graduate student at Central Michigan Unviversity, where she is studying Creative Writing.

Tracy Ludwig is a junior here at SVSU and is majoring in graphic design with a minor in general business. She is originally from Fostoria, Michigan. She enjoys going to concerts, rollerblading, listening to music and hanging out with her twin sister and friends.

Howard James Miller III is presently a junior at SVSU. He is a history major currently residing in Bay City, Michigan. He can often be seen in his natural habitat of the south side at any of the various "establishments." Be cautious—he is fairly temperamental— offer him a gift before approaching or consulting.

Kelley Montagne is a sophomore at SVSU majoring in Creative Writing and Literature. She currently lives in Saginaw, Michigan, but plans on heading south after obtaining her degree to live in Phoenix, Arizona, to pursue her career in writing. She is heavily involved with music and is currently interning as a D.J. at the New KOOL 100.5.

Holly Morningstar was born and raised in Hart, Michigan, with her two brothers by her grandmother, Fern Huizenga. She transferred to SVSU in the fall of 2003 and is working towards her teaching degree. Holly thanks God she has artistic and poetic abilities for they allow her to recycle her emotions.

Eric Rolfe is a Teacher Certification student working towards certification as a secondary - level Math and Computer Science teacher. His hobbies include photography, square dancing, reading, creative writing, and role-playing with his friends. "The High Driver" is his first published work.

Lesley Stanley will finish her Bachelor of Arts in English, Creative Writing degree this summer. After graduation, she intends to further pursue creative writing in the professional field. Lesley enjoys many things including music, reading, dancing, and Johnny Depp.

Bryan G. Thompson was born and raised in Saginaw, Michigan. He is a writer. His favorite season is winter.

Catherine Weinstein is a junior at SVSU and is majoring in English. She has enjoyed writing creatively ever since she wrote a ghost story in early elementary school. She hopes that writing will remain a major part of her life long after she graduates.

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Lindsay S Bryce



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