



genesis

literary and art magazine
of Indiana University
School of Liberal Arts
at IUPUI

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Best of Issue: Art

Chiaroscuro by Beth Zyglowicz
Digital

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Friends of *genesis*

Dear Friends,

genesis has made some great strides in recent years. In addition to establishing a course around the writing, editing, and production of the magazine (W280 Literary Editing and Publishing), we have created a more dynamic magazine, offering dramatic color options on the covers and artistic placement of both art and writing within.

We plan to continue to take such forward-thinking steps, including a new interactive website offering an even greater variety of artistic forms. With this option we will be able to publish even more of IUPUI's talent and stretch our creative reach beyond campus. We have big dreams and hope to fulfill them in the coming years.

In W280, we have learned what we value in writing and art, as well as why we value it. We have learned the ethics and politics involved in choosing pieces for publication. We have learned how to work in committees with respect and open minds. We have ultimately learned how to showcase the writing and artwork that best exemplifies thoughtful craft.

But *genesis* would be nowhere without the hearts and imaginations of its contributors and readers, as well as the support of those who continue to care for the magazine, and IUPUI's literary and visual arts. The students who produce this work ask that you help make our dreams possible. We all thank you for being a part of the past, present, and future *genesis* family.

Gifts in support of *genesis* have allowed us to fund our "best of" prizes. Now, we are looking further to the internet, where student work can be shared more broadly. We invite you to join those listed here as Friends of *genesis* with your gift today.

Gift checks may be made payable to IU Foundation/*genesis* Fund and mailed to the IU Foundation, 950 North Meridian Street #250 Indianapolis, IN 46204. Or you may go to the IU School of Liberal Arts website, <http://www.liberalarts.iupui.edu>, and make your gift on-line via the "Give Now" button.

Sincerely yours,
The Editors of *genesis*

Our special thanks to those who have contributed financially to the magazine since 2001:

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Follow the Butterflies by Beth Zyglowicz
Digital

Peddling Memories

Terri N. Graves

Lot 10, estate auction 2005

Letters you wrote in 1943 lie with brochures
you saved from when you enlisted. Your name
is the sender, my name, the receiver. Our bodies
were worlds away, love and affection sent
in envelopes. Our life together is now contained
in boxes spread about these tables. A happy
Santa I bought in the sixties resides with ornaments
from Target in the seventies. I see your khaki green
Lieutenant hat that sat to one side of your head,
holding back the black waves.

"Do I have 50, now 55, now 60, now 65... now 65,
sold to number 145 for \$65."

People mill about, some turning up their noses
in wonder of our taste, some excited
by this or that we have left behind.
We could not afford the Guardian Ware
I begged you to buy for me. You did.
Remember Grandmother's chair, its faded
purple velvet? Oh, how you hated
that chair. I never found it ugly
but here in this place it looks old and worn,
lonely without us.

"Do I have 75, 100, now 120, now 125..."

Our bedroom set's waterfall pattern
reflects our dreams of going places together.
We saved so long for it. Now, it is here
for sale, on the verge of being collectible. I wish
it was still ours with me sitting at the dressing table.
I can see your reflection in the mirror, asleep
in our bed. I pull up my hair, a French twist.
It was our time, you home from the war.
We'd go for a stroll, loved dancing.

"Do I have 100... now 125,
now 150... sold to number 99 for \$150."

Our life together goes in pieces
to places unknown to begin anew.
Our dreams sold, dwindled down,
one by one, the material dispersement
of what was, just as our bodies
decay slowly in the ground,
dwindling, dispersing
until nothing.

Best of Issue: Non-Fiction

Chinese for the First Time

charee dunder

I have thought about making a Chinese meal for my grandparents since I returned from China. On a cold day in January I gather the ingredients for Buddha's Feast. I diagonally slice four medium-size carrots with a butcher knife. I put soy sauce and cornstarch into a small metal bowl. As I measure chili powder, Grandma enters the yellow kitchen. I tell her the store does not carry Chinese chili paste, and I will substitute chili powder. Grandma warns, "Do not use too much. A teaspoon is too much." I fill the metal teaspoon halfway and whisk the three ingredients.

•••

Dad and I approach the Terrace Restaurant. We are sweaty from Shanghai's stifling summer heat. The hostess wears a fitted red silk gown, embroidered with bright blue dragons. "Ní hǎo," she announces; we repeat her salutation. She is quite petite. Compared to her, Dad and I are giants. Her face is pure white, without wrinkles. Her black hair is pulled tightly at the nape of her neck. She smiles, a real smile with teeth, then pulls two menus from the podium. She begins to walk; Dad and I follow. In the immense dining room the sounds of Kenny G play softly. We are underdressed, but no one seems to care. She leads us to a round table with four carved, wooden chairs and then disappears. The table, covered with white linen, is set perfectly with elegant white china. I gaze at my place setting: a plate outlined with gold, two bowls, chopsticks with a rest, a small cup for tea, a spotless wine glass, and a napkin folded with care. I smile and silently stare at the menu – written in Mandarin Chinese.

•••

I cut half-inch cubes of firm tofu and drop them into the cornstarch mixture. I boil water. I notice condensation forming on the window as I fill a plastic bowl with ice water. I chop squares of bok choy, then boil them for two minutes. With a slatted spoon I transfer the now translucent bok choy to the ice water.

•••

A girl around twenty, draped in green silk, approaches the table. Her hair is jet-black and fine. She carries a teapot and fills our small cups with boiling tea. I unfold a piece of paper, that I brought from Indiana, with "Vegetarian Menu" scribbled across the top. Eighteen English translations are given for Chinese characters. I feel foolish looking at this paper. I wish I could understand Chinese.

•••

I forgot to purchase broccoli florets, so I pick a few pieces out of a California vegetable blend and carefully place them in the boiling water. Grandma appears at my side; I am a head taller than her. I wash white mushrooms and ask her how to julienne. Grandma says, "Just cut the mushrooms thinly, lengthwise." I remove the broccoli from the heat and spoon it into the ice water. I begin grating gingerroot. I cut my hand on the grater; Grandma tells me I always push too hard, let the grater do the work.

•••

The girl reappears and uses tongs to place hot towels on our plates. I wash my hands and face with the hot towel. It is



Reflections by Briana Price
2'x1' Acrylic on Paper

instantaneously removed from the table. I test my tea. The flavor reminds me of spinach, which I love. I continue to sip from my small, white cup. The girl returns before my cup is empty

and refills it. Dad points at the “Vegetarian Menu” and attempts to place our order. She nods patiently and speaks – in Chinese. I look out the window. I can see a courtyard surrounded by an iron fence. The grass is short, well-manicured. Small stepping stones adorn the garden; the Chinese are not permitted to walk on the grass. The language barrier is proving impossible. The girl leaves and returns with an older woman. Dad begins to point and motion; this woman nods, smiles, and leaves the table. Dad thinks we have ordered fried lotus root, mushrooms with fresh vegetables, soup, and fried rice. The diligent girl fills our glasses with ice-cold water. Dad says I should drink tea only, it is boiled. Because this is a nice restaurant and I am dehydrated from the heat, I drink the water. Bamboo trees grow in the corner boxes, real bamboo, being forced into circles, growing into elaborate shapes.

•••

I look out the window and slice mushrooms; the sun is out but the snow isn't melting. I turn the burner to medium heat and replace the pot with a skillet. I drain the tofu, which is now stained brown, reserving the juice. I pour the carrots and mushrooms into the iron skillet. The vegetables sizzle. The baby corn and water

chestnuts drain in a metal strainer. I spoon the fragile, marinated tofu into the orange and white mass and I stir. I shake pale yellow baby corn and creamy water chestnuts into the skillet; it is now full. I slip a chunk of slimy tofu into my mouth. I quickly chop a clove of garlic and toss it into the concoction. The vegetables are cooking too fast. I pour the reserved fluid into the colorful skillet. The liquid begins to gurgle; the house smells Chinese.

•••

In China dishes of food arrive in an order of ascending quality. The girl with flawless skin delivers egg and tomato soup along with plain white rice. She fills two bowls with soup and two with rice. She has steady, cautious hands. She does not spill and her hands do not shake. We bow our heads; Dad offers a prayer of thanks. I enjoy my soup with a porcelain dipper, trying not to spill the transparent liquid. I childishly raise chopsticks to my mouth. I think that over time I will become a natural. Dad is a pro. He quickly finishes his rice and the girl fills his bowl.

•••

The small table is covered with a Christmas motif plastic table cover. I place silverware, three soup spoons, teacups, and large porcelain plates, with deep-blue flowers, on the table. I place a white set of chopsticks with red Chinese writing next to my plate. I pour boiling water into the white teacups. I place one tea flower from Shanghai into each steaming cup. I fill Grandma's large, porcelain dish with Buddha's Feast.

•••

The fried lotus root, mushroom with vegetable, and fried rice arrive. My plate is filled with these delicacies. I continue, carefully chopsticking. I begin with fried rice. I eat one grain at a time, avoiding the scrambled egg. I feel lucky when I get a pea or carrot from the bowl to my mouth. I do not want to drop the food onto the table – or worse my lap – so I go slowly, practicing for the

I childishly raise chopsticks to my mouth. I think that over time I will become a natural. Dad is a pro.

I fill Grandma's large, porcelain dish with Buddha's feast.

brown mushrooms with an unknown glaze. I keep dropping rice and carefully sliding it off the table, into my napkin. The lotus root is brilliant green and very slippery. After several failed attempts,

I maneuver an oily section of lotus root into my mouth; it is incredibly bitter. The girl has slipped away; Dad and I are alone.

•••

The half-circle table is pushed against the wall.

Grandpa rounds the corner in his wheelchair.

Grandma comes from the sewing room in her handmade dress. Grandpa's tires roll across the linoleum with the sound of ripping Velcro. Grandpa wheels himself to the center of the table and grasps my hand with surprising strength for a seventy-six-year-old. He bows his head and begins to pray. Grandpa thanks God for our food, prays for our entire family, and for the men dying in Iraq. The three of us say "Amen," and begin to cover our plates. My tea flower is opening, green petals slowly unfold, a pink center emerges.

•••

The girl returns and places a white napkin next to my plate. She nods and smiles kindly. I unfold Western silverware. She smiles again and says something. I think she means it is okay, but I am embarrassed. I recognize the Kenny G song that is playing. I place the polished silverware next to the chopsticks. I pick up the spoon.

•••

We begin to eat colorful vegetable stir-fry. I use chopsticks. Grandpa says, "make sure you add some salt." I look at him, puzzled because the recipe called for low-sodium soy sauce and I used regular. He smiles at me but says nothing more. The vegetables are crisp but slippery. I chase water chestnuts around my plate. After a few minutes of silence, I ask if they like the vegetable stir-fry. Grandma says, "It could use more salt. It could use more

spice too." I have to admit the flavor does not match the wonderful color. I look at the two ceramic sunflowers on the wall, one girl and one boy. They say, "Trade a smile, Spread some cheer" and "Let's be happy, While we're here." Grandma loves those sunflowers. "We don't have to eat it," I say. I look at my beautiful dish of vegetables and take a small bite. Grandma adds, "Of course we'll eat it, it's healthy."

•••

Dad and I finish our meal with *xīgūa* — watermelon. Five pink wedges are placed in the center of the table. Dad spins the lazy Susan, I will go first. I choose a large slice and pink juice drips onto the white table cover. Dad selects a piece and we bite at the same time. I follow his lead and swallow the seeds, something I have never done before. I don't want to spit in the Terrace Restaurant. My palms fill with juice. Large beads of juice stick to Dad's beard. Juice drips onto the napkin in my lap. Dad and I keep eating, with our hands, in the Terrace Restaurant in Shanghai. There is one piece left; Dad says it's mine. As I savor the last piece I begin laughing and can't stop. There is something amusing about eating watermelon in Shanghai. Dad has the biggest grin I have ever seen. ■



Chinese Alleyway by Nicholas Hayden Wiesinger
11"x14" Silver Gelatin Print

I Drink Heavily,

Alberto C. Diaz Jr.

because I think with every foamy sip of ale
and every burning swig of whiskey or rum
I can wet down the world around me and see
the truest form of all things real and fabricated
I think my mind will open up to some new realization
that will flush out through my fingers onto my notepad
but alas the only flushing that happens is the yellow
and orange remnants of my insides into a gray, stained
toilet bowl.

I drink heavily,
and I pass out wondering if I'd said something poignant
or important or of any value whatsoever
and if I did, did someone record it or remember it
but then I remember that aside from drinking heavily
I also drink alone and my own notes look like lines of
EKG paper from a dying patient
I have long serious blocks of writers... *block!*
And I sometimes interrogate my pets
the only witnesses of my inebriated genius.

I drink heavily,
and I vomit and piss out all these mad fancies
like a rusted, giant pipe sitting aside a waste water treatment plant
I look at my old Yamaha and wonder what inspired beauty
manifested through its out-of-tune chords as I thrashed
my unkempt nails passed them the night before
like siren songs on a binge through Hades and a route
Odysseus himself was too afraid to wander by
a failed troubadour; a wannabe Donovan, or Dylan, or Guthrie
a dead hippie with no dignity or direction.

I drink heavily,
because Poe drank, and Wolfe, and Hemmingway
and all the other great seers of our time and times forgotten
I can't stand with these men because the best I'll ever do
is write calendar notices for some university press
about sorority parties and anti-war demonstrations
I know I'm good! My mother told me so!
I know I have something to say but I just can't remember what
Let my friends enjoy my drunk ramblings whether be telephoned
or electronic, for what have I to give them otherwise?
I drink heavily.



Not Even Everything I Found in Less than One Hour
by Anna Poppen
11"x14" C-Prints

Buddy Christ

Sean Benefiel

Today I found Jesus.
He was hiding in a box on a shelf
in the comic book shop. Looks like
we have something in common after all.
Standing, smiling, winking, grinning,
giving me a thumbs-up.
He stood out like a copy of the Koran
in a synagogue.
As if only \$12.99
could get me into heaven -
or at least get heaven into my car.
So I purchased this pint-sized Christ
and placed Him on my dashboard.
It's funny,
at only 6 ½ inches tall,
He remains larger than life.
Portable redemption,
Christ as a comical companion.
What a thought!
Now I can profess my sins as my car warms up.

Jeremy

Elisabeth Hegmann

It's true that after Jeremy died I hadn't expected to see him again, yet I wasn't altogether surprised when he showed up at the Woods' party the day after his family had buried him. He had always been so cheerfully stubborn, and it was easy to guess that he was just trying to make the best of things. I admit I looked at him with curiosity as I finished off my drink. I may have even stared. He got a beer from the kitchen, covered half the distance toward where I stood in the hall, and then stopped as if unsure whether he should approach me. I don't think it struck me until that moment that he had been interested in me in his life. He looked so lost that I waved to him in encouragement. Maybe I shouldn't have, but it seemed the natural thing to do under the circumstances. When he got closer to me I saw that little mounds of earth clung to him. It was evident he had clawed out of his coffin - his hands were a bloody mess, the once-chewed nails were missing completely.

As he greeted me, I looked around to see who had spotted him with me. It wasn't that people would be rude, on the contrary, they would smile and nod politely. It was just that an understanding existed about this sort of thing. An understanding as with old folks who smelled, or people with large warts, or women who grew beards.

At times, Jeremy could be charming and a little funny, and in the past I had often accepted his company. Maybe in my clumsy way I had given off some signal that

hinted I was more interested than I actually was. Whatever the cause, it was clear that he had come back to finish what we'd failed to ever start.

That first night at the Woods' he still looked fresh and was not much different than he had ever been. There was something a little strange about the way he moved, but that was all. We talked about nothing of striking interest - some people we had known, what they were doing now - and the dullness of these subjects made me long to be rid of him. I was worried that he would try to follow me home, but near the end of the party I was relieved when instead he lurched through the garden hedge and out into the night.

Late that night, as I sat in the safety of my house, I contemplated what to do about Jeremy. At any other time, it wouldn't have been so bad for him to be hanging around while I waited for him to rot back into the earth, but for the next few weeks I planned to be at parties every night. For many years at the start of each summer all of the couples on Longlane Road had hosted parties. Nearly everyone in the neighborhood attended and many people used the opportunity to look for a partner. It was an elaborate masquerade of aging bodies, and I had always scorned such gatherings. But a few days ago I had received a letter from an admirer who called himself The Invisible Man. He instructed me to attend the parties, and said he would manifest himself to me at one of them. I was entranced

with the thought of him, but I wondered if he could love me now, as I was accompanied everywhere by the slowly-rotting Jeremy.

I climbed into bed as the sun came up and although I held the note from *The Invisible Man* in my hand, I thought of Jeremy instead, and I felt ashamed of my suspicions. Of course he had no intentions of following me home. He had always been polite, always a gentleman. Why did I suddenly suppose that he would become a lout or a rapist or a flesh eater?

The party the next night at the Chaney's passed in much the same way as the one at the Woods'. As did the party at the Romeros' and the party at the Prices'. After I had arrived to each I would hear Jeremy at the door, his once sweet voice now becoming thick with zombie phlegm. After the host or hostess let him in, there followed a discreet exodus of all guests within several feet of the entrance hall. Often, I imagined that some voice I heard might have been *The Invisible Man* searching for me, but when I turned to look there was only Jeremy.

Night after night, I retreated to secluded alcoves to choke down hors d'oeuvres. Jeremy was always by my side, droning a gargling death groan, on and on in my ear, as I drank cocktails. I tried to sink deeper into the alcoves so no one saw me with him. Anyone with an ounce of common sense and knowledge on the subject, would have known that I could have simply blown Jeremy's head off and that would be the end of it. After the first signs of rotting had appeared, I had almost been able to consider



Warmth by Briana Price
20"x16" Oil on Canvas

finishing him off. He seemed more revolting and less human, like a creature that might be appropriate to step on and squash. But I also knew he needed time to rot, just as most people in the midst of trying circumstances needed time to heal. It was not his fault that his flesh was failing his will, nor could he be blamed for my personal prejudices toward him.

On the fifth night of his return from the dead, Jeremy arrived at the Rottbergers' and made an offhand comment about it being cold and sticky outside. I wasn't sure if he was referring to the weather or if he was making a self-deprecating joke about his own condition. The previous night he had developed a sticky covering of rancid film.

I was becoming impatient with Jeremy's nightly appearances and wanted to tell him there was no sense in it. I knew there was no future for us together. That night at the Rottbergers' the advanced state of his deterioration had become all too apparent. A fold of skin hung loose from his arm, he smelled bad, and a small section of his face was missing. I felt a wicked urge to ask what kind of worms had eaten his face, what sort of bacteria was it exactly that had advanced up his legs. But instead I breathed slowly for a few moments, reminded myself that he meant no harm and managed a smile.

I found an abandoned part of the garden where I could fantasize about *The Invisible Man*, Jeremy stalked behind me. I longed for the companionship of The

This was his love, laid out naked and rotting for me to see. I had no jacket or I would have covered him.

Invisible Man, witty exchanges of dialogue, deep sharing of intellect and spirit that would all take place once we met. Though I had known from the beginning that I only had to wait until Jeremy decayed, I hadn't understood how difficult the waiting would be. I told myself the day couldn't be too far away when the worms would overtake him completely. In the meantime, all I had to do was try to be kind just a little longer.

On the eighth night, at the Ashers' house, all the skin sloughed off Jeremy's right arm and fell to the floor. We looked at each other for a moment and then I pretended not to have noticed. Throughout the evening he had been so cheerful and upbeat, getting me drinks and making jokes, as though he thought his condition was like cancer he might beat. But after the skin had fallen off he seemed injured, taken aback. He was quiet after that. If there had been enough of him left, he would have cried.

He was like a pathetic child with no understanding of what was happening to him. At night, after each party ended, he told me he'd see me tomorrow. It was clear he would realize there soon wouldn't be a next time when his body returned to the Earth. Yet, when I thought of this I had other fears. Surely whatever was left of him at that point wouldn't continue to crawl toward me? I couldn't bear to think of separate pieces, arms or fingers chasing after me and gamely trying to carry on a conversation, determined to overcome all obstacles without a mouth or vocal apparatus whatsoever.

I tried to be more tolerant of Jeremy at the Ashers' house because of his dejected mood. I didn't want him to feel worse than he had to. I listened to his gargling speech, but secretly I dreamed of a future with The Invisible Man. The thought of meeting him made me too excited to eat and I took food off the Ashers' trays just to

be polite, then threw it away when no one was looking, except Jeremy. He seemed concerned, and patted my shoulder with a bony, sticky hand.

At the Dustkills' party Jeremy's jaw fell off mid-sentence, and thereafter he was only able to make guttural sounds. But even these sounds had a sweetness to them, a loving groan. People milled all around the Dustkills' landscaped pool as Jeremy growled and moaned to me, oblivious that half his face was missing. As the hours passed I was strangely comforted by his presence. I still desired the day he would no longer show up, but I also dreaded it. He was little more than a piece of meat now. It tortured me to think about the flesh finally failing his will altogether.

When I arrived the next night at the Rippeys' house Jeremy was not there and I thought perhaps the end had come. But as I glanced out at the candle-lit terrace, I saw his torso crawling among the sweet peas and petunias. His head was still attached, but not much else. I wondered what forces had worked on him that he had worsened so quickly. I thought for a moment that I would pretend I hadn't seen him. But at least he was real. That was more than I could say for The Invisible Man. I got a drink at the bar and went to Jeremy in the chilly night with the forbearance that always comes when we know the end is near. There would be no conversation, of course. I sat there with him as the moon rose. He seemed so bare. This was his love, laid out naked and rotting for me to see. I had no jacket or I would have covered him. ■

Request

Meghan Dowell

Call me sometime
in the early morning
while you sip espresso.

Whisper and wake me –
I need to be waken.

Fumble your words.
Be so sleepy. I like you
just out of bed.

Take me from where
I'm tucked down
and hidden.

Untangle me;
Your voice
will soften the sleep
from my eyes.

Be my caffeine.

Tempt me. Tease.

We're alone here
in the early morning.

The sun is our only witness
and she's not taking notes.

So tell me.

Tell me all of it.

Vanilla

Meghan Dowell

The word vanilla is lust.

A wet whisper, greedy
teeth tease the bottom lip,
like splitting a sticky pod
rough and quick.

But ah, this creamy sigh,
released the shhhh-ing bees
drip honey over the chin
and skim the lips
with silken feet.

Deep, deep
the dark flower, the hungry
sheath spreads her sweet secret,
seizing the mouth in lush
hot indulgence.



Transparencies by Hali Lawson
18"x24" Chalk Pastel, Ink on Paper

Titles on My Bedside Table

Sarah Nestor

Lectures on Shakespeare
And my mind goes numb
Dreaming of my *Manhattan loverboy*
Waiting for *the good life* to come

But in this *writer's market*
All I find is that *the feast of love*
Leads to *nights of rain and stars*
And brings a *manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations*

That highlight the *cracks in my foundation*
And bring me *on the road*
In anticipation of the *secrets of the code*
So that I become *lost on purpose*

And *the fuck up* it seems
I will always be
Burning down the house in an effort
To *write away* everyday lies I'm told

Because *English is a second language*
And so often the *pitcher goes to water until it breaks*
Into the *milk glass moon* of my disposition
Leaving traces of *the elements of style* I once was

Loose woman but now I'm *trading up*
So that I can learn *how to read literature like a professor*
Enjoying the *seduction of water* and *the poet's companion*
In an effort to understand the *tools of the craft*



Fish Bowl by Briana Price
10"x6" Ceramic Bowl

San Antonio, 1976

Becky Armoto

He said Mexicans like round women
So she pulled over and let him climb inside.
His skin was smooth and tan like the leather
In the green Caddy her daddy bought for her birthday.

He liked to suck jalapeños while reading books
The juice leaving a trail on his chin
Trickle down to San Antone
Flat expanse red and gold
Said the juice was cooler than the dry heat.

Every morning, she would make corn tortillas
Green husks discarded on the floor.
There's no time in Texas – only the lazy drawl of accents
He called her Maria, the sounds liquid off his tongue
Like the tequila they drank. He sucked a lime and tasted her salty skin.

The morning rose, and he took the Cadillac to see his son
Never noticing the swell in her belly the flush in her cheeks.
Six weeks passed and she found herself alone naked
Under a green paper gown the same color as the walls
Feet in stirrups like the rider he said she was.

When she left, she called her daddy who said the money
Would be waiting at the ticket counter.
She boarded the Greyhound that day.

My life bloomed.

The Dream Club

Josh Flynn

"I hope it's still open," Penelope worried as we pulled into the empty parking lot on a cold Friday night in February. The tires of the car bounced over cracked pavement. "This place used to be a cocaine den. There were busts all the time until the people I worked for took over and cleaned it up." She pointed a finger toward the windshield, directing my gaze down the dark street. "Most people went to Joker's Wild then."

The Dream Club was shaped like a square, its triangular roof was covered with black and tan shingles, the tan spelling out "Girls" in large letters. A placard propped by the entrance announced "Under New Management." The strip club sat in a stretch of derelict buildings just a few blocks beyond the center of downtown Muncie. Across the street was a plasma center. "You can go sell your plasma and then walk across the street and spend the money on booze and boobs," Penelope told me.

"God bless America," I replied. We stepped out of the car into the chilly night.

Penelope was a former dancer at the club, performing for just over a month while she worked on her social work degree at Ball State University. Her hair was black, short in the back, with two long sharp bangs hanging at the sides of her face, stabbing her pale cheeks. A horseshoe-shaped nose ring pierced through her septum. She wore a multicolored scarf wound tight around her neck and was dressed in a black jacket, blue jeans, and black boots.

Slender digits poked out from her gloves, each fabric stalk cut away to allow her fingers freedom. She had not been to the club in some time and her big brown eyes radiated excitement.

The front door opened into a small, dark lobby, its walls covered with advertisements of upcoming events, featuring seminude women in various seductive poses and one male waist with a masculine hand crawling down his unzipped jeans. An opaque door waited at the other end. On the left wall was a narrow slit, a bright eye in the dark. An acrid odor drifted out, signifying it as the entrance to the restrooms – small concrete rooms with dirty walls, stained sinks, mirrors fogged with dust, and a toilet and floor soiled from spilt urine.

As Penelope passed the restrooms, a head popped out. It belonged to an African American man. He looked very suave, his hair nicely cropped, and a goatee circling around his mouth. He wore a jacket made of fake brown leather. "Hey baby," he smiled. "What's your name?"

She told him her real name.

"You have a lovely time tonight," and his head slowly descended back into the stench.

Penelope opened the second door and walked up three steps and onto the main floor. An obese bouncer waited, dressed in red sweatpants, a white shirt, and a red baseball cap covering his greasy hair. He greeted us with a glance and then stared off into space.

“They put in carpet,” Penelope said, surprised and impressed. “When I worked here the floors were sticky concrete.” The carpet was blue and decorated with yellow dots and red, yellow, and green stripes. The place was relatively empty. A few people played pool while the greatest hits of Bruce Springsteen blasted from the DJ’s booth. A small fireplace was to our left. We were wrapped in the smell of its smoke as the flames licked at several logs. All along the wall were dirty mirrors or gold wallpaper with black velvet stripes. Yellow, green, and blue Christmas lights hung around the ceiling, casting an eerie glow. One large section was dark and empty, its bulbs having burnt out long ago. I felt like I was in a bowling alley lounge in hell.

She led me to a booth, passing a series of tables. There was a skinny counter stretching across the center of the room. In front of the counter was a small dance floor, maybe ten feet long and five feet wide. A gold pole rose near the dance floor’s entrance.

Penelope slid into the brown booth, immediately removing a cigarette from her pocket. I noticed a second room attached to the main area. Through fogged glass I could make out a bar where two old men were perched on stools. A pool table could be seen through its entrance. The arcade sounds of a pinball machine intertwined with Springsteen’s blue collar angst. The bartender walked out of the adjoining room and came toward us. She was short and heavy, dressed in a blue t-shirt and dark jeans. Tired eyes sat within her bulldog face and her dark hair was pulled back in a tight bun. “Can I get you anything?” she asked.

Penelope ordered a beer and asked, “Do you know when the dancer’s will be here?”

“Hopefully soon,” she replied. “They were all here last night. I don’t know where they are now.” She turned and walked away.

Penelope lit the cigarette and took a long drag from it, releasing the smoke from her lungs with exotic flare. “They are supposed to start at six when the place opens and dance until three when it closes,” she informed me, irritated at the lack of dedication this new crop of dancers seemed to have.

The bartender returned with a can of Bud Light. “Two-fifty,” she said. Penelope dug into her purse and pulled out a five. Moments later the bartender was back with change. Penelope took the two dollar bills and folded them. She paused and said, “I bet this money has been in some girl’s underwear,” then shrugged her shoulders and tucked the bills away in her purse.

I watched an old man haul lumber out of a side room. As the door closed behind him I saw the words “Off Limits” stenciled on it in bold black letters. “What’s back there?” I asked.

“That’s where the dancers get ready. We get dressed and do our makeup back there. Then we wait until it’s our turn to go.” Her eyes panned from the door to the stage. “We do two dances. After the dance is finished you walk around the room talking to the customers, trying to get tips. It’s really exhausting. By the time you finish working the room, it’s time to get ready for the next performance. The cycle never ends.”

“Don’t you get a break?” I asked.

“No break. I would leave so sore sometimes I could hardly walk up the stairs to my apartment.”

“Did you make good money?”

“Nope,” she sighed. “We only made money from tips. On weeknights we had to pay the DJ and bouncer five bucks each from our money, and weekends it was ten. The most I ever made was seventy dollars. Normally after I paid them I didn’t make much at all.”

She paused and said, “I bet this money has been in some girl’s underwear,” then shrugged her shoulders and tucked the bills away in her purse.

I was surprised by this. “So there might be some nights when people dance and don’t get paid for it?”

“Yep,” she replied. “Usually if you didn’t make much money those guys didn’t make you pay them.”

Penelope got her start in stripping when she came into the club with a friend. They thought it would be fun and inquired about a job. The owner asked them to dance, fully clothed, on the stage. They shuffled through the massive collection of music at the DJ booth finding something they liked, then each took a turn showing their moves. They were hired on the spot. Penelope had a fascination with the burlesque. When she finally got to perform for real, she carefully crafted her performances, putting much effort into coordinating costumes with music. Each dance was meant to be a show. “I made it very theatrical.”

Penelope called herself a feminist who was able to adapt dancing into her belief system. “I see it as empowerment,” she began, “you are made to believe expressing female sexuality is bad. There is power in expressing yourself and it helps women become comfortable with their bodies and sexuality. I enjoyed being a dancer and might still do it if I could find a better place. Besides, when you walk down the street guys imagine the same thing they do inside the club. They are going to objectify you anyway so I might as well get paid for it. And it’s safer here. If they try anything they will get kicked out. There is no safety on the street.” She stopped and became quiet, thinking. “Stripping and sex work are very feminist things. I get tired of people being



Sarah by Briana Price
2'x1.5' Japanese Calligraphy Brush
and Ink on Paper

against female sexuality and saying it’s wrong to express sexuality if men are going to look at you.” As a dancer, she never did anything which made her feel uncomfortable. Some women went the extra mile to get a tip, but Penelope never allowed herself to be put in any kind of degrading position. Like many other dancers, she decided performing for women was more favorable than for men. “Women get more attention from the dancers. We are just more comfortable talking to them. It’s safer and you don’t need to worry about being grabbed. They have more appreciation for what we are doing. It’s not necessarily sexual, just an appreciation of the beauty of the female form. With guys it’s all about sex. They just want to throw you over a table blah blah blah.” She waved her hand in the air, dismissing the thought.

A small, blond woman walked into the club and momentarily paused, chatting with the bouncer. She moved away and pushed the door marked “Off Limits” open. Penelope saw this and her eyes brightened. “A dancer!”

After a short while the small blond made her way from the back to the dance floor. She wore a tiger print top and what looked to be bicycle shorts. Bruce Springsteen mutated into harsh hardcore rap laced with sampled musical motifs from the film *Requiem for a Dream*. The dancer began a slow gyration on the stage. The top came off revealing the name “Jeff” tattooed on the downward slope of her right breast. Another tattoo crawled around the left side of her neck, but I could not make out

what it was. She turned her back on an imaginary audience and lowered her shorts. A few people had accumulated in the club. A man dressed in sweats with scraggly blond hair and a mustache played pool with a woman wearing faded jeans and a grey sweater. A group of African American men and women congregated in a corner booth. A lonely looking man in his fifties sat at a table sipping a drink from a straw. No one paid attention to the dancer.

“She’s really boring,” Penelope commented.

She began to reminisce about the dancers she worked with, calling them a family rather than fellow employees. “When I was here, there was no competition between the dancers. We shared music. Shared makeup. There were four in their twenties and one in her forties. She wasn’t attractive but a good stripper. She would dance to my songs, like Joan Jett’s Do You Wanna Touch Me. It would piss me off. But she was like a mom to us. Would give us advice and compliment us. She was sweet. There was a cute black girl who had a kid and her mom was a stripper as well. Her mom would come and watch her.”

She grew quiet again, turning her attention to the dancer who lowered herself onto the stage and thrust her pelvis upward. “I’m happy I never had to dance for money or it never got to the point where I had to do it for money. It loses its empowerment if that’s the case. I think it would be depressing being forty years old and stripping for money. I would quit if it came to that.” Penelope took a drink from her beer while the blond awkwardly twirled around the pole.

The performance ended. The dancer left the stage, dressed in only a black pair of underwear. She walked up to each person in the room, asking for a tip. She got to our table. “Would you guys like to tip me?” she asked, the words laced with a southern accent. I tried not to look at her and pulled a dollar out of my pocket.

“She sucks. Don’t tip her more than a dollar,”

Penelope had told me as the dancer came near — but I felt bad giving her only a dollar. I felt like I was walking through downtown Indianapolis being asked for money by the homeless and unemployed. It took forever for me to develop thick enough skin where I could turn them down. I felt like that here. I felt like nothing I gave her would be charitable enough. To me this felt like charity.

I handed her the dollar, looking at her face. She looked tired, appearing much older than expected. She thanked me and walked away.

No other dancers showed up. The blond did a couple of more numbers and worked the room, but apparently found the tips unsatisfactory and decided to go home. When no one appeared to take her place we followed suit.

As we approached the car several women made their way to the entrance. Penelope paused, curious as to whether they were patrons or employees, but was not interested enough to pursue the matter. We got into the car and exited the lot, making our way down the dark street.

She asked what I thought of the experience. I told her it was interesting. She continued talking about stripping, restating her opinions as if to add closure to my night. “My whole philosophy is if guys are going to look at me anyway I might as well get paid for it. I don’t mind taking advantage of how guys think. Guys take advantage all the time. In an ideal world guys wouldn’t look at me like I’m just a piece of ass. Stripping, porn, sex work all allows for control. I would feel more like a whore working in fast food. Working any job that doesn’t require a college education is like whoring yourself out. I would rather strip than work retail. At least it’s kind of fun.” She sighed wistfully. “I loved to dance. I would kind of feel sexy. It was nice. I don’t normally walk around feeling sexy.” ■

“My whole philosophy is if guys are going to look at me anyway I might as well get paid for it. I don’t mind taking advantage of how guys think.”

Best of Issue: Poetry

Lucky

Clint Smith

to be standing under August overcast -
to be staring out past row after row
of boneyard markers in that broken, country

necropolis. Listen to: the sound of my father's feet
crunching gravel as we walked through the fence -
the one that wound around the potter's field.

When I found my monument, I searched the surface
for a fragment of my reflection that made sense. I traced
every silk-string fracture in the windshield's
shattered galaxy - sole creation of my braincase.

The old man passed me a cigarette,
but let me set it on fire all on my own.
With the free hand, my fingers read
a zigzag account across my forehead; sewn
in black braille. I unstitched the thread,

and unzipped the body bag I had on layaway.
I didn't understand how so many dead leaves
could find their way into the front seat.
Before my eyes slid under the damp shade

of each lid, I looked over in time to consider
an overturned tire, filled with parasitic
rain water - a snake turning laps inside.

There is a different story in the darkness
behind burgundy curtains. Where the velvet
undertow takes me, I can see a girl - feel lips

waking me like one wakes a baby. She'll get used
to the grotesque idea of me being the one
between the two who makes the bruises.
She pictured: a clandestine place where the sun

comes crawling over her shoulder at dawn - a place
where the current flowing through her terrace window
breaths life into sheer fabric - white drapes lifting in slow
motion as they drift above her face, always

& forever. In truth, morning was no more
than a dim transition from night to

gauzy light - a murky setting on the outskirts
where phantom sheets blanket the fitful sleep
of field mice, and windmills haven't worked
for ages. Drowsy mourning doves, perched
along barbed wire were frightened into flight

by the thunder of dual exhaust under my Camaro.
With a wheel in my fist, I tore down a narrow
back road - the demonic engine of my big car screaming
a hymn while we cut a wake through tides
of fog sweeping over the cornstalk-lined countryside.

As I chased the gray wail of air raid sirens,
a black mansion tuned into view -
the dwelling silhouetted against
an empty, panoramic movie screen.
I discovered her waiting in the shadow
of her basement confessional,

where she invites me inside and whispers,
*Show me black boots laced with straightjacket twine;
skeleton keys etched with cryptic designs.*
three years later I will find a picture

of my little brother and I as children, playing
barefoot next to a '55 Chevy - the once ferocious
machine cries rusty tears as she tries to explain
(in vain) why she was abandoned. The photo shows us

in grass-stained clothes - our sunburned flesh & bloody
knees begging for the sting of tetanus. Both of us
appear too tough to smile - or maybe we just weren't ready.
I promise, I will not tear this one up.



Lost by Eric Parcell
10"x14.5" Watercolor and Ink

Phantoms

Clint Smith

~ for D.

In step with the dead hour tick-tock
of the drowsy grandfather clock,

I tiptoe through my black mansion
where shadows, too, lie sentinel.
As I drift into the bedroom, I'm not sleeping,

she whispers in silky exhalation.
Like some kind of phantom in denial,
I continue looming - sneaking.

My midnight eyes adjust to stare at
the naked half above our sheet - the baby blue dune
of her shoulder. Are you coming to bed soon?
I go on voiceless, sleek and transparent.

Alas, How Tragic

Clint Smith

After a particularly gruesome afternoon,
a Colosseum custodian takes a break from cleaning up,
resting his chin on the end of his mop.
Exhaling, he glances up to the top
tier, where his Praetorian employers loom

with leisure. This janitor wipes his
brow (smearing a gore-streaked
forehead) and pauses when he hears the distinct
timbre of Longinus' lute. Alas, how tragic life is

when set to music, he muses when a nostalgic
tug seizes his bowels. Speaking of which: he now surveys
the field of freshly spilled viscera - staring into the glazed
eyes of the nearly sated lion, still working on some ecclesiastic

leftovers (the beast reposed upon a pile
of thoracic remains in the shade). Our custodian relaxes,
squints into the sun and smiles -
taking comfort in the classic maxim
that cracking skulls will never go out of style.

Observations of a Lover

Jade Christine Roberts

We align in the most innocent of pleasures
Through to my most carnal and aggressive
Passions

Laid on our backs we are truly children
Regressed into throes and hungers
Grunting over each other
As our hard earned language fails us

And you are truly a master of this sport
"The hand is quicker than the eye"
Yours is quicker than my breath
Stolen

American Gothic, Revisited

Laura Polley

Of course my pride includes you.
Like the window, like the kitchen,
It contains you very well.

Your parlor pallor suits you,
Like the house I've carved your niche in.
Of course my pride includes you,

Wife, not woman. You're not used to
Debts or summer. Take that stitch in -
It contains you very well.

Don't think my plan eschews; you
Feed my fork, I'll do the pitching.
Of course my pride includes you.

I claim my rights. I choose you
To enable me. My mission,
It contains you very well.

While I keep you, it behooves you
To keep me proud and wear your curtain.
Of course my pride includes you -
It contains you very well.

Valley of the Shadow (Abridged)

Laura Polley

Darkness reigns inside the church. Tortured candle flames, the only light, strain against the shadows and the sinister recessed walls. Everything here flickers, and goes straight past your conscious mind to the subliminal places in your soul.

How many crosses march around this hollow vault? Dozens and dozens, holding onto their mangled, rigorous bodies, flashing suffering off one wall and onto another. Statues lurk in niches all around. Rows and rows of bench-like seats stand ready to collect the faithful for a Sunday sacrifice. They come willingly, dressed in their brightest clothes, to reenact the gruesome death of their icon, and to revel in their own illusory safety.

They will eat pieces of a human body and drink human blood. They will pass the feast around to their children, who will do the same. They will all take their place in a single file line, moving one step at a time toward the eight-foot cross at the altar. Under the shrewd and watchful eyes of their priest, they will pick up the hammer and nails he offers them. Then one by one, from the frailest old woman to the smallest child, they will hammer that nail into the cross, until by service's end the nails become a picture of vicarious pain.

This is not a fringe-based maniacal cult. It is the Catholic church, and it used to control me.

I grew up in the shadow of this dark otherworld, where ritual and superstition were ordinary like wallpaper, and just as casually examined. It meant nothing strange to spend six days a week – sometimes seven – looking around in cowardly reverence from my spot in the church pew. Statues of martyred saints gazed through me with their fixed stone expressions and their gaudy red painted wounds. The priests wore black from

neck to foot, and as they haunted the aisles the little white squares of their collars seemed to bob in mid-air. In bowing my head day after day, I memorized the pattern of the church carpet – ancient crosses of burgundy and blue, intertwining with each other and ducking under the kneelers.

This spectacle that I remember now as a tapestry of bleakness used to pass for security and peace. I believed that Jesus was in the little wafer I ate, that he was the wafer, and I didn't give a thought to the cannibal horror of that belief. I wore his bloody corpse around my neck with pride. I trusted the priests as God's messengers on Earth, and the nuns as God's celibate brides. I loved Jesus as friend and companion, a reliable comfort in an indifferent world. I called on him often when I felt alone and adrift. Though his presence in my heart seemed to help, I wonder now if my habit of seeking inward solace didn't actually cause that isolation to begin with.

Like most Catholics, I learned to love Mary. She was the Queen of Heaven, the Redeemer of all, and stainlessly pure like unfallen snow. I was meant to idealize her virtue and follow her immaculate example. For Catholics the entire month of May belonged to Mary. I don't remember her exact feast day, but I remember our school's annual coronation ceremony. With the teacher in the lead, my classmates and I formed dutiful rows in the schoolyard. We walked in silence from one stone Mary to another, all around the yard, praying bits of the rosary at every stop as a kind of devotional tribute. When we reached the last statue, a pre-selected girl bestowed its head with the crown of flowers we had made. Filing back to class, we considered ourselves especially sacred. I never got the special honor of being the "May crowner," but I didn't mind since I'd been taught not to covet prestige.

Believing was very good for me when I was a small child. In those early years of life, I relished all the rituals. I went with my parents to the church after midnight, and helped recite special prayers in the presence of the sacred host. This was called Adoration, and it showed serious devotion, as not every Catholic could volunteer their overnight hours. My father was in charge of coordinating Adoration groups, so all of his church friends knew me well, and commented on what a good girl I was. I loved that attention, back when “being good” was a desirable, enviable thing.

My father was also in charge of the readers, the lay people who read Bible passages at the podium during Mass. I wanted so much to win his approval that I signed up to read. I smothered my phobias and suppressed my shyness, long enough to walk bravely up to the altar, open the huge book, and sing out my small voice. I don't think I ever had the courage to do it again. That first tremulous reading shrank me too much. I heard my voice shake. I felt the weight of hundreds of eyes watching me falter. I felt very small and incapable of power, even over myself. I felt I was a meaningless person in the company of greater souls, and that lesson stuck with me. It lurks with me still.

Other lessons abounded, and some I could not avoid. My elementary school was attached to the church both literally and metaphorically. For eight long years we went to Mass every day. I wore my plaid uniform – green, yellow, and red – and I looked like the rest of the Catholic schoolchildren. I never noticed, then, how uniformity within a group can isolate from the whole. Our dress and manner were commonplace to us as we clustered together in the Catholic world, but to outsiders we must have looked alien and slightly “off.” What did they think – the cashier at the grocery, the kids at the picnic in jeans and baseball jerseys – of the strange little girl in the strange plastic skirt?

The school gave us envelopes, neat miniature things, with preprinted dollar signs for writing in our tithe. We all gave ten percent of our allowance to the Sunday basket that never seemed to stop lap-hopping all Mass long. I used to help my dad “count” every week; this was what they called initial accounting, where a few good men gathered in a locked church room and assessed the “take” for the Masses that day. I loved being part of this, and seeing all those dollars. Stacks and

stacks of hard-earned money, all earmarked for God, I thought. Of course when I look back I can see that the money went for church purposes – God has no direct use for human currencies.

It wasn't just my father who was a church devotee. My mother was a veritable fixture in the vestibule walls. She taught me my place in the hierarchy of God: “God first, then others, then yourself last.” She put Advent wreaths and Lenten candles on our dinner table during their seasons. She cooked fish every Friday of Lent, except when she forgot and remembered the fast halfway through our pot roast. I was always glad when she forgot and if I remembered in time I didn't clue her in. I let her serve meat because I wanted to eat it. This kind of subversive, sinful action had to be confessed, and the church kept a priest on call for this purpose.

The confessional exerted a power over me, for I believed with quivering conviction that I could and would be sent straight to hell for any of a number of transgressions. The Catholic church creates hierarchies for everything. A line of importance stretches from the Pope all the way down to lay deacons, and Catholic doctrine even insists on a hierarchy of sins. Some sins “counted” more than others. Venial sins included such things as white lies, talking back to your parents, and stealing small amounts. These sins would get you some Purgatory time, but they wouldn't keep you out of heaven. Mortal sins, on the other hand, carried a death penalty greater than any crime. If you died with an unconfessed mortal sin on your soul, you were unequivocally destined for hell with no hope of redemption of any kind. Knowingly eating meat on a Friday in Lent was one of these mortal sins, or so my parents taught me, so naturally I made haste to tell all to the priest as soon as I could get my mom to take me in for confession.

It was Mom who insisted that we devote our house to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She still has the framed picture that she bought for the occasion, of a long-haired desert man with an oversized exposed heart. The heart is so large that it appears to be pulsing, in throbbing red garishness, complete with its own crown of thorns. The day that we dedicated our home to this relic, the priest arrived in robes and blessed every

If you died with an unconfessed mortal sin on your soul, you were unequivocally destined for hell with no hope of redemption of any kind.

room. My mother made punch and laid cookies out on the table, because, after all, Christ himself was now a resident in our home.

By the time I was eight, the first seeds of doubt grew. This was only a couple of years after I learned the truth about Santa Claus, and I cannot say for sure that one revelation didn't lead to the other. I remember tiring of the daily Mass routine at school, long before I knew what any of the prayers meant. Sit, stand, kneel, sit, stand, shake hands, kneel. Get communion at the altar and kneel some more, then go with God out into the world. After three years of this, I became jaded and resentful. One day in particular, I was feeling rebellious, and slipped quietly out of line away from my classmates, just as our double file procession entered the church building. My teacher didn't notice, though my heart pounded with horror at my own daring. I ducked behind a trash barrel, and squatted there for half an hour, waddling to one side when someone approached, then waddling back the other way as the person walked past. I don't know what I would have done if anyone had caught me there, the "good girl" in plaid green, wearing vigilance like a wounded animal.

When the class came back after the service ended, I let them go by and then ducked back into line. No one ever noticed that I had been missing. I got away with subterfuge, and lived to remember. This was my first independent decision.

Despite my tiny act of revolution, I still kept trying to toe the line all the way through grade school. I adhered to the strict piety my parents enforced, avoiding all profanity and seeing only Church-approved films. I gave up my bedroom to pregnant teenagers Mom took in. With growing dismay I began to sense resignation in my actions, a grudging weight of effort that had not been there before.



Obsession 2 by Carrie Rebecca Armellino
12"x16"x16" Red Wax, Wicks, Melonberry Scent,
Duration: Two Hours

without a second thought. My mom couldn't do that without prior approval from her parish pastor - she knew that all forms of birth control were expressly forbidden to Catholics. I was fifteen at that time, and thought it bizarre that a priest held the final authority in this situation. My mother's health depended on a man with no children who had never been pregnant and didn't understand the emotional trauma of the loss of fertility. Luckily, she got her permission and proceeded to have her tubes tied - the manner of sterilization deemed least likely to offend God. "My spiritual advisor said this was the best way," she said, and that was the end of the story as far as she was concerned.

I wish I could say there was a watershed moment, a turning point that broke me from Catholic ties. I can only point to concepts I was expected to believe, ideologies of faith that just didn't seem right despite my fervent attempts to settle them in my mind. For example, I never felt confident in the

My mother insisted on following the letter of the Catholic law. To her credit, she did so only from the purest of intentions. She truly believed that only Catholics owned the truth. While many Catholics rejected doctrines they didn't agree with, such as the birth control ban or the male-only priesthood, my mother thought a true Catholic adhered to every principle. She remained true to this conviction and lived it even when theology should have been the least of her concerns. At forty years old, after five pregnancies, three C-sections, two lower back operations, and a gallbladder surgery, in addition to scarred reproductive tissue caused by a stillborn child, my mother's doctors advised sterilization to avoid the deadly risks of another pregnancy.

Most people - including most Catholics - would follow the doctor's orders

transubstantiation thing. The idea that we all *literally* ate and drank Jesus – you can't call it anything other than cannibalism. Yet Catholics believed that grace came from this act, and that consuming Jesus regularly was essential to the soul's survival. Believing that they murdered Jesus and his blood was on their hands, Catholics redeemed themselves by eating his body – what would Jeffrey Dahmer think about that?

This sinister parallel seemed obvious to me, and I could not shake it without denying my intellect. Would God grant me intellect and expect me to smother it? I could not believe so. By the time I entered high school I made my doubts clear to both of my parents. I asked them questions, attempting to find the right signposts to guide me. I didn't want to reject my religion or its culture of ritual. Catholic life was all I had known since I was born. I cast about for help like a fish in a net: "Why would it be so terrible to have women priests? Why can't priests be married and have families? How come the nuns take a vow of poverty but the priests are given everything—clothes, cars, a home and a housekeeper? Why is Purgatory not in the Bible? Why is it a sin to attend a different Christian church?" My mother would tell me that "grace" was the answer to all of my questions. All I had to do was pray and believe. I didn't have to understand in order to live right. I only had to follow what the priests said.

I don't think I'm an arrogant person. On the contrary, decades of "putting myself last" strained that out of me. I tend towards deference, empathy, and a low profile. But I couldn't suspend the brain that God gave me to the point that my mother could. I began to feel dishonest when I said "Amen – I believe." By the age of thirteen I wanted to stop going to church. My parents wouldn't hear of this "as long as I was under their roof," but they did allow me my silence in church. I stopped speaking the prayers that I didn't fully mean. I stopped going to communion. I stopped kneeling on demand. Throughout my high school years I sat straight up in the pew, respectfully observing, and refusing all the rituals.

My mom often prayed for me, concerned for my spiritual health. I wasn't worried. "Mom," I said, "Look at it this way. If I take communion and say 'I believe' when I don't really believe, I'm lying. Lying is a sin. Lying to God is even worse. I know I will be okay because faith is a gift from God, and he hasn't given it to me yet. This way if I die I can look

God in the eye and say I was honest." My mother never denied that I had a point, and even though she prays for me to this day I know she respects my mind.

Once I gave honesty my highest priority, I found it much easier to chip away at my Catholic assumptions. I continued to question, analyze and evaluate, throughout college and to my present age. Since the day I chose honesty, I have let my conscience be my guide. I simply can't be Catholic and remain true to myself, even though my mother and a billion others can.

I'm comfortable with my life now, but the habits are persistent. It takes effort to control the old compulsions: not to pray to Saint Anthony when something is lost, and to use my brain (instead of a priest) when decisions must be made. I still feel a kinship with those faithful believers, walking through the mall with ashes on their heads. I still cry when I hear "Silent Night" or any Mass sung in Latin. I still love candles, incense and darkness. The familiar lure of dependence calls to me sometimes, but my road has come full circle, back to my beginning. It's time to rediscover who I was meant to be. ■

Decades of "putting myself last" strained that out of me. I tend towards deference, empathy, and a low profile.



Why I Feel Trapped in a Crowd 2 by Nicholas Hayden Wiesinger
16"x20" Silver Gelatin Print

33

Louis Miller

*Je ne puis pas échapper à cette
 hantise et à cette vision
 de Montparnasse...*

I wanted to say something,
 something stupid...

I felt it building,

"In Morocco

the prostitutes rim their
 eyes with kohl

blessed in the mosque

- it prevents infections."

I read it somewhere, but -
 but it slipped softly from my
 lips on gin...

I laugh

through the smoke

and the haze,

and our sociality

and I feel like sinking.

These are

the autumn

liquid-lined streets

of our deluded

Paris: I swear.

It's in the mind.

It is art from the glass
 and the metabolized reverie of
 an adjacent ingestion
 that eludes me from
 my company; my
 cigarette gestures -
 and they cannot
 hear...

Softly from shallow lips, my

glass now quite

empty,

Et les temps que nous avons gâché -

Je suis un criminel des autres cœurs.

I want to think that this is

just a dream,

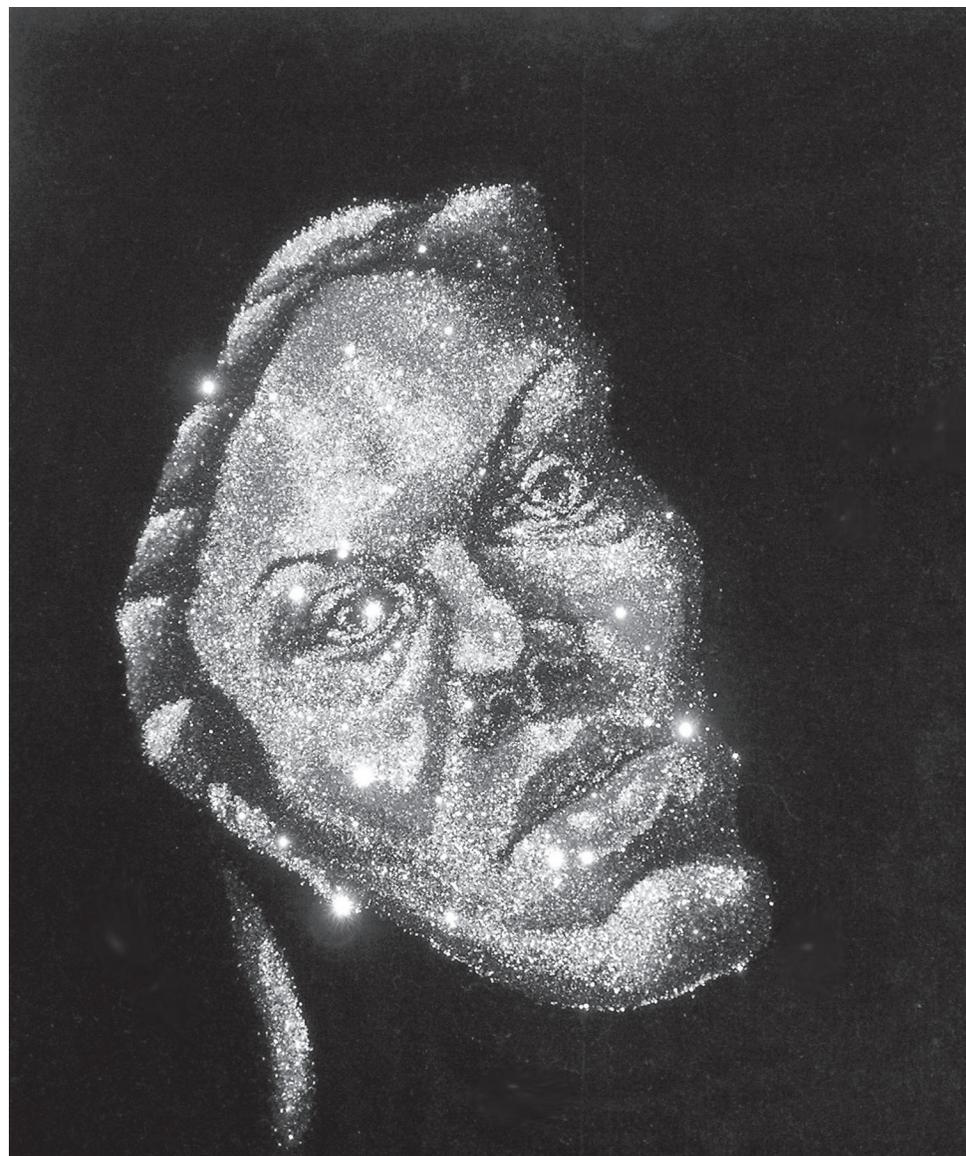
but even so, it

belongs to another.

Gaeta Balcony Thoughts

Matt Davis

Il Campanile del Duomo
I watch the girls walking
arm in arm
falling in and out of step
with each other
accentuated against a
backdrop of blue ocean
that seems peaceful
but cannot find peace
Big Caped Curtain
anxious for a dress rehearsal
a three-year-old squirming,
begging
for a bathroom break
and I sit on the steps and watch
the pigeons fly
in and out
of the naked,
sun-bleached windows
reminding me of
the old men of this alley
who strut about
with arms
folded behind their backs
pinned back
tragic
beaten wings
ever watchful eyes
these guardians
these sentries
these soldiers of Via Della Indipendenza.



Vanity 2 by Carrie Rebecca Armellino
24"x24" Glitter, Glue, Velvet, Masonite

On Quitting... Finally

Matt Davis

It has been nearly two days since my last cigarette. Go ahead and laugh, it's a pathetic situation. I've blackened my lungs for five years now and, to tell you the truth, I have a hard time believing that I'll stick to quitting this time. Not a minute goes by without a tugging urge to jump in the car and buy a pack of Marlboro Ultra Lights, with which I have an intense love/hate relationship.

It took me a very long time just to downgrade to Ultra Lights. I started smoking in Italy where, if you've ever been, the ever-mounting number of cancer deaths is treated like a fairy tale. You can still smoke in the movie theatres there, if that gives you any sense of the environment. American brand cigarettes are pricey, however, so I started smoking a brand called Diana Rossa, which I imagine is the Italian equivalent of Marlboro Reds. Cowboy killers, I believe, is how they are sometimes referred.

There are many people out there that believe that advertising has the greatest effect on beginning smokers. Not so with me. Camel Joe and the Marlboro Man had nothing to do with it. I started smoking at the age of twenty for a much dumber reason than some commercial trance relayed by a camel with sunglasses. I started smoking because a friend of mine bet me that I would not be able to quit.

I did quit, though. I quit for a period of roughly three months. I had been smoking for probably half a year

when Greg accused me of building up a sufficient addiction for us to go through with our bet. I am a Catholic and it was Fat Tuesday. Ash Wednesday would be here at the stroke of midnight. I declared to my friend, and to myself, that I could quit for Lent. After shaking hands, I quickly finished the pack I had been working on since roughly 6:30 pm, and rushed out to buy another pack to tide me over for the hours before midnight. I should have just gone to sleep.

Forty days and forty nights passed. I only slipped up one time, while I was back in America, on leave. Some friends and family had gathered, alcohol consumed, and I took a drag off of Mollie Beidleman's menthol. It was a caustic swirling bliss that spiraled down my throat and I thanked her with a big hug. The next morning I was ashamed of myself and promised that I would make it the rest of the way to Easter. When Easter arrived, I could only think of lighting back up. I felt that quitting had been rather easy to do and that I had the ability to award myself for a job well done without much anxiety about falling back into the gnarled clutches of the tobacco culture. So, I lit up.

I got married last Saturday. I promised Suzanne that I would quit when we were married. She frowned dubiously and looked away. She did not believe me. At the wedding I wore a nicotine patch until the reception. After a few beers and a shot of Jameson at the party, I tore the

patch off the calf of my left leg and bummed a Camel Light from my brother.

Sunday was spent in reflection. I realized that this would be a now or never kind of situation. I told Suzanne that my quitting would begin Monday at daybreak. I smoked all but four cigarettes from my pack of Ultra Lights.

Monday: Day 1

Today was fraught with the ubiquity of temptation. I cannot stop thinking about smoking. Just one, I say, just one. Every minute that passes, my palms are sweaty, my head is sweaty, I feel hot and itchy. I fell upon a crutch of four strategically timed cigarettes. I smoked the first after Suzanne went to work. Loneliness leaves me with the giant of my addiction. He strangles me. I do what he says. The second and third were smoked after meals, which is a digestive tradition for me. The fourth, before I went to bed.

Tuesday: Day 2

Down to the final nicotine patch. Do I buy more or do I try and tough it out? Italian class was today. It is an hour and forty-five minutes long. We usually break halfway for cigarettes (to add authenticity to the class). I alert my classmates to the fact that I have quit smoking. I show them my patch. Julie, a nurse practitioner, warns me against smoking while using the patch. "You'll have a heart attack," she says. In an effort to prove my fortitude to myself, I peel the patch away later that night. I make it about an hour before I have to duct tape it back on.

Wednesday: Day 3

No patches left. Initial panic reading at about 8 of 10. I have my first withdrawal-inspired altercation with Suzanne while we were out returning duplicate wedding gifts. I am very disagreeable and we almost split up in L.S. Ayres over Waterford crystal wine glasses. She wants them. I want a cigarette. I call her materialistic. She starts to cry. When we get home I smoke half of a cigar that I deviously hid in the garage at the start of the week.

Thursday: Today

Suzanne destroyed aforementioned half of cigar. She tortures me by informing that a pack of Camel Lights was left on the end table by my brother, visiting the evening before. She has hidden them. I search high and low for the cigarettes. I search for my lighter. I search for both. I know they're here somewhere, but where? Maybe her dresser? Maybe my dresser? No, that's too obvious. I open a Tampax box in the bathroom, convinced of her cleverness. Not there. My hands are shaking and my knees are weak. I search the yard for butts but find none of sufficient size for a hit. Sweat envelopes my hands and forehead. Suzanne's wedding bouquet is hanging in a vase on the dining room table. Bells of Ireland smell sweet. They, ironically, remind me of a flowered bush that I would pass on my walk to work when I lived in Italy.

I smile, defeated, for now. ■

Loneliness leaves me with the giant of my addiction.

The Skins We Shed

Karen D. Mitchell

We think we are safe. Most of us don't have a radio or telephone. The sky is an unbroken sheet of blue glass. We don't notice that most of the animals have run, flown and slithered into the hills. My parrot squawks and beats her wings against the bamboo cage. I let her out. She nibbles my ear, flies off.

circle of sand floats
blue water caresses toes
monster moves beneath

The sun burns hot today. I hang dresses on the clothesline and smile at my neighbor's twin boys. They run around in circles, giggling as they bump into each other and fall down. It is too late for me to have children of my own.

sweat trickles down chins
necks dry beneath white linen
kisses never fade

By the time we see the wave, there is no time to run. It hits our island with a force that only the gods can muster. Within seconds, the house fills with seawater, mud, rocks and logs. I wrap my arms around a log and hold on as the water sweeps me away. My dresses are gone. People are screaming. I am afraid.

water begins life
waves carry twigs through the tides
embers drown in blue

The log carries me to my neighbor. She's badly hurt and trying to hold on to her boys. I look into her eyes. They stare back from a faraway place. "Take them," she says in a calm voice. "Keep them safe." I grab the boys from her arms and place them on my back. Their cries drown out every other scream.

glass on a nightstand
tears pour into the darkness
seas cannot hold them

A snake the size of a telephone pole swims past me. It seems to be moving toward higher ground. I hesitate. A snake is the reason I am a widow. But I carry the future on my back. I also remember my husband's words: *You are my life*. Then I follow the snake.

hair twists into braids
black snakes weave memory
love tightens the knots

Where the Blood Grows

Karen D. Mitchell

It all started when I growled at my doctor. I can't remember why I did it. It made me feel... powerful, I suppose. When you're four years old you don't have much control over your life, except for the world within - that glorious country where Wild Things watch over you and Willy Wonka's door is always open. Parents can tell you what to wear and how to act, but they can't slip inside your brain, unless you invite them, which happens more often than we care to admit.

I know why they sent me to the hospital. My mother and doctor thought I was a werewolf. The signs were all there. A mysterious round scar had appeared on my arm - I think they called it ringworm - and I was prone to howling and gnawing on pencils. Typical werewolf stuff.

The full moon was still out when my mother and I climbed into the car. I remember feeling cold and scared, and I wore my fuzzy brown coat - werewolf fur. But why was I frightened? Weren't werewolves supposed to be loathsome creatures that feared nothing but the new moon, a time when their thirst for blood could not be satisfied? I pondered these questions as we drove past an endless triangle fence and finally walked through the large automatic doors.

First they forced me to drink some kind of orange liquid. I assumed it was anti-werewolf potion meant to prevent me from transforming and killing everything in sight. But the potion made me feel sick to my stomach, so I knew it had to be poison. I was a werewolf, and they wanted to kill me slowly with this concoction they told me was "a treat for good little girls." I didn't want to die yet, so I fought them. They held my arms and legs and forced it down my throat.

Every half hour they stole my blood, without permission. They didn't even say please. I felt faint, dizzy and violated. My desire to growl or howl or chew on pencils floated away with every red needle they pulled out of my arms. There was talk of "low blood sugar" and "hypoglycemia." Must have been doctor speak for werewolf infection.

My anxiety grew fangs and sunk itself into my mind. What would I do once they had taken all of my blood? Would they slip me between sheets of glass and watch me squirm beneath a microscope lens? Did they think they could reveal the secrets of the werewolf? Heck, I didn't know the secrets myself. I couldn't understand why they had to torture me for something I didn't understand myself.

I concluded that I wasn't a werewolf after all. I simply had bad blood. My dad liked to watch war movies, so I think I heard the term on one of those shows. So, it was worse than I thought. Werewolves only go away when the full moon rises. When you have bad blood, you have to go away forever.

I held out my arm and watched in horror as they tied a giant rubber band around me. I screamed inside my head. The Wild Things gathered around and held me in their paws. Mr. Wonka offered me a chocolate bar. I bit my lip until I tasted blood, determined to keep the last drop of me inside where they could never find it. Maybe then I could live to growl for one more day. ■

First they forced me to drink some kind of orange liquid. I assumed it was anti-werewolf potion meant to prevent me from transforming and killing everything in sight.



Self-Portrait by Briana Price
9"x7.5" Silk Screen Print

Water Lilies

Steve Ewing

In a world full of
pineapples

picked by the copper-haired
mistress of my youth

the vision of pointy-headed fence
posts and two-point-two
children fades in the abscess
of overwhelming trepidation

Shielding my head like
granite from the
tombs of scorned angels
I cry out for touched

longing, and feel the curve of
Mary's cheek pressed against
My virgin shallow palm
remembering (sour) brunches

when no words
were exchanged over
toast and poured
orange juice

She slips down the aisle
in sullen garb, petals
forming a bridge
before her feet

this can't be the moment her
new lover's waited for
all my life of painting
blue carriages

Although her veil does
bring (sweet) rain with
its Undoing -
"I do hope she's happier now"

Tell me, my Jesuit queen
where were you the day I
broke dawn and saw a river
in pieces?

First Date

Steve Ewing

My own tongue bathed
in Saharan sands flickers
about my mouth

turning teeth to
pyres, making ash of

words, my mind
a glutton for the heaving smoke

as Sarah remains
poised with pitcher ready

to empty cool
affection over fires, but

her mirage of
elegance departs and dismay
bids a fond hello

as she silently pours herself a drink



In the Window by Briana Price
2'x1' Watercolor on Paper

Best of Issue: Fiction

Walden Penitentiary

Frederick H. Shull Jr.

Dear Judge Mitchell:

I write you to ask for mercy.

When I was an adolescent I was guilty of a serious legal transgression and served six years in prison as a result. Fortunately for me, I was given a choice between serving my time at a conventional institution or going to the Walden Penitentiary for Men. I chose Walden. Before being accepted into the program, however, I spent six months in a conventional jail. I have no doubt that, had I been forced to serve my entire term in the general population of San Quinton, I would be dead now.

My participation in Walden meant that I was sent away from the prison society of San Quinton to the isolation of an almost entirely automated jail. Rather than spend my days in close quarters with a roommate, I had a single room. Rather than socialize with other prisoners, I spent my time undergoing therapy and educational enrichment.

The first few months were the most difficult of my life. My cell was padded and soundproofed, with only a window overlooking a field and farmland to the horizon. Meals were delivered three times a day through a food slot in the door. I had no contact with the guards or any other prisoners.

The cell was all white - white metal frame bed, white metal desk, white porcelain toilet, white foam walls, even the homework booklets had white covers. Personal items were forbidden. The television and video player

were disabled. My only options were to stare out the window or complete my therapy booklet.

My first assignments were to read the autobiographies of other prisoners. This was difficult for me at first because I was a poor student in school. Those first assignments took weeks to complete and my submissions were riddled with spelling and grammar errors. However, after determining my skill level, included in my therapy assignments were DVD English correspondence courses. I found out the TV and video player functioned, but only when I wanted to complete the educational coursework.

I spent the next year reading and learning. I had to write a complete autobiography of my life as well as detailed plans for my future. My family could visit once a week - but other than the few hours I was permitted to spend with them I had no contact with any other human being.

A person can adjust to virtually anything but the isolation almost drove me mad. My meals would appear in the food slot and my assignments would disappear through the mailbox. I considered breaking the television by slamming my fist through the screen, or stabbing myself with my pen to force someone to pay attention to me or kick me out of the program. I was that hungry for human contact.

However, I didn't get kicked out. I kept at the readings and made constant revisions to my autobiography and future goals. My group leader, a man I'd never met, critiqued my writing, asking for more detail or suggesting

new topics I should explore.

Socrates said the unexamined life is not worth living. Let me tell you, Judge Mitchell, Socrates has nothing on me. All I did for an entire year was analyze my life and develop a plan for my future. Then, one day, rather than the usual reading requirements and revisions, I received a note in my mailbox informing me that I would have my first group therapy session the next day. That night I couldn't sleep. For an entire year I'd neither seen nor spoken to a guard or fellow prisoner.

There were two other Chicanos, two blacks, a white and the moderator, also, white. We did not wear prison jumpsuits. We'd each been given a suit and tie. Looking at our discussion table, if you didn't know why we were there, you'd have mistaken us for a group of lawyers or bankers. In fact, when I got out, I wore that suit to my first job interview, and still have it tucked away in my closet.

The first therapy session must have taken ten hours. We had to go around the circle sharing our life stories and future dreams with everyone else in the room. Most of the convicts referred to their autobiographies only intermittently while recapping their lives in excruciatingly fine detail. When my turn came, I read the story I'd worked on verbatim - why not? I'd spent a year on it.

Over time, our group studied together, each of us earning a GED and college diploma. We had been matched according to our future goals and aptitudes to maximize our cooperative education. Rather than focus on gang rivalries or criminal entanglements we were united in bettering each other.

When I graduated from Walden Penitentiary, I'd earned my GED and two college degrees, one in psychology and the other in mathematics. I spent the summer with my family and friends before leaving to get my Ph.D. in psychology. I found that, having been removed from the circumstances of my youth for six years, I had little in common with my childhood friends. We no longer shared any interests with each other.

I was relieved to take up my studies again.

I focused on rehabilitation of the criminal mind and eventually, I took a teaching position. I've spent almost nine years educating and lecturing, including my life story in the class discussions. I married and had two children. I felt like the unhappy events of my youth were behind me forever until I met Tonia Smith during my lecture last week.

After the lecture she approached me, asking if I remembered her. I hadn't the slightest idea who she could be.

"You raped me," she said, "Fifteen years ago, when I was fourteen years old, you broke in my house and raped me. You held a knife to my throat and said that if I screamed you would kill me and then my parents. Then you took off my pajama bottoms and... you don't even remember?"

Some of the convicts, while they were in jail, met their victims. Such interaction helps prisoners come to terms with what they have done. I never had the opportunity to meet my victim. I was happy for the opportunity to close this wound entirely. We went to my office to talk. If only I had exercised some caution. But it was the furthest thing from my mind.

She sat in front of my desk, clutching her purse, looking at me with a mix of anger and fear. Even after all I had been through she looked at me like a criminal.

"Looks like you've done well for yourself," she said, while surveying the office and diplomas.

I felt self conscious, "How have you been?" I asked.

"I'm a cashier at Wal-Mart," she held her chin up, "I've got two boys in grade school and I'm taking night classes to be a dental hygienist."

"That's wonderful. I have two girls about the same age," I said.

"And how would you feel if someone broke into your house at night and raped one of them?" she asked.

I felt like the unhappy events of my youth were behind me forever until I met Tonia Smith during my lecture last week.

She was visibly surprised by the venom in her voice. I told her not to worry about it. The question was blunt, but one I was prepared for. It wasn't the first time I'd had to dispel the stigma of having been a convict.

I said, as I had told colleagues and students before, "If someone I loved was raped I would want that person to be punished. But, I would also want to be a responsible citizen and let society do what was just - which in every case means rehabilitating the criminal."

"You'd want to send the guy that raped your daughter to college?" she asked incredulously.

"No, personally I'd want to beat him to death, but that's why we have a justice system." I said.

"You'd want to beat him to death?" she said, "But sending him to college and giving him a job and a house is justice?" I started to respond but she cut me off. "It should be me behind that desk, not you!" She glared at me, as if being indignant made her right. She clutched her purse and kneaded it while she spoke. "I'll never forget what you did to me. All I got was a second rate psychologist who said I was cured when the insurance money ran out. Nobody ever offered me a free education. Do you even remember what you did?" If she'd allowed me to answer, I'd have to admit, the event has become more of an abstraction to me as the years had passed. Her wounds, obviously, were only beginning to heal.

She continued, "I remember it. I'll never be able to forget. I'll have to remember for the rest my life. When I was a teenager I couldn't let a boyfriend touch me without thinking about you for a split second. Even now, when my husband and I make love..." She bit her lip and looked at the floor. Tears were falling down her cheeks.

I took a tissue from my desk and reached across to hand it to her, but she was lost in her thoughts. I reached further and wiped the tears away for her. She looked up, her face contorted in anger and terror. Before I knew what had happened she removed a small can of mace from her purse and sprayed me in the eyes.

I recoiled, rubbing my eyes with my hands and collapsing into my chair. I was only a few feet from her and my eyes were wide open when she shot me with the mace. I only succeeded in rubbing more of the substance into my eyes. The pain was excruciating. I was blinded and sure I would be for the rest of my life. I felt like my eyes were being burned out of their sockets. I doubled over - my face over my knees - and yelled for help. The next thing I remember, I was in a hospital bed. My wife was holding my hand, reassuring me, telling me everything would be alright.

Evidently, while I was crouching, Tonia took a teaching trophy from my desk and hit me with it. She gave me a concussion, fractured my skull in two places, and broke my cheekbone. If her last shot, the one that ruined the side of my face, had been one inch higher she'd have hit my temple and I'd be dead. One of my colleagues heard my screams and restrained her before she could kill me.

I am now in recovery. I have several reconstructive surgeries ahead of me. I write you while I am confined to a hospital bed.

My understanding is that Miss Tonia Smith is in a detention cell awaiting sentencing for battery and attempted murder. I understand she could receive up to forty years for these charges. I write you, Judge Mitchell, to beg for mercy on her behalf. Despite the brutal attack she perpetrated upon me, I remain steadfast in my conviction that anyone can be rehabilitated if given the chance. I would like Miss Smith to have that chance and beg you allow her to serve her sentence in the Walden Penitentiary for Women.

Very truly yours,
Jonathon Durham, Ph.D. ■

Autumn

Douglas Patton

Standing on the Wabash watching
crimson leaves float by
drifting past ancestors' graves beneath
a cold October sky.

A whispered trace of hardwood smoke
clutching to the breeze
forgotten stories hiding in dappled
sunlight through the trees.

Fallen grain and unspoken words
in frost upon the ground
alone at last
in autumn's grasp
I walked without a sound.



The Reaching Walls by Nicholas Jackson
Digital

Self-Portrait, Angry by Carrie Rebecca Armellino
40"x29" Charcoal on Paper



Contributors' Notes

Carrie Rebecca Armellino is a Sculpture major at Herron School of Art and Design but she also dabbles in drawing and printmaking. She is also a Resident Assistant at the Campus Apartments on the Riverwalk. She will finally be graduating in May 2006. Her plans after that include living in France and then going to grad school.

Becky Armoto is a mild-mannered stay-at-home mom by day and intellectual menace by night. She loves coffee, books, music, and naps. Recently, Becky discovered a love of poetry, and hopes to complete her degree in English before she's too old to use it.

Sean Benefiel is a sophomore at IUPUI who has absolutely no idea what he wants to do with his life. He is currently entertaining the idea of teaching high school upon graduation, but would rather be a starving artist and poet. Sean is an outgoing guy with an outrageous sense of humor.

Joe Bieschke is currently attending the Herron School of Art and Design, and is focusing on painting and illustration. He hopes to, one day, create art for films and literature. Joe works at the Herron gallery, and does freelance portraits, landscapes, and murals.

Matt Davis: "File under jaded." In the fall of '04, Matt began his journey at IUPUI. He keeps a low profile. He smiles rarely. He was accepted in the School of Journalism before he had a chance to change his major to English. He mumbles obscenities in Italian. He is 25 years old.

Alberto C. Diaz Jr. is currently pursuing lifetime residence at IUPUI for as long as he can get away with it. He is an English major with Film, Literature, and Creative Writing experience under his belt. He plays folk guitar and harmonica, which his cat, Wiggins, and dog, Ingrid, seem to really enjoy.

Meghan Dowell is currently pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing.

charee dunder is majoring in geography and creative writing. Her interests include China, the Spanish language, rowing, and apiculture.

Steve Ewing is an engineer and chemist, and a writer by compulsion. He has lived, studied, and worked around Indianapolis his entire life. He can get away from time to time via the crafted page.

Josh Flynn is an English major and a photographer.

Terri N. Graves is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. She loves to play in the dirt and enjoys dabbling both with pen and paint.

Elisabeth Hegmann grew up in North Vernon, Indiana. Her family is full of musicians, and she has always been active in theatre. She used to write lyrics and librettos, but more recently she's tried her hand at creative non-fiction, short stories, and halting starts to novels. She is currently an English major at IUPUI.

Nicholas Jackson is from Fort Wayne, Indiana. "The Reaching Walls" was done in Photoshop, during his senior year at Elmhurst High School. The concept deals with the similarities between human-like features of the body and inanimate objects.

Hali Lawson is a senior fine arts major with a focus in illustration at Herron School of Art and Design. After graduation she plans on going to graduate school and getting a Master's degree in teaching.

Louis Miller was reared by a small pack of wolves in north central Indiana from whom he learned the fine art of racketeering. Tragically, the wolves were bumped off by an angry flock of geese, and Mr. Miller moved to Indianapolis in order to pursue a career in academia.

Karen D. Mitchell is a wife, mother, cat lover, legal secretary, English major/psychology minor, and poet. She hopes to someday help others heal themselves through writing, possibly as a poetry therapist. If that job doesn't pan out, she will settle for a gig as the cryptozoologist who locates and studies William Burroughs' little green reindeer and electric blue ozone cats.

Sarah Nestor lives and writes trying to overcome self-doubt, self-pity, and self-esteem in an effort to find some piece of mind.

Eric Parcell graduated from a small school in northwest Indiana called West Central and started attending the Herron School of Art and Design with hopes of becoming a professional artist. He is an illustrator that works in a mix of cartoon and realistic styles. When he gets burnt out on illustrating he paints large scale, abstract oil paintings.

Doug Patton is a sophomore in the nuclear medicine program at IUPUI. He has worked as a steel worker, an industrial electrician, a roughneck, a U.S. Marine, and an airframe and power-plant mechanic. "Any day that you don't have to risk your life for your job is a good day."

Laura Polley is a professional knit and crochet designer and loves to make sweaters and other warm, woolly things. She's happily married to a woman and they are raising their five children together in Franklin, Indiana. She's quiet most of the time, and writing helps her find her voice.

Anna Poppen is a senior in photography at Herron School of Art and Design and is excited to see what happens in the next chapter of life.

Briana Price says, "there is very little in this world that does not fascinate me." She constantly tries to push the boundaries of what she can do, for herself and for others. She hopes her art reflects her desire to be more than one thing in this world. Her eternal love and gratitude goes to Jared, her enthusiast.

Jade Christine Roberts keeps a notepad with her at all times to take advantage of moments of inspiration when they come upon her, despite her elusive muse.

Frederick H. Shull Jr.'s "Walden Penitentiary" was originally written for a course in law and literature. If you are interested in learning more about prison literature an excellent book to read is: "A Place to Stand" by Jimmy Santiago Baca.

Clint Smith is an Honors Graduate from The Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, Le Cordon Bleu. He is currently the Chef Instructor in the Culinary Arts Department at Central Nine Career Center. When he is not teaching, Clint enjoys reading, writing, raking leaves, and Chaos.

Nicholas Hayden Wiesinger is currently in his first senior year at Herron School of Art and Design, majoring in photography. He enjoys long walks on the beach, Spanish poetry, lounging by the fire, and movies with subtitles. He hates bugs of any kind, rainy days, and mean people.

Beth Zyglowicz is currently a freshman studying illustration at the Herron School of Art and Design. Eventually she plans to illustrate children's books. She enjoys cats, chocolate, and spends far too much time online. More of her art can be seen at www.flameraven.deviantart.com.