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Kaleidoscope

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Editor's Note

John Barton stated, "A literary journal is intended to connect writer with reader; the role of the editor is to mediate."

This year's Kaleidoscope is about connection: connection to the past and to the future, connection to those around us, and connection within ourselves. This marks the 30th anniversary since its inception, and as with any work it has evolved and grown throughout the decades. My goal for this year's magazine was to create a forum for artists and writers to explore that which is often masked, judged, sequestered, or feared. Ourselves.

"Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future." I decided to use this quote from Oscar Wilde as a thematic tool for this year's publication. I wanted the contributors to connect the passage of time to themselves and to their work. I did not use this theme in a restrictive manner, but more so as an invitation to eschew parameters and to lend itself to interpretation. I asked to be shocked and taken back by the works, and I pleasantly was. Not only did the number of submissions overwhelm me, but the content did as well.

This year the connection expanded to the Macomb campus. I had two assistant editors from Macomb and two from the Canton campus. I feel this opened an opportunity for unification between the campuses. Although communication was a little rough, to say the least, in the beginning we forged ahead. Alex J. Breckenridge and Samantha Hodgkins were the assistant editors from Macomb and brought forth a new awareness of the Kaleidoscope on that campus. Ivy Zahrdt and Tyler Crotzer manned the assistant editor positions in Canton. It was definitely a challenge to work in this way, but I thoroughly enjoyed the varied opinions and personalities that emerged throughout this process. And, I wish to thank Alex, Samantha, Ivy, and Tyler for their contributions and work and mostly for putting up with me as I learned what it takes to be an editor.

I wish to thank with all my heart the faculty advisors, Douglas Okey and Barb Rowland. They helped me in more ways than they will ever know. They believed in me, they supported me, and they reminded me to breathe. I have been truly blessed by their friendship. Also, I wish to thank Sally Shields for the numerous creative photo shoots she did for Kaleidoscope over the year. Besides being a great deal of fun, the photo shoots aided tremendously in raising the awareness of the magazine. Paige Edwards has been phenomenal with not only the promoting of the Kaleidoscope but actually the piecing of it together when my computer skills were severely lacking. I thank her for her friendship and long committed hours of work. Also, I would like to acknowledge the amount of work and support given by last year's editor, Rich Markley, and by Tisha Markley and Sammi Southard.

It has been a year of blood, sweat, and tears. It was more work and time than I anticipated and at times I wasn't sure how I could manage. And, I wouldn't change it for anything. But, here it is. Enjoy!



photo by Sally Shields I

Daily Denunciations

by Carmele Deushane

And you standing on your plastic pedestal
fondling a tarnished souvenir in your grimy hand
And you in your slack-jawed suit
braying out your aspirations and conquests
And you suckling on the bane of your existence
because it nourishes you and you are told to
And you grimacing with every painstakingly
simple adherence to that which you find to be holy and true
And you in your high-heeled slipper held together
at the ankle with a safety pin clutching a knock-off Vuitton
And you cursing your olfactory sense
for the timeliness of it all
And you wallowing in the book of Lamentations
without regard to public policy and writhing in the imposed beliefs
And you shaving above the knee
because you want to believe that will somehow soften the blow
And you rifling through your dog-eared DSM
trying on what fits and squeezing into that which doesn't
And you escaping the ill-fitting shackles
of feigned modesty that surges unbeknownst to the everyman
And you experiencing the untimely ripping
of the womb by the insatiable alien
And you offering redemption and treasures
in heaven to anyone foolish enough to deep throat that propaganda
And you gesturing over the crowded gymnasium
while the maddening throngs pull at your tufted hair
And you man-handling the Thanatos
all the while discussing your stock portfolio over scotch
And you with your stillborn ideations
of bell-bottomed musicality raking them over the coals
And you kneeling in contemplative prayer
while your emotional stigmata bleeds you dry
And you with your mesmerized sonnets
rhythmically knowing what you need to be whole
And you with your inherently primal thwarting
of war-torn hips that disallowed the truth
And you casting yourself in the roles
of Bettelheim's fairy tales when it seemed right

And you challenging the omnipotent behaviors
of your scheduled succubus time
And you seemingly estranged from your cattle calls
and the red sequestering societal ropes
And you not knowing what caused the throbbing
in the lower third region that added to the first fight
And you renting your garments
as your words are cast into a herd of swine
And you with your erotic abreactions
not unlike that of your foremothers
And you with your malicious antiquity
and re-creation of a simpler time
And you engendering empathy
with your doe-eyed song of mirth that resides just within his reach
And you bearing your slash-scarred intentions
of envy and imbued disgrace to the masses
And you in your qualitative state of generativity
and your withholding of the same
And you gnashing your meticulously manicured
canines carnivorously carving scrimshaw
And you with your high-glossed id
that keeps track of her perfunctory status quo
And you referencing all that is within you
all that is without you until the cows come home
And you eliciting your solicitations
all the while couponing the essence of compassion and intellect
And you ambiguously arching your back
against the torrential gusts your father left behind
And you with your sinewy arms
embracing that which nightmares are made of
And you taking it all in stride



The Tan People of the Grotesque Places
by Vanessa Coleman

The Ripper

by Alex J. Breckenridge

Adam slowly crept down the hallway. Lights flashed on and off, throwing eerie shadows upon the walls. Pressing the door lock, it flashed orange and beeped twice in disapproval. The door was locked, and Adam consulted his locator. The blue guideline flashed behind him to a door which had no lock at all. The power circuit was out. If he were to continue in his mission, a new conductor would have to be found. Walking back up the hallway he returned to the room he had just entered. As he searched in his flashlight's expanse his saw gun spun steadily at the ready.

Above the blades mechanical whine Adam could hear something moving around in the vents. The flashlight shone the room, destroyed and reeking with the stench of death. Body parts and luggage were scattered all about the floor, messages written in blood on the walls. Something sparkled in the light, and there laid the diamond conductor. The instant Adam placed it in his inventory, the music crescendoed, the vents banged above his head, and the creature was before him. Ugly and repulsive, the beast charged with a banshee-like cry.

The saw shot out, severing the monster's arm as blood gushed out in spurts. The demon cried out, its arm lying limply on the ground, yet it continued to charge. The flashlight spotlighted the extraterrestrial, and Adam had a clear shot. His ammunition panel blinked red and displayed the number one. He had one saw left, and it had to count. Adam aimed and took his shot...

...“Adam!” his mother cried, running to the backyard and tearing the hand-held circular saw from his grasp. “What did I tell you about playing with power tools?” she scolded.

“I know you said not to, but Frank and I were just acting out a videogame...” Adam explained, avoiding eye contact as if his mother were Medusa.

“What video-” His mother gasped, dropping the saw onto the grass. She first saw the arm, laying there amongst the rest of the scattered toys in the backyard. Then she saw Frank, lying on his stomach on the freshly mowed grass.

Blood slowly cascaded from his gaping esophagus and was swallowed by the Earth. Frank's head lay just feet from his body, poorly decapitated with jagged blade marks upon his neck. His face still had the dumbfounded expression of terror one might adopt when their friend takes their role much too seriously. Adam's mother turned to her son, then to Frank, then to the hand-held saw lying at her feet. The blade was covered in blood, and bloody hand-prints stained Adam's shirt.

“We were just playing...” Adam muttered, kicking some excess shredded grass.

His mother simply fainted.

“It is impossible to discourage the real writers--they don't give a damn what you say, they're going to write.”
Sinclair Lewis

Stone Fish
by Brock Jump



Gerard
by Ivy Zahrndt

I bought a fish
And named him Gerard
There are certain days on which
Gerard is more sociable
And on those days
I prefer his company to that of any
human
But on some days
He is in a bit of a
Tyrannical mood if I may say so
And on those days
I prefer the company of a cat
However
Serving someone hand and foot can
be exhausting
And although Gerard can be manly
And/or mean
He doesn't ask for but the occasional
flick of food in his bowl
Thus
I enjoy his company.

Dear Dad...

by Christopher Migawa

Got your son struggling with bills.
Sucks that I turned to pills.
You say you have no money
And I thought it would be funny
When you went and bought a Charger.
While my debt is getting larger.
I'm done living life this way.
So here is what I'll say,
So sorry you lost your son
But you chose to buy a gun.
Yes, you helped me out before
And I thank you, that's for sure.
But since I'm getting older
You think that I'd be bolder
But pops you are wrong,
I needed you all along.
So I hope you got this message
As I cried while writing this song.
You are no longer my number one
Because I don't feel like I'm your son.



Mom's World
by Brock Jump

Chores

by Ivy Zahrndt

Cooking is a task
Done by housewives
While downing vodka
And swallowing valium

Mixing some nostalgia
In with some poison
Careful not to ruminate
Too long causes burns

Devoured slowly
It's not good enough
It never is, the husband says
After taking his vicodin

The children are quiet
For they are long gone
Killed by the poison
Mixed with nostalgia

That was ingested
On the Tuesday
Before hell froze over
Or so they say

Dysfunctional Existence

by Tracy A. Iversen

I keep playing the game,
Walking forward,
Only to be dragged backwards screaming and looking for
Someone to blame,
Looking out the blinds of life only to be choked by the cord.

Why do I keep going?
Why do I beat my head against the wall?
Cause I take the pieces of my life and keep sewing,
Cause I want that golden ticket and I hear the call.

Sometimes I think, "What is wrong with me?"
Until I look around and find I'm not that bad,
Just these blind people all around me that don't see,
How they make me so stink'n sick and sad.

I march on like the zombies we have become,
I play this game even though it makes no sense,
Hoping life doesn't make me a homeless bum,
Wow, what a dysfunctional existence!

"A guilty conscience needs to confess. A work of art is a confession."
Albert Camus

Mindblown

by Luke Taylor

I was 7 years old, and on a field trip with my fellow Cub Scouts to see a magician perform. Naturally, I was elated to see what tricks this master of magic could conjure up. I sat near the front of the auditorium where the show was to be performed. It had a large wooden stage hidden partially by a red curtain concealing unimaginable mystery behind it. I couldn't wait for this show to begin, and the anticipation had my hyper, juvenile brain in overload. Finally the show began and out walked the source of my fixation, the magician.

The show had begun with a bang and my eyes made their best effort to stay focused on every movement this magician made. There were a few intriguing card tricks, and a few handkerchiefs that went on for miles it seemed. Then he removed his silk hat and revealed the inside of it to the crowd. He then tapped it rhythmically three times and then extracted a rabbit from inside it. I was dumbfounded. Amazed and slightly frustrated I sat silently struggling to see how the trick was performed. I'll never forget what he said next, "For this next trick I would like a member from the crowd to assist me." This unexpected chance at aiding this master at work had me squirming in my chair like a dog struggling desperately to reach an itch. Immediately my hand flew in the air as high as I could muster, swinging and bouncing trying to grab the attention of this genius. Momentarily we locked eyes, and he must have seen the eagerness in my bright, freckled face. He chose me to step on stage and I strode confidently toward him much to the envy of my fellow scouts.

This man clearly was magical. I couldn't deny the obvious facts at hand. He did things I had always thought to be impossible in front of my own eyes, and therefore I was beyond ready to help any way I possibly could. I told him my name and awaited further instruction as he addressed the crowd prefacing his upcoming magic trick. My face felt like it was baking in a 400 degree oven underneath the bright lights of the stage as I stood anxiously to be given instructions. He then turned toward me as my heart-beat increased simultaneously, and told me to make my hands into fists and squeeze them as hard you can while he counted to 15. I wondered what on Earth this could possibly have to do with the trick he was going to perform but I was quick to follow directions. I squeezed my fists so tight I could feel my fingernails begin to puncture the skin, but I didn't mind. After all, he did say to squeeze my hardest. Finally, he counted to 15 and he told me to relax my hands and open them. Confused, I did as I was told and opened them.

"This was impossible!" I thought as I opened my right hand. I felt a spongy, red, foam ball expand with it. Sitting in full form was the culprit resembling the nose of a clown sat in my outstretched palm. I truly was lost for words. I had no clue how this had gotten into my fist. I had it clenched as tight as possible! I stood flabbergasted staring at my hand, and then back at the wizard responsible. After a few moments the applause died down, and I handed the enchanter his ball as he embraced me one final time. I returned to my seat to the excited whispers of my friends seated around me. I had no answers for their questions. I had no idea how that sorcerer performed that trick, and I never will...

The Philosophy of the Arrogant

by Alex J. Breckinridge

"I'm going to sue this establishment, the managers, the franchise, and finally you, personally, and it won't be pretty. When I sue you, I'm going to hire the two most expensive attorneys on both coasts. And between the four of them, your prosecution will be so brutal that the judge will mandate that your testicles be surgically removed. And with the cash I get from winning the case, I'm going to do four things. First, I'm paying the four lawyers; then I'm paying off my mortgage; then I'm catching up on my alimony... nah, screw her, she doesn't get a dime. But last and most importantly, with the cash I have left over, I am going to legally purchase your castrated testicles. I'm going to put them in some of that weird preservative water in old timey horror movies, inside of a mason jar. I'll put that mason jar on my mantle, right between my autographed napkin signed by George Lucas and the picture of my nana, rest in peace. And right beneath the jar will be a little plaque that reads, 'Incompetent employee's balls'. And that, sir, is how I shall literally sue your balls off. Maybe next time you won't use so much mayonnaise on my sandwich."



Elegant Wolf
by Sammi Southard

Flee
by Katie Bell



Love is a Mystery

by Heather Kruzan

*What is love?
Will I ever know?
How do you let the one you love go
The hurt has gone way too far
Here I am still soaking up it all
Love so wonder
At times incredibly hard
How can you love someone?
Who doesn't give you their all?
Love is a mystery
This I know
Love can also be misery
Better yet left unknown
What is love?
Will it ever be like gold?
What is love?
Will it ever stop robbing the soul?
Love is a mystery
This I know
Love can be wonderful
Or it can eat at the soul*

Love

by Katie Bell





Aurora Borealis
by Katie Bell

Depression
by Stephanie L. Ouellette

The girl inside,
whom I despise,
her head is filled
with countless lies,
she hides her face
and tries to pray
and hopes all thoughts
will go away.

Friends
by Ivy Zahrndt

On the occasion
That I was electrified
I would have rather gone to the zoo

You see; the animals
They understand me
Nothing better than
Telling your problems to a penguin

Penguins are great listeners
However;
Giraffes are better friends
Their long necks provide not only
shade
But comfort

Beyond that, the lions are splendid
Never have to worry about anyone
Treating you badly
When a lion has your back

Nonetheless
On the occasion
That I was electrified

There was no one there for me.

This Statue's Mask

by Joseph Puoplo

*Here stands this long, sleek and slender soldier.
Born from grit and thunderous wonder.
The weight of a nation rested upon his shoulder.
With willful weapons collecting scars as plunder.*

*He sheds not tears but sweat and blood.
He passionately prays to brothers not God.
Fiercely fighting an ancient warrior's flood.
Watching stoically as his head gives a sudden and sunken
nod.*

*Fallen faithfully on a field of foreign soil.
Immortalized by the battalions of Spartan warriors past.
No longer haunted by horrific visions of loss and turmoil.
Freely wandering the wretched ranks, so ghostly, so vast.*

*So what stands here in this place you ask?
Only this memorialized iron statue wearing that soldier's
mask.*

I, Pharisee

by Carmele Deushane

*I ranted I raved I screamed at my mother
I drank gin I cussed God
I fled I hid I made promises
I broke vows I smoked fire non-stop
I punched hard I kicked walls
I furrowed my brow I clawed at my forearms
I blackened my eyes
I was hoarse and high battered and boozed tired and tethered
I staved off salvation corrupted the converts
I trivialized neglected indulged
I embraced the wicked within and murdered
I ate the authentic madman
I tasted blood I liked it
I blew I screwed I Jewed
I compromised I circumcised I criminalized
I wept*



Why

by Tyler Crotzer

I can't look up
the words clouding my vision
are all too thick to make sense.
My skin is ripped
with each slicing sound
it lacks to feel mine.

All around me
each face adequately composed
of understanding and control.

How do they know
sure of every word they see
Comprehending pain of sound?

Maybe they do not
and ignorance is the key
to blissful contentment.

Kiss this bliss
and it falls from my lips
laying on the rug of time.

Ignorance nothing
more or less significant to me
than being struck blind by faith.

Can the words be seen?
Can sounds be felt in my bones?
And after how long before divulged?

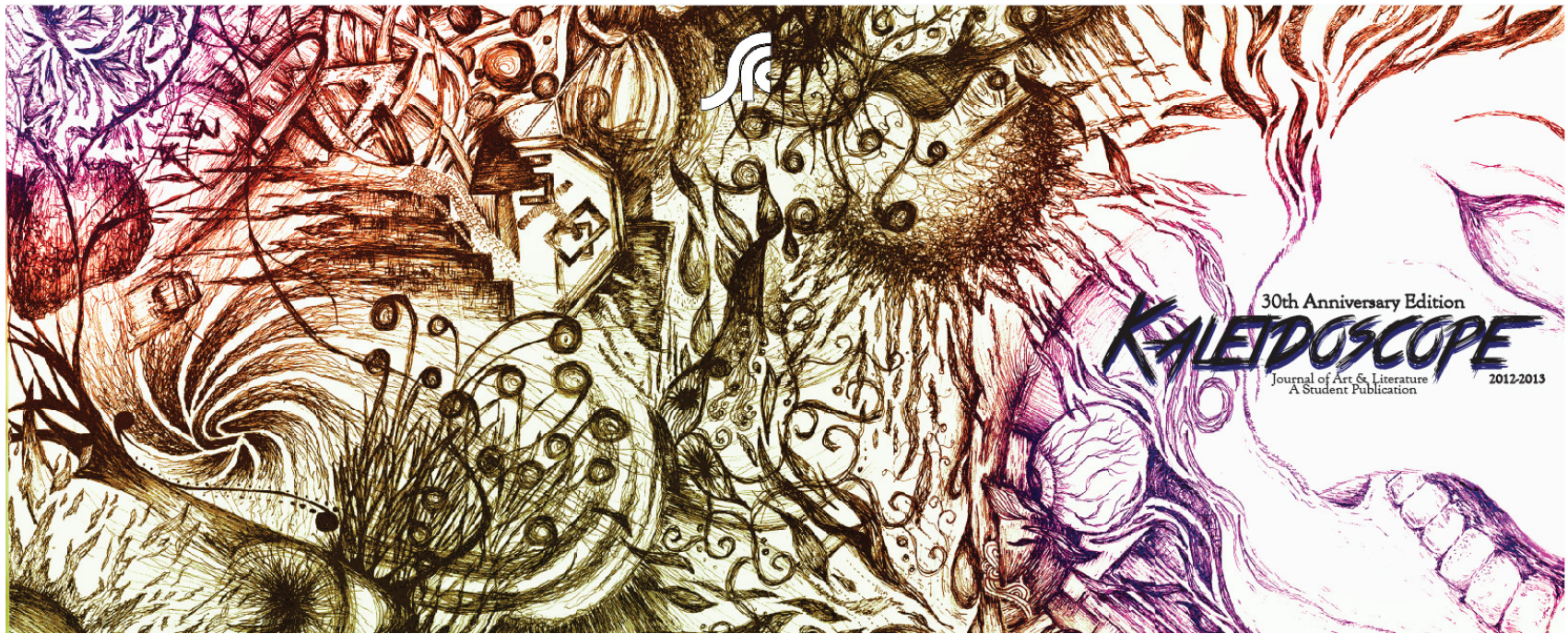
Numb

by Ivy Zahrndt

How many times
Is it possible,
Mind you,
To stab someone
Before they stop feeling?
Is it fathomable
To keep going
On and on
Until the flesh disintegrates
And nothing remains?
If you burn someone
Is it possible,
Mind you,
To destroy them completely?
The body is gone,
Yet the soul remains.
A reminder, the essence
A figment of hope
Runs away
With all you've ever had.

Havana Dreams

by Brock Jump



Second Place Cover Design
by Kyla Culbertson



Third Place Cover Design
by Kelsey Peace

There's Too Many Out There!

by Alex J. Breckenridge

Duncan sat in the fetal position, nervously rocking back and forth in the corner of the gas station lobby. He shakily held a pistol against his harshly thin chest. He now resembled a corpse more than a man, his ribs poking out like a skeleton and his eyes sunken into their sockets. The lobby was a wreck, trash and blood sprawled all over the floors. The power was out; the food had been eaten; the water had been drunk; even the toilet no longer functioned. The stench of feces had overtaken the bathroom and now infected the rest of the building. It was ingrained thickly into everything, and no amount of washing could cleanse it.

Duncan nervously rocked in a puddle of his own urine and sweat. The unsettling cacophony of the undead occupied his ears, and he could not escape it. Desperately he licked his dry lips and spoke with sandy, rusted vocal cords. His voice was shrill and cracking, and he said, "They're out there."

The other survivors turned in the darkness of day to look at him. He did not look at them but his eyes twitched nonetheless. To the others he looked like a madman, not far from achieving insanity. "They're out there and there's no way to stop them. There are thousands of them and about half a dozen of us." Duncan's heart pumped fiercely, adrenaline rising and head pounding. No one said anything but Duncan continued nonetheless, "There's no food, no power, no hope. There's too many out there. We'll never make it out of here alive. The government can't save us now. If those things don't overtake us, we will. If we don't find any food then we'd have to resort to cannibalism. We'd be no better than those monsters outside."

A hand gently touched Duncan's shoulder and said, "Hey, it's alright. We'll find a way."



Duncan shook his head and said, "I don't think we will." He shakily placed the barrel of the pistol in his mouth. It was cold, as cold as death. It tasted like death, but nonetheless Duncan jammed it against the roof of his mouth. Cocking the pistol, Duncan pulled the trigger. His brains splattered onto the wall, blood and shards of skull included. The other survivors wept and gnashed their teeth against one another; but they grew suddenly quiet. There were noises at the door, and something peculiar happened: the door handle rattled.

Have they gained control of their motor functions?

Have they evolved this quickly?

Were they capable of learning and adapting?

As swiftly as it had begun, the commotion ceased. Then the door abruptly flew off its hinges, sunlight exploding into the gas station. Two silhouettes stood in the doorway and shined flashlights around the room. "Survivors!" one of them cried. The other ordered, "Call the helicopter! It's a good thing you guys fired that shot; otherwise we would have skipped this place completely! We're with the evac team, come on and we'll get you all to safety."

Ah, the one that got away
by Ethan Beckner

*Ah, the one that got away
A creature by nature, with a perfect rack and body
The way you move makes me shake
My heart beats faster and faster, with every step
Ah the one that got away
The first time seeing you I knew, that I was in love
That you were what I have been waiting for my whole life
At first sight I knew I wanted you and would do whatever it took to get you
Closer and closer you walk towards me
Oh how do I get you to keep coming closer
The closer you come the more my heart beats faster and harder
Ah, the one that got away
At the sight of you, I knew you were the ONE,
And that there would never be another
The sight of you makes me tremble, oh how beautiful you are
Ah, you finally stop and look at me
I can't stop thinking about what to do, to make you stay
Ahh, the buck that got away
How good he would have looked up on the wall*



In Bloom
by Vanessa Coleman

Renegade

by Tyler Crotzer

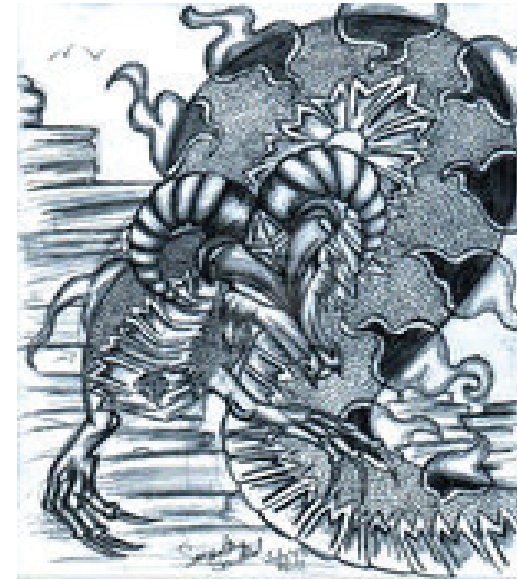
*I am Renegade.
I am happiness and sorrow.
Anger and bliss.
I am hate and love, but also desire.
I can give you pleasure, but I ask for none in return.
I am selfish.
I am pain and heartbreak.*

*While you are light. I am darkness.
While I walk freely, you stay in your cell.
Renegade does not stay in a cell.
My love is forbidden, but encouraged.
My hate runs freely, but is lost on you.*

*Your curiosity will break you.
My animosity will free me.*

*I am not who you wish me to be,
But I am not who you think I am.*

*I am here.
You will never be.*



*Desert Dragon
by Sammi Southard*

*“An artist is a dreamer consenting to dream of the actual world.”
George Santayana*

I Long to Go To My Wooded Way

by Angel Ernst

*I long to go to my wooded way
With its hidden brown patches
And twisted bramble guards
With soft green mossy covered banks
That covets the tiny babbles of its winding stream.*

*Low hangs my resting place.
Where shadows dance and play
Among the oak trees ancient.*

*Quite as I go,
With naked innocence.
The wooded creatures know me
As they are accustomed to my presence.*

*I am free for a time
In the golden rays lapping.
As I sit upon my wooded throne.
I long to go to my wooded way.*

One Foot in Front of the Other

by Sha Ehlers

*I start off with a strong stride one foot after the other
Each step takes me a bit closer to my goal
And farther away from my disappointment
Disappointment of not keeping up with rest
It kills me to see that I am not at my best
This pain will not kill me
In fact it wakes me up to my reality
The pain I am feeling in my chest is one of the best
A burning sensation in the lungs
Cooled off by fresh clean air I take in
Impurities of sweat run down my face
It cools me off to finish the race
It will only make me stronger
The pain I go through to make me push a little bit longer
Is the pain that keeps me aware that I am no longer younger*

Mulberry, Mulberry on the Farm

by Brendon Richardson

Mulberry, mulberry on the farm.
Mama, mama where've you gone?
Wheat and corn ready to sow,
Papa, papa what do you know?
Shine and beer up to drink,
Brother, brother what do you think?
Fields and pastures of barley and hay,
Sister, sister what have you to say?
Plows and sickles within my reach,
Pastor, pastor what do you preach?
Flocks to watch, babes to tend,
Salesman, salesman what do you vend?
A simple life and no one cares,
Blacksmith, blacksmith show your wares.
A bible with words of peace and love,
Is there a god somewhere up above?
Mulberry, mulberry on the farm,

Who am I, where do I belong?
My sweet child, my son I love,
I have died and passed to heaven above.
My dear son who I'm proud to call my heir,
I know that life is precious, both here and everywhere.
Older brother just look at my face,
I think of ways to better this place.
Listen brother as I sing,
I say kind and loving things.
Dear child don't be bored,
I preach the word of our lord.
Just come to school and learn young lad,
I will with you share all the knowledge I have.
Look for yourself, foolish boy,
I vend wool, grain, guns and toys.
Around me lay sharp tools forged by my own hand.
Yes young man, I am everywhere,
Just look at the ground, the sky, the earth and the air
And yes I do care.
Nathanael, Nathanael of the land,
You are a good man, and you belong right where you stand.

Dragon Armor

by Alex J. Breckenridge

"Yes, that's right, cleaned it right off at the scene. The entire village was so thankful that they held an entire banquet in my honor! That dragon never stood a chance! And neither did the maidens, if you get what I mean," Elzar boasted at the inn, winking to a bar maid.

"Who crafted this fine armor?" one of the drunkards asked, staring at Elzar's fine suit of armor forged of the bones and scales of dragons.

"I did, my friend."

"Truly?" The drunkard was astonished.

"Truly!"

"Have you any training as a smith?"

"Born and raised as one, I was!"

"And yet you possess the skill of a warrior to slay a dragon?"

"No dragon can stand the pierce of Elzar's mighty blade!" Holding his sword high in the air, Elzar gave a mighty war cry and the entire inn joined him. They laughed and drank and made fun of the bard when suddenly a man burst through the door, drenched in perspiration and breathing very heavily. "Elzar the mighty, Elzar the dragon slayer!" the man cried.

"I am he!" Elzar exclaimed, rising from his stool, tankard in hand.

"We beckon you, please save our village!"

"What devil dares descend upon your village, fair man? For I, Elzar the mighty, Elzar the brave, shall rid you of any pestilence!"

"A dragon, sire! A dragon approaches our settlement! We beseech you, help us please!"

"Of course!" Elzar threw off his cape and grabbed his helmet. The helmet was made of dragon bone as well, crafted into an intricate design which would strike fear into any mortal's very soul. The helmet slid on easily, and he swept up a bar maid and kissed her roughly on the lips. Without a word he exited the inn, drawing his sword.

Searching the skies Elzar began to yell, "Show yourself demon spawn! I will take your soul with my blade!" When no dragon presented itself, Elzar turned to the crowd of villagers and pronounced, "I have scared the dragon away! My mere presence has ridden you of this cockroach!"

As the crowd began to cheer, a shadow as dark as death itself lowered upon the village. The villagers cried and ran away, and Elzar was forced to slowly turn around. He had never been so frightened before in his life to see a dragon. It was, after all, the first dragon he had ever encountered. The dragon was the size of a dozen village huts, large and lethal. The scales looked like green-tinted obsidian, glimmering in the falling sun. It was perched upon the village hall, looking down at Elzar with demonic blood red eyes which blinked with two sets of eyelids.

Elzar was paralyzed with fear. He would have run away at that very moment had it not been for the villagers. But he knew the bar maid and the other drunkards were watching him from the inn windows, and he did not wish to disappoint them. So he weakly raised his sword and yelled, "I fear you not, beast! I shall send you back into the depths of the abyss, cursed demon!"

The dragon looked at him curiously, cocking its head to the side as a puppy might to an unfamiliar sound. This tiny man, with a toothpick pointed at a dragon, was a most peculiar sight indeed. Leisurely, smoke began to rise from the dragon's nostrils. Elzar stood still, watching its escalation. Suddenly, the dragon took a deep breath and exhaled a blaze upon Elzar, reducing the fraud to nothing but a soot-caked corpse. The pseudo-dragon armor had melted almost instantaneously. Had the bones been from a real dragon, Elzar would not have felt a single degree of heat. The dragon sat upon the village hall, staring at the tiny smoldering pile that had tried to threaten it. Satisfied, the dragon took flight and never bothered the village again.



Cool Dragon
by Travon Brantley

A Beauty So Deep by Brendon Richardson

*A beauty so deep,
So real and true,
That it hurts to witness,
And pains to view.*

*A Divine experience,
That will mark you for life,
And leave memories like scars,
From a jagged, twisted knife.*

*Tears will flow,
Without your control or consent,
For years to come,
When you think of how much it meant.*



In One Breath by Carmele Deushane

*Somber, slow and sweet,
Are those mournful wails,
And the melancholy laced voices,
As they tell their tales.*

*Trembling, shuddering and shivering,
Yet calm as can be,
Longing for someone to take my hand,
And walk with me.*

*Enveloped by sorrow,
Swallowed by despair,
Yet lifted by hope,
And raised high in the air.*

*Shallow breaths,
Drooping eyes,
Staring off into space,
Gazing at the sky.*

*The last note, the final page,
All too suddenly the beauty dies,
and all encompassing emptiness returns,
It's all I can do not to cry.*

*Nostalgia swirls around my mind,
And I think of way back when,
I've seen the beauty seldom since,
I can't wait to see it again.*

Dancing Plumes of Cancer

by Angel Ernst

*I sit beneath the plastered sky
Like a canary
Watching the dancing plumes of cancer.
And I wonder,
How to begin?
In the months long gone
Destroyed by time
I struggle to remember and yet, to forget
The things that were once endearing
Floating within the dark recesses of my
own dark
Memories.*

*The pen and paper are my saviors.
For here I know that I truly
Exist.
And with one last longing breath
The dancing plumes of cancer
Have relaxed my anguished mind.
I have finished
What needed to begin.*



Juliet
by Katie Bell

Grandpa

by Tyler Crotzer

Every person has moments in their life that shape them into the people they will become. A childhood memory that has kept its shine over the years, an early moment of personal triumph and development, or possibly the passing of a person whose wisdom aided in the shaping of your own mold, can be those bits of time that will all one day add up into the sum of the person you will become. My Grandfather died four short years ago and for me that will always be a moment in my life that has served as a stepping stone to get to where I am. I realized the entire lifestyle I was bound to live when I saw his pale face in that coffin. We get but one life to do with what we choose, so we must live to the full extent of our potential in the brief while that it is under our control.

The room was packed with people; every seat was full as men hung around the doorways and along the walls. All the people in the room made the air seem thick and hot as it seeped its way into our nice dress clothes. The soft buzz of the little A/C unit in the window served as a background hum to the priest's aged voice. All the folded chairs were lined up along the sides slanted toward the middle pathway of thick red carpet. And up front, lying in that long wooden box was my Grandfather. My eyes kept wandering to the dark cherry wood and with every glance my mind drifted to a memory of him or a story he told me. Each time it was too much; my eyes would begin to swell with tears and my head would swing down sending my eyes to my lap. To think I could no longer shake his hand or talk to him about a good book I read or that no holiday dinner would ever be the same without all of us bowing our heads and listening to a prayer so thoughtfully crafted it sounded like poetry. The sheer thought sent shivers up my spine and shocked my heart.

After the priest was done speaking one by one people began to walk by the coffin, but I stayed planted firmly in my seat just watching as they all went by. I had never been to a funeral of someone that I was close to before. I didn't know how I should act as I went up and stood by this dead man's bed. I didn't know what I was supposed to say or do. So I watched each person until everyone had walked by. A few people still lingered in the room, but they had formed little social groups and were paying no attention. I remembered how it took all I could muster in order to get up from

that chair and with each step closer my heart beat a little faster. The thick red carpet scraped under my feet and finally brought me to a stop directly in front of him. My head refused to look up. I stared blankly at the elaborate carvings etched into the side of the coffin. I remember thinking how people put so much time and money into death. They fear it and are heartbroken by the idea, but they spend so much time on all the preparation. When my thoughts faded and I had stood there as long as I needed to my eyes slowly floated up to his painted face. He looked nothing like the man I remembered. His skin was pale as a ghost with a thick powdery residue staining it. His chin was shaven smooth like I had never seen him do before. The large chest that I remembered seemed deflated and not to the stature it once was. Silk surrounded his entire body in a fashion too prissy for his liking. The last thing I noticed were his large hands folded so neatly on his stomach. I looked down at his hands and remembered how every time I saw him he greeted me with a firm hand shake and looked me square in the eyes. I lifted my hand up and placed it on the edge of the coffin. Looking back to him; that face that almost didn't seem recognizable I said my good byes. I choked on some of the words as they fell out of my mouth on deaf ears, but I was able to hold back the tears. Just as I was going to turn to leave I took my hand off of the edge of the coffin and reached for his. For one finally hand shake before he was placed in the earth. My fingers slowly stretched forward making their way to the top of his hand. I pressed my hand on his and the very second I did I wished I wouldn't have. It was so cold and still, so ridged and worn. It was not my Grandfather's hand! I wanted to remember his hand shake, so firm and warm. How he did it with such inviting eyes and a cheerful smile. The feeling of ice forming on the tips of my fingers haunted me for days and I will never forget what I realized that very moment in time. It has changed the person I am and want to become.

It is incredible how billions of tiny atoms of various elements have been composed to create each and every person. We all have the same molecular make-up and are all capable of the same functions. It is not the physical body that makes the person

who they are, but rather how the mind of the individual chooses to use it. When I die and am laying in a coffin, as my Grandfather was, people will not look down on my motionless body and remember me as such. They will remember all of the stories and memories we created in our friendships. They will think of all the things I did. They will look at all that I have built. Finally they will ask themselves what kind of person I was. This thought of life in death is what drives me to do all that I can in the short time I am given. The day my Grandfather died serves as a defining moment in my life because it made me realize how I must live my life. Life is a clock winding down to zero and each tick of every second should be spent in a manner best fitting to who you are.



Rose
by Katie Bell

Maestro

by Carmele Deushane

Defined not by black by white by gold
nor by the hazy rainbow of hues
in between you are I am told
and I am So we are forced to choose
how we shall differentiate these selves
from the illusion they create around us
Beneath the silence of one who delves
past the deepest palette shade we trust
Echoes of the pianissimo strains
harmonize the antithesis at hand
Measure by measure, our losses our gains
crash against the plinth we understand
I lay down my baton Forte! I proclaim
Believing because of you the song will be regained



Ptak Ohnivak

by David Smail

“Fill the paper with the breathings of your heart”
William Wordsworth

Are You Properly Socialized?

by Amanda Wrenn

*Homeschooling is education,
Not an anti-social play.
I don't socialize like you,
Because I do it my way.*

*From young to eighteen,
They were always there.
Same building, same friends,
Same overseers, same care.*

*From morning 'til later,
Eight hours or more,
They are restricted and confined,
Within a building of bore.*

*For me, I was at home.
Studied as long as my heart desired,
Played throughout the day,
And learned more than what was required.*

*Field trips were anything,
From going to the store,
To parks and fairs,
Always learning much more.*

*We would talk with everyone,
Young and old, short and tall,
Not just people in our age group,
We communicated with them all.*

*The public school limited them,
To certain races and backgrounds,
While our social ring,
Consisted of everyone, world round.*

*I am not perfect,
I don't claim to be.
But I am well-socialized,
Don't worry about me.*

*Concern should be placed,
Upon those in the public school,
The underage drinkers, smokers,
Irresponsible, and bullies so cruel.*

*Socialized can also mean to know,
One's own culture and values.
If that's the role of public schools,
Then trust me, I don't want those issues.*

homesick

by Paige Edwards

*hard to get that level of calm back
in the real world.
adrift
is the word of the day*

*feeling pathetic, but you said you prefer real to a false
front any day
you knew my soul was set free and I'm a little raw
around the edges
right now*

*obsessively checking
for messages from you or you or you
starved for camaraderie
now that I've found it
I want to gorge, like someone denied food and suddenly
placed at a buffet*

*a starvation of the soul,
as it were*

*so please pardon my gluttony at the feast of friendship
and will try to
chill the fuck out*

XXVIII



Emiquon Glow

by Brock Jump

The Basement

by Jon Myers

*I sit in the basement staring at a burning cigarette,
My hands are blackened like coal as is my soul.
I listen to the sirens and the sound of my beating heart.
My face is numb and the taste of burned char rests on my
tongue.
I look at the clock for I am not where I should be.
As I stare at my last cigarette with sorrow as it burns
away,
I think of my old life I gave away.
I wonder what kind of monster tomorrow I will be.
Will I ever be free to be the old me.*

The End
by Katie Bell



Aversion Therapy
by Ivy Zahrdt

At its best
Self-Mutilation
This is not a test
Now open wide
And scream it loud
We are all waiting
For your sound
Signaled joy
Through a voice
Shown through silence
It was your choice
No more waiting
Without a chance
A chance to lose
But gain romance
Eat it slowly
Through your teeth
You wanted this
What's underneath
Dream out loud
With a curse
Broken slowly
Now reverse.



Portrait of a Witch
by David Smail

For Sir Jack

by Carmele Deushane

*You let me be your undulating scroll, you honorably
discharged iconoclast.
I can catch the wine stained sweat off of your chest with my
tongue you know I do it while you sleep
Your divergent tactics keep us a float in the vastness of
the being I came to you in a song, you mumbled once,
a purple jazz song
You didn't write because the clock on the wall commanded
you as it had no beat
I kneel amidst the burrows in the blankets on the floor and envelop you
as a desolate angel
You howl at the Blessed Mary and the suffering
you caused her in Mexico City
I bathe in your ethereal quality
and your shedding of skin into me
You cling to the brother I know only as C , the one the plays in your mind the one
stays in your mind*



photo by Sally Shields

"If you did not write every day the poisons would accumulate and you would begin to die, or get crazy, or both. You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you."

Ray Bradbury

XXX