



The Phoenix

The Phoenix
SPRING 2003

THE PHOENIX

Milligan College

Editors

Amy Ewing
Jennifer Openshaw

Layout and Design

Carolyn Payton

Cover Photo

Dimitiri Jansen
Angel from Vancouver

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Ruth McDowell Cook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Poems and Short Stories:

<i>Fading Away</i>	Daniel Kariuki	1
<i>Crazy Mary</i>	Jason Payton	2
<i>Penguins Steal My Sanity</i>	Tony "Llama" Stanton	3
<i>Call Me Hypocrite</i>	Warren McCrickard	4
<i>Untitled</i>	Philip Rotich	5
<i>Christian Warrior</i>	Dimitiri Jansen	5
<i>A friend in you</i>	Tony Jones	6
<i>Nebula</i>	Andy Irvin	7
<i>Whose foolish hobgoblin drumbeat am I dancing to?</i>	Amber Saferight	8
<i>Act of Rage</i>	Amy Ewing	8
<i>Untitled</i>	Daniel Kariuki	9
<i>Mending Divided Souls</i>	Melissa Ruhl	9
<i>Untitled</i>	Mitch Scott	9
<i>Harlem Renaissance</i>	Beth Jackson	9
<i>What a gloomy day</i>	Kristin Kerkvliet	10
<i>Untitled</i>	Deniece Kitchin	10
<i>Reflections of Psalm 84</i>	Kevin J. Poorman	11
<i>Philippians 4:8 - In Love insecure</i>	Danisha Bethune	11
<i>Consciously Found</i>	Hannah Bader	11
<i><to be titled by audience></i>	Mary Howerton Stephens	12
<i>Why We Live</i>	W. Andrew Gibbens	13,14
<i>Untitled</i>	Kristin Kerkvliet	15,16
<i>From the Valley onto the Mountaintop</i>	Katy Head	16
<i>Happiness</i>	Monica Sharpe	17
<i>Searching For Knowledge</i>	Aaron Akins	18
<i>Untitled</i>	Aaron Akins	18
<i>Untitled</i>	Natalia Suit	19
<i>Two Ravens</i>	Mandi Aubrey	19
<i>Full Circle</i>	Jason Payton	20
<i>Angel</i>	Steve Burwick	21
<i>Four Years</i>	Brenda Turner	21
<i>brittle</i>	Jason Reed	22
<i>Foolish Things</i>	Hannah Bader	23
<i>Aunt Katie</i>	Jon Hall	24
<i>A rooster crow delayed</i>	Jennifer Openshaw	25
<i>The Last Kiss</i>	Jon Hall	26
<i>Untitled</i>	Amy Ewing	27
<i>You are a Resounding Gong and a Clanging Cymbol</i>	Muraya Muraguri	27
<i>Untitled I and II</i>	Muraya Muraguri	28
	Kris Reed	28

Photography and Artwork:

<i>Untitled</i>	Nataniel Poling	1
<i>Madonna with long neck</i>	Rachel Hatfield Dalton	2
<i>Everyday Simplicity</i>	Jennifer Soucie	3
<i>Untitled</i>	Dinah DeFord	6
<i>Untitled</i>	Hannah Bader	7
<i>Untitled</i>	Evan Longfield	10
<i>Untitled</i>	Hannah Bader	14
<i>Untitled</i>	Nathaniel Poling	15
<i>Untitled</i>	Robin Holtman	16
<i>Venice</i>	Beth Pearson	18
<i>The Birth</i>	Evan Longfield	19
<i>In Utero</i>	Rachel Hatfield Dalton	20
<i>Venice Guys</i>	Beth Pearson	22
<i>White Tulips</i>	Carolyn Payton	24
<i>Untitled</i>	Dinah DeFord	26

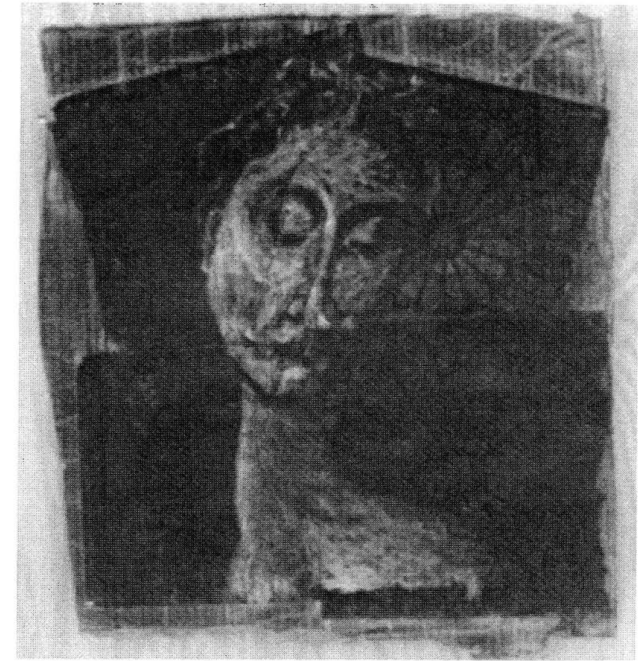
Fading Away

I'm fading fading dark and gray
Help me find the narrow way
Eyes of purity look away
From my sinful wicked ways
I do believe in God's grace
But can I truly ever find
Someone with a gentle hand
Someone who will understand
And look at all my faults and failures
And still be my friend and Savior
Father I know you fashioned me
Open my eyes and let me see
I'm fading, fading, dark and gray
Show me, show me the narrow way

by Daniel Kariuki



by Nataniel Poling



by Rachel Hatfield Dalton

Crazy Mary

Toward her little bungalow
Goes the weary messenger,
Having traveled many miles
From the skies to desert sands.

And he came to her at night-time,
And he sat next to her bed,
Singing dreams of fathers
And of sons into her head.

Though heaven thought she'd fall
Within her clay-covered walls,
She stood, and Heaven saw her
Rising up above it all.

by Jason Payton



by Jennifer Soucie

Penguins Steal My Sanity

Uncle Joe, sits down and smokes his pipe.
 His wife standing beside him, longs to gripe.
 Their son, my cousin, proclaims with a scream,
 The only Emperor is the Emperor of ice cream.
 His sister, primps in the mirror, curse her vanity.
 One by One the Penguins steal My sanity.

The wall of stone is still standing tall
 Nothing can topple it, nothing at all
 Alas for the man who doesn't know it exists.
 He crashes into it, when it's hidden by mists.
 Still the wall stands, mocking my humanity
 One by One the Penguins steal My sanity.

In the world of sea, with the murderous whale
 The absent-minded child, almost showing his tail.
 The humans in the arena, drenched and cold
 A giant mass of plastic and rope, not for the old.
 Floating at the top, a lone manatee.
 One by One the Penguins steal My sanity.

by Tony "Llama" Stanton

The Phoenix 3

Call Me Hypocrite

Okay. So call me a hypocrite. I get so mad at her. But I *love* her.

So she is busy when I am free. So she treats me different. Do I not deserve it?
 Look at this poem...this spoken word essay on my over-analytical self.

Why do I talk about myself so much any way?

Better yet, why do I talk so much about her?

Why do I think about her so much?

I mean I have a God that is *the* God and I don't type about his grandeur or his everlasting love or his kingdom. Nope. I talk about a girl. (Immaturity clause)

(Back two sentences)

Speaking of God; he is lucky. I mean he gets to love all of us. He didn't get created to love one. He doesn't have to feel guilty when he blames the fall of man (Eve actually) for every lost love or opportunity to love.

Ah! God *does* get blasphemed though. He also gets used as an excuse. Which brings me back to a girl. This wasn't her excuse though. She didn't even use the line from that commercial; "Sorry. My mom's making mashed potatoes."

No. She just wasn't ready. (BTW- What does that *Really* mean?)

Boo hiss. I am a bag of something. All these battles I wage on myself, on her, on *God*:

Emotions versus Reality

My fault versus hers

God's involvement versus God's punishment

Anger is relentless. Passion is dangerous. I am both.

Temporary pouting, weeks of whining. She sees what she wants. She calls when she wants. She puts "the ball in my court." I just want to hit her with it!

But her smile, her eyes, her desire to serve.

So start the circle over again. One ring of the Alexander Graham Bell creation and I release my tensions. She wins. I WANT TO WIN!

How did girls get so much power? How did I become the girl of every relationship...oops! (Females hate that word...let's use friendship)

The smart ones, philosophers and critics, say you can tell a lot about someone from their writings.

Here's what you learn about me:

I have no political opinion or at least not one great enough to talk about.

I can't play tennis.

I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

I miss Field Day.

And between girls and God, I just fail at being anything good, but a hypocrite.

by Warren McCrickard

The Phoenix 4

Untitled

Black,
Stereotype, Surreal they are,
Primitive or aesthetic or for the soul
For identity, Culture, or form of entertainment.
Real only if from the roots, yes from within.

by Philip Rotich

Christian Warrior

Here comes that Christian Warrior
Up from all the smoke, and ashes.....
Like a Phoenix from a fire.

Here comes a Christian Warrior
Garnished...in gold and silver too.
He's not coming for himself,
But He's come for me and you.

Sent by God...an amazing sound.
That sweet, sung, song...come to this ground.
For your heart and your longing,
That which speaks of belonging
To that group or that crowd.

But He's asked you to walk away
And give it all to Him.
Can you give it up?
Can you give it all away?
Can you see the reward, awaiting your claim?

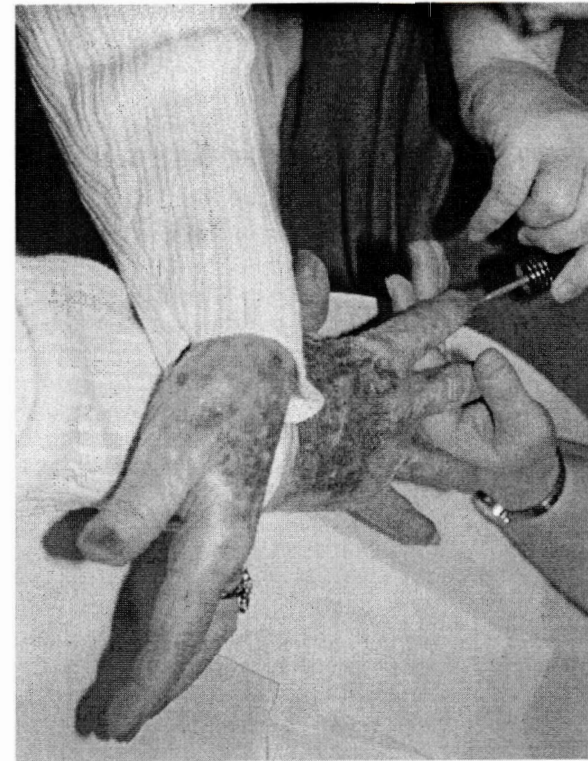
Or will you...Like I?
Cry in our hearts
Too scared to reach out,
And take what is ours.

Too scared to accept
The gift we've asked for.
Too scared to believe,
He won't be asking for more.....sacrifice.

He came to forgive.
A God-given chance.
To get back our dreams
Without a second, back-glance.

Come bring your dreams!
And a heart filled with gold!
Because in God's spoken language,
Our "wait" is called "hope."

by Dimitiri Jansen



by Dinah DeFord

A friend in you

As I reflect on four years passed,
And all the friendships I pray will last,
It hurts my heart as I leave this place
I might never again see your face.
A tear for every happy memory
Blurs my vision, so I can't see.
Thank you for the time you spent.
The places with me that you went.
For all the ideas that you shared,
For all the hard times when you've shown you cared.
Thank you for the beauty in your face and soul,
You're a perfect diamond, pressed from black coal.
You were here to dry my tears,
Comfort me in all my fears.
Truly, I do not deserve a friend like you.
Sorry for the things I put you through.
When you move far away,
And we can't see each other ever day
Wherever you end up, wherever you might be
For one bright moment, you had a friend in me.

by Tony Jones

Nebula

The Morgue lies empty
The winds I abhor
Blowing the stench of
Greed and Agony on its wings

With no one to die
What will they say
They'll turn themselves
On themselves

When the black envelopes you
When knowledge is a curse
All I know
All I've done

Cry no more
The horizon is on you
Turn a profit or walk away.

The World
The Carnival
The Worst
It is.

Apprehension
Abduction
Persecution
Cry Again

by Andy Irvin



by Hannah Bader

Whose foolish hobgoblin drumbeat am I dancing to?

Very few people are satisfied with society, and many want to rise above the standards set before them. When one thinks about it, he/she sincerely doesn't want to succumb to the pressures and concepts of our egocentric society. But if so many people are disgusted with society, why are we still an arrogant, superficial culture?

Those who claim to want to change the world's view ignore their sense of duty, simply watching themselves go down in a spiral of fitting in.

Those who do rebel and break the mold of society label themselves "freaks" and go along with one leader's—a nonconformist—point of view. So even the rebels conform to nonconformity, ironically undercutting their purpose of being different.

While I "rebel" against common concepts that I dislike, I set myself apart as an individual. But am I set apart because I honestly don't conform to anything, or do I conform to nonconformity? Am I a leader, a follower or simply me? Often, I feel like I don't belong with anyone. I have a group of friends that I wouldn't trade for the world, but even with them, I feel out of place. Part of it is the fact that I have no idea who I am. I have conformed to conformity and nonconformity, and now finding my place in the puzzle feels close to impossible. However, I know for certain what I do not want to become: a typical teenager who tries to fulfill MTV's perfect image of a teenager (i.e. Britney Spears).

Emerson once said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." I agree that the consistency of following the crowd (either conformists or nonconformists) hinders individuals by creating these hobgoblins. However, I feel strongly that I should be consistent in sticking to my beliefs. Yet I have to question, if I don't know my identity yet, how can I know what I stand for? I uncover a piece of myself each day, and the drumbeat to which I dance to changes its rhythm slightly, but definitely. Flavored by my experiences and discoveries, I will never have a constant drumbeat. But while I have it, I will dance and live up to my uniqueness. And while I change, I hope that fact stays the same.

I'm not going to claim that I am a perfect example of a rebel of anything; like someone else, I desire acceptance and to belong somewhere...anywhere. But I pray that my life will not go to waste by submitting to the pressures of society. I don't know where I belong yet, but I hope I won't become another face in the crowd, another one of society's victims.

by Amber Saferight

Act of Rage

She dipped her finger in
His coffee turning cold like his malice
Feeling the blood drip from her face
Scarlet tears from the wound above her eye
She traced his name in the black liquid
Over and over as the blood flowed down
Broken with pain desperate with love
Bleeding into the fresh coffee
Made by her hands
Stained by his act of rage

by Amy Ewing

Untitled

How does it feel to embrace lips with a lover
To take shelter and cover, and kiss while it rains
Does the spark from a kiss kindle a fire from within
Which sets in motion a desire to be loved, to be held
To simply have your eyes transfixed into the crystal glass
Of an intricately designed person known as Lover
How does it feel to immerse yourself in the warmth of the lover's eyes
To caress the eloquent skin of a graceful being and feel your heart race while your
fingertips burn with intense flame
As the sound of your name like mist drops upon the scarlet ribbon lips of the lover
To scream with delight as the lover's tongue dances erotically in your mouth
While basking in the beauty of this moment and holding one another underneath a canopy
of starlight, you both watch an ancient moon sail across heaven's seas.
How does it feel, Exhilarating.

by Daniel Kariuki

Mending Divided Souls

Harlem,
African art,
Changing the culture,
Mending divided souls into
One NEW language of art and acceptance.

by Melissa Ruhl

Untitled

Soul
Is constrained
Finally let loose
By the chance that the canvas
Holds for the palette of divided souls

by Mitch Scott

Harlem Renaissance

Chance,
Visions,
Soul Music,
Colorful Creations,
Art Knows No Race.

by Beth Jackson

What a Gloomy Day

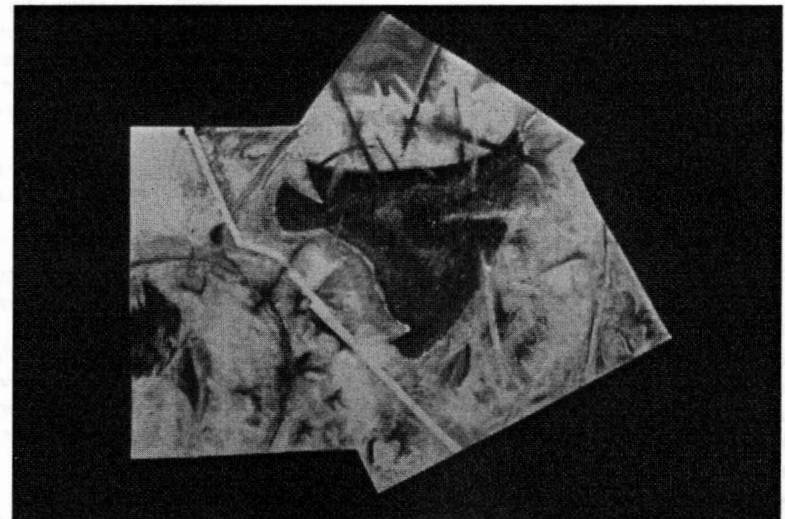
What a gloomy day.
All energy is drained.
Slouched shoulders,
Head down,
Small, slow steps,
Swollen eyes,
Burdensome legs,
I'm alright.
Anything to stay awake,
Or better yet, to go to sleep.
Is it already time to eat?
Sick of pretending,
Tired of complaining,
Don't feel like talking,
My smile worn away,
Can I not be sad just this one day?

by Kristin Kerkvliet

Untitled

IDENTITY
Black or White
We struggle to find a middle ground
Racial boundaries limit us from each other
Or do we limit ourselves within our racial identity

by Deniece Kitchin



by Evan Longfield

Reflections on Psalm 84

Father God your dwelling is lovely beyond compare.
Love its name and chief description.
Your life and light abode in the place of your love.

My soul covets your love, covets spending time in the presence.
The presence of your love, Jesus Christ.

Father even the birds of the air know the warmth of your love.
Truly blessed are those who abide in your love.

Father cleanse us, rend us and render us into servants of your dwelling.
Set in us the light which is your love.
Render us into those that point and guide others to your welcoming
place.

Lord let us be examples of and incarnate beings of your love.

Blessed is the man whose love is yours.
The man whose desire is only to rest at your feet in adoration.

by Kevin J. Poorman

Philippians 4:8 Is Love

Is love a red rose, or a bleeding red heart?
Is love a form of convenience, or a form of compassion?
Is love a yes, or a no?
Is love a feeling?
Is love a discipline?
Is love a skin color?
Is love a high, or a medium?
Is love a...
Is love a...
Is love a...

by Danisha Bethune

insecure

the bad thing about
pencils is
words that need to be
let out
should
be let out
can be erased

by Hannah Bader

Consciously Found

I'm chasing after sin itself
Into a wary night
Methodically aware
Of all the horror in my flight
I'm leaving with my conscience on
An unwanted sort of sight
I'm running after pride without concern
Of wrong or right

I'm burning with desire
And embracing its sad song
Lured by the fire
Lured by the wrong
I'm looking for a divider
Between heaven and earth
Striving to be unpersuaded
Of heaven's worth

I am...Consciously Lost
I am...Consciously Lost

But by a calm interval
From words I steal outright
The trace of David's Psalm
Is what offers me sight
And by that holy carnival
The saints upon their steeds
I'm running to the Angel
Who meets all of my needs

I'm chasing after good itself
I'm living in the light
Happily aware
Of God's grace in my flight
I'm living with my conscience on
A piercing sort of sight
I'm running to my Savior
And living for the right

I am...Consciously Found
I am...Consciously Found

I'm burning with desire
Embracing its glad song
Called to the fire

I ain't looking for a middle ground
Between heaven and earth
I'm seeing my Savior
For everything He's worth

I am...Consciously Found
I am...Consciously Found

by Mary Howerton Stephens

<to be titled by the audience>

how can i?...
how can i?...
how can i supply anything to you?...
how can i overcome empty promises and claiming?...
it is true...
you deserve everything...
and i've been placed here by you in a world of substance...
it is the real right now...
it will pass away sooner or later...
possibly emptied into oblivion...
i won't say i can comprehend the upcoming reality...
all i know is that we are being transformed...
written stroke by stroke in the Book of Life...
and if it is written in heavenly places, is it not written by your hand?...
why then do i stray?...
my words...
my ideas...
my philosophies...
do they match your will with action?...
why's this poem been centered on me?...
isn't that the way of the world that is passing...
gas is more structured than the self-seeking...
self-righteous person...
we need acknowledgement of your presence...
this isn't some self improvement experiment...
let's not pretend we're not all guilty...
disturbing behavior has blocked out our view that the Savior is actually Savior of all...
evil is messing with the heads of the masses (and those above the masses)...
we still want them to accept our savior...
OUR savior...
O U R...
our versions of the Truth...
i'd say...
and ask you to join me if the Spirit leads...
to do what i guess i just stated...
follow the Spirit...
if you can't hear him maybe you've plugged your heart's ears with the distractions that
matter least...
peace, peace, peace...
do we really want peace?...
do we?...
what are we willing to do?...
will you give it up?...
it being that which is strapping you up and causing malicious thoughts to ravage your
mind...
that which is causing problems like my empty promises...
your enemy is your enemy but he too is God's object of love...

will we stand up and forgive those who've pained us...
could we?...
let's stand up and fight with touch to cheek that is as a petal of a rose...
loving touch...
loving presence...
i see hope...
like blue sky puncturing the gray clouds is the loving God...
clarity and answers to straight and ambiguous questions are his

by W. Andrew Gibbens



by Hannah Bader



by Nathaniel Poling

Why We Live

The busyness overlaps and soon takes over,
As we run another lap.
Then we forget to live,
What is our goal?
Papers and deadlines,
Are they really important?
Don't make eye contact,
Might have to talk to someone,
Can't stop running,
The clock won't stop ticking, and we'll lose that precious time.
Even on vacation, life slips away with boredom—let's plan where we'll eat next.
Daydreaming can be fun as we mindlessly go.

What is the meaning of life?—a question so vast that one falls into the depths of the sea if it somehow creeps through the barricades of shallowness into the brain.
So instead of contemplating,
(just follow the lines),
Why we do our menial tasks that somehow never go away
And increase with each day,
We just do them and pretend that
That is why we live,
Until we realize we've entered a race with no purpose, destination, nor end.

by Kristin Kerkvliet

Untitled

Can you feel the madness inside? Darkness descending on the soul like a funeral shroud. The blackness of the night swirls, mixes with painful blood-red droplets, churning together. It grows, it multiplies, taking more and more of the sanity that used to exist. The beautiful, evil blackened redness has power, more power than can be imagined; it creeps ever so furtively into the mind, into the soul, turning logic into confusion and sanity into insanity. Night, day, sleep, wakefulness, dreams, reality, nothing is real anymore. Nightmares are truth, the unconscious is conscious, what is real? What is a memory and what is a dream? The darkness is taking control; it is increasingly harder to remain sane. Crazy? What is crazy? What is sane? Not the mind now; it is covered by a blanket of blackened blood, preventing any escape. No longer real, merely existing, trying to survive. Abnormal mind in a normal world. The struggle between the survival instinct of the body and the destructive impulses of the mind only furthers the confusion. Crazy. Toeing the line, pushing the boundaries, seeing just how far the mind can bend before it breaks.

by Katy Head



by Robin Holtman

From the Valley onto the Mountaintop

The view from up top is much better.
You can look out and see the vast expanse,
And marvel at its beauty.
But on a day like today—
All you see are clouds.

They block out the hope that you have
To witness the rolling hills,
The river, or the forest of trees.

When the clouds come,
Something beckons you to go higher;
To look above the clouds,
To a higher place.
And in that place—glory dwells.

To stand in awe and wonder
As the wind rushes onto your face.
It calms the soul.

Yet your mind still wanders
Down that lonely mountainside;
To the place in the valley you once dwelled.
The remembrances of times past
When all you did was turn
Your head and heart from others.

And knowing that in the valley,
The darkness can consume your soul.
The heart can turn to stone
And the feelings you once had
Vanish like the wind upon your face.

Time passes
And you long for the moment of peace
You once had upon the mountaintop.

And so your mind wanders back to that peak,
To the soul that is being healed.

Now the view is better and brighter than before.
There the mending takes place—
God will take hold of you,
And place you in his hands.
His love for you warms you
To the very core.
And then can the soul find comfort.

One last breath upon that mountaintop,
And the darkness of the valley is gone.

by Monica Sharpe

Happiness

You snicker, I laugh, and then I turn and vomit.
A grin is plastered on my face like mud on walls.
Alone, my tears wash off the dirty, grimy smile.
The façade slides down, until you walk in again.
Youth has happiness, but my innocence is lost.
My heart is blackened with the char of learning.
Yet you demand a smile, and a smile you will get.
Caked on my face with the makeup of care.

by Aaron Akins

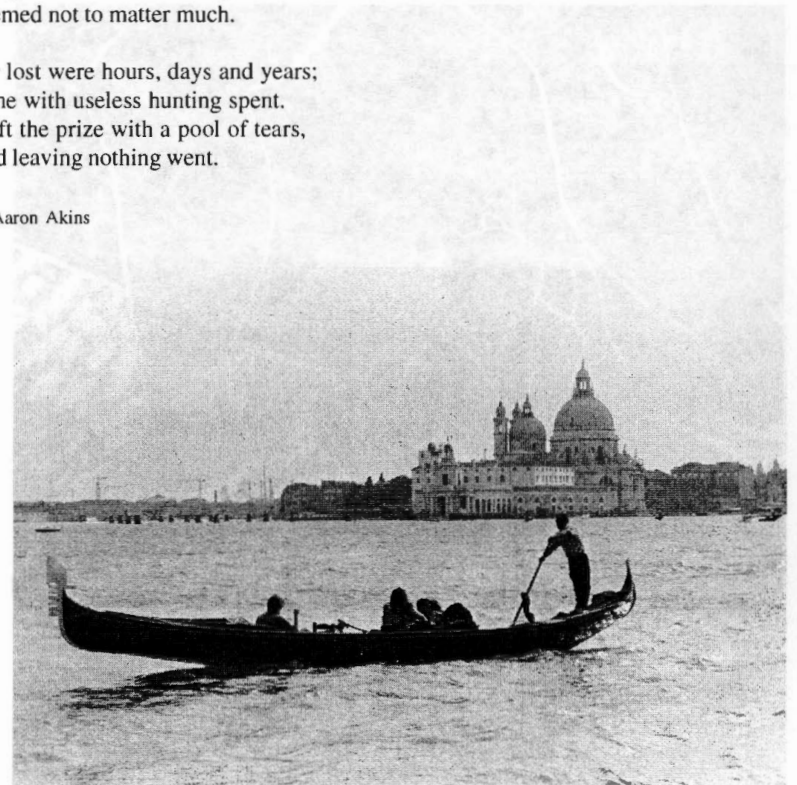
Searching for Knowledge

I walked the path with map in hand,
Ever searching for the prize.
Walked over stone, dirt and sand,
Always with wide-opened eyes.

And when the prize at last I claimed,
And lacking reason clutched,
The goal at which I'd always aimed,
Seemed not to matter much.

For lost were hours, days and years;
Time with useless hunting spent.
I left the prize with a pool of tears,
And leaving nothing went.

by Aaron Akins



by Beth Pearson

Untitled

Toys—dolls, blocks, teddy bears. . .
Things you haven't thought much about
Since your last rocking horsey was given away to charity.
Toys—cardboard boxes stored in your parents' house
Somewhere in the attic
Blue, yellow, fuzzy, purple, plastic, wooden essence of your childhood.
Toys—now they are coming back to you with your daughter's dreams.

by Natalia Suit

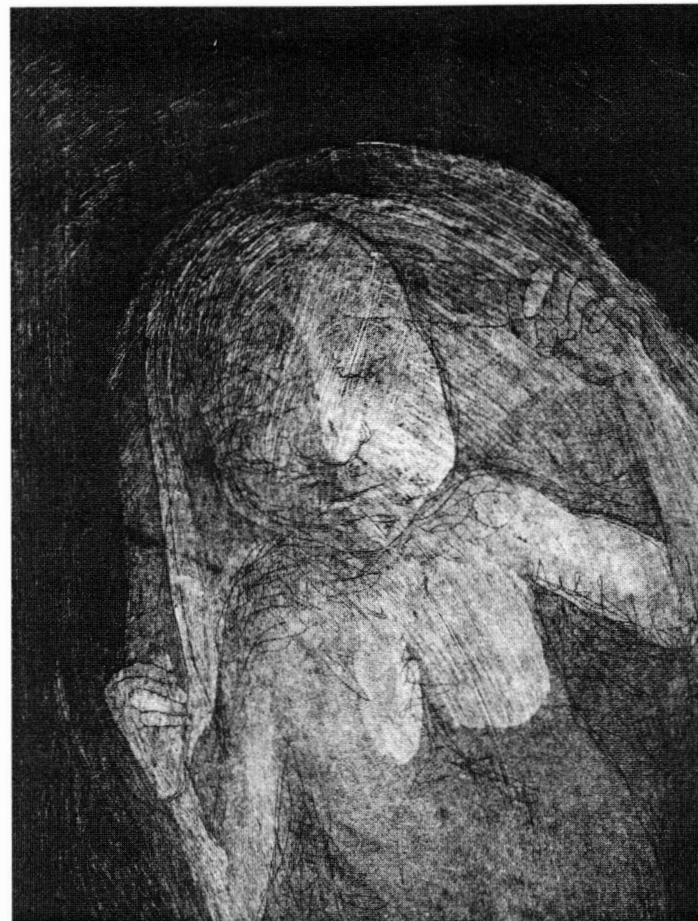
Untitled

Now
With You
Flesh to flesh
Sharing heartbeats
After my cries gave you breath to call me mother

by Mandi Aubrey



by Evan Longfield



by Rachel Hatfield Dalton

Two Ravens

I saw two ravens on an iron cross
Atop a weathered steeple.
Have you forgotten your Lenore?
I questioned them,
But ne'er received an answer.
Stoically they held their station,
Even as each other's gaze,
Remembering nevermore
The sorrows of bygone days.
Like winged prophets they soon were gone
To evangelize another place
And left me here alone once more,
In a solitary, crowded room,
To be forgotten, like Lenore.

by Jason Payton

Full Circle

My mind is on a roller coaster, going round and round, up and down... Suddenly I feel a draft. A cardinal flutters by. I grab his rope and ask for an audience with the pope. The cardinal chirps and bites my finger.

In a flash, we're at Caesar's Palace. The crowd cheers! Well, I have an audience, but the pope has left the building...along with Elvis. I figure that I might as well entertain, so I start singing, "There's a bluebird on my shoulder." The redbird bites my earlobe and then demands that I take him to St. Louis for batting practice.

I feel another draft coming on, so I trade him to Baltimore for a shortstop...After a short stop in Baltimore, the cardinal returns.

"All right," I say. "Which way to St. Louis?"

With that, the cardinal points—east, to be exact. So now he's a compass. I pick up the compass, get my bearings, and start drawing circles...

There's that draft again...So I sit at my drafting table with my pencil and my red and black crested compass, and draw circles...round and round, up and down goes the roller coaster.

by Steve Burwick

ANGEL

This poem is in dedication to my older sister, Lori, who died December 18, 2000.

A beautiful face
A lovely, kind voice,
One that will always be
Remembered.
A beautiful young woman,
An angel in heaven,
She died before anyone expected,
Now she is hard to let go.
She is missed dearly
The pain is almost too much to bear.
The love she had
And the love she shared,
My love for her
Will never disappear.
Not ready to accept her death,
Not ready to let her go.
Not yet, anyway.
Waiting for her,
For her to come back.
Come back to say hi.
Expecting her to come back
To tell me she's alive,
That I don't need to cry,
That everything's going to be okay.
I miss her more than I can describe.
I want to see her again
Even for just 5 minutes,
Just long enough to say
Goodbye.

by Brenda Turner

Four Years

Four years. That is the extent of our memory. There is something Orwellian in that truth. We have no history but four short years. The rest is but a myth, truth washed in shadow, a thing of no substance. Four years.

I can still remember the magnolia tree, whose branches I sat in during the height of its magnificence. There was a broken stone bench at its base. I would climb up in the cool of night and sit above the commons. It has been felled along with many good trees. Four years.

There are no more classes at the fountain, its memory torn from the ground. The Hopwood tree has been ground to dust, and the plaque at its base has vanished. In their place are iron lamps and a cross I fear to tread upon. Four years.

Where is the old theater where I laughed and wept, staring misty-eyed as friends and acquaintances transformed upon the stage? Where are the plays that so moved us? Shakespeare has been banished from our campus, and I fear he has taken the better parts of our nature with him. Four years.

We have lost so much, and what have we gained, air-conditioned classrooms and a well-lit commons? As the water wheel turns and turns, I wonder how much did we lose four years before my coming, and the four years before? Who but the faculty remembers? What will remain of the Milligan I once knew? They used to leave the bell tower unlocked, and we used to haze freshmen. We were a church once, and as I sit and stare at a dry baptistry, I wonder how long it took. Perhaps it was only four years.

by Jason Reed



by Beth Pearson

brittle

every word is a risk.
every thought could be the last.
and one step at
a time
is being calculated
and judged.

it rains today, like everyday
i say with contempt
to the sky
knowing someone hears but
wondering how i know
look out my
tight screen mind
seeing in continuous grayscale

and i could probably look up
watch the dome cave in
sigh complain
rename myself and
move on-
but i'm told
the world in its present state
is dying
which, if true would make
each second a precious gift

so why resort to apathy?
as defense? any sentence could
cut off-
out of chances to justify
to "contemplate"
my ideals-
would i then understand the
severity of simple words? the
complexity of every step?
life
is
fragile
i don't want to grasp that
yet.

maybe i should be
ecstatic
that it rains everyday.
maybe soggy shoes drooped hair
are signs
i'm still breathing
maybe i should
jump
headlong
eyes open
into muddy puddles
and not look back

by Hannah Bader

Foolish Things

The picnic table is wet
From the rain occurring now.
And a shell falls from a tree above me,
As if I didn't have enough bombardments,
I say aloud to no one.
As if Nature never cared.
And I pick up the small, black shell
(Most things look small and black at night however,
It may have been brown)
And I crack it in two
(On account of the fact, that is,
I am the most destructive force on earth)
The seed breaks evenly, as if meant to
And I notice two small, black spots
One appears to be rot, I can't really tell why
The other begins to move
Slowly, as if awakened from an alcoholic sleep,
I drop the foolish thing, I can't really tell why
I decided to leave then
But before, I left
A dollar on the table as adequate compensation.

by Jon Hall



by Carolyn Payton

Aunt Katie

The sun hasn't risen yet and Aunt Katie is in the kitchen making a racket loud enough to wake up all Coffee County. Snoring men sleeping on the screened-in porch hear the banging and ringing of the pots and pans; they pull their sleeping bags tighter over their heads. Walking quickly toward the outhouse, cold splinters reach for their feet, but they escape. Old tennis shoes muddied in the morning dew, hands groping for the wooden door, disheveled hair. Pal the dog opens one crusty eye and slips back into sleep. The women and children had been outfitted with down mattresses, with warm blankets indoors in the communal living space. It was to no avail; the clutter in the kitchen has woken them up; they are rubbing their eyes—tired from staying up playing cards the night before around her kitchen table. Katie had sat in her rocking chair, never playing herself, but peering over occasionally to see how the games progressed. But all that's on the table now is a 4 of hearts and a tin covered with white biscuit dough. Bacon wafts through the air, helping to open the squinting eyes; eggs fry up over the wood stove.

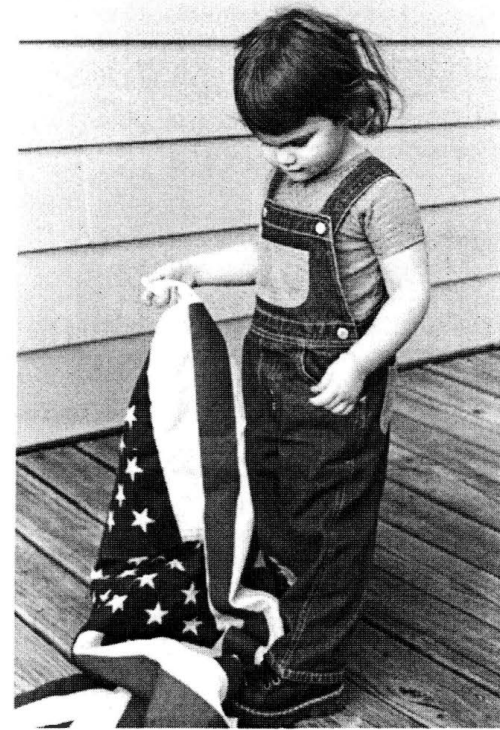
Later that day, the two boy cousins have scaled the huge oak tree in front of her house. Its leafy branches conceal their dirt-covered faces. The other part of the family is slithering down to the creek, meandering through a cow field, stepping over the hardened deposits left in the soft earth. In their arms are lawn chairs, a picnic basket, and two ripe watermelons. When they reach the banks of the creek, with its smooth rocks and rippled surface, they will spread out blankets and recline nearer to the damp earth than the scorching sun. Pal will pry a hot dog out of one of the mother's hands and chase the watermelon seeds as they are spit into the shrubs. Drinks will freeze in the creek, cooled by the mountain water. So the boys scramble out of the tree, chasing mischief down the dirt trail, and finding it again in the flowing currents of the creek.

They have gathered after supper and before bed. The boys are entertained with the dog, who had earlier growled at Aunt Katie as she reached down to pet its burred fur. Instead of starting out with cards, they ask Aunt Katie for a story. "What kind of stories do you know?" they ask her. Bouncing around her head are stories of pain, of independence, of fights sometimes ending in reconciliation. Instead, she tells them of the time she found a snake under one of the chickens as she collected their eggs one dawn. They listen, adding their own tales, until one of them suggests cards; they clear off the table and begin to play.

Drifting off, Aunt Katie rocks slowly in her rocking chair, reliving some stories that they knew, some stories they could only dream about, and some nightmares. Stories of her boyfriend, the father of her child. They wouldn't understand why she wouldn't move to Texas with him. It wasn't just about the drinking water—it ran deeper than wells. Stories of raising her son out of wedlock when that was taboo, both ridiculed for their positions, while she had to comfort him, nurture him by herself. What would they know of her pain, her longings? She was calloused. She dipped snuff and chopped the heads off snakes with a shovel. She was bound to this farm, to the barn, the potato house, the chicken coop, and the 2-seater outhouse. Not one to greet change or to wallow in sadness, she retrieved her thoughts from the past, and glanced over to see who was winning.

They are gone. Packed up their bags and automobiles to enter the suburbs again, leaving the sheets on the beds dirty. But she won't clean them. Not yet. She keeps looking around the house, trying to find some remnant of the people who had just crowded into her kitchen, leaving her lonely again. She finds a boy's sock on the floor, dog hair, and the 4 of hearts. She stuffs all but the hair into her bureau drawer. Now it was time for the sheets.

by Jennifer Openshaw



by Dinah Deford

A rooster crow delayed

Light created upon shadow
More interesting than pain
Colder now though with a price
And a rooster crow delayed

It's how you see the world
When eclipses have no say
I'm worried now without a doubt
But with them feel allayed

And now there is no dusk
And the same has gone with noon
When the backyard is your sun
And the front your lighthouse moon

by Jon Hall

The Last Kiss

My first trip to a Brazilian market. The sight of fresh meat hanging to dry. The taste of avocado ice cream melting in my mouth and dripping down my fingers. The sweet exotic flavor of sugar cane water. The barrage of cheap plastic cooking dishes and shaving razors. Dark eyes staring at me with unveiled questions. I take it all in, relishing the experience of a difference from my life. A step into another world. Then we turn to leave.

As I walk back to the bus, I see a little girl propped against the steps of a small shop. She sits there watching as our group scrutinizes the only world she has ever known. I smile and wave at her. She puts her hand to her mouth and blows me a kiss. My smile deepens at her gesture. And I send a kiss back to her. She blows a kiss. I blow another. And suddenly it is a game that we both understand and delight in. We exchange air kisses furiously even as I walk further and further away from her. Finally she disappears from sight as I round the corner and leave the market.

Who blew the last kiss? I can't tell. What does it mean, I wonder? This day, this small child. I wonder how long it takes to make a moment of meaning? Thirty seconds, an hour, a lifetime? Many words or a few blown kisses? I think of Virginia Woolf's "Kew Gardens" and the little girl who sat in painting class. The girl experienced the first glimpse of affection from an old woman who kissed her on the neck. "The mother of all my kisses" she would later call her.

It is a romantic thought, and I am not naïve enough to think that I will be the life spring of this Brazilian girl's kisses and other signs of love. But perhaps, someday, she will reach back, back into the depths of her mind and remember a sweet American girl who blew her kisses and spoke to her in a language deeper than words. Maybe she will not remember. But I will not forget.

by Amy Ewing

Untitled

Up in smoke, lives go up in smoke.
Dreams inhaled, despair and life's problems exhaled.
Smoke of pain, ambition, remission, depression.
Lightly floating thru the air of life.
Vanishing into thin air,
Never to materialize again.
Up in smoke,
Inhaled, exhaled, dissipated.
Dreams, despair, ambition.
So reverse the smoke,
Make it into a fragrance,
Fragrance of sweet,
Fragrance of cool,
Fragrance of ambition, dreams, fulfillment.
Sweet smelling floating away.
Embedded in the air, in the walls of
The mind. CIRCULATE.

by Muraya Muraguri

You are a Resounding Gong and a Clanging Cymbal

Sympathetic when all I need is empathy
Fool men, give them thought
Fill them with wisdom
Stuff them with understanding
Show just how arrogant speech is
Know just how stupid words can be
A deaf ear I turn
I am hardened in the kiln of words
Words spoken over and over again
Help that's not helpful
I spit at sympathy
Mine is toil, aches, and pains
No alphabet can fulfill my thoughts

by Muraya Muraguri

I.
Tree in the ground
bound
but free in the sky

brittle brown skin
but tender green fingers

II.
cave cold and hard
tearing flesh
screaming virgin
light born child from her womb

cave cold and hard
rending stone
weeping women
darkness in an empty tomb

by Kris Reed

*What was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to
imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself—
life hurrying past us and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose?*

~Willa Cather



The Phoenix - Spring 2003
PO Box 500 • Milligan College, TN 37682
800-262-8337 • www.milligan.edu