

**Northern Lights**  
**2008**



*University of Wisconsin*  
*Marinette*  
*Arts Journal*

ESCAPE TO PEACE  
by Michael Ceccarelli

We do ourselves disservice forever reasoning;  
for the engine of logic,  
can also imagine,  
becoming a reporter in the presence of creation.  
Post card tableaux,  
stretched like a velvet Elvis,  
on a roadside fame;  
unnoticing of nature's brutality.  
The shore erodes.  
Mountains crack and crumble.  
In an endless onslaught of  
wind,  
wave,  
and cold.

Surrendering to simpler selves,  
dissolved within the herd,  
idolized,  
iconicized,  
idealized,  
in attempting an Escape to Peace.

# Northern Lights

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University of Wisconsin  
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KNIGHT by Frank A. Oczus, Jr.

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Editorial Committee: Jennifer Flatt chair, Gabriella Sheldon, Maureen Frawley, Corey Kaempf, James LaMalfa, Amy Reddinger and Jane Oitzinger.

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## THE SWING by Kayla Bauer

The dirt track created as my feet  
brushed the ground is no more.  
The swing has ceased to swing  
an the grass has grown over.  
Colors fade as does my youth.  
Looking ahead on this swing of childhood  
I see the past.  
Leaning back, facing the limitless clouds  
I watch my dreams stretch into the sky.  
Although the swing welcomes me,  
my childhood is nearly over  
And I must say good-bye.



THE SWING by Kayla Bauer

AN ODE TO LIFE  
by Michael Paquet

Full of twists and turns  
Is this great Mystery;  
Hills, valleys, bumps and ditches  
Holes as deep as Hell;  
Highs as glorious as Heaven.  
Trials that refine us;  
And fames which encourage us.  
We must tread this life path  
With care and caution, for we ne'er do know  
When a trial is around the bend;  
And must walk with even more Caution when we prosper,  
For life has a nasty habit of catching us with our  
Pants down!



HOPSCOTCH by Laura Egilsson

THE HARLEQUIN  
by Michael Ceccarelli

I illuminated the darkened world;  
the long told tale, and sultry song,  
the memories of forgotten folk.

The clarion call, the clash of arms,  
the profane oath, and hushed promise.  
Hero, villain, sorrow, mirth.

I am the whisper in the venerable ear.  
The scratching pen and yielding parchment,  
the practiced chord o'er edgy strings.

An imperfect witness in the sacred court  
flavoring the past, gilding the truth  
till in their brimming cups it is remembered.

I am skald, bard, poet, entertainer;  
the conduit through which eternity echoes.

I am Harlequin.

Washington Island Ensemble  
THE ISLAND 7 AM  
by James LaMalfa

The island, past slumbering  
Shakes itself,  
Dislodging birds  
Who chatter their complaints.

The chilly July morning complements  
A blue cerulean sky,  
Cloudless and pure.

A flock of sandhill cranes trumpet  
Their joyous arising.

Like insects in amber,  
The sensations of a Washington Island morning  
Are eternally locked in my memory.



OWL by Kayla Bauer

## TATTERED TREASURE

by Katie Olson

There it lay. Awaiting for me to pick it up. Its yellowed, brittle pages call out to me as I look at the worn cover with torn edges, and crinkled picture which is fading off the cover. All that's holding it together is a thin strip of blue binding tape. How many have read you? Enjoyed the delightful tale you hold within? Bent with age and use. Stay together one last time to tell me your tale. I reach out with trembling fingers and gently caress the cover. I carefully pick up the delicate treasure and open up to the first crisp page...



BOOK by Kayla Bauer



WATER PLEASE by Kayla Bauer

Washington Island Ensemble  
A THREE PANCAKE MORNING  
by James LaMalfa

Our Nordic, blond-haired waitress  
Moves with smiling efficiency,  
Like the weather,  
Sunny but cool.

The bright chattering tourists  
From the cities  
Begin to fade,  
Become transparent,  
Then disappear.

They are replaced by images  
In blackened silver  
Of rockbound, treeless coasts,  
Stern fishermen looking west.

Pictures of Icelandic women  
At their spinning wheels  
Rise before me.

The city dwellers,  
Like colorful twittering machines,  
Blaze with color  
Then pass from view.

They are of no consequence.

Only the land endures,  
And the legacy of stolid Norse immigrants  
Who seeded this island  
With their ancient culture.

going to car nine, took pity on me and grabbed my suitcase. He hauled it the rest of the way to car nine. He doesn't know how close I came to kissing him.

I shared my cabin with a young married couple and a man very close to my age. He saw my long blonde hair and heard my delightful American voice and decided to celebrate the coming New Year with me. He was prepared with two bottles of vodka sitting on the table. He got glasses and poured the young man, me and himself a toast. The young woman never got a glass.

So he raised his glass to the New Year, to health, to prosperity and his good fortune, I suppose. I lifted the glass and clinked it against their glasses. Then I did an unpardonable act: I set the glass down without drinking. Even though I knew my gesture bordered on being an insult, I knew I couldn't drink. For one, as a member of the team, we had agreed not to drink. For another, I never drink with strangers. For a third, I never drink alcohol while I'm on a train in Russia. Alexi was stunned. He tried the same tactic again. Once again I clinked glasses and set the glass down. Fortunately the young woman knew some English, so she helped me explain. I think a lot got lost in translation because until I crawled up in the top bunk, he continued to toast every now and then.

Then with the help of the translator, he tried to persuade me to go to his home in Rossosh. He pulled out his cell phone and showed me a picture of his horse with him on it. He continued to try to persuade me to come to his house for the New Year. Of course, I continued to explain why I couldn't. While I was trying to make it plain to him that I couldn't go with him, I suddenly remembered something I had read about our trip. When I had read it, I had thought it was a rather foolish restriction and quite unnecessary for me to worry about. It was that members of the team were not allowed to date anyone while on the trip. I laughed to myself. I would never forget my first train ride in Russia.



MOJO RISING by George Gocht

Washington Island Ensemble  
ISLAND JEWELS  
by James LaMalfa

I approached my car at break of day  
To find it bejeweled,  
Covered with glistening slivers of color,  
Like gems scattered on the floor  
Of a pharaoh's tomb  
by careless thieves.

Bayflies, driven by the night rain  
Left their cloisonné wings  
On my windshield.

As if seen through a Gothic church's windows,  
The morning's light  
Illuminated shimmering segments  
Of brilliant hues.

By midmorning the sun dried the rain  
And the tiny jewels drifted away.

What good was the Bayflies' sacrifice?  
Perhaps only to give a poet pause.

MARY  
by Gabriella Sheldon

I met Mary in a private foster care facility on the outskirts of Beijing in the summer of 2007. She was only about seven months old. Outwardly there was nothing special about her. In fact, she would have been considered less than normal, definitely not special by most people. Although she didn't seem to be worth our time, there was something about Mary that touched me, touched us who were volunteers at the facility. The other 20 orphans there were winners compared to her. They had escaped death in a state orphanage to be given life-changing surgery and a chance for adoption at New Day Creations Foster Home. They were the beneficiaries of heart surgery and spinal operations among other procedures and treatments, but Mary's problem couldn't be fixed by surgery.

Mary's brown eyes followed our movements, but her face registered nothing. She didn't smile; she didn't coo; she didn't show any facial expression at all. And she didn't play with the toys around her. At times she let her tongue hang out. She would suck on her bottle slowly. When we fed her with a spoon, as much was on the outside of her as in the inside. Yet there was something about Mary that moved us and made us want to change her life. Truthfully we were her only hope for life, for if she were to be found severely mentally retarded, she would be sent back to the state orphanage. A child sent back to the orphanage could never be adopted. There she would die from lack of stimulation. We all wanted Mary to live.

Every day the staff and the volunteers worked with Mary. Because she was so unresponsive, some thought she was deaf. When I held her, I sang to her and repeated her name over and over. I touched her. I held toys in front of her. I put them in her fingers. The nurse and her nannies massaged her cheeks and her tongue, trying to stimulate muscles that were not being used.

Slowly Mary began to change. She started to hum. We were so excited. In a few days, she started picking up toys and looking at them, turning them around in her hands. Her bright brown eyes began to see things around her and to notice them. And then one day Sonya, a volunteer from New Zealand, came from the facility almost shouting. Mary had smiled. We cried together because we now had hope that Mary would come out of the nonresponsive world she had been living in.

The next time I worked with Mary, I too saw the smile. Then she started

Earlier on the drive to the train station, Christina had told us that we would be sharing our sleeper car with strangers since she couldn't get all our tickets together. Holiday travel had made that impossible. Most of the tickets were in car five, but three were in car nine—two together and one alone. As the oldest member of the team, I had offered to take the solitary bunk in car nine. Usually one boards a car from the car door, but in our case we had all boarded on car one. That meant I had to go from car one to car nine, pulling my bag. I started off cheery enough.

About half way through car one, the warmth of the train started to penetrate my heavy down coat, my faux fur lined boots, my hat, my scarf, my gloves. I really started to feel cozy. Occasionally I had to stop because passengers had placed packages, baggage, etc. in the hall. When I travel abroad, I like to spend at least six months studying the language. For this trip I had a much shorter window to study in and, therefore, had mastered only a few phrases: excuse me, please, and thank you, plus a few others that weren't useful at all on the train. When I encountered an object that blocked my way, I had to find the owner, say "Excuse me," and then gesture as to what I wanted done with a "Please." I would smile grandly and say, "Thank you." I found out first hand that Russians on trains don't smile much.

I made it from car one to car two, but not without difficulty in opening and closing doors between cars. My backpack kept banging into the doors and my purse kept banging into me. My suitcase got a lot heavier as I lifted it through the doors. As I walked, it kept banging into the walls of the narrow hallway.

As I pulled my bag, I no longer felt cozy. I felt down right hot. I was sweating profusely and the heat was weakening me. However, I kept going. Slowly I made it down another car and another and another and another. Finally I was on car five where I would say good-bye to most of the team. Somebody said there was a change and I could stay in one of the cabins in car five. WOW. I put my suitcase under the bunk and sat down. I couldn't believe the ordeal was over.

About 90 seconds later, I was informed that the original plan was still in place. I yanked my suitcase from under the bunk, replaced my backpack and purse and headed down to car nine. As I pulled and lifted my way from car five to car six, I decided to take my coat off. I was just too hot to keep it on. However, holding a heavy coat while pulling a suitcase and carrying a backpack and purse proved to be just as difficult. I kept dropping the coat and ended up putting it back on between cars six and seven. It was there that Jimmy, who was also

THE TRAIN RIDE  
by Gabriella Sheldon

There is something special about firsts. Most of us can remember our first day in school, our first kiss, our first big romance. To be sure, I will never forget my first train ride in Russia. It all started on a cold afternoon in Moscow just before New Year's Eve, December 29. I was with a group of singles from Atlanta, Georgia, plus a translator and one American who had lived in Russia for around a year. We stood outside waiting for our leader to come with her son.

As we waited, the near zero temperatures began to sink in. It was cold and the sun would soon set since we were at 55 degrees latitude. It was only going to get colder. We were all wondering: Where was Christina? If she didn't show up soon, we were going to miss our 6:00 train to Rossosh about 600 miles south. Finally, a few minutes before 5:00, she and her son showed up. She had had a slight mishap. She had decided to wash a load of clothes and the last person who used the toilet had forgotten to put the wash machine drain pipe back in the toilet. The flooding took time to clean up.

We quickly joined our luggage in a bus and headed across town to the train station. We got there before 6:00 and quickly unloaded our bags, each person taking his or her own. I had a 50 pound bag, a 20 pound backpack and a purse of unknown weight. Everyone else had another bag too. I had planned on bringing my guitar, but at the last minute I was told it wasn't needed, so I had a free hand.

We quickly started moving toward our train. The frigid air was hard to breathe as we pulled our bags and walked as fast as possible. I was following a Russian translator who thought she knew where she was going. Just as we were about to board, she got a phone call which stopped us in our tracks. We were boarding the wrong train. Immediately we left the platform and headed back where we'd come from to another platform and our train. Once again we were traveling as fast as we could; this time our speed was closer to a run than a walk since it was 6:00 and the right train was getting ready to depart.

We arrived at car one just as the train was closing its doors. Surprisingly we all were aboard a few minutes later when the train started moving. Some of the group had actually boarded a moving train. One of the Russians had said, "Leave the Americans behind." Fortunately the translation came long after the fact.

sucking her thumb, which helped strengthen her mouth and tongue muscles. She continued to hum and pick up toys. Every day she seemed a little stronger, a little more responsive.

I spent most of the summer of 2007 in China. I walked on the Great Wall, lived in rural China, ate roast duck, rode trains and bicycles, saw temples and shrines. I was with Mary only two weeks, but those two weeks were the most memorable of my summer. I will never forget how love and care began to transform a life that seemingly was worthless. And I will never forget how precious a smile really is, for Mary showed me the priceless value of a smile. Compared to Mary's smile, all those other things seemed so small and insignificant. I'm so glad that I met Mary.



SITTING AT 51 by Laura Egilsson

LIFE IS GOOD  
by Stephanie Thompson

Life is good in so many ways.  
Like long talks with Mom on our Green Bay days  
Cozy and warm in her small yellow bug  
Sincere, from the heart, holding a coffee mug  
I talk about anything that's on my mind  
Words and feelings are not hard to find  
She listens to me, ever so wise  
Her advice and good counsel I do not despise  
Mostly we laugh, sometimes we cry  
But when we're together there's no need to be shy  
Those trips in the car I will never forget  
Nor will I look back on them with regret  
I hope that someday, as we travel the road  
My daughter too can share her load  
With me, her mom, who listens with care  
Like the one I learned from, who was always there  
So Mom, dear friend, this poem's for you  
And I hope someday one will be written for me too

I open a final door, which reads "To Heart." In this room, I find but a simple rocking chair, in which sits a Man, and beside Him sits a small box. "What's in the box?" I ask. He looks from me to the box and simply says, "Regret." Reluctantly, I shuffle towards the box, picking it up. The Man in the chair tears the box from my possession and says, "I can't let you look in there today!" I shift in my place, and He says, "Trust me, there is nothing there that I have not already handled!" I think for a moment and find He is right. I then smile at the Man in the chair, saying, "Thank you...again." He replies with a smile, "It's what I do." I return the smile, think for a moment and ask, "Would you mind walking me out? It's scary out there!" He smiles, stands from His seat, and leads me by the hand out of the room, down almost endless hallways, and past my darkest memories to the exit.

When we reach the exit, He looks at me, and says, "You know, going through your mind is not the only way to come and visit me!" I smirk and reply, "I know. I just felt like taking the long way this time." He smiles and gives me a big, warm hug, bidding me farewell; even though He, Christ Jesus, my Eternal Lord and Savior, is always with me.

*I exit my mind, already eager to return to my heart, that I might visit again and talk with my Lord.*



SITTING ALONE by Kayla Bauer

A SINGULAR PLACE  
by Michael Paquet

My mind. What a dark place that few venture, and even fewer return. I do venture there when'er I build the courage, only that I might visit my memories.

Unfortunately, at the forefront of my memory catalogue are my worst memories; those I wish I could forget. Quickly, I shuffle past these hated times, making my way to my fond memories, and I lounge there. I walk, then, to my thinking area, wherein I lose myself in thought.

Forcing myself out of my thought/thinking area—like pulling oneself out of an exceedingly comfortable sofa—I approach the door to my current thoughts. As I make my way to this door, I can only wonder, “What am I thinking?” I open the door, and I find that it is lined with steel filing cabinets—all are filled to the top with papers, orders, and directions—in the center of this room is a dark, wooden desk with a lone box sitting on it. Curious, as I have not visited this place personally in many moons, I make my way to the box. As I walk, I pass the drawers labeled “breathing,” “equilibrium,” “digestion,” and lastly, “Statistics Homework.” Reaching the box, I firmly grip the lid, and pull it off. A black cloud of burning, aching white-hot fire erupts from the open mouth of the box. Swiftly as possible, I cover this agonizing opening. “Oh,” I remark, “So that’s where I put pain!”

I exit this room and continue my adventure. Making my way to the next room, I find that it is totally blank. I can only conclude that this room is meant for thoughts that have yet to be processed. Hmmm, must not have anything to do currently. Oh well.

I exit the last room and carry on my tour. I pass the room labeled “Jobs,” which refers to my current employment. From behind this door, I hear saws, jack-hammers, and pounding hammers. I muse on this for a moment, and conclude that this section is going through an expansion project, with the recent addition of a second job.

Puzzled, I continue to walk past a room labeled “Past Relationships” that has been sectioned off by yellow and red tapes, nails, boards, fire, and a large, flashing sign that shouts, “DO NOT ENTER!!!” Clearly, I do not want myself going into this room!

Continuing, I hear cursing, shouting, and other sounds from behind “Anger,” tears and weeping from behind “Sorrow,” and laughter from behind “Joy and Happiness.”



HAPPY PANDA by Kira Brown

STILL LIFE  
by Richard B. Peterson

The antique bowl arranged with brightened fruit  
Reflects the light and shadows from the pane.  
A still life to interpret in the artist's mind  
Now, how still, the frozen scene remains?

Life, still as in a vase of vibrant blooms  
Withers in the passing of a night.  
Captured in a snap of time which moves  
Without regard to human past or when.

She sits as still as time, not looking up  
As he sits frozen while not looking down.  
No word is spoken or an eye engaged  
In still life they execute a stepless dance.

Celestial fruits enjoyed on earthly ground  
Mark the ripening of daily life well spent  
Not delayed past time to pluck the bough  
When regrets are but the wasted seed

Still life, life still; in universal ticks.  
The tocks speed beyond man's illusion.  
Like fruit to be enjoyed in season ripe  
Not postponed until the spotting of the flesh

Pick not from the past with times judged tart  
Nor in expectation of more perfect fruit  
Feast upon the most succulent of days.  
The perfect ripeness of the day at hand.

MARCH 12TH, 2008: AN ODE TO MIRACLES  
by Michael Paquet

1. I do ask the reader,  
Do you believe in miracles?  
I do, and I am about to tell you why.  
Four years ago, to the date fore-mentioned,
5. I was thrown into a world unknown to most.  
My bones cracked, sinews burst asunder, and I,  
Gentle reader, was going to die.  
Thrown into a coma—one step short of death—  
My broken body was rushed to the hospital,
10. Wherein my situation was weighed; the doctors announced  
That I would not last the night.  
After exceeding their expectations of living 24 hours, they said 48.  
After 48 hours had passed, the doctors said I could go anytime.  
When I awoke, the report was changed so that I would forever have
15. The intellect of a 4th grader, as areas of my brain were *erased* that are  
responsible for learning. When I walked, I shocked the doctors.  
I stunned the doctors when I started learning again.  
Against *all* odds, I escaped the hospital within a single month.  
After more trials, and against all reason, only two years after the
20. Accident, I completed high school one year early at the age of 17.  
and it is now that I am here still with you, O reader;  
I walk the halls of our school—barely a scar visible without  
Careful examination—a walking miracle,  
For all the world to see.
25. Thus, it is now, gentle reader, that I implore you to  
Believe.

what they say. And little magic people of all kinds and colors crammed in. And monsters—would you recognize my monsters? Do you know what shape guilt is? Or fear? Confusion? Loneliness? Would the pain be as fire red-blue-purple-black as it feels? Would you see the monuments? The little grey graves dug for every time I *tried* to do the right thing?

If my car were the one sent spinning into space at that railroad track, I have this sick feeling that I might hear cheering as I was choking on my own vomit.

And that doesn't seem right. But I hear it.

If grey blood were pouring down out of my flip-top brain and I was gagging and convulsing, would you hold my head on? Would you bloodstain your only new shirt for me?

I did for you.

Or am I only dreaming?



TRAIN by James LaMalfa

TOGETHER  
by Richard B. Peterson

Hot spirits fan the fires of passion.

Embers flare, ignite intensely to desire.

Jealousies roil during moments parted.

Trust clings expectantly to moments shared.

Consuming love dying of exhaustion

The fuel spent in spurts of dazzling heat.

No time to bed and bank the cooling brands

Which radiate comfort in the darkling hours.

Infatuation turns to comfort.

Cheered by intermittent bursts of sparks.

Histories, stories, longings, secrets held.

Unspoken moments. Unmasked yet understood.

Companions on a journey bound together.

Respect of two as one and one as two.

Lives of giving more and less of taking.

Enhance both souls in cosmic unity.

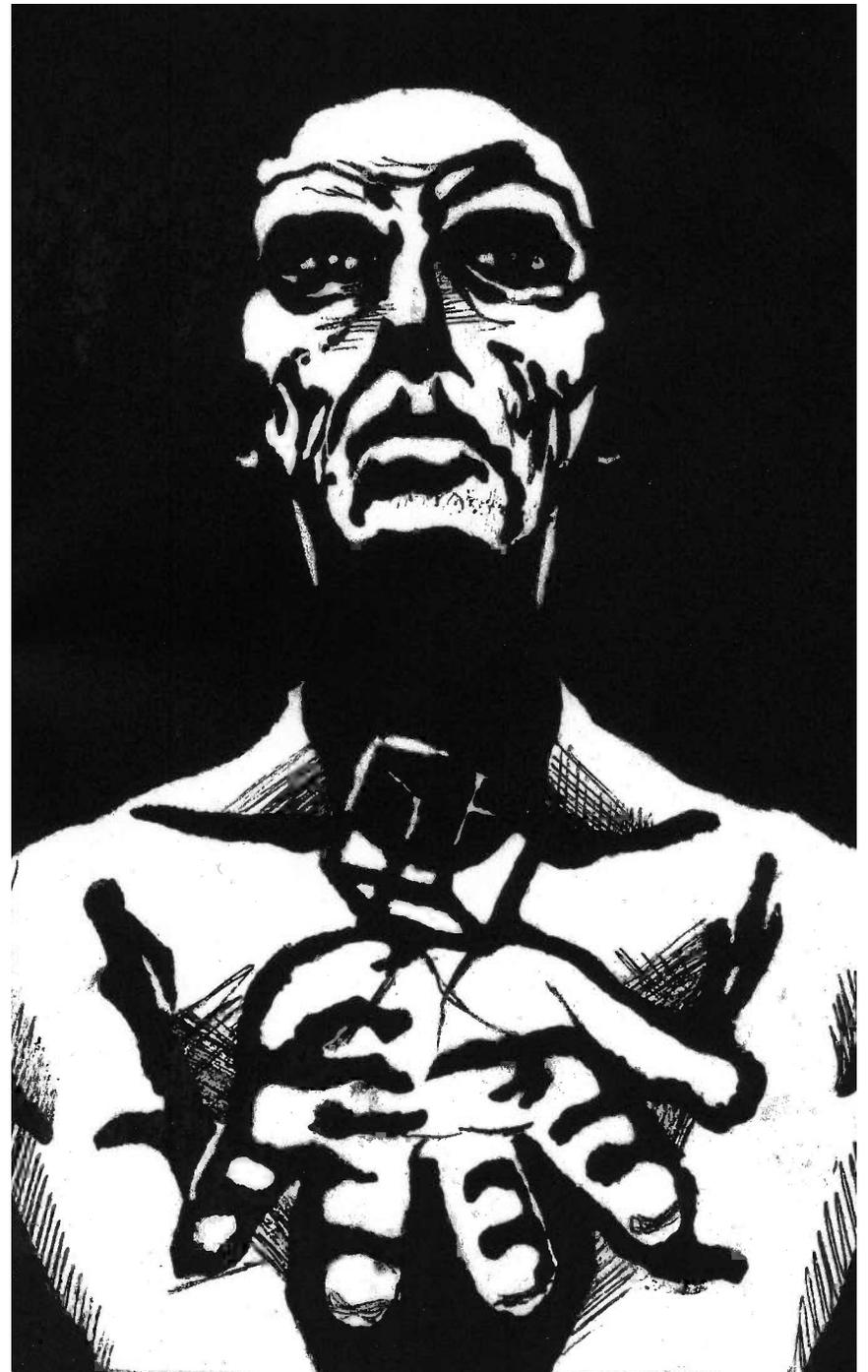
## BARSTOWS' WARM BARN

by Darwin Adams

Sam just showed up on the porch one day. He sat quietly, a safe distance off, and watched as my cats devoured their morning bowls of cat food. Every now and then a stray cat would show up and mooch a meal, so it wasn't unusual that we had another scavenger. But it was odd that my seven hungry felines showed no territorial posturing or growling; they sort of ignored him. Usually, they were wary of any interlopers and would run them off. Sam was very cautious, however, and didn't impose. But I could see our uninvited guest was anxious for me to disappear, so I watched him from behind the patio doors. Content and satiated, my cats started to peel away from the feeding bowls to lick and groom themselves. When the last of them had finished, Sam approached the left-overs. There was always enough food for everyone, but I was surprised how greedily Sam gobbled up every last morsel and licked the bowls clean. He had consumed double the food in half the time that a normal feline would have eaten.

Sam was the homeliest cat I'd ever seen. He had short, dirty-white matted fur with an unattractive slash of black on his forehead. One of his ears looked torn and a scarred-over gash, probably from a previous fight, marred his muzzle. A pale pink nose and dull, yellow eyes guaranteed that he'd never be featured on a cat food label. His paws were full of mud and his tail looked scroungy, as if he'd dragged it through thistles. Although medium sized, Sam was sinuous and scraggly. The sad-sack hobo appeared battered.

The roving maverick had neighborhood notoriety. Making the rounds, Sam had sponged, begged, or filched meals from everyone. The Wenzels had called my parents, who live next to me, and asked if I owned a white cat. Sam had been by their place, eating their cat's food, and generally causing a ruckus. Bill Wenzel didn't want to shoot Sam if he was one of my cats. My parents told him to go ahead and shoot him; I didn't have a white cat. Anyway, my mother was nettled that Sam was stalking wild birds and wouldn't really be heart-broken if he came up missing. Bill didn't shoot Sam. He told me later that Sam was "the community cat" and that if everyone else could tolerate him, he could put up with him also. My dad didn't shoot him either. My parents rationalized that Sam did patrol the field for mice, moles, gophers, and chipmunks and therein lay his reprieve. Across the road from me, the Wardens reported that Sam had frequented their porch and had ingratiated himself into food scraps from their kitchen. While visiting with Gail Warden in her yard one day, we saw Sam scamper down the Bay de Noc Road. She commented that *my* cat often loitered at their porch, waiting for a handout. I adamantly denied any affiliation to Sam and strenuously dis-



UNTITLED by Glenn Trybom

THE TRAIN  
by Dr. Douglas W. Larche

Once I was the first person at a car-train accident. I watched across the tracks with horror as the old man drove around the safety arm, oblivious to the frenzied blaring of the train's horn in counterpoint to the ringing of the warning bells. I shouted and waved my arms frantically. He did not see.

The cow catcher on the train sent the old brown Dodge careening up into the cobalt blue sky, rotating four turns in slow motion just like the black labrador I once hit with my station wagon.

I ran to the door of the car, recoiling at the pungent smell of beer and vomit as I stuck my head through the smashed window. The man's head looked like someone had taken a wood-axe just above his eyebrows...like a cartoon, his skull was laid open like a flip-top box, exposing the grey brain matter beneath. Blood was pouring down his cheek. But he was still gagging and convulsing, spewing and gasping.

I swiped at the greasy chunks coming out of his throat with my fingers, grabbed a shop rag from the seat next to him and lifted his skull back onto his head, where I held it with just a little pressure until the paramedics arrived four minutes later.

For that whole four-minute season, I talked to this sad, blind-drunk, stupid, old soon-to-be-dead man, (or this cataracted, aged-deaf, tragic, grief-stricken grandfather) offering soothing words about help coming and holding on and being there for him. Telling him he was loved.

No miracles happened. His eyes fluttered, he took his last contorted and pleading breath as he went from my hands to the paramedics. For my part I had years of nightmares and flashback of catapulting cars, gushing vomit, smelling hands and bloody shirts.

It was a new shirt. I was a graduate student and I couldn't afford to replace it. A brown Dodge.

There once was an America where doing the right thing was as normal as rain. It wasn't a choice, it was a reaction. Just like my Dad. No questions asked.

Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when I wake up, shaking, in an icy sweat, I wonder, what if it would have been me in that car? What would you have found inside my chunky, flip-top gray brain?

Words? Little backwards printer's block words of all shapes and sizes. Antonyms, homonyms, synonyms, acronyms. Words that don't mean exactly

avowed ownership. She chuckled and remarked that I had named the very cat that I disowned. "I guess Sam has tenure," she conceded. Maybe the pestering tabby belonged to the Barstows. "If he does, I hope he goes back to pestering them," I said. "They have a nice warm barn where he'd be happy."

But the spunky little critter continually freeloaded at my porch. Sam literally gulped down every last speck of the wet food and crunched away at the remaining dry food as if it were going out of style. Wishing our guest would go away, but not go away hungry, I made sure that there was always enough cat food left for him. Even though I was the hand that fed him, Sam was terrified of me. All it took was the patio door to crack open and Sam became a white streak shooting off the porch. He wouldn't stop until he reached the edge of the field to see if I were in pursuit. But I would be left standing on the porch with a bowl of liver and chicken bits in gravy sauce. Unconcerned and unalarmed, my cats continued preening and licking each other.

Sam became a regular, patiently waiting his turn each day, and cleaning up the left-overs. But each day he became a little bolder and a little less patient. Eventually, he started to disregard the pecking order and bully his way to the bowls. My cats, especially my large female Martha and feisty male Catsby, resented the intrusion. They would, for the time being, concede but not without protest. Assuming a hostile stance with ears lying flat, eyes narrowed, and backs arched, they would growl out a warning to Sam who brazenly reciprocated with growls of his own. Several times, when it looked like brinkmanship would flare into combat, I interceded. Normally Sam would scam at my appearance, but he increasingly held his ground until he wasn't afraid of me. He would defiantly saunter off to a corner of the porch and glower, leaving my cats to nervously try to eat and keep an eye on him at the same time.

I didn't understand Sam's behavior. All the cat books I consulted said that cats wouldn't fight for food if the supply was plentiful, which it always was. My veterinarian suggested that Sam might be an aggressive feral who would tame down if neutered. If I could catch him, she would perform the procedure and it might solve the problem. I told her that I couldn't get close to Sam. I didn't even know for sure that he was a Sam; he might be a Samantha. Trying to trap Sam would only result in trapping my own cats.

The escalation finally erupted into war one day. Hearing a terrific scuffle, I ran out to the porch to see Martha and Sam in a vicious cat-fight. They were gripped onto each other, clawing and biting, and the fur was actually flying. Shouting at them was useless, so I grabbed the first object at hand, a hard plastic bowl, and chucked it at Sam. He was not prepared to take on both Martha



BARN by James LaMalfa

SALVADOR DALI AS GOD THE CANDLEMAKER  
by Dr. Doug Larche

Salvador Dali as God the candlemaker  
I'm melting!  
Frosty the Snowman as icon  
I'm melting!  
My useless eye wandering,  
Falling, lifeless lava meandering down my  
Not-quite enough-jaw face  
Have you ever noticed how  
fine the line  
Between the beatific and the horrific?  
Erupting pustules on an angelic face  
Scrape it till it bleeds with aluminum paste!  
Sacrifice whatever is yourself to the god of smoother skin.  
An eye melting out of a socket  
fat large gross grotesque clumsy smelly slow stupid worthless  
head swollen, stretched but not quite hydroencephalic  
Speaking of phallic  
That's when I first touched myself  
When I realized my mother was lying  
When she said that I was beautiful  
And I saw the hurt in my father's face  
And no-one else would ever touch me without flinching  
In disgust or pity  
I'm melting  
But not fast enough



BLURRED GATE by Kayla Bauer

and me. Martha, who I'm proud to say looked like she was getting the better of Sam, would not back down. Neither would Sam. They both stood paw to paw with eyes locked on the other in an aggressive Mexican stand-off. I grabbed a stick and swung it at Sam, who only then retreated towards the horse stable. I ran after him but he would only retreat in intervals far enough spaced to keep me out of sticking distance. Martha defiantly watched from the top of the hill, content to let me take the fight to the enemy. Afterwards, although I tried to coax her with food, she decided to spend the rest of the day perched in a pine tree. Sam didn't return.

I was pissed. My dad had given me a shot gun to control the possums who occasionally were a major-league nuisance. I unlocked it from the gun safe, brought out a box of shells, and vowed to shoot Sam on sight, which would probably be the next morning at feeding time. In the back of my mind I knew I couldn't do it. Possums, whom I loath, had death sentences commuted to banishment because I couldn't pull the trigger. Not wanting to admit it, I lacked the courage to shoot Sam. "What was he guilty of?" I asked myself. "Being a cat?" Maybe my friend Ben would kill Sam for me. He was a hunter who seemed to enjoy killing things.

Sam showed up the next day and took his place in the feeding queue. He was the perfect gentleman. Martha acted like nothing had happened even though her fur showed the effects of yesterday's battle. Sam kept his distance from me, but had a look about him that implied a truce was possible. I shook my finger at him and proclaimed I'd not put up with his boorish behavior anymore. If cats could roll their eyes and speak English, he would have, while saying, "whatever."

The other cats, while not embracing him, decided to let well enough alone. Sam started to sleep in the cat house, a miniature replica of my house I had built as a shelter. While my cats slept in a heap for warmth, Sam curled up alone in a corner bed. He was definitely a loner and an outsider. Even though I'd never petted him, I could approach him now and he wouldn't run. He'd just give me the international cat-look meaning "you're a weirdo." I figured as long as I was the one feeding him, I could give him my unvarnished opinion at any time.

One day Sam was sitting on the lawn. He had an air of contentment and looked smugly happy just being a cat. He didn't move an inch as I, resigned to the fact that our squatter was here to stay, walked by him. "Sam, why don't you go live with the Barstows," I said more to myself than to him. "They have a nice warm barn and I'm sure you'd be happier there than here." Sam's body language said, "Make me." I kept on walking.

Sam and I actually cultivated a workable relationship. Admittedly, I sort of began to get used to him. He was so odd and pathetic looking, and had such an indomitable, self-assured personality, occasionally dropping his brawler image to do something playful, silly, and kitten-like, that he began to endear himself to me. Rolled up in a snug ball, contentedly purring while napping in the cat-house, he didn't look like the menace I had once thought he was. The independent fur-ball was just a normal cat after all. Sam began to respond favorably, so I stopped casting insults at him and he stopped hissing at me. We mutually decided to bury the hatchet. The ugly little white cat had found a home.

During the winter, Sam began to act lethargic. Cat lethargy sounds redundant, but it was true. He didn't act as spry. He wasn't the same old spunky Sam. One day he didn't show up for breakfast. Cats will run off at times, mine did occasionally, so I figured he was off carousing for a mate. Pushed to the back of my mind, I remembered reading that sick or wounded cats instinctively hide to protect themselves from predators when they are most vulnerable. But then, I reassured myself, Sam wasn't sick, he was just off on a lark. But no one in the neighborhood had seen him either. At night I could hear the coyotes, but didn't want my mind to go there.

Sam didn't show up again. I didn't investigate. I didn't want to investigate. Surely, Sam had gone to live in Barstows' warm barn. He would have plenty of food, be in the company of other cats, and be happy. I drive by Barstows' every day and could easily drop in to verify that Sam is there. Or, I could call the Barstows. That won't be necessary. Sam is definitely in Barstows' warm barn.



LYNX by James LaMalfa

THE ALTAR OF THE PIG  
by Dr. Douglas W. Larche

I inherited green gridiron glory  
And status as a hero among men as my birthright.  
It would come naturally.  
A gifted athlete's grace, the lithe movements of an olympian.  
The raw power of a bull, the courage of a warrior.  
Speed, strength, hand-to-eye.  
I was an expected autumn messiah.  
A football would be my scepter.  
Like my father,  
And so I, a poet, tried.  
And sought beauty in the blood,  
Metre in the mayhem,  
Rhythm in the rage,  
Catharsis in the carnage.  
And found them all in images of crimson.  
With ice packs and Atomic Balm® applied upon my soul  
I sacrificed a living thing at the altar of the pig.  
Bit by bit, piece by piece, a tooth, a bone, a treasured eye.  
Gone to god.  
But I was never sanctified.  
I became only a wordsmith of the gridiron  
Not a poet.  
A footman,  
Not a hero.  
A son,  
Not a father.  
Whose courage was in survival alone.

In my family I walked a mortal among giants  
Who thought their hugeness was the natural order of the universe.  
But all that came naturally was my blood.



GET YOUR POPCORN READY by Sean Gardon

WHO PARTIED LAST NIGHT  
by Gabriella Sheldon

Outside my house in the deep white snow,

Somebody partied, somebody danced.

Tracks fracture the smoothness

Of the vanilla frosting.

A rabbit went here,

An opossum went there.

A bushy-tailed squirrel

And a white-tailed deer

All danced in my yard,

By the light of the moon.

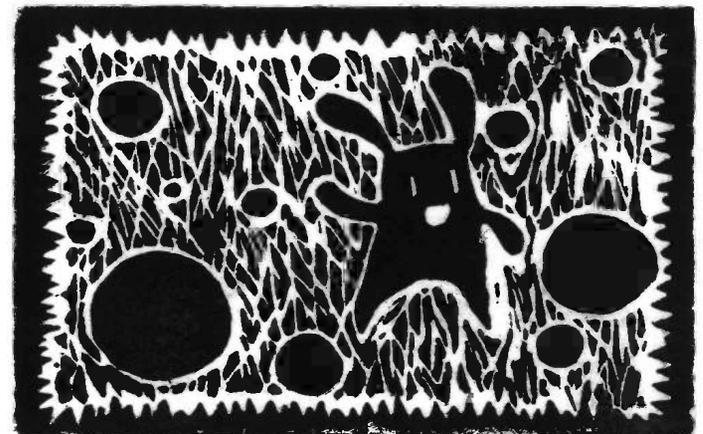
Even a bird and a mouse

Left their tracks.

But what is this track in the midst of them all?

Something that's large, that bounds in the night.

A party pooper: a large bobcat.



UNTITLED by Jessica Bruso



CAPTAIN MORGAN RULES by Terry Eager

DEAD PORCUPINE  
by Gabriella Sheldon

Brown and white he sat  
In the middle of the road  
Pulling on the carcass  
Of a very dead porcupine  
Whose quills still had their barbs.  
Hungrily he gorged  
On an easy meal.  
My rushing car  
Forced him to retreat.  
He took to the skies,  
His wings beat against gravity,  
And pulled him quickly upward.  
The carrion eater disappeared  
As I headed west.  
I felt sad and disappointed.  
Bothered that I had seen  
An eagle eating road kill.

THE HEART-SHAPED COOKIE  
(Adapted from Gevog Enim's *The Question Mark*)  
by Stephanie Thompson

Happy thing. Happy sprinkled character  
of dough. Who could guess,  
who imagined you once existed  
as an uninspired slice of sugariness?  
What sculpted you?  
Moments, precision, and the worker  
of our modern day?  
Were you not squeezed,  
fashioned and bejeweled?  
And you loved it all,  
got satisfying, and became your entity.

FROM THE COOKIE'S PERSPECTIVE  
(Adapted from Gevog Enim's *The Question Mark*)  
by Stephanie Thompson

Curious thing. Curious round-faced character  
of wonder. I could not have guessed,  
never imagined you once existed  
apart from a desire to taste.  
Are you starved?  
Deprived, waiting, anxious  
to have your fill?  
Am I not delightful,  
innocent and content to be?  
So you gaze on,  
remain unsatisfied, and let me live.

THE NIGHT LIFE OF A WALMART SHOPPING CART  
by Ashley Beaudoin

The fluorescent lights shine brightly above.  
The aisles are almost completely devoid of any human life,  
with the exception of an employee or a lone visitor in need of milk and toilet paper.  
A cold draft blows in through the automatic doors behind my stainless-steel family.  
They too wait impatiently for their upcoming turns.

The bright, smiling face of Hannah Montana leers at me,  
from where she perches across the way.  
Her t-shirts, pajamas—you name it.  
It's there.

I sit idly.  
I am next in line.  
Waiting for my turn.  
Just waiting to feel warm hands grasp me,  
Pull me away from those that I am so dear to,  
Take me from my safety zone and out into an area where almost anything can happen:  
Bumps.  
Scraps.  
Bangs and bashes.

Now, my turn has come.  
The one with the hands like fire pulls me away from my lot.  
She journeys through the empty lanes with the one she calls "daughter."  
She scans and picks through every other shelf.  
She is searching the aisles for every little, miniscule thing,  
then proceeds toward the customer-service counter.  
The only register open at this late hour.

My scratched,  
unpolished face barrels toward the counter.  
My wheels squeak across the polished floor,  
where the blinding reflection of the lights gleam upward at me.  
My heavy contents are emptied.  
Unloaded.

*Head and Shoulders* for the one with flaky hair.  
*Huggies* and *Isomil* for those who never get any sleep at night.  
*Lays*, *Keebler*, and *Pepsi* for those late-night parties and snack-driven crazes.

With their bags in hand,  
I am abandoned by the counter as they head for the door.  
I wait for Milton, the greeter.  
He, with a smile, returns me to my crowd.  
Here I will wait for my next turn, and who knows what that day will bring?  
*Kemps* ice cream.  
*Coca Cola*.  
Perhaps a handful of DVD's.

PRIVILEGED  
by Morgan Freuhling

I open my eyes to a world of color,  
Tulips that burn like living flames,  
Troubadours send bubbles of notes abroad,  
My wristwatch runs, but won't tell me anything,  
Dark storm clouds pop with flash bulbs,  
Rain falls too slowly not to dodge for fun,  
Each drop, square six-sided dice,  
A person builds a house of cards,  
A man paints with his dreams,  
Ships sail using numbered tones,  
Young girls fish for stars, within a vertical ocean,  
Silence suddenly freezes the world around me,  
My silver cord yanks me back,  
I awaken and cry,  
What do I have but dreams?

POETIC REFLEX  
by Michael Ceccarelli

Pushing ink around the page,  
fomenting forms vaguely resembling rhythm.

Praying that pulse will boot the bellows,  
firing the furnace,  
pumping passion into the pyre.

Annexing animus,  
making malleable the rigid containers of consonance;  
melding metaphor, conjuring connotation,  
releasing the elusive avalanche of allusion.

But I cannot borrow the muses' magic today,  
nor enlist their ephemeral endurance.

Caging Calliope, ensnaring Erato, evade my efforts  
when attempting to elevate prose with poetic reflex.