Forté
A Journal of Student's Poetry and Art

Illinois College
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Preface

Here's a small selection of poetry and art by some students of Illinois College. As editors, we wanted to try and choose the works that would best represent our college in the creative field. Hopefully this journal will do that.

We would like to thank the students who submitted their work and encourage everyone to continue writing, painting, and drawing. The creativity you've displayed shows the unique individual in each artist.

Michael and Lisa
Natalie Carpenter

Fine

The bald hairdresser cut my hair too short
That slap came out of nowhere
I got up and found everyone gone
Mama always says, “I don’t like to scream” but she needs to
I called him and heard her instead
She screamed “Bitch” at the neighbors once
Big Mama smiled at me Sunday and died Monday
No, I didn’t “let” him do it
I beat her hard but she never cries
Mama stopped calling him “Babe” after I was born
“That’s nice” doesn’t mean anything
I’ll never get the Holy Ghost
Dada really doesn’t go to Save-A-Lot those Tuesday nights
No one gets it unless they have faith
My sister won’t come and get her child
Mama nods knowingly whenever he leaves
A lot of things stopped after I was born
Mama makes Dada scream
Greasy hamburgers killed Grandma Carrie
Wide-eyed, my niece asked if this was her home
I ate dripping patties with her
Mama stopped oiling my scalp and scratching my back
I said no, that this was my home
I won’t be able to tell them I love them
until they can no longer hear me.
Natalie Carpenter

The House of Prayer

Pursed lipsticked mouths and beady black slits
Resting under flared fuschia hats and
Lacy white gloves blackened at the fingertips
Knobby, off-black limbs crossed rigidly with
Spiky hot pink heels sticking out, warning me
For the last time
To take that gum out of my mouth
Cause this is the Lord's house

Hushed whispers rising as the fat coal-black
Preacher in his flowing mulberry robe
Labors onto the stage, patting his
Ebony chins with his limp, white handkerchief
His thick, ivory lips opening slightly as
His deep, rich voice mutters
Psalms something or other and
Crisp, rice paper flap in unison,
Military-like to the correct page

And his baritone begins to bellow,
"Oh, God is good! Can't ya feel Him this morning?"
and, "Hallelujah!" the sisters and brothers holler back
And just like that,
All the hooplah begins:

The crooked backs straighten up and
The brown, withered hands clutch the pews
As shaky forms rise up to testify
To praise Him
To get the Holy Ghost as their
Loose spike-heeled limbs dance fluidly,
Aimed at shiny, black delicate Mary Janes
Aroused walls mixing with the moving church organ

And the choir unleashing trembling moans
The entire place is jumping,
Florals and pastels and stripes tangling my eyes

Until the preacher's swollen hand rises
And the wails become whimpers
And the rheumatism returns
As hunched figures slide back into their seats
Pampering their wrinkled, exuberant faces
And I realize that
I have swallowed my gum.

Jonathan L. Gonzalez

White Boxes
Angela Benedict

Black

Black is my mystery
blending with the night
mating with the shadows
undetected flight
Black my muse
Caress my skin
Black the soul
I’m drowning in
Black my tongue and
Black my eyes
in darkness veiled
I terrorize
Black makes love
without regret
Black my mind
in shadows set
Pale skin in black
My body free
Black the truth
inside of me

Angela Benedict

Fatal Lover

You’re drowning
but you don’t know why
Realism is you illusion
Liquor your lover
she caresses you soul
enslaved in her rapture
Awe struck by her
devil beauty
“Forget” she whispers
and dries your tears
And in the darkness
you do not weep
all the pain
is put to sleep
until the dawn
begins the day
She’s disappeared
she fades away
Mohammad Iftekhar Hasan

Untitled #1

A room.
And me.
Being acquainted for the first time with each other
with no past behind.
My friends had been here before seven and twenty nights.
So there you go, the transition in our relationship was
smoother
than rhyme.

This place had a queer arrangement
virgin to my perception.
As I was trying to include myself in the communal experience,
the sugar crystals took unbounded leaps
in the vessel behind my sight.
Suddenly she caught my eyes
her slender neck
her confused mask
she being so out of it...

Splotched with red
she is cuddled up by the door
sad, yet, trying to be oblivious to her pain.
Her gawkishness has charm which reminds me
of the memories of the sunshine girl
in the land of green mountain.
The heart-shaped crimson scars...
her legs like an alluring trapdoor...
her lips spread like petals of the sunflower...
a smile, so pristine and pure...

Thanks to this corner of the universe
because like the Buddha under the Ashoka tree
I had my revelation.

Only then I realized that those flickers of rounded ivory dices
beneath those soft sunflowers
were as catastrophic as they seemed.

Lisa Fay

Trapped in Darkness
Mohammad Iftekhar Hasan

Untitled #3

And the columns of lack less mist just stared at me,
while the cold, liquid December marooned itself on the lonely
lamp post.
He is prophetic but has no signs of life.

I am walking beside the dark cypress and tall pines,
dimensionless and superimposed
on one single plane.
The lights that have cut a few slits through the cascades of
leaves
are langourless—they are dead.

It's a cold December day.
And I notice the interlude between the multiple twilight zones,
I see colors that can't identify.

There are maroon that have lost its glow,
blue that gobbled up black,
and the red that looked like ghost-light.

What are those colors in between?
It seems like just too many colors
have splotched on the translucent canvas
that bends with gravity and time.
Too much confusion...
Too much pain...
Too many emotions that are stacked in the
back of my mind.

It is a very cold December day,
and I realize I would rather be dead now.

Ricole Schultz

Ameda

Hey Ameda, why'd you run out so fast?
tigers breath under eagle wings
can't help but wonder how
can't help but to just wonder
She tried to cleanse your wounds
She fought to fight with you but
Hey Ameda, why'd you run out so quick?
she always wished you'd stay
another hour to play
tiddlywinks
pick up sticks
tonka truck
but don't you take off so fast
she couldn't help to keep up
she wouldn't let you out so fast
but you ran and ran and ran from her
left watercolor stains running
away from guilty paper
through gutters:
back into her salty water glass
Hey Ameda, she wants you to know
she was your cheerleader
she was your lover
granddaughter
who tried to help you try
and they told her you died
and there was not a word
not a breath
so down
so down
no goodbyes
Ricole Schultz

Untitled

Expired time slowly elapsed
I hear your familiar ring
The resonating buzz
At four in the morning
Pulling me from dreams of
Your face
fully animated, patronizing
I wake
To your voice
Softly singing sweet sorrows
A desperate plea for
Understanding.
My ears,
Been dull for some time now,
Fasting,
Haven't rained since
Stone ages.
Your easy intrusion
Cutting open my delirious euphoria
That same bitter taste
Pinching me off,
Apprehensive of gentility,
Manipulating arctic flesh to bliss,
Revived from my deep freeze sarcophagus
Air tight and leak proof
Fall safe, I contemplated.
I, from a long latitude,
Disembodied, now immaterial,
Undisciplined, naked
Extended my limb magnificently
At four in the morning.
Commencing the pauper's request
A reminiscent attachment

Once exquisite.
Your indifference,
Silky, self-indulgent gloss,
Rabid machismo, carnal, breaching,
Lobbying for self content.
I, stoic, patient,
Longing to dismiss this
Void.
To pardon your in existence.
I, heavy with taught clavicle nuggets
Festering, nourishing, salty,
Lie silent, listening,
Cockeyed in my place of slumber
Long to stir again,
Lie lengthwise,
To nestle and burrow.
To scratch out, expunge
Retentive scars
From a broken, sharp edged lodestone
You disregarding sacred taboos.
At four in the morning, I sit.
Motionless, prudent, paralyzed,
Mighty and robust, but
You, fruitful and frisky carry on
Corrupting our bitter annulment
Liberating demons or
Swindling in new gambles to
Immobilize, solidify, and assassinate
Again.
You, imploring pardons and reconciliation,
Feast upon new exploits,
Paw at lost tolerance, and
Banquet upon my affectionate breast,
I black of face, draw deep breaths
Feverish, flaming, heaving
Rancid what if's.
I, sharply polished, philandering, cast
your spell,
I, pitiless, fortunate,
Harvest my haste
Quite luminous,
And rejoice.

Marie Williams

My Dream

The darkness calls me like a song from the heavens.
I look above;
twinkling
glowing
movement.

I close my eyes and feel the weightless air
run through my fingers like silk.
I want to be there;
suspended.

I want to walk the bounding, airy steps of long ago;
and watch the earth,
watching me,
watching it.
Brother

As children we played
  fought
  shared

We enjoyed the cartoons on Saturday morning
And the go-carts and motorbikes Dad brought home
We played house and commando
  And dreamt the dreams of children
  I taught you to tie your shoes

Later we argued, competed
  Life was different and we went out own ways
We were strange and annoying
  Teasing
  Dirty looks
  No girls allowed!

Now you're older, a man now;
  You have your own life
  pursuits
  dreams
I think about the days when we were kids

Sometimes I miss the go-carts, cartoons, and
  make-believe

Everything was easier, simpler
  No questions
  No separations

Do you miss it too?

Lobster Boys
(a Glass of Bordeaux in our Glass Bottom Boats)

Would you like another drink, my dear?
No, no, my feet are growing little fish
but please, dear, be my guest.
Why do you smile? Did I smile first?
Do I smile as you do?

The walls are growing thin:
I can hear them bleeding away against the rocks
outside, where a hale and healthy locust
is chewing away at my meal,
while his brother, the yellow grasshopper,
is writing down all that I say.
I say,
“Lemon, not lime, in mine.”
And you!

You giggle at the lobster boys that
stick their face against the glass,
yet your eyes wander strangely when I giggle, too.
Do you not like my laugh? Didn’t you laugh before?
Do I laugh as you do?
It was not me buzzing but the
table of crickets in the back,
neat the wall.
The tall tsetse fly
has flown by their table, but
their voices shatter too much to notice him.
They are singing in starts, and laughing with wings
that say,
“Chirrup! Chirrup!”

“Lemon, not lime, in mine.”
The locust is leaning against the vine wall, 
smoking cigarettes made of my ten dollar bills 
that he flushed from my wallet 
not two years ago. I did try to catch him, 
but I just couldn’t fly. 
Why do you stare at me so? Is it 
a ladybug behind me 
that’s caught your eye? 
Yes, 
yes. 
I know.

I know. 
My speech comes slow from this water. 
"I say," 
"I said lemon, not lime, in mine."

The katydids chitter to themselves 
and you smile, too, 
and did not see the lobster boys 
or listen to the cricket wings. 
"Chir-rup! Chir-rup!" they will say, 
but I promise to be deaf that time. 
If, 
if only you would wish me to.

I could listen instead to mislaid moonbeams 
gleaming on the soft, ripe lips 
of rosebuds, 
or look, perhaps, 
at sunlit grasses, 
that teem and spread with warm and fur-bathed sprites. 
If, 
if only you would wish me to.

Perhaps it is their crackling, 
clacking laughter that draws me to the lobster boys. 
It sounds as once of little girls 
and ancient, pig-fed witches. 
Perhaps the laughter of katydids 
is more than pouting rosebuds can bear. 

It is more than I can bear. 

And you? 
What would you say to the heartsick moon 
that kisses wet-wrought flower cheeks? 
Would you tell it, plead it 
that daylight has not quite stolen here, 
to make it languish in your bed a while? 
And Would your breath kiss its languid craters 
in a heavenly, lilting, dusty chanson 
that weaves, as a slow butterfly, ten across, 
and returns, all askance, twelve, no no, fourteen long? 

I’m sorry I’m not made of such fine stuff. 

And you? 

Are you, 

my dear?

Oh look- 
a lobster boy is boiling away in tears. 
He stands against the glass and cries, 
"Lemon, not lime, in mine."
Rachel Thebus

Heidi’s Eyes

What do I see in Heidi’s eyes?
Past the pools of crystal blue
quivering with fear and shock
is the terror of another time and place
she wished she never knew.

What do I hear in Heidi’s eyes?
wide and full of words
suppressed to chilling silence,
yet look close enough
and allowed the tortured screams be released and heard.

What do I feel in Heidi’s eyes?
Woe, the scars cut deep
and the pain penetrates the surface
from sufferings of the past,
none she wants to keep.

Who knows what Heidi saw
on the day that will never die
in the depths of her memories
played over and over again...
only before Heidi’s eyes.

Ricole L. Schultz

Fat Cow
Rachel Thebus

Backyard Games

Lights were flashing
stirring a hazy memory
of chasing fireflies at dusk
backyard to backyard;
far-off squeals from the child who captured his prize.

In another flash
the memory of the flickering streetlight
and the game of tag between cars
with the splintering pole as Base
and rosey cheeks on smiling yount faces...

...I watch the fireflies
flickering a beacon from their location
beneath the pulsating flash of the streetlamp
before I call my children form their neighborhood games
I once knew well.

T.C. Rammelkamp

A piece of glass found upon a beach

Glass held up to observe its translucence
and the shadows trapped within.
Its misty whisky-bottle look suggests
an illicit past, its first life full of wine and
nearby women.

It could have been a window.
Could have had a construction life,
letting you see out or... well
letting others see in.
but
Couldn’t windows have illicit backgrounds too?

Bridget Hendrickson
Bad Hair Day
T.C. Rammelkamp

The Function of Form

Brought out to work, an axe
has a heft peculiar to it—
peculiar to the man and soul.

The delicate, well worn, softly firm
handle, at once both soft and strong.
Giving grace to violence in form
Like a man in a woman’s curves.

Then the head:
the culmination the essence
as hard, slick, mean metal
curves and gleams
the violence achieved.

Achieved with one aching swing
biting and spraying
thin wood chips,
    small bits of life,
outward, upward then slowly falling.

They tremble in the air
with the delicacy of butterfly wings,
gently alighting
upon rough hands

The hands pay no attention
indifferent to such display
and as though humming a tune
they continue to rise and fall
firm in their task, firm
on the curve in hand.
The Freedom of Flowers or
Why Flowers are Better than Men

Part I
I walked through grassy meadows
With fields of flowers bright
I loved to sing and play and laugh
Beneath the pale moonlight
During the day I picked the flowers
And wove them through my hair
I pretended it was my crown
And I was a lady fair

Part II
Then you came near and bade me walk
Under the silver sky
You said I must learn to stay on the ground
And told me I could not fly
Yet I loved you, for you promised
The words you spoke were true
You said you'd make me into a fine princess
If only I'd learn what to do
You tore my flowered crown from me
Saying, "This you do not need."
I cried out I protest
Although you paid no heed
You crushed my flowers in your hand
And said you'd give me diamonds instead
Jewels on a gold crown

Part III
A crown to adorn my head

Part IV
Then you took me to your mansion
With rooms full of silver and gold
You told me it would be all mine
if I would do as I was told
You ordered me not to play in the flowers
For that was a childish thing
I must act dignified and lady-like
If I was to wear your wedding ring
The mansion was filled with luxuries
Yet I was not happy there
I longed to run through the fields
And weave flowers into my hair

Part V
So I left you to return to my fields
You said, "You be sorry if you go."
"I will never let you return
And you'll always be my foe."
But I walked out the door
Never looking back
As I left, I said to you
"It is love that you lack."
"If you truly loved me
Only for my happiness would you care
You would not have taken me from the fields
With the beautiful flowers there."

Part V
Since that time I have not cared
For mansions and fancy things
I do not like gold nor silver.
Or diamond crowns and weddings rings

Since that time I have realized
That the words I spoke were true
And ever since that day, my dear
I have not cared for you.

I wove a crown of flowers
And sang myself a song
For now I knew the truth
I had been a princess all along.
Michelle Shaw

Funeral at five Months

the time is past for preaching or condemnation
there is only sorrow left
and we have come to share in it

these two people are so young
yet the burdens of their brief lives
show in their eyes
and the sad way they smile

the preacher drones on about life and death
asking each of us to recognize our own mortality
but I only feel old

it is the girl's anguished sobs
which make all of us human
Michelle Shaw

Peace

My search for rest
has led me here
to lay under a tree with you
where my souls absorbs your heartbeat
and we solve the mysteries of the universe
together

life makes more sense
when viewed from the ground
instead of the treetops

I have concluded
true power is found
in surrender
not conquering

beauty is not in retouched photographs
it lives in you
for a few quiet moments
I can see it
under this tree

Lisa K. Liss

Stoney Way Campgrounds or
View From a Late Night Tree
(inspired from a poem by Padgette Powell)

I pitched a tent
at two a.m.
I breathed music.
I curled with smoke.
I jingled.
I sparkled beyond
the dirt between my toes.
I fled to the Bad Lands to tell tales, listen to fables with a dirty tribe around the fire until it was time
to climb trees with the native nomads so
I found my animal instinct.
I barked.
I scratched.
I whineeed.
I cooed and clawed.
I smelled.
I contacted aliens.
I told them earth is a jamm'n place and blew them a smooch from my tree branch broom stick.
And then I flew.
I was aglide...
I tried to swipe the grass that slapped under me but it was damp and way the hell down there and
I, of course, was up here.
I wanted to tell everyone, but know not how.
Humbug, Scrooge would say.
I wished my thoughts were amplified and fried like good chicken for everyone to digest.
I could fix breakfast for the morning.
I wished I was an Aunt Jamima, big bosom, red bandana, pancake giv'n, syrup smother'n, buttery bundle of big hugs mama.
The main thing is: be happy.
That's the main thing.
The unmain thing is: you're not gonna be happy until you do
what you wanna do and nothing besides.
Syrup! Syrup! Syrup for everyone!
If you're low down, blown 'roun, under cooked or over baked,
don't toss your cookies...
Give 'um to someone who wants something sweet.
Lisa K. Liss

The Walnut Outside My Kitchen Window

The leaves
on the tall walnut
outside my kitchen window
waver slightly in the wind
and wiggle in the middle
through the warbled workings
of his glassy-eyed porthole.
The tree
seems tarnished and antique
in the musy dusted glass
its bark waxes, its leaves sifting
through breeze like green kite tails,
the branches are wisps of brown hair
tied in several celadon ribbons
flowing
yet old wondrous woman
dropping crumbs for those who home
in her folds
always tall, never bowing
even through shaded faded tones
like Pachelbel’s Cannon
Played on an old
phonograph.
Michael Bivona

Smoky Heaven

One last glance at the fluorescent beer signs,
some half burnt out,
and I entered.
The room was black
but my eyes adjusted quickly,
making out the figures through the smoke,
tearing my eyes.

I walked awkwardly across the floor
as the gravel from the parking lot, still stuck in my soles,
mixed with the stickiness of spilt drinks,
from fights and jokes.
As I reached the stool my nerves received a startling jolt,
the bass.

I turned to watch the skinny cat thump the intro.
The vest wearing, poor-boy Stevie
screeched his lead guitar along with the bass,
not mixing, but each playing their own melodies,
making one song.

The smoke-screened bodies listened on,
most not turning to watch,
just listening while sipping;
they already know.

They know what this song's all about.
All of them have the same meaning.
Life can be bad, a man can be sad,
but it's sure a lot better when everyone's glad.

I knew this, everyone knows this,
we just all forget, except these people.
They're reminded through every sip and toke.

The very diseases that will lighten any spirit.
The pictures of King and Hooker
in between specials and ads
smile and sweat, while lonely thoughts
run through my mind.
The deep-lined woman behind the bar reached out
with her birth marked hand and touched my elbow.
Startled, I turned to her.
"Drink, honey?"
"Beer"

She smiled, winked and walked away.
Does she do this to everybody?
Regardless, I liked it.

I watched her crack a bottle top
as the harmonica wailed its anguish through my head,
resurrecting thoughts and feelings crucified by retro bars and
discos.

The night continued until vocals grew strained,
throats dry, while heads felt light, falsely capable.
Returning to the car, the gravel mixed with the carpet
while my heart and head continued the thump,
the bass.
Chad Heltzel

Wait Patiently

We can sit together,
Order some breakfast
In the booth by the window.
I'll take coffee too
While we chat
About our lives,
What's happened during the buried years.
I'll watch the people walk,
Watch the world pass by.
I'll sip my coffee,
You'll eat your bacon and eggs.
We'll unearth the past,
Drink it down with cream and sugar,
Order a refill,
Watch the world passing by.
We'll laugh,
We'll be serious,
We'll eat through the uncomfortable pauses;
Still outside our window
The world passes me by.
There's so much beyond the glass,
An immense existence
Oblivious to coffee and memories,
Where we can walk freely
Carry briefcases and shopping bags
And talk about the present and future
And forget about the constraints of time.
I can sit here, talk to you,
Argue 'til my face turns blue,
I will not let the world pass me by.
I can leave this booth,
Cast the tip into wind,
Leave the past where it belongs,

Not let the world pass me by.
I'll eat the rest of my breakfast,
Smile about my life, your life,
Peer out the window,
Between sips of coffee
Let my eyes gaze over
About the world passing by.
Chad Heltzel

Spelunking

Search deep within
And try to discover what's hidden there
Search deep into the caverns
Chiseling away the hard limestone walls
That immure all that wants out
For somewhere inside there is surely a spring
Bubbling among those walls
Yes, somewhere there is a source
For all the slow trickling
Through the chasms above
And it's screaming; it's pounding; it's ready to BURST
The walls right open
Crumble them down into the pits
Of nothingness
Solid, ignorant stone
Washed away by the rivers inside
That run FREE ! !
Inundating that cage, those fallen pieces of meaningless stone,
No more lost hope, no more lost words,
No more lost causes
We're gushing with an absolute, pure freedom
That carries away all despair
And when the despair is gone
That river will run forever
And ever...
Until the drought of realization comes.
And captures the river
Only now the facade is gone
The walls are gone
And the feelings run dry
And you're alone, exposed
With nothing to climb
Nothing to find

Just a chisel clasped in a hand
Wet with a mere drop of water

Lisa Fay
Self Portrait
The Heart Literal

You know all to well
That the heart is not
Just a drawing,
A couple of bowed lines
Found on greeting cards
And children's artwork
The heart for you
Is not a mere representation
Of an abstract idea;
It's biological,
A muscle that pumps blood,
A series of arteries,
An organ essential for life.
It's something of which you can take hold
In your hands
And squeeze
And clog
And rip all of the life from any living being.
With the single touch of a finger
You can stop it,
Start it,
Kill it,
Give it life,
Make it melt like a candle.
And it happens every time
I'm near you
And you know it,
You know it.
Right in the palms of your hands
You hold the key to life
What makes a man tick
And, oh God, you know it.
You use that power of yours

Every chance you get
And I can't do a thing about it
Because you know something?
... I kinda like it.
Caramel Nonsense

Somewhere between color and black
the un and the conscious
stretches the thick region of caramel
where your mind is sticky
and drops slushy ludicrous half thoughts
between painted dreams and lucid thinking
And they pour over you, these thoughts
and you crawl into the ring of gummy air
that consumes the reason you knew
So you swim and fly like night's angel
into thick, syrupy nonsense of visual trips
    Jack Nicholson is wearing an orange evening gown
    and singing
    And my beagle is answering phones at a greenhouse
    And I can talk to my spaghetti
And you levitate here, for the air is thick
and rich with fantasy that curls around you
like the sweetened smoke of a pipe
that you love to drink

Sleep

she floats freely to me
like a softened innocence
and petals like wings
sprinkle down
and I reach, moving through water
to catch her.
And she pulls on my hand
to her play
and we leap and dance
to a brilliant green field, that gleams
against a milky afternoon.

Together we swing hands
and gallop
and roll and tumble and wrestle
somersaulting through a floating sun
Her ponytail is alive and surfs the air
and her electric freckles sparkle
on a face of haloed apple
Enchantment
like the tickle of a weightless whisper
We loaf and stretch our bliss
to wings
The air lets us fly

As long as we can, we fly
and the charm stretches then
until it fades
back to heavy skin, thick fleshy eyes
and we pour into our warm waiting bodies
to wait
for sun again