IMAGES 2022
A LITERARY AND FINE ARTS MAGAZINE

by the Students and Staff of
Monroe County Community College

Front Cover:
Reflections • Illustration Techniques • Kristen Hause

Back Cover:
Mother • Illustration Techniques • Elizabeth Rodenbeck

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Note: This publication may contain mature subject matter.
This is the thirty-sixth year the compiled creative efforts of our community of students is being published. For Therese and I, this is only our fourth issue as editors together. The publication of the literary magazine is the highlight of our academic year. For this year, it is uniquely special.

For the past couple of volumes, due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) causing a global pandemic, the lack of students on campus combined with students not enrolling within the creative writing class contributed to the lack of writing submissions. Issue thirty-six reemerges with writing and art submissions for our students here at MCCC.

Not surprisingly, our students’ talent is on full display within this issue. Our hope is for you to see what our students have accomplished devoting their time and effort to producing these works of art. We hope our students’ visions and voices are resounding.

We would like to thank everyone involved in making this volume a reality. To the contributors: thank you for your courage and willingness to submit work for everyone to view, consider, and remember. To those who work behind the scenes—Grace Yackee, Rachel Eagle, Doug Richter, Joe Verkennes, and Elisabeth Brockman— we appreciate you, and we hope you know there would be no Images without your help.

We are already gathering material for our next issue. From now through next February, we will be accepting submissions from MCCC students to feature in the thirty-seventh volume. We collect these submissions through our magazine’s email address: images@monroeccc.edu.

Jenna Bazzell
Assistant Professor of English

Therese O’Halloran
Assistant Professor of Art
The small family stood outside the airport. They looked up at the tall, imposing building.

“Well… this is it,” The youngest, a blond woman, said. 

“Call as soon as you touch down in Michigan,” her brother, a man with black curls, insisted, “And again when you touch down in Alaska!”

“I will, Tolly.”

“And video call as soon as you get to Tiffany’s place,” The other woman, whose long red hair was pulled back in a tight braid, hugged her tightly.

“I will, Marie.”

“You’ve never gone this far away before, Lulu,” Tolly looked down at her, anxiety etched into his face.

“I’ll be fine. It’s only for a couple of weeks. You’ll barely have time to miss me!” She grinned back.

The last call for her flight rang through the open doors.

Lux clung to her brother and cousin for a moment longer before stooping to grab her bags and dashing for her airport terminal.

“Take care of each other until I get back! I love you!”

Five people stood just outside the airport terminal.

“Bist du bereit, Al?” One man said to another.

“Ja,” The youngest man grinned up at his brother, “Ich bin bereit.”

“Rufen Sie uns an, wenn Sie dort ankommen,” his mother hugged him tight.

“Ich werde, Mama,” Alan hugged her back, “Ich werde.”

“Du kommst besser zurück,” Another brother slapped him on the back, cane banging against his ribs, “Du bist Mama’s Baby.”

“Halte den Mund, Erik,” Alan elbowed him with a smile.

His father put a hand on his shoulder, “Pass auf dich auf, Alan. Und… Nimm das.”

Alan looked down at the collapsible knife in his hand. Carved into the wooden handle was the verse “Deuteronomy 31:6”.

“Opa’s Messer?”

“Er wollte, dass du es hast. Aber erinnere dich…” he tapped the handle with the tip on his finger.

Alan closed his fist around the knife and hugged his father, “Danke, Papa,” he turned to his last brother, “Jak-”

He was interrupted by the last call for his flight. Jakob shook his head and waved his little brother off with a small smile.

“Wiedersehen, Alan.”

“Wiedersehen!” Alan picked up his carry on and ran, “Ich liebe Sie alle!”
Counselor Counselor

A bright tangerine color floods the inside of your eyelids to tell you you’ve slept for too long. It’s bliss, and you are made. You’re not mad that you were pried away from your favorite dream. Not mad you’re removed from the perfect crevice you made in slumber. The shifting and quiet popping of your joints is the rhythm of your morning.

You see a familiar face mirroring your quiet smile as you wipe off the counters. The cleaner smells like lemon zest and energizes you. Dust particles dance in the air, relinquished from their original resting spot. You’re not robbed of tranquility. You’re at peace with these blue walls reminiscent of the great unknown outside. Inside is what’s known. Even if you cut yourself just looking at the knives.

Stiff and cold.

No matter. The pleasantries are yours. In the dead of winter it’s muted and your thoughts are yours. Luckily it’s August and lawn mowers and basketballs are the rhythm of your afternoon. That noise gives you life, the rhythm of being alive. Plans are cemented in your head like a concrete mold. The day is yours to seize, and you’ve done everything right in preparation to seize it. You grab your lanyard with a sea of metal on the bottom. Jangling, calling to you, leaving no door locked if you wish. Action is made, and as you are about to leave paradise your thigh vibrates.

An unknown number. And against your better judgment you answer the phone to hear a ghost of your past. Silver floods your head as you speak to them. Counselor this, counselor that, the counselor regurgitates your confidentiality in a box and ships it to your front door. You hear the doorbell and check through the peephole as if you are about to be jumped. Nothing was there aside from a box with a wide mouth, calling you.

Still on the phone you tuck it between your neck and face, acting as a voice of reason. Multitasking, you grunt and struggle to carry it. You prop the box into your arms using one of your knees and kicking the door shut with your foot. The burden drops on the table with a thud and the cats scramble as if bombs have been dropped. Close the curtains and the once blue walls look gray and muddied without light.

“Counselor, counselor—” You’d try to reason. Information leaks out of the phone as a black sludge, kissing the inside of your ears and leaking on the counter tops. The cold sour smelling ooze makes you recoil in disgust. You hang up to make it stop.

Your breath, heavy, is the rhythm of your evening. You slide on the floor frustrated and without a plan. A course of action doesn’t become clear for several minutes. Your hand reaches up and grabs a knife, then the rest of you lags behind.

You pry open the box like murder. The tape flaying open at the slightest touch as if you were scoring meat.

Your breath sticks in the back of your throat, suffocating like honey. The knife clumsily slides out of your hand as it seems like reality itself would fade for you. The clanging echoes, but it’s dead like winter again with no calls from the unknown, only you and your muted mind.

You push your nail under the lid to make the reveal.
Broken Heart
Shattered silence
Fallen footsteps
A broken heart leaves a shadow

Listen
Listen – give attention to sound and action
One is hearing, others are saying
It requires a motivation to understand and receive, without reaction
To perceive black and white, as well as the greying

The Reading Pool
The athenaeum seemed enormous,
Filled with infinite collections of philosophy, literature and prose
From the greatest minds the world has ever known.
The yellowing pages and frayed covers
Of the volumes filled every shelf and crevice in the room.
It seemed as though I could drown in the vast sea of
Knowledge that encompassed the edifice.
My mind is swimming with all the possibilities.
Slowly I inhale, ready to dive in.
Roar

Part 1

I felt tears stream down my face, but this time, I did not try to stop them. My lungs constricted, and I
could barely breathe. My sobs echoed throughout the surrounding forest and returned to my ears
frailly, as though my whole body shook on the hard, concrete sidewalk. I tried to see the
gigantic steel gates, but my vision was too blurred. However, I didn’t need to see clearly because
I knew what they looked like by heart. I had been the welder that fabricated the logos of my zoo in the
center of each steel gate, I had been the one who painted them with shiny black. But it was rusted
now. The logo was crooked and barely holding on. A small paint of flake gently floated through the air
and landed on my knee as two men dressed in satin black gave it a shove from each side.
I flinched at the sudden, deafening squeaking. Just a few days ago, I wrote “oil the gates” on my
-To-do list.

The squeaking of the gate’s hinges paused for a moment while Blake, my animal specialist, was
dragged out. His deep brown eyes matched his dark skin as both features displayed how frantic he
was. Then the horrible squeaking continued.
I cringed again when I realized the click of a new padlock was worse than the squeaking. A new
padlock. I didn’t own or have a key. My dream of protecting animals was now locked behind a
gate I had once built from simple scrap pipes. Now old and worn, I never felt the need to repaint
them drive by often and could picture the doors made of electronic screens, advertising the benefits
of myself as a target since I only try to save endangered animals.

Part 2 - Coming Soon

“I like hope,” I mumbled and then scraped away the remains of my salty tears. I thought, you know, I
 franchises and a few other competing AIs. They are willing to help us if we return the favor, so hope is not lost.”

Emily Klyder
**Disintegrating Dreams**

Morning tentatively pulls me awake,  
Eyes closed, clinging to dreamy residue,  
Delicately tracing lines of thought to induce a sticky state,  
Slippery is the grasp that records dreams askew.

The embrace of morning disperses dreams as dust,  
Later found in crevices, resemblance of the once lost,  
In want of solitude attention, they rust,  
By visiting reality, the loss of dreams is cost.

* Elisabeth Brockman

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**Prisoner’s Switch**

Must paired prisoners always switch sides?  
The cage, once removed, another shoved inside.  
Having always been told to "Love One Another"  
How can love for oneself exclude the love of a father-an abuser?  
Even when walking around in the light,  
I am cold as the chains holding men's faults with dark might.  
Once he held me in his arms,  
Sweet, until he squeezed too hard.  
Cut the invisible cord tying us together,  
Use it to bind his fate forever.  
Never to freely travel the world,  
Every potential ripped and reserved.  
While he withers away,  
I supposedly live truth.  
The truth is I miss being the one in the cage.  
I liked protecting people from the secrets he made.

Being outside isn’t much different than in.  
Same guilt and regret and mortality’s sin.  
He sits in his cell knowing he’s paying for wrongs.  
People lean on his bars, saying, "He’s where he belongs."  
I can run to and fro and do as I like, but  
I am trapped in the knowledge that I stole a life.  
Gone and dead are practically the same.  
I just wish I could share my hard-won gain  
With the one that lives in, while I live without.  
Without being able to say I keep fraternal love.  
I am expected to hate; I am expected to hurt.  
No longer a prisoner, but still with the pain,  
I live my life using the life that I took, and he gave.  
I live my life free of the bondage  
Knowing the escape left carnage.

* Elisabeth Brockman
Rivière Aux Raisin

The vine will shape.
The statued grape.
The purples, greens, and red.
The underbrush it will explore.
The sun’s hot blade it will endure.
Upon the scorching sun’s hot blade.
Nature's treasures will make the trade.
Watery cool,
The sun will snatch,
Upon the flowing glass I’ll glance.
And take a taste of summer’s last.
Upon the banks of Numasepee.

* Elisabeth Brockman

RIVIERE AUX RAISINS - It is the French name for the Monroe, Michigan River Raisin. The translation is river of grapes. I have spent a lot of time on the trails and in the woods. The wild grape vines seem to create statues over trees thriving in the underbrush and in the sun. As the summer comes to an end the sun that gave life to these vines’ trades back that life. The grapes become raisins, I sit on the riverbank seeing my reflection, and eating those last grapes. Numasepee-is the Potowatomi Native American name for the River Raisin; the translation is river of sturgeon.
So many unsaid words hang off my lips like the last raindrop clinging to the edge of a leaf, desperate not to plunge to the ground.

But that’s all it is, clinging to the last bits of hope, determined not to take that plummet I’m all too familiar with— the same fall that’s already broken every bone in my body yet I continue to hang myself over the edge again and again without hesitation.

How silly that little raindrops is, willfully fighting to force itself back up into the clouds that refused to hold it any longer, back to a time before it rolled down the leaves the same way they now roll down my cheeks when I try to sleep.

You’re my home in the clouds.

• Sara Ackerman
You’re like the book I’ve read a thousand times, concentrating through each page despite knowing every word by heart. Finding new things to love in each line, every word speaking to me as if I could hear it ringing in my head. Savoring each page as if it were the first time, slowing down to breathe in the most beautiful parts. The parts that are so detailed and compelling that I can almost hear the birds singing, smell the flowers flourishing through only their description. And the worst parts. The parts where I’m clutching the pages with tears in my eyes, at the edge of my seat struggling to get through it without so much as taking one heaving breath into my lungs. And just as I try to prepare myself for that inevitable ending.. I stop. Turn back to the beginning, and drown myself in your pages again, suffocating under both the beauty and pain within the story of us.

* Sara Ackerman
Six Word Memoir
1. My mistakes will never define me.
2. Digital connection doesn’t feel like connecting.
3. One compliment can change someone’s life.
4. The memory of her still lingers.
5. Addiction is like sinking in quicksand.
6. I saw death that fateful day.
7. Please let my fire burn again.
8. I wait but he never comes.
9. Feeling small isn’t small at all.
10. There’s no current without the wind.

* Joshua Sell
Soft Mornings
I slip into the shy landscape,
The air filled with a white drape,
Unannounced by twig or creak,
My eyes only see where I leap,
My eyes only are left to gape,
For the morning is lost to sleep.

* Elisabeth Brockman
Spark of a New Morning

Drops of sunny amber
Generate my ambition.
Blissful shadowy moments!
Awake, yet still, serene,
Rise to the occasion
Fresh, endless, untouched,
Grasping this energy
Courage to face unknown,
Gifted a new day.
I step forth anew.

* Elisabeth Brockman
UNTANGLED

LOVE is a strong emotion that binds us together.
It motivates us to treat each other right.
It helps us to find deeper understanding, it gives us reason to care,
And it serves as a root of our growing relationship.
To continue to fight and stand as husband and wife.

RESPECT is a choice we need to make.
The best gift we can give to each other – an investment for our good future.
When a new season comes, when challenges require sufferance because husband and wife are not to change each other.
The love within you accepts the other.
What is ahead of us is still unknown, good thing we are not alone!
Worry and fear are behind us.
FAITH, EXCITEMENT and JOY are blessings given to us.
To embrace the beauty of our union.
Strong and healthy marriage, LOVE and RESPECT are the reasons.

Together, we deciphered the mystery of marriage.
It is not about who is right.
It is not about who sacrifice a lot.
It is not about slavery.
It is not about separation but the combination of you and me.

* Maria Varner
I Believe in Nature

Nature nurtures the planet constantly,
She is always there and always aiding.
Her large, lush forests stand triumphantly,
Her great green influence never fading.
God remains unseen and unknown to me,
But I know that Mother Nature is there.
Her waves that sweep cities into the sea,
And her roots run rampant flaunting her flair.
I know what her beautiful blessings bring,
I’ve seen the epic effects of her wrath,
And I know she decides our being.
Her wrath holds a vile, adverse aftermath.
Ask me what being I choose to believe,
I’ll say green grass and the world I perceive.

* Tyler Haack
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