



Spring 1987

The Lantern Vol. 53, No. 2, Spring 1987

Anthony Fiore
Ursinus College

Lisa R. Talarico
Ursinus College

Debra Ritter
Ursinus College

Beth Riccio
Ursinus College

Matthew Noll
Ursinus College

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Fiore, Anthony; Talarico, Lisa R.; Ritter, Debra; Riccio, Beth; Noll, Matthew; Marino, Denise; D'Arcangelo, Maria; Salas, Angela M.; Power, Andrea; Moore, Rebecca; Long, Beth; Rohrbach, Erika; Corish, Julie Ann; Davies, Joel; Singhofen, Karen; Wilson, Eric Chandlee; and Moulton, Frank R. Jr., "The Lantern Vol. 53, No. 2, Spring 1987" (1987). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 131.
<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/131>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Ursinusiana Collection at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Lantern Literary Magazines by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

Authors

Anthony Fiore, Lisa R. Talarico, Debra Ritter, Beth Riccio, Matthew Noll, Denise Marino, Maria D'Arcangelo, Angela M. Salas, Andrea Power, Rebecca Moore, Beth Long, Erika Rohrbach, Julie Ann Corish, Joel Davies, Karen Singhofen, Eric Chandlee Wilson, and Frank R. Moulton Jr.

Spring 1987



THE ONE

The roaring wave which walls an ocean fort
Calmly crumbles and through it lets her pass
The soft sands know her size they can't support
Footprints form in glistening grains of glass

Her presence proclaimed by screeching gulls
Amazed her subjects gaze as on she walks
Fresh fantasy burrows into the skulls
Of males revealing feelings as they gawk

The breeze carries her hair from parts offshore
And lets it lightly leap into the air
Her skin more bronze than any mined ore
Her eyes the azure skies cannot compare

To everything I know her beauty lends
Without her she knows the summer ends

Anthony Fiore

PATRONS

Dean and Mrs. William Akin
Ms. Blanche Z. Allen
Ms. Susan Ashman
Baltzer Blosballick
Dr. Nicholas Berry
Biology Department
Ms. Ellen Bonds
Mr. Egon Borgmann
Dr. Laura Borsdorf
Mr. Barry Bowers
Ms. Adele Boyd
Mr. Anthony Branker
Mr. Richard BreMiller
Mr. Sterling Brown
Dr. Catherine Chambliss
Chestnut Books / Keschte Biche
Dr. Hugh Clark
Dr. John Cobbs
Continuing Education Department
Dr. Jeannine Czubaroff
Dr. and Mrs. Louis DeCatur
Mr. Geoffrey Doleman
Dr. Ross Doughty
Dr. Roy Dungan
Dr. Juan Espadas
Dr. George Fago
Dr. Gerard Fitzpatrick
Mr. John French
Ms. Judy Fryer
Dr. R. Scott Gassler
Dr. Colette Hall
Ms. Elizabeth Hankel
Ms. Cindy Harris
Dr. Joyce E. Henry
Dr. Ronald Hess
Dr. Peter Jessup
Ms. Auda May Johnson
Mr. H. Lloyd Jones
Ms. Debra Kamens
Dean J. Houghton Kane

Ms. Susan Koester
Rev. M. Scott Landis
Dr. Bernard Lentz
Dr. Joyce Lionarons
Dr. Annette V. Lucas
Mr. Conrad Meyer
Dr. Jay K. Miller
Dr. Douglas Nagy
Dr. Jeffrey Nelsen
Dean Debra Olsen Nolan
Dr. Frances Novack
Ms. Beverly Oehlert
Dr. Heather O'Neill
Mr. Jeffrey Page
Prof. and Mrs. William T. Parsons
Dr. Peter Perreten
Dr. John Pilgrim
Ms. Constance Poley
Ms. Sally Rapp
Mr. Ken Richardson
President Richard P. Richter
Dr. Bruce Rideout
Ms. Carla Rinde
Dr. Patricia Schroeder
Ms. Christine Shelton
Dr. John Shuck
Dean Peter F. Small
Dr. and Mrs. Roger Staiger
Mr. Harry Symons
Dr. Martha Takats
Dr. Lynn Thelen
Ms. Mary Tiryak
Dr. Victor Tortorelli
Mr. John R. Van Ness
Dr. Derk Visser
Ms. Tina Wailgum
Dean Richard J. Whatley
Mr. Nelson M. Williams
Dr. John Wickersham
Ms. Lorraine Zimmer

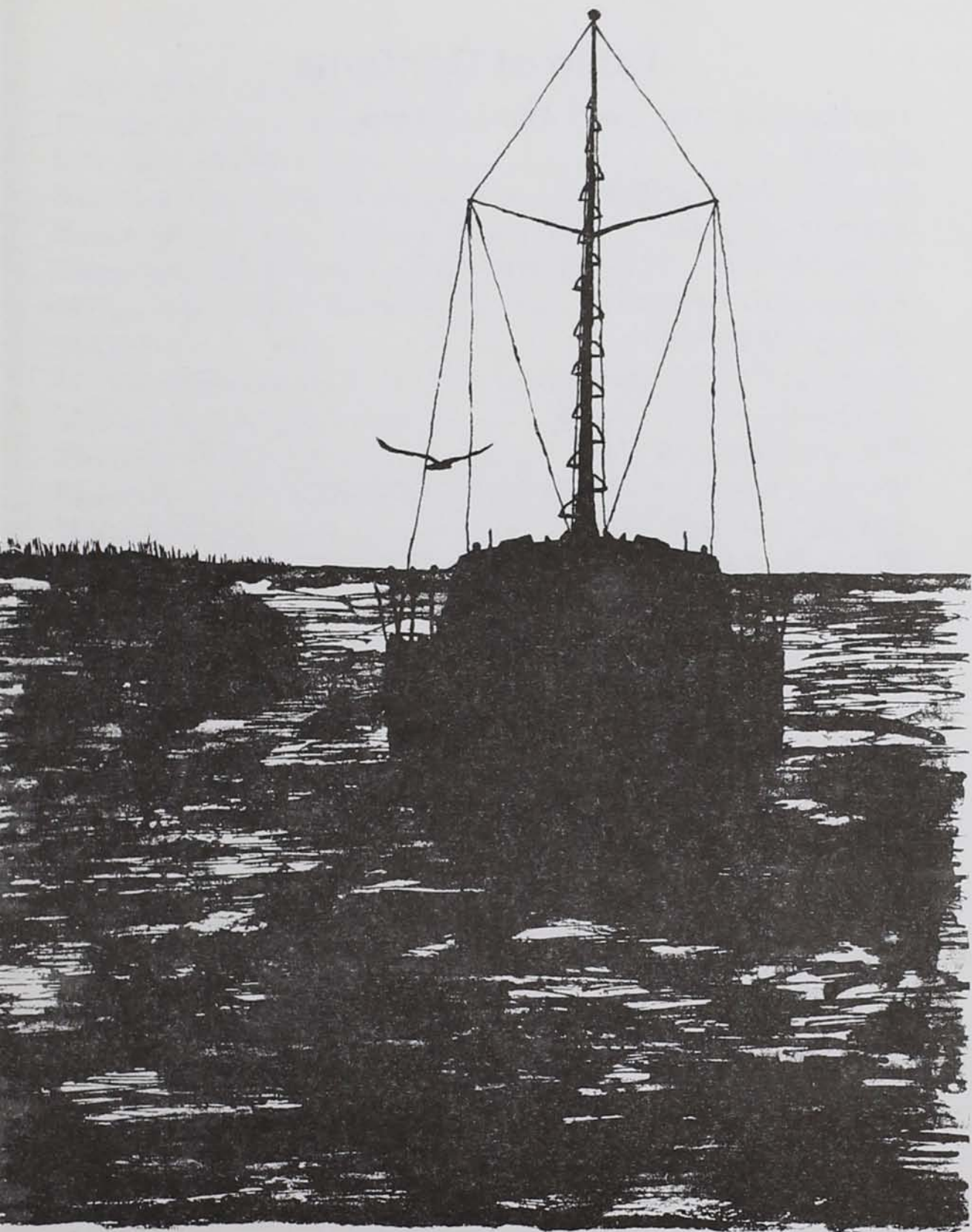


Table of Contents

Frontispiece "The One"- <i>Anthony Fiore</i>	1
Patrons	2
Painting- <i>John Spillane</i>	3
Editorial- <i>Angela M. Salas</i>	6
Homecoming—1946- <i>F.R. Moulton</i>	7
Puff- <i>Lisa R. Talarico</i>	8-9
Victory- <i>Debra Ritter</i>	10
Drawing- <i>Meg Sleeper</i>	11
The Prelude- <i>Beth Riccio</i>	12
Playtime- <i>Matthew Noll</i>	13
there's a killer in my heart- <i>Xavier Country</i>	14
Photograph- <i>Kurt Richter</i>	15
Who is Keats?- <i>Denise Marino</i>	16
Relationships- <i>Debra Ritter</i>	17
It's OK- <i>Maria D'Arcangelo</i>	18
Rasping- <i>Angela M. Salas</i>	19
Wearers of Underwear- <i>Andrea Power</i>	20-21
Conjecture- <i>A.L.C.</i>	22
Look her in the eye- <i>Rebecca Moore</i>	23
Counterpoint- <i>Beth Long</i>	24-25
Photograph- <i>Kurt Richter</i>	26
When the air is biting- <i>Rebecca Moore</i>	27
A Stream of Consciousness- <i>Me</i>	28-29
Centerfold- <i>Beth Long</i>	30-31

Bach's Concerto in E-A.L.C.	32
Tomorrow morn-Beth Long	33
Drawing-Susan Irwin	34
Ruminations on Bob Dylan-Angela M. Salas	35
last night a dream-Erika Rohrbach	36
Stephen-Lisa R. Talarico	37
A Baseball Story-Julie Ann Corish	38-40
I Am Sorry . . .-K.K.	41
. . . And Baby Makes Two-Joel Davies	42-44
Drawing-John Spillane	45
Next on Mr. Steinbeck's Itinerary. . .-Anonymous	46
Upon Visiting the Nursing Home-Karen Singhofen	47
Taps for Ralph-Eric Chandlee Wilson	48-51
. . . yes, I believe-Angela M. Salas	52
The Morning After . . .-K.K.	53
Conversation-Julie Ann Corish	54-56
Photograph-Kurt Richter	57
dear Man-Lisa R. Talarico	58
Photograph-Kurt Richter	59
Autumn Leaves-Xavier Country	60
Retreating Figure-Kurt Richter	inner cover

Editorial

If we define evolution simply as *change*, then the **Lantern**, and everything else, is continually evolving. Each generation of Editors and staff has its own ideas about how the **Lantern** should look and what it should print. The Ursinus community determines the theme of the magazine, if it can be said to have a theme, since the staff can only consider the pieces that members of the community have submitted. If a number of people are writing about a particular interest or theme, the the **Lantern** is likely to reflect this interest.

Now that the **Lantern** is being typeset and laid out by students, it is even more representative of its Editors, staff, and contributors. We hold ourselves culpable for any mistakes and pride ourselves upon our successes more than we might were we less responsible for and in control of the final product.

One of our successes is manifest in the response to our sonnet contest. We felt the urge to challenge our contributors by making them write within a particularly demanding form. People responded admirably to the challenge: we received a dozen entries. Of that dozen, three are included in this issue. The winning sonnet, "The One," by Anthony Fiore, is the issue's frontispiece. Congratulations to Anthony and to everyone else who entered the contest. Thanks go out to Dr. Louis DeCatur, who judged the contest, and to Dr. John Cobbs and Ms. Mary Tiryak who acted in an advisory capacity.

Congratulations as well to Beth Long, whose two color drawing comprises the centerfold of this issue. According to contest judge Ted Xaras, white is indeed a color. There were other fine entries to the contest as well. Thanks to Beth, Mr. Xaras, and all other contestants.

People responded to our expository essay contest on the subject of fantasies with a deluge of very nice short stories. Some of the stories have been included in this issue: they are delightful and entertaining. However, they are not expository in nature (designed to elucidate, argue, or define), so we have no contest winner. Thanks, though, to all who responded.

An obvious component of evolution is the "changing of the guard." Maria D'Arcangelo, the Associate Editor this year, will be Editor-in-Chief of the 1987-88 issues. I thank her for all her hard work this year and assure you that her characteristic enthusiasm, intelligence, and diligence will help the **Lantern** continue to evolve in a positive fashion. Remind Maria to put me on our mailing list.

Many thanks to everyone involved in the production of this issue of the **Lantern**: patrons, staff, contributors, typesetters, and contest judges. Thanks to Dr. Joyce T. Lionarons who, as advisor, neither smothered nor neglected us: no small feat.

Enjoy the magazine.

Angela M. Salas

HOME COMING—1946

There comes a time when dreams of youth
are past
And Grand Illusions fade. She's but a whore
That love for which a sailor's lot is cast
When he, unto this world's debris ashore,
Returns - (No flags will fly for him mid-mast);
Not he for whom maids wept some years
before,
But only one, till judgment shall be last,
Forgotten - summer's last surviving spore.
Oh God! Why hast thou made me what I am?
Where is my place in this thy earthly realm?
Is there no love for me that is not sham,
Nor course to which I may reset my helm
For some far distant shore yet undefin'd
Where love awaits and fate may treat me
kind?

F.R. Moulton

Puff

Puff.

Inhale deeply
grey pollutant
smothers your
lungs

Chat with the girls
laughter
silly jokes
release

Inhale again
grey pollutant
smothers your
concentration

Retreat to your mind
confusion
memories
pain

Inhale deeply
grey pollutant
smothers your
dreams

Regret for lost time
fantasy
recapture
gone

Inhale again
grey pollutant
smothers your
mind

Forget all the reasons
excuses
cheating
lies

Inhale the last
grey pollutant
smothers your
life
Crush the filter
black
dirty
ash.

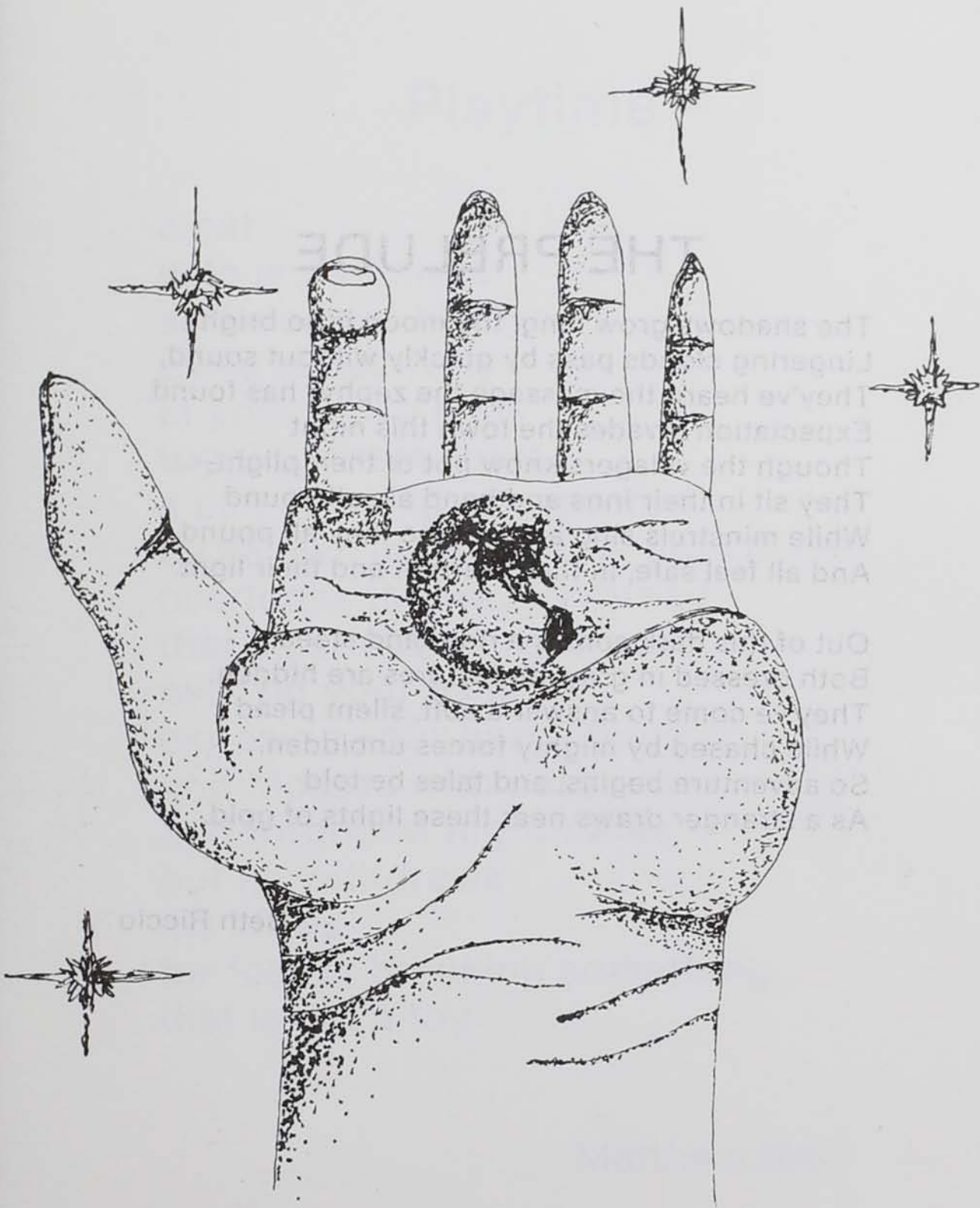
Puff.

Lisa R. Talarico

VICTORY

Dark
Forces
Fight within
The battleground
Of my mind, trying
To extinguish the glow
Of optimism and hope
That are their hated enemies.
I'm ill-prepared for the battle--
My only shields are innocence
And a belief in the goodness
Of Man. I marshal my strength
To withstand disillusionment,
Concentrating on my vision
Of a future without darkness,
Without war, without misery . . .
My enemies are weakening;
I sense their withdrawal.
Illusions intact,
I've won again.--
Forever
Shine the
Light.

Debra Ritter



THE PRELUDE

The shadows grow long; the moon is so bright!
Lingering clouds pass by quickly without sound;
They've heard the message the zephyr has found.
Expectation invades the town this night
Though the villagers know not of their plight--
They sit in their inns and hand ale all 'round
While minstrels sing and in time they all pound
And all feel safe, in their warmth and their light.

Out of this dark comes a rider and steed,
Both dressed in gray, all features are hidden.
They've come to answer a soft, silent plead
While chased by mighty forces unbidden.
So adventure begins, and tales be told
As a stranger draws near these lights of gold.

Beth Riccio

Playtime

a cat
with ivory knives
and sleep in his eyes
paws seductively
at your loose ends
tugging them apart
a ball of string, enraptured
by its own impenetrable tight coils
overlooks the frayed thread
that catches and rolls you
over on your back
exposing your heart, huge
and bloated with passions
and forgotten nightmares
but he withdraws
his claws
for fear of breaking something
that is not a toy

Matthew Noll

there's a killer in my heart
and he scares me
with his
cold cat feet
and imagination
whipsnap muscles
veiled behind dark apathy
and love

there's a killer in my heart
and his freedom is my fear
of bloodshed or worse
of failure
i hate him
but then realize
his eye watches even
the solitary route

there's a killer in my heart
and all the world's asleep
my mind holds him back
with a million flowers
and my heart
with loving friends
and i tell him to go away
but he only laughs
and calls himself
immortal

Xavier Country



Who is Keats?

Ah, yes
the question of the day

Let me see,
Well . . .
a man.

Yes.
Very good.

Striving to express his new, innovating ideas with the words his mind finds begging to be put on paper, through his best possible style.

Most likely,
Keep going.

Going?

Yes.

But wait,
The real question?

If you must,
Yes . . .
What?

Who am I?

What?

Who am I?

Tell me,
Who?

If I could answer that, I wouldn't be sitting here, desperately trying to scribble my own inner being down on paper so that I could understand it myself.

Well then.

Well what?

Who is Keats?

RELATIONSHIPS

An orange sits before me.
It is an unknown.
It promises sweetness, if I can
peel away the exterior,
the stubborn shell.

The anticipation builds . . .

I gently pull at the shell,
coaxing it to share with me
its inner secrets.

It remains indifferent.

I become angry,
pulling harder and harder,
trying to break through the barrier
to the fruit beneath,
until finally . . .

Success.
I've worked hard.
Nothing further stands
between me and the fruit
that I've yearned to taste.

But . . .

There are no guarantees.

Oranges can be bitter as well as sweet.

Debra Ritter

It's OK
You're leaving (again)
Don't want
to hear
what you
have (are you motivated by guilt) to
say

NO . . .
don't talk
of "next time"s
or valentines (or nursery rhymes . . .)
just walk
out the door, down the hall
and out (out get out . . .)
of my life (for good THIS time)

NO . . .
don't talk
of friendships
or hardships (or relationships . . .)
just run
as fast, as far as you can
and out (GET OUT)
of my life . . .

Maria D'Arcangelo

Rasping
Digging in pushing straining
For

NADA

Knowledge: I've run too far
too fast

Legs are barbells, lungs shredded

No reason

Frenetic, random motion

leap grace

pivot energy

vault fall

wintry failtrywinwinwinwin

What?

Reviled by some

Elevated by others

Analyzed too often

Understood by

whom?

What's to understand?

I do what seems necessary

rarely ask why

No time

Still I ask the face in the mirror

toothpaste froth on my lips

How much further can must will I go?

And why?

Angela M. Salas

Wearers of Underwear

By Andrea Power

“Honey, come in here and tell me if this fits!” Her order echoed off the powder pink dressing room walls while thoughts of horror reverberated in my mind. My first day on the job. My first bitchy customer. My first customer. And my first time delving into the world of Cross-Your-Heart-Bras in the Bloomingdale’s lingerie department.

As I walked to stall number three, I wondered what size this bovine creature was. Knocking twice, I inquired, “What can I do for you?”

“You can get me a bigger sized bra is what you can do!” And she flung open the door, exhibiting breasts the circumference of ripe canteloupes, sausaged into grapefruit-sized cups.

“Certainly. What size would you like?” I replied, having no understanding about the concept of numbers and letters used in brassiere measurements.

Glued to her fat finger which she pointed at me was a red Dragon Lady nail that I examined as she spewed her rage. “You should know that! You work here!”

The beast was right. I should know “that,” and I assured her I did know “that.” Thus, my first bitchy customer was the vantage point from which I began my career of conning lingerie patrons. Not all customers were so influential, although some provoked the imagination.

“Hi there. I’d like to buy a teddy for my girlfriend,” was what a 19-year-old named Mario said to me the first time he entered the lingerie department.

Every two weeks he would come in and purchase a new item for his girlfriend, Susan. Mario was a regular.

Those not-so-regular fellows were usually men choosing gifts for their wives. Unaware of her correct dimensions, one husband pulled out from his wallet a photo of his beloved, asking me to estimate her size. (I like a job with challenge).

I was never more challenged or frustrated than the night a woman insisted upon trying on nursing bras. She was very pregnant (at least eight months) and I was very anxious to get home, as it was 9:30, closing time.

Having an extra load to haul, the mother-to-be moved quite slowly. Likewise, she was quite leisurely in deciding what size would “work best.” By 10:00, she had tried on every brand in stock. At 10:15 she declared, “I just can’t seem to find what I want.” With that, she waddled out of the darkened store, and I was left cursing her from behind a pile of nursing bras while the night shift janitor vacuumed around my weary feet.

Closing the lingerie department was as much fun as opening. I always wondered why some people wake up before 10:00 on a Saturday morning to buy underwear.

Clutching the girl’s drooping shoulders, the woman with yellow hair said proudly, “Good morning. We’d like to buy a training bra.”

The daughter’s rouged face was barely visible as she contemplated the splotches of dirt and crusty mud adhering to her sneakers.

A white flash of capped teeth blinded me before I heard the mother’s airy voice. “Do you have anything feminine? Something lacy perhaps?”

As I pointed to where the fancy training bras hung, I noticed that the girl had a long way to go before reaching the peaks of growth her mom had achieved. Fists jammed into the front pockets of her jeans, the girl sauntered behind her hip-swinging mother to the “Pre-teen” rack where they decided on a brand called Blossoming Beauties. I laughed as they walked to the powder pink dressing rooms and wondered if it was time I burned my bra.

CONJECTURE

The ancient people's gods ate food
reserved alone for them.

I wonder, did ambrosia spoil,
or curdle in the sun?

Perhaps they kept the banquet
spread

from morning through to night
and nothing turned offensive there,
grew stale, or lost its taste.

It's likely, if this was the case,
[the gods could pull it off]

their friendships were like that as
well,

and love endured, unspoiled.

On second thought I must conclude
ambrosia didn't keep.

A.L.C.

Look her in the eye
And smile
Knowing you've
Dragged her
By the hair
Through the dirt
Bare your teeth
Make her think
You give a damn
Romance in that
Sweet old-fashioned
Way
Sugar and arsenic
She likes it like that
A hassle for you
A lifeline for her
Too bad you let
 the rope slip
Battered
Bruised
She crawls back
What does one do
 with such a pet?
Kindness--
 out of the question
A back bared
Is a back bitten
Bitten too many times
But she takes it--
When she can get it
Should she ask--
How could a gentleman
 refuse a lady
Especially with that
 Look
In her eye

Rebecca Moore

Counterpoint

black cat
feline
paw lift
claws unsheathe
HISS
tail twitch spasm agitation
lash (tail)
graze (claw)
leap--

claws reach
body stretch, extend
power explode from surface
push propel
to air
twist writhe always
balance
touch moment
absorb muscles
feline weight
tail twitch spasm
golden glare
sable strength
HISS scamper quickly away

white cat
feline
eyes blink
back stretch
paws reach
YAWN
tail twitch languid swish
indolent (tail)
sluggish (paws)
raise--

paws still
touch moment
 reflect lightness
 feline weight
body silent breath
tail lethargic
 eyes turn head follows
 lazy gait always
 balance
tail sway wave
 honey gaze
 frosted sinew
YAWN silent unhurried away

Beth Long



When the air is biting
 baring bitter fangs
the sky is grey and foreboding
clouds scudding across
 the ominous horizon and
mouldering leaves skittering
 across the icy ground
 (it's too late for them
 to touch down)
night falls fast
foreign moon burning cold
 imparting murky light
 incandescent heat
unspoken warnings from ghostly gusts
and trees speak mutely
 of death from decaying branches
stars shimmer black
 silent
 orbs in distant space
light within
flaming candles behind windows
a vacant and helpless
 vision of heat
then
i'll cry
for the frozen soul
inside you.

Rebecca Moore

A Stream of Consciousness

By Me

Sometimes, when I'm sitting at my desk doing my work or reading the stuff I've been assigned for a class, my eyes will wander from the page and I'll find myself staring out the window. From my room I can see the great big tree whose branches reach out to nod gently over the walk. When there's snow on the ground, I follow the shoveled paths with my eyes, and if it's absolutely miserable out, I dream of spring and birds and flowers and new leaves . . .

That's what I mean. I wander all the time like that. But it's no excuse, I tell myself. The worst is when I drift in class, too (my apologies to my professors), and I think of all sorts of things. Sometimes something the teacher says triggers a memory inside me and I'll follow that path.

I do have enough things to think about. It's been a little over three months, but sometimes it feels like I haven't had a father for a long, long time. It's worse when a sad song comes on the radio when I'm alone in my room, because I'll drop the pen and think about him. You know how you seem to be staring at something in the distance but you're not? I see the things I'm thinking of: my house back home, my mom and dad sitting at the kitchen table, my dad fussing with his tools in the garage, making some shelves or putting the final shingles on my dollhouse . . .

I remember when we wallpapered my bedroom. We'd put on the radio and listen to the station in New York that plays music from the 'forties as we tried to match up the intricate pattern of sprigs of lavender flowers. I would wipe the back of the paper with the glue and Dad would put it on those horrible yellow walls. And when we put the screens on the back porch, my dad said that I was a better helper than my impatient older brother.

You know, it won't even be when I'm doing school work that I think about him. I was fixing my new license plate on my big old bomb of a car--the plate holder broke off on one side when my dad hit a curb (it was his car and my mom told me to take it to school with me). Anyway, I straightened it by tying some wire around it. I was so proud of myself. But just fixing something with my hands reminded me of him. . .

Usually this is where my mind jerks itself back to the present, having found that my pen has made queer little circles and diagrams that a mathematician would be puzzled by. I try not to let myself drift off too much, but sometimes I can't help dwelling on it.

And once in a while I won't be prepared for it. Just listening to someone's conversation about somebody having a stroke or a friend who died and look out. I try not to let everybody see, because the last thing I want is pity from anyone, especially from someone I absolutely despise. Yuck.

Music is something I have to watch out for. I'll be minding my own business and some stupid song will set me off. If I can see it coming I switch stations with a vicious twist of the dial, and if my mom and I are in church and I see that one of the hymns is one that upset my mom even when Dad was alive, I'll get her out of there after Communion. Speaking of church, that can get depressing sometimes, too. My mom lights a candle for him every Sunday, and on the days that somebody requested a Mass said for him we have to go. At least we go to a church that's not exactly one of those medieval dungeons.

And flowers. The first time a guy gave me flowers after it happened, I didn't think of anything else for a minute except how good it made me feel--and then I buried my nose into them. Do you know how they say that smells are the most powerful memory triggers? Well, it's true. Immediately I was taken back to those days, those awful, awful days when flowers were everywhere. I don't think he noticed though, but if he did he kept it to himself and understood. He's that kind of guy.

But everything reminds me of my father: driving his car, watching some old movie (he could tell you who was in what picture, the part they had, and what other roles they had played), going through a bookstore--I was in a bookstore the other day and nearly lost it when I stumbled over some cookbooks (my dad was a great one for puttering around in the kitchen). Or when I look at the wallpaper in my room or all around the house (he used to be a carpenter when he was young and he built our house), or when I stuff the foam back into a rip in the seat of the car that I had sewed before, I think of him--silly, prosaic things like that.

But then I pull myself together, take a deep breath and get back to what I'm supposed to be doing. And try to forget. I'm sure other people think I'm terribly insensitive, but I just don't want to be upset all the time. People have their own problems and they don't want to hear me going on about mine. So I try to block it all out and think about stupid things like how the hair of the girl in front of me in class flips up over her collar, or how funny the guy across the aisle looks when he crosses his legs. Stupid, inane things like that, instead of thinking about the rain pounding on my father's grave in St. Gertrude's. If I let myself think horrible things all the time I would be a basket case. Father O'Brien says we have to go on living, but it's hard to do that when you call your mom and ask her how she's doing and she bursts into tears . . .

So, I am attempting to pick up the fragments of my life and get them into some kind of order so I can keep on going. Somebody's got to be strong, so it might as well be me . . . but forever is a long time . . .





BACH'S CONCERTO IN E

The instruments become
a growing vine of sound
entwining through each other's
secret thoughts, but now
confiding what they feel.
Like priests and penitents,
who all are speaking and hearing, all
confessing and comforted,
without dismay or fear.
Beneath the interwoven
counterpoint of grace
compassion moves with power.
Mystery is here
and power, the power of love.

A.L.C.

Tomorrow Morn

Tomorrow morn I know not what I'll see,
Save you, my love, your strong hand clasping mine;
For as the sun lights all the world with glee
And daisies wake while cock crows out the time,
So then the night shall fade with all my fears.
Beyond the morning mists and sparkling dew
Lies all the world--and I, here with my tears,
Must wait and quake to think of that day, new
And clean and bright, just waiting to be found.
Yet still my thoughts lay anchored in this night;
My questions pulse blood red and circle round,
'Til your soft song reminds me of the light.
Content, I smile within your love's embrace;
We'll wait for morning's touch with upturned face.

Beth Long



Last year, at the end of four sessions of summer school, I was in dire need of "a good read." As anyone who has ever spent an entire summer in school will tell you, the brain turns to mush after a while. I had fulfilled my language requirement and become an inveterate reader of *TV Guide* in the process. *TV Guide* may not be well written, but at least it's in English.

My advisor had once suggested that I re-read *The Great Gatsby*, pointing out that my violent hatred of Fitzgerald was probably ill-founded. Faced with the choice of watching "Kate and Allie" or re-reading *Gatsby*, I took her advice.

My opinion of the novel is not important. What I *did* find mildly life-altering, and thus, what I am writing about, is a scrap which fell from the book when I opened it. It was a faintly yellow slip of paper with the phrase *He who isn't busy being born is busy dying - Bob Dylan* scrawled in an immature, back-slanting hand.

The phrase, which I must have copied when I was about fourteen years old, fits the spirit of the novel, but I don't know that I had ever pondered it before. I did now.

Say those words three or four times in a row. *He who isn't busy being born is busy dying. He who isn't busy being born is busy dying.* If you grant Bob pardon for not mentioning women, it's a very disturbing phrase.

How exactly are we born? When I want an easy answer, I tell myself that that's why I'm a student. I tell myself that the people I see pushing their bodies to move faster, jump higher, and lift more are giving birth to themselves. They're moving beyond their limitations and redefining themselves.

I see professors doing research on topics alien to them, despite the fact that they have their doctorates, and are considered by most people to be experts at one discipline or another. They're being born.

These cold, early, fog-shrouded mornings, while running through Collegeville with my breath coming out in clouds, I wonder. *Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes*, wrote Fitzgerald, and I've chosen, for now at least, to found my conduct upon the premise that we are all here to be born, since we're too young to die. Maybe that's too facile, but somehow, it's a comfort. Otherwise, what purpose does anything serve? Why do we study, teach, work, or do anything at all, if not to create ourselves?

We all leave Ursinus, one way or another. Perhaps the measure of the college's success is exactly how far its students, staff, and faculty push themselves to be born--to stay alive.

Angela M. Salas

last night a dream
was sent to wake me--
it spoke
of happiness love
and the loss of language--
that's when the bridge
col
/
lapsed
(and every tendril in my body
snapped)
suddenly the competition crept
in (through a friend's warm
smile)
and I came up gasping
for escape--

dawn broke in all her sincerity
and I went to re-build
the bridge,
but the wood lay un-cut--
the river run dry--
and my saw.-.
virgin shrapnel in the stone.

Erika Rohrbach

Stephen

You, gallant charming
Man
Who cries like a
Boy
Who knows how to
Tend sprained muscles
And warm the common cold
Yet, you remain addicted
to snowy dust
While preaching
good health.

The river swells
with your soul
Your tears drown
in the blue moonlight
casting shadows upon
your stained face
Cool wind dried hair
feels icy and brittle
Prickly skin
will be colder by
dawn.

Yet, you walk
as a general walks
chin high
shoulders back
stomach in
no smile
You walk.

So much advice
Spills from your lips
Yet, you follow
not a word
Running straight
for the light
of your doom
Open arms,
of course.

The final
Break
Snapping like a
Crisp branch
Underfoot on
a clear cold
autumn morn
You split.
still a tall
figure draped in black
as I have always
known you.

You walk.

Lisa R. Talarico

A Baseball Story

By Julie Ann Corish

The crowd was cheering--this was the ultimate scenario: bases loaded, two out, bottom of the ninth, the batting team three runs behind. It was a gorgeous day at the ballpark: the sun was shining in a clear, deep blue sky, a gentle breeze stirring the flags at the end of the foul poles.

The pitcher took off his cap and wiped the sweat from his brow with his sleeve. The catcher ran up to him, trying to give him last-minute words of confidence, but he too looked over to the plate nervously. Then, to hide his jitters, he smacked his pitcher on the rump reassuringly.

What they didn't know was that the batter was as nervous as they were. Kevin Pedersen was a newcomer, the youngest on the team, but his manager knew he had good stuff. He was thin and gangly, but there was a raw power in his swing that the opposing teams already knew and feared. Sometimes he connected, sometimes he didn't. But Kevin knew, even in his inexperience, how important a confident appearance was. So he walked up to the plate with outward assurance, trying desperately to keep his knees from buckling.

The umpire waited patiently for the combatants to cease their prancing and settle down. He waited quite a while: batter scuffed at the box, pitcher kicked the mound, catcher pounded his mitt, baserunners paced, infielders backed up.

Finally Pedersen stepped up to the plate, swinging the bat. The catcher settled into his crouch, flashing signs. And the pitcher wound up.

Pedersen saw it coming--it was a beaut--but he remembered what he'd been taught. Never swing at the first ball: it could look great, but make the pitcher work harder than a hit, and possibly an out, off of the first ball he throws . . .

He let it go by.

"Steerike one!" screamed the umpire. Half the crowd cheered, the other booed.

The catcher grinned behind his mask as he chucked the ball back to the pitcher. Kid's still listening to that no-first-pitch routine, he thought.

Pedersen looked toward third. Even though the coach was almost ninety feet away, he could clearly see the expression in his eyes as the older man gave the signs. Bunting, one thing Pedersen didn't do well, was obviously out, anyway. So, if he got pitches that wouldn't walk him he was to swing away as hard as he could. And that, the coach knew, could be very difficult.

Pedersen was ready again. He scuffled the dirt a little under his feet, settling in for the next pitch. Low and away, ball one. Pedersen grinned; the pitcher didn't. He kicked the pitching rubber thoughtfully. The kid should've gone after that pitch, and he didn't. The pitcher sighed: he'd have to try again.

Pedersen, in the box again, locked eyes with the pitcher as they prepared themselves. Steel gray eyes stared into determined brown ones, and both knew that the other was not afraid.

But the next pitch was high and inside, so much so that the batter had to twist away to avoid it. As he straightened he could see the infielders--and sense the catcher--getting nervous. Well, he has to throw his best now, thought Pedersen.

The windup, the pitch--it was the fastest fastball he'd ever seen--and right where he liked it. He swung, a little too late, but the bat cracked from the contact and he watched the ball sail deep, deep to right field. It looked like it was--gone--but--no, just foul. A million sighs, it seemed, emitted from the stands and the players.

Muttering to himself, Pedersen turned away, picked up some dust and let it sift through his fingers. Two and two. The next one will make me swing, he thought, but it'll be a bad one. He could see it in the pitcher's eye: he wasn't about to let another one like that go, no sir. So, with a steeled nerve, he stepped in again.

The pitcher was sweating noticeably now. He took his time, wiping the sweat, twisting the ball in his hands, kicking the rubber. Then, he was ready.

A slow curve came at Pedersen, enticing, inviting, but then, suddenly, it dropped, but it was so far before the plate that Pedersen didn't bother with it. The ball hit the dirt in front of the plate, almost getting by the catcher, who had to throw himself on top of it to keep it from getting by him.

Now. A full count. Pedersen meant business; so did the pitcher; so did the catcher; and so did the runners--they'd be off on this one; and so did the bored, antsy outfielders.

The pitch came; Pedersen swung--and fouled it off to the dugout. He almost yelled in his frustration, so to calm himself he walked away from the box. He glanced over at the conference on the mound, which included the pitcher, the catcher and the rest of the infield. They caught him staring at them, and he looked away. Instead, he examined the outfield for holes. Just one hit, one run to keep the rally going, he prayed. That's all, just one run. Would he walk me? No way! So I've got to hit it . . .

Once more, he stepped in. He dug his hole, aimed his swings, and stood, poised and ready. The runners, his teammates, waited, also poised to the pitch.

The windup . . .

The pitch . . .

The swing . . .

The bat cracked gloriously, joyously, importantly, victoriously. Off went the ball, sailing high, high and into the right field corner, bouncing just fair, just shy of a grand slam, but good enough. The right fielder was at a full-out run to get to it, the runners were fairly flying around the bases, crossing the plate--and Pedersen was trying for third--

The throw . . .

The slide . . .

“Saeef!” screamed the umpire.

“Oww-ooht!” screamed the third baseman.

“Safe! Yeah!” yelled Pedersen, dusting himself off happily. Wow, he thought jubilantly. A triple. Three--count 'em--three ribbies! Wow

. . .

The pitcher was mad clean through. He had to go to the next batter just to keep his team alive. Impatiently, he threw the first pitch. It went wild, and the catcher could do nothing to stop it. The new batter waved frantically and Pedersen scrambled--slid--

“Saeef!” screamed the umpire. “Saeef!”

Pedersen picked himself up--and then the rest of his team picked him up off the ground and held their hero high in the air, chanting and yelling, “We’re Number One! We’re Number One!”

Pedersen had never felt so good. At that wonderful, ecstatic moment, he was the happiest fellow in the world: they’d won the game, the best game of the year, and boy, did it feel good.

As he grinned, screamed and yelled with the rest of his teammates, he thought just one thought. Way in the back of his head, he was thinking . . .

In fifteen years, no more jerseys with “Antony’s Deli” on the back, no more wooden bleachers, no more aluminum bats, no more screaming, hysterical parents on the sidelines. In fifteen years, maybe . . . the big leagues . . . but this would do for now.

I Am Sorry . . .

Too caught up in my own life I totally
Missed your cry for help.
You asked me to talk--
I said I had to work.
You gave me your prized possessions--
I only said thank you.
You expressed all your frustrations in anger--
I figured you'd get over it and walked away.
But you never followed to say goodbye.
When I finally realized your intent, it
Was too late.
You had gone--
Forever.

K.K.

. . . And Baby Makes Two

By Joel Davies

I looked at the digital clock on my desk and it took a few moments for the actual time to register in my mind. When I convinced myself that it really did say 8:30, I closed the case book and filed the last legal brief. Except for the cleaning woman, the office was empty; what else should I expect on a Friday evening? With a nod to the woman as she vacuumed the hallway, I headed out to the last car in the parking lot muttering to myself about not being the parent I ought to be.

When I got home Mrs. Feeney was waiting for me at the door, as she always was when I worked late. "Steve, your dinner is in the oven and P.J. is already in bed. He's asleep so don't wake him up to play tonight," she said, half-joking, half-scolding.

"Don't worry Mrs. Feeney. I wouldn't dare wake him up," I replied unsuccessfully attempting to reassure her with a smile and a wink.

As she headed out the front door back to her home across the street, she turned around and said in a motherly tone, "Really Steve, you have to find someone to settle down with. You should get married again; for your sake as well as P.J.'s."

I shrugged my shoulders and called out to her, "I'd love to Mrs. Feeney. But what would your husband say?"

She turned around, laughing, and said, "Oh Steve. Really now," before continuing down the driveway.

Mrs. Feeney was right; she always was. It had been five years since Kate had died while giving birth to P.J. I named him Paul Joseph, after Kate's father and mine. Kate would have loved him. She had looked forward so much to our first child; we both had. It was something we had always talked about since we first met in college. In a way it helped solidify and strengthen our love and relationship through my years in law school and hers in grad school. I can still remember the tears of joy in her eyes as she told me, "We're going to have a baby!" We had so many dreams for the three of us. But things never work out the way we want them to. We dream, plan, and prepare, but it never exactly happens the way we first picture it.

After eating the meal Mrs. Feeney had prepared, I went upstairs to check on P.J. I didn't turn the room light on when I opened the door. The light from the hallway was enough to assure me that he was safe and sound, tucked in fast asleep beneath the covers. The pride of fatherhood still glowed deep inside me as I stood there looking at my own flesh and blood. I figured that Mrs. Feeney was right, so I didn't wake P.J. up. Instead, I quietly closed the door to his room and then opened the door to my room across the hall.

I walked over to the far corner of the room, dropping my tie and jacket on the queen-sized bed, before stopping to look at the photographs on the dresser. There were a lot of memories staring back at me. The pictures of college dances and of our graduations, and of our times together during school breaks and vacations. But it was the photographs of our wedding that still brought out the deep feelings of love. Kate looked radiant in the long flowing white dress. Yet it was the warmth of her eyes, her smile, and even her personality which still beamed from her pictures. It was a warmth which had been sorely missed for so long, actually too long.

After getting undressed and whispering "I Love You" in the direction of Kate's pictures, I proceeded to climb beneath the covers of the bed. Even after five years there was still an empty feeling in being alone in that huge bed, so very alone.

At around 7:30 I was awakened by P.J. running into the room shouting "Daddy! Daddy!" and leaping onto the bed, and me, like a little puppy. He had Kate's big, questioning blue eyes and her curly blonde hair--God, he was so cute; if only she could have seen him.

I picked him up and pulled him close to me, giving him a big hug and a kiss on the forehead. And while he responded by planting a wet, slobbering kiss on my cheek I said, "Well Pal, it's Saturday. No school, no work. It's just you and me all day long. What do you want to do with your Dad?"

He thought about it for a little bit, while trying to squirm beneath the covers for some warmth. Then he looked at me, with his hair all messed up and a still sleepy look in his eyes, and asked me through a growing toothy grin, "Go to the beach?"

What could I say? Sometimes he acted just like his mother used to when she wanted something; the innocent look and the wondering eyes. Of course I said yes, and then I sent him off to take a shower and to get dressed.

Before we left for the day I made his favorite breakfast, my special pancakes and sausages. He gobbled them down while trying to tell me about what he did the day before in school. The weekends were our only time together, and I think he cherished the moments together as much as I did. As soon as I had the dishwasher turned on however, P.J. was almost out the front door heading to the car. The fatherly instinct in me came out quickly as I called him back in to check on him.

Naturally I had to retie his sneakers so he wouldn't fall. Then I had to rebutton his jacket--he was off by one snap. And finally, I had to put his hat on because the October chill was beginning to set in along the shore.

"P.J.," I said. "When are you going to learn to dress yourself?"

“Dad,” he squealed. “I’m only five.” And the five fingers he was holding up in front of him emphasized his point. I couldn’t help but laugh.

As we walked out to the car, his little hand wrapped around mine, I realized that it was just the two of us. I could keep all the memories that I have of me and Kate, but those memories were something which P.J. would never be a part of, nor something he would ever understand. I had had my life with Kate but the time had come to move on. If P.J. was to enjoy a home with just one parent, then I couldn’t impose a life of memories upon him--no matter how old he was.

I picked him up and put him in the car, being careful not to hit his head as I bent over. Then, as I was strapping the seatbelt across his tiny body, I planted a kiss on his forehead and said, “I love you Pal. Take care of your Dad, OK?”

He smiled back at me and said, “Love ya too. ’S’ go to the beach Dad.”



Next on Mr. Steinbeck's Itinerary is Auschwitz

Bubbling and buoyant, he strode triumphant
Through Krakow. Our guide, duly respectful
And attentive, clutched Steinbeck's testaments
To the enduring dignity of man.
Basking at last in adulation, this
Bard of husbandmen and canners nobly
Assented to be swept along for days
Through bureaucratic receptions and fetes
Set with surprising taste against baroque
Facades. (Now, only duty drones amid
Those monuments to elegance and ease.)

Next, they respectfully suggested, he
Would of course visit the camp at Auschwitz.
"It's like a corpse on the road," he replied.
"I wouldn't stop for it." The guide, aghast,
Looked at me for assurance, or help with
A tricky translation. You've got it right,
I thought. So does he. Surely the master
Owes nothing to the frightful grey ashes
Of people not his own. He's paid his dues.

We left without ceremony. We're off
To Budapest, where world-class fencers are
to show us their skill at foil and epee,
Risking, with buttons off, the ennobling
Scar, and even death.

Anonymous

Upon Visiting the Nursing Home

I.

Like a porcelain vase
Yellowed and chipped with age
She stands erect
Defying all progression of time.
Behold the ferns
As their corpulence
Fills this greenhouse vase.

But the water seeps out through cracks
Is sucked dry by some aspiring star
Until at last the water is no more--
The ferns wilt
Inevitably they will die.
The branches droop from thirst
Dragging the aged vase to the ground--

II.

I watched as my mother
Swept up the splendidly crafted pieces.
She wept for a while--
But only for a while--
Placing the shards
In the carefully manicured earth.

I don't quite remember
The significance of that greenhouse vase
Only that like that vase
I too was guaranteed
That token respect
And so I wept.

Karen Singhofen

Taps For Ralph

By Eric Chandlee Wilson

It was late November. The leaves had all fallen and the fields had all been harvested off. As the old man and the boy stood in the middle of the graveyard they looked beyond the burying ground and saw the naked woods and brown fields. There was a heavy smell of manure and ensilage in the cold air. As the pair began to wander through the maze of stones a raw, gusty wind swirled around them.

"I think it's a-goin' to snow, boy," the old man observed. His face bore the weathered, cracked appearance of age. An ugly mass of skin connected his chin to the bottom of his neck. He was dressed in a pair of faded woolen pants held up by an incongruous pair of gaily striped suspenders. The boy thought (but could not express, even to himself) that the aged have no sense of appropriateness or fashion in dress. The man's coat was heavy, and of leather, and it carried a strong barn scent. It was drawn closely, protectively, around his body.

"Is Uncle Ralph's grave here, Granddad?" the boy asked timidly, as youngsters do who are fearful of broaching the subject of familial death. The boy was about ten years old and was slightly built. He wore a long topcoat over a suit and his sandy hair blew wildly as the gusts of wind swept through.

"Yes, boy, his grave is right over here," the old man replied. The two approached a polished granite stone which read:

WILLIAM RALPH HUBBARD
JUNE 8, 1924—JANUARY 23, 1944

"Did he die in the war, Granddad?" the boy asked. The boy really knew all about his uncle, but wanted to hear the story from the old man, in his own words.

The old man gazed sadly at the stone. "Yes, boy," he said. "They brought Ralph out here on the second day of February, 1945. An' sometimes when I'm standin' here in the cemetery or wanderin' through yonder cornfield I can still almost hear the sound a' that bugle blowin' taps that day—still hear it in the wind."

The boy gulped and decided he had better ask his grandfather now, rather than wait and lose his courage. "D-do you think you could tell me about it, Granddad?" he asked.

"Why sure, boy," the old man said slowly. "Ralph joined up in the army right in the heat of the last war. He was alwas' a shy boy and pretty quiet. He was thin-like and had a shock a' curly hair what flopped over his forehead. Wellsir, all through the time he was a-goin' to Steelville High School he was a-buildin' them airplane models and daydreamin' about how he was goin' ta be a pilot someday—you know, like that feller Lindbergh. Ralph—why, his whole worl' spun around Lindbergh, fer a time. Wellsir, Ralph never said two hoots about it to me or ma, but we knowed that's what he was a-dreamin' about. When he gradiated from high school we tol' him, we says, 'Ralph, boy, now yere on yere own,' cause we didn' have no money ta send him nowheres. But d' you know, he jes' stewed aroun' that ole house we had back a' Towerville that whole summer. Poor kid. He wanted to be a pilot so bad, but he was jus' too shy to go see about it. Me and ma kep at him, though, sayin' 'What you goin' ta do with yourself, Ralph? Soons September comes you goin' to hafta start makin' a way fer yourself.' Ralph he'd grin a little and look down at his feet, an' start shufflin' his feet some an' say, 'Aw, well, I don' know. I think mebbe I'll join the army or somethin'. He never said he was goin' in the army so's he could get to be a pilot, but we knowed, all right. We seen all them airplane models and we knowed.

"Then the funniest thing happened. Somethin' I never expected out o' Ralph, bein's 'at he was so shy, and all. He'd gone off one afternoon by hisself, like he alwas' done, for a walk along the crick. I was putterin' aroun' the house and jus' by chance I happened by Ralph's room and saw a big wasp a-hangin' onto the window shade. When I went in to kill the danged thing I seen a piece a' paper on his bureau and up there at the top, in little writin' it said, 'To Mary Ann—With Love,' an' I'll be darned if 'twasn't a poem he wrote to some girl! Didn' seem like our Ralph at all! I never said nothin' to him, though, cause the nex' week he come bustin' through the back door all beamin' an' everything an' tol' us he'd went an' joined up in the United States Army.

“Well, the war was goin’ great guns by that time and ma she started to cry a little, an’ I knowed why he was a-goin’ in, so I didn’ say much—jus’ shook his han’ an’ said I hoped he’d do good. Wellsir, he went away the nex’ Monday, that quick you know, an’ we never seed Ralph again, ’cept for onct when he come back after basic trainin’ in ’bout six weeks. Ralph he hadn’ changed none, though. I remember I slapped him on the back and said, ‘Ralph, ole boy, you goin’ ta be a pilot now?’ He jus’ grinned a bit and looked down at his feet, like he always done. ‘Pa,’ he tole me, ‘They’re sendin’ us over ta fight the war. They says you got ta be a college man ta be a pilot.’ Wellsir, ma she started ta cry some, cause we heard how it was over there, but there was nothin’ we could do, an’ he went off in a coupla days. That was the last we seen a’ Ralph. He wrote us one letter, sayin’ how he was on the ship that took ’em over ta the ’tother side and that they was in the Medit’ranean Sea somewheres. He didn’ say much. That was the las’ we heard a’ him.

“Ma and me, we was both broke up pretty bad cause we knowed Ralph joined up thinkin’ they was goin’ ta make him a pilot, an’ alls he could be was a so’dier. A man got ta have dreams, he jus’ got to. You can call ’em daydreams or what you will but a man he got ta have ’em. An’ ole Ralph, his dreams they passed on when he went in an’ foun’ out he couldn’t be no pilot.

“Anyways, a telegram came ta us on the twenty-fourth day a’ January, 1944. It was snowin’ an’ a-blowin’ that day, an’ the temperture out back registered ten above. I got it wrote up in m’ diary. I was sittin’ in that ole rocker readin’ Colliers when a knock come on the door and it was a Western Union feller with a telegram from the gov’ment. Ma she had a premonitory about what ’twas an’ she got all flustered up and didn’t want ta open it. But we had ta do it, an’ jus’ like I thought it was about Ralph an’ how he was missin’ in action at a place called Anzio in It’ly.

“Wellsir, his brother, Clarence--your father, boy--he done his dangdest ta fin' out more about Ralph, an' fin'lly the gov'ment wrote us a long letter sayin' that they was shippin' his body back over ta us an' nobody was 'lowed ta open the coffin. You know the gov'ment. They said he was killed by a mortar shell tryin' ta get across some river at a place called Mount Casino with a whole bunch a' other guys. I guess you seed his name on that plaque over in the church. Ralph he'd a-been proud a' that.

“It was February the second, Groundhog Day, in 1945--a whole year later--when they brought his body up here ta the cemetery. They had a coupla army guys along ta make sure nobody'd open up the coffin ta see if it was really Ralph, and another guy with a bugle. All the relations turned out. Ma she was all busted up when she seed Ralph's coffin. It was pretty gray that day an' cold, like 'tis right now, an' everybody thought it was goin' ta snow again.

“I'll always remember how it 'twas that day an' hearin' that bugler blowin' taps real sad like. It was a-echoin' all aroun' the hills here an' I can almost still hear it now. I could a' cried some myself, that day, thinkin' about how quiet Ralph's always been an' how they brought him all the ways back from It'ly fightin' fer his country an' ta his own piece a' that country, an' when the wind gets up like today I swear I can hear that ole bugle playin' taps. I guess it's jus' that Ralph he was alive, onct, an' I guess I jus' think Ralph he deserved somethin' more in life than what he got.”

The boy stood motionless while the gusty wind swirled around him in the late afternoon. He comprehended some, but not all, of what the old man told him. Somehow, the grayness, the bleakness of the November afternoon gave him a strange sense of security, while at the same time he had a peripheral apprehension of a vast loneliness. Although he couldn't comprehend all that the old man told him, he still felt a definite closeness to the uncle he had never known. He felt as if he had known him.

. . . yes, I believe
that we are too young for regrets
(do everything right the first time
and you'll see)
time can be squandered,
beliefs altered
friends misplaced
Let it go
anguish accomplishes nothing
no lives are saved, no changes made
Let it go
move onward
upward
where air is thin
the sky is red
and you've no energy left for regrets
Let it go
I'll meet you there

Angela M. Salas

The Morning After . . .

You were told to walk the line.

You smirked and staggered down the road.

The numbness had control of your body--
leaving you completely senseless.

Even at the station when you were questioned--
You had not a care in the world.

Until-- you awakened the next morning. . .
Without a friend.

K.K.

Conversation

By Julie Ann Corish

"You know, sometimes I really don't like you very much," said the girl, rolling over onto her stomach.

"Why not?" he asked, surprised.

"Oh, I don't know," she said playfully. "I just don't, is all."

"Well, you must have a reason. I mean, you like me enough most of the time."

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, it's kind of silly not to like me all the time, isn't it?"

"I don't think so."

"What do you mean?"

She brushed her hand through the new blades of grass that were shooting up. "Sometimes you're not very nice to me."

"When am I not nice to you?"

"Just sometimes."

He reached over and began to play with her hair. "I am always nice to you."

"Only when you want to." But she smiled to take away the sting of the remark.

"You're the one who's not nice," he replied. "You are always teasing me."

"Turn about is fair play."

"You," he said, sitting up, "are a flirt."

"So are you," she said, smiling up at him.

"Well, sometimes you flirt with the wrong person."

"Like who?"

"Like that guy Albert you're always talking to."

"That's not flirting. He really doesn't like me and I enjoy getting him mad."

He cupped her chin in his hand and turned her face to look at him. "It's not always smart to flirt with the wrong people."

"Yes, well, you do it too. Why is it that your ex-girlfriend is always following you around?"

"You know I don't like Trisha anymore. As a matter of fact, I broke up with her so I could ask you out."

"Yes, I know." She turned her head to kiss the palm of his hand. "But she is still in love with you."

"Oh, I don't think so. I'm just a habit that she finds hard to break."

"I guess being around you is rather habit-forming."

"I never said I was modest."

"Nobody could ever accuse you of it."

"But I'm not the only one who follows people around. What about Charlie?"

"I hate him."

"Hate is a strong word."

"Well, I do. He is so obnoxious to me whenever I see him. I hate him."

"Sometimes," he said quietly, "I wonder if, when we break up, you'd say the same about me."

She sat up quickly. "Who said we were going to break up? That's the silliest thing I ever heard."

He looked at her earnest face, hair tumbling down over white shoulders. "You're going to get sunburned," he said.

"No, I'm not. Don't worry about me."

"I always worry about you."

"Well, don't. It's not necessary."

"I know what you've been through and I worry about how it's affecting you."

"Now, don't go playing psychiatrist on me. I'm fine."

"I could kill him."

"It was pure coincidence that I was on the road the same time he was. Don't say things like that."

"He shouldn't have been driving."

"Try telling him that when he's had one too many. Keith always thought he was a macho man."

"He should have gotten a stiffer sentence."

"Well, so should have I then."

"It was an accident. You didn't mean to and you weren't drinking."

"But I hit her," she said flatly.

“You didn’t see her. Besides, what was a seven-year-old doing out at that time of night?”

“I should have swerved the other way.”

“What, and hit Keith head-on? You didn’t see her and you thought it was safe to go that way. Besides, he still hit you.” He touched her arm protectively. “You could have broken a lot more.”

“Try telling that to that kid’s parents.” She leaned back and watched the clouds drift by.

“I’m sorry I made you think about it.”

“Doesn’t matter. I think about it all the time.”

“I could kill him.” He clenched his teeth and knit his brows.

“This is getting us nowhere, you know.”

“I know. I’m sorry. Come on, you’re going to get burned. Let’s go in.” He stood up and held out his hand.

She looked up at him, squinting into the sun. “I love you, you know.”

He pulled her up and kissed her. “Not half as much as I love you. Now come on. I’m starved. Let’s get some dinner.”

She smiled and walked back to the house with him. Up in the sky the clouds shifted and formed a circle around the sun.



dear Man

dear Man
lying silently
at peace
with a smile
slightly twisted
and one eyelid
slit open
just a bit.
rosary Beads
grasped between
stiff fingers
dark bluish-grey suit
to be worn
eternally
lifeless you are.

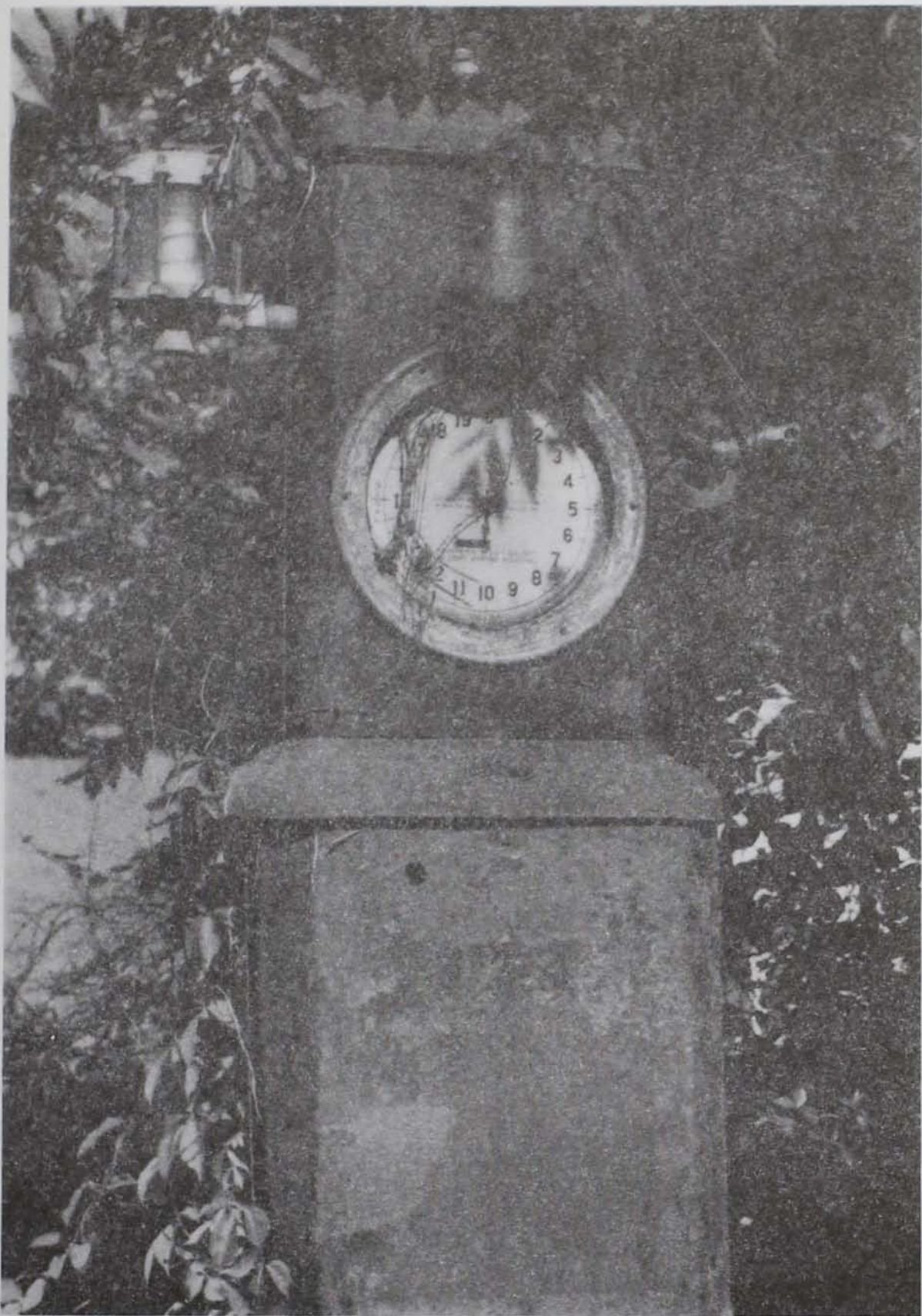
your Partner
strokes a painted
powdered
face
rough by comparison
to her own
gentle kiss
and soft prayers
mechanically
functioning
through the day
she weeps
only in private
alone from now on.

as the small crowd
watches
she holds your
chin
in the palm
of her hand
and shakes her
head
as if to say
“such a waste”
such a waste
indeed.

dear Man
you are loved
you are missed
tears flow
as the lips
of the casket
meet
as your voice
is silenced
forever.

dedicated, with love
to Armand Maestro.

Lisa Talarico



Autumn Leaves

Somewhere in November
Autumn meets winter
While autumn fire is extinguished by steel grey
skies
and to the south the gaggles fly
A young girl and I
lay in the autumn leaves.

I looked for November
as I grew older
Never looking for complicated tomorrows
content playing the football hero
I'd jump without care
laughing in the autumn leaves.

We walked in November
strolling together
And into our faces a perpetu'l wind blew
a blizzard of gold and red hue
From your hair my hand pulled
entangled autumn leaves.

I stood in November
as Autumn grew colder
Around me barren oaks stood frigid, sterile of
green
frozen earth entombing their roots
I recalled limbs that reciprocated my playing
basking warm in the laughing breeze.
Shivering I thought
how quickly autumn leaves.

Xavier Country

