

Fall 1982

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Valparaiso University

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the lighter

Children of Peoria
(For Richard and John Covelli)

Impressions of the Russian heartland,
A brilliant sun, a village dance,
Fields golden, horizon green,
Reaping grain by ancient means,
As almost unhidden, almost unseen,
The middle son rides to Poland.

Impressions of the U.S.A.,
A brilliant sun, a country fair,
Fields golden, amber horizon,
Reaping grain by modern means,
As almost unhidden, almost unseen,
The middle son watches the south,
Awaiting the call to El Salvador.

In the depth of night the August stars,
Winking through the haze,
Perceived under chemicals,
Felt under dreamlessness,
None takes time to study the sky,
None has the strength to chase the dawn.

Explosions rocking Palestine,
The slaughter of Beirut,
On tape exemplars without remorse,
In flawless animation:

*With robbers as cops in F-16's,
Children carried away,
By a saint in the midst of an outpost of hell,
From buildings carved by bullets,
And grandmothers burned in the rain of bombs,
Who await the call to boys with guns,
For scurrilous adventures,
Of irascible puppeteers.*

Creeping light disturbs a house,
A Russian girl awakens,
To thoughts of her lover standing guard in the east,
Where borders are barren wasteland.
As her father rises to constant work,
A tiny bird skims the fields,
Then rises on a dream,
In vain pursuit of the sun.

As children of Peoria,
Clap their hands and stamp their feet,
A sheltered congregation,
Whose faces yearn for assurance of peace,
In vacant eyes of strangers,
And hearts of restless friends.

Children of Peoria,
And throughout the northern world,
A century lost behind you,
As your cities crumble to sand,
With leaders heroic and always last,
To taste the blood of conquest,
So eagerly shed at their command.

Children of Peoria,
And throughout the northern world,
Your sympathetic whispers,
Will be lost with the bird on the wind,
Unless your voice is raised in a shout,
A boiling tempast of fury,
That breaks the walls of silence,
With relentless cries for justice and peace,
In subjugated lands.

k. scionti

Thanksgiving

It just happened
Mom, Grandma, and kid
had to eat.
It just happened
that we had garbage
and they
had to eat.
Proud that they didn't steal,
proud they still provided for their own.
They used our trash for dinner
and were proud
to live in America
where you and I live,
and drop our groceries
-- not crying over spilled milk
where leaders say to tighten our belts ...
right around those proud people's necks.

TJT

Writing isn't hard; no harder than ditch-digging.
--Patrick Dennis

Clear writers, like clear fountains, do not seem so deep as they
are; the turbid look the most profound.
--W.S. Lander

What is written without effort is in general read without
pleasure.
--Samuel Johnson

The filthiest of all paintings painted well
Is mightier than the purest painted ill.
--Tennyson

Dear Readers and Contributors:

Writing creatively is a difficult task that requires more than
imagination and sincerity. In most cases, the central ideas
should be communicated implicitly more than explicitly: a matter
of "show me, don't tell me." Successful creative writers use
concrete images to evoke emotional and intellectual responses
from their audiences.

Both poetry and prose depend on form as well as theme. The
connotative power of language, its sounds, and its cadences are
integral to what any piece of writing becomes.

The poet, more narrowly than the writer of essays or fiction,
must consider the length of lines (especially in free verse),
stressed and slack syllables (rhythm), and form. Sound assumes
special importance in verse because poetry is an oral, as well as
a written, art.

Basically, these are the qualities we look for in submissions.

Sincerely,
The Editors

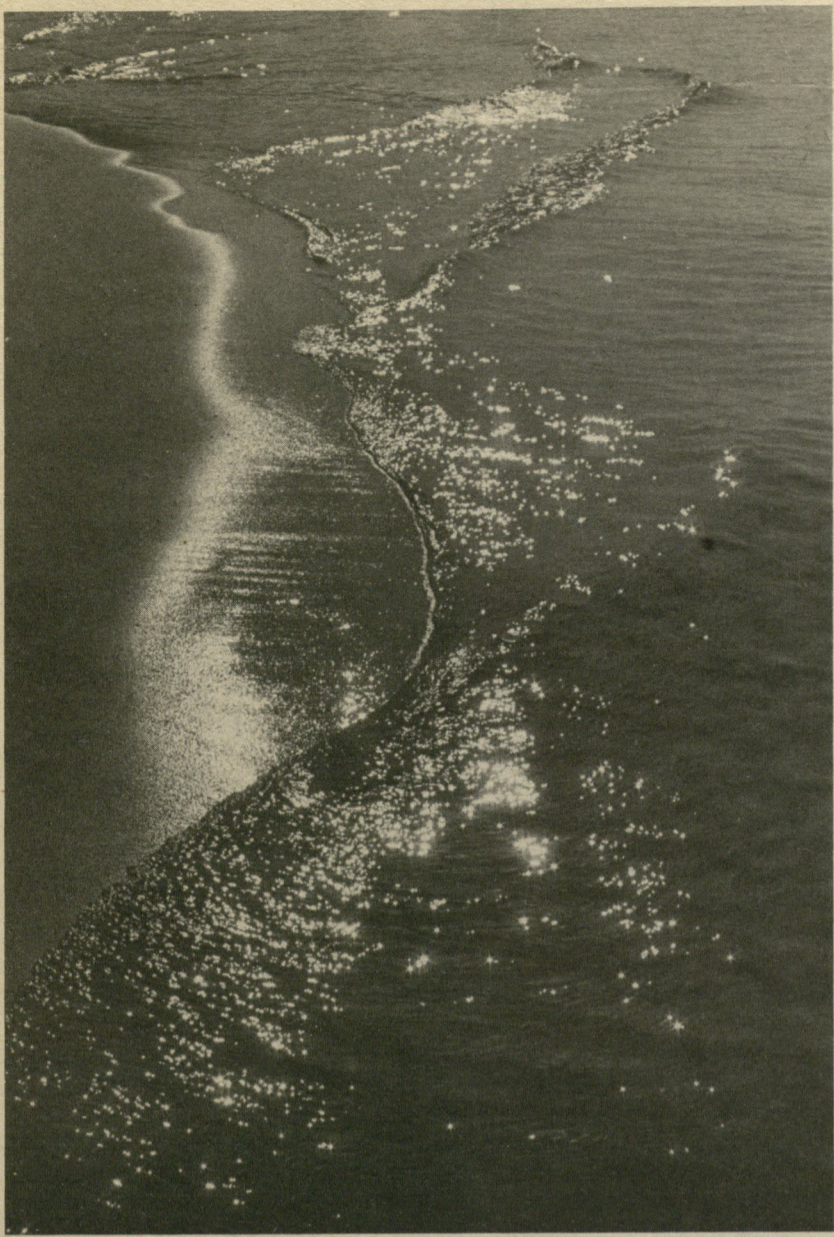
The Lighter

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precedes the standard edition to be published in the spring.



L. Mason

El Tocamiento de la Madrugada
(*The Feel of the Early Morning*)

The very air has been machined, and, damp in sound and
Smell, a sky set upon us like a plague
Breathing our breath,
Returning it sullied;
An hour till light. The sound hits the ridge sporadically
Bouncing for our ears, quickening our gingered hearts,
Hands clenching our declared way, legs
Clenching the earth, soft, green, supple
Holding, as to a horse, grappling as a climber on warm rock.
The staccato has a rhythm in the jungle.

Sleep not vanquished from our dreaming eyes
The din touches upon the sister ridge
Crossing dragonflies stirring the birds below.
And now, overhead!
We swing to face,
Run to hide
But at the shout of alarm it is gone.
The trees, thick around us, murmur with the shifting sound.
Again! We grimace, gritting faces
Waiting on the thief, ready, ready
Waiting, hearts drumming "fear" and "fly, fly!"
How the morning calm is utterly shattered, everything is
Siphoned
Into the sky.
We shoot after it.

Stooping, we glide toward the road, toward a hovering ship
Dropping its young onto the banks.
"No!" we cry, "terrible crime!"
We are so angry and we charge the road, into the dust,
Tears held static in our eyes
Our hot, salted faces.
Firing from the hip, wishing for our death so that we may
Leave -- lamenting, praying, pleading.
The chopper faces to a new tact and speeds away
Smiling as a swindler in a tent.
As we run amidst the shouting wind and cast ourselves
Into the brush
Pushing our rifles at their helmets
Glossy like the leaves ...

Overhead! The sky sweeps forth another
Chopper like the last, swinging fast and low,
Turning about, sprinkling Men over the road,
Who scamper away like roaches, shining and quick.
"No!" we pray; and another, and another, they fall from
The trees, dropping to the road clearing
Sprinkling men like salt upon our supple earth.
Our good earth.

Our blood dries on our clothes, our tears in our eyes,
Wishing for the death so that we may leave
And be counted in the papers
Reasoned and regarded by arid poisoned eyes.

Stephen Motét

Cadaver Palaver

"[Wayne State University's] medical school has more than
20,000 wills on file from people planning to donate their bodies
after death." -- Chicago Tribune, July 1, 1982

When his seventy-two-year lease was up,
Bernie donated me to an alma mater --
Western State for its School of Medicine
(bequest #1 under "personal property").

He wanted to give not just
His loving heart,
bashful kidneys,
myopic eyes
(if someone chanced to notice those three legacies
on the back of his Indiana driver's license,
and if they all could be excised in time
to serve some patient needing transplants),
but his hair and bald spot,
anus and armpits,
penis and sinuses,
the moles, the scars and the wrinkles,
all his body, that is,
except what several surgeons
who had completed med school long ago
had cut out already
(gall bladder with its stone rolled away,
ectomied appendix, adenoids,
three melanomas,
two warts,
one foreskin).

Although at times he fought with me,
he would be pleased to know I passed --
not 4-F-'d by the Director
of the Body Bequest Dept.
as too mutilated,
too diseased,
or just too fat.
(Should not med students see
occasional copulent corpses?
Some of their best patients
may be grossly obese.)

I guess he didn't care
to have me laid out in a satin-ruffled casket,
in his best suit,
with superfluous spectacles,
made up with a bit of rouge,
monitored by funeral directors
and hearsed to the Garden of Rest.
He willed it that the last to look on me
would be some diagnostic maedicoes --
young, probing future physicians --
not grieving friends and family
nor curious acquaintances.

Since Bernie much preferred
teaching to research
I have a post-last-wish wish
I'll make for him:
I hope to be a teaching aid --
a student body, so to speak --
providing real-death hands-on experience
to eager scholars learning
where to scalpel for the spleen,
rather than a research tool,
strapped into a Pinto
to see what suffers most
crashing at 50 mph
into an immovable object.
And yet, as I am severed
and dismembered,
I request a little respect:
no recoil from this mortal coil,
no snickering asides about my liver;
please don't denigrate my derriere.

Now, in my plastic shroud,
on this aluminum rack,
chastely on the other side of the room
from the female carcasses,
I'm well preserved for my stage,
thanks to mortuary science
and formaldehyde.
I'm supposed to have a shelf life
over two years,
but with WS's lively program,
I expect no Tut uncommon stay.
I (91-M-BH-39) will soon be needed,
after which this house of clay
returns at last to ash.

Bernhard Hillila

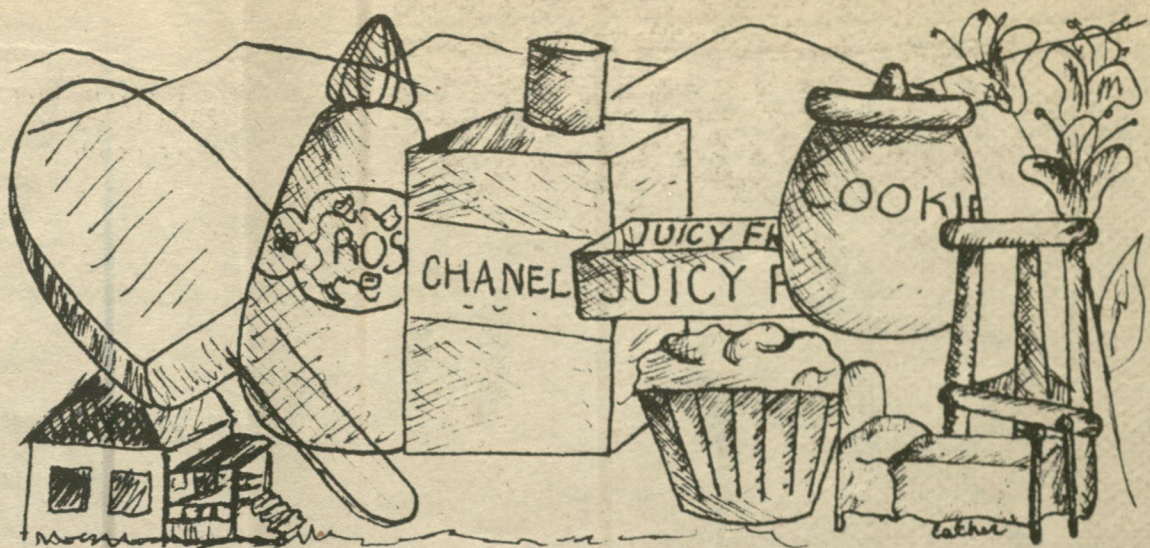
A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in
love with language.

--W.H. Auden

I suppose I'm not alone in having pleasant memories of visiting my grandmother's house, which, when I was a little girl, was my favorite place to be. I always looked forward to the start of summer vacation, which signalled that we would soon go to visit my grandmother -- Nanny, as we grandchildren called her -- for a couple of weeks. As the time drew nearer for us to go, we grew eager with anticipation. All during the nine-hour-long trip, we pestered my parents with, "How much longer till we get there?" But Nanny always made our long trip worthwhile. Lots of other kids spent their summers in perhaps more spectacular places than we, but I doubt that they had as much fun as we did at Nanny's.

Nanny's house was tiny, a "crackerbox" was how she described it, giving one a sense that everything in it was overflowing. Smells and sounds could freely roam from one end of the house to the other almost at the speed of light, it seemed. As soon as we walked in the door, we were treated to a variety of scents which made the house seem like a heaven on earth: cupcakes and coffee, and sweet-smelling bubble bath and perfume, as well. Nanny's laughter, totally uninhibited, seemed to fill the home.

My grandfather's bedroom was scented by a large cedar closet and by the faint smell of the Juicy Fruit gum which lay in front of the penny-filled glass clown bank on top of his dresser. His bed was so high that I always thought I'd never grow tall enough to climb upon it unassisted. Nanny's bedroom was decorated with pictures by her favorite artists, her grandchildren. Perfume, contained in assorted, multi-colored bottles which sat upon her dresser, filled the room with delicate fragrance. In the living room sat a chair that would turn completely around in a circle, and we thought it was lots of fun to spin in the chair until we got dizzy or we were lovingly scolded by Nanny for putting our feet on the wall to propel ourselves.



No matter what I was doing or what room I was in, I could easily be distracted by the delicious smells that came from the kitchen. Even when I couldn't smell things cooking, I knew that there was good food around, because Nanny always kept our favorite snacks around, just for us. Cookies were always in the cookie jar, and popsicles and ice cream were always in the freezer. When we'd go to the kitchen to get something to eat, Nanny, who was usually sitting on a stool known as "Nanny's throne" at a small red counter, working crossword puzzles, would stop to give us the inventory for the refrigerator and the cabinets.

While I loved being in the house, I loved being outside even more. The fresh mountain breezes relieved the summer heat and wafted the delicate fragrance of honeysuckle. We played hopscotch on the carport and bakery with the sand and utensils Nanny always had for us. Best of all was gathering on the big front porch in the evenings. We'd sit in lawn chairs talking, listening to a police radio, and eating popcorn that Nanny had popped. The mosquitoes were kept at bay by the citronella candles that sat on the banister. I always wished that those moments could go on forever.

When I was thirteen, Nanny died. Her death seemed unreal to me: how could Nanny, who was so strong and vital, succumb to death? When we went to her house for her funeral, everything was the same; nothing was the same. Oh, the decor was the same, but something was missing. The smells of baking and bubble bath were gone. Nanny's laughter was gone. All of the things I had cherished about the house had gone with Nanny's passing. At the juncture between childhood and adulthood, I finally understood life from the adult world. Memories of our loved ones keep them mortal. As long as we remember Nanny, she will still be invincible; she will live on.

The porch and the delicious food and the bubble bath and Nanny's laugh and her love of life are all a part of me. While I used to have to wait until summertime to go to Nanny's house, now I can go there anytime through my memories. Ah, to sit on the porch and eat popcorn and listen to the radio and talk and smell the citronella and hear Nanny laugh ...

Pam Benner

Contest Contest Contest Contest

The *Lighter* announces the First Annual Poetry and Prose Contest. A top prize of \$10 and honorable mentions will be awarded in each category. Entries will be judged on content, structure, style, and use of language.

Category I

Limericks, haiku, ballads, and other light verse.

Category II

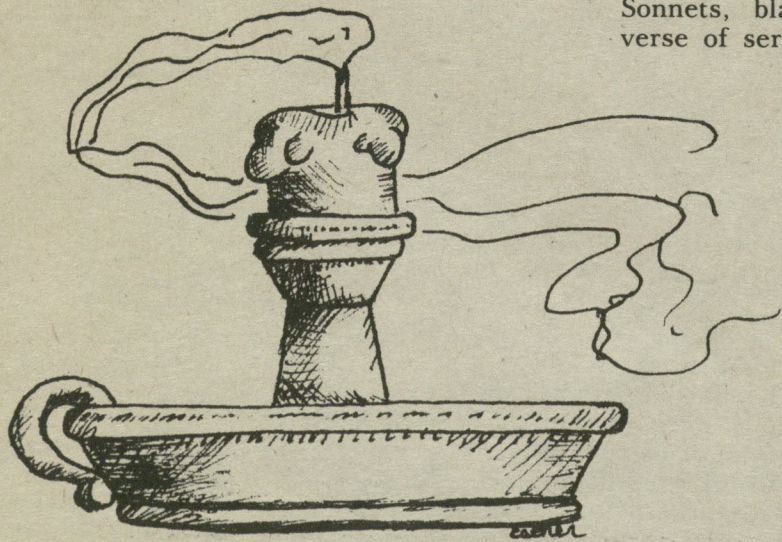
Sonnets, blank verse, dramatic & narrative poetry, and other verse of serious intent.

Category III

Fiction: short story, drama, character sketches.

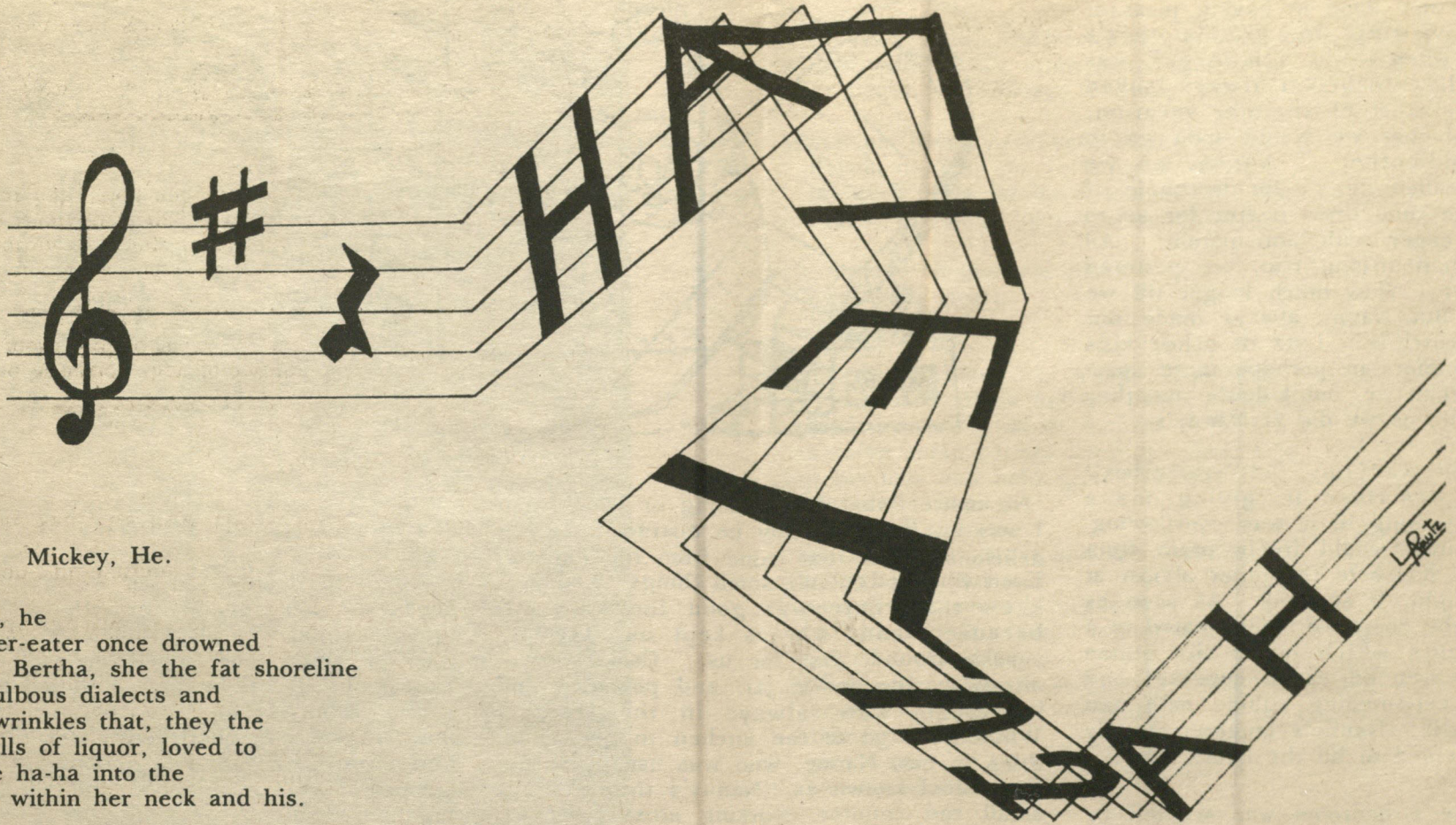
Category IV

Essays: Personal, Critical, Formal and Informal.



Please mark entry to include author's name, address and phone number, and the appropriate category.

Deadline for contest entries: February 23, 1983.



Mickey, He.

Mickey, he
the river-eater once drowned
next to Bertha, she the fat shoreline
with bulbous dialects and
jiggly wrinkles that, they the
waterfalls of liquor, loved to
cascade ha-ha into the
ravines within her neck and his.

Bottled me, the precious metal-
in-a-loop bearer, innocently
bystanding on the chin of the
dock, next to Father Good
chanting Ave Marias like it
was a wedding reception but
it, this ceremony, it were really
a funeral.

Well almost, because she'd
keep chortling ha-ha, and
he'd turn red in the nose and
swallow more water in see like
remember he drowned.
But them don't laugh at wakes.
Unless they drunked.

But, naah, wine and cheese those don't
be at very serious occasions
unless they, with bread, be waved
over by the good Father Good like he
was God see, who transubstantiated
everything he touch into Holy food
like that all we pray about
before we eat, mamma and us and
poppa, the river-eater.

So, laugh and shut-up kids.
Be that as it maybe could be, they'll
stand the wet mummy on its heels
and watch it, as we all supposed to say:
he die a good river-eater and deserves our love.

Bertha went first, fainted dead away,
she struck the toes of the votive lamp
all good Catholic families have
in our front room, waving the light
a little bit, it didn't wiggle too much
though, as quiet skated over her frozen
skin.

Mamma, poor Bertha, we all did, we
had to, it we cried and sobbed.
That woke daddy, Mickey, he woke
up startled Father Good into
saying a bad word, boy, he turned pink
like the votive lamp like he the with red nose,
my daddy the river-eater.

Shame on you Father.

Ha-ha we said. Us little river-eaters.

Daniel Avila

not the assertion that something is true, but the making of that
truth more real to us.

--T.S. Eliot

As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

--Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream

II

I have this day
when I open a door to open another
only to find myself
walking through the other way.

Linda Laatsch

Until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself
ignorant of his understanding.

--S.T. Coleridge

Thoughts on a Dark Winter Night

sneaking slowly through the trees, a floating summer breeze
wanders lonely anywhere, searching, looking, light as air
enraged by a storm
its mind turns red
its cause forgotten
it whips through, pounds down, whistles by
chasing rain, moving snow, lifting the earth
it cannot see the destruction
in minds its mournful songs' crying causes
content minds depressed, solid minds broken
lonely minds at home reminded
of time: passing, coming, going
whispering to the wind
blow breeze blow
cry wind cry
storms do blow away though
then the wind starts sneaking, cooling
whispering "remember me, remember me, remember me"
a dusty plea, only to storm.

Stuart Selthun

Of the Essence of Hope
(Originally for Tim Jarabek)

In the brisk of fall,
The flashing runner, strong,
Spirit surging with purpose of heart,
Strength of soul,
Fire of eyes in a
Race toward life,
Against a sunset sky,
Against a brace of night,
Heaven's Mind desire,
Lo! from a child,
The Eagle.