

Spring 1988

Spring 1988

Valparaiso University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.valpo.edu/lighter_62-03



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Valparaiso University, "Spring 1988" (1988). *The Lighter, 1962-2003*. Paper 61.
http://scholar.valpo.edu/lighter_62-03/61

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Lighter, 1962-2003 by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

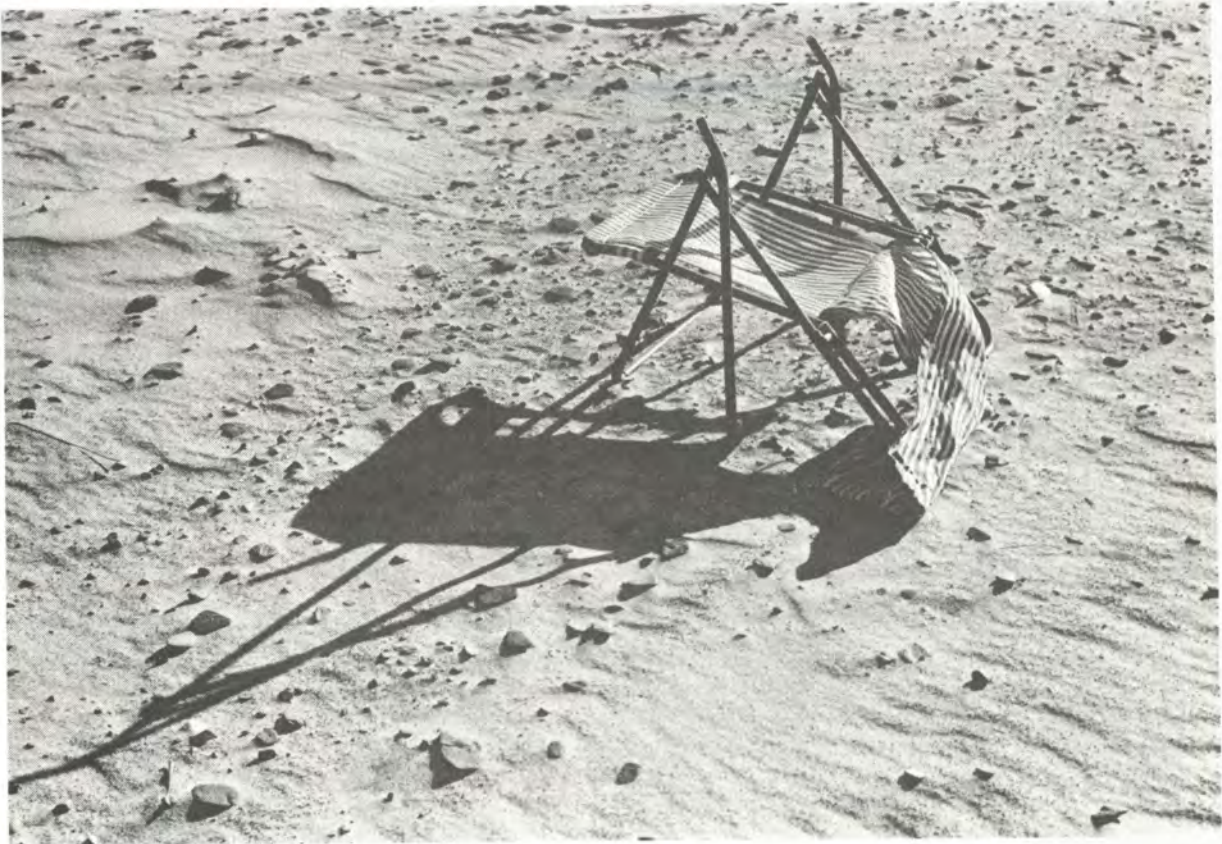
ighted



Invitation

An orchard moon rambles through branches,
cutting an idle swath across the crimson sky.
This show cannot last long. Wind rushes
thistles and willows lining the lake's edges
like a laughing child splashing tentative bathers.
There's a bottle of wine tied to the rowboat's bow.
See, it bobs there, as if marking the space
where an angler's lure lurks below.
And darkness is passing its trembling hand over
the waves, as excited as a clumsy boy
thumbing his first back bare. I swear
the show will not last long. Come.

—Michael Caldwell



—Laura Gatz

Dead Pets

The dog was dead. It lay in that posture that is so obviously not sleeping and that animals tend to assume when they expire. It was clearly defunct. Not a breath of life in its canine carcass, now a mere fleshy receptacle emptied of that stupid and energetic and affectionate spirit that characterizes all the best dogs. What was on the floor of my apartment was a corpse, no more and no less. Organic garbage, or at best a smelly memento of all that "Spunky" had been or would ever be to our tender rose-tinted, essentially soft-centered memories. Obviously, Spunky was a job for the garbage man.

Of course, that wasn't the consensus. The girl I was living with saw to that. Why this had to be so, why I had to face the awful consequences of Spunky's demise at such a trying time of my life, such questions escape me. Only one theory emerged from the shattering event. Now I honestly believe, at the very root of that awful divergence of the sexes, at the center of gravity of the one decisive chromosome that determines our gender, some cynical god has etched a maniacal sensitivity to pet deaths on the female matrix.

"The GARBAGE MAN?" my love screamed at me when she arrived home to the



—Heidi Kipp

scene of the disaster. "How can you consider turning Spunky over to the GARBAGE MAN?"

"Christ, Susie, I don't know. Apartments don't come with backyards—remember? What do you think we should do with the corpse?"

Spunky's remains were, by the way, growing more pungent by the minute. Susie and I were poor bohemian types, naturally suspicious of bourgeois luxuries such as air-conditioning.

"Well, why not a pet cemetery," she suggested belligerently.

Belligerently, because she knew exactly what I thought of pet cemeteries. What every sane person thinks of pet cemeteries. After all, pets are transient, people are transient, the earth is transient, the elements will eventually break down into their component parts and leave the universe a charged cloud of plasma—let's face it, we're living on the edge of a guess about an uncertainty. I don't think we've got time to leave headstones behind for everything. So pet cemeteries are right out. We had pictures of the pet. I even caught a case of worms once from the pet (at least that's my theory—I could never prove it). An official burial would be superfluous, and sacrilegious to boot, if either of us believed in god.

"Because," I replied, "pet cemeteries charge too much money, they're in revolting bad taste, a scam, a rip-off, a morbid wailing ground for lonely spinsters, a..."

"Stop it! Stop being such an insufferable elitist. Spunky's dead," a sob caught in Susie's throat, "and I think the least we owe him is a decent burial."

"Owe him? OWE him? Susie, did you forget that Spunky was a *pet*? We all know that pet means parasite. We fed that dog, housed it, walked it, cleaned up after it,

and ladled affection on it like pineapple sauce on a roast pig. The least Spunky could do is bury himself. Since he seems unwilling to make even *that* little contribution to our common cause, and since he's starting to smell, I suggest we let the garbage man take care of him."

"Callous, that's what you are. Insensitive and cruel. You haven't the least bit of human affection."

"I'm full to the *brim* with it! But since my affection for Spunky, especially Spunky in his present state, falls short of dropping two hundred dollars to have the little creature given a full dress burial in some park run for the purpose of leeching geriatric canophiles, I think we should turn his shaggy little carcass over to the sanitary engineer."

"Fine, you go on feeling that way. I've finally seen you for what you are, you sick animal-hater, and I'm leaving. How could I have deluded myself for so long?"

Susie stormed off to pack. In fifteen minutes (by which time Spunky had really started to get rancid) she returned, lugging a heavily packed suitcase and wearing a look of determination.

"I'm taking Spunky with me," she said, staring me straight in the eye.

Susie bent down, scooped the terrier under her free arm, and staggered out the door. I'm sure she made quite an impression walking down Oak Street with her overflowing suitcase and dead pet. I had never gotten a chance to tell her I'd lost my job that day, but, I assumed, after she had drunk a bit and gotten up the courage to bury Spunky in the park by night, she'd come back and we could discuss it. I looked out the window, and wondered how many blocks the latches on her beaten up old suitcase would last.

—Pat Burnette



Non-Variables

He has been difficult to know.
I am unfamiliar with him, and I shouldn't be
sad that time cannot be recovered or reworked.

The first divorce at age six means
that I cannot recall life as one big happy family.
Good times—here and there; odd weekends and Wednesdays there.
As a child I was fascinated with all of his wives'
names beginning with "L," envious of each one.
Fifteen years after the fact, we both wonder
separately, whether one can even justify such a choice
for personal happiness. And I am at least fifteen years away
from knowing what he wants for me at 21 that escapes him at 50.

The subject then is inheritance, arising even today
as both parents believe that I will be with them
on Christmas Day. My presence reassures them
that their house will always be my home.
But I have become clever
at finding other houses to go to,
and rarely going home. To do so
is to invite the rejected version
the self I left, back
to conservative playgrounds where all is untouchable.

I have been told that my resemblance to him is strong
and have grown weary looking
each morning in the mirror for the face
I know so well. It's not a problem
to ally myself with one who left.
He must have had reasons. And so I see my mother forever
cast as an ancient 34 year-old housewife—
what her trauma was has been my deepest fear—
wishing that she would be stronger, that she could
boldly detach herself from him,
so that I can stop thinking of her as rejected,
so that I can stop rejecting her myself. If
in a perverse way, I am my Daddy's Girl.

His girl simply because he has loved me
when I have been unloveable. Undeserved,
or at least unpredictable, that is the nature of it
which I restlessly pursue. And his guilt gives it all away
for I'm accustomed to it erupting, thinly disguised in our lives
like so many expressions carelessly tossed out and away.

Deciding an argument one summer, he said,
"I'm the parent. You're the child. That's that."
I only felt, car keys in hand, the levelling
power of the words, stressing the proper roles and denying them.
Much later—and more softly than his once-blue-eyed look, sometimes
through a silent AT&T line—I am able to sense his confession,
brimming with the whole story. It goes something like this:
"I'm your father. And you are ever my own.
It hasn't been at all what I wanted."



—Julie Meyer

To Frank in Manly from Valparaiso

Dear Frank: I saw *Out of Africa* again, alone. You were wrong about the toast at dinner, Streep drinks to fleet-foot lads and Redford to rose-lipped maidens. Here bitter winds have come to the brick buildings, swirling around awkward angles, lifting leaves in desperate dances of brown. Far from the lush greens and rolling yellows of fantasy Africa or real Australia. Brita tells of your biking in deserts of dingoes and abos. Today, the first snow fell, muddying dead grass as it melted in November sun. Not the same on campus without you. I'm missing crazy afternoons canoeing, drinking bandiera out of smoky glasses balanced on a pine, pints of dark, German beer behind Heritage till the sun rose over the railroad tracks. Remember wild, midnight drives into dark one-stoplight towns? Or taking Brita and Julie to the beach with four bottles of wine and forty dollars worth of grapes and crackers? Sun setting over a vague Chicago skyline? Even wind turning cold couldn't keep us from walking barefoot in the icy water, harping like old wives over fences on our eternal subject... You said it was like flying an airplane. Laughing, I claimed my plane was more a rocket, capable of short, disastrous flights. Remember Redford's crash in the movie? So did mine a few days ago. Julie called to tell of her May marriage. Happens all the time I guess. Watching thin lines of smoke from burning leaves twist painfully skyward, I'm thinking of our favorite songs and wishing like hell you were here. Fly home before I leave, and maybe we can drink a few to rose-lipped maidens. Michael.

—Michael Caldwell



Illumination

Goodness

**nature used to be Beautiful
as did I.**

**God's divinity prevailed
in all that I saw**

it was the Truth.

Lost in a world of

Innocence,

ignorant to all that surrounded me,

I was Good.

Suddenly Knowledge, illumination.

books, science, music, art—

Truth revealed, Beauty contained within—

Christ is a myth (and)

I am a fool.

Father, Mother, Sister, to you I cling,

Sold my soul to follow you

lead me to the Truth.

**Seduced by a false Madonna
veiled by a halo.**

Chopin and Sand sat together

in a pew while

the sheep and the goats were separated.

The trust is relative (and)

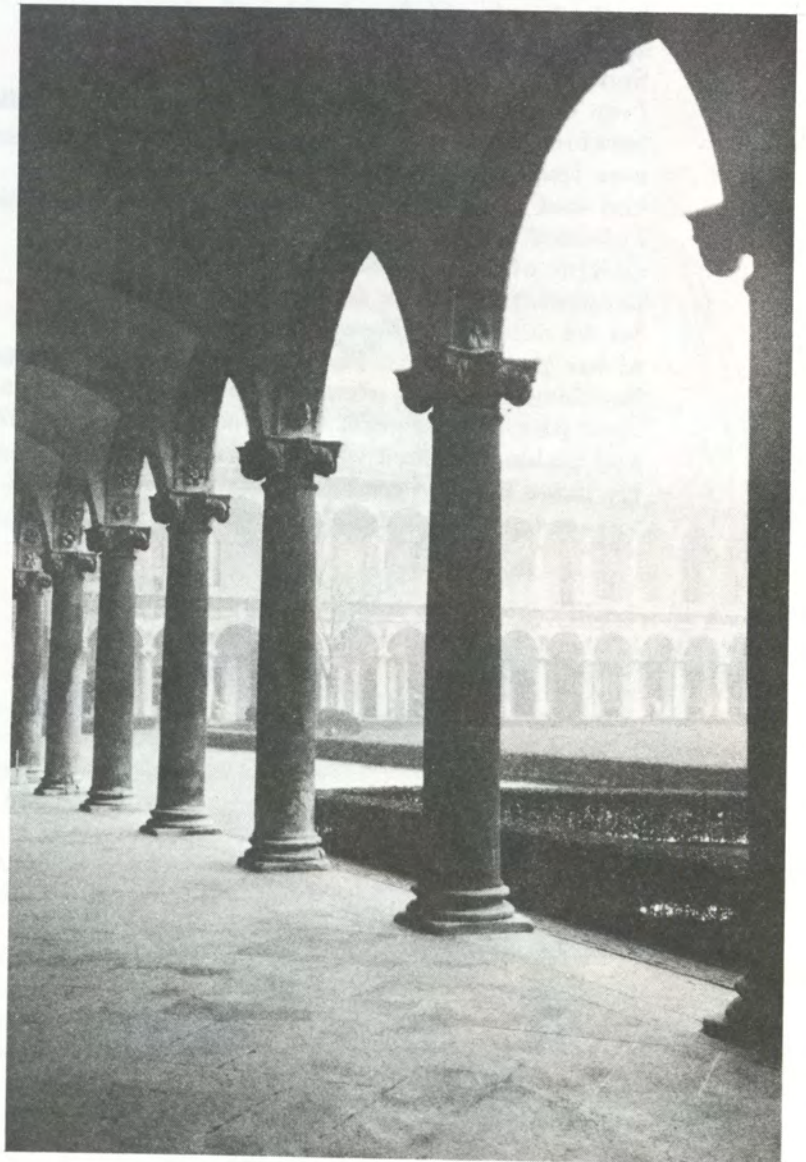
I'm lost not found.

Goodness

nature used to be beautiful

as did I.

—Susan Gardels





—Kathrin Eimer

Vigil for Grandpa

As I hold your icy hand—
Its old bones bound by tendons,
Laced in indigo veins, and wrapped
In tissue paper skin—
I watch the jagged line
They call your heart, and think,
So thin and green a line
Could never be a heart like yours.

I was eleven then, and though
You'd known three score more years,
You were eleven too—and God himself
Was only twelve in 1978.
Your broad pillared porch became
A time and space machine—lawn chairs
Of tin and plastic mesh, empowered
By words of one who'd seen the whole of life,
And dreams of one who'd seen it none, bore us
To Betelgeuse, and Pharaoh's tomb,
And worlds that God forbade to be.
For we were soul-mates,
Standing alone at life's rough ends,
Piercing the years between us
With our simple jokes, and simpler dreams
Of worlds that should have been.

Grandpa, I'm twenty-one now.
This coma makes you look
Old as this goddamned earth itself—
You're nearly dead, and God with you.
Our time machine has crashed, and time
Sprays in through shattered glass,
Sprays in and soaks us, chokes us, drowns us.
A new machine of time, of dials and pumps,
Of platyhelmenthic tubes, reaches its crane arm
Down your tender throat to seize your
Tired heart, it's tired lungs, and tell them
"Dance!"

I've failed you, Grandpa,
Death himself laughs at our ageless
Dreams. But only he can laugh,
For only he is still immortal.

The tubes and dials have done their work.
We've not stopped time, but stretched it out—
You live, you're well. But fiddling
With time's ceaseless clock costs
You your ears, costs us the words
That freed us once from time's great stream.
God, that aging bastard (he has
No father—nor grandfather),
Gave you back to me, fixing a
Pane of glass between us, a pain
Of glass to keep in stony silence
The words that once had set us free.

—Rob King

Eve

"Lusters are least dimmed among the damned."—James Merrill

**Christophe; it makes me blush to hear your name.
It was a minor indiscretion come to this—
I'd sell my soul to Cupid for your kiss,
O subtle irony of love that's close enough
To hear the arrow's rush;
But never close enough to feel its sting.
Of all people you would know
How it must pain me to admit defeat.
And I will not admit it;
But I will feel that blood come to my cheeks,
And I will wish that I could say your name.**

"Thou shalt have no gods before me"—Yahweh

**You are cruel, but not so pure as nature.
I lay inside the dark and think your fingers;
Hear your voice inside my head, sleepy and hot,
Whispering my desires like a list—
A litany of lusting, tossed about
Upon a wind of hell
that, in retrospect, will chill my heart.
The way I want you must be of itself the sin...
And I will bite that apple,
Knowing fully well where this will end.**

**Blood lust, and all I have in my defense
Is to say I cannot grasp the sense
Of what is being said.
I am locked inside this burning body,
Deafened by the pounding of my heart;
And dying in the shadow of your lips.
Locked into your breathing, breathing with you.
Wanting... never mind. Wanting you.**

**Swell inside my lungs until I'm crying,
Resonate inside my head until I'm blind.
Keep your distance as you walk beside me
But mind you never look into my eyes—
Where would we go, if it were to happen
And we were turned out of the garden now?
Knowledge is not exactly my temptation;
But this is just a symbol of our decadence,
That we confuse our knowledge with our passion.
I feel the Hand of Heaven pointing at me;
But this time, I choose not to take the blame.
Tame me and claim the glory of salvation,
Or take a bite and share with me the shame.**



—Kathrin Eimer

Don't pretend to have been concerned with preservation.
 The question now is not morality;
 I would gladly go to hell and stay there,
 To trade in the burden of these heavenly wings.
 The force with which we're playing now is twilight;
 But the glory I seek for us is of a different kind.
 Breathe life into my mouth with this new power;
 Draw forth my soul with your eternal kiss.
 Creation has been tilted in your favor,
 But God won't tell you how we've come to this.

Of course, I can't pretend to have conceived it either—
 Turning our vices into poetry; or even
 Making a god of mere perversity.
 But mine is not to build upon that altar.
 I do not wish to reach beyond my nature,
 But I cannot ignore what I have seen.
 We have flown our colors indiscretely; and
 Hell is clearly where we ought to be.

“Nothing spoils a good confession like repentance.” —Anatole France

I will never put myself at the wind's mercy.
 If I could really damn myself for this
 (The gentle silk of your infernal kiss),
 I would take no chances as to who would be on top.
 But, in the end, that will not be my honor—
 One may not choose what he will be damned for.
 Your beauty has wrung from me my confession—
 Or, we will call it my concession; if you'll insist.

—Marcia Boggs



The Storm

I
 Across the sky a mass of haze
 Looms above me, like a hawk
 Eying its prey. The cold
 Air grips my body turning it numb
 As I walk across the vacant lot.

II

Today, I saw a butterfly come out
 Of its cocoon. Clouds swarm
 Above me, beyond
 My reach. The blue sky,
 Their border.

III

I take a look around—
 The storm has passed; cobwebs
 Cleared. A warm breeze surrounds
 Me as I walk across the field.

—Kristin Hall

Another

And that time on Bourbon Street
or what passed for it in my imagination
ribbons everywhere
and women inclined to
ease out of their clothes
or lay their burdens down

"One toke over the line"
sweet jesus there were
pretty girls
lovely, young things
dashing in and out of giftshops
and the same porcelain
throw-away momentoes in every window
painted faces for sale
in anyshop and streetcorner
through a dirty window I could hear
the geriatric, generic blues



—Bill Rohde

"Woke up this mawnin'
find my baby gone
woke up dis moanin'
find my maby gone
when I don't find my baby
it's time to move alone"

I tried to get past
that redundant little club
but a feeling on my skin
like sweat over sunburn
came up through my pores
and I squeezed inside

Couldn't turn down its cool invitation
teflon-ripped nerve endings
raging hotel-ache and all
What's that oyster-shell saying?
-shuckmesuckmeeatmeraw-
I kept telling myself
"it's persistence that brings up the juicy bits"

Well, the bits I'd heard on records were better
When old people play jazz
it reeks of perspiration and uncertainty
shakes a lot, and skips lightly over grooves
like a blunt phonograph needle

But it wasn't another lounge act
for the Conventioneer Club
(M-I-D... deal with you real soon
D-L-E... y? because we like you
A-G-E-D.....)

No siree
it was the
Real Thing

The players stood like scarecrows
eyes staring dully towards the crowd-
their hands groped over their instruments
fingers searching for some braille inscription
worn smooth a lifetime ago

—Pat Burnette



—Jayson Mellom

Clover Lane

Walking through at night

This forest is illuminated by the light blue glow
Of television sets radiating out of family room windows.
A neat row of split-level duplexes where twenty families
Are willingly ensnared in traps set by previous generations
Of working men.

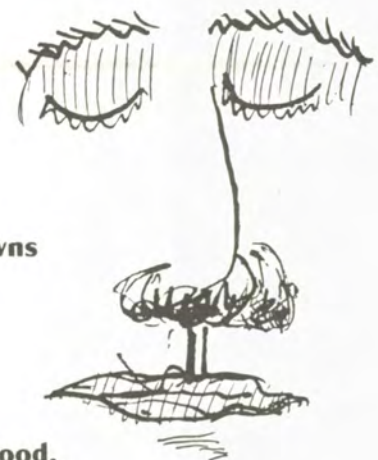
Birth and baptism and public schools
And entrance exams and cap and gown
And business world.

No questions, no answers.

No knowledge.

The blocks youth are herded off to school enmasse.
Practically coaxed the dreams out of a boy
So that he too can someday reside on the neatly manicured lawns
Of Clover Lanes somewhere,
Nowhere.

It's all for the little kids though,
They're happy because it's a safe and clean place to play
While their fathers struggle away at jobs they hate.
Saving up for old-age when they can revert back to their childhood.
And it will be a safe and clean place for them too,
But their play is limited to the Biggest drug of all
That is tuned in and never turned off.



—Andrew Griffin



Some Violent Memory



Some violent memory
is beating its way
painfully down the back
paths of my mind, trying
to pry its way in.

A field full of men
combed tall weeds
for a body, elusive
in its decadent disguise
of worms, buried somewhere.

Been two weeks since
the boy disappeared,
into thin air it seems.
A slick clairvoyant
told us where to look:

potato sack in the back
seat of a wrecked Buick
in the woods; we found
a litter of bastard puppies
in a stack of trash. Balancing

between hope and dread
of finding him, said
the Sentinel, volunteers
got snagged by briars, bit
by gleeful mosquitos, traversed

rusty barbed wire fences,
threatened tetnus by dying
light. It was a hot summer
for ferreting out a kidnapped
child from feral farmland

and everyone suffered. Weeping
willows slumped wearily
in the heat, and the dirt
no rain had quenched
in months stuck to drenched

brows, backs and parched
throats like heat in a
desert. Dusk illuminated
a subdued group, gathered
for jugs of iced tea plucked

from a cooler in a pickup.
Exhaustion spliced frayed
nerves, and dust settled
into evening. The Sentinel
reporter scratched his head

with a blunt pencil, tucking
a worn notepad into his shabby
shirt pocket. A few threads
of this story need to be woven
into tomorrow's account,

but unsolved mysteries have
their own morbid appeal,
he knew. Another long hot day
was over. The fruitless search
made the third page

come alive. I awoke
and read the news, thinking
of a man I know, remembering
my numb face after
he slapped it once; I wish

I had been that boy.
I wonder why
he never told me
I am not his son, not
who they said I was.

—Rick Van Grouw

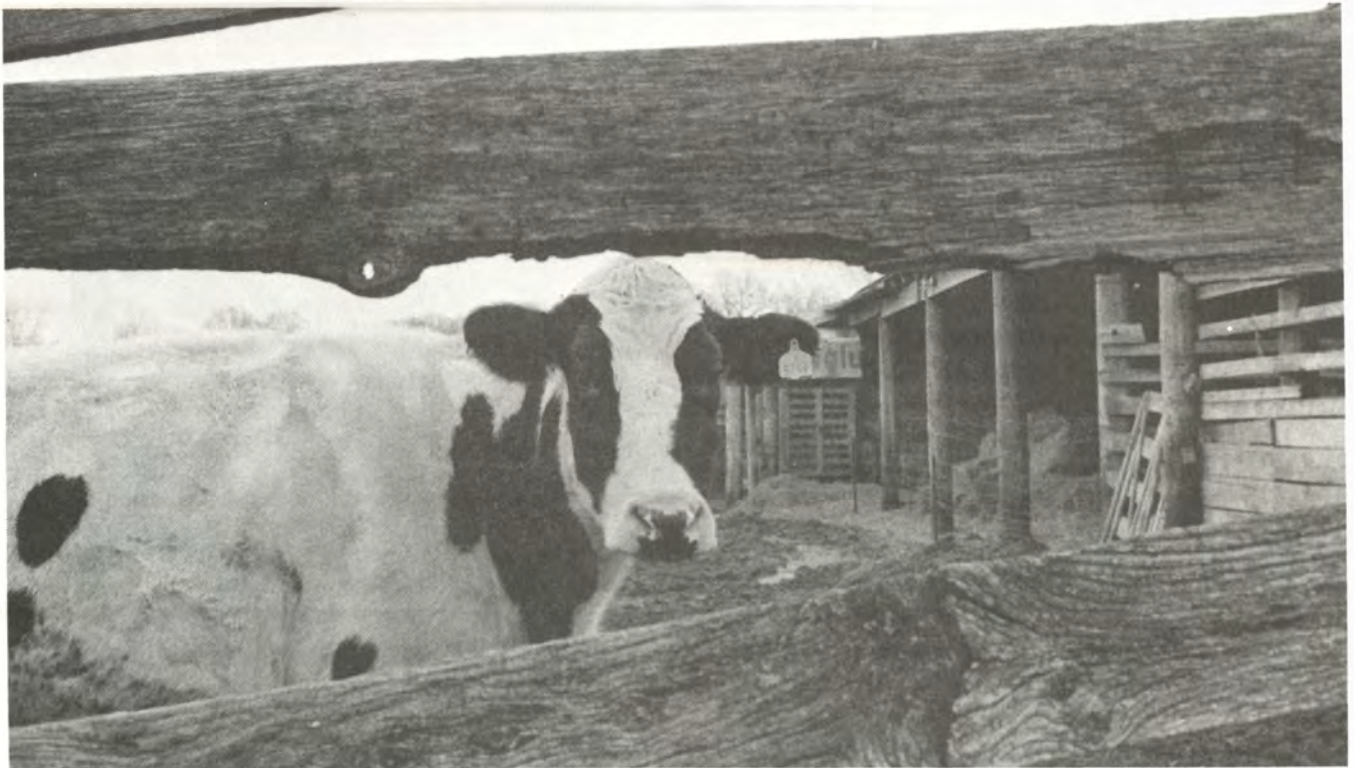
Contest

Morning air humid with the smell
of snakes and humus as he picks his way
past the water pump to the workhouse
where a greasy farmhand passes him a mattock,
leaving the dark stain of his grasp on the shaft.
The tool a cane, he walks a mile
to a septic tank's chalked-off site.
Mississippi sun burns the dew away
as he takes his first easy swings,
plucking up clumps of red clay and kudzu.
A black hand appears around nine,
and together they work the hole.
Knee-deep at noon, they take turns
loosening spadeful of dirt. By three
they must lift them waist-high to clear
the rim. He proposes a contest.

Rivulets of sweat glisten down
the black's dirt-encrusted brow.

Side by side in the narrow hole, they
flail at the hard ground. One moist chunk
refuses, pulling the mattock down into the cleft
between the black shoulder blade and spine.
The sound is of the blade entering earth,
muffled, deeper. Both are down: one
mumbling, the other wringing the crumpled
rag of a body. He tries to cure the flow
with his sweat-soaked shirt.
Dusk finds him cradling a limp form.

—Michael Caldwell



—Shannon Luck

spare me the cutter

protestant saints
make rotten dates

I found out when the car wouldn't start.

"Reginald, is the fuel pump frozen?"

She asked me with microwave eyes.

Abandon all hope, ye who attempt to enter here

will the engine turn over

will the engine turn over

I don't want to unclothe her

Why doesn't the car fucking start?

The front seat's fast becoming
like a reptile room at the zoo.

I feel like a mouse about to be swallowed.

would she won't she

could she cut me

I think she's reaching for a hair pin.

THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOT A PRELUDE TO DATE RAPE!

I didn't even pucker.

will the engine turn over

will the engine turn over

Jesus I wish I could

Oh, thank you Sir Goodwrench,
I hear an encouraging sputter.
I'll bet that was mace she was reaching for
in her leather purse.

the engine turned over!

God how I loathe her

And we're moving—it's Escape
from Night of the Living Frigid.

But I'm still just an arm's length away
from *what most experts say*
rivals Stephen King's scariest creature

Calm down, get a breath

you've nearly dropped her off.

this suburb should be declared

a toxic waste dump

"Good night, then."

-and I hope you enjoyed yourself-

I slip in with a psychic snarl.

"I'm glad

nothing

was broken"

Voice full of sweet-concerned menace

glaring at my crotch.

Must have been scissors in the purse

"Perhaps another time," I say

I'm such a slut for torture

protestant saints

make rotten dates

or maybe it was handcuffs...

—Pat Burnette



—Bill Rohde

The Wake

You wake up to the persistent beeping of your alarm clock. You know the beeping won't stop, no matter how long you wait, but you try to ignore it anyway.

The beeping doesn't stop. After a minute, it seems to begin drilling its way into your brain.

It beeps, you flinch. Pavlov would've loved it.

Deep breath. You sit up. Headrush. Light. You stand up. It gets worse. Your eyes feel like overripe fruit, the kind that gets put out on salad bars in really cheap restaurants and people eat it and go home and end up sick later that night.

You find the clock on the floor behind your dresser, under a dress shirt. You turn off the alarm.

The clock says 4:48. You look over at the window. Light. You don't remember the sun rising that early.

Of course, there are a bunch of other things you don't remember, so that's scarcely consequential.

You look back at the bed. It looks very large, and very empty. It feels very empty when you're in it, too, and you suspect it will for a while. The sheet is twisted into a useless rope of cloth that hangs off one side of the bed. A red blanket is bundled up on the floor a few feet from the bed; currently, it is keeping a tennis shoe and a fern comfortably warm.

You spent the night wondering why you were so cold. Looks like you did yourself again. It's a bad habit of yours. One way or another, you always end up in the cold.

When you were younger, your mom used to put your blanket back on you when you kicked it off on the floor. She used to tuck you in, too, when she was feeling particularly maternal and you were feeling particularly tired and depressed.

You remember one time when Janet took the blanket and...

Enough of that. Time to start the day. What day is it? Calendar says Saturday. You put your hand on the calendar to stop it from jumping around, and the little tack that holds it up comes out and falls on the

floor. You hold one hand on the calendar and bend over to pick up the tack. You hit your head on the wall, and manage somehow to step on the tack. Of course, you let go of the calendar, too.

The light in the bathroom reflects off all the tiles. Luckily you haven't cleaned the bathroom since Janet... since January, and the mildew probably saves you from being blinded.

You look in the mirror. Mistake. You look like death warmed over for too long in a microwave set on "high" instead of "reheat." Your hair looks like the yucca plants that grow in front of your apartment building. Your eyes look like... well, nothing like eyes really should.

In the drawer where you keep your toothbrush, you find a blue paisley tie. It is stained with pizza sauce.

Hanging over the toilet is a pair of black fishnet stockings. This presents a problem, as you have no idea where they came from. The seat of the toilet is up. If there is any connection between these two facts, you are very glad you don't remember anything about them.

The shower sputters and belches out a scalding stream of rusty water. You jump back, slip, grab at the curtain rod for support and pull down the shower curtain. Water begins to run down the side of the tub, where it soaks into the Holiday Inn bathmat. Another rivulet runs toward the toilet, until it is stopped by a dog-eared copy of *Bright Lights, Big City* that belonged to... Janet. She told you to read it but that "second person" crap confused the hell out of you and after two chapters you were depressed. Nobody lives like that, anyway.

5:03. You rub a towel over your head. Good enough. It's warm out.

Phone rings. Another irritating noise. Your head avoids exploding. Somehow. You stagger across the room towards the phone. Your feet tangle in an eighty-dollar pair of jeans and you fall down. The machine comes on.

"Hello. Thissiz Brad Gorman. I probably fell over something on my way to answer the phone, but just in case I'm really not here—" You turn it off. You've got to change that message soon.

"Yeah?" Ouch.

"Brad, where the hell have you been?"
It's Mr. Kinney, aka asshole, aka your boss.

"Uhh, when in particular?"

"I've been calling you for twenty minutes."

"I was in the shower. What do you need?"

"Terminal Ground says they can't make the press conference at three. It has to be rescheduled to five thirty."

"Hey, man, the hotel has the conference room booked for some bar mitzvah at six. It won't go. Get 'em here sooner." The advantages of working for a record company are that you get to go to a lot of free shows, you don't have to wear a tie to the office, and you can set your own hours. Unfortunately, that also means that your boss can call you at any time of the day or night and make impossible demands, instead of being restricted to the normal impossible demand hours of nine to five on weekdays, as are most bosses. Oh, and the demands are always much more impossible than with a normal job.

"Brad, I don't want to argue with you. These guys are a big name. Get us the room."

"It's Saturday night, man. The show's Monday night. The Mariott won't do us any favors, not since the Beastie Boys show when all those couches ended up in the fountain."

"I'm sure you'll think of something."
Click.

Mr. Kinney has no respect for the sanctity of Saturday nights. Janet used to say that he...

You call the Mariott and they give you another conference room, but only after a lot of arguing that ends up with you putting a hefty security deposit on all the lobby and room furniture. You have to use your Mastercard; they won't accept your company AmEx.

You're looking for clothes when the phone rings again. This time you answer it before the machine does, and without hurting yourself. It's Gary Blenmer, and you wish you'd let the machine answer it.

"Hey, Brad, I got the company BMW for the night! Whaddya say we go out to Warner's and see if we can pick ourselves up a couple of—"

"What the hell happened last night?"
Now's your chance to find out.

"Starting when?"

"Starting from after I got back from work. Ending with what the black fishnet stockings are doing hung over my toilet."

"You really don't remember, do you?"

"Of course I remember, I just love the way you tell the story."

"Okay, well, we'll stop by the photo place on the way to Warner's. The pictures should be ready. Should be worth several thousand words... probably a few thousand bucks, too. Pick you up in fifteen." He hangs up before you can call him an asshole. What the hell, he knows, anyway.

You make a mental note to get hold of the negatives before Gary runs short of cash, just in case.

Find some clean pants in the closet. The black Girbauds still have some semblance of a crease, even. Now a shirt. You choose the cleanest one off the floor. You'd better hurry. After all, it's something to do.

Tick, tick tick. You blare the stereo to wake yourself up.

Gary, of course, is late, and when he does arrive it's with all the clumsily attempted flashiness of a solid gold anvil falling through a plate glass skylight. The black BMW screeches around the corner, its loud German-named stereo blaring Top 40 at disturbing-the-peace volume. Skids to a halt inches from where you're standing.

"C'mon, man!" Gary's never one to mince words. You get in. The stereo extrudes aural claws that scrape across your brain. Ouch.

Light rain patters across the windshield. Gary turns on the wipers, pointlessly spraying washer fluid all over the windshield in the process. The overspray hits a passing derelict.

The city is big and shiny and hurts your eyes. The streets are full of damned attractive women with long, blond/brown hair like Janet's... Your mother used to have hair like that, back when you were in first or second grade. You feel frighteningly oedipal for thinking of such a thing.

Janet is gone. Face it. You don't want to, but face it, when you're in bed now and you take all the covers, nobody's going to complain. Nobody makes scrambled eggs for you in the morning now, unless you count McDonalds and somehow the idea of making love to a McDonald's fry cook and then

having an Egg McMuffin doesn't hold the same appeal as... as Janet.

There are pieces of Janet all over the place. Not in the psychopathic killer, cut-'em-up- 'n-leave-'em-lying-around sense, of course. The clothes she bought you, the girl at the concert who looks like her, the cloying scent of her perfume that jumps out and hits you when you walk through Field's after lunch. The rain. She liked the rain. She liked loud music in BMW's.

Unfortunately, she also liked freedom, as far as relationships go. You had convinced yourself that—

“Snap out of it, Brad!” Gary elbows you in the side, rather painfully. He skids the BMW to a halt and parallel parks it in a recently-vacated space a block down from Warner's.

You step in a puddle getting out of the car. Water seeps into your shoe. You need new shoes soon.



—Rob Wehmeier

The rain blows around half-heartedly, some miniscule leak in God's catheter. Sometimes you really amaze yourself with your ability to think up disgusting metaphors. Gary is wearing sunglasses in the half-light. To look cool, probably. You're not worried about looking cool, just about drinking until the pain goes away.

Warner's is packed, the usual meat market, guys flashing cash and women flashing marketable securities, as Gary says. You know, being above it all, that women in tight leather mini-skirts really stop being interesting after you watch them for about fifty years. It's just a spectator sport. You were sick of it a long time ago, but all your so-called friends still hang out here and sometimes you just want to go where everybody knows your name, like the song goes. Right now you're the emotional equivalent of a vegetarian who still has the urge to eat at McDonalds or Wendy's. Nothing of any lasting importance. Has anything ever had any lasting importance? You really wonder.

You order the first of what you suspect will be a long series of rather strong drinks. Another neat little metaphor: you're turning on the cruise control for this portion of your trip down the highway of life.

Next Exit: Oblivion.

Then you merge, and that's it. You're on your way.

Time passes.

"Yes," you hear yourself saying, "pain has always been part of my life. I guess you could say I'm something of a closet masochist."

You're not slurring nearly as much as you thought you would and you're not running your together sentences or ideas getting your mixed up or miswhatevered.

She is attractive, with short ice-blond hair in the sort of style worn by New York models who do an awful lot of cocaine.

"Really?" she smiles, seductively, does that little thing with the tongue and the lips and the teeth that Gary refers to as "growth-orientated marketing."

"Uhh, yeah. I'm a sucker for punishment." Tell her about Janet, why don't you? No, that usually turns 'em off. You don't talk about sexual prowess or old girlfriends when you're in a situation like this. You learned that in confirmation class... or from

your mom, or from Janet... no, maybe from Mr. Kinney, no, not Mr. Kinney.

"I think a temporary merger might be mutually beneficial." Great. She's into the corporate-level sexual innuendo crap, too. You make a crack about her having nice assets and she smiles. She sure has a lot of teeth. Fake, probably. Most everybody is. Teeth, that is. You suppose.

The next thing you know you're walking out of Warner's with her, then getting into a powder-blue Ferrari, and she's offering you some cocaine, which you turn down. She's driving you back to her place. This should be fun. It's been a while.

Her place, when you get there, is damned expensive and full of lots of artsy stuff and art deco things and all that furniture that you're only supposed to look at and not sit on cause it breaks even though it costs so much more than the sit-on kind of furniture. The furniture also moves around the room and is vaguely transparent.

No, that's you.

She invites you to make yourself comfortable—how cliché!—and vanishes into another room. You open her fridge to look for a beer. There's a lot of raw fish and some greenish-grey stuff in a pitcher. You drink water. You look through her CD collection and put on some new age stuff that makes you think about people sitting in poorly-lit offices full of expensive furniture, saying "My productivity has really gone up since I listened to W-whatever."

Janet liked new age music.

What the hell. You start taking off your clothes. You're down to plaid boxers and your socks when she comes back into the room.

You sense a subtle change in her mood.

You also notice that she is wearing a complicated arrangement of black leather with a lot of buckles and it really doesn't cover much of anything. She is carrying a long black leather bullwhip.

Yes, things have most certainly changed here.

"Get down on the floor," she suggests, staring idly at the whip in her hand.

"Why?" You really don't know, either.

"You said you're a masochist. You like pain. Well, I'm a sadist."

You look at her cluelessly and scratch an itch not usually entitled to public

scratching.

"I like to inflict pain," she says as clarification.

At least she's much more direct than Janet.

And hey, what the hell, why not? Maybe it would take your mind off things. You get down on your knees and wait. The carpet is white and thick and fluffy and reminds you of somebody's dog, but you don't remember whose... Soon she's going to hit you. It should be interesting.

Nothing happens. You look up at her. She's smiling down at you.

"Well," you ask, "aren't you going to hit me?"

She considers it.

"No." She smiles.

And then you have to laugh. Laugh and laugh and laugh until your lungs are ready to explode and tears are streaming from your eyes like that day when Janet... no, like there's an ocean draining behind them or something, and you roll around and knock a little ceramic cat off a bulbous pink table.

And you just keep laughing.

Because after all these years, you've finally found one who won't hurt you.

—George Zahora

Ode To Granny's Porch

**Rain is like water that falls from the sky
Tears are like water that falls from my eye
Mist is like water that hangs over the mountain
Pigslop is like fodder on which pigs are countin'**

**Grass is like green stuff that grows on the ground
Mass is like a meeting where Catholics are found
Rapids are like water which flows rapidly
Waterfalls are like water that flows mountainly**

**Clouds are like fluffy; white; things, in the sky
Eye lashes are like hairs growin' out of my eye
Milk is like like like a mountain
Royalties are like money on which I'm a counting.**

- 1) How does the author illustrate his belief in man's intrinsic position in the ecological triangle as illustrated in this poem? Compare and contrast.
- 2) Obviously, by inferences in the 3rd line, 2nd stanza, what political party does the author support? [hint: Nero]
- 3) From symbolic information in the first stanza, what is the author's opinion on acid rain and toxic waste?
- 4) What purpose does the author have in writing this poem?
- 5) What inference does the author make which displays the author's sympathy with Rose of Sharon from Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*? Give a pro or con argument for this usage.
- 6) Why could this poem be termed a red herring?
- 7) If this poem had been written earlier, where would the Panama Canal be? In Panama? Give 3 reasons.
- 8) What does the mountain symbolize?

—Marcia Boggs and Rob King



To make the Lighter a bit less heavy, we have included some things recently heard in class. Names have been left out to protect the innocent, but we provide the department for context.

God only speaks Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.
—English [on Chaucer]

Chaos is scary but interesting.
—English [on Othello]

Hormones are fantastic things.
—Social Work

She's not mentally ill, she's pregnant.
—Social Work

A Don Juan character can sustain an erection but not a relationship.
—Social Work

Aging starts at birth...it doesn't show until 30.
—Social Work

Death tends to be physically inhibiting.
—Political Science

An elephant—I'm aroused!
—Psychology [discussing the short sexual fuse of adolescent males]

That's just our friend the negative sign.
—Economics

Dim the lights. I'm in a very subjunctive mood.
—Foreign Language

If I had a whole slew of children, I wouldn't want any of them to be an -ir verb.
—Foreign Language

...depends upon how much of a tub-thumping point you want to make.
—Foreign Language

A regular, old, run-of-the-mill cascading series of events.
—Biology [on the formation of DNA]

Don't let your yo-yo jerk ribosomes mess with your DNA.
—Biology

A Germanic heritage goes a long way in incapacitating one's enjoyment of puns.
—Christ College

This is frustrating, isn't it? This is Modernism.
—Christ College

Show them love, those bastards.
—Theology

A lot of young children died early in life.
—Sociology

People are living longer because they aren't dying as early.
—Sociology

Christianity is kind of nice...for pious old ladies.
—Theology

Lutherans are like Lake Wobegon people in a lot of ways.
—Theology

There are literally dozens of thousands of herpes viruses.
—Biology

...but why do they fight so hard when the most they can hope for is a longer obituary.
—English

If you get rejected, go shopping. Feel better: buy a hat.
—Social Work

She's at home coughing her lungs up against the ceiling.
—Department secretary reporting to students why their professor is missing, in the professor's own words

Like a lot of students in the 1880's, he got involved in a plot to kill the czar.
—Christ College [on Lenin]

Russian peasants...they were short and troglodytic folk...muscular and illiterate...quite hostile to anything resembling an idea. They were thoroughly dislikable.

—Christ College

...a quadratic kind of a beastie.

—Engineering

The press and everyone associated with it were turned into marmalede.

—Christ College [on the swift and fierce reaction of the czar's secret police to protest]

We don't have to get downright phallic about it.

—English [on the symbolism in a poem]

Writing about your own sex life is sort of puke-inducing.

—English

George Washington: Red-haired, toothless Virginia farmer and military genius.

—Christ College

Opera and bladder control are very related.

—English

All generalizations are wrong, including this one.

—Political Science

Which is more exciting—blowing up the food service or driving 130 mph down Lincolnway?

—Christ College [on merits of a life of terrorism versus those of a life of materialism]

You don't do verbal pirouettes on someone's grave.

—English [on the need for restraint when writing elegies]

Each man for himself; God for everybody.

—Political Science

It's like trying to teach History in California.

—English

Perhaps we can conceive of art as a form of ejaculation.

—English

There are sort of ordinary people, and then there are women.

—English [a female professor]



—Alan Kossman



—Eric Levin

Everything will ultimately be on tv.
—English [general theory on life]

At least I have the sense to fall in love with other people's bodies and not my own.
—English [on Narcissus]

Coleridge was an opium addict. This was a very Romantic-with-a-capital-R thing to do.
—English

This is what you do. You writhe in a kind of possession while snakes slither over your huge, muscular body.
—English [on Bacchus]

...our friends over there in the College of Culture and Joy.
—Engineering [referring to the College of Arts and Sciences]

Lies are all right because smart people know they're lies and stupid people don't.
—English

I had to get up this morning and now I have to conjugate verbs. What kind of cruel world is this?
—English

Scholarly maniacs armed with high-powered lenses.
—Christ College [on scientists]

You can't shoot a bullet with a bar of soap; therefore, a bar of soap is not a gun.

—English [on how dictionary definitions work]

Legless Vietnam vets riding around on skateboards giving high-fives to drunken Indians.

—Christ College [describing a television commercial fraught with shamelessly sentimental American images]

Do you think Plato took his laundry down to the rocks and beat it out himself? Hell no! You can't keep your mind on higher things when you have to worry about getting the stains out of your toga.

—Christ College

That's too general. Let's get a little more pacific.

—English

You don't pant carefully, you pant with passionate abandon, don't you?

—English

Now Cupid will often set up camp somewhere in the lady's anatomy.

—English

We are prisoners of our right margins.

—English

There are times when wit is more important than depth of thought.

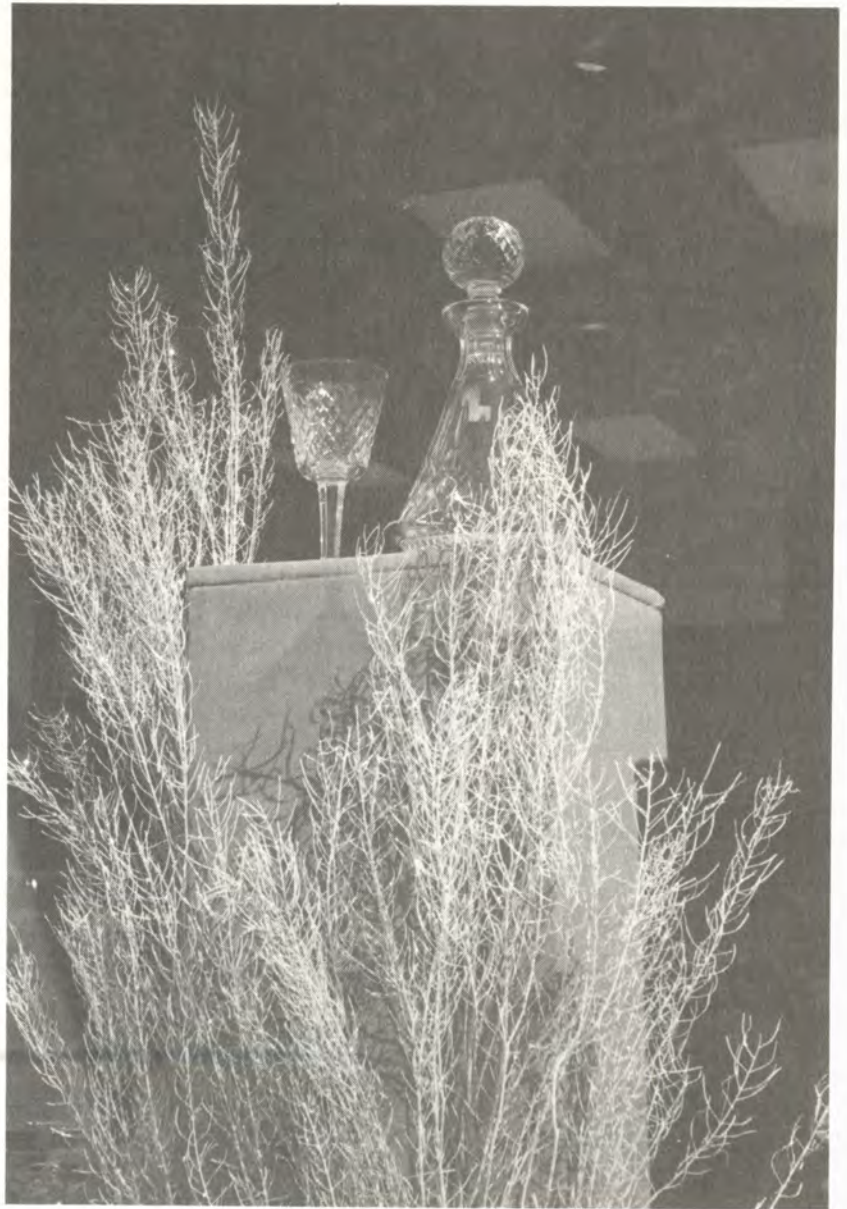


A Love Lyric

One of those Freudian things I suppose
my dearest dear dearheart of dears
first drew me to you
on that fine afternoon
by the lake with the ducks
you were tossing them bread
I'll always remember that scene

Ah, your untroubled brow
and aqualine nose
and graceful slim arm
flinging bread

I'll always remember you dear by the lake
(you remind me of mother
your elbows
your toes are identical
matches of hers)
throwing bread towards the lake
at the ducks on the lake
a Freudian thing I suppose



—Anne-Marie Christensen



Volume 33 Issue 3 Spring 1988

Editor-in-Chief: Bill Rohde
Co-Editor: Tanya Stedge
Art Editor: Kathrin Eimer
Faculty Advisor: Kathleen Mullen

Staff Members: Polly Atwood, Marcia Boggs, Pat Burnette, Michael Caldwell,
Dave Donahoe, Andrew Griffin, Barb Hoel, Brian Jung, Rob King, Julie
Meyer, Rick Van Grouw



Notes on Contributors



Marcia Boggs, senior, English/Psychology, Griffin, IN
Matt Bozik, senior, Biology major, Mt. Prospect, IL
Pat Burnette, senior, English/Humanities, Jacksonville, IL
Michael Caldwell, senior, English/Humanities, Richton Park, IL
Anne-Marie Christensen, senior, Marketing, Marietta, GA
Kathrin Eimer, senior, Art, Springfield, OH
Susan Gardels, senior, French/English/Secondary Ed, Independence, MO
Laura Gatz, sophomore, Urbana, IL
Andrew Griffin, freshman, Exploratory, Valparaiso, IN
Kristin Hall, senior, Communications, Naperville, IL
Barb Hoel, junior, Art, Arcadia, IN
Rob King, senior, Theology/Humanities, Griffin, IN
Heidi Kipp, Art, Fraser, MI
Alan Kossman, senior, Pre-Dentistry, Orland Park, IL
Eric Levin, sophomore, Business, Rock Island, IL
Shannon Luck, senior, Computer Science, South Bend, IN
Jayson Mellom, junior, Photography, Greenville, SC
Julie Meyer, senior, English/Humanities, Carmichael, CA
Bill Rohde, senior, English/Humanities, Appleton, WI
Rick Van Grouw, junior, Philosophy/Humanities, Holland, MI
Rob Wehmeier, senior, Photography, Flossmoor, IL
George Zahora, junior, English, Downer's Grove, IL

Once more, special thanks to Dave Soderna for his love and patience. We
couldn't have done it without you, Dave!

Thanks to the Torch for the use of their equipment.

Assorted heads by Matt Bozik

Printed by Home Mountain Publishing

The Lighter staff assumes all responsibility for the contents of the
magazine. Views expressed within the pieces contained in this magazine do
not represent official views or opinions of Valparaiso University, but instead
are creative expressions of individuals within the university community. Stu-
dent Senate provides funds for the Lighter but takes no responsibility for
the contents.

