Children of Peoria
(For Richard and John Covelli)

Thanksgiving

Impressions of the Russian heartland,
A brilliant sun, a village dance,
Fields golden, horizon green,
Reaping grain by ancient means,
As almost unseen, almost unheard,
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 carry away,
By a veldt 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 inscrutable 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,
Your sympathetic whispers,
Still echo from the past,
In subjugated lands.

k. sciocci

Dear Readers and Contributors:

Writing creatively is a difficult task that requires more than imagination and sincerity. 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 Lighter is a literary magazine published annually by the students of Valparaiso University. This newsprint edition precedes the standard edition to be published in the spring.
£1 Tocamiento de la Madrugada
(The Feel of the Early Morning)

The very air has been machined, and, damp in sound and

Breathing our breath,

Returning it sullied;

Breathing our breath,

Smell, a sky set upon us like a plague

Our hot, salted faces.

Sleep not vanquished from our dreaming eyes

The trees, dropping

Overhead! The sky sweeps forth another

"No!" we cry, "terrible crime!"

We are so angry and we charge the road, into the dust,

We shoot after it.

I'm well preserved for my stage,

Pushing our riffles 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

Over two years,

as too mutilated,

or just too fat.

(Should not med students see occasional corpulent 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,

to see what suffers most

crashing at 50 mph

into an immovable object.

And yet, as I am severed

to eager scholars learning

where to scalpel for the spleen,

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 aside 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,

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.

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Nanny's House

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 signified that we would soon go to visit my grandmother -- Nanny, as we grand children 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" as 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 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, containing in its 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.

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.

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

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

Mickey, 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.

So, laugh and shut-up kids. Be that as it maybe could be, they'l 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

Linda Laatsch

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

Thoughts on a Dark Winter Night

sneaking slowly through the trees, a floating summer breeze wanders lonely anywhere, searching, looking, light as air enragéd 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.

k. scionti