

# **The Fioretti**

## **The Literary Magazine of Marian College**

**1999-2000**

**Featuring the works of:**

- **Abayomi Animashaun**
- **Brandi Bowers**
- **P.M. Fisher**
- **Mark Hall**
- **Jennifer Johannigman**
- **Stefanie K. Kesecker**
- **Angela Pierpont**
- **Kate Raper**
- **Kate Rave**
- **Rachel Ray**
- **Anne Reaves**
- **Viviane Seumel**
- **Melissa Sprong**
- **Rachel Tompson**
- **Joslyn Virgin**
- **Lori Voorhis**
- **Suzanne Walker**
- **Rachel Wuertz**

**Edited by Julie Goodspeed**  
**Advised by Sr. Stella Gampfer, OSF**

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January 5, 2000

## Preface

So, here is the next edition of The Fioretti. Thanks to all of you who took the time and effort to submit your creations. I can easily say I enjoyed reading all the entries and was pleased at the evidence of new talent. (I continue to be impressed with already acknowledged talent.) For those submissions that are not included in this edition, let me say a few words of explanation. After careful perusal, I chose those works that best represented one or more of the following merits: 1) aesthetic value in terms of treatment and development of material, 2) creativity, and 3) significance.

Fifty-three pieces, ranging from poetry to science fiction, were entered for consideration in regards to publication in The Fioretti. Again, I would like to extend my gratitude to those of you who submitted your work of your own volition and to those who were subjected to my active recruitment. I think that this edition of Marian College's literary magazine is one that you can be proud to have been a part.

Furthermore, it was a tough job only choosing one piece from each author. It was with agonizing deliberation that I made final decisions in regards to which piece would be published when multiple pieces of equal merit were submitted by a single, clever writer. However, in consideration of equal space for all those selected, one piece per genre per author was the standard.

As for editorial concerns, attempts were made to maintain the original integrity of the works in reference to their content and format. Modifications have been made to certain works in order to format them in unity with other works (i.e. space considerations) and to make the works easily accessible to readers (i.e. author's name is always in bold in the upper left hand corner of the page). Corrections have also been made in grammar and spelling if it did not affect the integrity of the work. Examples of pieces that have been kept as closely as possible to the intentions of the authors are "Losing Nirvana Again" by Brandi Bowers and "My Girl" by Abayomi Animashaun. Bowers's layout of her poem is meant to resemble the shape of the world and Animashaun's italicized type emphasizes the urgency conveyed by the content.

This collection is entirely comprised of Marian College students and faculty.

Recognition belongs to Sister Stella Gampfer, OSF, advisor to The Fioretti. Her guidance and literary insight and understanding are much appreciated.

Enjoy!



Julie Goodspeed  
Editor

## Table of Contents

### Poetry

Animashaun, Abayomi	"My Girl"	1
Bowers, Brandi	"Losing Nirvana Again"	2
Fisher, P.M.	"Heart Talk"	3
Hall, Mark	untitled	4
Kesecker, Stephanie K.	"Static"	5
Pierpont, Angela	"Longing"	6
Raper, Kate	"Mixed Allusions to a Middle-Aged Adonis (Letter to a Long Ago Sweetheart)"	7
Rave, Kate	"Easter Sunday"	8
Reaves, Anne	"Millennium Giddiness"	9
Sprong, Melissa	"Wasted Beauty: A dedication to Janis Joplin on her death (October 4, 1970)"	10
Tompson, Rachel	"Fear of the Night"	11
Virgin, Joslyn	"Nymphs, Satyrs, and Arctics (or Taxidermal House)"	12
Voorhis, Lori	"August Dream"	13
Walker, Suzanne	"The Briefcase"	14
Wuertz, Rachel	"The Lovesome"	15

### Fiction

Johannigman, Jennifer	"Almost Complete Loss of Energy"	16
Rave, Kate	"Summer Solstice"	18
Ray, Rachel	"Element #113"	19
Seumel, Viviane	"The Balcony"	22

## **Poetry**

My Girl

*She lies down raped, abused, harassed, maligned.*

*Before beauty, now a thing of distress.*

*With innumerable breasts for those who thirst,*

*The provider of health for boy and girl.*

*But now she stands bare masked with ugliness.*

*With siphoned breasts, and punctured ass, she rests*

*On time's fateful hands a bloody carcass.*

*Daily I hear her cry, "I am tired,*

*My body is sore, my breasts have collapsed."*

*Here I stand and indeed testify that*

*More boys, more girls, (are) gnaw(ing) on her breasts.*

*With no milk in sight, the boys and girls fight.*

*For time piled on high, the boys and girls fight.*

Losing Nirvana Again

**Again**

**Again...**

Life is a big circle  
The world goes 'round  
The beauty of the once lovely ground  
is now just a dream.

**And Again...**

For everlasting eternity  
Ascend filth, ascend, ascend  
But overrated superfluity of human asininity  
Disintegrated, Destroyed, Abolished

**Genocide**

**Again**

The circle once again  
Reaches the beginning and end of its tether,  
the everlasting journey never ends.  
The desolate human destroyed

**And Yet...**

**Begins Once Again.**

Heart Talk

At night, while you sleep,  
I heart-talk to you  
my sleeping love.

My pulse,  
under cover of night's darkness,  
races a rhythm of words for only you.

They flow hotly to your waiting ear.  
Knowing they will be welcomed  
by your band-aid dreams.  
Not left to coagulate in day's cold light.

I bleed for you.  
My blood making tiny ruby fecks  
upon your cheek.

I lick the flecks, carefully,  
like a jeweler polishing  
the smallest of gems.  
Careful to not disturb  
your nocturnal healing.

I know, years later,  
I will still talk to you this way.  
Though yu may not be beside me,  
but lying with another

Some other lover whose blood  
runs selfishly in their veins.  
Never to pool lovingly,  
as does mine,  
at your soft and slumbering ear.



I  
speak words  
of forget  
fullness of time  
of place memory  
lost through years past  
connetion  
to you  
now.

Static

The music begins to play, as  
I look at you and think of me

The rhythm stops, as the musicians disassemble, but  
I keep hearing the tempo, feeling the impulse

Soon the stage is empty, and  
the curious observers have gone home

I look up and you're gone too  
I touch myself to make sure it is all real

I look around because I hear the music  
begin again, loud, soft, and then piano-forte, and  
then the flutist's solo, the high, eerie pitch  
resonating from the walls.

Each day is gone, and I wait impatiently, but  
the music has ended and I want to hear, see, and  
feel. Ominous silence reigns, as I  
sit alone in this expansive auditorium, and  
I never see that moment again, except in fabricated  
images, skewing my vision.

You hear it all though. You create new musical compositions,  
while the director smiles in awe, in a full auditorium  
far away.

Longing

A kiss is not the truth-- though we wish it were.

Mixed Allusions for a Middle-Aged Adonis  
(Letter to a Long Ago Sweetheart)

Beautiful boy  
I would run to you and reaching up  
Throw my arms around your neck  
And you would laugh  
Whether from surprise or joy I never knew  
But always I took pride that I, Diana-like,  
Created them  
The sudden half moons of delight  
That rose at the corner of each eye  
My bows, signs of my conquest  
You had them even then, the laugh lines  
They are what I know in your face still  
When so much else has changed, aged  
The silky line above your lip grown brushy  
And the soft curls darker and cut short  
The slender neck once burdened  
With little more than my arms  
Thicker now, weighty with responsibility  
They appear again, the crescents in your face  
And while I know they have been forever etched  
By time  
And work  
And weather  
And another woman  
I am the one who first cut their arc  
Set my bows  
My claim  
And when you laugh  
I tell myself  
It is still because of me.

Easter Sunday

Father-  
it's knowing  
even You  
can't save  
this fast talking,  
Picasso loving,  
Dickenson quoting,  
Crucifix wearing,  
Girl dancing to the music in her head.

Millennium Giddiness

I freely admit to my rampant consumer guilt.  
My toes wriggle comfortably in commemorative socks:  
01-01-00 with pocket watches  
scattered over a somber black;  
wilder still, across neon whirling  
planets quite unmoved by our limited time.  
In case I could forget the night of change,  
I wear an ebony sweater covered with stars  
and fireworks and still more glittering numbers.

I like the humor: 01-01-01  
so many purists repeat is right  
but their kind had no more luck in 1900,  
arguing stiff-necked in righteous collars  
as the true start of the glorious twentieth century.  
The other joke is better still: the birth  
of Jesus was in 3 or 5 BC.  
Who caused the current calendar chaos:  
Julius the murdered Caesar or Gregorius the Pope?

Did we miss the moment three or five  
years ago during a forgotten New Years?  
Were we laughing or sleeping away the time,  
oblivious to all but frenzy or friendship,  
lost in dreams with ice outside or in  
ourselves, cat or dog or love nearby?  
Were we stupefied with food or drink  
or too much noise to let in meaning?  
Or watching a flickering screen in the dark?

God's time and ours, unseen or delusionally seen,  
eternity in the evanescent,  
truth through the corners of a warped frame,  
sparking in the bubbles of a decaf, sugarfree soda.  
Preposterous: that God slipped on a garment of flesh,  
lived with us, lived like us, died by us, loves us still.  
Two thousand years or more of human denial-- and yet,  
the joke is, some times we actually pause to listen,  
the stars of kitsch remind us to hear and to act.

Wasted Beauty:

A dedication to Janis Joplin on her death (October 4, 1970)

This beauty, what a pretty girl.  
Beauty fades little one.  
Your famous ride was a whirl.  
By then you were already done.

Live it up.  
Shoot it up.  
Your comfort was Southern.  
Such soulful skill.  
Chasing dragons, and Heroin.  
What a raw deal.

It was an odd following.  
Tell mama about it.  
That platform-- your only healing.  
Much more than just a hit.

Oct. 4 was a Hollywood Landmark.  
You did a Full Tilt Boogie Sister.  
Get it while you can, you'd bark.  
Nothing but Cheap Thrills and Pearl Mister.

Fear of the Night

Walking down a pitch black alley		A figure
Alone		A distorted illusion of a man
Brick walls on either side		Stops her
Sliding her fingertips across them		The thick air
The grainy texture numbs her hand		Engulfs her screams
As she follows the cracks in the wall		Her lifeless body falls
Like a map		Stiff to the ground
The broken puddles		And the figure
She walks upon		That once stood
Reflect		Is now nothing
The full moon illuminating the sky		But a hovering shadow
In the distance		Lurking
The silence is deafening		In the darkness
She looks at her watch		Feeding on fear
12:30		And awaiting
Glances ahead		The next
She is almost home		Victim
The silence is broken		To swallow
By		Her
Footsteps near		Soul
She clutches her purse		
Her feet move faster		
By some unexplainable force		
She stops		
She turns		
Around		
Slowly		
As if to catch someone		
Her eyes face		
The direction from which she came		
Nothing		
Just the black		
As she twists		
Herself back around		
Laughing at her paranoia		



Nymphs, Satyrs, and Arctics (or Taxidermal House)

Lunar moth  
Flattened and stiff,  
Pinned down by fragile hands, hands  
Holding your death  
As though it were life,  
Hands pressing down the last flutter  
into a glass covered box,

another pair had somewhere  
caught this last flight, poisoned  
the edge of your wing,  
created you again,  
already having your home built and  
eager to name you.

You were presented to me, I took  
you to represent yourself,  
For that was the intent.

Under a simple roof,  
A shaded and leaf covered  
Shelter, I saw you for the first time,  
In all your pomp,  
In all your beauty,  
Among your species and family  
Lineage,  
Among paper tablets and  
Crook necked herons.

So close to your  
Tear dropped wings,  
I was your captive,  
Still and silent, moved  
At the sight of you  
So close.  
You reminded me of the attic  
And all that has been  
Packed neatly away there,  
Cotton sweaters belonging to their very own box,  
Waiting to be taken out again in colder seasons.

August Dream

Behind the drum,  
I saw you grass dancer.  
Grey Eyes peeking  
beneath the fox fur.

Under the moon,  
I heard you grass dancer.  
Your ankles jingled  
as your feet in leather

stepped

softly

away

from

me.

The Briefcase

battered scuffed red  
mary janes  
tapping on moldy porch steps  
small hands clutch  
dirty knees...  
daddy, daddy get home.

leaves stir blue to black  
ruffling the skirt of  
mary jane  
daddy, daddy get home.  
come on georgie,  
what are you waiting for?

## Fiction

The Lovesome

To think I was one enough to have known her  
to have her touch my shoulder blade  
her compositions furlough on the gallery wall  
reflecting and capturing all that was of her smile,  
alive and framed,

To think I was one enough to have heard him  
to have him address me by my name  
his reminiscence etched in words for a silent room  
charming and spinning all that was of his voice,  
animal and sacred,

To think I was one enough to see them together  
to have them kiss cheeks before me  
they were guileless soul mates in a room of cynics  
softening all that is of art and poetry,  
love and faith,

To think I was one enough would be mistaken.

### Almost Complete Loss of Energy

It is the twenty-first century and the year is 2005. My family and I have been fortunate enough to live in the country where we have been able to use the horse to plow the garden and grow our own food. Others were not so fortuitous when the tragedy struck several years ago. It happened one day very suddenly by something that is yet unexplained today-- for some reason, all energy, except that which is produced by humans, animals, and the ability to make fire, was wiped out. Everyone was forced to live a new way of life. One in which there is no usage of computers, automobiles, or even electricity.

At first there was total chaos. No one could get to or from anywhere, anything stored on computers was lost forever, and our main source for power was completely eradicated. It was as if we had been put on a time machine and warped back into the past.

I remember, very clearly, the day the catastrophe struck. I had been at home preparing for a job interview that I would find myself never getting to. My sister was away at college and my brother had just left to attend his technical training class. Both my mother and father were at work. I can remember that I was just about ready to leave for the interview when I noticed that all of the electrical items became defective. Let me assure you that there was no big bang or anything of the sort, just all of a sudden "black out" of energy. Of course I did not think anything about the electrical power failure; it happens quite frequently out in the country. I just figured that somebody had wrecked their automobile and in the process had probably hit an electrical pole. I didn't think there was anything strangely wrong until I was unable to start both my sister's and my car. I then proceeded back into the house to try to get a hold of my mother to see if she could come home to take me to my interview, but the phone didn't work either. By this time I was becoming scared. I couldn't leave and I had no way of calling anybody.

It would be hours before I would see any of my family, but my parents did finally make it home that day. Thankfully, they only worked in the nearest town so they were able to walk home. My brother also made it home, but since he had to drive to the city for his classes it would take him a few days to walk the distance. My brother told us that on his journey home he had stopped at a grocery store to pick up some food. While he was there he only had a limited choice to pick from since the truck had not and would never be able to arrive. He further told us that since the registers were unable to work they had to figure what he owed them on a piece of paper. He also had to pay them the exact change because they couldn't open the register drawer either. It would be months before we would hear any news from my sister. None of us expected this incident would last more than a few days, but it did continue to last.

Our typical day begins each morning by carrying in enough water and firewood for the day. In order to take a bath we must heat the water over the fire in the fireplace since we can no longer use the stove or water heater due to the lack of electricity. We then prepare our morning meal over the fireplace. My mother and father get ready for work. Since their transportation to and from work can no longer be by the luxury of an automobile, they are forced to ride their bicycles. I am still currently without a job. The majority of the businesses were forced to shut down due to their inability to function without computers and electricity and are still unable to reopen. My brother was forced to quit his technical classes due to his inability to get there, but also because he was studying to repair computers and now that is no longer needed. Therefore, my brother and I stay at home doing the many chores we had once taken for granted. I must now do the laundry by hand.

My brother goes out into the woods every day and cuts the firewood that is needed daily. He performs this job with only the use of an ax and can only get a day's supply done. After doing the laundry I then begin to prepare the meal that will be fixed for supper. With no refrigerator or freezer, most of our meals consist of fruits and vegetables that we have grown and stored for ourselves. Little can be bought from the grocery stores because of their inability to transport the products to here or to keep the food from decaying. So their supply is mostly limited to what we can grow ourselves. Once mom and dad return from work we eat. By then it has already begun to get dark and, believe me, little can be done by lantern or candle light.

My sister is still studying at college. She tells us that all of her reports have to be written by hand and she is forced to study by candlelight at night. We only see her once in a year, and that is in summertime, only after dad has gone to get her with the horses.

Never in my wildest dreams could I ever imagine that something as this could happen. Considering that most of my growing life involved learning how to use the latest technology invented-- but all of that has long become useless and is farthest from our minds now. We have now come to live in a society in which energy has become a thing of the past and learning how to survive on your own energy is the key to living in the future.

Summer Solstice

It was the summer Mother started buying Calcium Fortified Orange Juice. Subconsciously, she wanted to fortify our souls. *They* were coming with hammers and saws to tear our house apart. Leaving the innards exposed like cattle on a butcher's block, so all may inspect the baseness.

I wanted to write my poetry on the walls, to wrap it tightly in warm words. Maybe I wanted "artistic freedom," or some bull shit like that. Maybe I just wanted the empty words to burn in *their* bonfire, being absolved of empty words on empty space.

We emptied orange juice containers over soggy eggs, burnt toast, and the *Peterson's College Guide*. Looking far and wide for lava soap. Baseness seeps like ink on dry skin, coloring each line, each wrinkle, each crack of continuity.

Only weeds flourished. Ruling like forbidden armies who are never forced to leave. Let it all fall to pieces. *Who cares if there's enough calcium in your diet?*

Only the dandelions suffered war. The memories of childhood rough and crowns of vast kingdoms suffocated in the time by glass lay empty and shattered.

The ghosts are here, their reflections in glasy fragments before my bare feet. Daring me to touch those sharp edges, leach the baseness from this body, test fortified bones. *Pull back*, the voice whispers, *pull back*. *Stupid girl, such a stupid girl*, the light and the glass laugh.

Stepping back, the days swirl like fragments in a dustpan. Time, marked only by the weeds height. Someone was giving them orange juice. Someone was challenging my empty words, my stillborn children.

He calls from ragged pages:

**HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME**

**HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME**

So I toast *them*. Where's the broom?



Element #113

Jason entered the chemistry lab and tossed his blue book bag on a desk. One hour of work-study and then he could finally go home. He looked forward to the four-day weekend awaiting him. It had been a long week with two papers due and a test. He was glad that Friday had finally arrived. He didn't mind his work study job in the chemistry lab. It was laid back. All he had to do was get the equipment ready for upcoming labs. That never took longer than half an hour. For the remainder of the hour Jason usually did homework or read a magazine. Today he had a note from the chemistry professor saying that he was to get out equipment for a titration lab. He didn't envy the students who would do this lab. Jason remembered his first year of chemistry at UCLA. He thought about the titrations that he had had to do and how tedious it seemed at the time. He marveled that he had made it to his senior year as a chemistry major. It hadn't been easy.

After Jason prepared for the upcoming lab he realized that he still had 35 minutes left before he was free to go home. He didn't feel like studying and he hadn't brought anything to read. Jason glanced across the room and noticed a new addition to the chemistry lab. NASA has recently sent a space shuttle to Saturn. The astronauts returned with samples of rocks that they found on the surface of Saturn. Since UCLA has one of the best geology departments in the country, they received some of the rocks to study. There had been some speculation that the rocks might contain a new element hidden in their interior. They were to be studied by Professor Ellison, head of the Geology department, and Professor James, head of the Chemistry department at UCLA. The professors would then hold a press conference to reveal their findings. There was a lot of excitement about what the professors might find. If in fact the rocks did contain a new element, then, depending on its properties, the applications for the substance could be immense. Jason didn't know much about geology. He didn't understand why anyone would want to waste their time examining rocks. He had taken one required course in the subject and that was enough for him. But, he was fascinated by the prospect that the rocks could contain a new element. He daydreamed about the potential applications for the substance. Perhaps it would be able to bond with the pollution in the air and form a harmless gas. Or maybe it would be a new metal, able to conduct electricity better than anything in existence. Jason never considered that the element could impose a negative affect on mankind.

Jason looked closely at the Saturn rocks. He was intrigued by the iridescent colors on their surface. The time was crawling by and he had no work left to do. Jason looked towards the rocks. He wondered what colors were hidden in their core. He decided to split a small piece of the rock apart and examine its interior. He figured that breaking one of the small rocks would do no harm. There would still be plenty of samples left for the professors to examine. Jason found some tweezers and used them to remove a small fragment of the Saturn rocks from their airtight container. He placed the fragment on a watch glass and searched through the drawers in the chemistry lab for a mallet. He found a mallet and, to his surprise, he even located an ice pick. He wasn't sure why Professor James had these utensils in the lab, but at the moment he was grateful. Jason didn't think it was necessary to take any precautions. He didn't really think that the rock would contain anything other than perhaps some intense colors. He would soon learn that he was mistaken.

Jason centered the tip of the ice pick on the small chunk of Saturn rock. He held the mallet firmly in his right hand and gently tapped the end of the ice pick with it. Jason was

careful not to hit the ice pick too hard. He wanted to split the rock but not the watch glass. The rock didn't split with the first strike so he hit it again with a little more force. The rock separated into two pieces. Jason picked up one of the halves with the tweezers and marveled at the substance that he saw.

The interior of the rock glowed an intense blue-green. It reminded Jason of the water in the Bahamas where he spent last year's spring break. There were specks of bright orange intertwined throughout. Jason had never seen anything so striking. The rock actually seemed to be emitting an eerie light. The light grew brighter as time passed. Jason inhaled slowly and noticed a sour smell in the air. He remembered the expired milk in his dorm room that he almost drank this morning. The smell became more intense as the rock grew brighter. Jason's eyes began to sting and water. He blinked several times and guessed that he was allergic to the new saline solution his mom had just sent him. It was getting foggy in the chemistry lab. Whatever the substance was in the interior of the rock seemed to be reacting with the air in the room. Jason began to worry that he had made a grave mistake. He grew dizzy and, before he knew it, he had collapsed.

\*\*\*\*

Professor James was on his way to the chemistry lab to gather up all of the ungraded papers that he planned to work on during the four-day weekend. When he didn't see Jason in the lab he assumed that he had left early for the break. Professor James smiled and remembered his own senior year at UCLA. He remembered the anticipation he felt on Fridays when he would go home for the weekend. He knew how Jason felt and he didn't mind that he had left early. He checked to make sure that Jason has at least prepared the lab for the upcoming titration experiment. Professor James noticed a watch glass with a strange black, grainy substance on the surface. He saw tweezers, a mallet, and an ice pick lying beside it. Then he looked down at the floor to discover Jason's lifeless body. He immediately knelt down beside the boy and felt for a pulse. The professor's own pulse was racing as he wondered what could have caused this tragedy. Professor James felt no pulse running through Jason's arm. He quickly called 911 and, within minutes, they were there.

When the paramedics arrived they examined the body and called the time of death. They said that it appeared that Jason died of asphyxiation. They wouldn't know for certain until after an autopsy. The paramedics suggested that perhaps Jason inhaled or ingested some sort of deadly chemical.

\*\*\*\*

One month later Professor and Professor James held a seminar to explain to the students, faculty, and staff of UCLA what they had found in their study of the Saturn rocks. They had assumed that the rocks may have had something to do with Jason's death and everyone was anxious for answers. The professors had worked furiously to find these answers. They reported that the rocks in fact contained a new element. They called the element Saturonian. They explained that there was still much work to be done in order to obtain the definite structure and properties of Saturonian. But, with what they thought to be true at this point, they had developed a theory about what happened to Jason that evening in the chemistry lab. They believed that Saturonian belonged to group 17 elements in the periodic table. This element reacted strongly with the nitrogen in the air. When Jason split a Saturn rock he exposed the Saturonian in the center of the rock to the air in the lab. The Saturonian rapidly reacted with the nitrogen to produce a sour smelling, fog-like, deadly gas. The reaction also caused the rock to grow brighter, giving off photons of light. The most intriguing aspect of the new element is that the reaction expires after a short time. The

precise time depends on the amount of element exposed to the air and the size of the room. When the reaction is complete, all that is left of the iridescent Saturn rock is a pile of black, grainy residue. Also, any nitrogen involved in the reaction appears to return to its former state. The deadly gas vanishes from the air, leaving no trace of its existence.

The students, faculty, and staff listened intently to the findings of the two professors. They quietly reflected on the possible application of Saturonian if it fell into the wrong hands. A small amount could kill many people at once and without a trace of much evidence. The discovery of element #113 was at once intriguing and extremely frightening.

### The Balcony

Our first hotel didn't seem much to us, he a fast-paced, clean-freak North American, I a perfectionist workaholic central European. Its facade was of a sickly color, weather-worn and dirty with dusty windows. After all, it was only a two star place in Montecatini Terme. When we checked in, the receptionist was sitting in the lounge watching TV and smoking a cigarette. She seemed bothered by having to get up and give us the key to our room. We were disappointed and disgusted. We remembered it was siesta time; everything was supposed to be languid during these lazy afternoon hours in Italy. That thought made us forgiving as we climbed up the narrow stairs to the third floor until we entered the room, crowded with beds and other mismatched furniture, dirty and without a bathroom door. On the verge of tears, I discovered a small balcony.

Exhausted from the journey, we spent our first night in Italy on that balcony, soaking in the atmosphere. I was glad our room didn't face the main road which was busy with cars and a stream of window-shopping tourists and the incredible noise of a town that seems to have no life of its own other than the artificial seasonal existence that vacationing foreigners breathe into it. Our balcony opened what I thought a typically Italian scene to us, looking over two gardens and then a little further back more houses, balconies, and roofs just like ours. Then, far away on the horizon were Etruscan settlements slowly flowing downward from the top of the hills like lava out of a volcano.

On the balcony we each settled on a lawn-chair, one rusty and one sticky, with our dinner of stale German sandwiches on a third, this one dirty, between us. As we gnawed away on the Spartan bread and cheese, we watched what, for the next week, was to be our world. Within twenty-four hours we had been transplanted into a place different from anything we knew. Beneath us an elderly Italian woman in an apron was sweeping her paved entrance way with the loud, regular swish of a large broom. She was careful not to tip over the flowerpots that lined the way left and right. Her garden looked exotic from above. There were palm trees and flowers of all colors and tremendous cacti in ceramic buckets. Everything was a lusciously saturated green, except for the concrete walk way leading to what must have been her back door.

Bending over to the left, I saw meters and meters of cloth-lines filled with pillow covers, towels, and white sheets bulging like sails in the wind. The covers and sheets of our own beds in the room had probably fluttered there earlier that day until the maid came to take them down and prepare the rooms for the new arrivals who couldn't check in until late in the afternoon. Knowing that they had been washed made me feel better, but I still found something itchy in the thought of their having been dried under trees next to a busy back entrance to the hotel.

In the other garden a man worked busily watering his lawn. He had an ancient-looking well on his property, but it was covered with criss-crossed wire on the top. We decided he might have young children who could fall in or some other safety reason made him disfigure the old-time beauty of the well. We mused about drawing water from it, how cool and fresh it would be and how romantic to pull up a bucket of it on a rope. I thought about the woman who once was dependent on this water, drawing heavy bucketsful many times a day for many years, and the romance faded. But I didn't say anything.

To the right stretched the most marvelous balcony I had ever seen. It was large with two windows and a glass door and a low iron railing around it. All the shutters were closed, hanging limp and crooked from their rusty fastenings as if they were growing old.

Once they had been green, but now the color was splintering off in many places showing the gray, brittle wood underneath. The balcony was deserted and empty except for those miscellaneous items that gave it character: a pre-war baby carriage, a dusty wooden bench, a clothes-line spanned over one corner of the railing, and large dirty flowerpots. It seemed like no one had been there since the war, that the people who owned this balcony had run from the bombs and never returned. I wanted to climb over the red roofs to this balcony that called me with a mysterious voice of history. In its strange ugliness it was so beautiful that my eyes kept turning back to it throughout all the hours of that evening.

In another house on a floor of the same height as our balcony the windows were open. I glanced over and saw a woman in her underwear pacing up and down in her apartment. Only in Europe, I thought. I love Europe for the small freedoms it provides. I pointed her out to him, but when he finally turned around, she had disappeared. He didn't share my enthusiasm. To him it was indecent, of the flesh, un-American. For me, it was the spirit, the freedom of carelessly walking naked by the open window, not offending anyone. She appeared again, this time she wore a bra. I never did catch a glimpse of her head. She must be getting dressed, I thought, and told him to look again. He turned and missed seeing her once more. Her clothes were hanging over the back of a chair by the window, but, despite wanting to, I could not make out any other features of her room. Then I didn't look for a long time. We were talking of the lonely balcony again, designing fantastic strategies of how I could reach it. A noise led my eyes back to her window. She was closing it, sticking out her head. She was old. She must have been sixty. Only in Europe, I thought.

The night was still warm, but dark was settling quickly. I had become languid and absorbed in the atmosphere around me. I wanted to stay on my chair without arm rests and simply watch and take in this beautiful strange world. He suggested we go to bed. We had a big day ahead of us tomorrow, Florence. I got up feeling heavy, used the bathroom without a door, and curled up under the sun-dried sheets and dirty comforter, falling snugly asleep.

