

***Fioretti***



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# *Fioretti*

*A Literary Anthology*

Volume 52

Number 1

1993-94

Marian College  
Indianapolis, Indiana

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**Duplicating/** Larry Steeb and Joe Doyle

**Technical Assistance/** Dave Shumate

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# Contents

<b>SWEATSHIRTS IN THE FALL/Derek Witte</b>	4
<b>THE PASSAGE/Nick Schanz</b>	5
<b>ON WITH THE SHOW/Corey Cleary</b>	6
<b>UNTITLED/Eileen Nyikos</b>	8
<b>VERSED IN YOUTH/Nick Schanz</b>	9
<b>HAIKU/Drew Appleby</b>	11
<b>SERAPHIM/Derek Witte</b>	12
<b>LOVERS/Greg Knipe</b>	19
<b>MOUNT PENN/Derek Witte</b>	20
<b>BADGER/Larry Atwood</b>	21
<b>DO YOU REMEMBER ONCE?/Greg Knipe</b>	28
<b>REST CONTENT/James Johnson</b>	29

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## ***Sweatshirts In The Fall***

Derek Witte

Caffeine Buzz.

Should I call that girl, or go to bed.

Yesterday, I wanted a tattoo,

Today, I went for a walk--

The cold wind, and falling leaves

Smiled in my head.

## ***The Passage***

Nick Schanz

The leaves cycle silently up  
and then down  
    softly sinking like the  
colors  
    of the setting autumn  
sun.

The stillness breaks as the  
trees slowly sway  
    crackles and creeks yield  
echoes  
    through the mid-morning  
day.

Under the frost of the brisk  
morning dawn  
    twisted and curled are  
the blossoms  
    that soon will be dead  
and gone.

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## *On With the Show*

Corey Cleary

As I sit in this plain, dull, empty room I watch the sun setting across the horizon with the beautiful red-orange surrounded by a golden yellow with the glimmer of the sun actually appearing as though it were setting on the edge of the earth. It reminds me of the leaves softly flowing towards the ground, and when they land, life doesn't end. Suddenly, life has a complete warmth like the sensational feeling of "love," though I don't believe in love. Life had played a game with me, a very cruel game. When I was growing up, I was led to believe that I was meant to travel due to my father's yearly moving, but now I see my error.

I remember when I was a teenager (about 19), I spent a lot of time with a beautiful young lady named Erin. I more than enjoyed her company and the completeness she seemed to bring to my life. We would take walks in the park, see movies, go fishing, skiing, and do many other things, sometimes spending weekends or weeks together. Life seemed to fall in place like the final piece in a puzzle.

One day she came to me and told me she needed to talk, so I took a few moments and sat down to prepare

myself for a big break-up. “Mike,” she said, “I’m changing jobs because I have found what I’ve been looking for.” I thought this was great—until she told me that this would limit our time together, but I figured if we cared enough for each other, it could still work. I did not realize she meant seeing me one day a week when she would stop by the bowling alley and try to catch me up on her last week’s events.

Eventually, we both agreed it was useless. We didn’t even try to keep in touch. She went her way, and I went back to the road, the way my daddy taught me. She became a corporate executive; I read about her in the paper this morning. I discovered what my daddy was trying to tell me all along: “love,” money, and time all go hand-in-hand. I felt love was a fallacy: a theory only, I thought, and never really existing. With each city I encountered, I found it more and more evident.

Now, I sit staring out the window of an apartment two stories above the close-minded, cruel, unaware world, just waiting for the words that will link these images to paper and allow me to close the window of my mind.

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## ***Untitled***

Eileen M. Nyikos

There are long, dreary days when all of the injustices of the world seem to be thrust on my doorstep. They blink and scream annoyingly, a reminder that all is nowhere close to being right. These injustices, these wrongs, tear at the seams holding my sanity together and dare me to find some hope. Then, there seems to be a lighter tint to the grey sky. The blinking dulls, and the screaming ceases. All that is left is a little person. A person with hands that will someday join a nation, and eyes that will not judge by color, sex, or religion. The heart in this person encompasses all that is good and decent in the world. And in this heart is the capacity to love all creatures that exist upon the surface of the earth; all creatures that exist in places unknown. This person, this child, smiles widely at me, and in that smile I see that all of the wrong in the world can not ever compete with this entity. For in this child's sparkling eyes lie the answers.

## *Versed in Youth*

Nick Schanz

He started down the wooden stairs  
Pausing, looking once, and then again  
Through the blue drenched sky  
Past the unwrapped white birch trees  
To the rolling hills, where his eyes stay  
Fixed on his children playing a hide and seek game.

Thinking of his days of lighthearted games,  
Of coasting down the banister of the curved stairs,  
Wildly running about when mother allowed a friend's stay.  
Waking by the morning light to begin the process again.  
Climbing father's apple trees  
And then reclining in the green grass in view of the sky.

What happened to the days of climbing trees beneath the sky?

When did the countless days stop in the fields playing games.

Was it the day father cut down the apple trees?

Or the day mother caught him on the rail of the curved stairs?

Though it doesn't matter, he feels a rush of youthfulness again.

But then it quickly fades, for it cannot not stay.

Melanie tugs at his fingers, to show she wants to stay  
Near her occupied father. "Why are you looking at the sky?  
What are you looking for?" she asks again.

"Oh, just watching May and Amy play a hide and seek game."

Melanie places her hands on the window near the stairs.

"Where do you see them?" He points, "Near the trees."

As May quickly hides with Dusty behind the bent birch tree  
Trying to teach the restless dog to stay,

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Amy sees Melanie and him standing in the window near  
the stairs.

She waves her fragile hand, bringing it up into the im-  
mense sky.

To make sure they see, she waves it higher once again.  
He watches as they continue their hide and seek game.

The reminders of carefree living and playful games,  
Of long afternoons spent on the branches of the apple  
trees,

They are shining reflections of the past lived again.

As they walk back to the brown colored house, they  
stay

Close to the white birch trees that branch far into the  
sky,

Giving a closer view from the top of the stairs.

Time is constantly passing, never wanting to stay

For long, replaced by the sudden future, vast as the  
sky

And innocent as the children standing near the stairs.



Blizzard from the north

The barn's weathervane frozen

Its duck flying south

Drew Appleby

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## *Seraphim*

Derek Witte

The clinking of mugs and plates, the hum of intellectual conversation, the warm smell of pastries and coffee swirled around my head. I love coffee shops, brilliant smells, and aromatic thoughts, college professors, students, and travellers like me sitting around tables arguing the values of socialism or the interesting thesis of Dr. So and So. Graham and I were only in town for the night, and we had a mission. We were sipping cappuccinos and waiting for the well-read, eloquent, beautiful co-eds that frequent such establishments. It isn't that we were incapable of political conversation, or philosophical discourse—we'd argued for the leftists and pondered metaphysical laws of being as much as any mid-western highschool senior; however, we were young and inexplicably driven to seek women in any situation.

We sat near the large, glass counter filled with exotic cakes and puffs, our backs to the wall, our eyes sweeping over the conglomeration of characters. Every time the door whined open, we whipped our heads around.

“Check her out,” I said.

“She is beautiful, but she’s gay.”

“What do you mean? She’s gorgeous.”

“She’s a gorgeous lesbian. Look, her legs are unshaven, she’s not wearing any make up.....”

“So, she’s environmentally conscious, a granola person, one with the earth,” I pleaded.

“Look at the way she’s talking with that woman across the table. They’re having a lover’s quarrel.”

He was right. I was naive, I guess, or selfish.

“She’s still beautiful,” I sighed.

To say we were superficial would be partially accurate. We were dealing with the superficial reality of male, female physical attraction, but that doesn’t mean we weren’t capable of operation on a deeper level. Few females have had a behind-the-scenes view of men engaged in the natural ritual of surveying women, and I imagine those who have were frightened and sickened.

“How about her, by that Dali print?”

“She’s a mother,” I remarked, sipping my iced double-cap.

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“So what?”

I frowned.

“What about Mrs. Robinson?” he asked.

I smiled. I always did identify with Benjamin Braddock. We stopped talking, and watched. People milled around the counter waiting to buy flavored coffee drinks and over-priced cookies. Outside, the sun released its last burst of light before sinking below the campus skyline. We’d been in the cafe for nearly an hour, and we thought about leaving because we had to wake up early the following morning. We were just passing through University life as if it were a giant, interactive, robotic museum exhibit. We weren’t going to pierce the skin of that pulsating college night, and we decided to realize it. Then, the door opened, and two seraphim floated in.

“There they are,” Graham whispered.

“I know.”

They were dark and beautiful.

“I’m in love,” Graham stated dreamily.

“Man, they’re probably in college. We don’t stand a chance.”

“I’m in love,” he repeated.

“With which one?” I asked.

“I don’t care, chief.”

On a cushion of air they strode to the grand counter, and ordered two cups of the day’s coffee—Columbian Antigua. They gently landed at the table adjacent to our own, between us and the giant picture window in front. They were infinitely more beautiful up close. They both had beautiful black hair, cut a few inches below the ears, dark brown eyes, and large, sensuous lips. They didn’t wear make-up to cloud their purity, and they were wrapped in coats and sweaters that I imagined to be those of fledgling poets.

Graham stared at me.

“I know,” I mouthed.

“What should we do, besides stare with jaws open that is?”

“I don’t know,” I answered under my breath.

We watched girls all the time. We even entertained thoughts of speaking to some on a couple of occasions, but in the face of such daunting beauty, we were useless.

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For the next thirty minutes we listened to our hearts beat, and played first lines in our heads. I came close to actually speaking to them once, but my heart began to beat so fast, I was afraid I might explode all over their table. I looked at Graham as if he were my fellow victim lashed to the desert floor under a blinding sun. They looked at us twice, but we were nailed to our seats—men of words not actions. Our hearts sank when they stood up and headed for the door.

“We have to do something,” I said, trying to convince myself.

“I know. I won’t be able to sleep tonight if we let them walk away.”

“Let’s go.”

So without a plan, and no tool but determination, we overcame our fears, and bravely marched outside. We glanced down the street, expecting our goddesses to have returned to their parallel universe. They had not. They were twenty feet from the front door, illuminated from above by a street lamp, staring at us. As if hypnotized, we rhythmically walked towards them, and soon stood face-to-face. Every novel about love, every second-rate high

school movie, every female encounter story told by peers, raced through our minds.

“Hi, you guys go here?” Graham asked, to clear things up immediately. They looked at each other, and then down, all the while shuffling their feet.

“We don’t,” I said.

“Oh, neither do we. We’re in highschool,” they giggled.

The one on the left asked us where we were from. She had a thicker build, but was in no meaning of the word, fat. She had high cheekbones, large breasts, and a beautiful form. I glanced at Graham. He had targeted the one on the right, as I had the one on the left. Graham’s girl was of the same stock, yet slight, and with a sharp face. We exchanged essentials, and other interesting facts. Words were flowing smoothly, and our confidence was doubling with every moment. We learned that the girls were half Dutch and half Cherokee Indian. They lived in Pinconning, cheese capitol of Michigan, and were headed to college the following year.

After smiling at one another for a while, I

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suggested that we walk. It was a model college town, a slice of Manhattan. We wandered by foreign language bookstores, record shops, and a late night showing of Citizen Kane. Angela, the thicker beauty, and I walked several paces ahead of Graham and Maria. Angela's dark hair gently fell over part of her face, and her exposed visage shone subtly like a crescent moon. She wore a thick brown coat that hung around her like a big blanket.

"This is a wonderful night," I said without doubt.

"Yes," she said, "it is warm and the sky is clear."



## **Lovers**

Greg Knipe

I remember our moments  
together in sunlight:  
splashing in puddles like children,  
our first kiss,  
the night you held me close  
and whispered in my ear.

You were young, and fresh, yet  
your eyes shone with age old  
wisdom-  
what was it you saw?  
Were we fated to love?  
Have I held you before,  
whispered your name  
through melancholy ages?

Perhaps we have met,  
even loved, before.  
When I first looked deep into  
your eyes, perhaps I found an old  
friend there.

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## **Mount Penn**

Derek Witte

A little warrior pushing to the top.  
Small legs are spinning circles to the sky.  
He does not cry or think to brake and stop,  
But searches on for wings that sprout and fly.  
As those who look upon a painting new,  
Yet see a smiling face instead of art,  
The empty men see but the winning few,  
Forgetting him who burned blood from the  
start.

But to the Spartan boy they are cold stone—  
He struggles only for two love-tied souls:  
The driven self and his life's architect.  
Thus, when across the finish line he rolls,  
To see the man with clapping hands, erect,  
His sweat-soaked arms, raised tall in  
victory

Not for all men, just for his dad to see.

## *Don't Pet the Badger*

L. Atwood

Once upon a time there lived a quiet and industrious badger named Mortis B. One day, sitting on the riverbank briskly combing his pelt for those pesky little nettsuds that made life so charmingly irritating, he glanced up just as three abysmally large nettsuds broke through the tangled underbrush. "Oh fine," he muttered, "just when I'd gotten used to the last batch, they've mutated again. If they keep growing so beastly I won't be able to carry them at all." He eyed them askance, hoping their oblivious stares were the real thing. Their heads turned toward Mortis B. as though the cabbage-shaped things were swivel-mounted to their bodies. Their eyes locked on Mortis B. and they blinked in unison. Keeping him directly in their line of sight because things they couldn't see had no existence, they trod stealthily nearer. The hackles rose on his neck and his anger flared. "Dare no more to trod stealthily nearer!" he roared in his most fearsome badger-voice. "Nettsuds are the bane of my existence—begone!" "Shall we throw caution to the winds?" asked Williby, for such was its name, of the others. "Caution shall we to the winds throw," re-

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sponded the second, Wallaby. "Wind me some caution and I shall spurt!" exclaimed the third, Wannabe, in a bombastic frenzy. Mortis B. heard the door of doom squeak. They sidled closer, sniffing and humping, redolent with the early stages of terminal flatulence. "Shall we pursue our purpose posthaste?" Williby asked of the others. "Posthaste shall we our purpose pursue," answered Wallaby. "Posthole me a porpoise and I shall spout," shouted Wannabe, overcome with mindless glee. "Egad," murmured Mortis, "they come apace. Should I run for cover? No, they'll scurry after me upon their nimble and disgusting tentacles. Should I pretend not to see them? Never works. Should I heap praise and flowers upon them for being so kind as to visit my bit of the riverbank in order to continue their idle fermentation? No, nettsuds thrive on that, like waving rotten meat at a stampede of roaches. Ahh...I'm lost...woe...wo...wait...if I play dea..." With that the wily badger thrashed about in a paroxysm of severe chest pain, at last sinking into comfortable (and apparently dead) repose on a cushion of leaves.

The three lumbering nettsuds warily approached. Williby ever so gently prodded the supine badger with a sharp pointed stick. Mortis ground his teeth. Again he felt the stick probe his ribs and as it was yanked out he plopped into the softly spreading pool of his own blood. "Please, oh great Badger-God," he pleaded, "please give me strength lest I smite down these senseless oafs with the wrath of my angry retribution." Mortis always talked like that when his rage welled up from within.

The three nettsuds stood looking down at the lifeless badger. They would have been filled with sadness, but that was beyond them. They would have been filled with remorse, but that was beyond them. They would have been filled with endless grief, but that was beyond them. They would have been happy to be filled with anything, but they didn't know how to hold it. They always tried to keep it in their hands so they could show everyone else who wasn't interested and it always slid through their fingers like silky strands of silvery blobbing mercury. Very often, this was enough for them. They smiled like brainless children. They chortled with glee,

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they sang a song of sixpence. But mostly they just endlessly smiled, lobotomized lemmings that they were.

They stood hulking over the badger, mewling over his glossy black fur and fascinated by the bright redness spreading beneath him. Mortis B. cursed them in his heart of hearts. "Damn nettsuds," he swore, "won't give a body a moment's peace." Williby knelt over the badger, reaching out to touch its shoulder. Wallaby snatched Williby's hand back while Wannabe beshat himself in the feverish excitement of the moment. "Must we not wake him from his slumber?" asked Williby. "From slumber wake him must we not," answered Wallaby. "My lumber must awake and I shall spurt!" wailed Wannabe, joyfully thumping himself into oblivion. Mortis cocked one eye open and surveyed the hovering nettsuds. He felt a pleasing anguish spread over him. It was a warm feeling and it softened his heart toward the vile nettsuds. He moved slightly, lifting himself up. "Stop peeing...stop peeing, he's alive!" blurted Williby. Wallaby and Wannabe recoiled in amazement. Mortis rose, standing in a yellowish pool of steaming urine, and bleeding nicely from the

wound under his ribs. "You cursed swine," he began, as he caught a whiff of the stench rising from his besotted fur. Williby, Wallaby, and Wannabe cowered in dismay. Mortis B. scowled, "What...what is it you want?" Williby looked at Wallaby and Wannabe. Wallaby looked at Williby and Wannabe. Wannabe looked at Williby and Wallaby. They all looked down. "What am I gonna have to do here?" The nettsuds were all still looking down. They thought they were looking deep inside themselves. They thought they were pondering the mysteries of the universe. They thought they could see the answer key to all questions lying at the bottom of their souls. Actually they were just looking down at the muddy ground. They felt unspeakably large and grand. Mortis B. waited for their answer. There was no point in talking further. He waited. Then he waited some more.

It began to look like waiting was what these nettsuds did best. Storm clouds gathered, yet the nettsuds stood there, shifting back and forth, shuffling their feet, gazing knowingly into the distance and seeing

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nothing, shutting their eyes and marvelling at the same deep nothing inside. Mortis B. feared that these nettsuds would be content to cool their nasty little tentacles here for eternity. The trouble was that he lived here and he really didn't relish the idea of having three nettsuds constantly in his front yard doing their imitation of Ponderosa pines.

The nettsuds swayed gently in the wind. Mortis B. watched them bobbing to and fro, seemingly anchored to this spot, unmovable and unmoved. He looked into the face of each one, hoping to discern some sign of intelligent life. One had a wistful, faraway, cloudy look. One had a vacant, rabid, grinning stare. One looked perplexed and confused. Taken all together, it was no Mt. Rushmore. Mortis B. threw up his paws in despair. Perhaps the best course would be to move on to greener pastures after all. He got his things out of his mudhole and as he passed the petrified nettsuds one last time, he heard the gentle squeak of a flatulate conception. "Ah, aromatic essence," whispered Williby. "Oh, essence of aroma," murmured Wallaby. "Effluvia of the gods, be-

hold!" ranted Wannabe. Mortis B. looked back. And then he left the three tottering nettsuds standing as silent sentinels of the deserted riverbank.

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## *Do You Remember Once?*

Greg Knipe

Do you remember once  
When I told you of my secret  
place;  
a place where a man could think  
or weep or make love  
and be secluded from all but his  
own heart?

The creek has washed away the  
shore where once I skirted pre-  
cariously  
to reach the hidden path-  
the trees have taken it over,  
even if I chose to wade;  
You can't get there from here.

The lawns of rolling green I used  
to roam now boast a soccer field,  
with  
tan and clean-limbed youths to  
sport, and play, and prove their  
manhood.  
I, shirtless, sit and think  
of them, when they were me.

The rushing creek, once my guide,  
my beacon, now tumbles past me  
uselessly. The days of youth and  
glory  
now are gone, leaving me awash,  
adrift in a sea of memory;  
a ship without an anchor,  
a soul without a mate.

## ***Rest Content***

James Johnson

Spirit you refused to know of me.  
I gave you what you want.  
You complain all is superficial,  
But that is what you asked.

Three points, then I was not to speak on.  
I feel, but will not speak.  
There is something there needs sharing,  
Hope you heal it quick.

Though your parents cast you off,  
I was there to go with you.  
But now I am the one who is not your friend?  
And you will not see me alone?

Christmas is a special time,  
Unlike Halloween.  
Things I have to give  
You would like to have.

But better than all these things,  
I give you what you want.  
You may rest content,  
You are left alone.