

Memento Mori

Category: Poems

written by Craig W. Steele | December 14, 2012

Craig W. Steele

Quo Vadis Nursing Home haunts the east side of Erie Street,
squatting opposite Roselawn Cemetery, whose wrought-iron gates
gape tauntingly wide and welcoming. Today will soon be buried:
three wizened men sit rocking, speechless, on the front porch,
yearning for the shadowed marble and granite headstones,
no longer afraid of death, only of dying—suspended
between fear and need, stoically awaiting
the next busload of grade-schoolers determined
to brighten their deep-shadowed days.

Editor's Note: Memento mori is a Latin phrase translated as "remember your mortality," "remember you must die" or "remember you will die"
[from [Wikipedia](#)].

About the poet:

Craig W. Steele is a writer and university biologist whose creative musings occur in the suburban countryside of northwestern Pennsylvania, where he writes for both children and adults. His poetry has appeared recently in [The Aurean](#), [Poetry Quarterly](#), [Astropoetica](#), [The Lyric](#), [Popular Astronomy](#), [Spaceports & Spidersilk](#) and at [Stone Path Review](#), where he was the featured poet this fall.

About the poem:

"My grandfather spent the last few years of his life blind, deaf, crippled from arthritis and as a nursing-home resident. Regardless of his pain, and his silent, sightless days, he was very much afraid of dying, even though he acknowledged that death would end his suffering. I saw the three wizened men on one of my visits to him. And I'd always thought someone with a cruel sense of humor would locate a nursing home across from a cemetery. Last year, my daughter's sixth-grade class visited a local nursing home to cheer up the residents. She was shocked when a number of them informed her and the other children that they didn't appreciate such loud, annoying visitors—especially those with their entire lives still before them. On hearing her story, I saw an intimate connection between these events, separated by several decades, experienced by my loved ones, and tried to give voice to that connection in

this poem.”

Poetry editors:

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro