

MANUSCRIPTS

# Manuscripts

A written word is the choicest of relics.  
It is something at once more intimate with us  
and more universal than any other work of  
art.

It is the work of art nearest to life itself.  
It may be translated into every language,  
and not only be read but actually be breathed  
from all human lips;  
not be represented on canvas or in marble only,  
but be carved out of the breath of life itself.

--Henry David Thoreau



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\*Denotes members of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society.

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Cover Art by  
Rachel Wollin

\* Denotes members of Sigma Tau Delta  
International English Honorary



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### The Poet

As setting sun the ocean burns  
So the heart within me yearns  
As springtime buds embrace the dew  
So long I to be near you.

A poet's prone to tell such lies  
Though they be sweet and small in size  
He'll use such myths and silly rhymes  
For stealing hearts (and other crimes).

Though lightning cuts the darkest night  
Your brilliant eyes shine twice as bright  
As raging winds drive forth the storm  
So am I driven to your form.

Beware the poet's knack for words  
His tongue is simply for the birds  
So listen now to what I say:  
Don't trust the poet, Keep away!

As sparkling stars adorn the skies  
So I adore your twinkling eyes  
Though embers from some fires may smoulder  
Never will *my* love grow colder.

• *Brian Creech*

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### Fable

Green gabled thicket  
    behind a wood  
placed delicate atop a spiral tower  
    a princess  
    gently contemplates  
her impending Oedipal crisis  
    buffing creamy nails  
framed in arched window chaste  
    waiting  
for charming and delightful, brave  
    gleaming sword, sinful kiss  
desperately chirping the state of the nation  
    I hate my bell tower  
    I hate my bell tower  
to an audience that fed on worms  
    you cannot hear my words  
    you cannot hear my words  
    a shave and a haircut  
    two bits.  
Out from the glen come not a soul  
    no knighted stallion  
    no fairy's wand tip  
    not even a troll.  
    Dumbfounded  
she batted her eyes and ate her soup.

•Renee Kristine Nicholson

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### For the First and Last Day of the New Millennium

Of Apples, Honeyed Wine, Fromage, and Tea Leaves  
(and spinning lies beneath the ancient boughs of your sweet  
willows)--

we drank into our skins  
the scent of frost  
and ripened peaches,  
and watched as fire blossoms draped the lawn.

Of apples, honeyed wine, fromage, and tea leaves  
(and wading in lakes like milk beyond the fronds of your sweet  
willows)--

we danced in the Harvest Light with eyes too clear and bright  
(and swollen) to see  
and drew a thousand stars  
toward its full cup.

Of apples, frosted wine, fromage, and tea leaves --  
and hiking through a copse of summer vines and evergreens--  
we pressed against our lips the poisoned berries,  
and let the winds send 'tween us scents still fragrant,  
of unearthed truffles, and fairy mounds hidden, and rings  
and lemon secrets carried deep within the chastened  
soil.

Forever--

With cider, raisins, loneliness, and incense,  
to greet one bright and sentry autumn's day  
we lay beneath the boughs of your sweet willow,  
whose ashen drape of fronds churned deep the snow.  
We sensed the peaches meld into the rich earth  
and by the Hunter's Light  
watched toxic blossoms of fire and frost drift aimlessly  
over the ways back.  
We lay still in the boughs of your sweet willow--  
and watched a thousand stars ignite the sun...

•Larrisse Nelson



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## Transcontinental Blues

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Tiffany Myers

### KILL YOUR TELEVISION

"This is so tragic," Matt mutters as he strains to pick the sticks and seeds out of the remnants of the quarter of pot that he left stashed in the van. Somehow, he and Stacy have made a bong out of an old wax milkcarton, the kind that always reminds me of lunches at elementary school. From my position sprawled out on the thin and dirty mattress that covers the backseat, I consider shifting my head to examine their handiwork, but give up once I realize that any slight movement would cause me to lose the comfortable spot. It took me forever to stretch myself out in the back of the van so that Mark and I could both see out the window at the countryside around us. We lay on the mattress, like players on Sesame Street awkwardly forming the letter "T" with our bodies. My chin rests comfortably on Mark's giant chest, a gesture which, although I'm sure surprised him, he politely made no mention of.

After all, Mark and I usually don't touch. When you choose to be close friends with a member of the opposite sex, there's always that awkward middle territory that you don't want to breach. Touching like this is usually part of the taboo area. But for some reason, tonight it was all right. It was even comfortable.

I could feel his breathing through my whole body. As he inhaled and exhaled, my head bobbed up and down with his movement. His thin cotton T-shirt smelled like fabric softener, and a peculiar sour, sweaty skin scent that I believe to be exclusive to men. It was a smell that reminded me of my father, in an unpleasant way. It ruined the rare, quiet mood that had settled over me.

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Irritated for no particular reason, I flick Mark's nipple with my thumb and forefinger, causing it to immediately harden.

"Quit it!" Mark squirms away from me, cupping his nipples protectively with his hands.

"Oh, come on. You know you want it."

"I feel so . . . violated," he teases.

I begin to inch away from him, but change my mind at the last minute.

"Let me feel them," I demanded, crawling into a sitting position on top of his legs.

"No way!" Mark smiles, and in some unspoken way, I know that he is giving his permission. I feel his chest through his shirt, warm and hairy, and can see the little buttons of his nipples poking against the fabric of his shirt.

"Why do you like that so much?"

Mark is truly puzzled by this. Actually, so am I. I know it's not a sexual thing, this exploration of his body. And we both know in that unfair, gender-specific way that he would never be allowed to ask the same of me. This is just a quirk of mine. A strange nipple fascination that only he knows about.

Secrets, though, are our specialty.

"I watched Stewart today," Mark whispers when he is sure that Matt and Stacy aren't listening from the front seat.

Laughing, I roll away from him.

"You're such a voyeur."

"It's a sickness," he sighs. "Kill me."

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*"It is never really freedom until you find something you really positively want to be."*

*--D.H. Lawrence*

Every night this summer was just the same. Hop into the van, watch Matt and Stacy smoke whatever they could get their hands on, and drive around looking for fireflies. But even though it was so comfortable, spending every night in a beat up old Dodge van still made me feel restless, as if there was

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maybe some more constructive way I could be wasting my time. Of course, Mark filled the void through watching his neighbors. He liked to spy. It made him feel more . . . involved. Besides, in the middle of the summer, what else was there to do?

Mark's recent endeavors into the world of voyeurism had evolved out of the use of a high power telescope that Stacy had set up in the living room to watch the phases of the moon.

This telescope, Mark often professed, was the only bonus of having Matt and Stacy move into his family's basement. I wasn't so sure, but then again, living in the same house with those two would probably be quite a different experience from just riding around with them in their van.

For the sake of the family tree, let me point out that Matt is Mark's older brother. It was almost two years ago when Matt decided that he was finally tired of just sitting around his parent's house. He and his girlfriend Stacy secretly pooled together all of their money, bought a beat-up Dodge van, pasted a "Kill Your Television" sticker on the back window, and lit out in the middle of the night for the desert. For a day or so, his parents didn't really notice he was missing. Over meals they would casually ask if anyone had seen Matt lately, or if anyone knew what had happened to the blender. No one realized they had actually moved out until Matt called his family from a pay phone outside of Louisiana.

"Mom, Stacy and I are going to live in the desert now."

"The where?"

"The desert. We just need to get away from every thing."

"That's nice. By the way, have you seen dad's blender?"

With Matt gone, things certainly were quiet around Mark's house. I used to think that everybody was better off with those gone. When they came back two months later, I realized that I was probably just jealous. I've never liked facing people who are having more fun than me.

### TAKING FLIGHT

The stewardesses occasionally turn around and purposely avoid looking me in the eye. They glance



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directly over my head, as if they are looking for someone important. Someone who obviously isn't me. This is their game. They know that I'm trying to get their attention, and want to see how far I'll go in flagging them down.

"Jesus Christ. All I want is another bloody mary," I mutter to no one in particular.

Giving up, I sink back into my seat. I'm edgy because I know I'm going to have to face the trans-Atlantic flight without a sufficient amount of cheap vodka to numb my system. After all, I'm still a college student. I know my rights.

The old man across the aisle from me fidgets in his seat, trying to cock the recliner's angle at a reasonable degree between 90 and 95. He looks like an aging golf pro, dressed to the nines in kelly green trousers, a pink and mint striped polo shirt, and gleaming white belt. I try my best not to stare, but the look on his face draws me to him. He looks confused, maybe even a bit frustrated. The furrow between his bushy white eyebrows deepens as he motions for a stewardess to come over. I am of course instantly irritated at how little effort it takes for him to get a response.

"Yes?" asks a brisk woman with her hair in a tight french roll. Her name tag reads, "LaVrelle." I've never heard that name before, but I instantly decide that it's perfect for her.

The man leans over to LaVrelle. "Where are we?" he whispers.

"On the runway, preparing to taxi."

"Yes, yes," he waves his hand impatiently in the air. "But where are we? Is this Newark?"

"Sir, we're in Indianapolis. Continental Airlines flight 317 to London."

LaVrelle pretends that she sees another passenger waving to her, and walks away without another word. I settle back into my seat and try not to look at the old man across the aisle who has gone back to fidgeting with his seat. From behind me, I hear the voice of a little girl excitedly talking to her mother.

"Wow, Mommy. This plane looks like the ocean!"

The mother chuckles, and for the life of me I can't understand what the girl could possibly mean. Through her eyes, the world is obviously a very different place.

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A moment of silence passes. The engines of the plane begin to kick in, cutting through the air with a peculiar high-pitched wheeze. I can hear the girl behind me snap open the plastic cover on her window.

"You know, Mommy, I think I'll grow up a little while I'm in England."

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*"Others chuck it all for beatnik crosscountry odysseys, or hide within the safe confines of academia, taking up to eight years to earn a bachelor's degree."*

*--Paul Rogers*

*"Talking About Their Generation"*

Mark once told me that it was his dream to backpack across Europe, getting laid by captivating, exotic strangers in each country he passed through. I admit, that whole scene doesn't sound too bad to me. Given the chance, though, I know I wouldn't be able to go through with the sex. I think I sat through one too many high school "sex=disease and death" convocations to fully enjoy any such bohemian recklessness.

But with my time in college quickly screeching to a halt, I figured that the summer before my senior year would be my last chance to have a crack at adventure before I had to face the real world. So I decided just to do it. A few weeks in London. What could be better? Besides the captivating strangers, that is.

I always thought that something like this would change my life. Give me direction, broaden my horizons, and all that. I feel so trapped by Life. I know I'm supposed to find a way to grow up. That's what a college graduate is supposed to do, right? But I don't know how. I must have been absent they day they passed out the flow charts with the box "Adulthood" cubed off at the end.

I'm not totally unmotivated, though. I went to the Career Services center right before my summer odyssey to London. A chipmunk-cheeked woman named Amy squinted at me from behind her desk, which was cocked at an odd angle as not to make me feel intimidated (I learned that in psychology class). She demanded to see my resume, and I panicked when I realized that I had no idea what skills I had to market, let alone how to summarize them in a neat little package.



*The Awakening,, Washington, D. C.*  
Photo by Nick Murphy



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Pushing her pencil cup to the side of her desk blotter, Amy looked me in the eye and said, "You know what you need to start to do?"

I shook my head, feeling inexplicably guilty.

"Network, network, network!"

Needless to say, I escaped as quickly as possible. That was also the day I decided to go to London.

### PARTYING WITH A DEATHWISH

On the street outside the pub, Smudge casually brushes his fingers against the bare skin of my arm. It doesn't take too much ingenuity to figure out he did it on purpose, and I have to bite my lower lip to keep from smiling. Across the water from us, there's a party going on at the Stratford boathouse. The green, blue, and red lights hanging on its patio leak their reflections on the river Avon like color spills from a paintbrush dipped in a Dixie cup.

Mesmerized by the colors on the water, I barely feel Smudge work his fingers slowly between mine. I don't think I would have even noticed, except for the temperature of his hands. They're cold. Too cold to hold comfortably, but I'm not about to give up my grip on him.

As we walk over the long, concrete bridge that will take us to the side of the river where my hotel is, Smudge slowly begins to trace the curve of my fingernails with his index finger. Now that the effects of the rum and cokes he bought me are starting to wear off, I don't know quite what to say to him. I don't feel nearly as witty or clever as I did back at the Rose and Crown Pub. For some reason, everything that starts to come out of my mouth sounds stupid. I want desperately to be able to say something profound to him. Something that will forever shape his opinion of American women.

"Boy, it's cold out here, isn't it?" As soon as the sentence comes out of my mouth, it hangs heavily in the air. I want to take it back, start over. But since that's impossible, I clench my teeth and keep walking.

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"It's late," he says. "And it gets colder here at night than anywhere else. You know that."

I smile at Smudge and nod my head knowingly, even though it's only my second night in England and I don't have a clue what he's talking about. It's a relatively good bluff, though, and he doesn't seem to notice.

When we reach the center of the bridge, he tugs my hand and leads me over to the edge. In one swift motion, he hops up onto the railing and situates himself so that I can stand in the open space between his legs. Moving forward, I rest my hands on his knees and look up at him. I try my hardest to catch a glimpse of the color of his eyes, but the shadows from the trees fall too heavily on his face. He studies me quietly. I've never liked silence much. It unnerves me. I wonder what he's concentrating on, what he's thinking, but then the reality of what I'm doing suddenly hits me. This man is a complete stranger. I let him pick me up in a pub partly because I liked his English accent, and partly because I knew it would make a good story to take back to Mark, Matt, and Stacy.

"Move a bit closer, would you, Love?" he said.

Passively, I oblige. I justify it by rationalizing that no American girl in her right mind could resist the wishes of a British man who called her "Love." When was I going to get a chance like this again? I know that I'd be having a much better time if I could just stop thinking so damn much. Unfortunately, I'm cursed with the knowledge that I'm just romanticizing the situation. I mean, really, how much can I care about a guy I know I'll never see again?

Then again, what do emotions have to do with anything? It's hard enough to find someone to connect with on a purely physical level. Besides, I'm not particularly disappointed by the situation. For the moment, I can't imagine anywhere else I'd rather be. The only thought I have room for now, anyway, is whether or not he's going to lean down far enough so I can kiss him.

Taking a deep breath, I touch his cheek and hope for the best.

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### The Road to L.A.

I think we were doing 110 with  
    "Life in the Fast Lane" popped  
        in the tape deck and  
both of us wailing along to the chorus with a  
    Jaguar blocking the passing lane and  
        a slow moving Winnebago straight ahead when  
I began to wonder if there was a God and if  
    He was willing to accept young men of  
        questionable character into heaven who would  
die via Winnebago in the middle of the desert on  
    Route 5 in a red turbo-charged  
        Volvo headed south into  
L.A. of all places if that damn Jaguar didn't  
    make way soon  
        (or Joe didn't slow down).

"Uh Joe. . ." I said, my elbow resting lazily on the  
    armrest. The turbo whined.

"Yah?" he asked, hesitating. . .  
    slightly.

"Uh Joe. . ." I said again, eyeing the Winnebago  
    thoughtfully.

"Yah?" he asked, flooring it  
    again.



I waited until I could read the bumper sticker

"I Break for Wildlife!"

looked casually around for fauna, and said

"That's a Winnebago, Joe."

"Yep," he said. "Some assholes

just don't

know how to use the damn

passing lane."

Directed, of course, at the ever-present

Jaguar.

At the last minute, God Himself and in all His Glory  
intervened.

Joe yanked the car hard to the left and

squeezed

between the Jaguar and the loathsome Family Camper.

No one was killed.

"This is why our insurance premiums are higher, isn't it?"

I asked.

"Yep," he said.

A mile up the roadway, both lanes were blocked and  
Joe was forced to reduce his speed to 85.

The Jaguar caught up with us, but

we didn't care because now "Wasted Time" was playing and  
Lord knows you can't drive fast to a sad song.

• Brian Creech

## Animal Sacrifice

*In Nomine Patris, et filii, et Spiritus Sancti...*

There is something about the ocean  
that is like being in a great temple.  
I sit here, on my stone pew,  
the sandy dune my kneeling bench.  
The midnight sky-dome  
of nature's cathedral,  
the stars like flecks of  
paint spattered onto canvas,  
is reflected in the moon-leashed ocean.  
The waves chant an everlasting prayer,  
the same one they have sung  
since their birth at the hour of genesis.  
The congregation of animals,  
on the land, in the sea, and in the sky  
are alive as I am alive.  
From a cloud of sea-salt  
the fin of the dolphin reaches toward  
the outstretched hand.  
A vision of God is burned  
forever into the amber  
of the gull as it dives for fish,  
is present in the teeth of the shark  
as they sink into flesh,  
is praised in the chorus of barking seals.

*Sicut erat in principio, et nune, et semper, et in saecula  
saeculorum.*

In the beginning there was nothing.  
Then God created the heaven and the earth  
and the seas and the trees.  
Animals came  
to live in the garden,

to graze on the grass,  
drink from the pristine waters,  
and find joy in His creation.  
And it was good.  
Then God created  
MAN.

*O Deus, O Deus, quare me repulisti?*

The ocean churns before me,  
the waves rising and falling  
like the chest of a man  
in troubled sleep.  
From my second story window  
I can look down on the graying beach,  
the black oil a mourning shawl  
on the shoulders of an aged woman,  
a dying Mother.  
I notice the dead seals and fish, birds and kelp,  
that denote the line of the receding tide.  
Several people are crowded around a baby seal  
just cut from the womb  
of its once playful, proud mother.  
She is now lying on her side,  
her eyes glazed with the oil of her baptism,  
her coat slick with the anointing of last rights.  
The people work quickly to save the infant,  
their hands shaking with futility.  
Wrapped in swaddling, the child gasps,  
its chest rising unevenly, shudders,  
the little brown nose quivers, shaking the whiskers.  
Eyes not yet open, never open.  
Et mortuus est.  
The waves chant a dirge-like lullaby.

*Requiescat in pace.*

• Shannon K. Murphy



**If bob, be dead:**

Lovely bob and him so warm; him so firm  
and rudely male -- yet softer yet in form  
of hand and tone of voice that sets our blood  
to singing in our ears of bob to bob.

If that occur which must needs be that bob  
depart from flesh-life, violently rent  
from tissued transaction (his perfections  
would require no less that age should not  
defile a form of proportions as  
his are -- but see that he's removed therefrom  
that we may share in memories only  
the triumphs of genetic art that are  
the person-thing of our gentle bob)

If bob were but cold corpses, dead flesh, road-kill  
en-wombed in the warm ground (vapors expatiate);  
His form and order of male flesh turned  
back to the soils where ere' he proposed --  
(i imagine him done in in a bar-fight  
Romance; the passive, dispute object  
of limitless male appetite and  
the reformations of a proper need;  
Smoky bar midst smoky cold night;  
Boys in their leathers and khakis.  
Boys in their steel-toes; stubble-headed  
warriors of anonymous, men's room  
encounters; moments of release against  
the relentlessness of easy living;  
commerce is soft cavities; explosions  
upon a horizon of male need.

Courting bob contenders engage; enrage.  
bob taken down with edge of bottle-glass  
and they cry: "None shall have him, if not I!"  
His blood from mouth of wound anoints apostl's  
of a brave new faith; consecrates killers.  
Crimes of passion recognized as above  
the laws of plain boys and family men)

Given these things that bob be lost to warmth  
of maul and probe and spasms of reply:  
i'd burrow with hands the earth where  
under conducts the business that will  
disorganize this firm physique and make  
of bob a formless thing -- how shall love hinge?  
On what ground love, if love's no solid thing?  
Love requires object, if love is to be love.  
An indigent's grave i dig the ground that  
i may bathe and luxuriate  
in the liquidity and settl'd  
soils that once were the mass that i kissed  
as bob, and responded as bob-object.  
i shall have him -- he shall be mine; And we  
two shall become as one as we are joined  
in wallowing warm communion.

• Cde.X.

## Upon Hearing of Your Death

Once again  
your wet tongue trailed down my  
neck and your shaking hands  
fumbled  
at my coat zipper  
and my ten-year-old  
face burned hot  
as my head and stomach

turned. Inside, for  
so many years,  
I found myself  
in the cemetery,  
drenching your gravestone  
with my spit,  
gnashing my teeth  
ripping up the sod  
and pissing on your coffin.

But then  
in the moment when  
the echoes  
died,  
I drew myself up  
to face the ghost  
and stared  
into empty space.

• *Juliette Nehring*



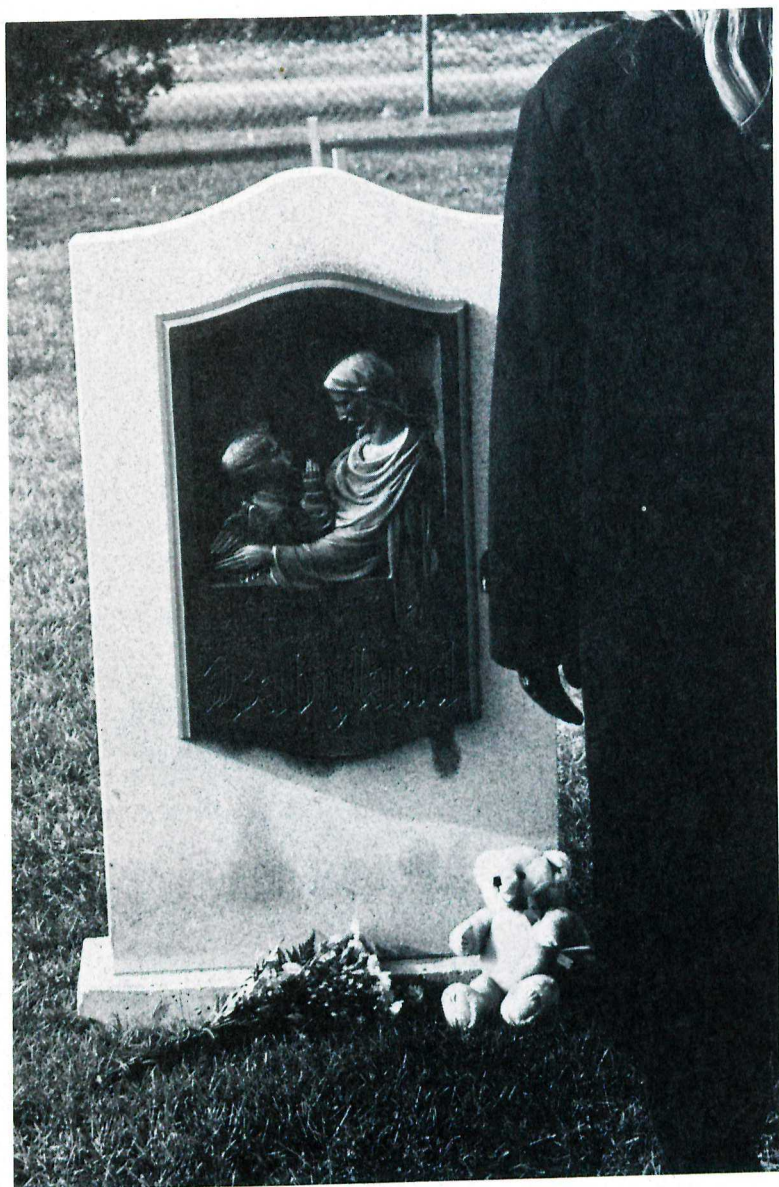


Photo by Jeff Martin

## Behind the Window

Car door cuts the silence with a muffled growl;  
Woody notes emerging through the clear barrier  
like a hand reaching through a vertical, liquid wall.

Legs fall limp, dangling in a pirouette pose.  
The stained plywood bench grows into lower thighs  
dripping tingling sensations downwards that collect in  
toes....asleep.

Orange Frisbee, like a contrasting sunspot upon a reflecting  
white background;  
soaring towards protective eyes, as an arm follows through.  
It hits the barrier and leaves a gray smudge.

A hand behind the shadow futilely wipes across the cool  
smudge;  
fingers extended, spread, like the bursting flares of fireworks,  
light exploding outwards, only to be engulfed by the dark.

Still air fossilized without life behind this cold, smudged  
barrier.

Spirited air wisps venturing through micro-cracks  
resuscitate life into the observing corpse.

Fingerprints encircle the smudge, each halo'd in gray  
obliqueness--  
holes in the barrier melting into nothingness without aid...  
while a leaf outside performs tricks upon an uneven stage.

Mouth opens with the sound of boots pulled out of deep mud.  
Tongue tasting aged plaque, rolled out only to shrink in fear.  
An ice cycle drips into a pool below a car bumper and runs into  
an open sewer.

Hot and cold as sweat gather in the crevices above the upper lip.

Chills fall down from frozen ears,  
like the pain now felt down each spine from a hunched back.

Tears are the only evidence of life as a dimmed reflection  
emerges,  
overtaking the inner barrier walls,  
like a phantom transparent in a darken hall...  
Or a man hiding behind a window.

- *Kevin Meek*



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### Reflections in a Bathtub

... time i'm gonna make you pay you bitch we had an agreement dammit it was simple it was DON'T FUCK AROUND ON MY TIME you know i've loved you for so long seems like forever you just wanted friendship so i loved you on your terms but there was a condition when you ask me along you're a eunuch that means don't ask me to drive and jack him off in the back seat especially when you just spent two weeks pissed off because he tried to feel you up i'm sick of you breaking every promise you make except the one that keeps me from touching you i'm the only guy you won't touch after all these years i still don't know why i'm tired of always being there for you and having to force you to hug me when i hit bottom out of the blue into the black i'm sick of your lies and the ache when i look at your face i'm sick of not remembering how to cry when i need to i'm sick of the fucking hypocrisy say what you mean do what you say what's so tough about that can't face another sixty minutes like this much less another sixty years so this time i'm gonna make you pay the dogs think i'm here to play with them i think jo cut his foot on the broken glass from the window i had to break to get into my brother-in-law's place funny how i always think of it as my brother-in-law's never my sister's he just got the shotgun he's been bragging for a week i was afraid he might be gone hunting today but it's there and they're not and i'm in the bathtub so the mess will clean up easier the barrel tastes like oil oh shit the safety's on where the hell is it there it is please god don't let there be an afterlife

•Michael P. Nowicki

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## Untitled

.....

Shannan Miller

Tea stains mark the inside of my mother's mug. Violent scrubbing does no good. I examine the interior and rub my soapy finger over the light brown rings one last time. Hundreds of cups of tea have left an imprint as permanent as the delicate peach flowers painted on the smooth clay surface. Shaking my head, I run the mug through a stream of hot tap water and place it in the dish drainer. My hands disappear into a cloud of soap suds in search of hidden silverware as I wonder how many washings my mom's mug has received.

I can't remember a day when my mom hasn't had a cup of tea for breakfast. In the mornings before school, for as many of the twelve years of elementary and secondary education I can remember, I sat across the kitchen table from my mom in drowsy silence. She would sit with her thin fingers wrapped around a steaming mug as I concentrated on a bowl of cereal or an Eggo drowned in syrup. She did not have to get up as early as I did but never failed to rise and keep me company while I ate. We rarely spoke on those dark mornings. The only sounds in the kitchen were the barely audible voices of two wise-cracking DJs and the rattle of the bubbling tea kettle on the black coils of the metal stove.

I never drank tea myself. Neither the sharp smell, nor the dull brown color appealed to me. As a child I felt tea was a drink for old people. I always knew a few rebellious kids who boasted of drinking coffee, but none bragged of consuming tea. My mom drank two or three cups a day. Every once in awhile she asked me if I wanted some.

"No thanks," I would reply with a wrinkled nose. Why did she ask? She knew I didn't like tea.

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"The kettle holds water for two," she would say on another occasion.

"I'll pass," was my stolid reply. Persistence wouldn't wear me down. She would have to drink alone.

"Your tastes will change as you grow older," my dad threw in from the side. He was partly right. As life switched to a new menu, I had to adapt or starve.

I felt the first twinge of panic about a month before graduation. Reality pressed hard around me as I thought about college in the coming fall. What classes would I take? Where would I live? What would I wear? Questions flooded my brain. Doubt troubled my conscience. Fear and anxiety wreaked havoc on my thoughts. In self-defense I clung to people, places, and petty objects from my past. A distant relative's health troubled my mind. A park frequented in childhood demanded a new visit. A faded t-shirt from freshman year of high school became my favorite piece of clothing. Little things suddenly mattered. Small details taken for granted struck me with weight.

My mom felt it, too.

I was shy and quiet as a young girl. (No surprise to those who know me now.) The unfamiliar had no appeal. Mystery turned me off. I stayed close to what I knew and held back from adventure. My mother, sensitive to a character so much like her own, nurtured my gentle nature, and in her own way, made me strong. Yet, when the time came for letting go, she was afraid. I could feel her concern. I understood her worries. I wondered myself how I would be on my own. Struggle was inevitable. She held on tight, but I soon discovered how dependent I was on her hold.

That's when I decided to start drinking tea.

"Tea?" my father asked incredulously when he first saw the small white tag drooping over the edge of my mug.

"Yea," I responded casually, "I just wanted to try it."



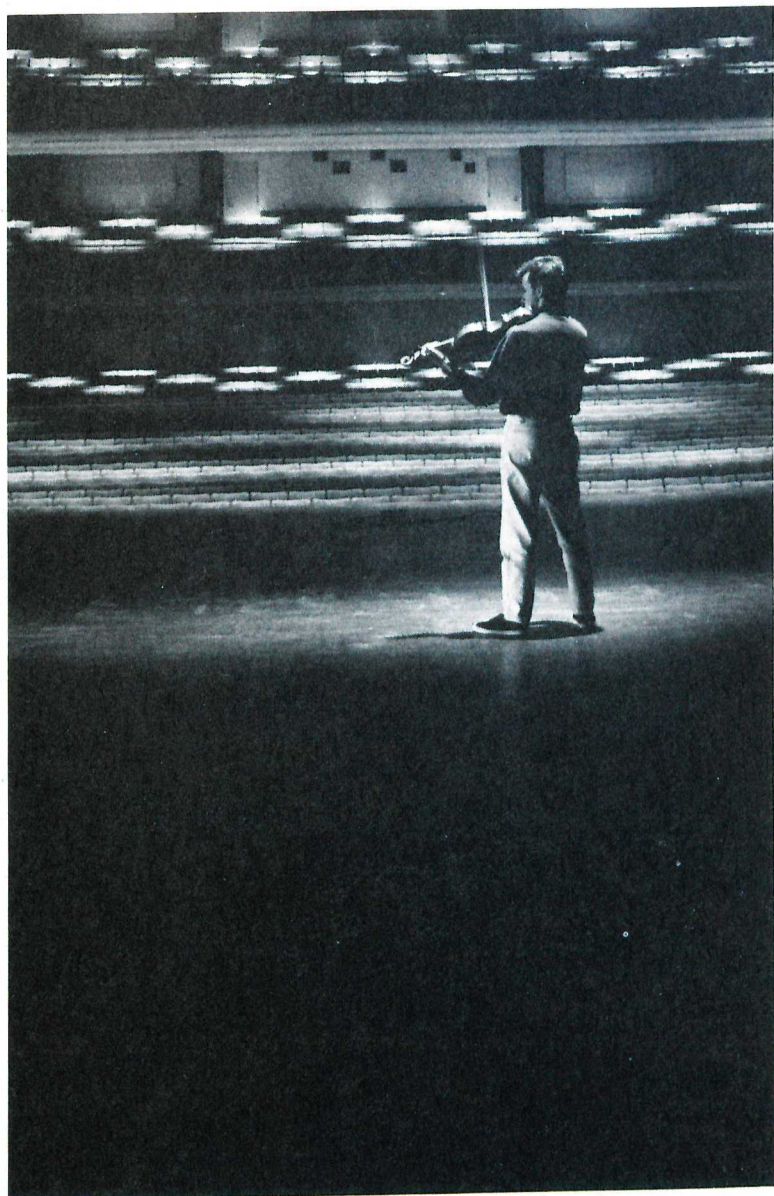


Photo by Jeff Martin

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My mom was a little surprised, of course, but took it quietly. I started out with one cup per week. "I'm having tea today," I would announce with enthusiasm. Mom humored me and treated the ritual seriously. My first cup was weak and loaded with sugar.

"How is it?" she asked.

"Not bad," I replied. She knew I was lying.

I was diligent, however, and soon grew accustomed to the bitter liquid. I experimented by adding milk and tried a variety of herbal blends. My greatest discovery: wild strawberry. The sweet, overwhelming smell is almost more satisfying than the drink. The summer passed and the time came when breakfast or an afternoon snack accompanied by a simmering pot of hot tea became an enjoyable treat my mom and I could share. Sitting at the wooden kitchen table, like so many times before, we talked and laughed and sometimes sat in silence.

Now, away from home, sitting in a small dorm room, spending late nights in front of a computer and tedious hours scouring obscure books, I take comfort in warm waves of steam that emanate from a hot cup of tea. At once relaxing and soothing, the simple blend conjures memories of slow times and easy laughter. I hear a clear, calm voice comment on the news or feel the soft touch of a light hand on my shoulder. For this treasure, people once traveled over land and sea. Sitting here, in a quiet hour, I begin to understand.

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## Untitled

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Jennifer Fuqua

### *Woods*

Beside my three-story house with red brick, country blue siding, big shutters and an apple blossom tree in the front that blooms an illuminating pink and white, is a small plot of rolling land densely packed with different shapes and sizes of trees. Possibly forty in all, it makes an excellent hide-away when I want to be hidden from my neighbors. It's not uncommon to find children climbing our wooden fence so they can sit in the extraordinarily green blades of healthy grass, to see a family of rabbits feasting on the vegetation that grows plentifully under the shelter of the trees or to see my dad napping on a blanket, hat covering his head and incessant snoring, after he has finished cutting the grass. One of the trees reaches up beside my bedroom window and I can't remember a summer morning when a family of cardinals or chic birds haven't woken me up with the morning sun.

### *The Swing Club*

My best friend, Megan, called earlier today jabbering away about the no cover charge at the Swing Club in downtown Wheeling and how everyone would be there to see the special light show D.J. Steve-E was throwing in for no extra charge to the management. He's a new one on the Brooke County scene -- probably trying to get a good rap. She also pointed out that Thursday night was when they served Rolling Rock from a bottle instead of the tall cans.

What I wanted to know was -- who's everybody? The Brooke High School juniors and seniors, stomping and squealing their way through the door of the bar like a mass of hungry pigs? The students who pretend they live the rebellious city life. The girls in their new starched tight halter tops, short-shorts, and white sandals. The guys in their Levi's, pegged



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above their high tops and too-tight t-shirts. All of them rebels because they are hitting the only dance bar in Wheeling -- hungry for the beer that is illegally served to seventeen and eighteen year olds...hungry for the thrill of seeing who's dressed the best...hungry to meet that special someone even though they could list everyone that's going to be there...hungry for the thrill of having something to do.

*Hey, that's just me*

No thanks. I told her I'd rather have a beer in a frat back at school with my real friends. The one's who don't mind if I don't have make-up on or who I'm dating. The one's who accept my alternative music and my lines of poetry and book titles I seem to remember when my head is spinning from a 6-pack. The friends who don't laugh or stare dumbfounded when I say I want to be a writer so I can save the environment, inspire the youth, run the country, change the world.

Megan understands. She wishes she could get out like I did. Megan has been my best friend since our sophomore year in high school when we struggled through geometry together. In our four years of friendship I've come to appreciate her ability to fool those who don't know her well. Long chestnut hair flowing half way down her back, neatly arched eyebrows that give her an intimidating look, and face perfectly painted with Mary Kay cosmetics give Mae an outward sophisticated appearance. I laugh at her adult-friendly persona and her polite responses because I know how she talks to me.

I think I'll spend my Thursday night at home with my mom. We'll probably walk my golden retriever, Katie, after it gets dark. I'll see a car of neighborhood teens drive by in a boat-long olive green car for their big evening; Mom will fill me in on what's happening with the Nolan's, the Graham's, the Forrester's and the Hull's as we pass their houses; my dog will speed up when she sees the open field at the end of the road where she's allowed to relieve herself at will. My mom and I will talk about life, school, writing, history, West Virginia -- in a different way than I do when I talk about these things at school. It's the environment, I think. It's usually on these walks that Mom finds out about my rebellious behavior when I was younger.

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*the cigarette*

One evening I admitted to the scandal that two of my middle school friends and I had plotted. Jill was to steal one cigarette from her mom's ever-present pack and Kim and I were to walk into the college bookstore and steal the free matchbooks. Jill knew her mother would miss that one cigarette and Kim and I knew that everyone in the bookstore knew exactly what we were up to when we grabbed the free books. We met at the end of the road, in the woods, and sat on a fallen log laughing nervously at our mischief. Jill whipped out the cigarette -- it was alone in a plastic baggy -- and I found it very ugly and intimidating. I couldn't light matches so Kim went through almost an entire book trying to light one. Eventually, she lit the fat white stick in her fingers, and we all stared at the burning end. Panic struck when we thought someone might see the smoke through the trees.

No one had the courage to actually take a puff, and we walked out of the woods feeling defeated and prude. Sixth grade was a tough year. Mom loved the story.

Yea, I think I'll skip the bar.

*A West Virginia Secret*

About four summers ago, I awoke to my alarm at 4:30 a.m., so I could finish packing for Florida. We were leaving at 6:00 a.m. I rolled over and looked out my window as I did every morning -- a habit I obtained in the winter hoping for snow days and cancellations from school -- and saw through the tree tops a black mass lingering over my yard. It floated there, almost gently, like a parachute just before it hits the ground. Every once in a while it appeared to lose a piece that relocated elsewhere. I put my ear to my screen and strained for a clue. The quiet sound of grass rustling in the breeze was all I could detect. I headed for a downstairs window and was mesmerized at what I saw. A herd of about twenty deer had found security and breakfast in the midst of my wooded yard. Their strong, lean bodies, poised and alert, had led them to feed on our healthily grown grass before they bounded back into the woods.

I'll never forget it.



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### *Bubba's*

Bubba isn't human. Bubba is a 6'9", 400 lbs. man who owns the only bar in Bethany. He drives a big, grey van -- nothing fancy -- because he can't fit into a car and is rumored to be a mafia man. He always wears black polyester pants and a black t-shirt and talks with a thick Italian accent even though he's lived in West Virginia all his life. Those of us who go to his bar are nice to him so we'll get served. He threatened to shut down the bar when the community wouldn't let him put in a drive-thru beer carry-out. Just what we need on our windy roads. I knew he wouldn't leave.

### *Cornfield*

Behind my house are rolling hills that light up in the fall with brilliant oranges, reds, and yellows. At the foot of the nearest slope is a cornfield that stretches down the first turn of Buffalo Creek. When it rains, the field floods with muddy creek water and serves as a dam for the houses just in front of it. When the weather's nice, families of deer, rabbits, and woodchucks sneak samples of the delicacies they find as they hide within the long reeds.

In the fall when the stalks are hollow and brown, paths from eager young teens, clad in brown flannels, brown fishing hats, and long green fishing poles, are created through the thick of the field. From my kitchen window, these paths look like animal tracks from a carefree, wandering herd.

### *A home for kittens*

Just up from the cornfield is an old red barn. It stands poetically with the hills as its backdrop. Tall reeds lay on its sides and the green grass around it is always perfectly mowed. It looks like a historical landmark kept preserved because of its beauty.

Now, it's used as a storage for garbage from the Millsop Center next to it. The tan silo to its left is graffitied from the Bethany College students.

Running rampant around the barn is a family of wild kittens. They've lived there as long as I've lived in my house. Every year a new litter of black and white kittens make their way across the street and into my yard to check out my dog and



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make her crazy when they run victoriously out of reach of her chain. Sometimes I think that if the kittens didn't live behind my house, I would want to move. The whole atmosphere is so intricately in place and each element makes my home -- home. Without the silo, the kittens, the trees, the fishers, it just wouldn't be.

### *My X*

Sophomore Sweetheart. Junior Track Star. Senior Drop-Out. Posse Drug Dealer. I saw a write up about him in the paper last summer. God, he looked awful. Now he's in jail.

### *The old man that waves*

Driving out of Bethany to Wellsburg, one takes Route 7. It's a seven mile maze of a road that seems at least twice its length because of all the sharp curves. Brooke County residents who don't live in Bethany always complain about how dangerous it is to drive Route 7, especially at night. I think they're just too lazy to drive seven miles.

If you drive it as much as I do (or did when I was in high school), you take its uniqueness for granted. Coming down Buchanan's Hill, there is a chocolate brown trailer that decorates for every holiday of the year with big, painted, plastic figures. Last Christmas, I noticed that Santa Claus had taken the place of the Angel in the Nativity Scene. On St. Patrick's Day, little green leprechauns that light up at night danced across their front porch. Down a little further are two big farm houses that share a large plot of land. I don't know if both of the families actually share the land, but they both raise heifer cows so it looks that way. Just beyond the big bend that requires a ten mile an hour speed is a small shack, almost like an old-fashioned garage, with a beat up, dirty white trailer behind it. It's grey wood looks so frail -- as if it would blow off into the woods like tumbleweed across a desert plain. Chickens run freely about the place -- even in and out of the trailer. Even frailer-looking is the old bearded man who sits in his lime green and white lawn chair just beside the road. The grey hair from his chin hangs to the middle of his chest and the balding hair from his head hangs to his shoulders. Peering from under his tan cowboy hat are light beady eyes and a thin,

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pointed nose. His appearance reminds me of a 90 year old man who needs the care of a nursing home. But his free spirit and WV pride probably keep him in the only place he calls home. I don't even know if he can walk because I've never seen him move from his lawn chair. But he always nods his head and waves, no matter how many times I drive by, in pure Brooks County style. It's enough for him to know that I live in his beloved state to think of me as a friend.

### *Diet Coke*

Ah -- the splendor. Ohh -- the taste. When I'm working for my mom at Historic Bethany in the summer it's ... 10:00 a.m. Coke Break...12:00 Coke & Lunch...2:00 p.m. Coke Break...6:00 p.m. Finish Work/Coke Reward.

I love my mom.

### *Cows*

bunnies the size of my hand peaking over the long blades of grass beside the road...tiny pink opossums running crazily to and from the dead carcass of what used to be their mom...perky and fat woodchucks, their fuzzy bodies, and the quick turns of thier heads to see the passing cars while perched on their hind legs eating away on the feast around them...baby lambs prancing across the hill for their 5 o'clock feeding, tripping merrily as they go...clumsy little goats fighting their heads into the feeding trough because they don't understand there's plenty for all...

### *The Explosion*

My 8th grade year, an explosion sent us to the ground along with paneling from the ceiling. It was the old McCormick house just down the way. It completely blew. There was nothing left but the frame. No one was hurt. Officials say it was a gas leak. The community suspected it was a warning from the Hari Krishna's. I guess Mr. McCormick witnessed a murder in California and he was going to testify. A little too crazy for my town? Maybe not.

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## Naranjo Dancing

My hands move slowly,  
my eyelids follow, heavy with anticipation,  
until my fingertips meet  
the cool surface of one bronze statue.  
Creeping along my skin is the feeling of,  
understanding?  
How this blind sculptor could see  
what we with eyes fail to.

His fingers,  
dancing over cooling metal  
form  
a strong back  
swelling with movement,  
powerful legs  
rippling smoothly,  
lips rounded in a wolf's howl.

From hands flow delicate fingers.  
A reclining woman's calf  
hides the toes  
of her small feet  
pressed against a chair,  
nearly imperceptible  
except to the eyes of one who  
does not see.

Hands  
studying the faces  
do not find them lopsided  
and their deeply impressioned eyes  
are like basins  
waiting to be filled.

He is dancing in these bronze statues  
with their hands raised high  
and their heads half turned as if  
the gods were speaking to them and they were  
straining to hear the words.

• *Juliette Nehring*