

manuscripts



2008



# Manuscripts

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I had nothing to offer anybody except my own confusion.

Jack Kerouac

## Letter from the Editors

As editors, we are constantly seeking to improve our magazine and our organization. Each year we are able to make small steps towards our ideal. This year, we are proud to say that we lengthened the number of stories and poems in the magazine by over 30 percent. This not only means that you the reader can spend more time pouring over our pages, but also that we can fit more of our favorite pieces into the magazine.

The collection of work in this year's Manuscripts aims to communicate feelings of love, loss, and memory. The collegiate world is about moving upward and moving onward. Inevitably something or someone is lost or left behind and by the same turn, new connections are forged. We hope that this year's issue is able to articulate all that comes with those changes.

As always, we were only able to publish a fraction of what we received—those pieces which our staff of nine judged to be the best of the best. To all those who were turned away and who refuse to let rejection deter them from their art, we would like to say: revise, rewrite, resubmit. We are readers and lovers of writing first and foremost and we look forward to seeing your work.

Best,

Karen Witting  
Christina Lear



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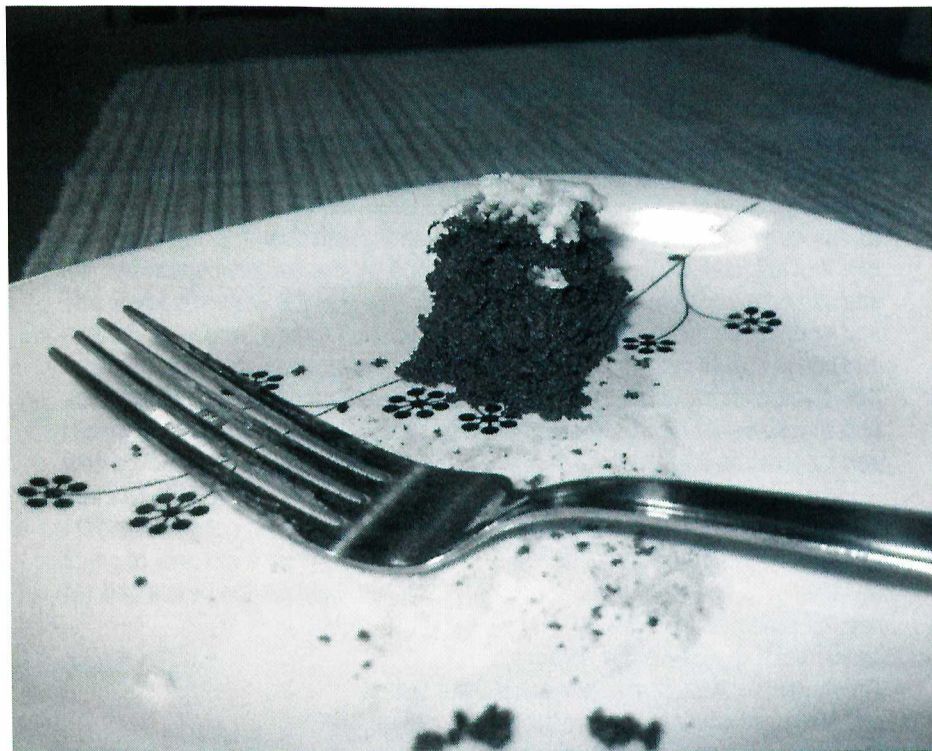
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A Moment of Discovery  
Amanda Meyer

I carelessly glance  
Through the grease fingered window  
Framed by white-wash scratched walls  
And indifferent patterned furniture  
As I'm sitting in my cold bare feet  
Itching at dry winter skin  
I chew my neglected lip

I stop to notice the snow



Lingering Sweetly  
Megan Hinze

---

**A Comb with a Glossy Butterfly Embellishment**  
**Samantha Atkins**

My aunt has too much jewelry.  
I went over to borrow diamonds once,  
during the summer that the locust swarmed,  
and I listened to them smack against her bedroom window  
as she dug through department store boxes laced with dust.  
She has hair combs, like this gold one here,  
and clip-on earrings from 1965  
and wedding pearls  
and conch shell necklaces from Hawaii.  
She also has brown carpet in her living room  
and a white terrier that stares at me with black eyes  
while pissing on the floor.

My mother pursed her lips together.  
Her food was overcooked  
and the floors needed mopping  
and the windows were grimey  
and where the hell was the waitress?  
The restaurant was a rat hole with clanking dishes  
and fish smell pouring out from the plastic kitchen flap.  
She rapped her fingernails on the table,  
made to look like an old surf board,  
and leaned across it to say she wasn't going to take it much longer.

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Our grease-covered waitress, popping her bubblegum,  
finally flounced down our aisle  
and my eyes tried to tell her to run.

My dad was driving me around in his rusty pick-up truck.  
The soybeans were bright green in the fields  
and the dairy cows dotted the rolling hills  
and the pavement gleamed with fresh rain  
and I hated it all like I hated my Dad.  
His embarrassing yellow and red flannel shirt  
was covered in sawdust and I was sobbing  
that I wanted to kill myself.  
I pressed my fourteen-year-old forehead against the glass  
trying to look like a sad little princess.  
My dad stared out the windshield in silence.



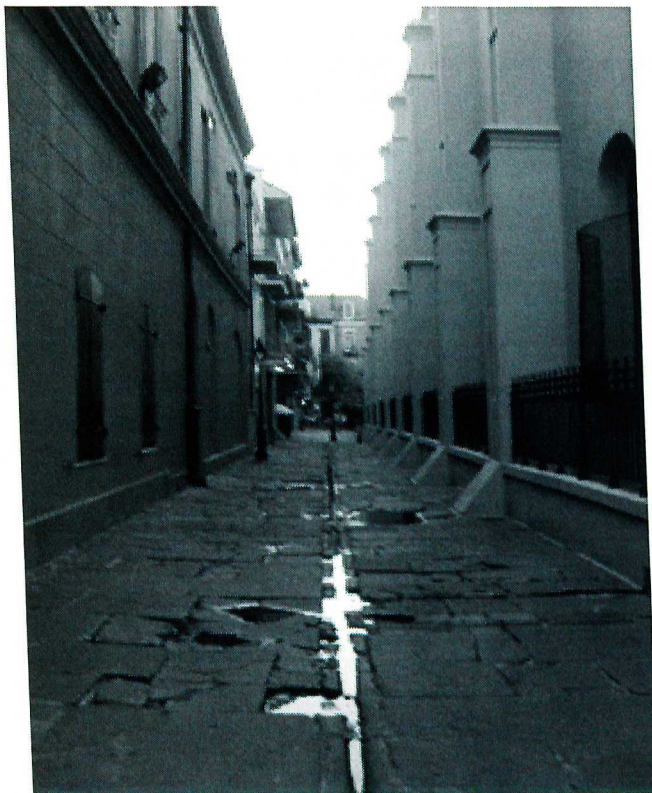
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Katie had a pink, electric jeep with a Barbie sticker.  
She also had blonde, shiny hair, like Barbie,  
and three big horses  
and a swimming pool with a slide  
and a dad who wore cowboy boots and still loved her mom.  
She drove me around in her backyard one day  
while our mothers made prayer lists in the living room.  
Our laughter was so loud  
until we saw a bee and had to swerve toward the fence.  
We screamed and blocked our faces with short arms  
as we slammed into a pole.  
Our heads bounced off the plastic dashboard.

I slept with my mother as a girl.  
Her mattress was too thick in summer  
and her back was hot  
and the pillows were hot  
and I couldn't escape the covers.  
I wore a T-shirt and she wore a silky slip  
that I watched shimmer up and down as she breathed.  
I would twist around and put my bare feet  
against the cool headboard or the wall.  
Or I would listen to her snore or to the crickets  
singing in the dark through the screen.

I wanted to sing like that.





Alleyway  
Samantha Atkins

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The Garage Behind Cornelius Drive  
Dianne Hardin

Hiding in tall weeds, flowers beginning to crown its head  
The small garage is more the prey than a predator.  
Nested between rows of tiny houses –  
Houses that have  
Vibrated to the slow beat of Dave Matthews,  
Shook from the weight of too many people lounging on bright gold futons with  
pizza and beer stains from older siblings,  
Shuddered from the stacks of dirty colored dishes and quirky brown-rimmed coffee mugs of old  
aunts,  
Quivered to shield dimly lit hallways hiding the secrets of college years.

The garage crouches in its foliage hideaway and—  
I didn't even know it was there.

The dark brown spotted boards of the garage doors used to be off-white  
But between wild green guardians and tiny pink blossoms,  
Cobwebs are its white beard.  
The doors are frames by a rusted metal arch and  
A forgotten lock protects the garage from embarrassment.  
It used to hold a brand-new '94 Mazda 626  
And its floors, now mangled with settling dirt and grime,  
Used to sparkle so much the driver could see a reflection of her foot  
Stepping out of the car.

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Now the concealed garage holds three things:  
An old couch, a dishwasher, and a lawnmower.

The couch sits on the right side of the garage, seeming to hold the wall up  
And its black and green and red and yellow and orange  
Pains the eyes, but has since faded  
From the time it held a newlywed couple staring into a crackling fireplace that rivaled the  
sparks between them.  
Now the couch stares at the dishwasher that used to belong to  
Jeannie's grandmother Helen-  
So proud to give her such a gift to go off to college—  
thinking of well-balanced meals on lovely china but the dishes turned out to be plastic cups  
and mismatched sets of silverware.  
And the dishwasher sits in the eclectic trio wearing suits of dust.  
The lawnmower's red is now rust, and underneath where blades of silver once spun madly,  
There is caked green so old it's black and now the cover of the deck  
houses five brown beetles that burrow in the remnants of cut lawns.  
Inside it is silent, slightly warm, and musky.

The garage hopes no one will notice it-  
I didn't even know it was there.

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## What If I Were Dirt?

Jonathan Garrison

I'd memorize your steps, Madeline,  
to be retraced if you found yourself lost,  
catch you if you stumbled, stain your jeans, cling  
to the skin beneath your nails as you  
planted sweet birch saplings, frail. I'd hide  
in the corner beyond your broom's reach,  
carried on an April breeze, beneath  
your eyelids I'd slide – be a fleeting  
malaise. During a summer's rain, I'd swallow  
your Birkenstocks – be washed from your body with  
sunflower-scented soap. I'd be the patches  
of Mother Nature's field and forest  
quilt for your eyes to fancy as you glide  
high above to visit your mother on the Pacific  
Coast. Swept seaward, I'd shape valleys, deep –  
compact, amass, build mountains, high. As you set  
your sails toward cities, unseen,  
I'd wait for you across the sea.





Antiquity  
Katie Ferrell

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## Love Letters: A Style and Usage Guide

Ryan Pardiek

Writing is my favorite form of communication—a trait that I once thought made me unique. However, it turns out that among the population of creative writing majors, I'm not alone. I've witnessed quite the number of my fellow students admit to feeling more comfortable within written expression rather than spoken. But sometimes I doubt my fellow students' allegiance to written communication: despite supposedly preferring to write rather than speak, they all seem willing to engage in romantic relationships within which—as far as I can tell—spoken communication is the primary mode of expression. Personally, I find this appalling.

For me romantic interaction is all about two things: the pen and the paper. Others seem to care about the exchange of saliva and God knows what other bodily fluids, but what I'm into is the exchange of big, leafy written documents. Give me some fervent written correspondence, the occasional hello, and lots of awkward eye-contact, and I'm a Happy Ryan. And really my life hasn't been as romantically dismal as you might expect: I've duped many the fine lass into becoming what was once later termed "glorified pen-pals" (her nomenclature, not mine). As such, I've become quite the authority on the art of writing a love letter.

What most people don't realize about writing a love letter is that it's a process that is just as much about structure as it is about passion—in fact, I'd argue that structure is *more* important than passion: passion comes and goes, but there's no excuse for a lack of structure. A well-formed love letter will always be read even if it is lacking in passion, but even the most passionate love letter will find a hostile audience if it is so structurally jumbled that it winds up looking more like a psychoanalytic inkblot rather than an attempt at verbal communication. Therefore, I present to you a simple, easy-to-use Love Letter Usage Guide. Simply consult this document before writing any love letter, and whether you're only an aspiring novice or you're a grizzled love-letter veteran, this guide will help you introduce your reader to a whole new textual representation of yourself.

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## SUGGESTED FORMAT

There are four widely accepted guidelines when it comes to proper love letter format:

- A. Write the damned thing out (in pen on paper).
- B. Write the damned thing out (in pen on paper).
- C. Remember: not even the most affectionate machines send each other electronic love letters.
- D. Write the damned thing out (in pen on paper).

It's also important that the letter be hand-delivered. However, avoid all unnecessary cleverness while doing so: do not slip your love letter into your reader's coat-pocket while they sleep, do not leave it in their primary journal (as if you would date anyone with only *one* journal) for them to find later, do not dictate it to their talkative parakeet, and never let anyone but you deliver it. Simply approach them and present the love letter, thus initiating the following exchange:

**Reader:** Is that letter for me?

**You:** Perhaps.

**Reader:** May I have it?

**You:** What're the magic words?

**Reader:** Suppurate Motel.

**You:** Enjoy.



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The magic words business is meant to confirm that your reader is who they claim to be, a precautionary measure so self-evidently necessary that it will be granted no further explanation here.

## THOSE THREE SIMPLE WORDS

It's optimal here to never trust your gut. Never write *I Love You* unless you're certain that you don't mean it.<sup>1</sup> This will keep your reader on their toes and your prose fresh.

**Improper usage:** "You know that time we shared a sidelong glance while perusing separate volumes of the OED? I kissed you then... like, in my mind. It was hot. I love you."

**Proper usage:** "Halfway through the meal I decided that although I am an ardent fan of puns, they make for poor eating utensils. I love you. And then I swapped my spork for something less clever."

However, don't fret if you find yourself unable to resist writing *I Love You* at times that you might actually mean it: these sorts of mistakes tend to get sifted out during the third or fourth draft.

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<sup>1</sup> The only exception to this rule applies to *I Love How You...* statements. Since these statements are not a direct assertion of love for your reader but rather a description of the reader's traits which you find favorable, feel free to use *I love How You...* statements with as much flair and frequency as desired. However, don't forget that artistry and craft come first: never fall into cliché or sentimentality. For example: "I love how you can sneeze without breaking eye contact" is bad. It is too precise and lacks smarminess. However, "I love how you never violate my personal space" is good, and "I love how you feign ignorance of certain adorable linguistic nonfluencies within your speech patterns" is even better.



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## ARCANE VOCABULARY

Use it! Nothing conveys true affection like words that your reader would have no practical reason to be familiar with.

**Proper usage:** “I suspect that this new hairstyle you’ve chosen will turn out to be Brahmasphutasiddhantaesque in nature (w/r/t the text’s treatment of zero specifically): seemingly reasonable and necessary during the era of its formation, but later only useful in the negative as a learning experience. I love you.”

**Improper usage:** Anything involving a Klingon.

## ENGAGING THE SENSES

Like any other kind of writing, the best way to engage your audience within your work is by playing to their senses. However, you’ll want to avoid sensory details rooted in romantic clichés. That means no red roses, no flowers of any kind, no cute allusions to the heart (toss all that ‘my right ventricle empties in tune for you’ stuff out the window right now), nothing is ever velvet or silk, no flower-petals of any kind—in fact, hardly any vegetation of any kind—nothing stuffed unless it actually exists (i.e., do not call your reader Teddy Bear—call your teddy bear Teddy Bear) and if you go the olfactory route, avoid ‘sweet,’ ‘cinnamon,’ ‘lemon,’ ‘lavender,’ and etc. etc. In general, you’d probably be better off avoiding anything visual, tactile, or gustatory so long as you want to avoid sounding overwrought. Therefore, only use words that are olfactory or audible in nature.

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**Improper usage:** "Did I ever tell you that I love how green your eyes are? Not even the wettest mucus could top that particular shade, baby."

**Proper usage:** "I think of you whenever I catch a whiff of a nearly-dead person at the nursing home, because that smell reminds me both to love those old farts even more since they're about to croak, but also to not get too attached since they're about to croak. It's a mix of selfless love and emotional self-preservation—like with you and me. Because we might break up. Or croak."

## WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW

Any good reader will be able to tell if you start writing out your ear, so stick to writing only about what you know. However, if you find yourself wanting to write about something you don't know, simply use this simple, four-step heuristic:

- 1.) Pick a topic you want to write about.
- 2.) Determine whether you know anything about this topic. If you do, proceed to step 4. If you don't, proceed to step 3.
- 3.) Repeat aloud the following: "I know that I know absolutely nothing about my chosen topic." You now know something about the topic. Proceed to step 4.
- 4.) Write about this topic.

---

**Improper application of the heuristic:** “I want to say that I love you, but I’m just not sure that I know what love is yet. I’m so sorry.”

**Proper application of the heuristic:** “I know for certain that I haven’t the foggiest idea what love is, and so therefore I can say with confidence that I love you... whatever that means.”

## THE BLANK SLATE

Use only when seeking relationship-termination. Consists of handing the reader a letter that is revealed to be blank upon unfolding. To be used with caution. Highly traumatic. Sometimes fatal. Use only in extreme cases. 100% relationship-termination success rate. Intrinsic ethical value hotly debated by numerous academics. Has resulted in a complete reversal of all romantic-tendencies in at least one documented case: Subject gave up on art of love-letter writing entirely. Proceeded to engage in mouth/ear romantic interaction thereupon. Subject cited shock associated with discovering the one he/she cared for so much would go so far as to invoke the well-documented Betrayal of the Assumption of the Presence of Affectionate Prose maneuver. Quote subject: “Looking back, I’m glad I got BAPAP’d. It just feels so great to finally be one of the *normal* people.”

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## Mermaid

Jessica Hanson

That girl is racing  
Across a desert  
She has found  
Yet another mirage  
She grasps it  
With clammy fingers  
Its unspoken melody  
Is her massage  
Then with every detail  
Becoming clearer  
As the heat  
Seeps through her veins  
It is unpretty  
As a mermaid  
Dried up and rotting  
In a cage





September 15 2007: March on Washington  
Laura Hazelton

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At Home  
Jon Garrison

A second-story sauna – cracked plaster,  
century-old musk, settled dust.  
Capricious commode, mildewed grout,  
fickle switches, haggard wood-work.  
Sagging walls, peeling shower caulk,  
scuffed vinyl tile, sink-faucet rust.  
Tarnished brass knobs on double-panel doors,  
busted latches atop drafty panes.  
Pale pine planks creak and crack,  
three radiators belch and grunt.  
Earthen hues cloak lead paint,  
built-in oak shelves ache and bow.

At home, surrounded by so much beauty,  
it's hard to find any one thing  
ugly.

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Lukewarm Breakfast  
Dustin Smith

Orange juice lingers in the restaurant's  
Glass, gath'ring dust. We fidget awkwardly  
In the pleather booths which moan with movement.

The sausage, half-eaten and burnt, grows stiff  
As I roll it across the maple lake  
Left after pancakes on my greasy plate.

You stare at your unfinished meal, across  
From me, repositioning leftover  
French toast and hash browns to harmonium.

Time ticks from breakfast to brunch as we sit  
Rolling and rearranging the world on  
A recycled plate as we wait and sigh.

We ease the tension with the same knife used  
To butter the wheat toast. And we replace  
The silence with my jokes and your laughter.

Now we pay the check and put our jackets  
On. You grab a mint and freshen your breath  
And I look back on the lone orange juice.

---

## Marquee

Josh Kaminski

The marquee at 26<sup>th</sup> and Pierce was where Rob  
and I went on Saturday nights, not to  
see the shows, but to see  
how they were misspelled.

We wondered if there weren't enough  
letters, or if the letter-hanger was  
the theater manager's dumb uncle,  
or if the letter hanger was secretly brilliant,  
and desired to keep other smart people  
away from this, the den  
of flickering lights over dull gazes  
and slightly-ajar-mouths.

We would move fast past the lights and into  
the alley, where we smoked sweet tobacco  
that tasted like Irish coffee, burning  
our fingers on our pipes' thin bowl-ends.



---

He spoke as he smoked, his tone bellicose,  
his drawl East Coast, and he always held my ears  
close, until they prickled and broke like icicles  
after a run-through by a fine wooden comb.

I couldn't tell you now what he said, only  
how he said it: like the world was ending,  
and only our smoke and our laughter  
could save it.



Punxsawtawney  
Alix Clinkingbeard

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## Pencil Sketch of a Rose

Samantha Atkins

His voicemail used to say, "Hey there, I'm either in the woods, fishing, or at work. And if I'm at work, I'm either thinking about fishing or being in the woods." He wanted to meet and marry a "good woman" and produce a bunch of blonde-haired kids that he could teach to set up tents and hook bass. He had a bumper sticker on his truck's dented fender that said, "Gun control means using both hands" and always referred to our small town in Southern Indiana as "God's country." Some people called him a "good ole' boy." I just called him Matt.

We met when he was in eighth grade and I was in seventh. He was in Student Council and was going around to all the seventh grade classrooms right before class started to tell us about the upcoming junior high euchre tournament. I was wearing my mom's dusty brown cowboy boots that day, and a pleather green jacket with a snakeskin design. I was reading *Interview with the Vampire* and sitting in the front row. When his turquoise eyes landed on me, I sat my book down on the desk and quickly took off my red-framed glasses.

A couple of weeks after we met, we went to a dance at the 4-H fairgrounds. Parents used to be able to rent one of the little buildings if their kid needed to have a birthday party or a wedding shower or something. The floors were slick, grey concrete and the walls were beige cinderblocks. The local DJ, who had worked for every family in town at some point, was mixing pop tunes in the corner and Matt and I were dancing too close to one another. He leaned in to kiss me and I got so nervous I stuck my whole tongue in his mouth. That's how we fell in love: a wet, embarrassing kiss in a crowded room.

---

Matt was the second youngest of four brothers that looked like him. They all had the same dirty blonde hair, prominent beaked noses, and long, muscled arms and they all loved hunting deer and touching girls. They also all hated their father, David, who was always drunk and out of work with one injury or another. A small statuette sat on a coffee table in their living room that said, "We are a fishing family," in ceramic letters, but they liked to do other things as well, such as wrestle on the stairs, steal from one another's rooms, and pee off the back porch.

We were "boyfriend and girlfriend" for about a year before we went on our first date. It was Christmas Eve and Matt had just gotten his license and a grey, rusted out Dodge pick-up with no back windowpane. I put on some nice jeans and we drove to the nearest movie theater, a half an hour north in Bedford, the "limestone capital of the world." There, Matt used fourteen dollars of the money he'd been saving to buy us two tickets to The Lord of the Rings. We held hands during the entire movie and on the way home, we sang Reba McEntire's versions of Christmas songs because the radio didn't work.

When he got mad, he clenched his fists at his sides and rocked his weight from one foot to the other, revealing his many chipped teeth through a grimacing smile and panting slightly. He never left home without his camouflage-encased pocketknife and told me he'd kill anybody who tried to touch me. I never saw him cut anyone with the blade, but I once watched him use it to chop up meth on the glass kitchen table at my sister's house, though it usually just cleaned the dirt out from underneath his fingernails or peeled oranges.



---

We broke up as soon as I realized I was pretty and then we got back together a couple years later when I was tired of exploring what that could do for me, five years since the junior high euchre tournament. My mom was out of town so we decided to eat a bunch of shrooms in the living room and liven up our dull summers. About two hours after we ate them, we realized we were trapped in mushroom land and I started to flip out on the plush, multi-colored area rug. I lay there with my head in his cross-legged lap, convinced God was killing me one minute and that he was French-kissing me the next. Matt gently stroked my hair, reassuring me that Jesus was on my side. I can't explain the rest, but the next day he laughed and asked, "Are you cheatin' on me with God, Beautiful?"

I haven't heard from Matt for a while, but I don't think he's dead. If he were, I would certainly have heard about it by now, both of us being from "God's country," population four thousand, and all. Instead, he is probably working some nine-to-five, using those over-sized hands and swollen knuckles to manipulate iron or dig holes or hammer nails into roofs. But who knows, he might've landed his dream job as a State Park tour guide, or he may have found a way to make money spelunking. If I had to guess, he's probably drinking Budweiser from a dark, glass bottle right now, sitting on a sofa somewhere and staring at a television.

If Matt were a season he would be summer, and if he were a time of the day he would be noon. If he were a country he'd be the good ole' U.S. of A. and if he were an animal he'd be a little dog with sharp teeth. But Matt isn't any of these things. He's just another poor kid from the sticks who, when smoking his Marlboros, lets the smoke fill his mouth and then drift out of his lips in a little grey tuft before sucking it in audibly. The last time I talked to him he was on a cell phone in the back seat of a car, being driven around the back roads by his two drunken friends and rambling incoherently about sin and Socrates. Those friends didn't know that he sketched a pretty decent picture of a rose once, in pencil, but I have it framed and propped against my bookshelf.

---

A Porch Night  
Chris Smith

It wasn't the stigmata  
or even close to it—  
I butted out my Marlboros  
on my wrists and when  
the burns blistered into scabs  
I ripped them off, and it  
felt like I was important—  
at least for awhile  
until my jeans stone washed  
stained rusted like  
the nails, but it wasn't  
my wrists nailed through,  
it was my chest pounded  
into the porch rail  
by the blunt moonlight—  
an aqua shaded aura  
as if a child had  
colored me transparent

---

with my arms outstretched,  
legs crossed at the ankles,  
eyes shut in simplicity,  
feeling whatever there was  
to absorb—oozing  
the whatever, hovering  
above the Chinese lanterns  
floating in the background  
of a watercolor dream.

---

barriers of experience

Dianne Hardin

i want to have  
the dark half-circles under your eyes  
the reddened whiteness and swollen eyelids  
with wet streaks tracing invisible bruises  
down your cheeks, through your chest.  
without the marks i cannot see your pain.  
and if you are unable to tell me, i cannot listen.

i want to feel  
the aches you can't describe  
fragments of your beauty lost to prejudice  
the words that pierce your gut and leave you drained—  
shit and blood stain the floor and  
it is what is gone that helped you live.



---

i want to suffer  
feel despair so intense  
that i no longer want to live.  
for your every thought is a virus  
racing through your mind to snap bones of joy,  
slash the skin of happy memories,  
and rip out the heart of the meaning of your life.  
it all reeks of a death without chance of resurrection.  
i must enter your quarantined skull.

so i can tell you i know what it's like  
and speak your language of experience.  
so you will shatter your stone lips and  
and i can hear you through battered ears.

---

## Rage

Sarah Murrell

Arms crossed, smoldering in a corner--  
as the linoleum curls away from me like a disgusted tide,  
as the paint peels into tight ringlets, running backwards  
in an explosion pattern on the wall behind.

My delicate cardigans on the hooks singe and smoke  
their delicate fibers merge above my head.

Heat rises from my cheeks and hard-flexed shoulders  
and melts the ceiling tiles.

They drip on my arms, face.

You won't hear me object or wail,  
but you will feel my rage, my white-flame misery  
on your tidy face, the char upon your noble cheek.



Buzzards in a Tree  
Michelle Skinner

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## The Writing Scar

### Alix Clinkingbeard

When summer drifts in again, another hot and sickeningly sticky Kentucky bourbon summer, it will have been four years. I'm never sure how much numbers matter. I know good writing benefits from specifics, so I try to use specifics, but in the swift current of everything it's hard to find perspective on four years. It's a long time for my generation. Four years at my age will have put me all the way through college, an entire phase of life, walking out on the other end with a bachelor's degree in hand. Four years at age 80 might be no more than a glimmer. Four years at 40-something might be just another four years, but not if every moment is another agonizing moment without your son. Four years makes me check the calendar – it can't have been so long, it doesn't seem so long. There was so much I wanted to do...surely I haven't wasted this much time? It's been three years, four months, two weeks, and four days.

Every year, month, week, day, is another I've failed. I haven't written about you yet. I've tried, I've made so many attempts and starts, but I can never seem to get past first sentences. And I'm so sorry, Sam. I know you'd want me to write about you. No, not out of any selfishness or grandeur, but because you know me – you know writing makes me happy, just as writing made you happy. Like photography makes me happy as photography made you happy. Like music makes me happy as music made you happy. Like the people I love make me happy as the people you love made – well, made their peace. We've all been forced to make our peace. Sometimes all I want to do is cling white-knuckled to grief.

I should cling to a pen, but I, I who am so quick to write, find myself wordless. I thrive in fiction, whittling away at characters and settings and conversations until my own universes (and those I borrow from more capable authors) are perfect. I vent, letting loose my frustrations, in journals and forums and personal essays. I preserve memories of my childhood and of adventures from last weekend by setting them down in either ink or

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pixels and bytes. I come back to topics again and again, rewording the same stories and finding new nuances in the events that mean the most to me. But what about you, Sam? If anything in my life has meaning, you do. You mean more than sand, more than clouds, more than moss growing on the north side of granite. You even mean more than the alcohol, more than the fixation on rivers and Jack Daniels. Yet with you my words come out clumsy and stumbled, the m's tripping over the tails of y's. I slam into three new clichés for every one I manage to swerve around and can never seem to pick myself up again. The collection of flawed first paragraphs about you is as scattered as the sentences that make them, but put together they'd fill half a notebook. You halt me.

When you died, when the news reached me, I managed eight words.

16 July 2004 @ 12:12

the world is a really fucked up place.

Mood: crappy

Eight hours after the eight words, I managed something else. Something no one else has ever seen, an online journal entry set to private.

16 July 2004 @ 08:19 pm

[protected post]

It's weird cuz there's no one to talk to and I don't really feel like talking to anyone, but I also really do and I think I really need to. But I don't feel like



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calling people up and talking to them because, I don't know, I feel like it would be melodramatic and it's not my place to be this upset. That should be left to other people. I'm just a bystander.

Mood: indescribable

Already I was speechless when it came to you, silent and unsure. Already out of place with so much to say and no place to say it. No place to even write it. I was uncomfortable with everything then, Sam. The other people, the better friends, were already writing eulogies and tributes, and I was locked in my bathroom afraid to let anyone see me cry.

Two days later I was trying to figure out the logistics of traditional mourning black at high noon in the middle of Kentucky summer. There was a storm cloud on the steps of the Baptist Church, hundreds of bodies in dark colors crowding in rough lines, waiting. Your family needed a break. We waited. It seemed like everyone spoke in rehearsal, the same stoic pre-planned lines, the monotony of the bereft. The shade of the atrium offered little relief, only discomfort. That's where they all were, Sam, the guys. Your best friends and some of mine, some band mates I knew vaguely, and my boys, Cullen and Duncan. They cried – my rocks, the boys who got me through so much, my best friend and my savior – they cried. And what was I to say? They knew you intimately and I... friends, yes, I would say you and I were friends, but not like that. I was out of my jurisdiction, once again wanting to hide, and the casket I could see shrined at the front of the sanctuary held not you but a corpse. The last time I saw you, Sam, you were playing a guitar and happy.

We got ice cream afterwards, Blizzards at Dairy Queen, we just had to. Blizzards make everything better. We bought you one, M&M, and ceremonially poured it out on the fresh blacktop. I opted for an empty comment over the gesture because really, what could I say? Later that night I tried again, but I had to borrow my words.

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18 July 2004 @ 11:06 pm

It's not enough to ignore it  
so I floor it  
get away  
for today

Spent the evening over in Indiana sitting at the falls and thinking and letting myself cry out and dry out.

Quote of the day comes from Fitz "It's amazing how many lives have been touched in 18 years"

That was the last of it for months. No more livejournal entries, no blotchy pages written in sharpie in my Curious George journal, not even a scribble in the margin of a notebook page.

I left on my collegiate adventure that fall, along with hundreds of other 2004 graduates of duPont Manual, the Magnet High School. I thought about you then, thought about how you would have been getting your education at Bellarmine University, wondered if you'd already been registered for classes and if your parents had already paid some money. Several times that year my pen touched to paper in fruitless attempts to get to you, but soon summer carried me home again without so much as one well worded sentiment. A year had passed me by and I had created novels worth of new writing. Your name was too fragile to pass the tip of pen or lips.

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They had a concert for you about a month after you died. It was the weekend before I left for college. I remember being bitter because some people came just for the free music and not for you and Jenny. But I guess that wouldn't have mattered to you. It was always about music anyway. My Olympus camera cradled perfectly in my palm, like always. I saw you so often through the eye of that lens, framed in by black borders and crystallized by the focus ring. I hoped for a ghost on that night when I turned my SLR eye to the stage. I wanted to see you once more. I never said goodbye because, like so many others, I never imagined I'd have to. I drove home with the windows cranked down and the stereo cranked up, your voice ringing in muted echo from my botched speakers. "Is innocence over?" And again, driving through the park at night, wind muffling every sound. "An onslaught of lights and twisted metal. The last thing they saw was their hearts in their eyes." I remember that one tear got swept back to my ear as I took a turn. "The end is happy. The end is sad. The end is an ending, can it be all that bad?"

The summer that followed freshman year I was unpacking and the photographs from that memorial show surfaced. They were as I'd left them, cut and cropped and pasted with rubber cement to white cardstock pages. Nothing was connected but they lay stacked in order with red suede covers on either end, waiting for the day when I found the motivation to bind them all together. Only one page had text, the first, bearing a dust speckled photograph of you holding a rubber duck. You remember, from photography class. I keep a small version of it in my wallet, behind my driver's license. A generic dedication in generic font. I wanted to add ghostly text on vellum between each page of photographs, and then I could finally bind it all together. The stack of silent pages still hides under my bed.

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Time passed, as I've learned it does. Another summer. I had big plans and even bigger dreams and still certain things dragged at my ankles. One night I drove away from home and found myself on the waterfront, shivering in the chill of the evening and clutching a notebook in my hand. I was delirious. I remember writing about how much I wanted a taco right then. I remember staring at the water, the Ohio River

moving sluggish and brown between its banks. I wondered to myself how cold it was, how fast the current was, what it would feel like to be dragged under and if anyone would jump. It wasn't desire, you understand, just curiosity. I cried, I know that, and I came home having written circles around you and nothing about you. I made a list of seven things on my mind that night when I was warm in bed. You were number five.

25 June 2006 @ 11:43 pm

5) I feel guilty about my grief. I will probably never come to terms with how much I cry over the loss of someone I wasn't even that good of friends with. I will never feel like I'm allowed to be this upset.

Mood: blank

When I stood at the counter of In Cognito Ink in Pasadena second thoughts still clouded me. The artist found, the appointment made, the price agreed upon, and Mojo needed to see my ID. You were there, you and that rubber duck, smiling up at me from my wallet. It was all right after that. It was zen.



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15 August 2006 @ 06:05 pm

Tattoo is awesome and I love it. It's beautiful and meaningful and honestly, I feel some immense sense of comfort and... closure. Not closure on Sam being gone but closure on my whole inability to deal with it, and the uncomfortableness I've always felt about my grief.

I had to use your words, Never Stop, because I couldn't use my own. Somehow you managed to say in two words, two words now forever etched under my skin, more than I've managed to find the strength for in almost four years. But then, you always were the poet.

I wonder if I'll ever manage it. And I wonder if maybe I already have. Maybe this is it, Sam, maybe this is all I've got. Writing comes so easily and yet with you it's the toughest battle, with no end in sight. Maybe all I have to give is that I can't find the words.





Typeset

Alix Clinkingbeard

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**Melucine in Monochrome**  
**Jessica Hanson**

Sometimes she is gray  
Tall  
Expansive  
Room to see all  
Room to breathe  
And room to stop feeling

Room to die  
Moment to moment  
Without fear

Sometimes she is black  
And full  
Stuffed  
Room only for kicking  
Screaming  
Punching  
Ripping

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In this state,  
Her only desire is reaction  
She closes off  
Blinds  
Gags love and compassion.

She is subtle.  
Wrapped in a simple package.  
Quietly  
Patiently  
Waiting.

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A Dream Dressed in Steam  
Beth Fontanarosa

When she's miserable  
she sings show tunes in the shower.  
Turns the faucet all the way to the left and  
the steam creates company, crowding  
the room.  
She can finally disregard her loneliness.  
She forgets her thoughts of him for awhile,  
washing them away.

She stands on the scrubbed marble tub.  
She plugs her ears  
and leaning her head back  
shuts off the world.

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The water rages down  
like hard rain on a wide windshield.  
The noise is echoing.  
In this moment she is numb.  
She wants the return of sensation,  
but can't even feel  
the scalding water.  
She only feels her stomach  
pulsating with anger  
for pulling over  
in that church parking lot,  
full of snow banks and Trojan wrappers.  
Angry for giving in  
as his pupils dilated,  
and sucked her in like a black hole.  
Ironical that when he smacked her  
she saw stars.

She scrubs her skin in circles with  
sweet Ivory soap--  
until her delicate skin  
bleeds red.



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**Requiting at Midnight**  
**Spencer Isdahl**

Jump and sparkle with your  
star-speckled eyes in the night;  
they are precious gems, uncut and raw,  
perfected in this natural state.  
Your sight unfettered and festive,  
we'll dance and pray and say to each other  
that all we have is need, all we need is here.

This message, all bottled up, adrift,  
spilling onto me, washing away  
split ends and sickly urchins which  
gather in pools of effervescing  
memories of being together forever.

What could have run through your mind  
when you waded into the ocean, chasing  
the reflection of the midnight moon?  
In the middle of that wavy white circle,  
you looked back at me, waiting on the beach.  
You were so cold, all alone on the moon,  
a thousand miles away, close enough to touch.

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I awoke from this dream, and you followed,  
a patch of thoughts, my living reverie,  
dancing through my fingertips  
like an ephemeral tongue of flame  
And now we drift lazily in the sky,  
a small patch of vapor in an arc of  
blue aether going to the far end of time.

Will you follow me there  
or remember the remnant we left behind  
and continue to search too close to home?  
Crystalize around me like rock candy,  
sweet and steady, all sugar and stickiness.  
Stick to me, will you?

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BB

Josh Kaminski

The dagwood maples shuddered in  
the breath-seeing morning cool,  
their leaves blood-black  
and their supple trunks taut.

Sand-pipers cut a jagged calligraphy  
above, their daggered voices sweet  
in their ground-nests' reprieve  
from the tractor's chipped dull blades.

I stood  
thwocking 2-liter bottles at twenty  
paces, replacing the labels with faces  
I hated.

Whatever it took to put  
copper pellet through vibrant eye  
and pulsing brain, I didn't have.

Earlier, my father had sat,  
ass in squeaky porch chair, same gun across lap,  
picture of a seat stolen  
from a hillbilly rollercoaster.

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His mustached grin shone brighter  
than the scarlet dawn-lasers that lanced  
down over the house's eaves, as his one good eye  
scanned for ground squirrels.

They were industrious  
yogis, burrowing a secret monastery  
out into the yard and deep under the porch,  
like Texas hounds fleeing heat.

I remember staring at my father, thinking:  
it is so odd what we find  
to keep us young.

Today, he will shoot our rodent Gandhi  
cleanly – flies will land  
on the squirrel's whiskered nose, eking out  
a residual twitch.

My father will swallow his chorus  
of almos'ts, next-times, and dammits –  
poking his quarry with the gun's  
crooked sight, he will become  
a little smaller,  
a little greyer,  
a little slower.



Beauty and the Beast  
Alix Clinkingbeard



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Wildflowers

Joanna Parypinski

She has shiny, straw-colored hair  
and a sun-kissed smile  
as she picks wildflowers—

Prairie grass shudders  
in tender, gusting air;  
waves like ocean currents

Rustle the tide of brown  
and sweep a sea of freckles  
bold on visage fair;

Her dress is white, lacking guile  
of old age—her pure  
and wide-eyed, wondering gaze

Looks on the field;  
the flowers span a mile,  
and petals fall like ballerinas—

The years will come, but now  
she has shiny, straw-colored hair  
and a sun-kissed smile.

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Ocean Eyes  
Sarah Murrell

All the continents were once an island, she says.  
One giant island all touching and pushing,  
the volcanoes scalding the plains,  
the mountains pricking the delicate wetlands.  
The arctic tears rained on tanned cheeks of the southern trees.  
The oceans stirred and grasped at the island's feet  
and as it danced and kicked it away, its guts rattled, cracks formed.  
The earth hugged itself together as tight as it could  
for one fleeting moment, everything squashed into a hot, wet chaos.  
When it could no longer fight the roar of the sea,  
it let go a moaning sigh, savoring the remaining moments  
of evanescent unity, and broke into seven mournful pieces.  
Each extended an arm of broken islands, desperate to hang on,  
trying to wave a ponderous goodbye as  
they floated away from one another.



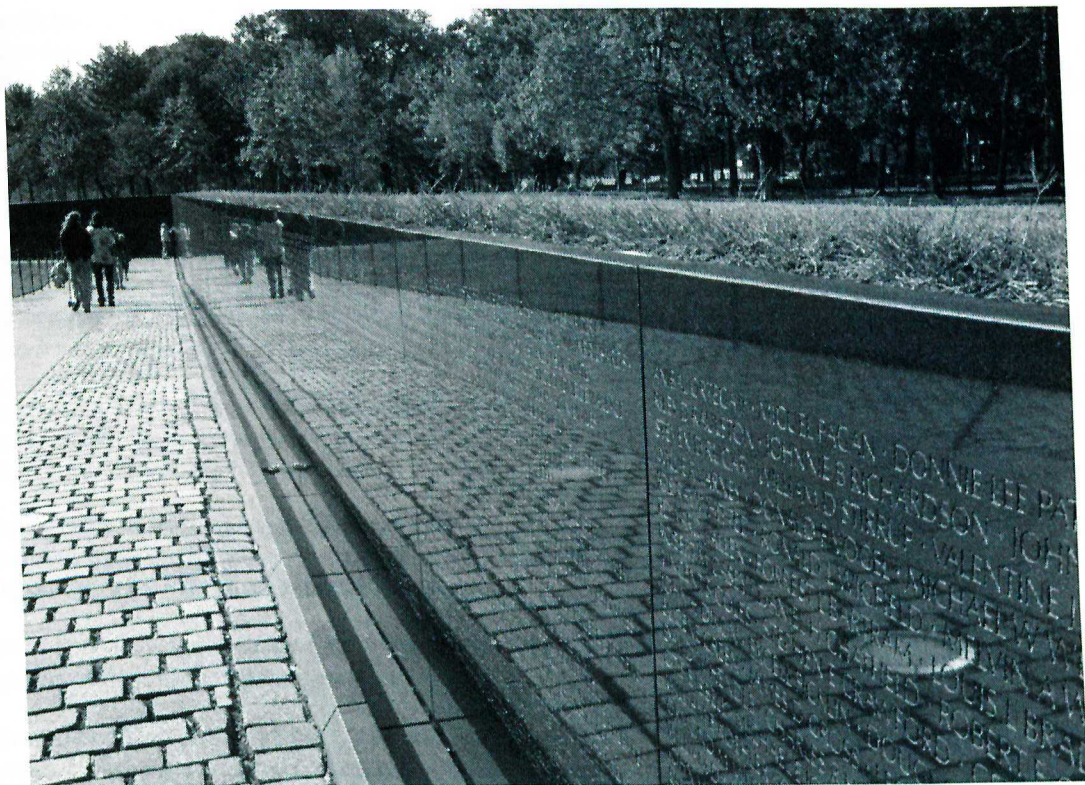
A Sense of Sahara  
Beth Fontanarosa

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The Parade of Men  
Melody Landis

We are the parade of men, soft scents, decent looks and sheepish hearts.  
We fill the souls of others by the emptying of our own.  
Ours ears bleed with secrets and our mouths drip with honey.  
White are our faces, but that is not our innocence.  
There is neither time of peace nor state of war; for us, we always have strife.  
What life have we here? What dust is this?  
Passing, silence.





**Vietnam Memorial Reflection II**  
**Laura Hazelton**



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# Manuscripts Staff

2007-2008

## Editor

Karen Witting

## Co-Editor

Christina Lear

## Staff

Maria Cook

Kelly Fritz

Meagan Hinze

Spencer Isdahl

Joanna Parypinski

Kelsey Truman

Joe Wadlington

## Faculty Advisor

Susan Neville

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**Karen Witting** is a senior Creative Writing major and Theatre minor. She has traversed the Indy theatre scene as a costume designer, working at IRT, The Phoenix Theatre, The Indy Opera, The Asante Children's Theatre, and of course Butler Theatre. Next year, she will be working at Beef n Boards Dinner Theatre and trying to do some freelance writing.

**Christina Lear** sends too many emails because of her Butler username: clear. She mostly sends informative messages on behalf of BUSF and yearbook but she also likes using email to harass people into submitting to Manuscripts. Christina is a sophomore studying English, Spanish and Gender Studies and is taking it abroad to Spain next fall semester.

**Maria Cook** is a sophomore who enjoys ballroom dance and fine cuisine.

**Kelly Fritz** is a junior English and Political Science major. Besides Manuscripts, she is involved with Peers Advocating Wellness for Students (PAWS) and can often be found playing Frisbee around campus.

**Meagan Hinze** is a Chemistry and German double major who enjoys convincing people that her majors, in fact, do make sense together. She is a crazy tree-hugger and borderline hippie and not afraid to admit it. You may also find her in her second home of the kitchen, forcing yummy baked goods on people.

**Spencer Isdahl** is a freshman English/Creative Writing major from Louisville, Kentucky. He enjoys exploring the Amazon, researching quantum physics, and writing fictitious staff bios in his spare time. When he's not spreading lies, he's generally telling the truth, which is sometimes even worse.

**Joanna Parypinski** is a freshman English/Creative Writing and Spanish double major. She is a self-proclaimed overachiever and spends her free time writing, reading, playing the cello, and listening to rock music.

**Kelsey Truman** probably hates you, but it's pretty easy to turn around. She enjoys destruction, peanut butter, and phat rhymes, and will one day join an all-female roller derby.

**Joe Wadlington** is a Creative Writing major (and Art minor) from Morristown, Tennessee. He enjoys writing, eating things covered in cheese & bacon, and being southern. Iguanas really freak him out and he wishes we could all just get along.

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## Updates

It is a new tradition that Manuscripts updates readers on past contributors. Being published in a literary magazine is often a stepping stone to future creative pursuits.

To the Editors, I see that you now have a section in your magazine updating the work of former contributors to MSS. I am a former contributor and want to inform you of my new book *Racing in Place* and my book of collected stories, *Double-Wide*. Also I gave a reading at Butler in the Fall. Thanks for the great mag.

Michael Martone

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# Manuscripts

## Call for Submissions

Manuscripts will begin accepting submissions for the 2009 issue on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. We invite all students of Butler University to submit their best prose, poetry, photography, and artwork.

All submissions must be e-mailed as Microsoft Word documents or JPEG files to [butler.manuscripts@gmail.com](mailto:butler.manuscripts@gmail.com). Each submission must be sent as an individual attachment. To ensure quality printing, photos should be high resolution—at least 400 px/in. Please include your contact information in the body of the e-mail.

For more information on submitting to Manuscripts, visit our website at [www.BUmanuscripts.com](http://www.BUmanuscripts.com). If you have any specific questions, feel free to contact us at [manuscripts@butler.edu](mailto:manuscripts@butler.edu) or by phone at 317.940.6344. We are always happy to hear from you.

We look forward to reading your work!

Best,  
The Manuscripts Staff