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T•Y•G•R

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The Literary Magazine of
Olivet Nazarene University
1993

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William Blake

The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the Forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

On what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

From the Editor:

Aside from death, life is the single most meaningful thing that will ever happen to you. But the meaning isn't in bold print. Life doesn't come with Cliffnotes; you have to dig the meaning out.

Writers and artists are the diggers, the archaeologists of life's meaning. Writers suck the truth out of life, distill it and pour it, undiluted, on the page. They present their moments of truth unapologetically. That is what good writing is -- truth stamped black on white, bare and without excuses.

Writing is not for the frail or timid soul, but only for the truly courageous. For to write and do it well is to grab onto a wild truth with both hands and wrestle it to the page.

Here are Olivet's writers. Enjoy them.

Stephanie Burggraf

Bobette Bouton

To My Ideal Reader

To my ideal reader:

Please do not stifle my creativity by criticizing me harshly. If you dislike, disapprove, or debate, please reply gently. My writing is me. When you brutally criticize my writing, you are doing the same to me. If you are my ideal reader, you will criticize me, but softly.

Please tell me why you enjoy something that I have written. Tell me if you could picture yourself in the place of my character or if it brought back a pleasant memory of your youth. If you are my ideal reader, you will let me know when I have satisfied your heart.

Please listen to me. Do not judge too quickly. Listen to all I have to write about; then make your decision on my writing. If you do not understand, do not judge falsely, but ask me questions. Let me make you understand.

Please give me your ideas. Help me improve. Let me inside your mind and let me wander around a bit. Be open with me; do not close yourself off. If you are my ideal reader, you will allow me your inner thoughts.

Please pick me up if I fall. Dust me off a bit and help me back on the proverbial saddle. Then sit back and allow me to fall again. I will make mistakes in my writing, but allow me these mistakes, for this is the only way I can grow. This is the only way my writing can be something you enjoy.

Please do not forget about me. Do not simply insert my thoughts into one of many book shelves that line your walls. Keep me close for times of reference. You might need my words someday, but they will have already rotted away unless you know where to locate them.

My ideal reader, where are you?

Rosie Lundmark

Beginnings

My French grandmother, "Maman," handed it to me in a bright green case with a striking black zipper and handle, brand new! Then, we sat at the oval diningroom table for our first lesson. But the dark, shiny wooden surface stretched endlessly before me as she attempted, in gentle, halting English, to teach me where to place my fingers and how to blow.

Now, twelve years later, the orange-brown stain is chipped around the mouthpiece and scattered nicks mar its varnished smoothness. The gold has nearly disappeared from its indented letters above the finger-holes. Although tired, a cedar plug in the mouthpiece still retains its fragrance.

It holds no ear-splitting, summer thunderstorms in my memory, but only sweet, springtime songbirds . . . beginnings. I started learning twice. The first time, I quit because of my restless impatience, then again at eighteen, because I was lazy . . . and I've procrastinated until now.

How Maman's cheeks will glow! How her eyes will sparkle when she hears that I've finally mastered that recorder. My music will say, "To Maman, with love from Rosie."

The Rocking Chair

The chair rocks alone
filled only by a presence,
No longer physically moved.
Only memories caress the handles.
the other furniture has
 been divided, sold, and burned,
The rocker stands alone.
Children were nursed
Problems discussed,
Now it stands alone.
The tears shed over loved ones lost.
Those held in these loving
 arms now cry on their own.
For the rocking chair
 stands alone.
Breezes come in from hidden drafts.
Windows all boarded up.
Warped wood where
 old hands rested,
Now lonely, the chair stands.

A Ray of Hope

The old storefront sagged away from the street as if tired of having to hold itself erect like the other buildings on the block. "Ray's Resale," the faded sign proclaimed, hanging crookedly from the top of the dark doorway. I was just following the rivers of cracks in the warped sidewalk, scraping and scuffing my shoes along the curb because I was in no hurry to get anywhere. I thought maybe I'd walk until the sidewalk wound down to nothing but a garbage-strewn blind alley then I'd sit quietly and think and cry with the tomcats and the trashcans. This was my plan until I noticed the rundown little shop. I was intrigued with Ray's Resale. I wondered why Ray didn't fix up his sign or at least sweep his doorstep. I wandered in, noting my disheveled appearance in the streaked glass window. Dull eyes stared back at me, red rimmed and dry. My poor eyes, they were so tired of crying. Every time I thought I wouldn't be able to squeeze another tear out of my burning sockets, somehow they managed to wring out a few more. I wished my mouth could remember how to smile, I didn't want to scare Ray, whoever he was. I tried to practice one in the window, but it looked weak and shaky, so I decided to wait until something could make me smile for real.

I pushed the door open and set the brass bell that hung at the top into tinkling giggles. The shop was little more than a long narrow room. The end was so far back that the air in between was murky and dense. Shelves arched to the ceiling, each one cluttered and full. I eyed them uneasily for they bowed under the weight they carried and leaned away from the wall as if eager to release themselves of their full burden and dump their contents unceremoniously at my feet. Rows of

stained and dusty glass counters formed thin aisleways that were barely wide enough to walk through. The glass counters held dozens of curious objects. The only thing they all had in common was a thin layer of dust. One counter held trays of rhinestone jewelry sets in every color with the tarnished settings of real antiques. Another held porcelain figurines and mismatched sets of Depression glassware that glowed softly pink and green in the dim light of the store. Bins full of old comic books congested the cramped aisleways even more. I was beginning to feel a little like Alice in a haphazard, pawn store Wonderland.

As I waded further into the chaotic disorder, books seemed to predominate. They ranged from ancient leather bound volumes where the gold leaf had peeled away in dulling gleaming spirals to the last year's best selling paperbacks with their front covers torn off. I flipped through a few of them idly, but none of them said what I wanted to hear. I wished to read in some volume that this hole inside me would close up. Somehow, I didn't think that book had been written yet.

A dull silver gleam teased me from the corner of my eye and I turned to look. An old silver serving tray stood by itself on a three-legged endtable, with a menagerie of pewter animals spilling across its surface. There were crystal-clutching dragons with beady red eyes, tiny puppies chewing pewter bones and carousel horses with jewel-encrusted saddles. They were all lovely and I studied each one, marveling over the intricate details. Finally I came to the last little figure on the tray. It was a small pewter stallion that stood on the outermost edge as if too proud to be associated with the rest. He stood in a defiant stance, apparently leaning into the wind, for his small tail had been whipped into a silver cloud, and the muscles in his neck stood out in sharp relief. He was not a slender nervous thoroughbred. He was a wild mustang with short legs and a barrel chest. His head was small and savage with coils of gray pewter mane whirling around his alert,

upright ears. He was beautiful and he was proud but most of all he was free. I was still in the grips of depression, but he was liberated. His round gray eyes looked at me wisely and said maybe I could be free too. I held his strong little body tightly in my hand until it was warm and smooth. I wanted him for my own.

I started for the long warped wooden bar on which an adding machine stood next to a dirty white pad of paper and a worn down pencil nub. I gently tapped the small bell that wore a sign Scotchtaped to its swelling chest that declared, "Ring Bell for Assistance." A door from behind the counter creaked open and a tiny old man appeared. He shuffled forward, an ancient gnome with a wrinkled roadmap face. I understood now why the place was so dusty and the sign so old. Peering through half-moon glasses he opened his mouth to speak and I almost expected a puff of dust to come from between his thin dry lips. "Can I help you, Miss?"

"Yes, I would like to buy this." I held the little horse out to him, surprised at how reluctant I was to release it. He turned it over carefully and examined some minute writing on its belly. Then, muttering to himself, he pulled an old torn catalog out from under the counter and flipped through the pages. "Don't have a price tag on that one, gotta look it up," me mumbled. Finally, satisfied at what he had read, he put the book away.

"That's a collection piece, Miss. He's a part of a whole herd that's made by Franklin Miniatures up in New York state."

"Well, how much?" I really didn't care about the horse figure's history. A desperate note was creeping into my voice.

"Oh, that one's about twelve dollars, but you seem like a real nice girl, so I'll give it to you for ten." He smiled and scrutinized me from behind his Granny glasses. The price seemed way too high to me, but I pulled a wrinkled ten dollar bill from my jeans anyway and laid it on the counter. He took

the money and tucked it away somewhere in the long faded cardigan he wore. Then he wrapped the stallion in a little piece of white tissue and dropped him into a paper bag. He handed it to me and half-turned to go back into the dark hole he seemed to have materialized out of, but at the last moment, turned to face me again.

"He's got a name, you know. The whole series is supposed to have been done by some sort of inspirational artist. Each horse is named for some quality or emotion." I listened politely and wondered if he would ever get to the point. He seemed pleased to have my attention and slowly wiped his glasses on the ragged hem of the tattered cardigan. He carefully put them back on and looked at me steadily with his watery, pale blue eyes. "That one's called Hope. I just wanted to tell you 'cause you looked like maybe you needed some." He beamed at me and left, closing the door softly behind him. I caught my expression in a grimy mirror with a lacy frame that was hung behind the counter. I was smiling.

Stephanie Burggraf

Father

The rolling hills
Once rugged, youthful, mountain steeps,
Now, gentled by time
Into soft swells of land.

The moonlit night.
A mysterious background
Against which his daughters shine
Like stars
Tiny, twinkling lights
Born of dust and vapor from
His great depths.

The new air of a balmy spring morning
A lungful of fresh insights
Borne on soft breezes

The rustling colors of a mellow autumn evening
Whispering encouragement
Bolstering the will for winter.

He is the deep tide and strong waves
Who move mystically by the push of a
Heavenly power.

The Mystery of Creation

I distinctly hear the crispness of falling leaves as I slowly walk along the path. Grief invades my life like night that darkens the day. The sun's golden rays no longer flash over the sea, neither do my dreams flash over my daily routine. I utter a prayer to lift me up to heaven like the leaves, picked up by the wind that swirls them in a happy dance. I have dreams to find a refuge, a shelter, to run and hide from death, a plowman who sows seeds of grief and sorrow.

I rise high up. I am filled with the sun which gently pours its light on turbulent sea. Over the monstrous, roaring sea, I cry out to heaven in helpless despair. I roar in the air like leaves, gold and scarlet, that a minute later will land on chilly ground. I know I'll fall too. I'll fall a victim to grief, a notorious reaper of souls that shuts my eyes on dreams and hope. My shipwrecked dreams, like raindrops, fall and drown in the sea. I cry out a prayer for the soul that grieves for gentle love and tenderness of heaven, for a gentle touch of comfort like that of falling leaves that hardly touch the ground.

I pray for the sun to pour its light, so a grief, a cowardice, flees, as the sun thrusts its yellow light mercilessly exposing everything low, malicious and ugly. Arrow-like rays of the sun taper off, leading into heaven -- the wonderland of dreams, mysterious and unknown, the reigning place of rustling leaves, shimmering sands and glimmering sea.

Angie's Letter

Trembling fingers,
eager with anticipation,
struggle with the sealed envelope.

Finally, it opens
and I read quickly -
as if I am afraid
the words will disappear
upon exposure to light.

After reading once,
I begin again . . .
slowly

 this

 time

 digesting each word individually.

I want to crawl between the words,
pull the pages over my head
and snuggle in their warmth.

As I read it one more time,
I picture you in my mind.
The preserved memories of your
hair,
eyes and
touch
caress my mind,
causing the corners of my mouth to twitch . . .
 forming a smile.

Prayer Meetin'

It was Sunday mornin' and the bells were a tollin', callin' us all into the little country church, for it was prayer meetin' time. It was hotter'n a pistol that sunny mornin' as we all came together in our Sunday best. Granny Grunt and them other saints of our little church had already taken their customary places on the second pew from the front, just a little left of middle. My family and me, we put ourselves toward the back, (we liked to beat the Methodists to the cafeteria) but just close enough so's ta still be respectable. With a swing of his arm, The Reverend brought us to our feet; prayer meetin' was ready and rearin' to go.

We was sweatin' like pigs standin' there, packed in our pews like sardines, as we sang them great old anthems of the church. We had the offerin', (Mildred Smith played Amazin' Grace on the Hammond, like usual) and sat back down and prepared ourselves for the trial ahead: the sermon.

It wasn't much different from any other sermon. The Reverend covered all the bases, how the God of all grace fills us with the peace that passeth all understanding as he leadeth us through the valley of the shadow of death, for in the time of trouble he shall make your paths straight . . .

Us young 'uns had a terr'ble time tryin' to sit still that long. I was havin' a good day, sittin' quiet as a mouse like a good kid, bein' seen but not heard. I woulda been fine had I not caught sight of Lila. Lila, Lila, the apple of my eye, sittin' cute as a button by her mama just one row across from me. Just the sight a her gave me the shivers. I remembered how jus' the day before I had walked her home from the swimmin' hole, her arms white as snow and her lips red as a rose. I was proud as

punch when she asked me to be her "escort," whatever that is. I was feelin' free as a bird and strong as a bull as I delivered her to her doorstep. She was such a purty little number, standin' there on the porch wavin' me goodbye. As I was sittin' there in my pew I could see her there again. My sister, she's 'bout the same age as Lila and she's flat as a fritter, but that Lila, she had curves, real curves, like a woman . . .

I gotta confess that right then my thoughts weren't bein' none of the purest kind, and Granny Grunt, she's always been a little holier than thou, found me out. She was a hefty woman, big as a whale. She put herself meek and humble, but I had heard her call the pastor hot to trot, so I knew she was a'lyin' like a rug. Anyway, she turned around from her place second row a little left of middle and gave me a look cold as ice and hard as rock. That glare of death brought my attention back to The Reverend, who was just gettin' to my least favorite part of the sermon: the hellfire and brimstone. As he heaped the ashes on my head, visions of the devel leadin' me off to Hades' gates filled my pore little mind, and I was sore afraid. When The Reverend gave the altar call and Granny Grunt gazed right through me, I pulled my way to the front and laid my evil notions on the altar. "Please Lord, don't a let me burn in eternal damnation! I promise never to look at Lila again, promise!"

After what seemed like hours a'pleaden', I rose from my place and returned to my spot in the pew unchanged but fer the pain in my knees. Granny Grunt had a look a' satisfaction on her face, as if her angelic person had set another sinner free. Little did she know that I could read her clear as glass. I maybe ain't no genius, but I could tell a fake when I seen it. When I left that little church, I didn't never look back. I kep' my promise to God, and I never did look at Lila again, but neither did I go back to that little country church, and I been sleepin' like a baby ever since.

Untitled

In untold darkness I now abide
Under guiltened sorrow's wings I hide
In rage and helplessness I've cried
My crimson hands, my knife, my bride.

Erosion

Turquoise waves clawing
licking the edge of the earth
eating away time.

Silence

How many times can a man walk through the waste of the world without screaming? How many times can he watch death breed with our children and not weep? Shall we lie down in our pool of despair while the nothingness begins to choke our spirit? Our own great disgust and contempt for this vile beast has now weakened our emotions to the point where apathy has attacked our system and become victorious. Our heart begins to slow down, our mind wanders, and we come to the place where we are aimlessly content to be stagnant, inert -- unable to gather the strength, courage, and desire to thrust forward to the birth of another sun. The answer is sobering. It is not the fault of centuries and centuries of growing degradation. Our ancestors are guilty, but not for our sins -- for each generation has the capacity and opportunity to cleanse and purify the world they were given. They must choose to topple down the walls of selfishness, laziness and man-made ignorance that each man confronts. They must reach beyond themselves to a force that empowers the wisdom and understanding that has eluded man from conception. They must face their creator. They must bow at his feet.

Wealthy Love

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we will soon be landing. Please fasten your seatbelts and bring your seats to an upright position. The current temperature at the airport is 78 F (25 C). We at Mexicana Airlines thank you for flying with us and hope you have enjoyed your flight."

As soon as the announcer finished speaking, I looked at several of my teammates. Their faces seemed to ask the question I felt: Are we ready for this? We had been preparing for months by saving money, practicing clown and puppet routines, memorizing Spanish choruses and collecting used clothing. Finally we had boarded the airplane from Miami to Mexico City where we would spend a week to evangelize dirty children, encourage struggling churches and serve needy people -- all in the name of Christ.

Having never been out of the United States before, I was startled by the many contrasts of this international capital. Against the backdrop of corporate headquarter highrises sat common vendors selling newspapers, magazines, and comic books. While every block boasted of either a bank or a currency exchange center, every corner presented a shoeshiner. Downtown six-lane highways carried ten lanes of traffic while rural villages five miles away were reached by narrow, dirt roads climbing through the mountains. This over-crowded city had housed four million people in discolored, cement-block shelters before the devastating earthquake of 1985. Two years later when my mission team arrived, most of the residential areas had not been rebuilt, and Mexico's economy had never recovered its losses. As a result, people built temporary roofs out of any metal sheets or wooden boards

available. Children begged on street corners; men and women sold blankets for a few pesos to tourists. My heart ached for the Mexican people, wishing I could help ease their suffering. An overloaded mule that I watched plodding uphill symbolized the burden I assumed these people carried. I was sure poverty disgraced them, for in America wealth bought pride.

We who had come from America would share our wealth with the people of Mexico. Each day my team rode a bus from our five-star hotel to a nearby village. We would help; we would give; we would love. Each afternoon we gathered neighborhood children using our finely-tailored puppets and our color-coordinated clown. We stared and smiled as Mexican Christians told the story of Christ's love and sacrifice. We thought we had much to offer these impoverished people.

We soon realized, however, these people gave more out of their poverty than we could hope to give from our affluence. The Mexican churches welcomed us in their services and even prepared delicious American-style ham sandwiches for an evening fellowship in our honor. Women of the church fed us as much as they gave their own children, and probably more; yet we did not recognize their tremendous sacrifice to accommodate us.

While the adults gave sacrificially, the children overflowed with love and generosity. One Sunday morning, for example, I had politely greeted a mother and daughter when the smiling six-year-old asked for permission to sit beside me. Neither of us spoke a word, for the love we shared could not be expressed. Maria followed me all day at the city-wide rally; we could not be separated by culture or language barriers. By greeting and listening to the children during daily Children's Crusades, I gained many more friends; but none was as dear to me as Tonya. Tonya was a thirteen-year-old girl always dressed in overly worn clothing and always carrying her toddler brother. During the final crusade meeting, Tonya

received Christ as her Saviour and overflowed with joy. She tried desperately to talk to me, but I did not understand her language. Finally, through an interpreter, Tonya asked me to stay at the church for a few minutes. I waited as she hurriedly left. Within twenty minutes Tonya returned, her face glowing. Opening her overworked hands, Tonya gave me a beautiful blue-beaded necklace. With tears in our eyes, we hugged to say goodbye. I knew she had given me her most prized possession. That pale blue necklace is my most priceless treasure. Maria and Tonya showed me love and generosity.

Too soon the week was over; my team's mission ended. We boarded a bus to our hotel as we waved and called out, "Adios, amigos," to our beloved, cross-cultural friends. Tears filled my eyes as I looked at the city. Unlike at my arrival, however, I did not pity their poverty, but I rejoiced in their wealth -- the wealth of their loving hearts. I would never be the same. I would always share a tender love with the Mexican people.

"The flight to Miami is now boarding. Please gather your belongings and take small children by the hand," an American interpreter announced.

I looked around at my teammates scrambling to find last minute souvenirs -- sombreros, ponchos, blankets, and extra pesos. I picked up my bags but reluctantly boarded the plane. I returned to America carrying my souvenir -- the debt of love as I had been loved.

Different Equals Different Only

Black, White, Yellow, Red
Wrong, different, stupid, dead

Buddhist, Catholic, Baptist, Jew
Clueless, helpless, hell-bound, you

We all sit back
Laugh, damn, whisper, attack

We are not the judge
Spit, curse, guilt and grudge

God knows every heart
Loving, kind, gentle, smart

Stop being so dumb
Hug, smile, encourage, love

You, me, he, she
All one big family

Teddy Dream

It's so lonely down here. I've been sitting in this cardboard box while small eternities have plodded by on leaden feet. Sometimes a stray sunbeam steals through the cloudy basement window and I'm entertained for a short while by the dancing dust motes that weave in and out in an intricate waltz. But mostly I sit, half crumpled in this cardboard corner where you left me so long ago, dreaming of our golden times together, hopefully praying that someday you'll come down here and pick me up, brush me off and we'll go play like we used to.

I can remember the first time your baby fist closed around my paw and your round blue eyes stared into my glassy brown ones. You were my first friend, and I was yours. We took long naps together in your softly rocking crib and played hide and seek around the frilly pillows. Your first smiles were drooly, gummy grins and sometimes you drooled on my fur and matted it a little, but I didn't care because I loved you and what was a little drool between friends?

Then you got a bit older and I was the honored guest at all your tea parties. We would share sage thoughts on the state of Barbie's hair and the sad fate of Mr. Potato Head, who had no mouth because you had lost it. I hugged you when you scraped your knees trying to ride your new two-wheeler. You would always put me in the front basket and we would explore darkest India, the jungles of the Nile and the island of Tahiti, all on Beech Street. After a wild ride through the Sahara Desert, we'd go back home and lay on the floor of the tree house your Dad built. The branches would sway and the late afternoon sun would make uneven stripes across your sun-

burned face. The wooden platform would rock oh so gently, and you would pretend we were in a hot-air balloon or maybe a spaceship, but I liked to pretend we were back in your crib, rocking and dreaming baby dreams of milk and Mothers.

And then your legs got long and you had funny silver things on your teeth. We didn't ride on the bike any more, but sometimes you would still take me with you when you went to a friend's house, although I always got squished at the very bottom of your Holly Hobbie sleeping bag. When the lights went out I'd get pulled to the top and hugged and we would reassure each other that there was no slimy, snaggle-toothed sewer dweller slipping through puddles of his own sour sweat toward our vulnerable position on the floor next to Ann-Marie. We hated Ann-Marie. She always fell asleep first and was never scared of the slasher who lurked in all the campus horror movies rented for the slumber party. I wasn't scared, though. I knew if the time came, I could protect you from the sewer monster or the slasher, because I loved you and we were friends.

And then came the years I sat on your bed with Snoopy and Winnie the Pooh. Sometimes you would remember to hug me when you came home from school, but mostly you ran right to the pink phone on your bedside and talked to people I couldn't see. It wasn't like when you were young and we would talk to Ernie and Bert and a BigBird we made up. Now you talked to ghost voices that didn't share their secrets with me. The pink phone was your new best friend.

But when the pink phone told you that the Johnny guy who had come over one afternoon and kicked me around the front room like a football, was taking Ann-Marie to Prom and not you, you came back to me. You wet my fur with your tears and my yarn mouth strained to smile as I remembered how much it felt like baby drool and my patchwork heart nearly burst with all the love I held for you. We lay on the lavender polyester daybed covered with hot-pink satin pillows and

plotted out a cruel and evil revenge for that witch Ann-Marie, and comforted ourselves with the fact that at least we had that autographed poster of Mel Gibson, even though Ann-Marie said it was fake. She was just jealous. We had always hated Ann-Marie. It felt good to be your conspirator again.

Then you went away and didn't come back for a long time. I didn't know how long it was, but it was long enough for small brown spiders to drop from the ceiling and tie your high school pendants together with silken strands. When you finally came back, you came in with a cardboard box and laid Snoopy and Winnie the Pooh in and held me up. You were wearing a pretty new gold ring and you smelled like roses. Your pink, lip-sticky mouth brushed my round furry ear as you held me close once more and whispered, "I love you, Brown Bear." Only a puff of dust squeezed out instead of what I wanted to say. You put me in the box and down in the basement and that was the last time I saw you.

Now I sit here, trying to remember every detail, trying to bring back your face because the memories fade a little more each dusty hour. But I hold on to the time we shared in the crib, rocking and drooling and dreaming.

A Lesson From the Bird

Do you see that bird outside your window? Yesterday it perched outside a dance club in Chicago. Today it sits on your ledge in Bourbonnais. Does it remember where it was yesterday? Does it matter?

Today you sit at that desk in much of the same way you did yesterday. What memories do you have of yesterdays? Does it matter?

You sit and think about your day, a hundred-and-one activities, and sixty-two anxieties. The bird looks down to the ground three stories below, waiting, watching. Soon it will be time to fly and catch the worm. But now it is time to rest. The food will come.

Do you know what rest is? You flit and flirt about from class to class grabbing worms one at a time. Sorry, no time for rest. What's next? How much time do you have before - - **STOP!**

Take a lesson from the bird. Is it still on your window? The bird is not lazy. It works to sustain itself and its five hungry young. Do you know the difference between yourself and the bird? Listen. Stop working, running, hurrying, worrying. Do you hear it? The song.

The bird sings. It has priorities. It has responsibilities. It has hunger, pain, and sore muscles. It can feel the cold and the heat. But the bird sings.

It's not easy being a bird. Life isn't easy for you either.

How do you sing? Do you sing with only your voice? Then it does not surprise me that you are stressed and exhausted continually.

Take a time-out. Rest. Whistle. Sing with your whole

being. Look for the worm, but remember to look up and see the birds.

Look out your window. The bird is gone now. But you will remember this memory today. Do you know where it will rest tomorrow? Is it searching? Is it alone? Does it matter?

Are you singing?

Plainsong

"I think it's dark and it looks like rain"

you said.

"And the wind is blowing like it's the end of the world"

you said.

"And it's so cold it's like the cold if you were dead"

and then you smiled for a second.

"I think I'm old and I'm feeling pain"

you said.

"And it's running out like it's the end of the world"

you said.

"And it's so cold it's like the cold if you were dead"

and then you smiled for a second.

Sometimes you make me feel like I'm living

at the edge of the world

at the edge of the world.

"It's just the way I smile"

you said.

Untitled

Funny
how we know when
we don't belong somewhere.
Our feet
hold our bodies in place,
but our minds take us
to where we wish to be.
Funny.

The World Around Us

... Sublimity and supernatural power of God's creation -- the sun, rising and setting at God's command; the moon, pouring its dim light on the sleeping earth; the sky, whose temper is very likely to change every minute. It can be speckless blue, but a minute later becomes gloomy and dark. It can arouse your fascination, surprise you with an enigmatic form of its clouds, slowly sailing by. It can provoke your sorrow when it cries bitterly, and heavy drops of rain, like a stream of tears, fall down, breaking your fragile world of peace and consolation.

I question myself: what went wrong? Why did sorrow outweigh joy and happiness? Why is heaven crying? Can I help? Can I do anything to restore the balance? I can distinctly hear the rain gently tapping on my window, the intimidating rolling of thunder intermingled with bright splashes of lightning. "You surely can help," whispers the sea, shining pacifically in all its glory and splendor. Its waves advance and withdraw, splashing water in my face. As the sun sets, its red glow, like the flames of fire, is reflected in deep and stormy waters.

Fire and blood. Turmoil and upheavals. Grief and sorrow. The world is crying out for love and mercy, sympathy and compassion. "Compassion," gently whispers the sea and withdraws. "Compassion," I can distinctly hear its voice echoing off the cliffs.

Paula Pitts

When I was ten, I drove my parents crazy. I was forever collecting living things like stray dogs and cats, roly-pollicies, and spiders. It was upon my imprisonment of the latter that my mom began to get antsy. She seemed to think that the best place for spiders was outside where they could rid us of pesty insects. Of course, I could not have agreed more. However, the creatures were not of the same mind; they liked our house, particularly my room. Why, with a forest on all sides, they took up residence with me I did not know. I figured they appreciated the air conditioning. In any case, I was unwilling to rent my room to the pushy tenants, but I thought death too cruel a solution. So, to remedy the situation, I put them in my mother's jelly jars.

That was the last straw for mom. Out went the spiders, and I was without a collection. That is, until my mom handed me a single jar with a tree branch inside. After peering into the jar for a moment, I concluded that my mom had lost all rational thought. Nothing moved. Nothing breathed. It was just a little branch with a few leaves on it. And then I discovered a small bundle of thread resting on one of the leaves. Mom had brought me my very own cocoon.

We had just studied caterpillars in school, and I knew that my caterpillar would soon emerge from its silken blanket as a beautiful butterfly. I waited day after day for the big event that was sure to be just around the corner. Days turned into weeks, and still I waited. I loved that butterfly. (I always thought of it as a butterfly rather than a caterpillar.) I regarded it with deep wonder and respect. It was God's creation, and it was the closest thing to a miracle I thought I should ever see.

Weeks became months, and still nothing happened. The little being still lay asleep in its bed. Fearing I somehow inhibited the metamorphosis by keeping it in the jar, I asked my mother if I should let it out. She did not know. I was perplexed. If I kept the caterpillar prisoner, its chances for survival were slim to none, but if I let it out, I would never know if it had survived.

Wanting to know its fate, I kept it in the jar. By this time the leaves were all withered and brown. I still checked to see if anything would happen, but my visits to the jar became more infrequent as my guilt increased. Finally, after a year, I opened the lid and put the branch outside. A little part of me wanted to believe it would make it now, but I knew that I had killed it. The caterpillar had not gotten a chance to grow into a butterfly because I had not let it be free.

Now when I think back, I am still saddened by the thought that thanks to my own selfishness, one less caterpillar reached its potential that year. I know it seems silly to worry over a simple butterfly's fate, but it was more than just the butterfly. It is the fact that I held onto something that was meant to be free, and because I smothered it with my own need for control, it did not develop. Always one to apply the smallest incident to the "bigger picture," I compared how I had acted as guardian of the caterpillar to how my parents have acted toward me.

Now that I have left home for college, I see how I could have shared a fate similar to that of the cocoon. I have often wondered what would have happened to me had my parents not chosen to let me "out of the jar" to experience life without their constant protection. It is through the hard times that we grow, and as hard as it was to leave the familiarity and comfort of my parents' home, I had to be free to begin to reach my own potential as an individual. I am like that caterpillar I kept in that jar, but with one important difference -- my guardians let me go.

Standing on the Rock

It is very early in the morning, the sun is just beginning to peek out above the cold Rocky Mountains. Shadows lurk in the forest below, dancing between the green patchy meadows lying within the mass of trees. The tiny birds, his children, sing praises to their great father the forest. He stretches his branches to the sky like a sleeping giant awakening. He looks about his domain to see if there is anyone or anything that needs his immediate attention. The cruel, cold world that lies on the other side of the Rocky Mountains pushes forward pebbles, rocks and boulders to come crashing down into the unsuspecting birds and animals still sleeping in their beds, nestled in the heart of the forest. His trees are there to form a barricade so that no harm will come to his children. Although he breaks some branches and takes many bruises and wounds to protect them, he never complains. He whispers happy thoughts throughout the countryside through his soft, blowing breeze. The tiny brooks that begin at the mountaintops become deep, flourishing rivers in his valley to nourish his family. The sun begins to lie down on the other side of the mountains, but in doing this it paints a beautiful, colorful picture for him as if to say "well done." The sun is gone; all that remains is the tail end of a colorful message. Another day is gone and the forest finally sleeps knowing that all is well within.

Mercurial Muse

He bursts into my history class,
Without an appointment,
Interrupting the lecture,
Disturbing my thoughts,
Pre-empting my pressing "to do's."
There is a violence in him;
Uncontainable energy.

He is an inconsistent lover,
Sweeping in and out on a whim.
But he can never leave permanently,
For he loves a lighter side of me.

He loves the
Daisy plucking
Firefly catching
Barefoot dancing
Moonlight swimming
Side of me.
He adores an
Irreverent
Impertinent
Irrepressible
Part of me
Where we meet
Without an appointment.

America's Cultural Diversity

The United States is undoubtedly the most successful, powerful nation in the world. The freedoms that Americans enjoy separate the United States from other countries of the world. Americans enjoy the freedom of religion, the freedom to say and do what they like, and even the freedom to be different. It is the ethnic diversity of the people of the United States and the freedoms that they enjoy that make this nation different from other nations of the world.

The United States is made up of a "melting pot" of ethnic groups. There are the English, European, African, Indian (both Eastern and Native), Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Oriental, Pacific Islander, and many other nationalities making up America. The United States is not an Old World nation made up of several groups that came to America to find freedom and prosperity. This cultural diversity is an advantage for the United States.

With diversity comes strength. Strength has come from the mixing of these ethnic groups and from their resolve to be free. Some people disagree with the interaction between the different ethnic groups of our country, but this is what has made America great. It is true that all American people do not live in harmony. Different ethnic groups sometimes conflict, but this only makes our country stronger and increases our resolve to be free.

Religious freedom is important in the United States. As Greeley stated, "the United States had to learn a sufficient

amount of tolerance for religious diversity, merely to survive" (19). Religious freedom allows the English to be Protestant, the Spanish to be Catholic, and the Chinese to be Buddhist. It allows our population to share some of their traditions or "roots." Religious freedom, the freedom to say and do what you like without fear of persecution, and the freedom to be different allow Americans to be strong and well-rounded.

Diverse cultures, music, food, languages, and genes have mixed and become part of America. Things seen and heard in America are present nowhere else in this world. We are unique. From "air trains connecting terminals in Dallas Airport in both Spanish and English, to African art on the walls of your local McDonald's," the United States is unique. Only in the United States could a person observe the following scene:

At the annual Lower East Side Jewish Festival yesterday, a Chinese woman ate a pizza slice in front of Ty Thuan Duc's, a Vietnamese grocery store. Beside her a Spanish-speaking family patronized a cart with two signs: "Italian Ices" and "Kosher by Rabbi Alper." And after the pastrami ran out, everybody ate knishes" (New York Times np).

Living in this type of environment will, like it or not, make a person unique, well-rounded, and worldly. This is the genetic advantage of being American.

If someone were to break this country down into subcultures and look at the different ethnic groups as different species, it would then be possible to see the advantages of our culture. Unlike the cheetah in Africa which are becoming endangered, America has a fresh gene pool. America's diversity has diminished the disease and problems that will eventually

cause the cheetah to become extinct. The United States does have its problems: gangs, cults, extremists, crime, and homelessness, to name just a few. There is ethnic disagreement, hatred, and actual war going on in sections of our country. The American family also has its problems. Brothers and sisters quarrel, college roommates disagree, and married couples divorce. The United States is made up of a family of different ethnic peoples, yet we are strong because of our cultural diversities. The coming together of so many ethnic groups could have been totally disastrous; instead, the effect of mixed cultures has been positive. "The ethnic group in American Society became not a survival from the age of mass immigration but a new social form." (Glazer 16). This well-rounded, new social group, "America," is a country made up of culturally-different minorities.

The ethnic diversity of the people of the United States and the genetic pooling of cultures, music, food, languages, and peoples make America the most successful, powerful nation in the world. The freedoms that Americans enjoy make this diverse nation different than other nations of the world.

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War

She sees the cold, dead lingering bodies covering the frozen fields. Their blood turned black from the icy air. Fragments of body parts litter the once beautiful countryside. The wounded lying beside their dead friends waiting for medical attention and the angel of death. She goes from patient to patient, bandaging and setting bloody limbs. Those who have legs walk around waving their flags triumphantly over the wounded and deceased. They won this battle, but the war still rages on. No one counts the casualties, there are too many. Brothers against brothers; the blues fighting the grays. A country divided and overtaken by two premier gangs fighting to the death merely for "turf". A present day inner-city scenario. Everyone loses here; there remains no winner standing alone. All that remains is a blood-stained country. The blood of a kaleidoscope of races runs but one deadly color.

The End

(Adapted from "The Silver Swan," by unknown author,
1612.)

Of Granny being fed by Nurse, I note
The soup that dribbles lukewarm down her throat
And laps against pale lip, like waves on shore.
Unable to enjoy, yet thirsts for more.
Then Nurse will leave and let those tired eyes
That once were young, to sleep, now old and wise.



The Silver Swan

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached unlocked her silent throat;
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sang her first and last, and sang no more.
Farewell, all joys; O death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.

Anonymous (1612)

The Final Exam

Tests, questions, and answers seem to form a secret code used by professors to determine what students have learned during their classes. The most notorious example of this is the final exam. Professors select the most important concepts of their instruction and formulate complex questions. Students seek to unlock the code to discover these key ideas. Often students wait to begin their search until adequate time is gone. They then try to cram every idea into their minds in order to pass the final exam.

All people will enter God's presence for the most significant final exam. God has selected the focus of His scriptural instructions: love. God will examine the love both received and expressed by each person. People who have surrendered their lives to Christ by receiving God's love will be prepared for God's examination. People who have followed their own ways by rejecting Christ's love will not have been able to sincerely love others. They will not be prepared for God's final examination. God will recognize His children by their love. Matthew 25:31-46 gives the grading scale and the test results of this final exam. We must not wait to prepare for God's final exam; we must accept and express Christ's love today, so we will not have to cram for the final exam and fear failure later.

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me' (Matthew 25:40 NIV).