

From the Editor's Desk

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It's almost midnight on a March night as I write this, and I'm comforted by shadows. Some nights, I see things in the shadows that frighten me, and often my imagination—or perhaps my vanity—convinces me that evil men lurk in those shadows waiting to murder me in a cruel and leisurely fashion. But tonight, I am awake and I hear songs in my ears, and I am convinced this time of the sanctity all around me. The shadows want songs.

I was reading many things tonight. Waiting for dinner to be picked up, I snuck into a bookstore and picked up four books—a new copy of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, an old copy of *The Screwtape Letters*, a ratty book called *Filthy Shakespeare* (that I had no business picking up, but I picked up nonetheless) and Diana Galbadon's *Outlander*. A bit of horror, a bit of horrific truth, a bit of horrific filth, and a bit of not-nearly-so-bad-as-it-might-be historical romance, you might say.

I came home and read

Outlander for a bit, but by the time that Claire ended up, against her will, in the friendship and company of the red-haired Jamie, I realized I needed purpose. So I read some poetry.

*But in the importance
and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are
roaring like beasts on the
floor of the Bourse,
And the poor have the
sufferings to which they are
fairly accustomed,
And each in the cell of
himself is almost convinced
of his freedom,
A few thousand will think
of this day
As one thinks of a day
when one did something
slightly unusual.*

I cannot stress enough how much those final two lines of that stanza of W.H. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" struck me. Reading aloud, as I often do with poetry, in my husky and quite-sexiful post-cold voice, I read them into reality, and my ears pricked, my heart considered and my writer's soul felt like it had finally heard what it had waited for. For those who know me, do your best to

think of my voice, usually so brisk and lilting and smiling, as a softer, more reverent voice, weighted but not burdened with throaty texture.

When I knew little of poetry, my favorite poem was "When We Two Parted" by Lord Byron. I thought it dreadfully romantic, and I knew, for some reason, that I liked the drama and the way it sounded all nice-like. Perhaps I am arrogant, but I am keenly grateful for my greater exposure to poetry. As I've been learning in Literary Criticism (and as Auden himself once wrote), poetry can be merely memorable speech, memorable words. Poetry doesn't have to be perfect meter and perfect rhyme, or even perfect imagery or perfect sentiment—it is something felt. Something remembered. Something of power to the soul, somehow.

I only wish that, when I took Poetry Writing in Spring 2007, we had delved into literary theory and not just poetic form. I as much as the next writer appreciates new devices—a villanelle, for example, is a unique and entrancing thing. I of course fancy elegies, because almost everything I write captures more of the mourning of life than the joys. I had great success with my pastoral and my ballad, but my sonnet was entirely falsified, because I had nothing profound to say. Perhaps some of the pressure to be profound would have been taken off me and the other students, had we realized that grand and new insight was not required. What is so grand, new, insightful, and profound about Auden's line? "A few thousand will think of this day, as one thinks of a day when one



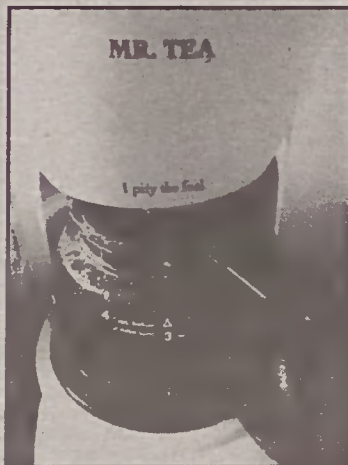
did something slightly unusual." Indeed, there is nothing profound! There is hardly any beauty to the line, there is hardly any proper rhythm—but there is something that reminds.

A day when one did something slightly unusual—it catches the quirking edges of my life. Perhaps the day I wore no makeup and still felt gorgeous. Perhaps the day I listened to nothing but opera. Perhaps the day that I spent all morning blind. I could not tell you a date, or even a record of precise events. I have the impression in my memory and that is enough. Perhaps just like the day that Gregory Peck died, or Ronald Reagan, or Kurt Vonnegut. We have the memory, the feeling, but not the detail. But does that really matter? To a poet, it would not. To Yeats or Auden it would not. To me it does not at all, and that is fortunate, considering my poor memory.

There is so much poetry in shadow, and so much shadow in poetry. Just like all things in life and the realm of experience, I feel a true sense of rejoicing in what is and what can be and what may not but might be. I've said for most of my grown life—at least since I was fourteen or fifteen—that I cared not what was happening, as long as life was

happening. It's a right blessing, I must admit, that God has given me this sense of all things being sacred and alive. I recall that almost as soon as I became a Christian, I told Him, well aware of Him and myself, that I was prepared to accept whatever life He intended for me, if it meant His glory. If He wanted me to be unhappy all my life, I would embrace it as duly as I would a charmed life. In return for this promise (or perhaps I made this promise because of this), He has given me such eyes for life. Like I said, my heart is ready for what is and what can be and what may not but might be. The shadows. The poetry. Is there not holiness in words? Is there not holiness in the play of shadow and lamplight and the texture of dry winter skin on the backs of fingers lit by a laptop's glow? Those words belong to God. Those shadows belong to God. Those wintry hands belong to God. Those silly romance novels with strapping Highland lads and cynical British ladies belong to God. Those days when one does something slightly unusual, and those days when one does nothing unusual at all, belong to God—and all is sacred.

*"As iron
sharpens iron,
so one man
sharpens another."
Proverbs 27:17*



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