

[Home](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Autumn 2007](#)

[Summer 2007](#)

[Spring 2007](#)

[Winter 2007](#)

[Autumn 2006](#)

[Summer 2006](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

[Fall 2005](#)

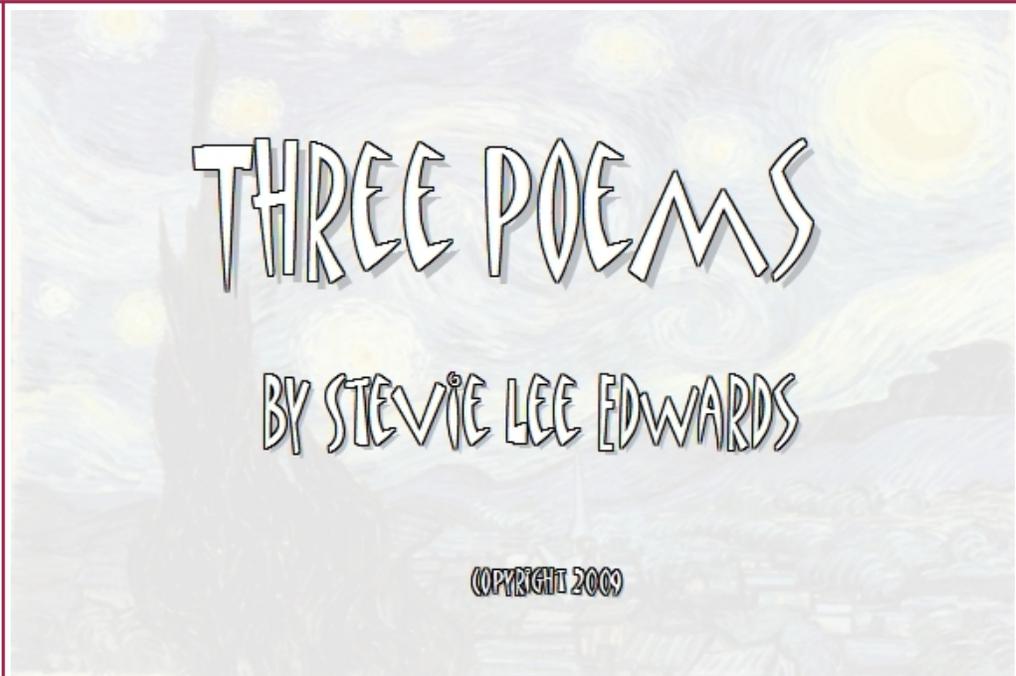
[Summer 2005](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)

[Contact](#)



## Change

At 20, left home for Brussels, craving change.  
Got a job in European Parliament,  
covered my curves with a pin-striped power suit,  
and spent my days in a corner office  
drinking my coffee with cream and sugar,  
writing speeches about change for Europe.  
Lobbyists greeted me with kisses on both cheeks,  
commenting on the weather and my perfume,  
while on our stoop, a Roma woman begged  
for change, snuggling her infant who howled,  
hungry like a Windigo. Cold wind grew  
icicles on the their long, dark lashes.

Passed them quickly in the cold— no change left—  
all spent at drunken pub talks about change.

## Gifts

Insatiable, I left you home  
and traversed the Atlantic,  
searching for a fix, a cure  
for my restless soul syndrome.  
I drank all the Trappistes dry  
and ate each every chocolate—  
bartenders shook their heads,  
Served Guinness instead of Rochefort.  
Neuhaus and Leonidas boarded their windows—  
I had to devour them all.  
The flavors tasted richer than home,  
filled with histories: of recipes, buildings,  
and feuds burgeoning back  
to before America was called America.  
My skin burst with gifts for you.

---

I thought I could see the Manneken Pis  
and send you all of his silliness.  
And I sent you the finest chocolates and beers  
to fill you with this history too,  
but you said the chocolates  
tasted like chocolates and the beers  
tasted like beer, not battles  
between Francophones and Flems.

I tried collecting more gifts for you,  
but I lost most along the way.  
One day I dropped my keys, drunk.  
My landlord said she'd have my head,  
but she settled for an arm and a leg.  
I protested, But Madame, they were only keys!  
These must come off, she said—  
chop, chop and half my limbs were gone  
with two hacks of the old surgeon's saw.

I tried to run away from my butcher,  
but crumpled under the weight  
of my baggage full of gifts for you—  
too much to carry  
with just one arm and leg.  
I thought we might enjoy  
a lovely kidney pie,  
but beer had bloated mine—  
too heavy, I left them by the curb.  
Because I knew the pangs  
of loneliness, I left them friends,  
swollen and diseased by my gluttony:  
my liver, stomach, some intestines.  
Hopefully some creature of the night  
found some sustenance.

The airport guards seemed concerned  
by my blood-stained clothes.  
I tried to explain—I had gifts for you,  
and was missing the Great Lakes and snow.  
I craved ketchup, not mayo with my fries and your  
warm breath breathing down my neck at night.  
But they carried me out like a dirty diaper.  
There was only one way to get these gifts to you  
Left, then right, then left then—  
sinking, sinking fast, salt water  
stinging my wounds.

Still too heavy to walk on water—  
I took off my epidermis,  
peeled off one strip at a time,  
like old floral wallpaper.  
Stretched out and over worked,  
it was no real gift to give you.  
A heap of bones, skeletal, I tread  
over the great Atlantic, yearning  
for you, for home, for English.  
I saved a few good parts.  
I'll leave them on your doorstep:  
my heart, two ovaries, tits.  
I brought these gifts for you—  
celebrate their loveliness.

---

---

## Trying to Sleep in Brussels

3 AM in Brussels. Back from the bar.  
I rest my bones in a bed for one.  
Picture you: lying down, wrapping  
your body around the place I used to sleep  
on your queen-sized mattress, the place  
where I long to be. Doze off—

A Teddy Graham leaps from the yellow box,  
chases me through the library corridors,  
chuckling, I'll get you this time.  
His fangs twinkle in the fluorescent lighting.

First, he goes for the legs—  
he dunks my head in a tub of holy water:  
Drink and be whole again!  
Fully saturated, I sink  
Down and down—can't bear  
this heaviness of being.

Wake up whimpering. Try to remember:  
two months ago I was safe. Your pillow smelled  
like Old Spice. I was working on being naked,  
trying to feel whole again. You were helping—  
your hands tracing the outline of an hourglass  
along my side, fingers lingering at every  
little perfection. You nestled your nose in my hair,  
Breathing slowly, softly—my favorite lullaby,  
lulls me to sleep again—

I am surrounded.  
Rwandans, Sudanese, Bosnians, Iraqis, Cambodians—  
everywhere, victims of genocide.  
The undead—skeletons protruding  
through gray skin, sunken cheeks, hacked up, bloody—  
chanting: We'll get you this time!

Captured and blind folded,  
I feel a blade press against my jugular.  
Nothing gold can stay!  
They pry my rings off my fingers.  
Rip my earrings out. Shave my head.  
Strip me naked. Tattoo my forehead  
with a label I cannot see. Rape me.  
The cool blade threatens closer. I smell  
steel. But my pulse does not race. I am  
a vision of calmness—an oasis. I'm already  
cut up, cut out. Nothing left

to sink the blade into—

This frenzy, this restless soul syndrome  
shakes me from my bed, scratches  
through my skin—leaving  
only shreds from the inside out.

Yes, I'm cold—  
Cover me up from head to toe.  
Hide me from breezy looks.

I listen to the old-style radiator clattering

---

---

and count the miles from here to you till dawn.

---

---

**Copyright 2009, Stevie Lee Edwards.** © This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.

---

**Stevie Lee Edwards** recently graduated from Albion College, where she studied English and economics. Her poetry has been published in *The November 3rd Club* and *The Cartier Street Review*. She also has poems forthcoming publication with *PANK Magazine*. At Albion College, she worked as a Poetry & Fiction Editor on *The Albion Review*. She formerly wrote speeches and worked as an office monkey for Member of European Parliament Peter Skinner in Brussels, Belgium.