




3-2005

## 2003 - 2004 Literary Review (no. 17)

Sigma Tau Delta

Follow this and additional works at: <https://poetcommons.whittier.edu/greenleafreview>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sigma Tau Delta, "2003 - 2004 Literary Review (no. 17)" (2005). *Greenleaf Review*. 15.  
<https://poetcommons.whittier.edu/greenleafreview/15>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship & Research at Poet Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Greenleaf Review by an authorized administrator of Poet Commons. For more information, please contact [library@whittier.edu](mailto:library@whittier.edu).

A Sigma Tau Delta Publication

2003-2004  
*Literary Review*

---

Number 17

$\Sigma\tau\Delta$

March 2005



"The Crow Image" by Kristin Oase



A Sigma Tau Delta Publication

2003-2004

LITERARY  
REVIEW

Number 17

March, 2005

## Table of Contents

Forward by Jessica Stowell and Katie Hunter pg 6

### Fiction Award Winners:

**Hummer** by Julia Uelman pg 8  
**Umi Says** by Justin D Angona pg 15-17  
**The Star Keepers** by Aaron Jaffe pg 17-23  
**A Perfect Glass Sphere** by Eric Dzinsky pg 23-26  
**He stopped the car and reached for the rifle** by George Gonzales pg 26-29

### Poetry Award Winners:

**Music Box** by Karen Barragan pg 30  
**The Truth About Wanting** by Jessica Gardezy pg 30  
**Out of China** by Vanessa Giovacchini pg 31  
**Family Portrait** by Aaron Jaffe pg 31-32

### Scholarly Writing Prize Winners:

**Augustine and Aquinas: An Evolution of the Medieval Mind** by Lisa Ybarra pg 32-41  
**What Happened to the American Idiom?** by Amber Hollingsworth pg 42-52  
**Read My Story: Aemilia Lanyer on Writing While Being Written**  
by Eva Sevcikova pg 52-57

### Freshman Writing Prize

**Striding for the Dream** by Melissa Daley pg 58

### Poetry

**An Insomniac Romance** by Paco Alcaraz pg 59  
**Anna s Having a Bad Hair Day** by Paco Alcaraz pg 59-60  
**Lost and Found** by Nicole Palacios pg 60  
**The Mug You Gave Me Before You Died** by Nicole Palacios pg 61  
**Aroma** by Nicole Palacios pg 61  
**My Night with Rob** by Joshua Sovell pg 61  
**Two Guys** by Joshua Sovell pg 62  
**He Said To** by Joshua Sovell pg 62-63  
**Roadkill** by Greg Bone pg 63  
**The Couple Behind** by Greg Bone pg 63  
**2103** by Greg Bone pg 64

<b>Growth</b> by Lauren de Remer	pg 64
<b>Denial</b> by Lauren de Remer	pg 65
<b>Not the Title</b> by Justin Goldberg	pg 65
<b>Little House of Music</b> by Justin Goldberg	pg 66
<b>The Trilogy I-III</b> by Karen Barragan	pg 66-68
<b>The Blue Sheet</b> by Karen Barragan	pg 68
<b>Poem for My Friend Lance, Dead at 38</b> by Karen Barragan	pg 69
<b>In Awe of the Great Ocean that Silences</b> by James Ryan Young	pg 69
<b>My Peninsula</b> by Aaron Jaffe	pg 70
<b>Dreaming of Hair</b> by Amber Knutson	pg 70
<b>In the End</b> by Andrea Garcia	pg 71
<b>Dead Girl Sometimes</b> by Vanessa Giovacchini	pg 71-72
<b>Library sex</b> by William Fenton-Hathaway	pg 72
<b>Saint Sabrina's Purgatory</b> by Megan Dahlen	pg 73
<b>Mass versus Potential</b> by Eric Mattys	pg 73

### Short Story

<b>A Hat for All Ages</b> by Antonio Trepesowsky	pg 74-79
--	----------

### Critical Essay

<b>The Varying Powers of Love</b> by Leslie Piló	pg 79-81
<b>Hollywood Dream Industry : Shifting from Internal to External Goals</b> by Leslie Piló	pg 81-89
<b>Rape As Performance of Nationalism and Masculinity</b> by Greg Prieto	pg 89-94

## Foreword

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling, like dew, upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.

Lord Byron

Due to various problems, the Sigma Tau Delta Literary Review was not published in either the year 2003 or in the year 2004. As a result, this edition of the Literature Review combines two year's worth of Review selections into a single issue. As editors, we have tried our best to include all of the work that was compiled for the Review over these two years. Thanks to the convenience and accessibility of e-mail, we were able to track down several prize winners who graduated and moved on from Whittier. As a result, their work is included as it should be in this edition of the Literature Review. However, we were unable to communicate with some of the people whose work was meant to be published in the Review the past two years. We apologize for those works which deserved to be included but are not. We are including a complete list of literature prize winners from the years 2003 and 2004 in this edition so that although sadly their work is not included, at least they will be recognized for their contributions and achievements in literature.

We want to thank all of the authors who are included in this edition of the Literature Review for their patience and continuing desire to see their work published. We want to thank Kristin Oase for allowing us to use her beautiful artwork on the cover of this edition of the Review. We also extend a special thanks to Adam Whitten for being Sigma Tau Delta's invaluable Publication Board liaison. Last, and certainly not least, we thank Anne Kiley and Tony Barnstone for their constant support and enduring vision that after two years of absence a double edition of the Literature Review could actually be created.

Enthusiastically yours,  
The Editors,  
Katie Hunter and Jessica Stowell

Academic Achievement Awards  
Spring 2003

Newsom Awards in Fiction and Poetry

FICTION

First Place- Meredith Wallis  
Second Place- Eric Dzinski  
Third Place- George Gozalez

POETRY

First Place- Britni Sternquist  
Second Place- Jessica Gardezy  
Third Place- Lakisha Dubar

Scholarly Writing Prize in English

First Prize- Eva Sevcikova  
"Read My Story"

Second Prize- Emily Curtis  
"The Baton Also Rises"

Second Prize- Christina Gutierrez  
"Design Aphasia"

Freshman Writing Prize

First Prize- Amanda Woolsey  
"Onchocerciasis"

Second Prize- Brycie Jones  
"Would You Like Some Fries With That Irony?"

Third Prize- Melissa Daley  
"Striding For the Dream"



Academic Achievement Awards  
Spring 2004

Newsom Awards in Fiction and Poetry

FICTION

First Place-Julia Uelmen  
Second Place- Justin D'Angona  
Second Place- Aaron Jaffe

POETRY

First Place- Briti Sternquist  
Second Place- Karen Barragan  
Second Place- Jessica Gardezy  
Third Place- Vanessa Giovacchini  
Third Place- Aaron Jaffe

**Scholarly Writing Prize in English**

First Prize- Lisa Ybarra  
"Augustine and Aquinas: An Evolution of the Medieval Mind"

Second Prize- Dorothy Burk  
"The Ends of Power, Knowledge, and Discipline:  
Three Contemporary Texts"

Second Prize- Amber Hollingsworth  
"What Happened to the American Idiom?"



**Hummer**  
by Julia Uelmen  
First Place Fiction-2004

"Come on, I dare you."

"No. It's too deep."

"It is only up to our knees."

"It'll be up to our necks by the time we reach the other side."

"Ah, you *are* a coward."

"Totally. Can we wait for the boat?"

"Oh, very well, then." Todd's sigh had only the hint of a growl, so I supposed he wasn't really angry. The water was cold, anyway, and the boat-fare only a pound. We climbed back to the boat dock and sat down to wait. It would be a good twenty minutes before the tide was high enough for a motor boat.

"See?" I pointed triumphantly. "there's jellyfish in the water!"

"Nonsense, it must be a plastic bag, or something."

"Jellyfish." I turned my back on him to look up at the castle. The clouds were just turning pink as the sun began to set, and the castle turrets were fading from their warm afternoon glow, into a cold, forbidding black. "Do you think anyone sleeps up there at night?"

"The security guards, perhaps."

"Nah, that'd be a bit pointless. They may as well live down here." I gestured at the small cluster of quaint old houses that surrounded the dock. "I was thinking more like a family or rich tourists or something. I mean, the whole lower part of the castle is off limits. You have to wonder how deep into the mount the castle goes."

"Well, perhaps the St. Aubreys still come here on occasion."

"I wonder what that would feel like: to be a visitor in a place you used to own? Still, I suppose free vacations here were part of their deal..."

Todd shrugged. It was hard to keep up a conversation with him. He got bored too fast.

This wasn't our first trip to St. Michael's Mount. We often went there on Sundays, to loose ourselves in the labyrinthine garden; or to sit on a solitary bench on the hillside, barely five metres from the sea. We usually left before the tide came in, but this time we had fallen asleep. I looked back over the water toward the mainland. The dry flagstone path from mainland to the Mount, which we had walked on this morning, surrounded by a wide expanse of sand and stinky seaweed, was now a good two metres under water. It gave me the creeps to think of all the strange creatures that were now crossing that path.

"Was your father going triggling today?"

"Aye, he probably has a pie made already for supper," Todd replied wistfully.

"Well, here comes Frankie now." The castle guides, and a few tourist stragglers, had joined us, and Frankie was ready to ferry us all across Mounts Bay to Marazion. From Marazion we caught a bus home to Penzance, where Todd's father owned a pub on the Promenade. The crowd at The Old Bath Inn had spilled over into the street, as it usually did in the evenings, and getting to the house next door was a tedious maneuver.

"Mr. McTeague! Your father has been triggling in the middle of winter!" a voice rumbled from the crowd. And the short, stout, good-natured deputy mayor of Penzance (who lives in Newlyn), stepped neatly in front of us.

"But, sir, it is almost March." Todd countered. "Winter is ending."

"Aye, but it's still too early in the year for triggling. I should like to see the size of the

cockles your father found. I would be surprised if they were larger than 20 pence."

"Well, I could bring you some shells, if you like." Todd replied, edging his way around the deputy mayor.

"I would thank you better for a slice of pie," the old Cornishman winked.

"Ah, but sir, it must be a very small pie, with the cockles being smaller than 20 pence." Todd shoved his key into the lock and we slipped thankfully into the little house.

Mr. McTeague the elder then appeared from the parlor, and began to sign excitedly to his son. I had not learned enough ESL to follow the monologue, but I was more interested in the pie, anyway.

It smelled heavenly. The cockles were a good three times as large as a 20-pence coin, and the pie was in a 12" plate. My nose was an inch from the plate when I felt hands on my shoulders. Old Mr. McTeague turned me gently away from the pie and signed a nice slow *tell me what you two did today. As I fumbled out a reply, I heard the deputy mayor's voice in the front hall. A place had already been set for him at the table.*

Ah, Monday morning. It amazes me how much someone can hate such an abstract concept as weekdays. Todd and I never spoke in the mornings. But we often shared murderous glances at the cheerful Mr. McTeague, who's only distinction between weekday and weekend was the number of people who showed up in his pub.

On Monday mornings, the people who showed up at the Penzance Bookstore were nil. There wouldn't be an idle shopper or a tourist on Chapel Street till nearly noon. So I fished the cat out of the window display, swished a feather duster across the shelves, and settled down with the latest book Mr. Doran had ordered. It was some dull affair about Lord Nelson, but it was the only book in the store left to read; aside from the cookbooks.

I met Todd that evening on Market Jew Street, and together we headed up the Causeway head for some of the town's best Cornish pasties. The Oven Door was packed this evening with a busload of young tourists – American students. It made me homesick to hear them.

"Can I have a cheese and onion pasty, please," the girl in front of me drawled.

"It's *pasty*," Todd said with a smile, "as in glue, and toothpaste," he added helpfully. *The girl behind the counter glared at him.* "May I have three beef pasties, please?" he said to her.

"Oh, we're all out of those," the girl behind the counter replied. Todd pointed at the tray of pasties behind the sign saying "Beef and Onion."

"Oh, sorry, I must have misplaced the sign." The girl said. "These are tofu pasties."

"Well then, I'll have three of them. No, not those tofu pasties. *These tofu pasties.*"

"Not very malicious, is she." I said once we were outside.

"No, it takes cunning to be malicious." Todd bit into a pasty and chewed thoughtfully for a moment. "Ugh, they're putting horse-meat in the pasties again."

"Yeah, it's what they bought Bradford's old mare for." I studied my pasty and sighed. "Well, at least it isn't cow, what with the Disease running rampant and all."

The students began to spit out their pasties, and one was neatly sick in a flowerpot.

Mr. McTeague's shoulders were shaking with mirth. *And they believed you?*

"Oh, they'll swallow anything," Todd replied. "That's why our dear deputy mayor has to chaperone them when they hit the pubs."

*Goodness... but that was a bit cruel of you.*

Todd shrugged. "So what. They hate us, anyway."

*Not everyone.*

There was a pause.

"Um, a man came into the shop today, wearing—"

*Sign, darling.*

*Why? You hear me.*

*Yes, but I love to see you sign. Your hands are beautiful.*

"Dad, are you flirting with my girl?"

Old Mr. McTeague winked and smiled. *Somebody has to do it. This girl has no idea what a charm she is.*

"Yeah, Todd, 'cause you never tell me."

"I would rather show you," he purred.

*Ha-h, goodnight.* And the old man scuttled out of the room.

"I think he's plotting for a grandson," I said. But Todd was still purring.

I think I should explain the purring... only I don't know how. It's just something Todd knows how to do. It's something his old man knew how to do, too. You might call it a gift, except that Penzance is a small fishing town. And fishermen are very superstitious.

Todd was a fisherman, too. He would go out in the early morning with a fleet of static gear boats, and they wouldn't return till sunset. What happened out in the bay, nobody knew, but Todd's fleet always came back with an excellent haul of fish.

It was on a Thursday when Todd broke the news to me. Thursday was always the turning point in my week, when things started looking better. And then Todd had to go and break the vase over my head like that. "I've found a job in London. I'm going to manage the *Gypsy Moth on the river in Greenwich.*"

We were walking along the Promenade. It was dark and the tide was high. White foam sprang up over the edge and splattered on the walkway. "That's a ship, isn't it? And old one? What do you know about old ships?"

"I used to help with the ones in Charlestown. Anyway, 'tis nothing I can't learn about."

"But why stop fishing? That London job surely can't pay better, and we'll have to get a flat and pay rent, which will cost a —"

"Darling... I am so tired of fishing. This is a chance for a fresh start. Wouldn't you like it better in London than here? The markets and the theatres, the bookshops, the coffeehouses..."

"What about your father?"

"We can come back and visit on weekends."

"But he's an old man: he can't manage by himself."

"Mrs. Dowrick will see he's alright."

"I'm not leaving him in the hands of the cleaning lady!"

Todd sighed, and looked out at the restless black sea. "I am going to London. You may stay here, if you like."

By Saturday the news was out. Old Mr. McTeague heard it from one of his customers. He didn't talk to Todd, however. He waited for Todd to bring the matter up.

Saturday was a big day for Penzance. Their rugby team, the Pirates, was playing against the London Welsh. It seemed like the whole town was at the Mannaye Field for the game. Even the fishermen had taken the day off to watch. "Todd McTeague is leaving Penzance" was the main topic of gossip in the crowds. The fishermen seemed really upset about it. I left the game at half time, tired of the roundabout questions people kept asking me.

Todd didn't even go to the game. He went swimming. I found him at the Jubilee Pool on the sea. He wasn't in the pool, but swimming around the rocks the pool was built

on. I stuck my feet in a tidal-pool and waited for him to finish.

"Would you rather I go to London... or would you rather I stay here?" I asked as he towed off.

"I want you to go to London with me."

"Okay. I'll go, then."

Todd told his father the night before we left. Mr. McTeague knew all about it, anyway. And he understood Todd's tardiness in telling him was not all his son's fault. Todd had warned the fishermen he would be leaving soon, and they had told him to clear out right away. So there was no reason to wait. We were moving to London right away. Mr. McTeague had listened to Todd's explanations without interruption, and then he had gone up to his room, without a word.

Finding a girl to replace me at the bookstore had been too easy. But I hoped there would be better jobs in London.

I ended up working at one of the bargain bookstores in Greenwich. This was not as bad as it sounds. There are lots more customers in Greenwich than there are in Penzance, and *the Gypsy Moth* was moored only a few blocks away. After work, Todd and I would walk along the Thames Path, or go barhopping in Soho, or see a play. There was too much to do in London, but not enough money to do it with. I was happy to hurry back to Penzance when the first week was over. But Todd stayed in London.

Mr. McTeague was happy to see me back. He looked rather worried about something. And he made no bones about telling me what troubled him. He had written a letter to us in London, but was hesitant about sending it off. He thought it would anger Todd or something. She showed it to me now.

*The fishing has been bad in Penzance since you two left, he had written. Cameron's fleet has twice returned with empty boats. And their haul, when they get one, is no larger than anyone else's. They are becoming angry with you, Todd, for leaving.*

Well, their anger didn't extend to me, at least. The fishermen were as friendly as ever to me. But their anger did seem to extend to Mr. McTeague. He had been a fisherman in Cameron's fleet, too, before he lost his voice. The fishermen of the fleet had all appealed to him to speak to his son, to get him to come back. But Mr. McTeague had refused. If his son didn't want to fish, he said, nothing an old man could say would make him rejoin the fleet.

No one appealed for me to speak to Todd. They knew I couldn't influence them. So I spent a quiet Saturday at Mr. McTeague's, and Sunday at St. Michael's Mount. It was odd being there without Todd, and I walked back to mainland long before the tide rose.

Todd in London was a different Todd from the fisherman in Penzance. His voice was quieter, and somewhat blunted, and his manner was much milder, almost careless. Managing an old, floating restaurant was much less stressful than hunting for fish. Between us we managed to make enough money to pay the rent, and to have a bit of fun, but none left over for a possible future family.

By the time summer rolled around, Todd was well settled in London. He hadn't been back to Penzance since March, and didn't care what was happening there. I, on the other hand, went back every weekend, to check on his dad, and the situation there was becoming rather alarming. The fishermen were doing very poorly, compared with how they had done when a McTeague was in the fleet. Their usual haul wasn't much worse

than that of the other fleets along the coast. But the other fleets along the coast weren't doing very well these days. They had blamed their sour fishing on the abundance of Penzance, and were now quite glad to see the town in the same straits as everyone else. This infuriated the townsfolk of Penzance.

There was an evening in June that year, I'll never forget. Todd and I were dressing for a performance of "Absolutely! (perhaps)" at Wyndham's Theatre, when the phone rang. Todd picked it up with a "Say what?"

I watched the expression on his face change from surprise, to indignation, to anger, to fear. Then he said, "who is this? Robbie? Ken?" He fumbled with the ansaphone as he spoke, and clicked it on. I heard a gruff voice on the line say:

"You come back, Todd McTeague, or your father will pay for our losses."

Then the line went dead. I would like to say we drove at a breakneck speed all the way back to Penzance. But we were caught in traffic as soon as we reached Deptford Bridge, just outside of Greenwich. I texted Mr. McTeague on my mobile as we waited in the traffic, and he wrote back, saying he was alright. I suggested he invite some people over for the evening, and he agreed. I got the impression this threat wasn't new to him.

When we finally reached The Old Bath Inn in Penzance, we found that the Neales and the deputy mayor were keeping Mr. McTeague company, at the pub and at home. We had quite a little party in the front-room of the house, and played at cards till after dawn. Then Todd and I both called in sick at work, and went to bed. The Neales and the deputy mayor, unfortunately, had to work that day. In this small town, coworkers came around with flowers when you called in sick, and they were very shrewd in telling the difference between the flu and a hangover.

We woke up around noon, and went swimming off the Promenade. And toward evening I headed back to the pub. But Todd went to the docks, to wait for the fishermen to return.

Mr. McTeague and I were in the front-room watching telly when Todd came back. Or rather, Mr. McTeague was watching telly, and I was nervously shredding an old doily. It was almost midnight, and I had been ready to call the police. Todd was surprisingly calm when he sat down beside me on the couch. The left side of his face was bruised, and he held himself stiffly. But he wasn't angry or worried.

"Dad, would you come to London with me, just for a little while?"

*Who will look after the pub?*

"Me, of course," I said.

*Your job at—*

"It's horribly dull. I can manage the pub: I've looked after it before. Don't you think I can handle it for a week or two?" But we all knew it would take more than a couple weeks for the fishermen's grudge to die down. Mr. McTeague leaned back and sighed. I had a feeling he had seen this coming.

*I see... I suppose this is for the best. I'll go around the pub with you tomorrow morning, to refresh your memory... Then the Neales and I are going t-r-i-g-g-i-n-g. You can handle the pub this evening.* He smiled, satisfied with his arranged day off.

"If all goes well, you will leave with me tomorrow night, dad."

*Why the rush? Why not Saturday morning? I'd not mind a full night sleep, for once.*

"Well, you won't get it if you spend your evening with the Neales," I muttered.

The next morning went according to plan. Mr. McTeague took me around the pub, reminding me of all the minutiae of running a public house. Then he left me there

and went off with the Neales. Meanwhile, Todd drove over to St. Ives for the Cornish ice cream that was so popular there. Mr. McTeague used it for alcoholic cordial milkshakes, and he was running low.

It was very late in the afternoon, and Todd hadn't yet returned from St. Ives, when a policeman entered the pub and asked to see me alone. My thoughts sprang to Todd. Had there been an accident? No, miss, it was a disappearance. Mr. McTeague had disappeared while trigging in Mounts Bay. Not Todd: Mr. McTeague the elder. They took him! Why him? Where were the Neales?

The officer patiently explained to me that Mr. McTeague and the Neales had been attacked by four men in ski masks. The Neales had been beaten unconscious, and nearly drowned in the incoming tide. Mr. McTeague was nowhere to be found.

Maybe he had returned home. That is what the officer had come to determine. ...But no, the house was empty. Todd was driving home from St. Ives when I called him. He let out a howl of fury when he heard, that set my ears ringing. Now the traffic would allow him to drive here at break-neck speed. The officer kindly drove me to the West Cornwall Hospital, where the Neales were recovering from multiple fractures.

Todd arrived a minute after I did. Mrs. Neale dissolved into hysterics when she saw us; but Mr. Neale just stared at his hands, which were calmly folded on his lap. It took us a long time to pull Mrs. Neale together so she could tell us what had happened. But we got no information from her that I hadn't already heard from the officer. "It was the fishermen!" Mrs. Neale cried. "They did this! They said they would do it! The fishermen!"

"What did they say they would do?" Todd asked in a low growl. But Mrs. Neale was having a sobbing fit. Mr. Neale just went on staring at his hands.

When the tide went out the next morning, the Devon & Cornwall Police force found the body of Reynard McTeague in St. Mount's Bay, two miles from the place where the party had been trigging. He had been tied to a piece of concrete, and dropped into the water at high tide.

There was no blaming the fishermen: they had all been out to sea that day. They had each other, and the harbormaster, and a few witnesses on land, who would vouch for their all being on the boats when the fleet set off. The boats had all stayed within sight of each other, the fishermen said. And the place where Mr. McTeague had been kidnapped was not accessible by boat in the early afternoons. No, there was no blaming the fishermen. The rope and the piece of concrete had both come from a construction site in Helston.

When we returned to the house adjoining The Old Bath Inn, Todd went into his father's room and locked the door behind him. I didn't know what to do with myself, so I went into the pub. It was more crowded than usual (the crowd literally stretched down the Promenade), but the people were all very subdued. They had heard about the death of Mr. McTeague.

The people were all very nice and polite, offering their sympathies as I threaded my way through them, and out to the garden. The pub's garden was one of its most attractive features, and it was crowded to the point where no one could admire it. I made my way to the back, unlocked it, and slipped through. The narrow street behind the pub curved away from the Promenade, toward the Morrab Gardens, where I was heading. After the squeeze in the pub, the street looked unreal: dead, in a way, like a ghost. The Morrab Gardens weren't any better. The place was curiously devoid of young lovers making out, or old folk taking their evening constitutionals. The story of a vicious gang of murderers must be what was keeping them indoors. But there was one old woman who



had braved the threat, in favor of her constitution. She was sitting on a bench, staring up at an empty bandstand. I sat down on the next bench, and idly shredded the leaves of a nearby bush.

"Ah, you must be Todd McTeague's sweetheart," the old woman said, as if I had just introduced myself. I didn't answer.

"Bad thing, that. To break a tradition..."

I broke off a flower and began to pull out the petals.

"Still, I suppose one gets tired of it after a while... Such a shame it had to end this way. Shame, shame, shame," she muttered, huffing herself to her feet. And she turned to continue her walk.

"What tradition?"

"Eh? The McTeague fishing tradition."

"That being?"

"Eh?"

"A father passes a job skill onto his son and you already call it a tradition? Well then leaving the fishing business must be part of it, right? That's what Mr. McTeague did. No one seemed bothered about it then."

"Ah, but they had his son," the old woman said, stopping where trees tunneled the path. "There has been a McTeague in the Penzance fishing fleet for over two hundred years. I call this a tradition."

"But Mr. McTeague said he came to Penzance after the war."

"Aye, he did. He was replacing old Crevan McTeague. Old Crevan had lost his voice by then, poor dear. I suppose that is the price they all must pay... shame to break a tradition," the old woman muttered as she continued on her way.

My head ached, and my shoulders, too. I reached up a hand and kneaded at a knot of shoulder muscles... there was blood on my hands. Only a little bit, but from where? My ear. My right ear was bleeding.

The next evening I figured Todd had had enough time alone. I had taken care of virtually all Mr. McTeague's funeral arrangements, with help from the deputy mayor. Now the rest of burying his father was up to Todd.

Todd didn't respond to my knockings or my calls, and I didn't have a key, so I used a butcher knife to open the door. He was sitting bolt upright on the end of his father's bed, staring at a painting of the piper that was on the opposite wall. Some people said Reynard McTeague had painted it, but I had not seen the old man even doodle on a pad. So I assumed the artist was some older R. McTeague. Anyway, Todd was sitting staring at this thing as if he had been doing so for days. I had to shake him, and then slap him, to get him to snap out of it. But then all he did was push me aside and stumble out of the house.

He didn't take the car, thank God, but made his way stiffly up the back road to the Morrab Gardens. I didn't much like that idea, since that was where the fishermen's wives took their children after school. The sight of him might disturb them. On the other hand, I wasn't strong enough to hold him back from wherever he wanted to go.

The fishermen of Penzance had not caught anything that day, and so they had stayed out later in the evening than was usual. Things might have been different if they hadn't. I learned that night how a McTeague did his fishing, and why the fleet at Penzance had been so successful with a McTeague to help them.

Less than an hour after Todd had stalked off, I heard him walking back down the road. He was singing an old Cornish hymn. His voice had that purr in it that always

made me go warm and fuzzy inside. The McTeague purr, I called it. And now his voice was purring so strongly it was like humming, or the droning of a wasp. His normal voice seemed to be making this purr very loud. I smiled when I saw him round the corner. Then I froze.

There were children following him. The fishermen's children, and other children too. They were following him down the road. Their mothers were there, too, trying to hold their children back, to keep them from following. But the children would go berserk when their mother's grabbed hold of them: kicking and clawing and scratching. Most mothers couldn't hold on. They cried and begged for Todd to stop. But they couldn't get near him. Whenever a mother tried, Todd would scream, and all the children would scream, until the woman backed away. Down to the Promenade Todd led the children. And from there down to the docks. I followed them. The people on the Promenade were shocked at this parade, and helped the mothers to hold back the children.

When Todd reached the docks, he untied his own fishing boat, and jumped in. The children waited on the docks. For a moment Todd had stopped singing, and the children were looking confused. I made a grab for the nearest child. The boat started up and Todd started singing again. As the boat moved away, the children all jumped into the water and began to swim after it. Many of the adults ran after them. But we couldn't catch all of them.

The last we saw of those children alive, and of Todd, was when they left the harbor, with fish jumping wildly all around the school of children. When the fishermen came back, several hours later, they brought back some of the bodies with them. All told, fourteen children had died, and eight had disappeared in the sea.

Reynard McTeague was buried without ceremony, and I left Penzance soon after he was in the ground. I will not say where I live now. After all, Todd McTeague might still be alive. I hear about people like him, where I am, who have that special purr in their voice. They're everywhere, I suppose, especially around animals and children. They can charm animals in to following them wherever they want. They can charm children into doing anything they wish. And there is no way anyone can tell who they are, until they start to purr.

### Umi Says

Justin D'Angona

Second Place Fiction- 2004

I woke up like a jabberwocky struggling against the tentacles of my sheets as they sucked me back into sleep. After several turns and tosses, I woke up dazed. The night had cast me out into the raw new dawn. The morning air was cold and drafty from the sea breeze and punctuated with the acute sense of time one feels when a deadline looms out from the forgotten corner of subconscious memory and smacks you in the face. I had five minutes to get to work. Jumping in my jeep without wiping the crust from my eyes, I set out for my "job." I use quotes here because it doesn't really seem appropriate to call sitting on a beach for a whole day a 'job.' I'm a birdwatcher at the beach five minutes from my house, and my job is to protect the endangered piping plovers that live there. Today that meant for the next fourteen hours.

Driving down to the beach took about two minutes, so I managed to make it on time. After meeting in with the Harbormaster to get my check sheet and binoculars, I

started out driving down the sand road to the secluded region of the beach where my birds nested. That drive took about fourteen minutes. As I crunched on, crushed sand blew up from under my car, sizzling and popping like a needle over old vinyl as it drifted into the katana beach grass gardens, where hermit crabs scuttle away their antisocial lives. On the road were the tracks of the homeless coyotes with jackolantern grins that lived out in the crusty trees of the Gurnett down the road. A week before one of the coyotes had eaten a nest of plovers; the Harbormaster saw it lope away with a kool-aid stained teeth. All birdwatchers were now supposed to be on high alert to watch for them, and if they came near a nest kindly ask them to leave or poke them with a stick.

The terns swooped overhead and chirped. Terns are aggressive birds, they peck and defecate on those they perceive to be a threat, especially during nesting season. But this morning their chirps brought a musical percussion to the roll of the waves in the distance and the buzzing of the morning air. Dust arose again in a haze from my tires once I hit the four wheel area, and by the time I stopped to get out of my car, it was thoroughly talcumed.

There is no path to the beach I was assigned to watch. To get there I had to walk across the wrack, and intertidal crunch of undergrown beachrose plants, a tangle of thorns and poison ivy that breaks up the sand and keeps it from eroding into the ocean. Beneath the hardy grey foliage was matted beachgrass laced with broken Budweiser bottles and driftwood. Mice would scurry under my step as I shifted my weight onto a board, or kicked a shard of some anonymous bottle. The whole wrack had an ancient sad feeling. All the plants were grey and salted, as infertile as Carthage. The wood was sun bleached and dead, its smooth shell cut by the wind and sand into strange grooves and patterns. Being alone there had an eerie feeling, like walking through an elephant graveyard, the driftwood- dwindling fossils of the giants that lay beneath the sea.

At the end of the wrack stood a four foot fence, shiny grey weatherbeaten boards strung together into a wreath with three sections of even grayer wire. The wrack fell off into sand and met the fence at an angel. Part of the reason the fence was installed was to keep this angle in place to prevent erosion, as well as to stop people from walking across the wrack. I jumped over the fence and rolled down into the sand. It was soft, warm and comforting. I rolled around in it and felt home. The air was still cold and sharp, but sunny and clear. The light came from the sky and swam in the ocean, then danced off the rocks tossed up in the beach from the storms and hurricanes of winger. When it hit the sand, it shimmered like satin and reflected back into my eyes and the cloudless sky. I breathed in and felt clean. There was no one for a mile in either direction. I was alone with the beach and birds.

It seems a long time ago the world traded its heart for a pacemaker. Most people go to the beach to "get away." To get away from the world and forget everything. I get a way to get *to*. To get to the truth, to be alone and have a clearer look at the world without the distractions of whirling city lights and car horns. To get to something intangible, an archaic urge that has led men into the wild since we first got out of it. Being alone, I don't have to be afraid of the nightmare legions of city goblins and tabloid robots. There's peace and solace in isolation.

After half an hour, I dusted the sand grains off my check sheet and walked the beach for birds. Piping plovers come in fours or fives, nuclear families, two parents and up to three children. They scurry the beach like little tufted mice with wings, peeping and poking the seaweed on the shoreline for bugs. They also happen to be gray and white, the same color as virtually every rock, so it was very hard to find them unless they were making their distinctive chirping call, which, fortunately they always were. After a few minutes I spotted them flitting among the rubble and seaweed that broke the beach

up in the middle and took notes. I now had the rest of the day to do what I wanted as long as I checked the birds every hour. Tough job.

I went back to the car and got *On the Road*. After two or so hours of read my arms went sore, so I went for a walk. The beach is long, and when the sun-haze hits mid-day it's impossible to see beyond the curve of the bay to the land where the sand ends. I walked on the rocks to look down for interesting flotsam, but ended up just scraping my feet. It was hot and sweat was starting to ooze through my sunblock. Skin percolating, I hissed into the water.

Deep and powerful, the sea always sways with some misty hidden secret God told it long ago and it refuses to share; but if you listen closely, it will whisper some phrase of it in your ear when you dive in, if only for a second. I looked up at the sun and lowered my back into the water. It was cold and clear. The salt stung the cuts on my feet for a second. Floating on my back, my hair wisped in the water like sea anemones. I closed my eyes and drifted oblivious to anything but the red glow of the sunlight filtering through the capillaries in my eyelids. I don't know how long I was in the water. I sort of forgot time. The sea had an infinite quality about it which makes that easy. When I got out, my vision was bleached and salty. I walked up the beach looking for the birds amidst their rocky twins, but not too hard. I didn't really care, and I would see anyone within a mile walking anywhere near their nest. I sat down on a piece of mattress foam that had washed up in the intertidal wrack and reclined in the warmth of the sun. My hair twisted into knotty little tendrils. Work was almost over. The sun was bleeding into the horizon, leaving its mantle hanging on the pink clouds etched in the sky. A great flaming peach in the sky, bruised and naked, leaving the plum twinkie of night behind as it sank. When the sun dies the world looks old and golden.

A great story teller once said that after people die their souls have to pass through the sun to burn off sin. I don't believe that, but I do believe everyone has to burn. Everyone has to go through some experiences so visceral it has to hit their souls in order to realize the truth of life. Why have feet if not to walk over hot coals? I've never met my Grendel, but when I do I'll break off *both* his arms, pin him down, and play wipeout on his head. I guess I have an intense drive to have my name written on the tablet behind the sun, and since there are no monsters to kill, I'll aim my ambition at something else. But it was too late for today. The sun had died, and I left the beach feeling inspired.

## **The Star Keepers**

Aaron Jaffe

Third Place Fiction-2004

### **Chapter I**

The sun was setting and as it dipped below the horizon it shot a few final rays through the arched windows of the inn. They came to rest on the glasses of wine the inn's serving boy was carrying to a group of thirsty patrons. The glasses had been custom made for the inn by a traveling merchant and on each one there was a tiny picture of the inn, surrounded stars etched into the glass. As the light hit the goblets their stars sparkled magnificently. The serving boy carefully padded across the inn, delicately balancing the glasses on a tray, when his foot snagged on a loose floorboard. He caught himself before he went pitching forward, but one of the glasses slid off the tray. It went somersaulting through the air like a graceful diver, the light reflecting off it brilliantly. It finally collided with the floorboards in a splash and explosion of glass and sent the inn keeper scurrying

over immediately.

"Elon, not the goblets!" the innkeeper said to the serving boy. "I can't get any more of these you know. And the mess, look at this mess. We've been cleaning for ages and you'll be cleaning an age or two more if you keep this up!"

The innkeeper and Elon had been busily preparing all week. Every bit of silver had been polished until glistening, the glasses were spotless, the lanterns filled, ready to burn bright late into the night. Every bed in the inn and the two others in town were occupied.

The entire week people had been entering the village. Some came in small caravans, riding carts pulled by oxen or horses. The serving boy looked forward to these the most because they often brought goods from foreign towns and would occasionally give him some small trinket when he carried their bags to the inn. In fact, there were only a few of the yearly visitors he did not look forward to seeing. These usually came on foot, alone. They wore deep black traveling cloaks with large hoods that they wrapped around their bodies so all you could see were their mud-covered boots. They were grim, but the Elon tried not to let them bother him. Every year people from all over the land made a pilgrimage to the lake town, Lagoness and the black cloaks were such a small portion of the crowd.

The sun finally passed beyond sight and night crept into the sky, the inn was bustling and bursting with energy. Every table in the room was engaged in conversation about what they would see tonight. All save one.

The one table that did not seem to share the rest of the inn's enthusiasm was comprised of six of the innkeeper's oldest and most loyal patrons. They were men who had lived in the town all their lives, right from its founding and the long winters spent by the lake could be seen in their careworn faces. They all had deep creases under their eyes, their hands were gnarled and wrinkled, and their backs had a pronounced hunch from many hard days of labor. Only their eyes still looked young and these were bright and piercing.

The Elon approached them slowly with the inn's regular clay mugs brimming with ale. The old men took no notice of him as he carefully set the mugs down and continued their conversation in hushed tones.

"It will be the ruin of our town," said one of the men at the table. He had clear blue eyes, so light they were almost white, peaking out from under bushy white eyebrows. "He doesn't listen to me. His head is filled with nothing but figures and plans."

"Have peace Carne, I will try and talk some sense into him," said another man.

"No," said Carne, "It's no use. He's a northerner and there'll be no changing his mind. All they know is industry and expansion. Soon he'll have our little village looking like one of those ghastly cities."

"It's hardly a little village anymore," said second man, "and maybe it's for the best. It's been a long while since any of us has gone hungry or wanted for lack of food or anything else for that matter."

At this there was a general murmur of agreement from the other men. They could all remember times when they had gone hungry and their stoves had been short for wood.

"Surely my ears deceive me," snapped Carne. "Mark my words, this industry our headman is cooking up will be the end of us. We need to go back to the way things were when we first came here, the old way of doing things."

"Is it not possible that we only long for the old ways because we are old ourselves?" asked another of the men.

"Just because a way of doing something is new does not mean it is better." With

this Carne buried himself in his mug, while the others began to reminisce about the old days.

Elon had heard this same conversation played out a hundred times by the old men in the town. When they first followed the river south and came to settle, Lagoness was an undisturbed lake. But it had been like no lake they had ever seen before. Its banks were made up of fine white sand that slid underfoot like crushed silk. They surrounded the lake uniformly; making an almost perfect circle around the clearest water any of them had ever seen. They could look into it and see straight through to the white sandy bottom, while also seeing a reflection sharper than any mirror man could make. Set back from the lake were tall, strong trees with light green multipointed leaves. And finally, behind the trees they saw gray sloping hills that broke only where the river fed into the lake and provided a certain amount of protection from the wind.

After the first weary settler walked barefoot up to the lake, fell with a splash to his knees and took a long drink of the crystal clear water, there was never any question as to whether or not they were staying.

Soon they had built a small village on the edge of the lake, consisting of a few ramshackle cabins, animal pens, and pastures. The soil around the lake was unnaturally rich and made for easy farming and the animals that grazed there grew thick and sturdy.

The first years at Lagoness were spent peacefully, despite any minor hardships they endured. It would have stayed that way too, until the end of time or the end of the village, which ever came first. But the villagers were not the only inhabitants of the lake.

There were many nights when the villagers sensed there was something out in the water. They could see ripples and movement in the otherwise calm lake and when the light from the stars and moon struck the water they could see enter moving shapes and bounce around until somehow it was finally absorbed. But from the shore this looked like little more than light reflecting off the water. It wasn't until one night when one of the men went out with a boat and a small net that they finally got a look at exactly what was in the lake. It was Carne who caught the first one.

He had always suspected something lived in the lake, so he constructed a small rowboat and went out one night. Looking down into the water he could see the shapes moving underneath him. The light would hit them making them visible for a split second before it was absorbed into their bodies and they became undefined figures again.

He lowered his net into the water and to his surprise the little shapes swam right in. They were inquisitive and wanted to know what this new object was in their lake. They didn't even think to be frightened until after Carne had hauled the net back up and they were flopping vigorously around on the bottom of the rowboat.

Carne had caught a fish, but it was unlike any fish he had ever seen before. It was roundish, with a pointed nose and a very large tail and fins. The fins, like the fish, were also clear and rounded, while the tail ended in a large graceful arc with hundred of small, translucent fibers trailing from it. All the while, even in the rowboat, the fish seemed to glow through its lucid scales.

In spite of the fish's unusually appearance Carne's thoughts were mostly practical on the row back to the village. They consisted most of musings on whether or not he would become sick when he ate the fish and what would be the best way to remove the meat from the bones.

When he finally ate the fish after much difficulty scaling it and a several small cuts on his hand, he more than just pleasantly surprised. It was the most delicious meat he had ever tasted. It was soft and almost seemed to melt right into the bottom of his mouth, while it had a rich almost buttery taste to it. Word soon spread through the village

about the miraculous fish that lived in the lake and from that point on small fishing parties went out nightly.

It was only a matter of time before the villagers were devising methods of curing the fish and sending it to neighboring towns. Trade routes quickly sprung up and the fish became known as one of the finest delicacies in the land. However, it could only be sent so far before spoiling, so travelers often made a point to go out of their way to come to the village and feast on fish, which led to the village's first inn being built, the very inn where Elon now lived and worked.

The town expanded and became prosperous. More people came to settle and all the money in trade allowed the villagers to replace their ramshackle cabins with sturdier wooden homes and even a bit of stonework here and there. They also had an entire host of foreign goods coming in from wine to fine clothes. The small village had become a town. It was so well liked by some of the wealthier men in other towns, that they chose to spend weeks at a time there during the summer and a few even had small homes built for them around the outskirts of the lake. But the beautiful view of the lake and the food were not the only reason to visit the town and it was certainly not the reason people made a yearly pilgrimage there.

The old men's conversation finished as it always did, with empty mugs and a call for more wine.

"Those were the days," said one of the men as the serving boy refilled his glass, "when this place was still new and green. I think I liked the look of those stretching pastures more than these houses."

"Aye," said another, "we had paradise, all to ourselves. I don't care much for this ruckus every year. The fish's dance is a sight to see to be sure, but how many times have we seen it now?"

"I believe this will be our seventieth time," murmured Carne. He could still remember the first time, he had seen the dance. It had been just he and the other villagers, standing in amazement with light cascading off their faces seventy years ago.

The excitement in the inn was mounting. Several of the families had woken their children, who were now running zigzags and circles around the tables. Elon smiled when he saw the innkeeper with his arms crossed, chewing on his lower lip. It was a posture he had seen many times in his younger, more rambunctious days.

By this point every one was talking so loudly, they had to shout over one another just to be heard. The innkeeper put his hands to his temples and then motioned for Elon to bring him a drink. Elon hurried behind the bar to get one of the crystal-star glasses and then ran to the cellar. He had seen the innkeeper put on this act many times now and he felt that only the finest wine was fit for the performance. The cellar was naturally cool and dark and it was littered with old boxes of broken glasses, busted chairs, and many other objects that passed on during service for the inn. Elon had tried to persuade the innkeeper to part with at least some of the debris many times to no avail. Now he slipped past all of it to the far wall, where they had stacked barrel upon barrel of ale and where the innkeeper kept his private wine stock. He selected a dusty bottle of white wine with piece of string tied around its neck. This was the innkeeper's method of marking his oldest bottles.

He trotted back to the main room, bottle of wine in hand, barely able to contain his own excitement. He opened the bottle and poured until the glass was brimming. The innkeeper took the glass and gave a short nod of appreciation to the boy. At first the innkeeper took a tiny sip sloshing the wine around in his mouth. Looking pleased with him-

self he finally tilted his head back and finished the glass in one large gulp.

With his cheeks now noticeably flush the innkeeper took the empty glass and unsteadily climbed on top of the nearest table, picking up a knife as he went. Some people took notice of him and quieted down, but the rest went on with the conversation just as loudly as before. Unperturbed the innkeeper raised the glass and proceeded to strike it forcefully with the knife. It let out a high, clear note, almost like singing voice of some beautiful young girl. The crowd quieted itself almost immediately and with out missing a beat the innkeeper began to speak.

"Welcome, welcome all," he said heartily and in response they cheered loudly, clapping their hands and those who had wine glasses in their hands toasted him. "I am glad to have all of you here in my home on such a wonderful night." There was more cheering and more toasting. "Some of you I have seen before and I am overjoyed that you could return. But for those of you who are visiting us for the first time," he paused dramatically, "I promise you will see a sight like nothing you have ever seen before!" At this the entire inn, including the serving boy erupted in applause and cheering. It took quite awhile and the innkeeper hitting his glass many more times to quiet them down. When he finally had them settled he continued, "Tonight," he said in his deepest voice, sucking his stomach in and puffing his chest out, "you will see not only animals, and nature, but even the heavens themselves all conspiring together to produce the most amazing site that any man, woman, or child has ever laid eyes on!"

This time the innkeeper did not even attempt to quiet the crowd down. He climbed down from the table and dabbed the beads of sweat from his forehead.

"Elon," he said, calling the serving boy who came over immediately. "Begin rounding up the ones that are to go out on the lake with you."

"Yes sir," the serving boy replied.

"And be careful not to overload the boat, we don't want any one falling in and ruining the whole thing."

"No sir."

"And you do remember your part? What you're to say before they start?"

"Yes sir." The serving boy had delivered his own speech out on the lake four years counting now.

"And Elon," the innkeeper said at last.

"Yes?"

"Would you be so kind as to get me another glass of wine?" the innkeeper asked licking his lips, "That bottle you brought was an especially good year."

Elon lead a small group through the cobbled streets of the town. If he looked past the houses down other streets he knew he would see similar groups coming from the other two inns. These were the guests who had paid handsomely for larger rooms and more importantly a trip out onto the lake.

They wound their way past the shops and then the fishermen's houses and finally came to the lake's shore and the several wooden docks where many small rowboats were moored. Elon led his group to the end of the closest of these and instructed them to climb into one of the boats. It was wooden, but had thickly padded cloth seats and hundreds of tiny stars etched into it. Elon helped them board the boat, attempting to be courteous, but also make sure they didn't fall in. When every one was on board, he leaned over them.

"Now from here on out not a single word from any of you," he said. "No talking, no cheering, no applause. You are about to witness something much greater than anything you have ever seen before and it would be a shame if it was ruined by an untimely scream



or squeal." He paused to let this sink in. "And you, miss," he said to one of the women who had been especially noisy at the inn that he remembered bringing wine to on multiple occasions, "I would appreciate it if you would be so kind as to sit on your hands." She nodded, scrunching her face up in concentration.

Elon leaped lightly into the boat, untied the rope holding them to the docks, gave a gentle push and they glided out into the clear water. The people in the boat were nervous, many of them not knowing what to expect. And one fellow, next to the lady who was sitting on her hands, kept rocking vigorously back and forth. Elon took the oars and slowly lowered them into the water. Then he pulled on them smoothly and began to guide the boat to the middle of the lake.

The people in his boat were not the only ones who seemed excited. The fish were frenzied under the boat, darting back and forth. To the untrained eyes in the boat it looked like the lake was pit against itself, with unchecked currents flowing in all directions. Finally one of the fish, exploded out of the water, tendrils trailing from its tail and all, and landed again with a small splash. That was all the woman could take and a small peep escaped her lips. The boy smiled, knowing that once the fish started nothing would stop them. His first year as a guide one of the men had gotten so excited he had actually fallen in the water, but the fish just continued on around him.

As they began to draw close to the center of the lake Elon pulled the oars into the boat and let them drift. The fish seemed to have momentarily calmed, their swimming now slow and deliberate and he knew the time was coming soon. He stood up in the boat to address them.

"Ladies and sirs," he said slowly, "I tell you now that you will remember this night for the rest of your lives. For what may be the only time in your short existence you will see the entire world around you working in perfect harmony. I ask that you take something of this night away with you and apply it to the rest of your life. I sincerely hope you will let yourself be changed by and what you see." With this Elon bowed as low as he could in the boat and the first light blinked on under the surface of the lake.

Elon noticed it immediately and pointed. Every one in the boat turned to look. One of the fish, about four feet below the surface of the lake was now glowing with a pale white light. Several balls of light were circulating through its clear body, like fireflies in a jar. But these lights did not blink out, they kept circling through the fish's body and only seemed to grow brighter as time passed, until they made the entire fish glow bright white. More lights blinked on across the lake and grew bright. Then more and more, until every fish was glowing fiercely under the starry night.

Thousands upon thousands of bright lights now dotted the lake and the fish began to swim slowly and deliberately until they were again motionless. Elon pointed up to the sky and quickly the people in his boat realized that the fish had aligned themselves in an exact reflection of the stars. In the lake they could see familiar constellations, now formed by glowing fish and in turn the stars seemed to grow brighter and brighter as well, almost as if they and the fish were feeding off of each other.

They stayed like this for a long while, mirroring each other, until one of the brightest fish at the center of the lake began to move, slowly winding its way around the other fish in an expanding circle. And much to the surprise of Elon's boat one of the stars in the sky was doing the same thing. The other fish started to move too, winding their way around each other slowly in graceful arcs, switching directions and places in an indiscernible pattern.

The stars were also moving in the sky and as the fish increased their pace the stars moved faster as well. Now the fish were shooting in and out of each other in quick

graceful movements, glowing brighter than ever. And the entire sky was in a fury as the stars shot in and out and around one another like some great astral game of tag. Then one of the fish exploded out of the lake, the beads of water trailing behind it glowed as well and one of the stars dipped lower in the sky, trying to meet the fish. Another fish burst out of the water, this time right over the rowboat. More and more jumped out of the now churning surface of lake and the stars sank lower and lower in the sky to meet them. The rowboat was surrounded, above, below, and both sides by streaking points of light, all in harmony. And then without warning one of the stars streaked across the lake, over the town, and away to the north.

Many in Elon's rowboat turned their heads, expecting to see one of the fish flying over the town as well, but there was none. Then another star streaked away and its light when out. Soon all the stars were shooting off in a great cascade of light and with each one, one of the fish's light would extinguish. The lady who had been sitting on her hands up until that point could not control them any more as they left from under her and she clapped them together. Elon could see the large smile on her face as the last stars streaked away, but he was not smiling. His mouth was open and his eyes were wide with fear and he could not bring himself to move as they sat floating out on the lake in total blackness.

#### *Author's Note:*

This is obviously the first chapter of a much longer piece. The story that follows goes something like this: Elon was not originally born in the lake town. He was born in a great white citadel city at the base of a great mountain. The people that lived in the city were essentially guardians of the mountain, or more accurately guardians of the beings that lived on top of the mountain. These were called Strothmen and they were essentially conductors who could control the very movements of the stars.

Shortly before Elon was born an outsider from a large industrial city came to the white city at the base of the mountain. He had many ideas on how to improve the city and he quickly won the favor of the steward of the city, Elon's father, and became his most trusted advisor. Once he had attained a position only second to that of the steward, the outsider murdered the steward and his wife and sough out Elon. His maid, in hopes of saving his life, sent him down the river that flowed from the top of the mountain all the way into the lake, where he was finally found by the villagers that raised him.

As a ruler of the city, the outsider became obsessed with power and ultimately sought control over the stars. And order to get this he unleashed the very evil the entire city was supposed to protect the Strothmen from.

This is a story about corruption, greed, and the destruction of paradise. And most importantly it is a story about trying to control things humans were never meant to tamper with. I hope eventually you will be able to read the full story in print.

### **A Perfect Glass Sphere**

Eric Dzinsky

First Place Fiction-2003

Carol was looking at herself in the mirror when she heard the news. It was one of those big full-length mirrors on stands, solid and dark in the far corner of her bedroom. She had seen the mirror at an antique shop and bought it on an impulse. A few days later she had seen one at the mall that was light and slender and could be hung on the wall. She came to resent the bulky piece of furniture taking up so much space in her

tiny apartment. She couldn't return it, the antique store had a no returns policy, and she couldn't throw it out without throwing out the \$130 she had paid for it too. So she stopped looking at it, she stopped even acknowledging that it was there, she tried to erase it from her room by sheer will. It took several weeks (and Brian's pointing it out) before she realized that she was holding a grudge against an inanimate object. Thereafter she resolved to look into it every morning before she went to work, to make sure her outfit was coordinated and her makeup even and her hair adequately bouncy. As long as I have the stupid thing, she thought, it might as well be useful.

She was looking into the mirror when the news came over her clock radio that scientists at the local university had finally completed work on the project that had taken years and millions of dollars to accomplish. They had created a perfect glass sphere. Carol listened intently as the announcer explained in brief the processes and machines they had used to create the sphere. The instant that the announcer said that the sphere would be on public display for a limited time was the same instant in which Carol decided that she would see it. After the announcement the radio station went into a bit called "news analysis" where they had men of different political beliefs debate about the sphere. One spoke very softly and eloquently and used long words that Carol didn't know. The other was very straightforward and asked how this was a beneficial use of tax money. It seemed like there was a different soft-spoken eloquent man on every week, but they kept bringing the same guy to do the other side. Carol had ceased listening after the times and dates of the display were announced, she thought instead of how she could get out of work in order to see the sphere. She held up in front of her a dress with a stretchy red top and a skirt that billowed over her ankles. She turned to the side and then back to the front before frowning and pulling on a heavy brown sweater from her dresser.

Carol packed her bag for work and threw in a few dollars more for the train ride to the university. She pulled her bag up over her shoulder, which swept her keys off of the kitchen counter and onto the floor. They slid onto the floor and stopped short of the loveseat in the adjoining living room. When she bent down to pick up the keys she found next to them a pile of white cotton. She picked it up and shook it out. It was a white t-shirt; cold from the floor and deeply creased from the position it had been in. Briefly she wondered if it still smelled like him, gamey and musky with just a sweet hint of the cologne he used to wear. She retrieved her keys without smelling it and stood, walked toward the door, and dropped the shirt into a small cardboard box next to the coat rack.

Brian sat up in bed, propped against a pillow on the headboard. He read a book through the light film of smoke rising from his cigarette. Every so often he would rub away an itch or a stray bit of ash from his shirtless chest. He was pale and thin and rather hairy, but he didn't seem to notice. Carol had been drying her hair in the bathroom, and she leaned against the open doorway watching him with a disgusted fascination.

"What?" He asked finally.

"Are you just going to lie there naked all day?" She pulled the robe around her as he looked up.

"Of course not, I have work in a few hours." He crushed out his cigarette and turned the page. She turned back around and continued to shake her hair with the towel. Suddenly she felt his arms wrap tight around her waist and his bristly chin brush her neck.

"Get away," she batted at him, "I'm not dressed." She pulled the robe tight.

"Did you hear me complaining?"

She grabbed his wrinkled t-shirt from the dresser and whipped it at his face.

Carol boarded the train and stood near the front, leaning against the aluminum rod extending from floor to ceiling. It was cold and clean; she tried not to think of all the people who had touched the pole with what, focusing instead on the way it made her skin contract where it touched her moist forehead. The train slid to a stop at University station and she exited with a handful of other passengers, all carrying backpacks or briefcases or messenger bags. She climbed the stairs into the warm afternoon air. The last time she had taken a half-day off was when her sister needed a ride to the airport in February. Then it had been sharply cold and wet and slush had piled up on her tires and in her boots. Today the sun glinted off the high windows into the shade between buildings as a cool breeze fluttered the corners of newspapers and flyers. She crossed the street onto the lawn of the campus.

There were people everywhere. Students lay on the grass in small circles and clusters, they sat on benches bent over oversized books, they strolled the sidewalks talking pointedly at one another. The men wore muscle shirts and baseball caps; the women wore shorts and tight tops. Carol's stomach dropped with the sudden recollection of her own college days. She suddenly felt very much alone among these kids. She quickened her pace as she passed the anthropology center and the history building, behind which the auditorium rose like a crashing wave, sharp and dramatic against the equilateral buildings around it. She was struck by the suddenness of the building and jerked momentarily before continuing past it. The marquee in front of the building advertised an upcoming dance performance. Jazz, Tap, Ballet, Modern, Wednesday at 8 P.M.

The tights were new. The leotard was too. The only things she kept from the previous year were the shoes. Her feet, despite her best efforts, had stayed the same size. Carol shrugged as the heavy bag slipped over her shoulder. She finally got into the studio and dropped it against the mirrored wall. A small group of girls stood along the wall and talked, giggling while they stretched. A few of them turned to look at Carol as she dropped her bag and leaned her leg against the heavy wooden bar set into the wall. She had been stretching all summer too, and could now go through all her basic positions for a long time without cramping. Madame Colette strutted into the studio and clapped her hands, causing a brief clamor of girls lining up before her. She strode slowly in front of them stopping when she reached Carol.

"What are you doing here? Did I not tell you in the spring that you were too fat to dance properly?" Madame made not the least effort to lower her voice.

"I worked all summer Madame, I lost so much weight." Carol pleaded.

"You cannot change who you are, girl."

Carol picked up her bag and walked out of the studio. Her mother had already left, so she waited the entire hour until she returned, sitting on her bag, her head folded in her hands.

Carol stood in the front of a small group in a cramped, cold room with low ceilings. Most of them wore bright clothing and had worksheets on clipboards, one girl cackled loudly into a cell phone. A young woman in a lab coat and tortoise shell glasses stood before them speaking.

"The sphere itself took about a week to create, although the equipment and techniques used to do so took years and millions of dollars to perfect. We had to build a perfectly spherical environment in which to make it, and use tons of pressure and heat to force out any flaws in the structure. We've gone over every millimeter of it with a microscope to verify its perfection. We've done everything short of scanning it with an electron microscope."

"Why didn't you?" Carol asked over the woman who still chattered into her phone.

"The high energy of the microscope would disrupt the molecules and throw off the sphere's symmetry. Too much scrutiny can undermine perfection." The students scribbled on their worksheets as the woman in the lab coat stepped aside, revealing the case that the sphere was in.

The whole apparatus hummed as the sphere floated a few inches off the surface, suspended in a magnetic field that not only kept the sphere from touching anything, but also assured that all of the electrons spun the same direction. Carol could imagine them all dancing perfectly in time with the magnetic waves that washed over them. A cool mist tumbled over the sphere, lowering its temperature and reducing the rate of molecular motion. Carol asked if she could look closer and the scientist nodded, asking her to be careful.

"Be careful Carol," her mother chided. She took the little doll from Carol's hand and replaced it on the rickety wooden stand. "If you break something you have to pay for it." Carol's mother had never been this fretful in America. She would let her grab things from store shelves and examine them, because she knew that she would put them back when she was done. In America things were in plastic bubbles or in cardboard boxes, and there was very little chance of breaking them. This was the first time they had ever taken Carol to Mexico, to Ensenada, and everything was different here. Chickens hung upside down in a butcher shop across from their small hotel. Dolls and cheap jewelry and trinkets stood exposed on tables and little folding shops along the road. Carol's mom turned away to talk to a man who was renting out scooters a few feet away. Carol stood on her toes to try and reach the top shelf. The man who ran the stand looked and smiled at her through a graying mustache. He reached over and handed her a glass ball that was sitting on the shelf. His fingers were grubby as he placed it in her hand. It was warm from the sun. She held it to her face and saw her reflection in it. Her face was broad, and when she smiled into it, the reflection smiled twice as broadly. She could see the reflection of her hand leading to the broad reflection of her own body and up to her face. Behind her were people walking, growing and shrinking as they entered and left the ball, but always behind her, distantly. The man behind the shop said something in Spanish, but Carol could not understand. Her mom took the ball and handed it back to the man, saying *no gracias*. She took Carol by the arm and led her away from the shop. Carol looked back at the ball; the sun glinted off of it brightly.

Carol approached the sphere and bent over to view it. Her breath was visible in the cold of the lab. The thick mist tumbled over the sphere as it rolled slowly in midair. She leaned in close, holding her breath. Through patches of fog, she saw her reflection in the transparent surface of the sphere. She looked fat.

### He Stopped the Car and Reached For the Rifle

George Gonzales

Third Place Fiction- 2003

"Dad, don't. Let's go.

"Give me the bullet."

Ed reached into his pocket, found the bullet, and rubbed his thumb over its point.

"Come on, son, before it trots back into the woods."

Ed gave the bullet to his father.

Ed and his father, Edmund, were out in the trails of the San Gabriel Mountains. They hiked two miles in and came to rest on a small plateau that overlooked a sharp chasm lined with vanilla-smelling Jeffery Pines. Ed's father crouched between two large boulders, set his rifle where the rocks met, and shot eagles.

Ed sat in the passenger's seat. His father stepped out of the car with the gun down along his side.

At dusk, Ed swirled dirt with a stick.

"How many bullets we have left, son."

"Only two."

"What happened to the rest? I bought 48 shells."

"You only gave me 24."

Ed buried the rest, eight, in the earth while his father sniped a black object in the sky. Ed retrieved the bird: a black thing with a ruddy, feathered neck severed from the shot.

Ed's father leaned against the side of his car. He began to sweat, and the gun felt loose in his grip. The engine was on. Ed sunk down his seat and stared at his knees. One bullet was left in his pocket.

"Well, if we only have two left we should save them for the hike back."

"Sure."

"There isn't anything worth taking back, too many bad shots. Just leave 'em here."

There were 14 dead objects on the ground—if put together, they would form a black, white, and red mass of feathers with beaks, legs, and eyes randomly thrown across its body.

Ed's father aimed the rifle at the doe. The headlights reflected from the animal's coat and off the hood of the car. Ed looked at his father. The gun rested on the edge of the car; Edmund swung his left hand underneath the barrel and snuck his finger alongside the trigger. In the tiny orifice between his father's left arm and the gun, Ed saw a bespectacled face that broke the darkness beyond his father.

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"What the burning fuck?" Edmund said, and turned.

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"What the fuck?"

The light dimmed, and Ed looked back. The doe was gone.

"That was my god damned hind."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"Who the fuck are you?"

Ed could see the briefcase. He got out of the car.

"Dad, I want to see what's inside."

"What?"

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"I want to look, dad."

"A dollar? That's way too much."

"Please, dad."

"Are you sure, son?"

"Yes, yes, yes. Please."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"I know, asshole. Here's one."

The man opened his briefcase. Ed saw a river run across the width of the case. Water splashed against rocks, and fog clung to the tops of firs and edges of the briefcase. Ed reached into the box; his arm numbed. Ed fell.

"Ed," said his father, and knelt down to his son.

"Did you see it, dad?"

"Yeah. A whole lot of nothing."

"What?"

Ed's eyes closed.

Later, when he had a son, Ed drove up the mountain.

"Dad, why did we come to California to go hiking?"

"Because I haven't been here since I was your age."

"We could've gone hiking at home."

"We can't see the eagles at home."

"We can on TV."

Ed and his son, Jerry, got out of the car and hiked two miles into the San Gabriel Mountains. They settled on a plateau that overlooked a chasm. Ed opened his pack and took out turkey sandwiches, orange juice, beef jerky, and trail mix.

"Look over there."

Ed's son turned and saw two eagles whirl down in a cone and twirl back up.

"Gee, dad, I've never seen that on TV before," Jerry said.

"Go take a picture."

Jerry walked over to the edge of the chasm and took pictures. Ed moved to his son's seat on the ground and dug. He scooped away inches of dirt and scraped out a bullet. He dug more and took out the other seven. He put them in his bag. Jerry ran back.

"Wow, dad, that was great."

"Yes. Yes it was."

As they drove down the mountain, a deer ran in front of Ed's car.

"Dad, watch out!"

Ed's foot squashed the brake. The car hit the deer's hind legs. The deer spun to the floor and away from the car.

"Stay in here."

Ed got out and went over to the animal. The deer's left front leg covered its face. Ed smelled pine and burnt tires.

"I killed it."

A man with glasses on his nose walked out from the woods with a briefcase in his hands.

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"Oh, fucking Christ. Jerry, stay in the car."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"Get away from here. Get out."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"I have a bat, and I'll bludgeon your head if you don't get away from my face."

Jerry got out of the car.

"I want to look, dad."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

"No, get back in the car. You, get away from my son."

"Come on, dad, I want to see what's inside."

"No. There's nothing in it."

"Grandpa let you look."

"When did Grandpa tell you that?"

"Before we left."

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

Ed stared at his left shoe. He counted each time the lace intersected with itself.

"Are you sure, Jerry?"

"I want to look. Please, dad?"

"Would you like to look in my briefcase? Only a dollar a peek."

Ed gave the man two dollars. The man opened the briefcase. Ed saw the trees and the river and the fog. A man with a gun walked along the river and crouched near some rocks.

"I don't see anything, dad."

Ed turned his head to the car. The deer was gone. He looked back into the briefcase. A deer ran out from the fog and hooved the man in the throat and eyes.

"I don't see anything."



### Music Box

Karen Barragan

Second Place Poetry-2004

Oh how she must be loved  
in the hands of her maker  
sanding every corner into perfection,  
tightening her screws,  
but not too tight  
and then laying her on her back placing  
his music inside her.  
He winds and winds her until  
she can't be wound anymore  
and then she plays their music softly,  
over and over again with pride.  
Then he paints her ever so delicately, seals her  
with a flawless glaze  
and clothes her  
in red velvet.  
Oh how she must be loved...  
but not enough  
she was sold  
to the first bidder.

### The Truth About Wanting

Jessica Gardezy

Second Place Poetry-2004

I want to tame you so that you're used to me—  
as one becomes used to drinking coffee black,  
or parting his hair on the same side—  
then I'll leave.

I want to shelter you from the hard rain  
with my own body, so that you will feel  
the pounding against your naked flesh even more  
once I'm gone.

I want you to know me so well  
that out of habit,  
you will trace my lines on their skin  
every time you touch them softly.

I want to be like a phantom pain to you—  
like an appendage that you still feel  
even after its been cut off.  
I want you to bleed from the inside—  
to ache and scar for me  
and to never heal.

## **Out of China**

Vanessa Giovacchini

Third Place Poetry-2004

Traveling out of China

A man with downcast eyes

struggles to lift his suitcase

gently so gently

to the conveyor belt as he checks in

His jet eyes stray to the left

as he masks the sound of wheels churning in his head

with a thin lipped grin

He thinks—

good or bad, good or bad

I've done this twice before, it bothers me still

His eyes linger on his pregnant luggage

as it glides through plastic flaps and out of sight

At gate four he sinks into a worn vinyl seat and opens his book

the white pages become shadowed

and he hears the clink of metal on metal

handcuffed

When they unzipped the case

inside they saw

fit like a puzzle

porcelain, honey toned

legs and arms

wrapped and hugging each other

Fifty six small eyes closed in tranquil slumber

and thin hair like caps of raven feathers

Twenty eight smuggled baby girls

quiet in a black suitcase—

the stork to twenty seven

and the coffin for one

## **Family Portrait**

Aaron Jaffe

Third Place Poetry-2004

In my mother's house,

Up three flights of solid oak stairs,

In a dark corner of the attic,

At the bottom of a cardboard box,

Sits our family photo album.

On the first page there is one picture,

The only picture in the album,

Of my mother, my father, and me.

My grandparents took it

When they gave us the book.

We're in our living room,

Framed by the light from large bay windows.  
My mother is on the left,  
With her head turned away,  
And her hand in front of her face.  
My father is on the right,  
With his eyes just slightly averted,  
Starting at a clock on the wall.  
And I'm in the middle of it all,  
Looking straight at the camera  
With my eyebrows raised,  
And my mouth slightly open,  
Like I'm trying to apologize,  
Before I turn away too.

### **Augustine and Aquinas: An Evolution of the Medieval Mind**

Lisa Ybarra

First Place Scholarly Writing Prize-2004

Although differing remarkably through their theories on the relation of God to His created world, the Christian philosophers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas contributed greatly to the overall doctrine and beliefs of the Church. In the process, the two great thinkers not only contributed to the Church as an institution, but also influenced the perceptions and values of the medieval mind. Expressed within the literary works of the period, the influence of their philosophical systems on the sentiments of the people becomes clear. Although the two shared a conceptualization of God as immutable, creative, eternal, and all-good, they differed on their perceptions of man's capacity to understand, the role of the will, and the meaning and/or purpose of the natural world.

As barbarian invasions within the late fourth century and early fifth century caused the great Roman Empire to lose its strongholds throughout Western Europe, chaos, instability, and uncertainty replaced the prosperous, "civilized," and ordered empire. The absence of safety and reassurance among the citizens allowed for the Catholic Church to gain support it otherwise might not have been able to obtain. As citizens searched and yearned for protection, understanding, and purpose, the Church and its concept of a loving and omnipotent Father appealed to those seeking to escape their chaotic realities. Contributing and influencing such a sentiment among the population, the fourth century Christian philosopher Augustine attempted to illustrate the "true" superiority of God and his eternal law to the earthly world He had created. He aimed to fuse many of the concepts he derived from the classical works of Plato with his Christian doctrine of a divine God. Unlike Plato's demiurge that served as a craftsman to construct the world from pre-existing Forms, Augustine's concept of God embodied and possessed the divine Forms described by Plato as Beauty, Truth, and Wisdom. Likewise, he attempted to reconcile the problem of how an omnipotent and all-knowing Father could allow such chaos and perceived evil to occur within the world. In Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will* he attempts to understand and define the existence of evil through his perception of the nature of God the creator and the notion of man's free, but deficient and divided, will. As lesser perfections of God-and, therefore, lacking "true" reality- man's deficient will and earthly goods are seen as the sources of evil. Through arguing man and earth's inferiority to the eternal, his proposed "City of Man"(earth) and "City of God" (Heaven) are placed

in opposition, as man and earthly goods are seen as the sources of evil to be completely rejected in favor of the Truth and Wisdom of God. In suspense and anticipation of the end of the world and Judgment Day, Augustine believed that those who rejected earthly goods for the love of the true Good would be saved.

Emerging from the darkness of the early Middle Ages-characterized by this scorn-ing and denial of the importance of this-worldly affairs in relation to the eternal and other-worldly- the thirteenth century Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas created an evolution of the medieval mind. As the anticipated world's end did not happen and time passed, people's focusing on their relation with God over all else waned, and they shifted their interest to this world. With such a shift towards the appreciation of classical works including and beyond Plato, and the reemergence of Aristotle's writings, the challenge for Aquinas lay in fusing together the Aristotelian view of man and his world with Christianity and its views. Despite the challenge, he suggested within his works that the division of the universe into the secular and the divine or the "City of God" and the "City of Man" proposed by Augustine in the fourth century, was no longer quite so complete. Likewise, he did not perceive the human will and intellect to be deficient and pre-disposed toward evil, but rather as capable of understanding God's wisdom through reason. Likewise, Aquinas did not perceive the natural world completely evil, meaningless, and lacking reality compared to the eternal, other-worldly, "true" reality of God, but rather as a mirror of God's divine goodness and love, to be used as a means to further understand Him.

Likewise to their contributions to the evolution of the Church and its doctrine, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas' philosophical systems of thought on the nature of God and His relation to the created world also influenced the works of poets in their respective periods. Influenced by Augustine's division of the secular and the divine, or the "City of Man" and the "City of God," early Christian lyric and Old English and Religious Poetry of the period express the lack of value of earthly goods. In contrast, Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* reflects Aquinas' belief that the earth and its lower degree are a mechanism for understanding eternal Truth. Through a variety of characters and their positions in the cosmos, Dante illustrates how the appreciation of the natural world can be used either as a "ladder" in understanding the eternal, or as an evil if one places earthly goods above God. In reflecting the theories of Augustine, "To Ausonius," "The Wanderer," and "The Seafarer" express the meaningless nature of the earth and the superiority of the eternal as earth is depicted as alterable, fleeting, and uncertain; and emphasizes trust in God. In contrast, Dante's *Commedia* illustrates the importance of this world as an instrument in understanding the other, as he expresses through Cunizza and Folquet and Francesca and Paolo how the use or misuse of this world and God-given reason can lead to eternal damnation or salvation.

#### I

Although Aquinas shared Augustine's concept of God, the two thinkers differed on their perceptions of man's capacity to understand, the role of the will, and the meaning and/or purpose of the natural world. Despite their shared belief that the source of evil lay within the will of man, Aquinas attributed much more to man, as he held that intellect had control of free will. In contrast, Augustine believed that man's free but deficient and divided will led to an inability to do good, even though human beings were equipped with the knowledge of what is good.

In explaining the existence of evil, Augustine held that all people, as descendents of Adam, inherited a free but "deficient will" resulting from the Fall. As creator, God made the world out of nothingness. Consequently, each creature made by Him lacks His perfection and is less "real," as are they inferior reflections of Him (Jones 108-111). He

believed that evil existed not as a creation of God- because he held God is supreme goodness- but rather that the source of sin was internal rather than external (Jones 108-109). Although he held that God is omnipotent and all-good, he believed that the desire for temporal goods over eternal law was an effect of one's free but deficient and divided will (Jones 110). He theorized that God had equipped the mind to comprehend the good, but that man still does evil because the human predicament inherited from Adam causes us to have this divided will and to be helpless without the divine intervention of the Lord (Jones 106-107). Because of this first unnatural turning away from God, God punished humankind by bestowing ignorance and difficulty in seeing the Truth. The Truth that human psyche so clearly understood, was replaced with a divided will that failed to align intellect with will (Williams 107). He held that we should attempt to improve our relation with God by rejecting the goods of the earth and embracing the eternal. Having a "right" order of loves, would require that the eternal should be placed in supreme position over the numerous, meaningless goods of the earth (Jones 104).

In *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine furthers his argument on the nature of evil in relation to humankind's free but deficient and divided will. He holds that by giving man the ability to reason, God placed man in a superior role to other forms of life. Through such an ability, which seems the most God-like of human attributes, God has equipped man with the ability and/or potential to understand Truth. Yet despite the human mind's ability to reason and understand Truth, we are often unable to do the right because of the difficulty posed within as a result of a deficient will (Williams 114). Despite a divided will, those people who possess utmost reason, where reason rules the divine hierarchy of the capacity of souls over inordinate desire, are able to rule over the desires of the flesh, as the mind controls the body (Williams 111). Specifically, since we are predisposed to fall into evil, we must use our reason to look to God for aid in understanding. He argues that free choice is the root of sin, as it allows the body to rule over the mind when it turns away from God. Augustine states, "The conclusions that we have reached thus far indicate that a mind that is in control, one that possesses virtue, cannot be made a slave to inordinate desire by anything equal or superior to it, because such a thing would be too weak. Just one possibility remains: only its own free will and free choice can make the mind a companion to cupidity" (Williams 17).

Through such an argument, Augustine reveals how God, being all-good, would not in nature be the source of man's sin. Consequently, man with his deficient will should look to God for the understanding of Goodness. Furthermore, he argues that man's reason, allied with spiritedness (fortitude), should rule over the desires of the flesh in the hierarchy of the functional capacity of souls (Williams 14). According to Augustine, the man who possesses such control is "rightly" ordered and reflects the eternal law; his reason rules over the body, as God defined as Truth rules over the earth (Williams 15).

Discussing the possibility of attaining a good will, Augustine describes the nature of a good will as having a "right" order of loves, in which it embraces the eternal and turns its back to the temporal. In Book I, Evodius and Augustine discuss the value of a good will over the futile goods of the earth. A good will is determined to be the true source of happiness and determines whether man enjoys in the "true" good. Augustine states, "To have a good will is to have something far more valuable than all earthly kingdoms and pleasures; to lack it is to lack something that only the will itself can give, something that is better than all the goods that are not in our power" (Williams 20). Augustine holds that the futile goods of wealth, power, fame, or other are worthless because they are mutable and fleeting. Through their alterable and fleeting nature, these futile, earthly goods of the "City of Man" lead humans to turn away from the "true" reali-

ty, Goodness, and Truth of the eternal law.

Augustine describes the good will to be ordered and embracing of the eternal over the temporal through its possession of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice (Williams 20). He argued that by the possession of each of the virtues, the good will, with its goodness acquired through the divine intervention of God, is able to avoid evil. Consequently, although Augustine held that human beings had an innate predisposition to fall into evil, he also believed they could be saved by rejecting the temporal and trusting in the eternal.

Likewise, Augustine ponders on the issue of why exactly God gave humans free will if he was aware through his Divine Foreknowledge that evil would occur. In Books I-IV, he discusses free choice as a necessary condition for the greatest good and the greatest evil. He argues his position by discussing how God has given man free will as a mechanism to do the good. Yet despite its capacity to do the good, free choice can also be used to do evil as one chooses the temporal over the eternal (Williams 69). According to Augustine, God's Divine Foreknowledge in eternity does not cause man to lose his freedom and lack responsibility for his actions. Because God is eternal and dwells out of space and time, He does not inhibit free choice, but is aware that one will have that free choice (Jones 92). Consequently, our good or evil acts can be attributed to ourselves and not to God. Although our free but deficient and divided will has an innate predisposition to do evil resulting from the Fall, our choice to do good or evil results from our free choice to either place the eternal above the temporal or the temporal above the eternal.

Augustine's perceptions of the worthlessness of the natural world- with its evils caused by the deficient will of man and the fleeting, alterable, futile goods of the earth- are expressed in the early medieval poems "To Ausonius," "The Wanderer," and the "Seafarer."

Influenced by his long correspondence with Augustine, Paulinus of Nola's "To Ausonius" illustrates the very essence of Augustinian thought. Addressing the poet Ausonius, whose poetry marveled at the beauty of the earth and scorned upon the short time to life, Paulinus of Nola expresses how the earth is meaningless. Describing those who have chosen to abandon the temporal for the eternal, he states, "Freedom they seek, and emptiness apart/ From worthless hopes: din of the marketplace, / And all the noisy crowding up of things, / And whatsoever wars on the divine,..." Through such a description, the poet depicts the moment as enemy. The poet perceives the temporal world and its goods to be an evil, obstruction to the understanding of God. He believes that the temporal goods and affairs of the earth are merely a distraction from the eternal law. The poet emphasizes the denying of the moment and the living for eternity. He describes how we should reject all alterable, fleeting goods of the earth and embrace God and His Truth through faith. Furthermore, he states, "The present's nothing: but eternity/ Abides for those on whom all truth, all good,/ Hath shone, in one entire perfect light." Like Augustine, Paulinus perceives the world as nothing, meaningless, and lacking the "true" reality that is only provided through God and the eternal. The will's choice to embrace the eternal and reject the temporal is "true" goodness. The poet expresses how the eternal is the only source of happiness, as God's Goodness, Truth, and Wisdom, becomes clear.

Further exemplifying the meaninglessness of Life, "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" also reflect an Augustinian perception of God's universe. In "The Wanderer," life on this earth is also reflected upon as alterable and fleeting. As the poet looks upon the ancient ruins of man he ponders the earth's changeable nature: "Wretchedness fill the realm of earth, / And Fate's decrees transform the world. / Her wealth is fleeting, friends are fleeting, / Man is fleeting, maid is fleeting: / All foundation of the earth shall fail!"/

Thus spake the sage in solitude pondering./ Good man is he who guardeth his faith." Contributing to its expansion of the uncertain and alterable nature of life, the poem addresses the need of man to look to his faith in the all-knowing, omnipotent God and to not become entangled in the earth's goods. Moreover, the poet says that the truly good person is one who rejects the "City of Man" to embrace the "City of God." Only those who do so will be saved.

Similarly in "The Seafarer," the poet tells of life on this earth as uncertain. Within the work, the poet describes his literal journey in life as the sea. Spiritually, the poet describes his journey to Heaven. He describes the obstacles he must face morally, spiritually, and literally within his life as the bad weather, storms, and rough waves a seafarer must encounter on his journeys. He describes how man should not fear his own sea-faring or Life journey because he should trust in the Will of God who has set his path. In opposing those who favor the temporal he states, "Stupid the man who scorns the Almighty. / Death us an ambush. / Happy is he who is humbled: Heaven awaits him. / God upholds him who lives in His hands. / Steer your will well. Keep it on course. / Keep faith with your fellows. / Follow wisdom. / Love those who love Him. Hate His enemies. / Until you be place on the funeral pyre/ Your comrades have made you." According to the poet, God is the only source of happiness, truth, and wisdom. Consequently, the Lord deserves utter and complete loyalty.

## II

Unlike Augustine's notion of a divided world- of a "City of God" and a "City of Man" in which the earth is perceived as primarily unreal and meaningless- Aquinas believed in one universe, where God and his creation serve as one, ascending, unified hierarchy (Jones 214-215). He believed that the natural world and its goods and experiences could serve as a means to comprehend God and the eternal. Likewise, he attributed much more to man's capacity to understand and to do the good.

In attempting to fuse the classical views of Aristotle with Christianity, Aquinas sets out to express how reason and revelation could be unified to reach a greater truth (Jones 212). By unifying Augustine's two spheres, he sets out to illustrate how many Christian truths can be proved through reason. However, he does believe that the truths within revelation are the supreme principles used to proceed to prove other truths through rational argument. Likewise, he held that such truths serve as a means of developing other truths we would not have been able to achieve had we not had the principle truths as a basis (Jones 213). Yet like Augustine, he also notes how many truths do remain outside the reason of man and therefore, should be accepted only through faith (Jones 213). But through his attempt to reconcile reason with revelation, Aquinas expressed his belief in how the unification of the secular and the divine can lead to a higher understanding.

Furthermore, Aquinas adopted Aristotle's belief of the universe as a hierarchy of substances composed of matter and form. For Aquinas, form was the essential description of an animate or inanimate object's nature. He held that form referred to the actuality of the creature or object. It was perceived as normative and standard. According to Aquinas, an object's form was determined through its given characteristics. Unlike form, matter determined individuation among objects and creatures. Matter dealt with the potentiality versus the actuality of a substance. Unlike form, matter has the potential to change. Specifically, matter underlies change in form (Philosophy 312 Lecture 11/13/03).

Within this unified, ascending hierarchy of substances composed of form and matter, Aquinas describes and elaborates on the positions of God's creations. In describing the differing natures of God's creation, he states, "Different kinds of things produce in differ-

ent ways, those on a higher level producing in a more interior way" (McDermott 115). In *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas elaborates on this hierarchy and the characteristics of objects that determine their position. Beginning at the bottom of the hierarchy, "The lowest level of all is that of non-living bodies, in which production is only possible when one body acts on another" (McDermott 115). Within this level, Aquinas includes the element of fire, which can produce itself only when it comes in contact with another object outside itself. Aquinas tells of how plants are the only living things that are most nearly related to the objects within the level. Although he recognizes that there is sign of life in plants as they move themselves towards some form- versus being moved by something outside themselves- he describes how they can still be placed within the lowest level by the fact that their production begins from outside. He continues, "for the inner juices of the tree are sucked up by the roots from the earth which nourishes the plant" (McDermott 115-116). Continuing his explanation, Aquinas describes the level above plants, which includes animals. With their sense-awareness, these animals are at a higher level than plants because their production is more internally contained: "For something outside that can be sensed impresses form on the eternal senses, and from there goes on to the imagination, ending up stored in memory" (McDermott 116). Despite their position as higher than plants because their form of production is in essence more specific to themselves, they are still not perfect because their production still moves from one thing to another (McDermott 116). Aquinas eventually tells of the highest level of the hierarchy. Contained within this most perfect and high level is the intellect, which can reflect and understand itself. Within the highest level exists sublevels, ascending from humans, to angels, and finally, to God. At the lowest sub-level is the human mind. Although it has self-awareness, it cannot attain knowledge without its senses or the external world. Above the human mind is the life of angels. By knowing themselves not from external experiences but through themselves, they are above human intellect. Yet despite being above the human mind, they are not in the supreme position of the hierarchy. Although the ideas in their mind are completely within, it is not what they are. Specifically, their existence differs from their understanding. Aquinas continues, "The acme of perfection in life, then, belongs to God, in whom to exist is to understand... so that in God the idea in his mind is what God is himself" (McDermott 116). Consequently, placement within the hierarchy is determined by degree of ability, or lack of ability, to produce internally. Unlike creatures of God's creation, which in some sense require understanding or some aid outside themselves, God has complete and utter understanding, wisdom, and knowledge within Himself. He is everything. Because He creates the world in His image, everything is a lesser perfection of Him. Therefore, as a lesser reflection of God, the earth and its goods and experiences can be used to further understand Him.

As Aquinas dismisses Augustine's dualistic division of the universe into the "City of God" and the "City of Man," he also attributes more to man's capacity to understand and to do good. Unlike the Augustinian notion of a free, but deficient and divided will resulting from the Fall, Aquinas held that man did not have an innate predisposition to fall into evil and an inability to do the good without divine intervention. Unlike Augustine, he did not believe that the will had power over the intellect, but rather that intellect could control the will. Within his work *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*, he discusses the problem of human choice. Specifically, he debates the question, "Can human beings choose their actions freely, or are such choices compelled?"

Through his first set of propositions, he presents twenty-four arguments and/or sources in support of human choice being compelled. Within premise three, Aquinas argues that although animals move themselves by their appetite, they are not free to choose because their appetite moves and exists in response to an outside source. Therefore, if



human will is moved by God as appetite is also moved by God or an outside force, it does not have free choice (McDermott 172). In premise six, he presents another argument for choice being compelled versus free. Within premise six, he states that “no power can act except in pursuit of the object that defines it...” (McDermott 172). Therefore, he holds that since the object of the will is the good, it is unable to pursue anything else. Consequently, it cannot choose freely between good and bad (McDermott 172). Within premise twenty, Aquinas relates free will/choice to the nature of existence. Using Augustine as a source he states, “Augustine says that nothing causes its own existence; and for the same reason nothing causes its own movement” (McDermott 174). Following from such a premise, Aquinas argues that because will did not create itself, it cannot move itself but is moved by an outside force. Consequently, it can only be moved by something outside itself. Therefore, it is placed under compulsion and is not free because it is under the power of an external force (McDermott 175).

In reply to his premises supporting the compulsion, versus the freedom, of human choice, Aquinas reveals his dissatisfaction with such a position. Through his reply, he argues that will can sometimes be compelled, but that engaging in an actual act cannot be compelled. In support of his position, he discusses the nature of mind/intellect and will. He argues that human choice is not under complete compulsion because human beings originate actions. He argues that forms taken in by the human mind differ from the forms taken in by nature, which cause one, individual matter resulting in a fixed tendency and outcome. He explains that the mind takes in general forms that do not specify a fixed tendency or outcome, but allow for variety of outcomes and actions (McDermott 176). Likewise, he discusses the classification and exercising of a given action. He attributes classification of action to form and exercise of the action to an agent and its pursuit of a goal. Discussing the intellect and will, he holds that intellect relates to form and will relates to action. Specifically, he holds that when classifying actions within the realm of form, the intellect's objects of Being and Truth are in the highest position. Likewise, will places the good as its principle goal (McDermott 177). Consequently, “good applies to all goals as truth applies to all forms mind takes in” (McDermott 177).

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that will moves itself by deliberation. He argues that the mind is able to think through the means and ends of an action and choose to engage in the action accordingly. Despite his position that the will moves through intellect, he argues that some source must have moved it to begin deliberation. He theorizes that God moves the will. But, like Augustine, Aquinas did not believe that God's moving of the will obstructed man's freedom of choice. Aquinas believed that God moved the will not by having complete control over the course of action, but rather that he moves it in the way that He predisposed it to move. Therefore, He allowed for the will to have a variety of possible choices (McDermott 178).

Furthering his argument, Aquinas held that the will can be compelled, but not through action. He believed that we are compelled by what we perceive as good and appropriate. Humans are compelled to achieve complete happiness, and this desire is the underlying motive that we are determined to achieve. But our “compulsive determination” to achieve complete happiness, does not guarantee the “compulsive exercise” of the goal of his will (McDermott 179). Consequently, Aquinas held that the human mind does desire to do the good, but our choice of action through will does not necessarily coincide with the determination.

Therefore, deriving from his reply, Aquinas argues against the premises he presents in support of the idea that human choice being compelled. To premise three, he argues that

a “higher agent” does move lower animals through a stimulus that awakens their sense-appetite, but that God moves the will in the way he predisposed it to move. He does not compel every action, but rather allows for a number of possibilities (McDermott 180). Responding to premise six, Aquinas argues that although will’s object is the good and it can will nothing else, there are a number of good things. Consequently, one can choose among two or more goods. In response to premise twenty, Aquinas argues that will is not placed under compulsion by something else because of the mind and will’s capacity. He argues that a thing can move only through a variety of respects. Through understanding, the mind actualizes its own potential and can, therefore, move itself. Furthermore, will actualizes itself and is able to move itself by willing a goal (McDermott 183). Consequently, Aquinas held human will to be free and not entirely compelled. In contrast to Augustine’s notion of man having a deficient will, predisposed to evil and helpless without divine intervention, Aquinas held that man’s ability to reason allowed him to control the act of the will.

Influenced by the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Dante’s *Commedia* illustrates the importance of this world as an instrument in reaching and understanding the other. Through the character of Beatrice, Dante uses the illustration of earthly love to represent the Divine Love of God. Therefore, he presents earthly love as a means of comprehending the Divine Love through a lesser degree of perfection. Yet despite the importance of this world as an instrument in reaching and understanding the other, the suffering souls in Hell depicted within his *Inferno* tell of how such an appreciation of the natural world can turn terribly wrong. Within the *Inferno*, the lovers Francesca and Paolo represent a distorted mirror of the divine love as they commit idolatry, selfishly fail to “love their neighbor” by committing adultery, and blame love and God’s power over personal action for their eternal punishment.

Understanding the works and theories of Aquinas, Dante tells the tragic story of Francesca and Paolo to illustrate how focusing only on the this-worldly and the complete rejection of the other-worldly can lead to eternal punishment through God’s divine justice. After meeting Minos, Dante and his guide Virgil enter the Second Circle of Hell in Canto V, Dante states, “I came to a place stripped bare of every light/and roaring on the naked dark like seas/wracked by a war of winds. Their hellish flight/of storm and counterstorm through time foregone, /sweeps the souls damned before its charge. /Whirling and battering it drives them on, /and when they pass the ruined gap of Hell/through which he had come, their shrieks began anew. /There they blaspheme the power of God eternal” (Canto V ll. 28-36). Overcome by their loud shrieks and cries comparable to the sounds of cranes, Dante learns that these punished souls are those of the lustful, who committed the sins of the flesh. As Virgil identifies such souls as Semiramis, Dido, Tristan, and Cleopatra, Dante is overwhelmed by pity. Dante sees two souls whirl by together in a furious wind and tells Virgil that he wants to speak with them to learn about how they were brought to eternal damnation. He calls to them in the name of Love and Francesca yearns to explain her situation to the piteous Dante about her situation. Dante learns how Francesca and Paolo committed adultery and how Francesca’s husband murdered them in their sleep. Throughout the description of her plight, she blames everything from Love to the reading of the story of Lancelot and Guinevere as a cause for her actions. She states, “On a day for dalliance we read the rhyme/of Lancelot, how love had mastered him. /We were alone in innocence and dim time... For when we read/how her fond smile was kissed by such a lover, /he who is one with me alive and dead/breathed on my lips the tremor of his kiss” (Canto V ll.124-126, 130-133). Francesca does not blame herself for her damnation, but places the blame on everyone and everything else. Therefore, it is only appropriate that her egotistical nature places her in such punishment through the Divine Justice of God.

Dante chose Francesca and Paolo's story because they were such passionate lovers. It seems as if their earthly love was almost divine and could have ideally been used a stairway to understand the divine love of God, had they not chosen to love one another above God. Tragically, their love for one another was so intense that it could have been ideal; yet, it was not, as their love surpassed their love of God and his eternal law. Likewise, the two lovers did not follow the Word of God as they failed to "love their neighbor." They selfishly chose to indulge in the sins of the flesh and to disregard the feelings of their spouses. They violated the sacred vows of marriage for the satisfaction of their lust.

Moreover, through Francesca's blaming of God's power, love, and the Lancelot rhyme, Francesca falls short of taking responsibility for her actions. She fails to see her misuse of earthly love and her rejection of God through her actions. Consequently, she and the other damned souls of the Second Circle of Hell damn God's power for their damnation, rather than themselves.

Through the story of Francesca and Paolo, Dante is expressing the idea that although the this-worldly is important, its deepest meaning is sacramental. We lose the good of sacramental things if we place its goods before God. In understanding the world within Aquinas' Aristotelian theory as a hierarchy of substances with God in the supreme position, Dante depicts how earthly goods give one the sense of the divinity of God in a lesser perfection. The earthly love of Francesca and Paolo does resemble the divine love of God in a lesser degree; yet they fail to use it appropriately as a "ladder" to higher things. Likewise, Aquinas' justification of reason as a means to reinforce revelation is seen through Dante's depiction of the Second Circle of Hell. He states, "I came to a place stripped bare of every light..." (Canto V ll. 28). Through such a description, the absence of light symbolizes the lack of reason within this place where the lustful reside. It is the place for those who betrayed their God-given reason for the fulfillment of their lustful desires. Therefore, because they failed to use their God-given reason as a "ladder" to the divine, it is only appropriate that they are eternally doomed through God's Divine Justice.

Francesca and Paolo's punishment also satisfies the principle of *contrapasso*, in which all souls find their place within the universe. Within this notion of *contrapasso*, so vividly brought to life within the *Inferno*, the punishment for these souls is the sin. Consequently, the superimposing of the "City of God" and the "City of Man" is expressed. Therefore as Francesca and Paolo whirl around in a furious wind, their punishment for their sins of the flesh is to be eternally together without the presence of their bodies. Instead of being unified in the after-life to indulge in their love and compassion with one another, surpassing their experiences together on earth, the two lovers are whirled around in eternal torment with the absence of their bodies.

In contrast to the *Inferno* where the principle of *contrapasso* is achieved for the souls as their punishment is their sin, within the *Paradiso*, the reward the souls receive is their virtue. Once again superimposing the two cities into one, Dante uses the characters of Cunizza and Folquet to present the glory of those who use their God-given reason on earth for the good. Emerging from the darkness of Hell and Purgatory, Dante finds himself in the Paradise of God. Unable to fathom the true nature of such a place, Dante is guided through the spiritual journey by his love Beatrice. The nine spheres within Heaven serve as the ultimate trinity of trinities, as the nine circles of Hell and all it embodied is a mere parody of the superiority of God. Differing from the darkness of Hell, caused by its absence of reason and presence of evil, Paradise is filled with blinding, incomprehensible light provided by the knowledge and wisdom of God. As Dante soars higher and higher through the spheres of Heaven, the light gets brighter as the complete knowledge and wisdom of God

becomes clear.

Dante and his blessed guide Beatrice eventually ascend to the Sphere of Venus (third sphere) occupied by the amorous. Following their meeting with the great ruler Charles Martel, a spirit identifying itself as Cunizza da Romano introduces herself to Dante. She describes a soul next to her by explaining how he pursued the good while he resided on earth. She continues by telling Dante of the evil that has befallen her homeland of Venetia. As the citizens pursue merely the temporal goods of the earth, they are perverted with corruption and treachery. She prophesizes great ills for her people because of their choice to pursue only earthly goods and acting for evil. Through such a character, Dante illustrates how the physical world should be used above all as a means to gain understanding of the eternal, not used to distract one from, or to reject, the other-worldly. Unlike the souls depicted in the *Inferno*, the souls within Paradise did use the physical world as a "ladder" to the understanding of the higher. These souls fell into earthly love, but repented and learned to use earthly love as a means to understand the love of God.

As Cunizza departs, the soul she failed to name during her first remarks approaches Dante and reveals himself to be Folquet. The former Bishop of Marseilles describes how he once burned with earthly love earth. Comparing the earthly love he experienced to Dido's immense love for the Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*, he tells of how he converted the love he felt on earth into a ladder to understanding God's love. Through such a conversion of desires, he and Cunizza are allowed to be together eternally in the presence of the love of God they chose to revere. He explains how the intense desires of earthly love no longer plague him. Describing his place in the Sphere of Venus he states, "joy is all our being: /not at the sin-that never comes to mind-/ but in the All-Ordering and All-Foreseeing. /Here all our thoughts are fixed upon the Love/ that beautifies creation, and here we learn/ how world below is moved by world above" (Canto IX ll.103-108). Through Folquet's use of his understanding of love of earth to comprehend the divine, he finds a place to rejoice in Heaven. Unlike the damned souls who defamed creation and placed earthly love above God, Folquet and the souls of the Sphere of the Venus find that their love is their eternal reward. Therefore, uniting Augustine's two worlds, Aquinas and Dante express how the unreasoned, evil acts of the damned souls is their eternal punishment and the intellectual, virtuous acts of the blessed souls is their eternal reward.

Although Augustine and Aquinas shared a similar conception of God and recognized the importance of the eternal world, they differed on their perceptions of the value of the natural world and the capacity of man and his relationship to God. Augustine's complete and utter rejection of this world with its evil he attributed to man and his deficient will, shadowed the "true" essence of the human mind to contemplate, understand, and contribute to the further understanding of God. From the darkened Augustinian perceptions of the helplessness of man and the evil of the natural world, Aquinas emerged to unite the "City of God" and the "City of Man" and to recognize the importance of the natural world and the capacities of man in discovering Truth. In Canto XXX of Dante's *Paradiso*, Beatrice declares, "Light of the intellect, which is love unending;/ love of the true good, which is wholly bliss;/ bliss beyond bliss, all other joys transcending," (ll. 40-42). Within the *Commedia*, the very place the souls find themselves is dependent on their rejection or embracing of the knowledge and wisdom of God that Dante referred to as Love. As so vividly illustrated through the work of Dante, Aquinas' unification of the two cities was to usher in a period of new appreciation of man and this world.

## What Happened to the American Idiom?

Amber Hollingsworth

Second Place Scholarly Writing Prize-2004

It was undoubtedly a significant forty years that changed “a red wheel / barrow // glazed with rain / water” to “Go take a flying crap in the / rain!” These forty years saw the Second World War, the creation and detonation of the Bomb, and the emergence of the ‘free love’ doctrine. They also saw modernist thought, art, and literature morph into postmodernist, and with all of this, an important shift in the attitude toward the role of poetry and its components. This shift can be traced through the writings of two of America’s most noted modern and postmodern poets—William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg. This paper searches the ideas of what it means to be a modern and a postmodern poet, and specifically what I means to write using the American Idiom as established by Williams under each of these movements. Although Ginsberg claims to be deeply indebted to Williams for his use of the American Idiom, “inevitable changes have occurred in the chronological transference of Williams’ ‘poetics’ to the 1950’s and 1960’s.” In order to present a focused argument, especially considering the broad and varying definitions of the terms ‘modern’ and ‘postmodern,’ these changes can be looked at through the subject of metanarratives as discussed by the theorist Jean-François Lyotard. As a modernist, Williams can be seen portraying (and perpetuating) certain metanarratives both in his poetry and in his beliefs about the role of poetry; Ginsberg, tapping into certain postmodern ways of thought, seems to appeal to Lyotard’s “incredulity toward metanarratives.”

### What’s so ‘post’ about postmodernism?

As the name implies, postmodernism is an extension of and reaction to modernism, and the definitions of the two terms often overlap. Both movements are based on the idea of breaking down the taboos, traditions, and structures of the past. In some senses, postmodernism is simply modernism to a more extreme degree, as is the case with Ginsberg’s poetic form, discussed later in the paper, which imitates the basic ideas established by Williams, but goes even further to break even those forms. As critic Simon Malpas puts it, “postmodernism is thus a radicalization of modernism in which artistic experimentation is pushed even further.” Another part of postmodernism, though, is the recognition of the areas where modernism fails, and the readjustment of those ideas. This is where Lyotard’s argument about metanarratives fits in.

“Modernity,” according to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, says Malpas, “is concerned with progress, whether that is the development of ideas and technology, the generation of wealth or the movement towards justice for all.” This concern is common to all ideas of modernity, Malpas claims; from the version whose beginning is located at the death of Christ to the version whose beginning is located at the First World War “with its mechanization of combat.” The concern with progress, though, is what Lyotard finds problematic about modernity, because, as Malpas says, “For Lyotard, modernity is defined by its reliance on grand narratives that depict human progress.” Progress is a metanarrative created by society in order to legitimate itself.

The problem Lyotard has with metanarratives is that they conflate denotative statements, like “cannibalism exists,” with value statements, like “cannibalism is bad.” Science must appeal to a metanarrative of progress “in order to explain and justify their discoveries,” Malpas explains. One example of this might be the development of the ability to send a human to the moon. In order to do this, scientists first had to convince the world that we *should* do it, and progress was the argument they used. Lyotard says that

the connection of fact and value is not something that is inherent, but rather something that is arbitrarily decided and agreed upon by a community. The other problem with metanarratives is when they are used to delegitimize things they were not designed to legitimate in the first place; or more specifically, when the metanarrative of science and progress is used to delegitimize the arts.

For a time, the arts had to defend themselves against the sciences when science claimed to be progressive and good for humanity while the arts couldn't. What Lyotard says is that literature, a "language game" of its own, doesn't have to appeal to a metanarrative of progress—you either accept it for what it is or you don't. This attitude, the "incredulity toward metanarratives," is what defines the Postmodern Condition, and what can be seen in most postmodern works.

### **How is Williams modern?**

A number of critics, such as Joseph Riddel, claim that Williams's poetry and ideas about poetry display more postmodern tendencies than modern, and the evidence for that claim does exist. Concerning science, Williams once explained that

When a young astronomer asserts the superiority of his materials, the stars, [to that of the poet, words, he does this at least correctly, he objectifies the words as the material of poetry, differentiates at the same time between their use to him, an astronomer, and to another, who is a poet.

But to say that either words or stars are the material of either science or poetry, shapes perceptible to the senses—it would be better to go slow—for are they not corollaries only of the brain? Were we to scrape the words from the paper, or the stars from the sky, they would mean alike, nothing. It is only their inter-relationship with the perceptions that we know them. And there they are equally real.

In writing there are depths to be sounded as deep as any sky—as material, as full of value.

Here, Williams is tapping into Lyotard's argument about science attempting to legitimate itself over literature without realizing that they are separate language games, each with its own rules. This is a very postmodern idea about literature. But no matter how critical Williams is of science's claims to be more valuable, he can't help but latch onto their metanarrative of progress when Einstein's theories come to America.

As a modernist, Williams is still on the edge of the debate between science and the arts; his own incredulity toward that metanarrative was not strong enough at the time to defend poetry on its own terms. So when a 'new science' came into the scene, Williams found a perfect way to legitimate not only literature, but his own search for an American Idiom, whose discovery he also had to defend. Einstein's physics created a 'new world' where Williams's Idiom belonged. As critic Lisa Steinman explains in her book *Made in America: Science, Technology, and American Modernist Poets*,

Williams invokes not only Einstein's creativity but also scientific *hardness* generally to underwrite poetry, justifying his search for a new measure by comparing the object of his quest with a new element "predicated by a blank in the table of atomic weights." The point of such analogies was to argue that poetic experimentation was as firmly connected with verifiable discoveries about the real world as scientific experimentation.

The new physics, mostly because of its newness and experimental origins, “seemed to offer a way to defend poetry.” We can see Williams attempting to tie in the elements of physics in the prose-poetry of *Spring and All*, for example, by using phrases like “energy in vacuo” and “inevitable flux” and displaying the idea of “thought in motion” with his fractured, unfinished statements. Later, Williams used Einsteinian physics to validate his development of a variable foot, claiming that “the universality of science compels” a new measure. The postmodern aspect of Williams’s appeal to science in this case is that the new physics was all about motion and change—important parts of the postmodern world. However, Williams’s “insistence that poetry address the collective needs of Americans, [...drawing] on analogies with science or technology in order to claim that poetry was, like these other disciplines, important to America,” is in fact a very modernist move. In fact, as critic James Breslin points out, “*The Great American Novel begins*: ‘If there is progress, then there is a novel. Without progress there is nothing.’” Williams is appealing to the same metanarrative here that science does. The works of Ginsberg, I later argue, are far more postmodern in that Ginsberg makes no appeals to science in order to defend poetry’s value against metanarratives of progress, but rather writes in a way that says: “here’s my poetry, take it or leave it.”

Another way in which Williams can be seen as modern in terms of the modernist association with metanarratives is in his involvement with “the grand narratives of modernity [... that] point towards a future in which the problems facing a society (which is most often thought of as all humanity) will be resolved.” Whether Williams believed that the problems of humanity could be resolved is debatable, but his faith in progress and creation even in the face of the depression, two World Wars, and the Bomb hints toward such a modernist attitude. In “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower,” Williams likens the Bomb, “dedicated / howbeit / to our destruction,” to a flower and to love, noting that the heights of human creation have also brought us destruction. Still, he recognizes that creation and destruction are not dichotomous but part of a cycle, like spring and winter. This idea is expressed more explicitly in the prose-poetry of *Spring and All*, where Williams encourages “the annihilation of every human creature on the face of the earth,” for “Then at last will the world be made anew.” It is only through destruction that the “majestic progress of life” can make the world new. Of course, Williams is speaking of poetry here, saying that only by destroying traditional poetic structures and forms can America create its own. This is the problem facing American society that Williams believes newness and progress can resolve; this is why Williams claims anything can be the subject of a poem, and why he writes in lines emulating speech. These things can resolve the problem of America to find its own Americanness.

The idea of searching for an American Idiom, or essentially an America, is modern in its unifying nature. When Williams represents the universal in the particular, he admits to the belief in the existence of a universal, a concept shunned by postmodernists who perceive only fragments. Like cubist art, which Williams so admired, modern poetry consists of fragments that interact to form a whole. In a Williams poem, this looks like “The Great Figure”:

Among the rain  
and lights  
I saw the figure 5  
in gold  
on a red  
firetruck  
moving  
tense  
unheeded  
to gong clangs  
siren howls  
and wheels rumbling  
through the dark city.

In this poem, each line presents a new image “suspended and lifted [...] in time” that creates an overall image, or “moment of perception” captured in the poem. While Williams is careful not to copy objects with his poetry, but rather imitate them by making the poem a thing in itself—“not ‘realism’ but reality itself”—“He is not arguing that a poem has merely existence, no meaning,” explains Breslin. “What he does hold is that its meaning will not be found at the surface, explicitly stated, buoyed up by a pleasing rhetoric. It will be found [...] hidden in the minute relationships of the words.” This is why, in poems like “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “so much depends / upon” this image. Williams doesn’t say what depends upon it, he just says so, and gives us the image. The same is true for “The supreme importance / of this nameless spectacle” in “The Eyeglasses” (the nameless spectacle being an interaction between a man, a woman, and a child witnessed by Williams), and the fact that Williams “must tell you” about the “Young Sycamore.” Such value-laden phrases interjected in pure image implies that there is something—a universal, perhaps—to be found in these things. Critic J. Hillis Miller offers a thorough analysis of this very aspect of Williams’s poetry, saying:

No symbolism, no depth, no reference to a world beyond the world, no pattern of imagery, no dialectical structure, no interaction of subject and object—just description. How can the critic “analyze” such a poem? What does it mean? Of what use is it? How can the poet justify the urgency of his first line: “I must tell you”? [...] The answers to these questions can be given only if the reader places himself within the context of the assumptions which underlie the poem [...] His poetry can give itself to calm description because all objects are already possessed from the beginning, in what he calls an “approximate co-extension with the universe.” The co-extension need be only approximate because that concentration on a single object or group of objects so habitual to Williams confirms his identification with all things.





The whole process is a lie,  
                  unless,  
                                crowned by excess,  
it break forcefully,  
                  one way or another,  
                                from its confinement— (“The Ivory Crown”)

This sparrow  
                  who comes to sit at my window  
                                is a poetic truth  
more than a natural one.  
                  His voice,  
                                his movements,  
his habits—  
                  how he loves to  
                                flutter his wings  
in the dust—  
                  all attest it; (“The Sparrow”)

Or in *Pictures From Brueghel*, Williams's last collection of poems, a majority of the poems consist of short, three-line stanzas. A simple scan of the pages of this book reveal, at the very least, a pattern of form, something unseen in the works of Ginsberg. It is not just the appearance of the poem that Williams wished to establish with his variable foot, however, but the way the poem reads as well. “The Rewaking” exemplifies this idea perfectly, with lines that read:

Sooner or later  
we must come to the end  
of striving

to re-establish  
the image the image of  
the rose

but not yet.

Many of Williams's poems follow this structure, where each line alters the image of the preceding line or lines. Ultimately, Williams has developed a measure that, no matter how ‘variable,’ creates a sense of order amongst the chaos of society, an idea common to modernity.

### **How Ginsberg is what Williams isn't: postmodern**

It is true that some aspects of Ginsberg's writing are extensions of Williams's ideas “pushed even further”; Ginsberg was, after all, for a time considered Williams's protégé. However, the differences in their writings appear not just as different styles of the two poets, but expose underlying theoretical belief differences between them. Wherever Williams holds onto modernist ideas of progress, meaning, and order, Ginsberg destroys them with his frustrated, existential, chaotic poetic style. Where Williams unites America, revealing the universal in the particular, Ginsberg presents the fragmented, non-referential

postmodern world in his poetry.

The early poems of Ginsberg admittedly follow Williams's style in an almost idolatrous sense. "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour" in *Empty Mirror*, for example, "structurally matches the commonplaceness of the scene with a spare, matter-of-fact treatment," critic Thomas Merrill explains. He goes on to say, "Ginsberg has managed to pull something universal out of ordinary workaday trivia." Indeed, this poem could easily pass as Williams's. As Ginsberg's poetry progresses, though, Williams's influence gives way to a style and an ideal of Ginsberg's own; "to an impassioned, uninhibited style which eventually erupts in *Howl*." On one hand, this style is an extension of Williams's variable foot idea, or writing in a line synonymous with speech. Ginsberg speaks of a "breath unit" as the measurement of each line in *Howl*, and attributes this idea directly to Williams in an interview with Gary Pacernick in the *American Poetry Review*. Still, one can actually see the difference between Ginsberg's version of this unit of measurement and Williams's; in *Howl*, a breath unit may consist of:

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen  
night-cars, N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and  
Adonis of Denver—joy to the memory of his innumerable lays  
of girls in empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses' rickety  
rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in  
familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings & especially secret  
gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys too

Ginsberg admits, "It probably bugs Williams now, but it's a natural consequence, my own heightened conversation, not cooler average-daily talk short-breath. I got to mouth more madly this way." Ginsberg asserts again and again that his poetic structure is based on this breath unit measurement, and if so, this is where he is more extra-modern than postmodern.

Several critics, including Merrill, claim that Ginsberg isn't just following Williams in a more extreme manner. "He wishes to break through even the permissive, flexible control that Williams deems essential," Merrill says. Weatherhead agrees: "There is not a great deal of Williams in all this [*Howl*]." If this is the case, it not only means Ginsberg is more postmodern than he acknowledges being, but it makes more sense as well. The idea of breaking through a form of control is one that Ginsberg holds to his whole life, from his disgust with the government's drug laws (he calls the government the "bladder police") to his battle against censorship. If he held such philosophies to his poetry, it would agree to Lyotard's definition of postmodern art, which "disrupts established artistic structures and language games [...] Postmodern works are disorienting: they break the rules and undermine the categories that the reader or viewer are used to, and raise the questions of 'what is art?' and 'what is reality?' in their very structure." Indeed, Ginsberg's poems made readers wonder what could be considered poetry, if this could. The poem "Graffiti 12th Cubicle Men's Room Syracuse Airport," for example, is simply what the title implies; Ginsberg probably wrote the poem while on the toilet. Even Merrill, one of Ginsberg's most generous critics, notes that "one of the problems one must continually consider in Ginsberg's work [...] is that] poetry does not live on rhetoric alone." Between his prophetic rants, his sexually explicit expressions of desire, and his drug-induced visions, Ginsberg constantly challenges the categories of art and reality.

The subjects of Ginsberg's poetry are also postmodern not just in the sense that "anything goes," which Merrill claims is simply a juvenile handling of the postmodern dismissal of metadiscourses, but in that they vouch for a postmodern view of the world as fragmented, meaningless, and Zen-like. The philosophies of Zen Buddhism, widely adopt-

ed by the Beat poets, contest that evil is not considered the natural enemy of good but its inevitable companion. They are sides of the same coin, and the proper stance of a reasonable man toward them is not one of pursuit of one and resistance to the other but a natural acceptance of the claims of both. A man consists of both good and bad things; to deny, therefore, part of himself through an arbitrary moral code would be to deny his claim to the name *human being*.

Ginsberg indeed accepts all of what it means to be human, including auto- and homoerotic desires, insanity, and all forms of bodily functions. On a theoretical level, this principle could be tied to Lyotard's idea of mini-narratives, or the pieces of life that don't fit into modern society's metanarratives. By creating metanarratives that claim to possess the qualities of order and value, mini-narratives are by default marginalized and given qualities of disorder or wrongness. Theorists such as Jacques Derrida discuss this problem in terms of binary opposites, where one thing or one idea is given a positive value (usually the things that fit into modern metanarratives, such as heterosexuality, for example), and its counterpart is given a negative value (homosexuality). Lyotard claims that by destroying metanarratives and choosing to include all local or mini-narratives, we can free ourselves from a world constructed of arbitrarily assigned binary opposites. Malpas says that Lyotard wishes to increase "the fragmentation of language games. As language games are linked to identity, Lyotard argues that the wider range of different language games that are considered legitimate within society, the more open and pluralistic that society can become." In practice, Lyotard's theories can be interpreted as the Beat poets interpreted it:

Where American culture preaches that cleanliness is next to, if not godliness, a high popularity rating, the Beatnik refuses to bathe; where convention insists that marriage and the home are the foundations of the great society, the Beatnik glories in casual sexual liaisons and flirts with homosexuality; where society places the bulk of its hope for the future in the hands of science, the Beatnik listens passionately to the sometimes confused murmurings of his heart.

By actively rebelling against such traditional and modern metanarratives, the Beats insist on exposing all parts of life. On the page, Lyotard's theories look like Ginsberg's poetry.

Come heroic half naked young studs  
That drive automobiles through vaginal blood  
Come thin breasted boys and fat muscled kids  
With sturdy cocks you deal out green lids  
Turn over spread you strong legs like a lass  
I'll show you the thrill to be jived up the ass  
Come sweet delicate strong minded men  
I'll take you through graveyards & kiss you again  
("Come All Ye Brave Boys")

The fact that Ginsberg's poetry was censored also supports the fact that he was a post-modernist living in a traditional world organized by arbitrary values.

Also accompanying Ginsberg's fragmented style and extreme subject matter is the existential attitude of the Beat poets. Since, as Lyotard claims, "The grand narrative has lost all meaning" in the postmodern world, "there is no longer any unifying identity for the subject or society," Malpas concludes. Without a unifying identity, Ginsberg's fragments cannot reveal the universal, as we've seen done with Williams's poetry. At best,

Ginsberg can hope that “Readers identify because they see [him] as more or less naked and transparent,” Ginsberg explains in an interview with Lisa Meyer. “They see things in me that are like things in them.” So not only do the Beat poets claim that traditional ideas of universality are wrong, but that universality does not exist. Ginsberg hints at this when he says, “I don’t think there is any truth. I think there are only points of view.” In cooperation with this is a postmodern idea of language or words existing only as surfaces. In the equation of signifier and signified, the signified is removed, and all we’re left with are non-referential words. And Ginsberg wholeheartedly asserts that there is no meaning to be found in a line like

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns,  
wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of  
teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and  
tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ash-  
can rantings and kind king light of mind

All of these qualities found in Ginsberg’s poetry point to the ultimate test of postmodernity—“incredulity toward metanarratives.” I’ve discussed this in relation to Ginsberg in more general terms than Lyotard uses in *The Postmodern Condition*, and now I will return to my original argument about the use of metanarratives to legitimate poetry. While Williams was critical of science’s appeal to progress to legitimate itself (and in turn question the legitimacy of the arts), he still uses the positive qualities of the ‘new science’ to defend his won search for an American Idiom and a new measure. Ginsberg, however, comes from a generation where the arts are under less pressure to defend themselves against the sciences. With his challenging poetic structure and content, Ginsberg not only refuses to appeal to a metanarrative of progress or universality to defend his poetry, but he destroys these ideas and still says, “accept this.” As critics Francis Golfing and Barbara Gibbs explain, postmodern poets are “finding courage to simply assert the value of poetry through the act of writing it.” Such a description certainly seems to fit Ginsberg’s ideas about poetry, therefore giving to the fact that he is postmodern in the very sense of the term as defined by Lyotard.

Of course, the catch to all this—placing Williams into the category of ‘modern’ and Ginsberg in that of ‘postmodern’—is that such an act could be perceived as falling back into the world of metanarratives, saying that Williams and Ginsberg are particulars that represent all-encompassing categories. Inherent in its definition, too, is that postmodernism is an improvement upon modernism, and the two can therefore be assigned positive and negative values as binary opposites. Thus, the most Lyotardian conclusion is that Williams is Williams and Ginsberg is Ginsberg, and to force them into categories would be to ignore all the pieces. Yet, this essay is composed with all the effort to include the instances where Williams deviates from the ideas of modernity and Ginsberg deviates from postmodernity, while still being able to claim that each author embraces styles and theories associated with his respective movement. It is through this assessment that one can trace the progression of the American Idiom from modernism to postmodernism in the hands of these two poets.

### Works Cited:

- Ball, Gordon, ed. *Journals, Early Fifties Early Sixties*. New York: Grove Press, 1977.
- Bernstein, Charles. "Poetics of the Americas." In *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1996. 1-23.
- Brame, Gloria G. "An Interview with Allen Ginsberg." In *ELF: Eclectic Literary Forum*, Summer 1996.
- Breslin, James E.B. *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Dijkstra, Bram. *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Ginsberg, Allen. *Collected Poems 1947-1980*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984.
- Kramer, Jane. *Allen Ginsberg in America*. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition*. In *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, eds. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.
- Malpas, Simon. *Jean-François Lyotard*. Routledge: London, 2003.
- Merrill, Thomas F. *Allen Ginsberg*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969.
- Meyer, Lisa. "Lisa Meyer: interviewing Allen Ginsberg." In *The American Poetry Review*, Vol. 26, No. 4, July-August 1997. 22-24.
- Miller, Hillis J., ed. *William Carlos Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.
- Pacernick, Gary. "Allan [sic] Ginsberg: an interview by Gary Pacernick." In *The American Poetry Review*, Vol 26, No. 4, July-August 1997. 23-28.
- Riddel, Joseph N. *The Inverted Bell: Modernism and the Counterpoetics of William Carlos Williams*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.
- Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan, eds. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.
- Steinman, Lisa M. *Made in America: Science, Technology, and American Modernist Poets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Weatherhead, Kingsley A. *The Edge of the Image: Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967.

Williams, William Carlos. *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Vol. I, 1909-1939*. Edited by A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1986.

—. *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Vol. II, 1939-1962*. Edited by A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1988.

—. *The Embodiment of Knowledge*. Edited by Ron Loewinsohn. New York: New Directions, 1974.

### **Read My Story: Aemilia Lanyer on Writing While Being Written**

Eva Sevcikova

First Place Scholarly Writing Prize-2003

*"Thus provided, thus confident and enquiring,  
I set out in the pursuit of truth."  
(Virginia Woolf, 1929)*

In her essay titled "Aemilia Lanyer and the Politics of Praise," scholar Su Fang Ng makes an argument against "overemphasizing" Lanyer's feminism and advocates focusing, instead, on "the important class tensions within the [Lanyer's] poem" in order not to "obscure the complexity of her poem as she negotiates the patron-client relationship" (434). In her attempt to show how Lanyer manipulated multiple dedications in her "difficult search for patronage," Ng asserts that Lanyer falls into a category of writers who flatter a specific female audience while writing "not to disturb male sensitivities too brazenly for the first time" (440). Ng's argument shows a feeble understanding of the message that Lanyer puts forth on the pages of her *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Moreover, to obscure Lanyer's role as a feminist is to neglect her as a courageous and boundary-defining woman whose work not only shakes the ground but also reveals a great deal about her aspiring beliefs of gender equality. And we might add 'thankfully,' because there is little and, indeed, lamentable biographical information available nearly four hundred centuries following Lanyer's death. In both her work and her life, Lanyer tried to find a connection to the outside world through a self-created community of female readers, the most notable of whom happened to be the queens and ladies of the court. To seek patronage of such distinguished females should not be perceived as a failure or a cheap way out. This serves only if for nothing else but the simple need of sustained financial stability that every writer needs. As Virginia Woolf reminds us in her *A Room of One's Own*, "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well" (18).

Clearly, in *Salve Deus*, Lanyer thought very well. Despite struggling with considerable financial difficulties at various points in her life, Lanyer accomplished something extraordinary: she successfully wrote and published in a time when she was measured up against highly reputed male writers, such as William Shakespeare, John Donne, Ben Jonson, Edmund Spenser and others, who wrote on all topics, including women. Seeing this long tradition of women being written by men, Lanyer decided to pay homage to strong women; to do so, she chose perhaps the most famous, most controversial, most sacred, most cursed, and simply the most influential text of the Western civilization—the Bible. She narrates biblical stories from the Gospel according to Matthew not as (his)stories but as (her)stories. In the decentring of these original stories, she approaches the Bible from a definite ideological position as a marginalized woman and meditates on the nature of sin, evil, and virtue. In doing so, she argues for a multiplicity of voices and

points out the moral and ethical impurities which flaw the single male voice that has been in the forefront of seeing the world for so many centuries.

As an illustration of her feminist (and also religious) agenda, Lanyer discusses the story of Christ's Passion, which she bases on Matthew 26:30–28:10. The account of death and resurrection of Jesus, surely one of the most poignant stories of the Christian faith, contains a warning by Pontius Pilate's wife against the execution of Jesus: "When he [Pilate] was sat down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). Pilate, however, ignores this prophecy, and what follows is Christ's atrocious death on a cross, applauded by the chief priests and the elders. Lanyer implies in her work that the occurrence of this murder and the degree of its atrocity are a result of the lack of virtue and moral strength on the side of men<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>men who betrayed Jesus despite their professed love for him.

It is not all men per se, however, who find themselves under attack in Lanyer's poem. Even though in her "To the Vertuous Reader" she refers to men as "evill disposed," she is not the so-called "male basher," a derogatory term by which some feminists are labeled. After all, she doesn't shun all men; she puts Jesus on a pedestal so high no one can ever reach him in his grace and glory. Still, in her reading of the Bible, she extends a lot of criticism towards men. In comparison, she highlights the often-overlooked presence and noble behavior of Biblical women. This approach allows her to write both *about* and *to* women, and perhaps most importantly, to men, especially to those men who try to "ecclipse the brightness of their [the women's] deserved fame" (Woods 48).

Her accusation of the falseness of men begins in the garden of Gethsemane, "that blessed Garden, which did now embrace / His holy corpse" (ll. 363-364). At this calm place, the last peaceful stop before his death, Jesus spends his time in prayers and in solemnity: "Here his Disciples willed he to stay / Whilste he went further, where he meant to pray" (ll. 367-8). Jesus picks Peter and two sons of Zebedee to share the sorrow with him<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"these three deere friends, so much he did intrust" <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> only to find them sleeping soon after. "They slept in Ease, whilst thou in Paine didst pray," Lanyer writes (ll. 427). In one of her lines she even lists a perceived excuse for their feebleness: "Although the Spirit was willing to obay / Yet what great weakenesse in the Flesh was found!" (425-426). Nonetheless, she clearly condemns their behavior, when she ruthlessly calls them "those Vipers, objects of disgrace / Which sought that pure eternall Love to quench" (ll. 365-6). Similarly, a few pages later, Lanyer points to how the twelve disciples sought Jesus, to embrace him "With fained kindnesse" (ll.486); and once again, Lanyer can't help but exclaim: How blinde! How dull! How weake! How stony hearted! How void of Pitie! (73). Interestingly enough, in the face of all this injustice and pretense that Lanyer describes, something grand and graceful rises: the figure of Jesus himself. As Lanyer sees it, Jesus' glory was magnified by his act of humility in a situation when he was "well content to have thy Glory drowned / By being counted of so meane a berth" (ll. 475-6).

Another "wicked" individual lies in the character of Caiphias, the high priest of Jerusalem who tries Jesus for blasphemy. Caiphias seeks false witnesses and "studies only how to doe him [Jesus] wrong" (ll. 636). Lanyer condemns him as much as she condemns the witnesses themselves, whose "tongues doe serve him as a Passing hell" (ll. 649). Void of any moral principles, "so sound a tale unto the Judge they tell / That he of Life must shortly be bereaved" (ll. 651-2). They simply make up lies, as Lanyer relates: "They tell his words, though farre from his intent / And what his speeches were, not what he meant" (ll. 655-6). And likewise, Lanyer demonstrates, as Christ is going to his death, more and more men betray him in manners similar to the ones discussed above<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>among these men are the Crier, the Hangman, the people, the Thieves and the Serjeants, all watching and



blaspheming (ll. 961-7).

With regard to these stories of men betraying Jesus in his last hours, Lanyer clearly comes off disturbed by such odious behavior. Taking Pontius Pilate as an example, she plainly states that “washing thy hands, thy conscience cannot cleare” (ll. 935). But moreover, in all these occurrences, she laments the lack of goodness and moral excellence in the men involved<sup>34</sup> “There’s no revenge where Virtue still doth rest,” she says in line 182. Chastity of the mind and decency of the soul are characteristics, she implies, that should be in the forefront of our desires. Regrettably, they aren’t at all times. Lanyer illustrates her point by the rather lengthy discussion of the world’s focus on outward beauty. In it, she speaks out against outward beauty unaccompanied by virtue, because she is well aware that “faire forbidden tree” only offers fruits of “blood, dishonour, infamie, and shame” to both men and women (ll. 217-8). It was Beauty that caused thousands of deaths in the ten-year-long Trojan war. It was Beauty that cost Lucrece her life and only after being raped. It was Beauty of Cleopatra that blinded Marc Anthony’s eyes and made him wrong his first wife, Octavia. It was due to Beauty that Matilda was “borne to sorrow and to discontent” (ll. 234). And it was Beauty that left Rosamund wondering if life had been fairer to her had she not been “fair” (60-61). All of these stories are a result of the fact that men are quick to pursue this kind of outward beauty—a beauty, which as far as Lanyer is concerned, has an expiration date: “Those gawdie colors soone are spent and gone,” she writes (ll. 188).

In this fight against the male gaze and Petrarchan beauties Lanyer finds her strength. What better place to show the alternative to the theory of women as objects than in the story of Christ’s passion? In comparison to all the men betraying Jesus, as discussed previously, the women lack evil intentions, and Lanyer glorifies their presence (however marginally touched upon in the Bible) and their noble deeds towards Jesus. She thus proves that Beauty and Virtue can, and in fact, should combine, and deserve our highest affections. One example of how Lanyer takes marginalized figures from the Bible and expands upon their presence is the conduct of the daughters of Jerusalem during Christ’s death. The Gospel according to Matthew reports briefly on the women: “And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children” (Matthew 27: 55-56). In this account, these women are reduced to mere observers of a public spectacle.

Lanyer finds this “observer status” simply unsatisfying. While the Matthew’s Gospel only “notes” the women, Lanyer tells a story about their tears and their compassion. After Jesus dies, “The Maries doe with pretious balmes attend, / But beeing come, they find it to no end” (ll. 1287-8). These are in stark contrast to the cruel and heartless behavior of the men who sentenced Jesus to death and then rejoiced over it. Earlier Lanyer writes:

When spitefull men with torments did oppresse  
Th’afflicted body of this innocent Dove,  
Poore women seeing how much they did transgresse,  
By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat, may prove,  
That may be done among the thickest presse,  
They labor still these tyrants hearts to move;  
In pitie and compassion to forbear  
Their whipping, spurning, tearing of his haire.

But all in vain, their malice hath no end,  
Their hearts more hard than flint, or marble stone [.] (ll. 993-1001)

There was only one man who acknowledged these women and their cries: Jesus himself. He turned his head towards them, as if "not remembering his great grieffe and pain," because these "poore women, by their pitious cries / Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King, / To take compassion, turne about, and speake / To them whose hearts were ready now to breake" (ll. 981-4). If all the women's laboring to move the hearts of the tyrants was to be in vain, in this moment, perhaps it was not, because the women's compassion was reciprocated by that of Jesus.

Another example of Lanyer expanding on the minimal mention of women is her speech by Pilate's wife. As quoted earlier in this essay, Matthew's gospel mentions her warning only marginally in Chapter 27:19. Lanyer, however, awards Pilate's wife with a well-articulated, clever and poignant speech, into which she inserts "Eve's Apology," a suitable argument against placing all the guilt upon the woman's shoulders and a passionate plea for gender equality. In it she juxtaposes the evil carried out by men towards Jesus with the goodness that guides Eve's actions when offering an apple from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to Adam. Eve means no malice, Pilate's wife (and by extension, Lanyer) argues: "No hurt therein her harmlesse Heart intended" (ll. 774). She exonerates Eve by showing how she erred for the sake of knowledge, not for the sake of doing harm to anyone. Pointing out that for centuries women took the blame for Eve's deed, while Eve's "fault was onely too much love / Which made her give this present [apple] to her Deare," she places the blame on men's shoulders (ll. 801-2). Because Adam was the Lord of all Earth, he must bear an equal, if not even a greater, share of the blame: "What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refusde," Lanyer writes (ll. 779). Here the flaw of Adam and Jesus' disciples are put on the same level, because they all neglected moral justice and betrayed their ethical selves. For this, neither Adam nor Jesus' disciples should be excused. Having said that, the case remains, as Catherine Keohane has noted, that Lanyer was radical in her emphasis on women in the Passion story. It is not a mere emphasis, Keohane argues, "but an imaginative expansion of brief mentions of women in Scripture" (363). In this expansion, Lanyer re-writes what has been written dozens of times over the centuries: she re-discovers the Bible traditionally presented through the eyes of men and writes a Gospel according to Aemilia.

Lanyer finds strong and deserving women not only in the story of Christ's passion but also in ancient mythology and in her surroundings. In the dedicatory letters that compose the first half of her publication, Lanyer pays homage to female deities, such as Minerva, Cynthia, Venus, Pallas Athena, the nine Muses, Aurora, etc. and highlights their wisdom, fortitude, dignities and beauty of their souls while hoping that women reading her work will find comfort and inspiration in these individuals. It was her wish that the ladies of the royal court and noble origin (to whom she addresses her dedications) would look kindly upon her writing and bless it with their approval: "Reade it faire Queen, though it defective be / Your Excellence can grace both It and me," she writes in her opening letter "To the Queens most Excellent Majestie" Anne of Denmark. (ll.5-6). But at the same time, she also wishes to call attention to these magnificent women and their virtuous souls and worthy minds.

By doing this, she finds, indeed, what Woolf calls a "room of her own." However, Lanyer does not want to be alone in it and thus she invites company<sup>34</sup>all virtuous ladies in general, including her readership. In "The Description of Cooke-ham," the last poem in *Salve Deus*, she celebrates female companionship (entirely men-less) in a beautiful pastoral setting of the estate at Cookham, the royal country house of Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, who is the principal dedicatee of Lanyer's poetry. The time Lanyer spent at this estate was one of a rich poetic activity, intensified by pleasurable company of other women which provided Lanyer with energy and life she captured in terms of

a post-Edenic Eden: "hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee / They had appeared [...] all interlac'd with brooks and christall springs / A Prospect fit to please the eyes of Kings" (ll. 68-72). And even though the poem ends with the women being cast out into the patriarchal world, Lanyer's endeavor to capture its memory was not without a significant earnestness. Lanyer nearly four hundred years ago had done what the late 20th century French feminist Luce Irigaray argued for in her essay "*The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine*" In it, Irigaray defines female writing (and thus female vision) as that of which does not privilege sight, but "instead, it takes each figure back to its source, which is among other things tactile" (572). The subtle yet significant difference between the French words "savoir" and "connaître" perhaps best captures the distinction that both writers make about the production of knowledge, especially the one that for centuries has been labeled as the only correct one. Both Irigaray and Lanyer argue against philosophy that sees only one idea of the truth—one that is logical, clear, and of a linear progression. Lanyer accomplishes her critique of this male gaze in the way she reads the Scripture, offering a multiplicity of voices where previously only one stood higher than all others—that of a man.

Not only does Lanyer boldly redirect our attention towards the women made invisible, she also conceptualizes what Irigaray in her second essay, "Commodities amongst Themselves," deemed nearly impossible: the creation of Utopia in which commodification does not exist. Irigaray describes this world as such where "nature's resources would be expended without depletion, exchanged without labor, freely given, exempt from masculine transactions: enjoyment without a fee, well-being without pain, pleasure without possession" (577). After reading *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, one is inclined to believe that Lanyer would whole-heartedly share Irigaray's wish for a society in which moral justice, not exploitative and offensive behavior, were the highest virtue.

Also, in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer very consciously responds to what another feminist Judith Fetterley in her essay "On the Politics of Literature" dubbed as the "impalpable series of designs in literature on the female reader" (561). Simply said, Lanyer refuses to perform her identity as a male and rejects the universality defined in strictly male terms. Just like Fetterley urges her readers to do, Lanyer is a resisting, rather than an assenting, reader: alarmed about the fact that women often had no story in the works by most males, Lanyer tells a story about and by women. Distressed by the very same thing, feminist scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar examined the portrayal of women in numerous literary texts. They suggested in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic* that women are constantly being mystified by men in the works of literature: they often have no stories to tell but exist merely to give advice and consolation (599). Lanyer would surely agree with them, yet she subverts this argument by telling her readers about various women and their various stories. Some of these do include the "traditional" feminine attributes of kindness as is the case with women who offered sympathy (Mary Magdalene or daughters of Jerusalem); others made passionate arguments and solicited action (Pilate's wife).

One must agree with Keohane who says that "what Lanyer does with this allegedly unexceptionable topic [the Bible] is quite exceptionable, quite imaginative, and quite bold" (360). Lanyer's accomplishment is even more exceptionable when we realize that she entered our modern consciousness as an individual filtered through a male pen. The diaries of her astrologer Simon Forman, whose vision of Lanyer was undoubtedly clouded by his unsuccessful attempt to "halek" with her [halek is a euphemism he used for the sex act], tell us the little we know about her life. In her writings, Lanyer takes her destiny into her own hands. She doesn't look as much into the future as Forman's astrological charts did. On the contrary, by looking into the past and seeking inspiration and encourage-

ment in the strong women of the Bible, she seeks to answer some haunting questions of the present: How does a woman write her own future if the compass and the pencil which draw her life path are in the hands of a man? Lanyer does this by formulating her own feminist position: she provides a story of women *for* women written *by* a woman. In doing so, she subverts the cultural assumption of women as inferior human beings and questions their subjugation to men which is seen as natural and necessary. Simply said, *she* draws her own chart.

### Works Cited:

- Fetterley, Judith. "On the Politics of Literature." in Literary Theory: An Anthology. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998. 561-569.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. "The Madwoman in the Attic." in Literary Theory: An Anthology. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998. 561-569.
- Irigaray, Luce. "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine." in Literary Theory: An Anthology. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998. 561-569.
- . "Commodities amongst Themselves." in Literary Theory: An Anthology. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998. 561-569.
- Keohane, Catherine. 'That blindest Weaknesse be not over-bold': Aemilia Lanyer's Radical Unfolding of the Passion." ELH. Vol. 64, No. 2. (1997): 359-389.
- Ng, Su Fang. "Aemilia Lanyer and the Politics of Praise." ELH. Vol. 67, No. 2 (2000): 433-451.
- The Holy Bible. Weston, Florida: Paradise Press, Inc., 2001.
- Woods, Susanne. The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer—Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1989.

Striding for the Dream  
Melissa Daley  
3rd Place Freshman Writing Prize

It's late afternoon in mid-October at Newhall Park. I am no stranger to this course, but stepping up to that glaring chalky white line in the grass still awakens an all-too-familiar desire to flee as if my life depended on it. A hum of excitement builds as teammates and families shout encouragements, but the encouragements fall on deaf ears. We girls are eerily quiet, playing the roles of both predator and prey. We simultaneously calculate individual attack strategies, harboring varying levels of trepidation in the face of our impending challenge. I can feel the thick tension in the air as I position myself, muscles twitching, anticipating the sharp crack of the gun.

A mile and a half remains in my everlasting quest towards the plastic flags and huge time clock at the finish line. Its multi-colored hands beckon in the wind, while the luminous green numbers tick away, taunting me to run just a little bit faster, a little bit harder, for just a few more steps. The throng of teenage girls in a medley of proudly sported jerseys has thinned, fading into the hazy landscape behind me. My stride feels strong and my breath comes with relative ease. The only thing that truly matters is the dry, dusty trail awaiting my determined stride.

My mental energy and physical will to succeed fight to block out external distractions. The bonds of apprehension that have plagued the first half of my race are loosened, and give way to an uncharacteristic resolve. Gone are the sounds of dogs barking and car horns blaring; gone is the smell of exhaust and the sight of smog.

The cozy neighborhood surrounding the park, with its white picket fences and rocking chairs on the front porch, envelop the temporary microcosm I have created for myself.

My lungs desperately grasp for air and my legs scream with exhaustion. But my inner drive does not fail me as I complete my second loop around the expanse of freshly cut emerald green grass, past the weeping willows that bend woefully in agreement with the pain I am experiencing. The remaining runners fade away like shadows giving way to sunlight, unbeknownst to me as I focus on the shimmering path ahead. Once more I pass the base of the wheat-colored hill with the American flag proudly saluting our attempts at athletic greatness, and over the precariously slimy stepping-stones onto the backside of the creek.

I am still able to hear the encouraging cries of my teammates positioned strategically along the course. I am soothed by the pounding rhythm of my stride, and curiously apprehensive over the absence of my competitors' footsteps. A myriad of questions parade through my mind all at once: "Where are the other runners? How long can I keep this pace? When will I be overtaken?" For a brief moment my heart sinks to the pit of my stomach as I realize, "They will pass me soon..." But I do not dare turn around. The fierce competitor in me will not allow it.

It may be the faint buzzing in my ears as if I am racing through a tunnel. But I am no longer aware of my teammates' joyful cries, nor am I conscious of the jello-like fatigue in my limbs. The beads of sweat and prickly feeling in my skin caused by the Indian summer sun no longer bother me. My mouth is cotton-dry, and my lungs seem to inhale more dust from the trail than oxygen, but I don't realize it. For it is at this moment with wide, incredulous eyes, and a breathless "Oh my gosh!" that it hits me full force. I am going to win. I am *really* going to win. No one is in front of me. I am not going to *let* anyone pass me. All the moments of dehydration and tense muscles have paid off.

I can't say for sure if my parents were there to watch me that day; I can't say what my race time was. Truthfully, I don't recall what crossing the finish line felt like. I was simply striding on the back of a swift, exhilarating wind. In that single moment my mind was a blank slate, disconnected and unaware of all that surrounded me. The one image I recall vividly is of rounding the final turn: No one is standing at the corner distributing small bits of *running wisdom* as I am momentarily hidden from view. The greatest accomplishment of my sixteen years lay on that dirt path framed by two weeping willows, which seemed to stand just a little bit straighter this time around.

### **An Insomniac Romance**

Paco Alcaraz- 2004

You walked into my life at the most whimsical moment,  
Asking for the most whimsical of objects

The evergreen scent resonates from the TV screen  
As you walk by and told me to turn off that stupid game

In the somber times of life, your eyes stayed open with mine  
Through the sunrise and a can of soup

If sweet-hearts hold hands until their senior prom,  
If soul-mates find each other in their first or eighth life,  
If star-crossed lovers unite with one glance,  
Why can't I ask you for one date to the movies?

And then, when I closed my eyes and entered a dreary slumber,  
I saw you sitting there next to me  
But none of that matters to you, because I'm just the fucking nice guy

I'll always be that guy, who looks from afar, staring into the depths of your heart,  
And sees everything you want in him, in me  
Confidence is a mutual feature, and if I don't have it, it's because  
You didn't go for it either

So now, I'll stay in my room, with the digital pine forests and the  
Superficial darkness, waiting for you to walk by  
You never do anymore.

### **Ana's having a Bad Hair Day**

Paco Alcaraz- 2004

The cold moist chill  
Whispering from ear to ear

Nature and limestone,  
Kissing the man-made stars

The embers fade out,  
The smoke dances upon the breeze

The strength in me has left  
A cycle of moons passed by, since breathing you in

My hands feel the sensation  
Yet you've half-past left my life  
But I was the one who left our dreams  
And escaped to a Disneyland bliss...  
But who called it quits after the third or fourth kiss?

Thousands of episodes I've squandered through,  
Late night shows become late-late shows and early morning matinees

A haze of memories transcend...into a dopamine utopia  
Spouts of laughter here and there, until that sudden crash ruins the trip

Empty thoughts linger, thoughts of you holding someone else

(The next night)  
I'm lost in ambiguous space, sloshed with an ambiguous face  
I'm crashed on the ground, no more barley-gold water or sour-mash bliss to pound  
Blood as thin as red wine, streaming from freshly cut spouts  
Maybe we should've kissed a fifth time

### *Lost and Found*

Nicole Palacios- 2004

When I got home from work she was already gone.  
I knew where she was.  
Since the moment she told me she was pregnant I had a hole in my heart.  
We both knew I needed her more than she needed me.  
I often asked her what would I do without her about this and that.  
She told me I would be okay.  
The phone rings and it's her telling me that it's time.  
I tell her I hate her and begin to cry.  
She calms me down, just like she always does,  
Then says she has to go.  
I go to find her and sit for hours on the crusty, blue chair.  
They tell me she handled it beautifully,  
I'm not surprised.  
They let me in and she hands her daughter to me.  
The hole from my heart.  
Nineteen months later I get home from work.  
She sees me approaching.  
She smashes her face against the windowpane and yells, "Hi!"  
It's funny how each day I can't wait to get home.  
To wrap my arms around the hole from my heart.

The Mug You Gave Me Before You Died When We Were Thirteen  
Nicole Palacios- 2004

I don't really like to use it because I dropped it once.  
It sits pushed to the back of the kitchen cabinet.  
But occasionally I admire it,  
The chipped white mug with the illustration of two girls standing  
in the rain without an umbrella, the phrase,  
"One day we will look back at this and laugh."

**Aroma**  
Nicole Palacios- 2004

*He stood in the pile of pastelike clay*  
until his shoes were filled  
with the brown soil.

He kept saying that it  
didn't smell,  
kept denying the stench.

But how could anyone  
ignore that odor?  
It was thick and sickening.

I told him to just stop  
and wash off his shoes and feet.

But he continued to argue that they didn't smell...  
Failing to realize he was already  
In deep shit.

**My Night with Rob**  
Joshua Sovell- 2004

It took four tries to get it in the first time; I was shaking just wanting it to start  
They say it gets easier the more you do it, but I can never seem to get used to it  
Used to the slow insertion and the cold that creeps inside  
Used to the searching for the right spot and the pain of the wrong one

Sometimes my body can't handle it, tears form in the corners of my eyes  
I'm told to buck up and take it like a man, that it's for my own good  
I try to not think about it and escape my body  
I try to relax so that my muscles will let go and it will just be over

It's hard for me to recall the beginning to all of this, that it was positive  
Rob only had passion on his mind, not test results  
Not a separation and longing for human touch  
Not a life full of infection and a needle poked body



Two Guys  
Joshua Sovell- 2004

That's Eric; he's out on the streets  
Tonight is actually his first night away from his house  
Wandering around the desolate corners scanning cars looking for an innocent face, a man  
He figures if his family does not care about him he will go to the people that do  
Eric has turned some tricks before; it's easy  
This is why his dad turned his back and his mom ran from the room crying  
A car rolls up and inside is an older man, who reminds him of his best friend's father  
The guy is average looking and offers a warm smile while introducing himself as Michael  
Eric climbs into the passenger's seat and starts making small talk  
Mike shares about his job as a banker and how he likes to escape to his cabin on week-ends  
Eric makes up a story about his parents being dead and just surviving life  
They talk about the usual stuff too: blow jobs, rim jobs, pierced nipples, handcuffs  
Somewhere between his mourning and spankings Eric puts his hand on Mike's thigh,  
making himself more comfortable and Mike excited  
They near a freeway where signs for fast food and gas outshine the stars  
The car pulls to a stop under a pink neon V CAN Y  
and Mike tells him to wait while he takes care of things  
Once inside door number eight, the zippers drop  
In the hurried strip Eric notices a lamp like the one his mom bought for his room  
that makes him feel like he belongs here  
Mike's naked hands roam all over Eric's body before guiding him to his knees  
Where the head slides easily to the back of Eric's throat, and Mike lets out a moan  
That moan leads to thrusts which leads to grunts which leads to drops of sweat  
coating hair, back and anus  
Mike finally crashes from fulfillment and makes his way to the bathroom to wash up  
Eric covers his naked body and curls up feeling complete  
The bathroom door opens, and Michael is fully clothed. He gets out his wallet  
and throws a 100 on the bed on his way to the door  
A barren wind pours in when Michael leaves for home.

He Said To  
Joshua Sovell- 2004

crawl on my knees  
toward him  
except to freeze  
for punishment.  
It was still ninety degrees  
at night, between us  
in august, rain and all.  
He wanted my ass  
which he swore to protect.  
I hurried in the darkness—  
over things and under things—

to reach the next position  
in time, and once  
I lay as a cool slave that  
so suited all I had become.  
I took it inside.  
I made it work.  
From endurance  
And common sense, I made a man  
to survive the lifestyle, which means  
that I made a man to survive  
being a man.

***Roadkill***

Greg Bone- 2004

Roadkill  
That lay on the street  
Prone, flattened to a T

-This  
Could be a sign  
Of how it is today-

You can almost see the bones  
Faintly outlined in the skin

***The Couple Behind***

Greg Bone- 2004

The couple behind me  
Laughs  
Their love  
So sweet their hidden whispers  
Go by  
And I  
Just listen-

**2103**

Greg Bone- 2004

April 3rd 2103

The war ended

The listing of the casualties in battle

Stopped.

The guns falling silent everywhere

People returned on two legs

Not like the wounded-

Or the dead

In 2103

The war ended

Rifles stacked on the racks

Planes never used in combat

The pilots just sit there

Complaining that

Scout missions are easy-

### **Growth**

Lauren de Remer- 2004

Sand turns to skin,

as letters to thoughts.

A purr from a friend,

means they love you lots.

Two hands make a fist,

as wrinkles make age.

Our lives are bittersweet,

so open your cage.

Inspire your neighbor,

for he shall mature.

Passion is determination,

as determination results.

Mistakes are positive lessons,

which must be understood.

Look not to the past,

for the self is ever-changing.

***Denial***

Lauren de Remer- 2004

I am not falling in love...

quick glances, cherry friendliness, planted conversation  
unworthy history, ripe attraction, Rocky environment  
secluded affection, Velcro grip, sparkling snowy eyes

...I am not falling...

butterflies stirring, candle light kiss, perfect smiling flower  
Hollandaise breakfast, savored musical moment, loaded car  
frightened reality, impossible avoidance, beach-like ecstasy, smile

...I am not falling in love.....

***Not the Title***

Justin Goldberg- 2004

Take a step back, step away  
Remove yourself from your self  
Shake out the coins that wind you  
Walk around town, stepping, gripping  
The ground that he usually walks on  
Do you notice something?  
Can you feel the vibrations,  
Resonating through your legs?  
The legs of infitude  
It hurts huh?  
Walk some more,  
See if you can loosen  
The rust; dusty sunburnt metal  
Of comfort and placement  
See if it will fall and crumble,  
so new rust can form.

## **Little House of Music**

Justin Goldberg- 2004

Up close, glued to movements of hands, heads and feet  
Possessed by a time maker, an inner rhythm producing frantic madness, glorious beats  
and tones.  
Simultaneously, giving the crowd a haven, a sanctuary  
A coming to peace with one's self, they do this  
For us, we are...amazement, and awe, and wonder  
If the doors are open, you're letting out the magic  
Don't let them hear, don't give them a taste of what only lives and breathes through us, the few,  
the members of the Absorption, feeding off passions that  
Run so deep they have formed roots to an underworld, of purely emotional content  
Aiming to rip out the inconsequential heart that beats in the shadows of what was once our land

We can just feel and grow and bite into the air of sweet misery, pungent frustration,  
Rich confusion, and melting happiness, Melting right into our skin, filling the "color" "Full"  
Mosaic of life. The music does not celebrate life, it celebrates blissful moments inside a reciprocal  
prism, each moment incomplete and begging for justification, don't give in, emotional  
clarity is just around the corner.

## **The Trilogy**

Karen Barragan- 2004

### **I. Conquered**

I stood against the wall  
as your breath turned my tears into vapor.  
I was paralyzed by your voice and  
was filled with grief as my son sat in a huddle  
with his scattered cheerios  
on the floor next to me watching  
as I did nothing.

You pushed me aside  
and said you'd be better off without me.  
I agreed and slid down the wall  
next to my son.  
I thought he would be a better man  
if he didn't see this.

So I kissed him on the head

for the last time and  
he watched me go  
all the way  
to the bathroom  
as I became nothing.

## **II. Cheerios**

None of this would have happened if  
I hadn't spilt my cheerios

Mama is still always quiet around him,  
but with me she is always laughing  
and singing  
It was just an accident.  
She tried to clean it, but it was too late...  
He saw.

I couldn't do anything but eat them as I sat  
huddled on the floor waiting for it to stop.  
She slid down next to me like always,  
but this time she didn't help.

She sat still looking out in front of her  
then kissed me and walked all the way  
to the bathroom and  
closed the door.

Something is wrong  
I can't hear anything inside.

## **III. The Bath**

I closed the door and watched  
my hand turn the lock.  
Then I pulled back the curtain,  
turned the right knob counter-clockwise,  
and placed the black stopper into the hole  
and I felt my hand go numb.  
My nipples went rigid as my toes touched  
the water and all my hairs came alive  
and screamed for warmth.

As I lay down all I heard was,  
"There you go, rest...rest" as pain shot  
through my heart. I laid still  
and counted the chill bumps on my breasts  
caused by my longing

Then a new voice broke through

my icy barrier. A voice I didn't want  
to remember... "Mama?"  
Again the voice called, "Mama...open" and a little hand  
tapped on the locked door.

My frozen body painfully climbed out of the chasm  
and stood trembling in front of the mirror.  
I looked over to the door  
and tried to pen it several times as he tapped,  
but my hands were frozen.  
"Mama?"  
Finally it opened and my son stood before me  
Smiling.

**The Blue Sheet**  
Karen Barragan- 2004

A year ago I was lying on the cold table.  
Only a blue sheet separated us.  
When she told me she was about to start  
I took my last breath as  
you took your first.

For two minutes I talked with God about what I would miss;  
your first step, love and kiss.  
Then she allowed me to come back to kiss your head,  
hear your heart beat  
and while we embraced  
I smelled your sweet skin.

Now a year later you're lying on that cold table,  
only a blue sheet to separate us.  
They turned off the light  
but I cannot leave.  
I was there for your first step,  
I was your first love  
and the first one you kissed.

I can't be angry with God,  
She took pity on me and I can only hope  
She'll do it again  
as I smell your cold skin,  
kiss your sweet head,  
and hear as I embrace you  
nothing but the clock on the wall.

Poem for My Friend Lance, Dead at 38

Karen Barragan- 2004

I wish I could understand  
Where you were at that moment  
Fully loaded with one bullet  
And target in sight with eyes closed

You locked the door,  
Lay down in your porcelain bed, and  
Then took one last breath full of memories  
Good but mostly bad.

Then with a pinch  
A flash of light and a pounding sound  
Warmth surrounded you  
Dripping down your back

And in that moment you called God a liar  
All of your life was too much to bear.

**In Awe of the Great Ocean that Silences**

James Ryan Young- 2004

As they crackled and crashed, together as one  
They were restless for play and forever ceased not.  
They were never silent, nor shy and answered to none  
For we, in our tiny ship, faces these waves and fought  
Them, know, that even the most gallant of rows or strongest of sterns,  
Or with the most brightest of sails with most favorable winds  
Were vastly inferior, as the deep, blue majestic ocean churned  
It's growling appetite for our costly sins  
For boldly challenging this monstrous beast,  
This immortal God to say the least  
Will devour us whole and leave nothing by broken pieces of wood.  
As this merciless ocean is the Father of Noah's great flood  
And in our wooden casket we waited patiently in silent awe we stood  
To meet our great end and to make that deep, blue ocean encrusted with our fearless,  
mortal blood.



### ***My Peninsula***

Aaron Jaffe- 2004

My friends frown at me and say  
that I cannot be an island.  
And I counter,  
that perhaps I am not an island  
But a peninsula,  
whose inhabitants have erected a towering gray stone wall  
to separate it from the rest of the coast  
and ward off any unwelcome visitors.

Then I watch apprehensively,  
as they work through the day,  
And into the night,  
finally lighting bonfires along the coast,  
until they have built a fleet of tiny seafaring canoes.  
And like curious island natives,  
they board their boats,  
And paddle around my fortifications,  
climb over my ramparts,  
and venture into the interior of my peninsula,  
whether they are welcome or not.

### **Dreaming of Hair**

Amber Knutson 2003

Dirty, disturbed and overused,  
a withered washcloth searches every crevice,  
wiping away the remains of the night before.  
My mind ponders the possibilities of more moments,  
as shots of water pulse my body.  
Stepping out of the purifier,  
Slippery limbs glisten in the afternoon air.  
Sun's arms surround my body like cigar paper.  
My spine quivers as water trickles down.  
Not sure of what is to come,  
but knowing how I want it to end.  
I slide my towel down, exposing waist and everything that surrounds  
Only to pray for your body pressed against mine  
Through a curtain of tendrils.

## In the End

Andrea Garcia 2003

I had a dream that the rolling plains were covered in ice  
And the floor of the lake was exposed  
Brown and murky, dead fish still with lines in their mouths floating aimlessly  
And I gazed over the plains again and they were  
covered with burial scaffolds, clusters stood  
where families once lived, but were no more.  
And I soared over the expanse  
like an eagle, and scaffolds dotted the land like  
stars dotted the heavens  
It was quiet now  
and the echo of prayers was now diminishing,  
enveloped by Silence  
And then I looked up and saw a warrior on a fire red horse  
He was fierce and so was his shrill cry  
And that shrill cry then turned into an owl soaring into the pale moonlight  
And the moon lit the outline of a black buffalo that  
towered in front of me  
He slowly turned his back to me,  
steam coming out of his nostrils,  
hooves breaking the earth  
and I was on my knees when  
the last camp fire went out.

## Dead Girl Sometimes

Vanessa Giovacchini 2003

Sometimes I sit limp  
like a dead girl  
Because I can't make myself smile  
And when I am the dead girl  
my mind chews on its corners  
and it loves the pain of the bite—  
spitting out and chewing again  
But you cannot hear the chewing  
and you hug my little body  
cold, lifeless— like a doll  
You try to squeeze me alive  
and you put your lips to mine  
You kiss me again because it  
wasn't right the first time  
You want my passion—  
my Spanish passion, but its been  
chewed off

And I can't give you that kiss  
right now  
You don't want to let me go  
I might fall lifeless at your feet  
and then you would see  
But you dance with me instead  
And try to find a warm place on my soft body—  
How can I tell you I am cold  
All the life behind your eyes cannot retrieve what  
you love in me  
Because I'm a girl  
dead in my own right  
and chewing, right now, I can't stop  
chewing

### Library sex

William Fenton-Hathaway 2003

Libraries need more brown, while I study all I want to see is brown.  
And the Madonna sitting in white and blue,  
four  
tables  
down,  
One across.  
Like a crossword puzzle I mapped her out.  
I will assure you my intentions are honorable.  
True love,  
the electricity is like that going though a microwave  
cooking Monday nights dinner.  
Look at it this way, we are both wearing sweatpants.  
Hers the blue that comes after a summer rain,  
While mine, the navy that creeps up before the storm.  
What am I saying,  
*Just give me sex.*

## **Saint Sabrina's Purgatory**

Megan Dahlen 2003

Saint Sabrina's Purgatory is where I went to get a needle shoved through my nose.  
The first time to piss off my parents. My eyes flooded like rain gutters when the tiny diamond stud fell out on the lake that summer. The reflection of my bare face in the mirror made me feel empty like my empty bank account meaning for the time being no replacement. The second time because I hated my haircut. "It needs a nose ring," I told my bewildered friend as we drove her black BMW toward the high rise of buildings in the distance. Both times white preppy girls in a dark tattoo and piercing parlor. Collared shirts and khaki pants, a clean white ribbon wrapped neatly around my thin brown ponytail. Surrounded by magenta, electric blue, black hair, tattoos of topless women and Satan. Scandalous stripper clothes in erotic pink that we loved to look at but would never be caught dead in. My eyes wide in the waiting room looking around at all the foreigners with infinite holes in their faces, I wondered if they were trying to torture themselves. They stared into me like they were looking into a mirror and I was the reflection of their antithesis. It was an escape from our suburban world filled with Jamba Juice and Abercrombie. A guilty pleasure now and then to help us live in denial of the fact that we knew nothing except ourselves.

## **Mass versus Potential**

Eric Mattys 2003

The size of the  
Growth on your face  
Puts the rest of you to shame.  
I mean that mass that is your nose,  
Your only point of interest.  
Children stare bewildered the same as  
Explorers who first saw Mount Everest.

Your skin is greedy  
Because your muscles are unemployed.  
Regions designed to be firm  
Bulge in a jello explosion.  
If ants had the ability to build surf boards  
They would ride waves on the sea of your gut.

This blubbery layer  
Would cause no offense  
If there were something inside you worthy of protection.

So, how about you continue your meaningless meandering.  
Don't worry.  
Eventually you'll find your value  
When someone sneezes  
On the dust you've become.

## A Hat for All Ages

By

Antonio Trepesowsky 2004

The Boy Who Lived. That's how it starts. Harry Potter spurred a movement of global unification across all cultures, languages, and ages (for proof, note the global spike in domesticated owl purchases). It drove many apart as well. This is a tale of one person's encounter with the Harry Potter phenomenon, my own. And I have the hat to prove it.

It was lunch hour on Friday, November 16th. This Friday was unique for several reasons. That evening there was a vocal recital for my good friend Marleena. It was opening weekend of the first Harry Potter film. And it was also the last day of pre-registration for the January and Spring terms 2002 at Whittier College, which is nestled, appropriately enough, in Whittier, California. The latter is only significant because, at the time, I was employed by Whittier College and worked in the Registrar's Office, and, consequently, was having a very busy day. We had closed the office doors for lunch and my three coworkers and I were randomly eating, checking email, listening to voicemail, trying to straighten our desks, taking slow deep breaths or, in my case, any combination of the above.

Marcia, the office's front desk assistant, was in her fifties (a classic Quaker) and had a very pleasant personality. She was frequently thrust into popular culture by her teen daughter's need to attend multiple concerts with her teen friends. Dianne, the Assistant Registrar, also in her fifties, has many stories about her wild teen life in the sixties, which rarely manifests itself outwardly except perhaps as an avid "original" Beatles fan. Wayne, the Registrar, was a tall fit black man who loved tennis and also had endless stories of his daily dramatic life with which he would unknowingly entertain the office and anyone else who happened to be listening (which was just about everyone). Then there was me, a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, recent college graduate (from Whittier) with a typical nerd appearance (tall, scrawny, glasses) and an avid Animaniacs nut (my favorite cartoon show).

It was lunch hour, as I've mentioned, and Dianne, having finished eating, was surfing the web, when she said, "Oh I can't wait to see Harry Potter."

Having momentarily forgotten the importance of today (if information isn't in cartoon format I rarely pay attention i.e. news), I was quick to respond, "Oh, me too. I'm seeing it tonight with some friends. Have you read them (meaning the books of course)?"

"Yes", replied Dianne, "Have you?"

"Of course! What's your favorite?" I asked.

"The third one. It makes me cry."

"Oh, me too! When his patronus gallops across the lake ..."

Naturally the two of us are almost in tears as we are speaking, at which point we both launch into a grossly in depth discussion of the finer points of Hogwarts adventures for a good ten minutes. After ending our joint reverie with a sigh of anticipation, we realize that the office has become very quiet. Wayne had ambled out of his back office and was leaning against the wall in muddled amusement and Marcia had turned around in her chair in a state of confusion, to better watch our antics and lively discussion. Not quite understanding the problem, Dianne and I, in unplanned unison innocently asked,

"What?"

"You've read them?" replied Marcia and Wayne, also in unison.

"You haven't!" in dual stentorian tones.

"No!" they rebutted. "Aren't they children's books?" added Marcia naively.

This of course started another ten-minute conversation where Dianne and I justified and rebuked point and counterpoint on the mandatory reading nature of Harry Potter for all, which brought our lunch hour to an end in a very unsatisfactory mood. There was no time after we closed to discuss the matter further as I needed to race off to my friends recital. My fellow moviegoers had planned on meeting at the recital, which was close enough to the theatre by means of a brisk stroll through Uptown.

Uptown Whittier has the quaint small town feel that many New England towns inspire naturally, but has to be a bit manufactured in California. It's the kind of atmosphere where small children should be licking large rainbow colored circular lollipops and younger folks escort older folks across the street. Where people driving through an intersection slow to wave and say hi to a friend on the corner. None of these qualities have I actually seen in Uptown Whittier, but if all three events ever occurred, it wouldn't look out of place at all. Uptown is decidedly not the place to find protestors, which was exactly what my friends and I discovered standing outside the movie theatre.

There were four of them, all middle aged men of mixed backgrounds who outwardly would have had nothing in common except they were all holding picket signs. The first sign read, "Harry Potter supports witchcraft" which, for any who have studied the Wicca belief system, isn't correct at all but a forgivable misunderstanding. The second was rather lame and read, "You know what's next! Don't buy your kid the video game!" I must confess I don't think I made it to the fourth sign because the third read, "Imagination is a dangerous thing". This was too much. I turned to my friend Alyssa and said, "I'm going to talk to them."

"Stay in line" she sagely countered.

"Fine" I grumbled. But I couldn't help staring at them (perhaps my unconscious was determined for a fight especially after my frustrating day). I soon noticed that they were all holding books which, I stupidly assumed, were the first Harry Potter books and which my friend quickly clarified for me were bibles. Having been a devout Catholic from ages 5 to 17, I'd run the whole religious gambit. I'd been an altar boy every Sunday until high school, where we celebrated mass every day (small, private, catholic school). I knew my bible quite well and if it came down to bible quoting they would never have known what hit them. "That's it," I informed my friend, "I'm talking to them." She knew better than to argue with me when I took the "Voice of Reason" tone so she simply shook her head and watched me walk over to them.

Unbeknownst to me at that time, the person in front of us in line turned and addressed Alyssa. "Finally, some action!" she exclaimed. "I was wondering when fighting would break out". Alyssa had to swallow a chuckle. She knew that I had no intention of starting a row but merely wanted to engage them in academic discussion but try as she might, she couldn't seem to explain this to the lady in front of her in line. She proceeded to tell Alyssa how her entire family, at one point or another, had all been arrested for sit ins and protests and other less academic pursuits and in the span of five minutes Alyssa had learned more about this woman's criminal record than she felt comfortable standing in line with. How she managed to stay in line for another fifteen before I finally returned I'll never know.

I knew none of this at the time as I approached the four men. I struggled to bottle my frustration with narrow-minded people and decided on the most neutral approach possible: to let them explain their position. "Hi (decidedly neutral), I couldn't help but notice that you were protesting Harry Potter and, since that's the movie I'm standing in line to watch, I was curious to hear your viewpoints." What could possibly have been more neutral or more to the point?

The three men all turned to Man "A" who pointed to Man "D", who had been sitting on the floor. Man "D" rose and began to explain. "I've lived a terrible life" he began. Puzzled, I had no choice but to let Man "D" continue, who was obviously struggling with his public confession. Being prone to round about tangents, I trusted that he would eventually bring the point back to Harry Potter, that being the obvious topic of my intended conversation. He continued, "I thought I had it all together, and then I got married, had kids, started drinking, cussing, never prayed like my mom had taught me, abused my wife ..." I began to dread that he had committed sins against all the commandments and was beginning to hope that he hadn't murdered anyone but he seemed to drone on for a while longer hitting many of the cardinal sins and lesser venials. Roughly five minutes later, "I was broke, my wife left me, and then I found ..." (please let him say something related to Harry Potter) ... "God". While I rejoiced at the man's spiritual triumph (after all, very few people seem to find God) this wasn't the conversation I had thought my very direct question had inspired. It took me a second to realize Man "D" had asked me a question. "Do you know about God?"

"Yes, I know God". The shock on the man's face was visible. He wasn't prepared for that answer and so he turned to Man "A" for guidance who quickly gestured with his eyebrows to Man "C". The four repositioned themselves so that it was clear my attention should now be given to Man "C". I alas had no time to marvel at their subtle choreography as Man "C" had begun his own discourse.

"God loves you." Uh oh. Man "C's" discourse is barely worth recounting as I paid him little heed and began to muse in my own thoughts how I had gone so wrong. I thought I had made it very clear that I desired to speak about Harry Potter. It took me a couple of minutes, though Man "C" showed no outward sign of slowing, to realize their assumption. I was in line to see Harry Potter. Therefore, I must be a pagan idol worshipper, or worse, a follower of witchcraft. Though I still hadn't made the leap to what Man "C's" purpose was I realized that Man "C" seemed to be winding up to some conclusion. "Are you Christian?"

Ah, of course. Having professed a belief in God I had somehow separated myself from my animistic companions and now they needed to discern a more exact religious orientation in order to establish an understanding common language other than English. "Yes, I'm Christian". This time it was relief. Sensing that his task was done, he also now turned to Man "A" who indicated it was now Man "B's" turn. This was becoming painful. I was dreading the worst, when he opened his mouth and said to me, "What denomination of Christianity are you?" Well that was original. Starting with a question. "Catholic" I replied. It was evidently the correct answer.

"You are," interrupted Man "A" who had yet to speak. "So are we. I'm Joe," he said as he grabbed my hand and shook it painfully. "And this is Juan, and Frank, and George. What's your name?" "Uh" I mentally stumbled as Joe had continued to shake my hand

vigorously and I tried not to think about how I was going to need my spine realigned. "Antonio," I stammered. My mind slammed into the "now" moment as I realized I'd just given Whittier's version of tele-evangelists my real name. Not even your average pagan idol worshipper is stupid enough to give out his real name.

"We're from St. Mary's. What's your parish?" This was awkward and unexpected. I've fallen away from devout Catholicism because I had struggled finding a church that was conservative enough for my religious viewpoints. I'd rather have a mass in Latin with an organ or Gregorian chant than a mass in English with a guitar and tambourine player any day. While this was perhaps the last thing they expected to hear, they seemed to appreciate my search for core traditions and conservative teachings at which there were several mutterings of agreement. Now that common ground was established, I was finally able to ask my own question. Having lost 15 minutes of my life already, I was eager to know if any of them had actually read Harry Potter. If they all said no the conversation would have come to a sudden end by me saying something along the lines of "I've read your book but you haven't read mine so I really don't see a need to continue this conversation." So," I finally managed to cut in "have you read Harry Potter?"

To my great relief Joe said that he had, though the other three said they hadn't. I now gave Joe my full attention. "And what did you think of them?" I asked. "Well, at first I thought nothing of them. I'd read all four books and had noticed that the fourth was very dark but hadn't given it much thought. And then, the other day in mass, the pastor got up and explained to us how Harry Potter was supporting witch craft and suddenly I saw it all."

This explained everything. I could see the whole picture now. Their pastor had explained to them how it was their Catholic duty to preach to the heathens who had been lost along the way by the conniving plans of the devil and his medium, Harry Potter. The only reason they were there was because the Church had told them to be there.

"So I had been letting my daughter read them" continued Joe, "she's in fifth grade. And when I found out what was going on I took them away from her." I think I must have had a look of absolute horror on my face. I could just picture his daughter, enveloped in the plot of book three. Harry's been surrounded by the dementors, his parents are screaming in his head as his scar practically splits and then, YANK! "You can't read that anymore". The travesty! I had to help that poor child! So they are here because their pastor told them it supports witchcraft, huh. Boy are they screwed.

"So what did you think of the books?" Joe inquired. "I'm glad you asked that, Joe. First, I have to disagree with your protest sign. JK Rowling has done an incredible job creating a world that is amazingly imaginative but also true to itself, which is no small feat. I don't think the imagination is a dangerous thing. I think it is a necessary gift that should be encouraged not stifled. Reality sucks a lot and without an imagination to brighten things up every once in a while it can be a real miserable life. That's my first point. Secondly, I'm also amazed at the amount of research that Rowling put into her work. She didn't just create all these mythological creatures. It was popular belief back in the middle Ages and the Renaissance that these creatures were real. Creatures like Unicorns and man-drakes can be found all over Renaissance art and this was during the hey day of the Church (he he). If you visit any cathedral in Europe you'd find those creatures carved in the masonry. Why? Because that was popular belief and the cathedrals were the picture



books of peoples' faith. So I'm very impressed with the research she has done reviving these lost stories and creatures." And then, without giving them a chance to speak since I was on a roll, "But thirdly, I'm also excited because it is teaching kids Latin! How many times do we wish that our kids would learn a different language? And it's not just Latin words. She's using proper conjugations and declensions. 'Wingardium Leviosa' and 'Expecto Patronum'. Why that's first person singular imperative with masculine singular accusative as the direct object. Perfect. Exactly what it should be." This was a bit much for them and all four had a bit of the deer in the headlight look. I decided it was best to not go into further detail on the uses of Latin ablative cases. "But most importantly", I continued on with the clincher, "it's getting kids to read! How many times do we wish kids would read more instead of rotting their brains on video games or going out and joining gangs or doing drugs or turning into couch potatoes. Don't we always want them to read more? And here they are reading these books! Fifth graders reading these books. And these aren't small books either. That fourth book is over 700 pages. What was the biggest book you read when you were in fifth grade? I think the biggest book I read was maybe a hundred pages."

It was actually quite sad. They were so flummoxed they didn't know what to do but answer my question. I could see Man "D" thinking to himself, "Did I read in fifth grade?" Man "C" had a similar expression, "I think I read in fifth grade." Man "B" was about to speak when Joe interrupted. "Yeah, I think I read a fifty page book in fifth grade and that was impressive." "Exactly," I continued, knowing that I had them. "Fifty pages. And here they are reading seven hundred pages. And loving it and wanting more! And we're going to tell them 'No'? And...(looking at my bare wrist) oh my gosh, look at the time. I've got to get back in line before I miss my movie. It was a pleasure talking to you."

It was actually quite cruel. I gave them no chance for rebuttal but I didn't really care. Only one of them had read the books anyway. I scurried back to Alyssa who quickly placed me between herself and escaped convict Linda. "What have you been talking about?" she demanded. She quickly filled me in on Linda's vast litany of nephews and nieces and the black sheep of the family who had never been arrested but before I could process that she again demanded what I could have possibly been talking about for twenty minutes. I began to recant the conversation and I had barely gotten through two minutes of Man "D's" speech when I noticed that the picketers, who had set down their signs while we were talking, had picked them up again. "Alyssa," I said, "I think they're leaving." "Oh, I don't think so" she replied. Thirty seconds later, they turned their backs to the theatre and walked away.

I couldn't believe it. I thought to myself, "I wish my good friend Ryan were here to see this." "Oh my gosh" came a familiar voice from the crowd, "Antonio, you got the protestors to leave!" "Ryan," I practically shouted, "you're here. You saw." "What did you tell them," asked my circle of friends who had materialized out of nowhere. "Wait till I tell you..."

Needless to say, I was very excited to get to work on Monday because I had this great story that I was eager to share with Dianne. I was so excited I almost started to tell my story to Marcia, who had arrived to the office first. Luckily a few minutes later Dianne came in and was quickly followed by Wayne. Wayne set his bag down and stood in the center of the office, that being his usual, "I have an announcement" pose. "I have an announcement," he said. "The two of you were so excited about Harry Potter the other day that

over the weekend I went to Target and bought all four books in hardback. "A convert!" I exclaimed. "Wait," interrupted Marcia. "I have a confession. Over the weekend I went to Target, and got the first three books in paperback." "Oh my gosh, two converts! I have the best story." And it was.

### *Epilogue:*

So two years later, when Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix was coming out, Borders Bookstore decided that their employees should wear baseball caps that advertised Harry Potter. My good friend Lori worked for them for the rush period and thus was obliged to wear the cap. Not being a cap person, she wanted to give it to someone who would wear it and appreciate it. Noticing that I wore caps all the time, she asked me one day if I liked Harry Potter. I explained to her that I was a big fan and had read the books many times. "That's good," she said, "because I have this cap. I'm not a cap person but I want to give it to someone who deserves it. Do you have any Harry Potter stories?" I gladly shared my Harry Potter story and was duly awarded the cap, which I wear proudly to this day.

### **The Varying Powers of Love**

Leslie Piló -2004

Love – is it really as sweet and warm as it seems? Or could it be used as a vicious tool which lends itself to cruelty and malice? The exploitation of human emotion, namely the powerful emotion of love, in an attempt to gain power is scandalous. Some people become thoroughly involved in a relationship, dedicating their lives to pleasing their partner and being as selfless and supportive as possible. If they are betrayed, however, it is no wonder that they will be heartbroken, miserable and distraught. The extent to which love can move one to action can be seen in the early Greek play by Euripides, *The Medea*:

Jason: O children, what a wicked mother she was to you!

Medea: They died from a disease they caught from their father.

Jason: I tell you it was not my hand that destroyed them.

Medea: But it was your insolence, and your virgin wedding.

Jason: And just for the sake of that you chose to kill them.

Medea: Is love so small a pain, do you think, for a woman? (Euripides, 105-6)

Medea believes that Jason is responsible for all that has occurred. She feels Jason has disrespected her for leading her on in the way that he did – and it is obvious that a significant reason why he married Medea in the first place was to gain power. Medea provides the explanation that it is in his leaving her and choosing to marry someone else that has caused the pain and anguish she is feeling and *that* has driven her to such an extreme as to kill their children. It is the relentless manipulation of love to gain power which leads to many unforeseen consequences.

Marriage has historically been used as a way to gain power. A connection to a prominent family name increases one's chances of achieving an elevated position in society. Using love to control any given situation to satisfy one's own best interest was not an uncommon occurrence. This was especially notable throughout the beginning of the

Roman Empire where a series of warriors utilized their ability of love to attain what they wanted – power. In 40 B.C., Mark Antony married Octavia to have access to the Octavian family lineage and also to establish an unbreakable relationship within that family: “...the union brought Antony closer to Octavian and the political power he desired” (Kebrić, 100). It did not matter that he had previously had a wife and that he even had a relationship with Cleopatra at the time. The manipulation of love was used to their own advantage and they would satisfy their own interests by simply being associated with the given family. As Kebrić states about Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship in *Roman People*, “For the moment, Cleopatra was not important to Antony, and Octavia was soon pregnant with his child” (Kebrić, 100). Regardless of how much Antony may have cared for Cleopatra, he could not ignore the opportunity to gain power by marrying into Octavian’s family.

Similarly, Jason marries Medea to benefit his own interests and not merely for being in love with Medea. As a warrior, Jason’s intentions are unmistakably based on gaining power. He is attempting to conquer the Golden Fleece and does not see a better way to do that than to marry the daughter of the King who controls it. Medea is princess of Colchis, the daughter of King Aetes (the fleece’s protector), and she is a sorceress. Medea has many qualities which can be, and indeed were, used to Jason’s advantage. The combination of her high position and her newly found love for Jason is just what Jason needs to triumph. Jason is oblivious to how powerful of an emotion love is. He may feel as if a marriage and having children is something one can do with *anyone*, and that emotions should not drive the relationship. However, he fails to realize that one minute love can be gentle and warm and the next, fierce and relentless. Love has the potential to drive people to many extremes, given that people are often blinded by the intensity behind a love affair and will do almost anything to please their partner – occasionally ignoring what values and morals that person would abide by without love’s force.

Although not directly included in the actual reading of *The Medea*, the recollections of Medea carrying out several merciless actions as a result of her unyielding love for Jason are generally accepted as prefaces to the work. Medea kills a serpent which her father has sent out to destroy Jason, and she reduces herself so far as to murder and chop up her own brother, scattering the pieces in the sea, to help Jason flee. Later, in an attempt to help Jason win over the throne of which he is rightfully heir, Medea prepares a story with the intention of having Pelias’ daughters murder Pelias (Jason’s uncle who had unrightfully taken the throne when Jason’s father died) by using her position as a sorceress to convince the sisters that if they kill their father and chop him to pieces, he will come back to life much younger and he sustain his ability to remain in power much longer. Medea’s evil actions seem to reflect a person blinded so deeply by love that she would bring herself to such an immoral level as to murder human beings who had meant so much to her (her brother and children) – even assisting others to do the same (the daughters of Pelias).

If Medea is willing to do commit these horrendous transgressions while she is in love with Jason, it is not difficult to speculate what she is capable of doing to seek revenge on Jason for betraying her. For the sake of revenge, people can be driven even further to destroy all that one has dedicated to the relationship – which in this case turns out to be their children. By turning on Medea and planning to marry anew (Creon’s daughter, another woman in a high position), Jason tempts Medea to seek out the ultimate revenge. Undoubtedly, Medea realizes Jason’s true motive for marrying her:

You too, O wretched bridegroom, making your match with kings,  
You do not see that you bring  
Destruction on your children and on her,

Your wife, a fearful death.

Poor soul, what a fall is yours! (Euripides, 93)

As further punishment for his inconsiderate actions against her, Medea feels the only way to get revenge is to take back what she has contributed to the relationship (the children) and also to make it impossible for him to be happily in love (by killing his new wife and father-in-law).

Marrying Medea does not result in the outcomes Jason originally anticipated. In fact, the consequences that arise from Jason's manipulation of Medea's emotions are unthinkable. There is no denying the fact that Medea first does many atrocious things in an attempt to please her husband (killing her brother and arranging for Pelias' death). The tragic actions Medea commits to seek revenge, however, are conducted to such an evil degree that the sheer power of the emotion behind it is apparent (killing her children, Jason's new wife and father-in-law). Yet, even after Jason married Medea and she had helped him succeed to a certain extent, all efforts are in vain, for nothing positive comes about from either of their actions in the end. Jason's attempt to gain power leaves Jason, Medea, and their children melancholy, crazy, or dead – evidence that the cruel manipulation of love for one's own interest only leads to the destruction of those affected by the process.

### **Hollywood Dream Industry": Shifting from Internal to External Goals**

Leslie Piló-2004

The attraction to Hollywood had become unavoidable by the 1930s. A series of disheartening events in America had left societal morale at an all-time low. The discouraging outcome of World War I had wrought melancholic sentiment throughout the United States and in the succeeding years, the economic crash of 1929 created the aftermath of what has been called the worst depression in American history – the Great Depression. With nothing left to do but dream about better times, Americans yearned for something that would take their minds off of their problems. The rampant spread of hopelessness and despair categorized by the major events occurring at this time, coupled with the increased hype for the 'West,' and appeal to Hollywood in particular, sent thousands of Americans rushing to California. It would not take long for these people, who had found a renewed sense of faith and purpose in life, to become diehard believers of the "Hollywood Dream" and to abandon personal beliefs and values, replacing them with the collective goals and aspirations Hollywood had prescribed. The growing film industry along with the unrelenting mass production of the time lent itself to the standardization of a collective thought. This mechanical churning, like an assembly line, of ideas rather than of products, of dreams rather than of physical objects is what created this endless cycle of a fictional universe for those who chose to partake in its distortion of reality. Individuality, which is categorized by internal, personalized goals, had been sacrificed by the unyielding, and somewhat blinding, choice to contribute to the formation of a new mass culture of the external values, goals and beliefs Hollywood entailed.

Nathanael West's interest in the "Hollywood Dream Industry," its effects on society, and its formation of a particular mass culture stems from the fact that West himself was a part of the culture he was writing about (moving to California during the rush). Much of West's life has been contextualized within this fantastical framework. Living in New York, West was in the advertising capital of the world. It would then be of no surprise that he too was taken aback by the appeal to Hollywood and the move westward to

California which he did in 1935. In doing so, he created for himself the balance of extremes – the move from advertising to film, the shift from busy commotion to relaxing calmness, the transgression from the real world and reality to a created image, a fantasy, a dream – the very things everyone else who moved westward hoped to attain. His personal connection to the occurrences of this time (changing his own name to West to epitomize the very thing he viewed as a crazy phenomenon) made his commentary all the more vivid, insightful and truthful. He ardently commented on the absurdity of the “Hollywood craze” and his views regarding this issue are particularly evident in his most famous work, *The Day of the Locust*, which he published in 1939. West’s heavily biased view against the absurdities of letting oneself become so heavily immersed into the “Hollywood Dream” incites an analysis of the act of following a collective thought and the unavoidable surrender of personal goals and ambitions in order to focus on the externalized goals brought about by the “Hollywood Dream Industry”; goals based on artificiality and fiction rather than on true, internalized beliefs.

Hollywood’s ability to completely absorb the masses was assisted in several ways. Events like the First World War and the Great Depression had left Americans hopeless and desperate for an enticing attraction – something that would free their minds of the harsh realities of the time. Dealing with the loss of loved ones during World War One proved to be a difficult task. Populations were displaced as more and more soldiers died while abroad in Europe. At home, the only thing they knew was that their loved ones were dead and that there really was no resolution to the war, at least no resolution would be valid enough as to give their deaths legitimacy. Loss was also experienced during the Great Depression when the economic prosperity Americans once reveled in was completely turned upside. Due to unregulated capitalism of the time, the stock market crashed in 1929, leaving banks and farmers out of business and (by 1932) 1.3 million people without jobs (DeLong). For over a decade afterwards, unemployment, poverty, and starvation continued to spread all over the United States thus weakening the individual and making it easier for new ideas to be whole-heartedly believed and followed.

The deluge of “Hollywood” propaganda during the Modernist period essentially fed on the vulnerability and malleability of the emotions of the people. The hopelessness and desperation they experienced was caused by the loss of faith in what they once deemed as fundamental to their very existence. What they now needed was something that would offer them some sort of hope for the future, along with meaning and purpose in their lives. Thus, mass commercialization and strategic advertising was used to market the “Hollywood Dream Industry,” appealing to such materialistic features as the “glitz and glamour” of Hollywood, fame and fortune, leisure, and the transcendence of real-life troubles with a calming serenity in what the dream life could offer them. Hollywood became something new, exciting, strange, and mysterious (Tejani). It offered hope and diversion at a time when everything seemed to be going wrong for people and, at least for diversion’s sake, people were willing to buy into it at all costs. People were taken in by the spectacular presentation of Hollywood. As Adore’s mother says in the novel, “‘Like California?’ she laughed at the very idea that anyone might not like it. ‘Why, it’s paradise on earth!’” (Page 88) The soothing element attributed by the fantastical aspects the “Hollywood Dream” provided had sparked an interest in material objectification and a belief in non-reality.

The rise of advertising and commercialization of the “Hollywood Dream” and of the film industry produced a collective thought which made it possible for dreams to be “sold” to those who wanted them most. The acting and make believe associated with the film industry helped people escape the realities of their everyday lives: the problems, the constraints, the failures. Unfortunately, those persons who were weakened by the harsh realities of the time would be the ones to fall into it; they were essentially the ones who

would buy it, imitate it, and transform it into their own 'reality'. As West documents in the novel, California had become a place for escape; a place idealized for its perfection, a place where one's dreams could be realized:

All their lives they had slaved at some kind of dull, heavy labor, behind desks and counters, in the fields and at tedious machines of all sorts, saving their pennies and dreaming of the leisure that would be theirs when they had enough...Where else should they go but California, the land of sunshine and oranges? (Page 131)

It was the commercialization and fundamental use of people's own hopes and dreams which served to draw people in, to entice people to buy into the "Hollywood Dream". Boorstin comments on the societal necessity for people to expect things to happen. If it does not happen, then they force the creation of pseudo-events; in effect, these are things that people create in order to spur exaggeration and start up conversation:

By harboring, nourishing, and even enlarging our extravagant expectations we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves. And which we pay others to make to deceive us. The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some of its most honest and most necessary and most respectable business...Our every effort to satisfy our extravagant expectations simply makes them more extravagant and makes our illusions more attractive. (Boorstin, 5)

Yet, although they feel as if their own dreams are realized, they are actually getting reproductions of a dream that has been played out over and over again. Both Faye and Harry Greener are good examples in that they repeatedly try to 'make it' in Hollywood as actors over and over again regardless of countless fruitless efforts to become stars. They are blinded by the sheer magnificence of the "Hollywood Dream", of achieving the goals that have been set by mass culture and followed by the masses. They will never realize that their efforts are in vain and will continue trying to achieve that stardom because they are essentially blinded by the fantastical element, the non-reality and cannot rationalize correctly about reality. Thus, Harry dies a washed-up door-to-door acting salesman, while Faye continues her futile efforts at attempting to get a larger role in a movie.

People create their own reality, yet they oftentimes confuse fact with fiction, real events with those which only occur in the movies. The important thing to understand is that nothing has real meaning unless society as a whole gives it that particular meaning:

The main line of critique has been that ads make us buy things because we are deluded into giving things meanings they don't have. Real meanings, in this view, are based on relationships of work and production. Advertising plays on and conceals the real alienation of life in capitalism and in a commodity culture. It replaces real human relationships with relationships based on things. It uses the sense of incompleteness that goes with our work in this system to offer commodities as a way of fulfillment. (Myers, 9)

People can no longer see the difference between fiction and reality. Boorstin argued that, over time, people become almost desensitized to fiction and the element of non-reality. Through movies' repeated use and constant repetition of such values on-screen, people began regarding what they saw as "real" and "natural" (Boorstin, 144-45). They could no

longer differentiate between inherent, true values and those which were mechanically processed and continually regenerated on the larger scale throughout mass culture.

People who feel the need to conform to the ideas of a collective group tend to be weak individuals who are influenced much more by the opinions of others than by their own decisions about their actions. Their weakness is due to their vulnerability; in this case it was based on the negative effects of the particular historical events occurring. They needed a straight-forward sense of direction and purpose. People are likely to be swayed by anything which provides them with a sense of security. Adorno relates this process of the human need for nurturing and comfort to that of infancy and the inherent need for a baby to have "pre-digested" food (the "food" here being the external values brought about by the "Hollywood Dream"): "The pre-digested quality of the products prevails, justifies itself and establishes itself all the more firmly in so far as it constantly refers to those who cannot digest anything not already pre-digested. It is baby-food: permanent self-reflection based upon the infantile compulsion towards the repetition of needs which it creates in the first place" (Adorno, 67).

Over time, after repeatedly following these external goals that Hollywood projects constantly, they forget what their own personal goals once were. Internal goals are then replaced by the goals Hollywood has established and that mass culture emphatically reproduces in a constant cycle. Attached to the group psychology is that which provides for these weak individuals a comfort level, a sense of reliable security, as they in fact fear the unknown – the astonishing disorder and troublesome chaos that the real world embodies. The individual's beliefs and values change based on what mass society deems as important and what should be valued and these externalized, processed values are soon transplanted into the individual's mind, regardless of what s/he may have thought prior to this transition. Uniformity in thought is what tends to make people lose their individuality and thus be regarded as a collective whole. Andreas Huyssen realizes the effects of the transition to the collective ideology. He views this transition as a negative one in that it prevents the individual to think and rationalize for him/herself: "The culture industry is seen as one of the major factors preventing such 'healthy' internalization and replacing it by those external standards of behavior which inevitably lead to conformism" (Huyssen, 22). They become the "faceless masses" which carry no absolute distinction between individuals and which embody not a variety of differing viewpoints but instead, the omnipotent and collective ideology.

The mechanical reproduction and profound artificiality characterized by this period was slowly transposed from film and on screen to life and the real world. The process of the reproduction of dreams in the film industry can be seen in Tod's description of the studio set-up:

Just as that imaginary body of water was a history of civilization in the form of a marine junkyard, the studio lot was one in the form of a dream dump... And the dump grew continually, for there wasn't a dream afloat somewhere which wouldn't sooner or later turn up on it, having first been made photographic by plaster, canvas, lath and paint...Somewhere [dreams] trouble some unfortunate person and some day, when that person has been sufficiently troubled, it will be reproduced on the lot. (Pages 81-82)

The ability for Hollywood to essentially reproduce any possible scenario for a 'dream life' asserts its power to manipulate any believer. The dreams create the necessary distraction given the negative effects the world has had on them. Yet, the fact that they are also able to cater to a variety of possibilities makes the "Hollywood Dream Industry" a frighteningly powerful force. The industry has the power of manipulating people's beliefs to coincide

with those which Hollywood has created for itself. Moreover, this mechanical reproduction of dreams carries over to the characters themselves and in the actions they make based on external motivation. In a scene where Faye is telling Tod about her dreams, Faye is not smiling out of personal joy, sense of accomplishment, or anything else of that nature, but instead, she smiles about the mechanics and how good she has gotten at the imitation of things Hollywood values most – fakeness, impersonality, reproduction, and artificiality: “While she admitted that her method was too mechanical...He thought it important that she smiled while telling him, not with embarrassment, but critically. However, her critical powers ended there. She only smiled at the mechanics” (Page 50). West stresses the importance of the mechanical aspects of her behavior. If she had smiled from embarrassment, she would have been expressing an inward emotion, but her sheer dismissal of reality, of true and personal feeling, makes it so that the reader sees the daunting reproductive affect the “Hollywood Dream” can have on people.

Hollywood prescribes the way people ought to behave. The reinforcement of attitudes and the representation of illustrative advertising “can blind us to other values” (Lecpa, 16). The “Hollywood Dream” has its own set of norms which are duly enforced by its supporters. The uncontrollable obsession with the “Hollywood Dream” has created a series of externalized, collective goals, values and beliefs which people who fall into it follow. These goals are extremely materialistic and artificial. Things like making it in show business, becoming famous movie stars, striking it rich and being well off, and enjoying the easy life – away from problems or worries become central objectives to how the people react in the world. Those who avidly believe in the “Hollywood Dream” form a collective whole as the mob scene at the very end of the novel can easily document. But not only is it important to notice the crazed end result of their collective whole, the transformation is an equally important element: “New groups, whole families, kept arriving. He could see a change come over them as soon as they had become part of the crowds. Until they reached the line, they looked diffident, almost furtive, but the moment they had become part of it, they turned arrogant and pugnacious” (Page 131). They thus begin sharing in the common tasks in search for the achievement of their collective goal. Stalking movie stars (as in when people run out of Harry’s funeral at the sight of a movie star) or striving for an ideal as defined by mass society become their key objectives. However, there is no personal or inner development, no growth or innate inspiration because it is set aside in an attempt to delve into a collective ideology. Sadie Plant explains that spectacular events must be viewed as parts and can only be achieved separately, and not in unison with any other aspect for it confuses the sensory experience: “The commodification of human choice places every experience within a predefined role and enforces identification with a spectacular and specific category from which an experience of the whole is impossible” (Plant, 65). As in the descriptions West provides with all of the people following the same absurd codes of dress and actions, extravagant means must be achieved and that, in turn, leads to a sense of a collective whole:

As he walked along, he examined the evening crowd. A great many of the people wore sports clothes which were not really sports clothes. Their sweaters, knickers, slacks, blue flannel jackets with brass buttons were fancy dress. The fat lady in the yachting cap was going shopping, not boating; the man in the Norfolk jacket and Tyrolean hat was returning, not from a mountain, but an insurance office; and the girl in slacks and sneakers with a bandanna around her head had just left a switchboard not a tennis court. (Page 2)



What is regarded as typical or “normal” within the context of Hollywood, may not be the same for any other framework. Thus, in order to fit in and assimilate to those around him/her, one must follow the standardized conventions of what Hollywood values most.

Personal hopes and dreams are replaced by the external goals which have become part of the “Hollywood Dream Industry”. The individual view is distorted by a false sense of reality which it then re-creates and markets back to the people. People become absorbed in the craze and, in turn, become crazy themselves – the surrounding chaos mixed with the undeniable confusion and lack of clear understanding of what they ought to believe in becomes blurred in a mass collection of beliefs and values. The artificiality of life becomes ever-present as beliefs and values begin taking on a mechanized shape of non-reality, of fiction, fantasy, or a dream. However, at the same time, it is important to note that people following the “Hollywood Dream” do not particularly believe that they are giving up their own individuality. It is, instead, a subconscious dismissal of the individual self and complete assimilation of new, external goals and objectives. They simply do not comprehend that their individuality is being erased by the very act of following a collective thought. In fact, Faye truly feels like she is coming up with something original when she explains the way one makes it into show business. She believes it is an idea that has not been mentioned before:

She went on and on, telling him how careers are made in the movies and how she intended to make hers. It was all nonsense. She mixed bits of badly understood advice from the trade papers with other bits out of the fan magazines and compared these with the legends that surround the activities of screen stars and executives. Without any noticeable transition, possibilities became probabilities and wound up as inevitabilities.  
(Page 110)

Faye’s understanding of show business has been convoluted by the basic conceptions and standardizations of what Hollywood norms expect it to be. Through various forms of media, Faye is able to piece it all together and gain Hollywood’s understanding of how one becomes a movie star. It is evident that Hollywood expectations and values have been embedded into her mind by how ardently she believes in it as reality.

In a time when there is no differentiation between a dream-state and reality, it is difficult to react as an individual. As Walter Benjamin put it in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936): “In the world’s structure dream loosens individuality like a bad tooth.” Adhering to invented beliefs as prescribed by the whole leaves no room for the individual’s input. The belief in externalized values causes the individual to forfeit his/her individuality for the sake of contributing to the collective thought. Wholeheartedly believing in one set of values (in this case the external) means giving up a part of oneself (internal goals). The replacement of the aspirations, values, and goals which have been created, reproduced, and advertised by the “Hollywood Dream Industry” implies a direct abandonment of personal ambitions. Those who are absorbed by Hollywood and its collective objectives must, at least subconsciously, empty their minds of prior personal ambitions, goals and objectives in order to succumb to the collective Hollywood ideology. Internal beliefs cannot thrive in this type of setting – if one does not abide by Hollywood ideas and collective thought about those ideas, then that person does not have a place in this scene, or even in this industry. If a person is unwilling to ‘be like the rest’ and give up his/her individuality, then s/he is simply not meant for it. West makes this divide apparent in his description of ‘the other type’ of people along the street:

Scattered among these masquerades were people of a different type. Their clothing was somber and badly cut, bought from mail-order houses. While the others moved rapidly, darting into stores and cocktail bars, they loitered on the corners or stood with their backs to the shop windows and stared at everyone who passed. When their stare was returned, their eyes filled with hatred. (Page 2)

It is evident, also, that those who are unable, for whatever reason, to be absorbed by the "Hollywood Dream" actually want to be. They are envious of the ability others have in making that transition. The dream and its attempt to move away from reality is incredibly appealing, especially for those who are living with the harsh realities of society.

However, the quest to actually fit into this crowd, when they understand that in striving for these collective goals the individual is lost, is an absurdity West emphasizes throughout the novel. The appeal of 'fitting in' to a collective whole simply does not make sense when weighing the costs and benefits of the experience. Although one may receive temporary relief from their problems, it costs them their individuality. It causes them to forfeit their previous values, goals, and ambitions; it causes them to give up their 'self'. Yet strangely enough, the transition from personal, internal goals to external goals comes almost naturally. It does not seem to be difficult at all; moreover, it seems to just happen naturally. Personal goals become overridden by collective goals and the loss of individuality is brought about by that shift from internal to entirely external beliefs. The attempt to become absorbed within a dream limits reality, "To try to live a dream is like not living your own life" (Tony Barnstone, 2003). However, to the people who have become blinded by the falseness and artificial quality of their newly established externalized goals, they learn to want to live that dream life and can no longer see the truth. The truth evades fiction and it is wholly believed as reality.

Many people were absorbed by this fantasy world where fame and fortune was regarded as more important than intelligence and morals. They begin to lose sight of the important things in life. Their personal goals, the ones which should matter most and which seem to express a key issue of concern for the basic necessities in life, are lost: "Some of them are very poor, but no matter how poor, they always manage to scrape together enough money, often by making great sacrifices, to send their children to one of the innumerable talent schools" (Page 88). Soon, individual internal goals, hopes and aspirations are thus quickly replaced by those encompassed in the external facades of the Hollywood scene. Thus, the individual identity was quickly lost and, instead, substituted by a collective identity which did not allow for freedom of thought and expression and, in fact, limited critical thinking. "[Adorno] argued that the culture industry commodified and standardized all art. In turn this suffocated individuality and destroyed critical thinking" (Adorno). The absurdity of such values is evident in the way the extras who were injured viewed the disaster after the accident where a set comes crashing down during a run-through: "They were quite happy about their wounds. They were certain to receive several extra days' pay, and the man with the broken leg thought he might get as much as five hundred dollars" (Page 84). They are no longer able to rationalize in the sense that they have been injured to the miscalculations of the film industry and yet they are more worried about how much money they will get from it, rather than with their own well-being. This lack of rationalization caused by the belief in Hollywood's materialistic values is also evident in Faye's view of her goals in life: "I'm going to be a star some day...It's my life. It's the only thing in the whole world that I want...If not, I'll commit suicide" (Page 44). Faye is blinded to the internal values life encompasses and, instead, forces the two extremes – either she becomes a star or she dies. She would rather die than live knowing that she will not be a part of the collective whole, those who live their entire lives attempt-

ing to fulfill the “Hollywood Dream”.

Identity is lost and, in turn, a severe dependence on the entire group becomes necessary to ensure the person’s happiness – which s/he gains through acceptance into the larger group. However, once one gives in to the external beliefs, the transition back to the internal is nearly impossible. In fact, attempting to remove oneself from the beliefs of the society proves to be detrimental. At the end of the novel, Homer goes crazy as a result of letting people walk all over him for so long and for believing people could genuinely care, or have personal emotions. In the end, he too gives in to the craze in stomping on and brutally murdering Adore. Tod comments in the narrative that Homer “was like a stone column” (Page 135) at that moment. Homer is completely solid inside – his emotions are no longer personal, but instead, they have become weakened by his falling into the reproductive trap of the “Hollywood Dream”; his features “were set in a rigid, mechanical grin” (Page 132).

This becomes the absurdity with societal homogeneity that West emphatically comments about in *Day of the Locust*. What happens to people’s ability to feel inward emotions, to react based on internal motives and incentives and not those of the collective whole which have been remanufactured over and over again? Is individuality jeopardized with the mass production of feelings, values and beliefs? There is a definite conflict between attempting to retain the individual self and contributing to the larger scheme of things as a part of a mass culture. Maintaining accuracy in both is extremely challenging in a world where people are conditioned to behave in a particular manner through various avenues, such as advertising, film, and mass culture, in order to achieve externalized, collective goals. People are taken in by the “Hollywood Dream” and through its repetitive and reproductive element, they begin to adopt its values for themselves. Thus, as they adhere to external goals, they lose sight of their internal, personalized goals and their individuality is lost in the process towards attaining the collective whole. Individuality fades away with one’s pursuit of becoming more attached to a group mentality, which is essentially a reproduction of beliefs, values and ideas. In effect, the materialism and artificiality characterized by the mass reproduction inspired by Hollywood advertising and the film industry lends itself to people’s belief in a fantastical fiction of externalized values rather than a feasible reality of internalized goals.

#### Works Cited:

- Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry*. London: Routledge Classics, 2002.
- Auden, W. H. “West’s Disease” in *The Dryer’s Hand and Other Essays*. New York: Random House, Inc. 1962.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Atheneum, 1972.
- Collins, Carvel. “Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* and Sanctuary” in *Faulkner Studies* 2, no. 3, 1953.
- DeLong, J. Bradford. *Slouching Towards Utopia?: The Economic History of the Twentieth Century*. University of California at Berkeley and NBER, February 1997. Online: [http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/Slouch\\_Crash14.html](http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/Slouch_Crash14.html)
- Herbst, Josephine. “Nathanael West” in *Kenyon Review* 23, 1961.

- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Leepa, Allen. *The Challenge of Modern Art*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1957.
- Martin, Jay. *Nathanael West: A Collection of Essays*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.1971.
- Myers, Greg. *Words in Ads*. London: Edward Arnold, 1994.
- Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Reid, Randall. *The Fiction of Nathanael West*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1967. Sandoval, Andrew.Love: Forever Changes. Online: <http://www.rhino.com/features/liners/76717lin.lasso>
- Tejani, Jim. "A Wasteland of Contradictions: The California Dreams of Nathanael West."Literary Traveler. Online:<http://www.literarytraveler.com/spring/west/nwest.htm>.
- Volpe, Edmond L. "The Waste Land of Nathanael West" in *Renascence* 13,Winter1961.
- West, Nathanael. *The Day of the Locust*. New York: Bantam Books, 1939.
- Williams, William Carlos. "The Day of the Locust" in *Tomorrow* 10, 1950.

### **Rape As Performance of Nationalism and Masculinity**

Greg Prieto-2004

Rape, during the Rwandan genocide, served as a tool of war; moreover, it became a channel through which Hutu men, particularly the *Interahamwe* and the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), asserted their masculinity and avenged mythic Hutu victimization at the hands of the Tutsi. Tutsi women, in particular, became targets for Hutu violence; sexist patriarchal practices and Rwandan law rendered women second class citizens, their central role as reproducers made them perpetrators of the "Tutsi problem," and their supposed superior physical appearance aggravated Hutu men who were thought to be unable to attain Tutsi women, or Tutsikazi, because they were ethnically undeserving of such beauty. As targets, Rwandan women were frequently raped in such a way as to completely crush their human spirit and destroy their will to live; in addition, those women who survived Hutu brutality were often ostracized by their communities, resulting in devastating poverty for the women who no longer had husbands or family to rely on for support. Thus, rape became an act of war, or more accurately, an act of genocide—a genocide that was performed against women through the assertion of ethno-masculine dominance and the performance of patriotism in service to a nation based on ethnic homogeneity. Because Hutu masculinity was often defined in opposition to Tutsi femininity, the domination and destruction of Tutsi women through rape served to reaffirm and reassert Hutu masculinity, as well as allow Hutu men space to perform their national duty: the substantive or physical destruction of the reproductive centerpiece of Rwandan culture and the annihilation of human respectability and life.

In general, the combination of nationalism and normative masculinity is a particularly insidious force because these forces are intertwined so intimately that the performance of one often necessitates the successful performance of the other. Thus, conforming to normative masculine expectations is a criterial component of patriotism, and vice versa. Mosse elaborates, "Manliness symbolized the nation's spiritual and material vitality. It called for strength of body and mind, but not brute force—the individual's energies had to be kept under control" (Mosse 23). Masculinity became the gauge against which national health and stability was measured; furthermore, careful control of one's faculties, especially one's sexuality, was required to perform one's masculinity properly.

Derived from middle-class, bourgeois norms of respectability, masculinity was constructed in opposition to the emotionalism of femininity, engendering a strict dichotomy between the controlled, strong, dominant male and the emotional, idealized, passive female. "Strength is a manly prerogative, while women must exemplify beauty and decorum. Man was active and woman passive, and the two roles must not be confused" (17). The purpose for this dichotomy lies in the need for the nation to be strong and orderly, a nation defined in opposition to an "other" and invested in the preservation and integrity of the national population. Thus, men provided the nation with strength and order, while women performed the dual role of other, both in need of male protection, and the passive body through which the male population was fostered. Within this gendered framework, masculinity and femininity became touchstones of nationalism; the protection and enforcement of this gender dichotomy was vital for the maintenance of national identity.

Exacerbated during Rwanda's colonial rule, these gender roles were adhered to within Rwandan society. According to a Human Rights Watch report entitled Shattered Lives, women in Rwanda are treated as second class citizens: women are idealized as reserved, passive, and fertile child-bearers; they are indoctrinated early on to assume the roles of mothers and wives; and they lack rights to inheritance, making post-genocide economic recovery extremely difficult (1996). Women in Rwanda are taught to be dependent on their male counterparts, whether he is one's father, husband, or male children. Their disenfranchisement has impeded recovery in Rwanda, as the female population now accounts for 70% of the total population, 50% of those are heads of households (1996). Women's lack of legislative or cultural empowerment has obstructed recovery in Rwanda and reinforced women's status as second class citizens.

Thus, Rwandan women's lack of agency served as the foundation upon which the male draws his social, cultural, and political dominance. According to the same Human Rights Watch report, the strength of the family was measured in the number of its males; the average number of children in a Rwandan family prior to the genocide was 6.2 (1996). Masculine identity hinged not solely, but importantly on opposition to the feminine identity. In Rwanda, this opposition is often expressed physically and demonstrative of the control males were expected to exert over their female counterparts. "The Rwandan government report estimates that one-fifth of Rwandan women are victims of domestic violence at the hands of their male partners. One Rwandan proverb states, 'that a woman who is not yet battered is not a real woman'" (1996). Indeed, the role of the Rwandan man, as well as the woman, was one influenced by European, bourgeois culture; control, aggressiveness, and strength composed the normative male identity, while docility, passivity, and maternalism comprised the normative and idealized, Rwandan feminine identity.

Rape, during the Rwandan, genocide derived its meaning out of this culture and these normative identities. Through violence, men found a channel to express their masculinity, as well as a forum to demonstrate their nationalist spirit. Rape, as an expres-

sion of masculinity, was often constructed as avenging mythic Hutu victimization; rape, in particular, was directed at Tutsi women because of their stereotypical sexiness and deceitfulness. Hutu extremist propaganda reflected this construction of Tutsi women as deceiver:

'The propaganda warned Hutu men to beware of Tutsi women,' explained one Tutsi woman. 'For example, it said if she gives you a good child, the child is not really for you-the child is really for her Tutsi brothers. These women are very sexual, and they sleep with their Tutsi brothers. You will be deceived by them.' The stereotypes also portrayed Tutsi women as being arrogant and looking down on Hutu men whom they considered ugly and inferior. (1996)

Thus, Tutsi women were portrayed as betrayers and liars, not to be trusted by Hutu men. Moreover, Tutsi women exuded a snobbish beauty that had always been out of reach for the ugly Hutu man; consequently, rape served to reassert and reaffirm the Hutu's worth as a man. Through the humiliation, degradation, and destruction associated with raping a Tutsi woman, the Hutu male was able to affirm both his cultural dominance over women, and also elevate his own worth by violently laying claim to the perceived superiority and heightened beauty of Tutsi women.

Rape not only functioned as an equalizer between Hutu men and Tutsi women, but also furthered the nationalist project through the ethnic destruction of the Tutsi "other." Tutsi otherness and Hutu nationalism was constructed largely along ethnic lines; nevertheless, Tutsi women were targeted in particular for their gendered roles as seductresses and spies, a subversive group bent on maintaining Hutu inferiority and undermining Hutu attempts at equality.

*Kangura* [a Hutu Power publication] accused Tutsi women of monopolizing positions of employment in both the public and private sectors, hiring their Tutsi sisters on the basis of their thin noses (a stereotypically "Tutsi feature"), thereby contributing to the unemployment rate of the Hutu, particularly Hutu women. (1996)

Tutsi women threatened the health of the nation; they poisoned any hope of a Hutu nationality grounded in ethnic purity. Rape became a tool of genocide, in that rape substantively and physically destroyed the Tutsi woman and freed the oppressed Hutu majority of the dominant ethnic group. Rape became an exercise in nationalism, a performance of loyalty to Hutu Power, and ultimately the most perverse and destructive means of ethnic extermination.

With a propagandized image of Tutsi women clouding their minds, Hutu *génocidaires* engaged in rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, genital mutilation, and forced marriage as means of attacking both *Tutsikazi* and the Tutsi community through an assault on the ideals of womanhood and virtue.

The humiliation, pain and terror inflicted by the rapist are meant to degrade not just the individual woman but also to strip the humanity from the larger group of which she is a part. The rape of one person is translated into an assault upon the community through the emphasis placed in every culture on women's sexual virtue: the shame of the rape humiliates the family and all those associated with the survivor. Combatants who rape in war often explicitly link their acts of sexual violence to this broader social degradation. In the aftermath of such abuse, the harm done to the individual woman is often obscured or even compounded by the perceived harm to the community. (1996)

An attack on a woman was an attack on the abstraction of the *Tutsikazi* as well; more than just a woman was raped, indeed rape was an affront to the maternal values and reproductive capabilities of a community. The shame of the act extended to the woman's husband, family, husband's family, and even the child of the rape. Thus, the *génocidaires* effectively employed rape as a tool of genocide—it not only destroyed the woman, but also the community to which she belonged.

Although the connection between the community and the woman is vital for understanding the purpose of rape as a tool of genocide, one must examine the intimate sufferings of the individual, thereby eliminating the abstracting effect of distance on the reader, personifying atrocities that are quite unimaginable, and simply telling a story that deserves to be told. The extent of the dehumanization endured by rape victims was disgustingly intense; frequently, the woman's family was murdered while she watched, after which she was raped, often repeatedly, and then tortured. Many women were subsequently murdered, yet significant numbers of rape victims were allowed to live so that they "may die of sadness" (1996). Thus, whether or not the woman was allowed to live, she was destroyed. This passage is an excerpt of a Tutsi woman named Perpetue's experience:

'On April 9, 1994, they found me. I was taken to the Nyabarongo River by a group of Interahamwe...For two days, myself and eight other young women were held and raped by Interahamwe, one after another...On the third day, one Interahamwe saw that I was not able to walk anymore. He told me that I had already died and could go. I tried to leave, but I could barely walk...I was in the church building when the Interahamwe came there...He [another of the interahamwe] took me to another building near the church and raped me there. Before he raped me...one of them sharpened the end of the stick of a hoe. They held open my legs and pushed the stick into me. I was screaming. They did it three times until I was bleeding everywhere. Then they told me to leave. I tried to stand up, but I kept falling down. Finally I crawled outside. I was naked crawling on the ground covered in blood...' Unfortunately, when she arrived in Gisenyi at the end of May, she was recognized by an Interahamwe from her home area... 'He took me to the lake. There, he raped me. I cried out because I was still wounded from before and he was opening all the wounds again...After the rape, I was left alone and naked...When people passed me, I sat down and stopped walking so they wouldn't know that I had been raped because I was ashamed. When I saw the RPF fighters, I thought it was the Interahamwe. I told them to kill me because I didn't care anymore.' (1996)

Invasion, shame, agony, vulnerability, fear, death, and resignation—all of these characterize Perpetue's experience with the *Interahamwe*; she makes it very clear that the extent of her dehumanization was such that she no longer craved life. During the genocide, experiences like these numbered in the thousands; large numbers of *Tutsikazi* became targets for the aggression and horror of the genocide. Whether or not Perpetue survived her ordeal, she was nevertheless shattered by her experience.

Although Perpetue's rape may seem like the actions of reckless and insane individuals, in fact, the actions of the *génocidaires* were calculated, strategic and exemplary of masculine control, strength and dominance. Mosse articulates the complementary nature of the two concepts; "Nationalism reinforced such control by redirecting men's passions to a higher purpose" (Mosse II). To explain the mass rape of the Rwandan genocide as the actions of a group of horny, bloodthirsty, and reckless teenagers is entirely

insufficient, especially when considering the scale, consistency, and purpose with which these atrocities took place. Sexual eroticism was an element of the mass rapes; however, the more meaningful explanation lies in the relationship to masculinity and nationality. The mass rapes provided a channel through which men could direct their sexual energies, simultaneously exhibiting control over their female victims and contributing their nation's integrity through an assault on its constructed enemy. Through the act of rape, men quite literally performed their normative masculinity, exhibiting respectable, European, bourgeois norms of control, dominance, and strength over their victims and, by extension, over the Tutsi community.

Moreover, the strategic and controlled manner in which the rapes occurred point to nationalist fervor as the crux of the mass rapes, rather than uninhibited sexual drives. According to another study by Human Rights Watch entitled The War Within The War, older soldiers and commanders often passed on opportunities to rape women and encouraged the younger, more inexperienced soldiers, to participate in the rapes (2002). Rape was a strategy pursued by Hutu extremists and indoctrinated into the Hutu youth, not one motivated solely by sexual aggression. By encouraging young soldiers to participate in rape, older commanders were not only asking for their participation in this perverse act, but also securing their commitment to Hutu extremism and their nationalist cause. Through rape, young soldiers performed their commitment to Hutu extremism and furthered the Hutu political agenda by annihilating the Tutsi other.

The effects of this nationalist agenda on the women and their communities were real and devastating. Should the woman survive the rape, the subsequent complications were stigmatizing, ostracizing, and shameful. Women who were raped during the genocide are often very fearful to publicize their experience or even see a doctor for fear of exposure. Because women in Rwandan society are constructed as virtuous and maternal, rape deeply undermined their identities as women. Consequently, they are undesirable to other men and oftentimes to their own families who were shamed by the rape as well. Without a male independent, women were often left as the head of the household, attempting to fend for themselves without money, aid, training, or adequate healthcare; consequently, rape survivors often live in abject poverty with very few communal ties. Perhaps the most severely stigmatizing and shameful result of a genocidal rape was pregnancy and the birth of "enfants de mauvais souvenir:" children of bad memories, or children of hate (1996). "According to estimates of the National Population Office, survivors of rape have given birth to between 2,000 and 5,000 children...Health workers at Kigali and Kabgayi hospitals had noted that after September 1994, over half the pregnant women seen for consultations had been raped: between six to seven out of ten each day" (1996). Occasionally, mothers of rape come to love their child; however, more often the mother loathes the child as a reminder of the rape. Significant numbers of women went as far as to commit infanticide because the child was too great a source of shame. The woman's primary role as child bearer is perverted by the birth of a "child of hate;" her identity as a woman is further obscured by her experience, while the masculine identity of her attackers are affirmed—a final tragic example of the oppositional nature of normative gender roles in Rwandan society and the exacerbation of that dichotomy during the genocide.

The rapes of the Rwandan genocide were much more than crazed acts of sexuality; they were expressions of masculine ideals of control, strength and dominance, as well as techniques for the purposeful and calculated destruction of the Tutsi population and the foundation for a nationalist, Hutu identity. Because normative gender roles in Rwanda were diametrically opposed, the extreme performance of one was to inevitably come at extreme cost to the other. Hutu men were given the opportunity to perform



their masculinity and their nationality, but only at the expense of the respect, health, and humanity of their victims.

#### **Works Cited**

- Human Rights Watch. "Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath." Human Rights Watch/Africa/Women's Rights (Sept. 1996).
- Human Rights Watch. "The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in the Eastern Congo." Human Rights Watch/Africa (June 2002).
- Mosse, George L. Nationalism and Sexuality. New York: Howard Fertig, 1985.



