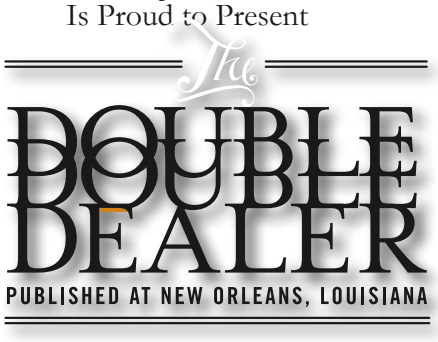
The 2011 DOUBLE DEALER

PUBLISHED AT NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The Literature of War & Collateral Damage

The Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society

Is Proud to Present



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With special thanks to Shari Stauch and Karin Kaltofen for their tireless efforts to produce this edition.

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Introduction

On September 25, 1990, William Faulkner's birthday anniversary, the First Annual Meeting of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society marked the beginning of the Faulkner Society's annual tributes to all great writers—past, present and yet to come—in memory of the Nobel Laureate, who wrote his first book while living on Pirate's Alley in 1925. Faulkner's work was first published by *The Double Dealer,* a New Orleans literary journal of the 1920s, which the Faulkner Society reinstituted in 1992. Much of the material in this issue relates to the theme of *Words & Music in 2010*, the Society's 20th anniversary.

As a young man, Faulkner's imagination was captured by the romance of the flying aces of the RAF but he also was a keen observer of the sad experiences veterans were having as they attempted to re-enter American society after the trauma of the "Great War." Faulkner's novel, in fact, is among the first American novels to address post-traumatic stress disorders among veterans and their families. It was only fitting in a milestone year in the Society's history— when American men and women by the thousands were serving in Afghanistan and other hotspots— that ***Words & Music*** and *The Double Dealer* focused on war and its impact on literature and life. Mr. Faulkner's first novel, **Soldiers' Pay,** is the story of a veteran flyer who finds himself at odds with home, unable to pick up the pieces of the life he led before he left to go into battle. Mr. Faulkner had a keen understanding of both the lure of war and the evil of it. He understood clearly how war can shape the fabric of a society for generations after.

The Soldier's Fate Remains the Same

This photo could be a photo of an American combat soldier in any modern war... Guadalcanal of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, you name it. Combat soldiers all have that same haunted look.

In fact, it is a photo of Frank Cox, author of the new memoir, **Lullabies for Lieutenants: Memoir of a Marine Forward Observer in Vietnam, 1965-1966.** Words & Music added a new feature in 2010, a Call for Papers by academics, scholars, and authors, several of which are included in this special edition of ***The Double Dealer.*** Frank is one of 20 who responded. Frank's presentation was a reading entitled *Anger*, a chapter from his book.

We are so enthusistic about the quality and range of the papers that we hope to attract similar presentations for **Words & Music** in the future. We believe that the 2010 papers added an important dimension to the theme: **The Literature of War & Collateral Damage**.

We offer our special thanks to Nancy Cater, J.D., Ph.D, a lawyer and Jungian psychologist, who suggested it. Nancy is Editor of *Spring: a Journal of Archetype & Culture*.

Sensitive Plants

Editors Note: *Fiction Writer* ***Richard Ford****'s new novel,* **Canada***, was released in June, 2012, He was guest of honor for* ***Juleps in June, 2012*** *on June 10. The story about Richard in this issue of the* ***Double Dealer*** *is an updated version of a story which appeared after a reception celebrating his prize-winning novel,* ***Independence Day****.*

By Rosemary James

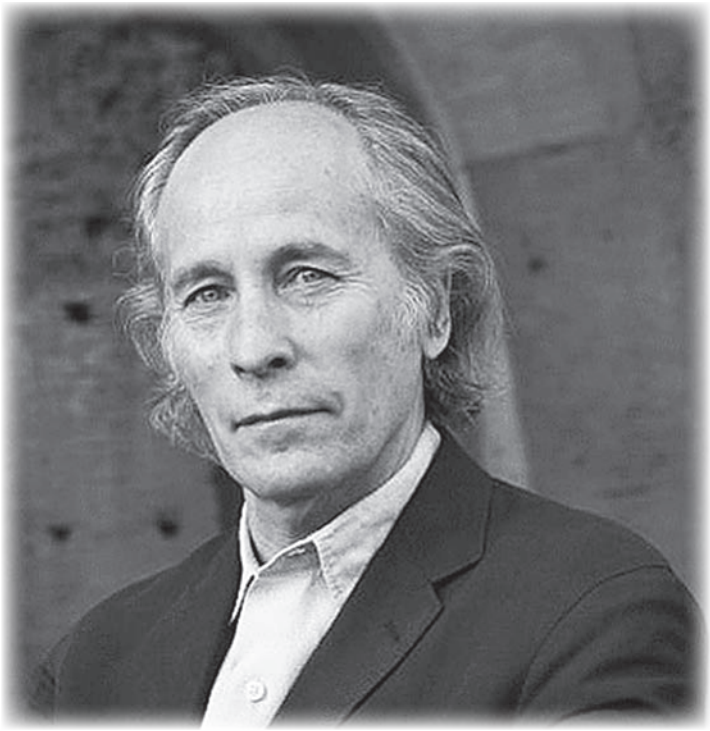
All living things, of course, are nourished or damaged by the elements of their environments. For some sturdy creatures, survival is easier. Some humans, for instance, seem to thrive and flower most profusely in the midst of elemental turmoil. Others require calm instead of the storm to flourish. Any gardener will tell you that in the case of some plants you'd better be darn certain you want them before you plant them because they'll grow like weeds anywhere, regardless of light, water, food, parasites, care. Some cities, cut down to the ground by disaster, as New Orleans by Katrina, rise again, like the proverbial phoenix. And some humans are like that, too, hardy.

Then there are the storytellers.

They are like roses, when cultivated in the heat and drowning humidity of a Deep South garden, prone to wilt or insignificant flowering without constant tending.

Novelists, the good ones, although bigger than life in many respects, are like sensitive plants. They can stand a lot of nurturing from their environments. Many writers, therefore, have a tendency to transplant themselves frequently, always looking for the perfect place.

Richard Ford, who won the Pulitzer Prize and the Pen/Faulkner Prize for his novel **Independence Day**, has been one of those, a self-confessed searchers for that best place in which to live and work. He is an avid inspector of new real estate on the market in towns that strike his fancy—ranging across the country from chic Newport up East and the rarified intellectual airs of Princeton and back down to home in the Delta and Oxford and up to cold, cold Ann Arbor and out West to the solitude of Montana, across the ocean to England, Scandinavia and France, and back again. In fact when asked why he decided to use the vehicle of real estate for **Independence Day**, Ford quipped: "I have so much personal experience in that field, I decided I needed to use it."



His eternal quest has been for that place whose people will offer him condolences when he is blocked, give him plenty of space and leave him alone when the muse is kind and he is working well, offer company when he is ready to play, toast his successes and simply be glad he lives among them.

All of this preambling is necessary background for you to understand that some years ago Richard Ford gave New Orleans a gift from the heart at the Faulkner Society's Meet the Author reception celebrating publication of **Independence Day**. That day he summed up New Orleans up as pretty much the perfect place for a writer to live and work.

Although conveyed to the Society and its guests for the event, Ford was speaking to all of New Orleans and his timing made the gift even more precious.

Back then, the denizens of New Orleans could not eavesdrop on a restaurant conversation, pick up the daily newspaper (or the alternatives), could not turn on the tube or drive-time radio without being depressed by discussions of crack cocaine and crime and police problems and an underfunded school system and political scandals and garbage and all manner of other filth in the streets. And at that moment Richard Ford gave all of us good reason to be glad we live here. And his message then remains relevant today.

He reminded us that New Orleans embraces artists with a tolerance and kindness that is in sharp contrast to the reception writers are given in Princeton, for instance, or Ann Arbor, "where they don't understand or particularly care about writers."

Ford emphasized that he had been truly happy to have lived in New Orleans while writing **Independence Day** and "to be here talking to you about it now that it has been published."

The essence of what he had to say, however, is this.

Unlike the people of some other towns in which I have lived or visited for a while, the people here really are tolerant of those whose lifestyles are somewhat different than their own. And they actually think that writers, whose social habits are frequently antisocial, are worthwhile people. If you ignore them for weeks, even months, while you are working, they don't get offended. They really want you to succeed. They actually like writers and are happy to hear that writers are working on books here in New Orleans. People here don't lose esteem for you if you don't succeed on a certain book, but they are truly delighted when you hit a home run. They love it when someone living here writes a book and it is published and gets good reviews. They go to multiple events in your honor and buy books and stand in line happily waiting for you to sign. You don't know how rare it is elsewhere to experience this community delight in a writer's worth and work and success. It is special that you make us feel special. Some people say they can't write in New Orleans, that there are too many distractions. I don't buy that. Writing is a matter of discipline and being alone with that discipline for many hours at a time. You can be as alone as you need to be in New Orleans for as long as you need to be if you are serious about your work. Even being serious about your work offers no guarantee that you will write a great book and get it published. But if you do, the people of New Orleans will be genuinely pleased, happier for you than the folks anywhere else would be.

During the days immediately following the reception, I discovered that I was not the only one touched by his remarks; phones were alive all over town with talk about his class act: his book, his remarks, the time he took to give us a lift when we needed it most.

Ford also gave us another gift by reminding us of the lessons to be learned from a very wise woman. Although Ford took questions about his novel, he modestly declined to read from his own work for the assemblage. Instead, he selected a passage from the work of the South's first lady of letters, Eudora Welty.

Two of the best storytellers in the country have been Ford and Welty. It would be nigh on to impossible to be bored by anything either has to say. And I commend to you both **Independence Day** and the Welty work from which he selected a passage for his reading to the Society.

If you have not yet had the experience, I must warn you: Don't try to read Ford when you're tired. He makes you work. Hard. Each page, dense with ideas, is like the best of meals. You don't know which part of it to chew on first; it's all so appetizing. And it's absolutely necessary to dine on Ford slowly, otherwise your system will be thrown out of balance for days, screaming at you, "overload!"

For me, **Independence Day** sort of summed up everything roiling around in my head about my generation's expectations and comeuppances and ability to keep hoping.

Unlike Ford, Ms. Welty seems to have known her perfect place from the very beginning: Jackson, Mississippi, where she lived pretty much continuously, devoting her days to the telling of stories.

Ford's selection of Welty was especially appropriate for a meeting of the Society, which has among its principal goals: preserving the great storytelling traditions of the South and assisting aspiring or developing writers.

He told us that **One Writer's Beginnings**, Ms. Welty's autobiography, is "what we're all reading, like The Bible, now." I took that to mean all serious writers.

Writers don't get any more serious about their work or any better than Ford—either as artist or philosopher. If he tells me, then, that **One Writer's Beginnings** is the word for any serious writer, then I am obliged to recommend it to you as just exactly that, the word.

This incredibly readable autobiography is, in fact, perfect inspiration for any writer. It is divided into three parts: Listening, Learning To See, and Finding A Voice. Even Ms. Welty's subtitles are perfect. Obviously, it is difficult for anyone to say anything worthwhile until the individual has listened and watched long

enough to learn something about life.

Ms. Welty uses the vehicle of her own life to impart to us the vast knowledge she acquired by listening and learning from observation. Every paragraph is not only a lesson in how to become a writer worth reading but also a lesson in life. One small example:

Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening for them is something more acute than listening to them. I suppose it's an early form of participation in what goes on. Listening children know stories are there. When their elders sit and begin, children are just waiting and hoping for one to come out, like a mouse form its hole.

It was taken entirely for granted that there wasn't any lying in our family and I was advanced in adolescence before I realized that in plenty of homes where I played with school mates and went to their parties, children lied to their parents and parents lied to their children and to each other. It took me a long time to realize that these very same everyday lies, and the stratagems and joke and tricks and dares that went with them, were in fact the basis of the scenes I so well loved to hear about and hoped for and treasure in the conversation of adults.

My instinct—the dramatic instinct was to lead me, eventually, on the right tack for a storyteller. The scene was full of hints, pointers, suggestions, and promises of things to find out and know about human beings. I had to grow up and learn to listen for the unspoken as well as the spoken—and to know a truth. I also had to recognize a lie.

One Writer's Beginning is an exceptionally entertaining memoir. It is one of the finest primers in existence for the student of writing. And it is also a fine reminder for all of us that sensitive plants properly tended can become the stars of their environment, flowering in the most dazzling ways, like that first Spring bloom of the carefully tended Deep South rose garden.

The Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society was founded 22 years ago by men and women who simply want to play a small role in the nurturing of today's writers and future Faulkners and Fords and Weltys.

We hope you will decide to join us in beating the drum for the salvation of such sensitive plants, who in turn light the path to our own salvation.

Since that summer of 1966, when **Independence Day** was published, Richard Ford has covered a lot of real estate in his moves and in his fiction. He's been to Montana and back to New Orleans. He's been to Princeton, where he researched his novel, **The Lay of the Land**, published in 2007. He's lived Maine and then back to New Orleans and then in the Oxford of his native Mississippi. More recently Richard turned his attention due north to Canada. The result is a new novel, **Canada**, to be released in June, 2012. Richard, who already is touring in England and Europe for the new book, will be our special guest of honor on June 10th, so pencil us in!

Pulitzer Prize winning author Richard Ford was a pallbearer at fellow writer Eudora Welty's funeral. Clarion-Ledger file photo by J. D. Schwaim

Rosemary James, *started her career with the Charleston News & **Courier/Evening Post** in her hometown. In New Orleans, she worked for the **States-Item**, where she covered courts and politics. With two other reporters, she broke the story that District Attorney Jim Garrison was investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Later, she moved to **WWL-TV**, where she covered the six-week trial of Clay Shaw, indicted by Garrison for conspiracy to murder the President. She co-authored the non-fiction book, **Plot or Politics?** centering on the investigation. **Plot or Politics?** remains in print. She edited a collection of essays in the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, **My New Orleans: Ballads to the Big Easy by Her Sons, Daughters, and Lovers**, published by Touchstone, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, which also remains in print. Concurrently, James has owned her own design business and has been a frequent contributor to design magazines, such as **Southern Accents**, **Traditional Home**, **Creative Life**, **Departures,** and* **Decorating.** *With her husband, Joseph DeSalvo, Jr., and W. Kenneth Holditch, she is co-founder of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society and the creator of Words & Music: a Literary Feast in New Orleans. The DeSalvos are recipients of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.*

The Classics Revisited: Women in the Fiction of Robert Penn Warren

By Lucy Ferriss, Ph.D.

Robert Penn Warren was never known as a women's writer, at least not during his lifetime. Many women loved him dearly, however. Katherine Anne Porter, for instance, was among his staunchest friends. But during those midcentury decades when contemporaries like Faulkner and Tennessee Williams were creating problematic fictional women who continue to ignite storms of controversy among dedicated readers, Warren seemed to be writing mostly for and about men. At least that was how his critics—overwhelmingly male—saw his work. Praise for his novels as "wise" and "good" repeatedly went hand-in-glove with characterizations of their "masculinity," as if good and masculine were synonyms in the Warren canon. When the female characters in Warren's ten novels and book-length poem, *Brother to Dragons* were discussed, it was to dismiss them as the author's "gallery of bitches," a phrase coined by Leslie Fiedler and adopted by other reviewers.

It is time to take another look. Not only has Louisiana State University Press reissued Warren's novel **Band of Angels**, written entirely from a woman's point of view, but there also has been renewed interest both in biographical sources for Warren's writing and in literary gender studies that investigate the whole idea of so-called "masculine" or "feminine" narrative. Arthur Mizener once noted that "the most human experience for Warren appears to be sexual experience." Indeed, on looking closely at Warren's novels, particularly the Pulitzer-winning **All The King's Men** and **Band of Angels**, we find Mizener's theory borne out—with the understanding that it was both male and female sexuality that interested Warren. The idea that "men are from Mars, women are from Venus" would have come as no surprise to Red Warren, because it was precisely that difference in language and narrative that he was continually seeking to realize.

Take, for starters, **All The King's Men**, the one work by Warren that is indisputably canonized—widely read and taught in college courses on American literature. In its conventional reading, the book is at once the self-conscious confession of a former newspaper reporter, Jack Burden, and the ironic recounting of the rise and fall of the populist demagogue and governor Willie Stark (aka Louisiana governor Huey Long.) The female characters in the book—Willie's wife Lucy, his mistress and gang mill Sadie Burke, and Jack's former girlfriend Anne Stanton—are viewed either as foils for the book's action or as motifs, symbols of Willie's former purity or Jack's yearning for stability. Jack Burden's search for identity, in fact, has been said to be the whole subject of **All The King's Men**, despite Warren's own protest that he intended the book to be about Willie Stark, that Jack was simply a "vacuum fellow" whose need for self-justification would propel the narrative. And if we look at, say, Anne Stanton, in terms of her own voice and point of view rather than in terms of the men Warren created in the book, we get a different view of women indeed. Jack first describes Anne as "an old maid, or damned near it," whose relationship with him is based on her being a near-clone of her brilliant doctor-brother, Adam: "They looked alike, Adam and Anne," Jack observes. "They might have been twins." In fact, Jack's whole description of Anne is of a product turned out to resemble her brother as closely as a female can: "…the brown-toned, golden-lighted face, not as dark as Adam's, with a hint of the positive structure beneath the skin, which was drawn over the bone with something, a suggestion, of the tension which was in Adam's face, as though the fabricator of the job hadn't wanted to waste any material in softness and slackness. They even had the same smile. But the mouth it came on was, in Anne's case, different. It didn't carry any suggestion of the nice, clean, decisive, well-healed surgical wound. The fabricator had, on this item, allowed himself the luxury of a little extra material."

All the differences between Adam and Anne are male-female differences. On a picnic, for instance, Adam "swam hard and straight" whereas Anne "curled over forward in a clean surface dive (and)

would lift her head, and smile, and dive again." And as those differences initiate Jack's attraction toward Anne, Adam is the first to notice: "It wasn't a noise, but instead, a stillness that made me turn suddenly to Adam. He was staring at me. When I met his eyes, his face flushed first, and he jerked his eyes off me, as though embarrassed." From the start, then, Anne is caught in a triangle where her identity is bound up with someone else's idea of who her brother is. And Adam, to Jack, is a "Success" while he is a "Failure" (both spelled with capital letters). His success is founded not on worldly recognition or wealth but

on having "the idea he lived by. To do good." And according to Jack, it is something of that same idea that Anne wants to see in him. "You know I love you," she says to Jack, "and I'll live in a shack and eat red beans if you've got to live that way because what you want to do doesn't make any money. But if you don't want to do anything—even if you do just sort of get a job and have plenty of money—oh, you know what I mean—you know the way some people are…You are not going to be like those people, Jack Burden."

Are we meant to believe that Anne will not marry jack unless he finds some inner calling? Maybe—but Warren gives us room for doubt, or at least for discovering richer possibilities below Anne's surface. First, she has been struggling to get away from men with purpose all of her life—first her father, the late and overly revered Governor Stanton, and now her sanctimonious brother Adam. She has every reason to fall in love with a drifter. Second, her red-beans protest is launched after an episode that has nothing to do with vocation and everything to do with sexuality. On a summer's evening at the Stanton house, with her parents away and the two young people's blood running hot, Jack and Anne repair to her bedroom, where he watches her undress, and then, "letting one hand drop to the bed for support, she leaned a little sideways, lifted her feet from the floor, still together, and with a gentle, curling motion, lay back on the white counterpane, then punctiliously straightened out and again folded her hands across her bosom, and closed her eyes. And at the instant when she closed her eyes, as I stared at her, my mind took one of the crazy leaps and I saw her floating in the water, that day of the picnic three years before, with her eyes closed and the violent sky above and the white gull flashing high over, and that face and this face and that scene and this scene seemed to fuse, like superimposed photographs."

Jack refuses to believe in the woman Anne; he sees the little girl Anne, passive and "innocent," and in a panic he fails to perform. Thus kicked out of bed, so to speak, Anne cannot address the issue of Jack's sexuality head-on, and so she resorts to phrases like "if you don't want to do anything…" And since Jack himself feels a need for purpose in his life—it is from that need that he evolves the theory of the Great Twitch, which incidentally includes the "twitch" of heterosexual desire—he takes her call for him to have "purpose" at face value, making the problem one of her demand rather than his own frustration.

A whole generation of Warren critics have missed this subtle interplay between Anne's motivations and her actual speech. Why? Not only because the book is supposed to be about Jack Burden and Willie Stark and is thus supposed to be "masculine," but also because Warren himself, at the time he wrote **All The King's Men**, had not resolved the tension between character and plot. For instance, the one crucial action Anne takes in the novel is to sleep with Willie Stark. The episode is a turning point in the book—it

arouses her brother's murderous vengefulness and puts her relationship with Jack on a new, jealous ground. Yet Anne's motivations here are never made clear. She herself claims simply that she loves Willie. Jack decides first that it amounts to perverse self-loathing engendered by his fouling the name of her father, and later that "she had taken up with Willie because he was so big and tough and knew his own mind," in contrast to Jack himself. But even such psychologizing loops backward. By having set Anne up as the demand that cannot be met, Jack has likewise set himself up as responsible for the consequences of that demand, until "somehow, by an obscure and necessary logic, I had handed her over to [Willie]" (emphasis mine). Anne's personal feelings or impulses toward Willie are considerations marginalized by the force that must entwine Jack's personality and fate with that of the Boss.

In fact, the reason for Anne's affair with Willie is a practical one that lies outside the fictional world Warren has set up: the affair propels the plot forward and brings its elements together. The baldness of such a plot contrivance is difficult to defend; the deliberate shock value of Anne's episode with Willie, its absence of subjective validity, makes Anne Stanton one of the weakest links in the chain of Warren's greatest novel. But to Warren's credit, he knew this. In an unpublished 1977 interview he said, "The one thing I regret about the book is that I have no real scene that catches the moment that would explain what Stark gives to Anne that she needs. What emptiness does she feel? That scene never occurs. I faced the question at the time, but I flunked it."

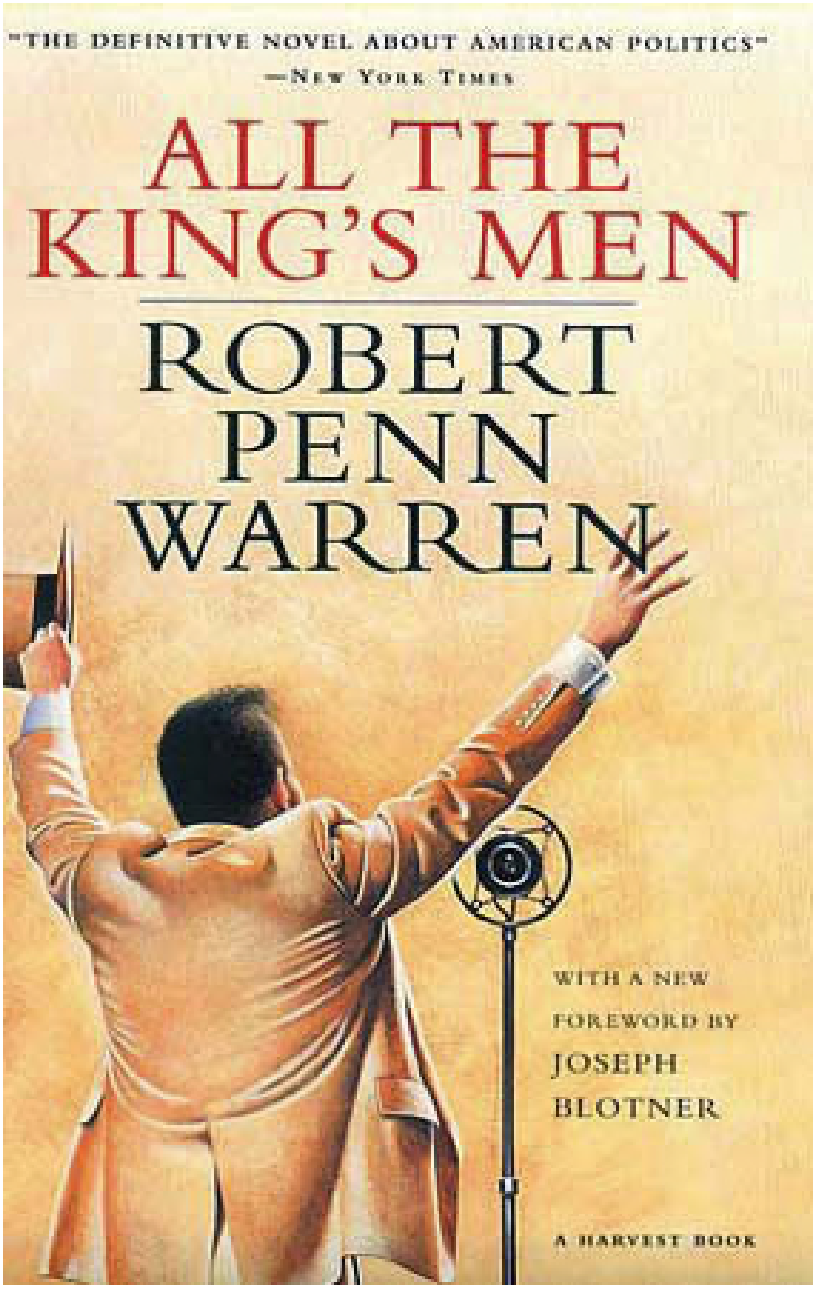
In a broader sense, it is Anne's failure to emerge as a fully rounded character that reveals the whole problematic nature of a book as reliant on voice as **All The King's Men**. Her use is simply too great, in a story told from Jack's point of view, to admit her radically different, female point of view at great length.

Fortunately, a decade after completing **All The King's Men**, Warren was able to unveil a woman's point of view at the greatest length possible, by having her tell the story. Band of Angels is the history of Amantha Starr, the daughter of a slave-owner and—as she discovers on the brink of womanhood—his chattel. Upon bankruptcy and death, she is seized from her "white" life of privilege and sold downriver, to be raped and made the mistress of Hamish Bond, a dubious character apparently modeled on Kurtz in Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**. Amantha has not been nearly so well received by critics as Jack Burden. She has been called a "tiresome character whose frail sense of discrimination puts the trivial and the momentous on a single egocentric plane," a "singularly passive" narrator. At any degree of close inspection, these criticisms hold little weight. Surely there are many times when Jack Burden fails to discriminate justly between the trivial and the momentous; my women undergraduates tend to find his tough-talking tiresome and his reactions passive. But critics who equate "wise" with "masculine" are uncomfortable with Robert Penn Warren's immersion of his author's voice in a female narrator, especially one as articulate and assertive as Amantha (those qualities making her, in one critic's eyes, "not even a credible woman".)

In fact, while Amantha has more in common with Warren's male narrators than with his more marginal female characters, her voice is not simply Warren's own transposed into a female body—Warren was far too aware of the differences between men and women to attempt that stunt. Amantha's style is grounded in her gender and in experiences that in large measure are peculiar to women. Two pivotal experiences forge her young outlook on life: she is sold into slavery and she is raped. "I would remember what happened on this bed," she writes, "remember that heavy-bulked, raw-handed, stertorous, brutal strange—the raw hand seizing my hair, compelling me, that compulsion outside me evoking some new compulsion inside, like terror." Thus Amantha's acceptance of the mantle of "victim" (usually accompanied, in the critical literature, by the pejorative "self-pitying"), is grounded in the experience of being victimized. And like many rape victims, she hoodwinks herself into believing that the act of violence was an act of love, at the same time employing the means she does have at her disposal to survive, physically and emotionally. "I knew deep inside me," she notes shortly after the rape, "maybe denied and separate from me, some hard, secret sense of advantage suddenly growing."

The book's leitmotif is Manty's cry, "Oh, who am I?" The question is complex and falls short of an answer. As Warren himself admitted in an interview, "There isn't enough richness and depth in the experience of the narrator—at least it isn't brought out. Indeed, the whole book is ostensibly told from the point of view of an Amantha whose "old shadows" have been "canceled in joy," whose perspective on her young expe-

rience has the reflective irony of age. Yet rarely does he offer a balanced appraisal of her suffering or relegate her pathetic enjoyments of being "precious and little and wronged" to the realm where they belong: the intersection of young womanhood and dispossession. As with **All The King's Men,** Amantha's voice is cut short by plot and theme—the book, after-all, is about the divisions of slavery and war, albeit from a woman's perspective. But the triumph of **Band Of Angels** lies in Warren's remarkable ability to recognize sexual and racial exploitation for what it is, to look I in the face from the point of view of a black woman. I know of no other male author who has done so. And to Warren's further credit, in my view, the ending of **Band Of Angels** is not nearly so neat as the ending of **All The King's Men**. In the final scene, her husband Tobias's hand, Amantha tells us, is "patting me on the back while he said darling, darling, darling." Then she adds, "That was what he said," as if we needed prodding to believe her, or as if she didn't quite believe herself; in either case casting doubt and causing us to think about why, after all she has been through, she should still be on her guard against being disbelieved.



Other Warren novels with strong female voices (his last book, **A Place To Come To**, and the wonderfully lyric **Meet Me In The Green Glen** are good examples) likewise show Warren to be far more sensitive—not only to women's concerns, but to women's nonlinear ways of telling stories—than has been supposed by Warren's male critics. We may be glad, too, that feminist criticism has moved beyond an initial stage where they tried to topple a number of male writers, Hemingway and Faulkner among them, whose purportedly misogynist texts were to be replaced by previously neglected books by women. Such critics never went near Warren, so we can read and reread his books without politically correct prejudice. And what we discover is that his women characters are neither "bitches" nor in a "gallery." They are as individualized as their male counterparts, and they have the deep and abiding sympathy of their creator. Looking at them with fresh eyes—not only in Warren's greatest novel but across the whole of his work in fiction—we find that Warren created complex women caught up in history, and that those women, with their multiple voices, awoke in Warren what he referred to as the "unconscious self… sleepless and eager to have another go," which makes for the enduring tension and power of his supple prose.

What I started out to say, however, was this: how do you know how you yourself, all the confused private nesses of you, are involved with that history you are living through? A young girl, storm-drenched and storm-scared and lonely and confused in a foreshortening of time, is disposed on a bed by an aging man, who utters her name like a groan, and gently and bloodily does that

thing to her, and she cries out. I had almost used that foul word that old Mr. Marmaduke, back in Kentucky, had used in his prediction of my fate. I would have used it in some impulse to spit upon and spurn that aging man and the young girl coupled on that bed, but something forbids. I would not spit on them after-all, I suppose.

Well, the young girl is adjusted upon the bed, but how is what happens to her connected with some late conversation of bankers that same night in New York City, wreathed in the spicy smoke of cigars and eyes glittering with French brandy, or connected with the sweat-cold nocturnal death-fear of a politician abed in Washington, or connected with a grim-jawed old man, seated by the candle in a farmhouse in Maryland, not far from Harper's Ferry, who lifts his eyes from the Holy Writ and moves his lips stiffly in prayer, panting for the moment when the old blood-drenched fantasy will whirl again before his eyes and justify all?

Oh, who is whose victim?

And the hand of Hamish Bond laid to my side, and the spreading creep and prickle of sensation across the softness of my belly from the focus of Hamish Bond's sandpaper thumb, and the unplaiting and deliquescence of the deep muscles of thighs were as much history as any death-cry at the trenchlip or in the table of the abates.

Lucy Ferriss**, born in St. Louis, has lived on East and West coasts, in the middle, and abroad. She is the author of nine books, mostly fiction. Her new novel, **The Lost Daughter** (Berkley, 2012) is a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate pick. Dr. Ferriss, an early winner of the Faulkner Society's gold medal for best novel, was among Society guests of honor at its March 18, **2012, Meet the Author** event at the Cabildo in New Orleans and she will be a member of th faculty for **Words & Music, 2012** Ferriss' memoir **Unveiling the Prophet: The Misadventures of a Reluctant Debutante** was called Best Book of the Year by the **Riverfront Times**; her novel **Nerves of the Heart** was a finalist in the Peter Taylor Prize competition; her collection **Leaving the Neighborhood and Other Stories** was the 2000 winner of the Mid-List First Series Award. Other short fiction and essays have appeared most recently in the New York Times, Missouri Review, Shenandoah, Michigan Quarterly Review, and Georgia Review, and have been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Faulkner Society, the Fulbright Commission, and the George Bennett Fund, among others. She received her Ph.D. from Tufts University and currently lives with Don Moon in the Berkshires and in Connecticut, where she is Writer-in-Residence at Trinity College. She has two strong sons and abiding passions for music, politics, travel, tennis, and wilderness. She has a historical novel, **The Woman Who Bought the Sky**, on deck, and is working on another new novel, tentatively titled **Honor.** Her website is: **http://lucyferriss.com.

Relics Of The Past

By Robin Black

So, it's Sunday morning and CBS **Sunday Morning** just did a feature on Susan Boyle. And damned if the number isn't featured prominently: 47.

Her age. My age.

Middle-age.

I was an unrepentant weeper when she made her début. I watched the thing oh, I don't know, maybe 30 times. (Maybe 47 times?) I read all the criticism, that of reality shows in general, of her voice, of the set-up, suspiciously perfect, Simon's shocked expression a little rehearsed, perhaps? And I agreed with much of it. I pondered the feminist angles – I ponder them still. And then I clicked back over to *You-Tube* and I wept. Cried my blessed eyes out every damned time. Great big snuffly sobs.

It's a late-bloomer thing. You wouldn't understand.

Or maybe you would. It turns out a lot of people do.

It turns out, as I've learned, that a lot of women do.

A couple of weeks before Susan Boyle took the world by storm I spent a week as the Fellow at the Sirenland Conference, in Positano, Italy. The Fellowship is awarded to an emerging writer who doesn't yet have a published book. It's an amazing conference – stunning location, brilliant teaching, and serious attendees, many of whom were women more or less my age. By then, my book had been under contract for about six months and I had received both a lot of congratulations and a good many warnings about the impact a first book might have on my life.

I'd also answered numerous questions from other early-career writers about how it had all happened, how I'd gotten an agent, all that kind of stuff. And I expected more such conversations at Sirenland, which was fine with me.

I was delighted to talk about my book. But what I experienced there was unlike any of that. The women I met, not all but many, were less interested in the fact that I had sold my first book at the age of 46 than they were overjoyed by it. They didn't ask me the kinds of questions I had grown accustomed to, not at first. They just beamed at me. They stopped me in hallways to talk about how much my story—a mother at home with kids for nearly two decades getting her first book contract at 46—meant to them.

They spoke about loss of hope. They expressed great surprise. More than one woman said my story made her feel like crying. One woman did cry.

I was taken aback, at moments moved close to tears, myself. Surprised that they seemed so surprised, I was nevertheless glad to have made them so happy. Mostly, however, I have to admit, I was upset, as heir joy, their shock bespoke such a deficit of hope for themselves.

It was clear to me that though they were writing, and working hard at it, many, many of these women shared an underlying assumption that the world wasn't really interested in what they had to say.

"The editors who liked the book all talked about appreciating what they called the 'maturity' of the stories," I began to add, when I told the story. "It was actually viewed as a positive that the author had some years behind her. That it didn't read like a book a 20-something could write."

More happiness. More shock. And, then, hope.

Robin Black *holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence College and an MFA from Warren Wilson College. Her first story collection* ***If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This,*** *was published by Random House in 2010. The book also was published by six foreign publishers and translated into four languages. Robin Black's stories and essays have appeared in The Southern Review, One Story, The Georgia Review, Colorado Review, Alaska Quarterly Review, Indiana Review, and The Best Creative Nonfiction. She is the recipient of grants from the Leeway Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, the Sirenland Conference and is also the winner of the 2005 gold medal for Best Short Story in the William Faulkner – William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition. Her work has been singled out for Special Mention by the Pushcart Prizes on four occasions and also deemed Notable in The Best American Essays, 2008 and The Best Nonrequired Reading, 2009.*

Luscious

(an excerpt from **The Pugilist's Wife**, a novel by David Armand)

It's raining in New Orleans now. But not hard. The steam rises from the streets and there's a thin veil-like mist over everything, and the people walk faster, their clothes damp, hair dripping. Sweat and rain. It's quiet and the sun hangs high in the sky as if hung by strings there, beating through the few rainclouds that are moving southward now, across the Mississippi River, away from where they're needed further north, their gray-white tendrils whisping behind them like chimneysmoke as they float, drawing odd shadows over the bright brown surface of the water.

The noise from the riverfront has not ceased either—the steam organs on the riverboats, the beggars, peddlers hawking their wares, the couples in love, they're all there still. It is as if the rain does not exist for them, so they continue with their business, their rituals, as if nothing out of the ordinary is taking place.

Two couples are walking side by side. They are laughing and smoking cigarettes, a fat cloud of smoke follows them, and they, like everyone else here, seem oblivious to this rain. The two women are wearing cut-off shorts and high heels, tight scoopneck shirts, and long dirtyblonde ponytails. People stare at them as they walk by.

The men who are walking in front of these girls are talking to each other, blowing cigarette smoke into the air behind them, where the women are. They are not laughing.

One of the men says: I think it's about time we get outta here.

We been here for twelve years. Why do you wanna leave now?

I dont know, but I just got a bad feeling.

Well, what do you propose we do with them? He flicks a thumb back at the women.

I doubt they'll miss us.

Like hell they wont.

We'll take em then.

Shit, he says. Then he blows out a cloud of smoke. The women are still laughing about something.

They keep walking, the men silent now, the women laughing still. The cessation of rain has brought on the heat full force now and the men are irritated. The women dabble their faces with Kleenexes and drop the pink and brown tissues onto the steaming sidewalk.

Hey, dont drop those on mah front porch. A man is leaning over from his wheelchair and is picking up the tissues and putting them into a plastic bucket with some loose change and wrinkled dollar bills sprinkled about the bottom.

The women stop. Giggling. Sorry, mister, one of them says.

Hey, it's okay, most people dont know this mah front porch. Just look like a sidewalk to em.

The two men in front stop and turn around. One of them says: Come on.

Wait, wait, the man in the wheelchair says, yall look like newlyweds. Am I right?

The women laugh. The men walk over to them.

I member when I was a newlywed. Got married right heah in the city. Over at St Augustine choich. That's mah wife over there, he says sibilantly. He points a cracked brown finger across the sidewalk to a metal parkbench where a woman sits sleeping, stooped over under a black plastic yard bag to stay dry, even though the rain has stopped, a small green purse at her thigh.

Hey baby. She doesnt look up. Hey. The man takes his cigarette and flicks it at the woman, the damp butt plucking her in the chest. She wakes, rolls her eyes around in her head, then picks up the cigarette gratefully and starts smoking it. She doesnt say anything.

Come on, one of the men says. He pulls at one of the girl's arms. They all start to walk away now.

Wait pops, the old man says. I wanna play a song for yall. Just one song.

Uh-huh, one of the men says. They've seen this before.

We aint' givin' you no money.

It aint givin. My old man allers said I gots to work for what I want, and that's what I gonna do. I wanna play you a song, and then you jist give me what you think it's woith.

No. We're in a hurry. Sorry.

You pretties look like you wanna heah a song. Come on, just one song.

One of the women says: Alright. Sing us one then.

The men flick their halfsmoked cigarettes into the brown river and shove their hands into their jeanspockets. Angry now.

Then the crippled bum wheels himself closer to

the two men and two women, pushing the bill of his cap up on his forehead, exposing one milky eye and another one bloodshot and jaundice-yellow. The four teeth in his mouth are chalky and orange and his hair explodes in greasy black puffs from either side of his filthy cap. He stands up on two pencil-thin legs, his kneecaps white and cracked and ashen, his shins speckled with sores and oozing pus. He is wearing khaki pants that have been cut into shorts, and his mismatched green and white socks dangle pathetically over the tops of his stretched loafers. He juts out his bony and quivering hand.

Name's Luscious.

The women look at his hand, step back.

I aint gonna bite. I aint got rabies, he says. A spray of saliva lands on one of the women's arms as he makes the difficult S sound, when his parched tongue struggles to find its place among the four jagged and sporadic teeth and the hollow caves in his rotting gums where teeth once were. The woman wipes her arm against her shirt.

But she still doesnt take his hand. The old man hobbles for a second then sits back down in his wheelchair. The chair rolls back toward the river, which is behind him, a fat string of water. Then the chair stops rolling. The women move nervously. The men just wait for this to be over. They've seen this too many times.

Okay, okay, well we dont have to shake, ladies, Luscious says now. But I still gonna keep mah promise. And I gonna do somethin that pretty much gonna amaze you. That's mah word.

The women are quiet, watching him.

One of the men lights another cigarette, waits.

Luscious says: Okay. Now I want you to look at these buckets I got heah. See em?

The women nod.

Okay, well they look like regular buckets to you, I'm sure. But I'm bout to turn them into musical instruments.

He points to the two buckets that he has now pulled in front of his wheelchair, one yellow and one blue. Another blue one which is jutted against a lamppost is the one where Luscious tossed the women's used tissues, and it is the one with the money in it.

From next to his gaunt thigh the old man pulls out two chipped drumsticks and spins them around in his hand. One falls.

It's hell gettin old, he says. Hell. Dont let it happen to you if you can void it, he says. He bends over painfully and picks up the stick.

Now, I'm gonna turn these ordinary buckets into musical instruments right before your eyes. But I'm gonna need you to help me. Which one a you wants to help me?

One of the women steps forward. Luscious hands her a drumstick. Can you keep a beat? he asks her.

Sure, she says.

What's your name? he says.

She says: it's Courtney.

Okay then Miss Courtney, I need you to tap out this beat for me. It's like this: one and two and three and four. Like that, over and over. You think you can do that?

Sure, she says. She takes the stick and taps out the beat against the bucket. One and two and three and four.

Luscious lets her tap for a couple of measures, then he begins to bang his bucket, singing When the Saints Go Marching In, himself singing both the call and the response and stumbling and stuttering over the words, but making every effort he still has left in his forsaken bones to get it right:

We are travlin in the footsteps
Of those who gone before,
And we'll all be reunited,
On a new and sunlit shore,
Oh when the saints go marchin in
Oh when the saints go marchin in

Lord how I want to be in that number
When the saints go marchin in
And when the sun refuse to shine
And when the sun refuse to shine
Lord how I want to be in that number
When the sun refuse to shine
And when the moon turns red with blood
And when the moon turns red with blood
Lord how I want to be in that number
When the moon turns red with blood
Oh when the trumpet sounds its call
Oh when the trumpet sounds its call
Lord how I want to be in that number
When the trumpet sounds its call
Some say this world of trouble,
Is the only one we need,
But I'm waitin for that mornin,
When the new world is revealed.

When Luscious finishes Courtney hands him back his drumstick, then both of the women stand there quietly for a minute and then they start to clap and laugh and then they reach into their tight pockets for some change to throw into Luscious's bucket. But he's not ready to let them go yet.

Hey, he says, I got a riddle for you. It's free, and you can share it with all your friends at home.

We really gotta get going, the other woman says, looking at the two men still waiting.

It'll just take a second, Luscious says, and I promise it will be woith it.

And now Courtney drops a five dollar bill into the bucket.

Let's go, one of the men says.

Wait, Courtney says, I want to hear this joke.

It aint a joke, sweetie, it's a riddle, Luscious says, standing again. Hobbling. He leans in close, his rotten breath hot and damp on her arm and neck. She steps back.

It goes like this: Two woids. Both begin with C. Both have six letters. And both woids mean exactly the same thing. Now here's the clues: the man who make it, he dont want it, the man who buy it, he dont need it, and the man who got it, he dont even know he got it. What is it?

The women look at each other. They think over the puzzle that has just been put before them by this grotesque man as if a guardian to some sacred gates leading to their eternal salvation.

Luscious sits back into his wheelchair. Proudly. He grabs his grizzled chin and smiles up at them. The chair rolls a couple of inches closer toward the river again. The women move forward with it out of instinct.

Give up? Luscious says.

I dont know it, Courtney says.

What about you? Luscious asks the other woman.

I give up, she says.

What about you fellers? he says, pointing at the two men who are still waiting impatiently for when they can all just walk away from this.

They turn away, put their backs to him, the river. They look toward the levee and the erratic skyline of the French Quarter.

Well, here it is, Luscious says. It's a coffin and a casket. See?

The women laugh.

See? The man who make it dont want it, the man who buy it dont need it and the man who got it is dead so he dont even know he got it. And both them woids begin with a C and both have six letters.

Ahh, neat, the other woman says. That's really neat.

Now you got somethin you can share with your friends. See, Luscious always keep his promise.

The other woman drops a few quarters into the blue bucket, and the men begin moving. The women follow them. And Luscious tells them thank you and to come back to see him. The organ music from the riverboat starts up fifty yards downriver, so the couples dont hear the dilapidated man's last few words.

They walk over the levee and down the stairs onto South Peters Street, crossing over onto Jackson Square, then Pirates Alley, the St Louis Cathedral looming over them, a shadow, as they balance over the large stones in the walkway leading to their apartment.

The regulars at a nearby cafe drinking beer from tall glasses look at them as they walk into the building.

See how they're watching us? one of the men says, the one who was talking about leaving.

So what? the other one says.

I dont like it, Travis, that's all I'm sayin.

Grow a pair, Doyle, that's all I'm sayin. We aint leavin.

They walk inside, the girls following behind them.

But tomorrow they'll be gone, all of them, heading north across Lake Pontchartrain, over whose granite-flat surface these same two men had traveled south some twelve years earlier on their way in from St Louis, Missouri.

Ruthie, Duck Lady of New Orleans

By Leonard Earl Johnson
(Reprinted from Les Amis de Marigny)

Ruthie, seems like we barely knew you, though we lived within a couple blocks of each other for thirty-something years.

You regularly zoomed by us on roller skates, wearing a wedding veil, holding a big white duck and a rolled up poster of you roller skating, wearing a wedding veil, and holding a big white duck. You were existential infinity in motion.

Sometimes you spoke as we pedaled past on Featherbike, our yellow-feather-trimmed bicycle. Once we rode a gleaming French Motobécane, a bicycle we took with us to Sea, when we wore a younger man's clothes.

That French bike was stolen by a newly released ex-con you said you knew and hated. He noticed our casual, below Canal Street, lifestyle and jumped over the fence and plucked our Motobécane and its collage of travel stickers.

We mourned those stickers -- an irreplaceable collection -- more than the bicycle.

You said, "Get a duck. I got a duck. Ain't nobody ever stole no duck."

Maybe, though sometimes they ran them over.

When dumpy, comical Featherbike replaced that elegant French Motobécane, Ruthie looked at its bois-

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David Armand *teaches Freshman Composition and American Literature at Southeastern Louisiana University, where he also serves as Managing Editor for Louisiana Literature, the university's nationally-recognized literary journal. The piece which appears in this issue of* ***The Double Dealer*** *is an excerpt from his novel,* ***The Pugilist's Wife****, which placed three times in the Faulkner Society's national literary competition. The novel recently won the George Garrett Fiction Prize and will be published in 2012. In 2003 he won the D Vickers Award for Creative Writing. David has written a collection of short stories,* ***Mae's Blues,*** *and he is currently at work on his second novel,* **Harlow***. David lives in Hammond with his wife, Lucy, their daughter, Lily, and their son, Levi.* ***The Pugilist's Wife*** *is Southern Gothic at its best. Louisiana fiction master* ***Tim Gautreaux*** *calls it "a powerful Southern brew of violence and religion. The writing is intense, fast-paced, linguistically rich, well-crafted and ultimately riveting.* ***New York Time****s bestselling author* ***Ron Rash*** *adds that "the writing is first-rate... a fine, fine novel. It is clear that an outstanding new voice has entered the Southern literary pantheon."*

David will appear at ***Words & Music, 2012****.*

terous yellow feathers, and said, "Looks like Bigbird."

"You ought to know, Ruthie," we said. "Don't they call you the Duck Lady?"

Ruthie sometimes sat on her stoop, a traditional Downtown pastime, watching clouds ("gathering cotton"), contemplating the weather, Life and, maybe, her next Budweiser and Kool Cigarette

"You got a little beer, for later? A little cigarette, for later" was Ruthie's way of offering to accept a beer and cigarette, but not that she expected to return the favor. Ruthie was a no-strings, free citizen of the French Quarter, a neighborhood long associated with free spirits.

She also enjoyed sitting atop bar stools. Pat O'Brien's, on Saint Peter, and Crazy Shirley's, on Bourbon, were two of her favorites. We met for the first time at Crazy Shirley's. It was that era when the fabled Sixties were morphing into the Seventies. Our best friend from college was a reporter for the Associated Press newly assigned to New Orleans. We came down, from Illinois, and spent an early Spring exploring the French Quarter. We walked through a magical barroom door and there sat Ruthie and a big white duck.

She accepted a beer from the bartender. Complete with a saucer for the duck. She got "a little cigarette, for later" from a man, in a white-and-red striped shirt, standing just outside the barroom door selling Lucky Dogs. He also gave Ruthie's duck a piece of hot dog bun.

At dinner, that night, my reporter friend told me the story of Ruthie, the Duck Lady -- a proud marcher in New Orleans passing parade. Could anyone want to live anywhere else? Within the year we signed up and moved in, next to Ruthie's world.

Ruthie had a voice like Donald Duck's Cajun cousin. She was born Ruth Grace Moulon, at Big Charity Hospital, in New Orleans, of parents from Plaquamines, a small town West of the Mississippi River, near Baton Rouge. As a child she was sickly and lonely. As an adult she was not. She died at age 74 on September 6, 2008, in Our Lady of the Lake, a care facility in Baton Rouge, where she had been evacuated for Hurricane Gustav. Ruthie gained her four-score-and-more years drinking like a fish, smoking like a chimney, cursing like a sailor, staying out on the streets all hours of the night and day, subsisting on a diet primarily of salt, sugar and preservatives washed down with Budweiser and smoke.

Many are the pure fallen to an earlier grave.

Ruthie befriended most people and all ducks. Easter was a big day on her liturgical calender. Many ducklings began their relationship with Ruthie as an Easter offering from friends and tourists who passed the little balls of fluff into her welcoming hands, in Jackson Square, in front of Saint Louis Cathedral.

She lived a careless life, and so did her ducks. None of them lasted as long as she did. Most did not make it to the next Spring. But they all seemed happier for the company.

Any one who knew Ruthie knew some colorful version of her car-smashed-duck story. They all ended with Ms. Ruthie bending over the carcass in the street telling the fallen fowl to stay on the sidewalk, next time.

The sweetest version came from her friend, David Michel, a New Orleans Police Officer who was working off-duty detail, at Pat O'Brien's, when informed Ruthie's last duck had been flattened by an automobile, outside, on the corner. He immediately dispatched a driver to City Park to scoop up a replacement.

We sometimes drank beer with Ruthie. And laughed with her. And, truth be told, at her. She was amusing, and -- dare we say it -- an odd duck we are better for knowing.

We met her boyfriend, Gary Moody, after we had all grown older, and she had moved Uptown, to the Saint Charles Health Care facility. It was from there she was

evacuated to Baton Rouge.

Gary Moody had been a sailor on shore leave, in 1963. They met once, on Bourbon Street, and kept up a lifetime postcard correspondence.

Ruthie referred to him all the rest of her life as her boyfriend and, sometimes, her husband. Many felt she had made him up. Until he flew down from Minnesota to dance at her sixty-seventh birthday party, at Rock 'N' Bowl, on January 20, 2000. The party was organized by friends as dear as any on this side of Judgement Day.

Filmmaker and friend, Rick Delaup, has an excellent film of Ruthie, in a collection of filmographs he has done of free souls of old New Orleans. There you may again see Ruthie, her small body bent over roller skates, flying down Bourbon Street, wedding veil flying, a soul mate of a white duck cradled in her arms.

Once, my Mother, a stern Illinois-German, came to visit. On a walking tour of the French Quarter, we happened upon Ruthie, who asked for a little cigarette for later, then skated off.

My Mother listened to the story of Ruthie's admirable self reliance, and neighborhood colorization. Then said, "Someone should pick her up and put her in a home, where she can be taken care of."

The week after that visit, we saw Ruthie walking along Conti with a briefcase-bearing woman in a severe black suit. "A state social worker," I thought, "my Mother dropped a nickel on Ruthie!"

Later that same day, we again spotted Ruthie sitting at the bar at Crazy Shirley's. Over a beer we asked, "Ruthie, who was that woman we saw you with, earlier today?"

'What, who?" she said in her Donald Duck accent.

"I don't know who. Some woman in a black suit with a briefcase. You were crossing Conti, at Royal."

"Naw," she said, "must have been someone who looked like me." The bartender and two flies at the trough laughed. Ruthie smiled her flap jaw snaggle-toothed grin, and lifted her beer.

How we could use that laugh again today.

Leonard Earl Johnson, pictured above at left, is a popular online columnist who lives in New Orleans and Lafayette and is a member of the Faulkner Society.

Civil War Civilians in the Ozarks

By Steve Yates

In my personal quest to understand the Civil War's impact on my native land, the Ozarks, I have relied on great books. Three in particular have helped me understand my home country and the war's effect on civilians. And they inspired me to write my novel **Morkan's Quarry**.

Those books are Michael Fellman's **Inside War: The Guerilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War; The White River Chronicles of S.C. Turnbo: Man and Wildlife on the Ozarks Frontier** by James F.Keefe, and Lynn Morrow; and **Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It** by William Garrett and Richard W. Hatcher III.

I am pleased and grateful that my now published novel gives Ozark hillbillies a chance to have their say. The story of the Civil War in the Ozarks is almost entirely unknown.

I daresay that most Americans know as much about the Civil War in the Ozarks as Europeans know of World War I in the Balkans.

Not such an unfair comparison when you know the stories of both regions.

Both are mountainous, isolated regions, filled with backward, clannish, peculiar people, some of whom held longstanding grudges. While no grudge in the Ozarks can match the longevity of the Bulgar or Serb's 500-year vendetta against an Ottoman Turk, we were and are quick studies.

Both regions were arguably where the wars started. World War I started in the Balkans as major powers of the day—especially Austro-Hungary and Russia—became increasingly then belligerently involved in local wars and politics. In Missouri, we were busily at each other's throats and the throats of neighbors in Kansas seven years before the rest of you all took up the sword. Some persnickety history buff is already squirmingly ready to correct and say that the Ozarks

was not part of the Bleeding Kansas border conflict. Oh really? Many of the major players of the war in Missouri and Arkansas, fought mostly in the Ozarks, cut their teeth in Kansas. See Christopher Phillips's outstanding biographies of General Nathaniel Lyon and of Missouri Governor turned Rebel Claiborne Fox Jackson to understand. If the bloodbath of popular sovereignty went undecided during regulation play in Kansas, then the Civil War in the Ozarks was four years of savage overtime.

Both the Balkans and the Ozarks, suffered a collapse of civil authority and the institution of capricious and often brutal martial law conducted by distracted occupiers. Resources to maintain order and security were needed and sent elsewhere in both conflicts. Montenegrin and Serbian civilians suffered terribly under Austro-Hungarian martial law. And Ozarkers suffered under a Union control that maintained some secure garrisoned outposts but could not bring the vast countryside, the brush, to justice and domestic tranquility.

And, last, both regions are by history forgotten, deliberately I think, it being too painful to consider for long that such suffering was visited on any people for no discernible gain. And forgotten because the people, having suffered terribly and having often been betrayed by neighbors, did not and do not encourage much real remembering.

Civilians in the Ozarks suffered from all quarters. Missouri and especially the Ozarks were divided in a way that few historians write carefully about. Historians in haste usually describe the Missouri countryside as "bitterly divided." So with our blue and gray bifocals fixed squarely on our noses, we think they mean an angry 50-50 split. Not so. In the 1860 election, 17,028 Missourians voted for Abraham Lincoln, 31,317 Breckenridge, 58,801 Douglas, and 58,372 Bell. In Greene County 42 voted for Lincoln, 414 for Breckenridge, 298 Douglas, 986 for Bell. The whole of the state, then, would very narrowly have gone for the conditional unionist and Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, and closely given second to John Bell, the slaveholding Whig from Tennessee, also a conditional unionist. A majority of the voters then in the Ozarks chose candidates who were for the status quo, which included slavery, but more important to the voters included peaceful, continued compromise within the Union. When the question of even holding a secession convention was put to vote in March 1861, 73% voted against secession. So Ozarkers were not divided 50-50, but a centrist majority of yeoman trapped between the screaming, belligerent minorities of slave-holding elitists and abolitionists. In that March 1861 voting on whether or not to hold a secession convention in Missouri, unionist candidates outpolled secessionist candidates 73% to 23%. Sources did not tell me how the missing 4% in that statistic voted, so I'll say they were Ozarkers running on the "I've had it with all of you'ns" or the "Quiet'n down" ticket. Those two tickets may be in jest, but the joke gets at the heart of Missouri Ozark attitudes to the American Civil War at its outbreak. According to Michael Fellman in his great book **Inside War: The Guerilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War**, the average Ozarker was a hill farmer whose people migrated recently from Tennessee or Kentucky. Almost all these stats come from his mighty work. Fellman says the Ozarks hillbilly was as "bitterly negrophobic" as he was deeply resentful and suspicious of the elite Southern planter class and that caste's "pretentious" Missouri counterparts in the Boon's Lick. In **Missouri Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West**, Christopher Phillips argues that Missourians of the day largely considered themselves vanguard Westerners, claiming neither North or South. Soon in the war, however, this leave-me-be middle ground caused a hell of suffering.

On August 10, just outside of Springfield, my hometown where my novel **Morkan's Quarry** is set, more than 17,400 men fought in the Battle of Wilson's Creek, 12,000 Confederate and 5,400 Union soldiers. That evening and late into the night, the defeated, exhausted Federal forces poured into town. And on August 11, confused, shattered, infuriated, desperate, and lacking firm leadership, that Federal army sloughed its many wounded and dying into our courthouse and our churches and our homes, removed all it could carry of local goods and foods, and took all the currency from the banks in town. Many families with Union sympathies began hastily packing their households and were soon clogging the streets. Civic authority largely collapsed, and a chaotic military and civilian exodus for the safety St. Louis began. Bedlam. For the first time citizens with little experience of bloodshed and killing, of mortally wounded men, were nearly outnumbered by the wounded and dead of both sides. August 11 was just the start of Springfield's terrible ordeal.

From July through December of 1861, Springfield

changed hands five times and was occupied by six different armies. After that, half the town's population left, and half the buildings in town were unusable. There was one more serious battle inside the city limits in January of 1863, and for most of the war the town became a Union garrison, supply post, and hospital tent city. Again and again in **The White River Chronicles of S. C. Turnbo** you will find beleaguered Ozarkers, regardless of sympathies, fleeing to Springfield after a traumatic, life-threatening visit from brigands of unknown allegiance. And you find many of the refugee men joining Federal militias to have work and sustenance. Women labored hard to serve the armies there—diaries record countryside women toiling away to make flat cakes and baked goods to sell to Union soldiers even while guerilla brigands circled the city to rob the poor women of what they earned. Other diaries report unfortunates of both sexes wandering depraved and becoming alienados. Reason stayed long enough for them to flee the hills to Springfield. But they had seen brothers, sons, and fathers killed before them, and sisters and mothers tortured and beaten. In the seeming safety of my hometown, reason shattered and departed. Possibly a mercy considering what they had to remember.

Not knowing another's allegiance and not being able to predict the behavior of those you encountered became a constant theme and a major cause of fear, flight, despair, and in some cases depravity and madness for civilians. Imagine, you are in your yard carrying water from the spring house, your mother on the porch pounding dust from a throw rug, brother and father are one hill over cutting timber. Out of the mist come seven riders, all with Federal blue coats, but long hair, grimy faces, and when they approach you notice scalps trailing from their tack, holes in their tunics where a ball has passed that would have surely killed the man wearing it. What comes next?

Story titles in **White River Chronicles of S.C. Turnbo** reflect reality of the time—*Hardships and Starvation in the Days of War; Saving Her House Through Tears and Prayer; Visiting the Grave of Her Affiance; Reading the Bible by the Reflection of Light from a Burning Town*.

The progress of guerilla war and its uncertainties actually intensified one's sympathies. So Union families became more vocally and even violently pro-Union. Secessionist families became more radically and, when necessary, more violently pro-rebellion. The middle ground evaporated, since those who are unpredictable, whose loyalties and intentions and motivations remain unknown, are a greater source of anxiety than those whose actions and attitudes come from declared or discernible character.

This devouring and constant, violent uncertainty resulted in two psychological characteristics that Fellman points out in **Inside War**: First, survival lying and, second, psychic numbness. Fellman found within that the vast majority of Ozark civilians, regardless of their true sympathies, were not willing martyrs and stalwart heroes. To survive when under Union captivity or duress from guerillas, we lied. We were coerced into doing what irked our captors, forced by the other side, and had always been good and loyal whatever you need us to be, sir. Psychic numbness is quite possibly the most awful manifestation Fellman points out. It is a state in which Missouri civilians, subjected to recurring, unpredictable violence from former neighbors and from both guerillas and undisciplined Union occupiers, found life "emptied of any inner meaning," found greed for money and food an overpowering instinct,

and found violence to be the accepted and new norm of many social transactions.

This period caused serious creases in the Ozark character. Reticence, distrust of outsiders, and that vanguard western desire to light out for the territory and be free of things civilized have been a part of the hillbilly psyche since.

Surely you can imagine how the war described by Fellman, Keefe, Morrow, Turnbo, and Piston with Hatcher severely hardened hearts. Who would want to remember the real war? There was a willful silence and a determined forgetting about the war in the Ozarks. That's why Morkan's Quarry starts with the sentence: "When the war was finally won and the Morkans reclaimed their quarry, they did their best to forget the armies, the battles, and the occupations."

Imagine Ozarkers sitting around listening to stories of glorious battles fought elsewhere. That will be a short visit! Likely they would warm to true war story, as Tim O'Brien says, a war story with "an uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil,"not one of a lost and chivalrous South that never really was.

Here's a true war story from the **White River Chronicles of S. C. Turnbo.**

"One night while Mr. Baker and Jim was away from home, the band of heartless men rode up to the yard gate and dismounted and walked into the house and with threats and oaths they attempted to compel Mrs. Baker and Calvin to tell of the whereabouts of their money and other valuables which they refused to do. They then proceeded to whip the faithful woman with a drawing chain and hung Calvin by the toes to a joist in the house [Calvin is described only as 'small,' so he's maybe 8-11]. Mrs. Baker was beaten almost to death with the chains before the brutes let up and Calvin suffered intensely before they let him down…. The bandits did not stop at this but finally killed Mr. Baker and his son Jim in a cruel manner. Mrs. Baker who had partially recovered from the terrible ordeal of being whipped with the chain had her husband and son buried under a large apple tree that stood in the corner of the orchard. After the close of the war she had the two graves and the apple tree enclosed with paling. Mrs. Baker bore ugly scars on her body, head and limbs to the day of her death and was subject to spasms that attacked her after she had underwent the brutal treatment inflicted on her by the bushwhackers and cutthroats. Mrs. Baker when her death occurred received interment in a graveyard on the bank of Bear Creek."

Think of Mrs. Baker after the war. It's Sunday, church is over, and there's a little picnic and some music in the holler south of Lebanon. She's with her Calvin. Alone, unmarried, he has trouble walking and is not much of a prospect. Mrs. Nan Baker is glad to be with her people, enjoying the music and company, and she hopes very much that one of the girls from from around here without men now will love Calvin one day. Everything is fine until there's a change in the breeze, some clouds darken the sycamores by Bear Creek. Nan begins shaking; she feels her lips and face clench up; she knows she can't stop it. And so she rises and excuses herself and leaves Calvin and her people. She walks home and sits in her cabin, her body in full disobedience now; she's alone, and she's remembering crawling from the cabin to see the terrible scene in her yard. The whole world at an end. She's remembering the apple tree and that white fence and those two graves. And she's remembering Calvin screaming. And she is trembling.

The next time someone sells you a romanticized story of bushwhackers and those who hunted them in the Ozarks, just remember Nan Baker.

Steve Yates *is author of the Civil War novel,* ***Morkan's Quarry****, released in 2010. An MFA graduate from the creative writing program at the University of Arkansas, his fiction has won two fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission and one from the Arkansas Arts Council. Portions of* ***Morkan's Quarry*** *first appeared in Missouri Review, Ontario Review, and South Carolina Review. A novella-length excerpt was a finalist for the Faulkner Society's William Faulkner — William Wisdom Award for Best Novella. Yates is a native of Springfield, MO, where his novel is set. His book was published by Moon City Press, a new press recently created to zero in on work related to Missouri and Ozark Mountains. The press is operated by the Departments of English and Design at the University of Missouri. His short fiction has appeared in Texas Review, Turnstile, Nebraska Review, North Dakota Quarterly, and other journals. He is assistant director / marketing director at University Press of Mississippi in Jackson and lives in Flowood with his wife Tammy.*

Steve was a speaker on the 2010 theme, The Literature of War & Collateral Damage, at ***Words & Music, a Literary Feast in New Orleans****.*

Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society 2010 Alihat Awards

Arthur Davis

Rebecca Wells

Tim O'Brien

E. Quinn Peeper

Legends in Their Own Times

Alihot: A Legend in His/Her Own Time

In 1996, the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society, created a special award to be given to men and women for excellence in literature, journalism, music, art, and community service, or philanthropy. The award is given to men and women who qualify as legends in their own time.

Rosemary James, Co-Founder of the Faulkner Society, took the name from one of her former journalistic colleagues, the late Jack Dempsey, a legendary police reporter for the old New Orleans afternoon newspaper, *The States-Item*. Dempsey sent his police report columns from police headquarters by teletype. He always signed his dispatches:

ALIHOT

A Legend In His/Her Own Time

The awards are given annually in memory of Jack Dempsey, other memorable guys and dolls of reporting, and the great 20th Century heyday of journalism.

There is no specified number of awardees each year, although at least one award for Literature always is given.

The first ALIHOT Award for Literature was presented to Mississippi author Eudora Welty for her impressive body of fiction and non-fiction.

That same year, ALIHOT Awards were presented to Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin for Philanthropy in the Arts and to artist Wade Welch for cartoon satire. Other awards have been made as follows:

Honoree	Category	Year
Armando Valladares	Human Rights Advocacy	2011
Oscar Hijuelos	Literature	2011
Justin Torres	First Fiction	2011
Nilo Cruz	Drama	2011
Randy Fertel	Narrative Non-Fiction	2011
Tim O'Brien	Literature (Fiction)	2010
Rebecca Wells	Literature (Fiction)	2010
Arthur Q. Davis	Civic Service	2010
E. Quinn Peeper	Civic Service, Music	2010
Ronald Pincus	Civic Service	2009
John Biguenet	Literature	2009
Ted Turner	Philanthropy	2008
Roy Blount, Jr.	Literature (Non Fiction)	2008
Michael Malone	Literature (Fiction)	2008
Matthew Bruccoli	Biography	2007
Marie Arana	Literary Criticism	2007
Michael Dirda	Literary Criticism	2007
Jonathan Yardley	Literary Criticism	2007
Josephine Sacabo	Art Photography	2007
Bertie Deming Smith	Philanthropy	2006
Robert Olen Butler	Literature	2007
Shirley Ann Grau	Literature	2007
Nancy Moss	Philanthropy	2007
Thomas Neff	Art Photography	2006
Shirley Ann Grau	Literature	2006
Michael White	Music	2006
John Besh	Culinary Arts	2006
Robert Olen Butler	Literature	2004
Stanley Crouch	Words & Music	2004
Irvin Mayfield	Words & Music	2004
Dow Mossman	Documentary Cinema	2004
Mark Moskowitz	Documentary Cinema	2004
Gérard Lange	Art Photography	2004
H. Paul St. Martin	Philanthropy	2004
Michael X. St. Martin	Philanthropy	2004
Ellis Marsalis	Music	2003
Herman Leonard	Art Photography	2003
Raymond Meeks	Art Photography	2003
Valerie Martin	Literature	2003
William Farlowe	Philanthropy	2003
Elizabeth Spencer	Literature	2002
Leah Chase	Civic Service	2002
C. D. Wright	Poetry	2002
Deborah Luster	Art Photography	2002
Earl King	Music: Blues	2002
Freda Lupin	Civic Service	2001
Dalt Wonk	Drama	2001
Susan Spicer	Culinary Arts	2001
Dan Ragland	Art Photography	2001
Rodger Kamenetz	Literature	2000
Arthur Samuelson	Literary Publishing	2000
Paul Prudhomme	Culinary Arts	2000
Julie Grant Meyer	Philanthropy	2000
Lawrence Ferlinghetti	Poetry	1999
Iris Kelso	Journalism	1999
Don Lee Keith	Journalism	1999
Thomas C. Keller	Philanthropy	1999
Fredrick Barton	Words & Music	1998
Jay Weigel	Words & Music	1998
Lolita Davidovich	Performance Art	1998
Ron Shelton	Performance Art	1998
Sandra Russell Clark	Art Photography	1998
Dorothy Crosby	Philanthropy	1998
Lynn Crosby Gammill	Philanthropy	1998
Shelby Foote	Literature	1997
Yevgeny Yevtushenko	Poetry	1997
Delta Burke	Performance Art	1997
Gerald McRaney	Performance Art	1997
Odetta	Music	1997
Lyle Bonge	Art Photography	1997
Ian Arnoff	Philanthropy	1997
Eamon Kelly	Philanthropy	1997

No awards were presented in 2005 due to Hurricane Katrina

Tim O'Brien

Year after year, English students sit down to read **The Things They Carried** by Tim O'Brien.

O'Brien's book has become the definitive fiction of the Vietnam War and the reaction is consistent. Silence and awe. There is a reason this book is considered essential reading not only for young people, who might get deployed to hot spots around the world but for all serious readers, all thinking people. That reason is simply the truth readers feel, tugging ever more insistently at their hearts as they go from one story to another.

O'Brien himself has said, "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done." It is this quality in his words that can touch such a wide audience, that make the old professor, the young mother, and the high school jock shed a tear. This kind of truth can only be found in the finest literary fiction.

By fictionalizing an event the truth becomes cleaner and universal and such is the case of O'Brien's work.

Born in Austin, MN, O'Brien's family moved him when he was 12 along with his younger siblings to Worthington, MN, a place that once billed itself as "the turkey capital of the world." Worthington had a large influence on O'Brien's imagination and early development as an author. The town is located on Lake Okabena in the western portion of the state and serves as the setting for some of his stories.

He earned his BA in Political Science from Macalester College in 1968. In addition to a diploma, the young O'Brien was handed a draft notice. O'Brien was against the war but he made the decision to go. He later acknowledged this decision to go was based on not having the courage to do otherwise.

Illustrating the shift that the Vietnam War brought to the archetypal concept of the heroic soldier, O'Brien suggests there is now a moral question attached to the decision to go to war. A question that turns up again and again is his work, where do the morals and courage fall: to those who fought for something they did not think was right or to those who fled? He served from 1968 to1970 in 3rd Platoon, A Co., 5th Batt. 46th Inf., as an infantryman. O'Brien's tour of duty was 1969-70 and he was part of a platoon that participated in the infamous My Lai Massacre. O'Brien has said that when his unit got to the area around My Lai (referred to as "Pinkville" by the U.S. forces), "We all wondered why the place was so hostile. We did not know there had been a massacre there a year earlier. The news about that only came out later, while we were there, and then we knew." O'Brien later used this tactic of concealment in his own writing style, particularly in his book, **In the Lake of the Woods**.

Upon completing his tour of duty, O'Brien went on to graduate school at Harvard University and received an internship at the *Washington Post*. And he was a journalist first, before turning to fiction. His writing career was launched in 1973 with the release of **If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home**, about his war experiences. In this memoir, O'Brien writes: "Can the foot soldier teach anything important about war, merely for having been there? I think not. He can tell war stories." This way of thinking is what makes **The Things They Carried** so poignant, so beautiful. Essentially the book reads like you are listening to someone's war stories, told sitting in a rocking chair on someone's front porch. Not just anyone, but someone you know and trust and could listen to for hours after which you know you will never be the same.

Rebecca Wells, also being honored by the Faulkner Society this year, has told us that reading this book turned her into an anti-war protestor overnight, com-

pletely changed her outlook about war and other aspects of life and literature.

While O' Brien insists it is not his job or his place to discuss the politics of the Vietnam War, he does occasionally let fly. Speaking years later about his upbringing and the war, O'Brien called his hometown "a town that congratulates itself, day after day, on its own ignorance of the world: a town that got us into Vietnam. Uh, the people in that town who sent me to that war, you know, couldn't spell the word 'Hanoi' if you spotted them three vowels."

It is admirable that O'Brien does not moralize or preach his agenda. And he does not have to. He shows us with heartbreaking humanness the atrocities and the every day life of the soldier. His storytelling instincts are such that we know his war stories are the real thing.

"If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. As a first rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil."

On left hand page, Tim O'Brien in Vietnam. Above, Tim speaks to Words & Music attendees at the Petit Theatre in New Orleans.

One attribute in O'Brien's work is the blur between fiction and reality. Labeled "verisimilitude," his work contains actual details of the situations he experienced. While that is not unusual, his conscious, explicit, and meta-fictional approach to the distinction between fiction and fact is extraordinary. In the chapter *How to Tell a True War Story* in **The Things They Carried**, O'Brien casts a distinction between "story-truth" (the truth of fiction) and "happening-truth" (the truth of fact or occurrence), writing that "story-truth is sometimes truer than happening-truth." Story truth is emotional truth; thus the feeling created by a fictional story is sometimes truer than what results from reading the facts. Certain sets of stories in **The Things They Carried** seem to contradict each other, and certain stories are designed to "undo" the suspension of disbelief created in previous stories; for example, *Speaking of Courage* is followed by *Notes*, which explains in what ways the work is fictive.

O'Brien's papers are housed at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin. O'Brien writes and lives in Texas, where he raises his young sons and teaches full-time every other year at Texas State University–San Marcos. Alternating years, he teaches MFA workshops in the creative writing program.

Among his credits, O'Brien received the National Book Award in 1979 for his book **Going After Cacciato**. His novel **In the Lake of the Woods** won the James Fenimore Cooper Prize for Best Fiction în 1995.

His most recent novel is **July, July.**

"I didn't get into writing to make money or get famous or any of that. I got into it to hit hearts, and man, when I get letters not just from the soldiers but from their kids, especially their kids, it makes it all worthwhile." -Tim O'Brien.

For opening our hearts to the fate of the soldier, which remains the same from Achilles to Afghanistan and beyond, Tim O'Brien is among the most important literary minds of the post Vietnam literary era.

He is a legend in his own time.

E. Quinn Peeper

E. Quinn Peeper, MD, FRSA, who grew up in Memphis, TN, is one of the multi-talented young professionals who have selected New Orleans as their permanent residence and who add enormously to the vibrancy of the city's cultural life. A talented, much admired surgeon, Dr. Peeper also is a prize-winning concert pianist.

On the musical side of this eclectically energetic personality are countless hours of musical performing donated for the benefit galas of such organizations as the Louisiana Philharmonic Symphony and the New Orleans Opera Association. He made his New Orleans début with the Faulkner Society at a Words & Music concert in St. Louis Cathedral on the 100th anniversary of William Faulkner's birthday in 1997 and his national début at Carnegie Hall the same year. He won the 26th Annual International Piano Competition at the Giornale Musicale Festival of Italy in 1991 and the Adult & College Division of the New Orleans Ursuline Bach Competition in both 1997 and 1998. Since his début with the Society, he has performed at Words & Music on numerous occasions, both solo and with his partner, another of the city's multi-disciplined professionals, attorney and concert pianist Michael Harold. Most recently, they have performed together at Trinity Episcopal Church and at the Wilson Center, Washington & Lee University.

Educated at Washington & Lee, where he was graduated magna cum laude; Oxford University, where he received a BA and an MA; and Columbia University Medical School, Dr. Peeper did his residency at the Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan and was Chief Resident at St. Paul Ramsey Medical Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. Today, he is in practice with Crescent City Physicians, specializing in gynecology and obstetrics and associated with Touro Infirmary, among the city's most respected hospitals. Since 1998, he has been a lecturer with Professional Seminars, Inc., tutoring medical students in written and oral Board Review Courses. Prior to joining the staff at Touro, he was senior partner and Medical Director, for West Jefferson Women's Health, Obstetrics, and Gynecology at the West Jefferson Physician Center. His appointment there followed a stint as Vice Chairman of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Quality Care Committee, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, West Jefferson Medical Center. Widely published in medical journals, he has conducted research projects at a number of medical institutions in various aspects of pre-natal care.

He is a member of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Fellow of the Greater New Orleans Obstetrical and Gynecological Society; member of the Orleans Parish Medical Society, The Most Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and the Military and Hospitalier Order of St Lazarus.

He is active in cultural affairs not only in New Orleans but in Great Britain, where he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts (FRSA), inducted in 2007. Currently, he is a member of the Faulkner Society Board and is President of the English Speaking Union, New Orleans. He was responsible for bringing the national convention of ESU to New Orleans last year and organized the programming for the convention around the birthday of Samuel Johnson. A voracious reader, he prepared himself for the conference by reading the major works about Samuel Johnson and every important work of the legendary British author and expert on the English language and literature. In the six years since taking over the leadership of ESU, he has transformed it, brought it into prominence as a leader in the cultural and educational life of New Orleans. Under his direction, ESU has initiated numerous projects to enrich the reading and speaking skills of Louisianians.

For instance, as President of ESU, he created the English in Action program to teach English to new immigrants in New Orleans. He personally gives English lessons to Vietnamese immigrants every Sunday at Queen Mary of Vietnam Church in New Orleans East. Ten years ago, before becoming president, he created the New Orleans branch of the ESU Shakespeare Competition for high school students. The winner goes to Lincoln Center for workshops with other students of 72 branches from the US.

He also has spearheaded the creation of a scholarship endowment to provide for continuing education for New Orleans teachers. This scholarship thru our ESU New Orleans will pay for tuition and expenses for a local high school teacher to attend the summer continuing education program in the United Kingdom. He wrote to Buckingham Palace for permission from the Queen to name the scholarship in her honor and she gave permission in writing on Sept 8, 2010. It will be named the Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship and in 2012 will be called the Diamond Jubilee scholarship. Future fundraising by ESU New Orleans will be to fund this scholarship. The endowment was begun with $20,000 earned by ESU New Orleans from the convention here last year.

Faulkner Society Co-founder Rosemary James with "Alihot" honoree E. Quinn Peeper

He is a member of Board of Directors and Production Committee, New Orleans Opera Association and has been a member of the Vestry, Christ Church Cathedral. His clubs include The United Oxford and Cambridge University Club, London, Oxford Cambridge Club of New Orleans, New Orleans Opera Club, Shakespeare Society of New Orleans, Jane Austen Society of North America.

He is endlessly perfecting new skills, exploring new avenues of expertise in both his primary career and in his leisure life and, whenever, he gets into a new activity, it is with boundless enthusiasm. He does not like to waste a moment sitting idle. An example: because of the endless hour on call as an obstetrician, he decided to take up needle-point to satisfy his creative urges. His needlepoint pillows, most completed while waiting for a deliveries, are exceptional decorative arts pieces.

Home decoration is, in fact, his longest-running hobby. He received the Metropolitan Home, 2001 Home of the Year Award in 2001, and his various homes have been photographed for a series of lifestyle magazines. He also enjoys decorating himself and he has been a recipient of the New Orleans Men of Fashion Award.

Now, he has embarked on a new obsession. For years he has kept a diary and, recently, decided to do a memoir in the style of the famous 17th century diarist Samuel Pepys. If he is not now among the leading experts in the country on Pepys, he soon will be, so extensive has his research been to date and so extensive are his research plans for the immediate future.

Quinn Peeper represents the best and brightest of this community, a young man every woman would love to have as her son.

He already is a legend in his own time.

Rebecca Wells

Rebecca Wells began life in a large, merry, dancing, storytelling, play-acting family. Today, Louisiana's all time number one *New York Times* bestselling author, creator of four bestsellers, including **Divine Secrets of the YA-YA Sisterhood**, is an important role model for developing writers.

Her career proves that fiction writing comes most naturally when based on a life of broad-based, interesting experiences to draw upon. She has demonstrated the need to build a platform upon which books can be marketed successfully, so important today when publishers, pinched by economic turndowns, have slashed promotion budgets. And she has demonstrated over and over again the importance of sense of place and character development in successful fiction.

Rebecca was born and raised in Alexandria, LA. Early on, she fell in love with dreaming up and acting out dramas for her siblings. Acting in school and summer youth theater productions, Rebecca stepped out of the social hierarchies of high school and into the joys of walking inside another character and living in another world.

Early influences were the land around her, the harvest, crawfishing in the bayou, practicing piano after school, dancing with her mother and brothers and sister. She counts black music and culture as a lifelong influence, along with the poets Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg and author Anais Nin.

Rebecca graduated from Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, where she studied theater, English, and psychology. There, she performed frequently and also became a political activist. She began her life long habit of keeping a journal shortly after graduating,

A brief stint in advertising paid the rent. Fast at ad copy, she had plenty of time left over to read books on Tibetan Buddhism and begin the practice of prayer and meditation, "which didn't come easy for me."

After saving some money, she left for Boulder, CO, and enrolled at the Naropa Institute to study "Mind, Language, and Consciousness" with Choyum Tringpa Rimpoche, the Tibetan monk and teacher, and Allen Ginsberg. She then traveled the country by train for a year, filling journal after journal, writing performance pieces, shards of stories, and word-portraits of people she'd meet in different towns. Although not fluent in French, she then went to Paris to study jazz piano at the Sorbonne. When not practicing piano, Rebecca spent countless hours in the *Jeu de Paume* art museum, captivated by the paintings of such artists as Cezanne. In France she began "playing with colors," which remains a joy for her. She camped out for a while in Marseilles, where New Orleans friends had rented large studios near the Old Port. In a kind of Bohemian drift, Rebecca made a habit of people-watching and making up stories about them, their lives, their loves and losses. Because she didn't speak the language, it was easier to do this. Rebecca says this was an important time in her life as a writer, as she was "released from the restraints of conversation, free to hear song, tone, color."

Back in the States and strapped for money, she became a cocktail waitress, then a bartender, and used the money for more travel and exploration. She had an epiphany in Laramie, WY, after a night of dancing in a cowboy bar. She decided it was time to take stock and focus. In Amherst, MA, she took a contact improvisation workshop and met Maurine Holbert, who became her acting teacher, mentor, and "spiritual godmother." She moved to Manhattan to study with Ms. Holbert, immersing herself in the Stanislavski method and a Jungian depth approach, which integrates spirituality and performance. While becoming a professional actress, her political awareness intensified and she became an early member of Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (PAND). She studied non-violence with the American Friends Service Committee, demonstrated at nuclear power plants, and helped plan a major march of 100,000 people in Manhattan for nuclear disarmament.

While in Seattle to found a chapter of PAND, she was cast in a play and settled there. She wrote her first play—a solo show called **Splittin' Hairs,** which won the HBO Excellence in Theatre Award. This play inspired her latest novel, **The Crowning Glory of Calla Lily Ponder**. Rebecca developed the play first with a small women's theater group, then with the Seattle Repertory Theater. She toured **Splittin' Hairs** throughout the West, including venues in Elko, Nevada, and Northern Idaho. Her tour of Alaska included

performances and instruction for Inuit Native Alaskan villages and the Alaska State Penitentiary in Fairbanks.

Then Rebecca broke her foot dancing at the Empty Space Theater. This accident forced her to sit still. She couldn't act, she couldn't audition. So, she began to write. **Little Altars Everywhere** came first and it won the Western States Book Award and became a *New York Times* bestseller. Rebecca, her husband Tom, and a friend made up a fictional publicity agency, creating letterhead on the computer and mailing out letters announcing the book. Rebecca, using her acting skills, created a secretary named Mona, who then followed up with phone calls to book readings. When they got a little tour together, they jumped into their FBI-green 1974 Plymouth and traveled to bookstores, where Rebecca, dressed in flamboyant vintage clothes, would proceed to perform her fiction.

Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood, became a literary phenomenon, remaining number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than a year. As Ya-Ya clubs spread worldwide, **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood** continued to top the *New York Times* bestseller list, bestseller lists in several foreign countries, bestseller lists of every major newspaper in the country. Rebecca performed the abridged audio versions of both **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood** and **Little Altars Everywhere**. She considers her performance of **Little Altars Everywhere** to be the best work she has done as an actress. **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood** won the 1999 American Booksellers Book of the Year Award, and was a finalist for the Orange Prize. Her books have sold six million copies, have been translated into 27 languages, and are now taught in high schools and colleges. **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood** was made into a feature film, which brought out groups of women across the country dressed in tiaras and boas, and "Ya-Ya" sashed evening gowns. The **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood** DVD is one of the most frequently rented.

Rebecca, however, missed most of this celebration. At this point she was falling down, and didn't know why. On the day of the premiere, she was getting an MRI to rule out a brain tumor. After years of misdiagnoses, she was finally diagnosed with chronic neurological Lyme's disease, which she has battled for the last decade. Suddenly, Rebecca and Tom were dealing with caregivers, medicine charts, oxygen tanks and canes. Rebecca and Tom have been known to joke that they thought these kinds of days might come, but not until their 80s!

Disease did not keep Rebecca out of active politics. With the publication of her third novel, **Ya-Yas in Bloom**, also a *New York Times* bestseller, Rebecca began to speak out about the horrors of Lyme's Disease, to call for research, to call for a cure, and to call for care for those afflicted with this often misdiagnosed disease. She is on the honorary board of the Lyme's Disease Association. Rebecca now leads a life in which Lyme's Disease is managed. She's dancing again--in the kitchen, out in the yard, and in her books.

Rebecca now lives on a on a remote island in the Pacific Northwest with husband, photographer Thomas Schworer, whose work can be seen in **Searching for True**. They grow their own vegetables and flowers, raise Shetland sheep, and share their lives with Mercy, a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel. For her numerous literary gifts to dedicated readers, for giving developing writers hope that they, too, can literary success, for her courage in the face of a debilitating disease, and for her outspoken stance against war, we salute Rebecca Wells.

She is a legend in her own time.

Arthur Q. Davis

(1920 - 2011)

To read the story of Arthur Q. Davis is to read the story of his city, his state, his country, and, indeed, the world of his time. His architectural firm's mark on the skyline of New Orleans with such achievements as Louisiana's iconic domed stadium has been nothing short of historic.

This renowned American design professional, who was selected by his peers as one of the 100 most important architects of the 20th Century, is a walking book of modern history. And with his usual, quiet good humor, he likes to quip that his career began "literally in the toilets of Louisiana politics. One of my first projects as an architect was to design the partitions for the restrooms in the state capitol built for Huey Long.

Since meeting and working on the project for

that famous populist, Arthur Davis has known every Louisiana Governor and New Orleans Mayor and has designed state and city projects for all of them and, indeed, for the Governors and Mayors of other states and cities, as well as for quite a few heads of state of sovereign nations.

Davis' firm has built state-of-the-art schools, innovative hospitals here and abroad and prisons, including Louisiana's Angola State Penitentiary; office buildings and shopping centers; business parks and luxury hotel complexes not only in Louisiana but all over the world; medical, civic, and performing arts complexes; university facilities, other sports arenas, and an entire new town in Indonesia. At the same time, he has designed some of the finest contemporary residences in America.

His exemplary career as an architect, however, is only part of the Davis story, which he describes as "a charmed life, ruled by Fate." This quiet, competent, always curious man has taken the ball Fate dealt him and run with it, scoring impressively in his career and in creating a better, more entertaining environment for Louisianians and their visitors from around the world. Along the way, he has known Presidents and Kings, Saudi Royals, and the corporate elite of the world.

The Davis saga includes designing camouflage for the Pacific Fleet, a sort of charm he perfected to protect our ships as a young Navy officer during WWII. It includes clandestine operations on the Eastern bloc side of the Berlin Wall's Checkpoint Charlie and an eerie series of encounters with voodoo practitioners, which, ultimately, have proven beneficial to his health and wellbeing. Originally, the Davis family was in the rice planting and milling business in Pointe-a-la-Hache, LA, south of New Orleans on the Mississippi Delta.

In the Great Flood of 1927, the delta's fertile land was flooded when the levees just below the city were dynamited to save New Orleans. "Because of these events," Mr. Davis has said, "my family was forced to move to New Orleans. It was as if the city we had saved with our own destruction would somehow save us in turn. And it did.

"In that strange way that New Orleans has, it ad-

opted us and gave us sustenance, a new way of living. Without the flood, without the city, without the workings of Fate, my life would have been defined by the delta. Instead, I came of age surrounded by the vast inventory of manmade structures, wonderful and various, that make up New Orleans. And it was Fate that put me on the path to my profession. I was 14 when, for no particular reason, I took a different route to Audubon Park. On the way I happened upon a brick mason building a fireplace in a herringbone pattern. He seemed to be weaving the pattern from the unyielding red brick, pausing only to consult the blueprint tacked to a plywood board, curling at the edges in the summer humidity. Fascinated, I parked my bike and sat on the curb, watching until I had the courage to ask about his project and especially about the blueprint. I had never seen one before. The mason patiently explained the purpose of the blueprint to me. What impressed me the most was how those diagrams described exactly the way the chimney should be built and how it would become an integral part of the house. This meeting with the mason, which occurred because I decided to take a different route to the park, dictated my career. I knew I wanted to become an architect from that moment."

Three years after this chance encounter, Arthur graduated from the Isidore Newman School and entered Tulane University. As a student of architecture, he learned "the cryptic language of engineering with its enthralling calculations" along with French, then required of all enrolled in architectural studies, "a hangover from the Beaux Arts period when it was believed that all great architecture emerged from Paris."

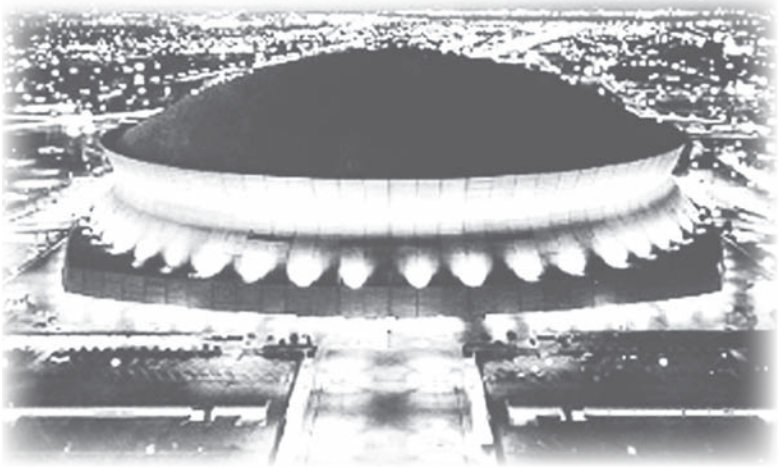
Arthur came to a different conclusion about the sources of good design as his career progressed but, he says, "the French came in handy, as Fate would have it." While wandering the streets of the old neighborhoods, searching for just the right historic structure to measure, a requirement of all architecture students, he came across Voodoo for the first time, when he found mounds of deep red brick dust with patterns drawn in white on the stoop of a Creole cottage with shuttered French doors. "I felt instinctively that these patterns had a power of their own, a power to attract." He did not succumb to the attraction, however, and, instead selected for his thesis a small architectural jewel, the chapel of St. Roch Cemetery, a predecessor in spirit to the work of modernists, such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, mentors who later influenced his own work. He later learned that the patterns on the stoop were intended to attract amorous clients for the prostitutes who lived in that cottage and he has always believed that his resistance to their charms made him a better candidate for more beneficial voodoo magic.

While at Tulane, Arthur met and fell in love with Mary Henriette Wineman, a Detroit native studying

at Newcomb College. Arthur needed an extra ticket for the Sugar Bowl game. He learned from a mutual friend that Mary was going home to Detroit for the holidays and would not be back until after the game. He called on her and asked if he could have her ticket. When she returned to campus, Arthur asked her out on a date to thank her. "And that was it. My fate was sealed." As fate would have it, football determined the course of his private life and later was the inspiration for the best-known achievement of his firm, the Superdome.

After graduating from Tulane, he went to work designing the massive wood structures used to build flying boats for the Navy. During his tenure at the shipyard, he became friends with an elderly black man who worked at the shipyard. While he thought that the work they were doing was important for the war effort, Arthur wanted to do more, to be part of the great adventure of war and he volunteered for Officers Candidate School. When his friend learned that he had joined the Navy and would soon be leaving, he brought him a going-away gift.

"He brought me a charm. When I saw it, I realized he must be deeply involved in Voodoo. The charm seemed a small thing, just a red oilcloth pouch the size of postage stamp, but I could see that it had been hand-stitched. He instructed me never to open it but to carry it with me at all times. I would know it was working when I felt it moving. Although I knew little of my friend's religion or the nature of the charm, I did know that where I would be going, I would need all the help I could get. So, I accepted his gift with gratitude and followed his instructions. I keep the charm with me to this day."



The Louisiana Superdome, Designed by Curtis & Davis.

Arthur and Mary married August 30, 1942 in the living room of her parents' home in Detroit, just before he left. She was just a junior and so completed college as a married woman, very unusual for that day and time.

Arthur's first assignment as a Naval officer was to design camouflage for ships of the Pacific Fleet, a special Davis charm for their protection. The Turks were so impressed with his camouflage that they memorialized it with a Turkish national postage stamp. Then, he was ordered to active duty and, carrying his little red charm, Arthur survived a storm so bad while airborne that the plane he was on was actually flying backwards, a brief stay on Tarawa, a stint on that "damp Hell" Guadalcanal, then Noumea, and finally the aircraft carrier Bunker Hill, which took part in every major engagement from Rabaul to Tokyo. "Soon after I left the Bunker Hill she came under kamikaze attack and hundreds were killed or wounded and she limped back to the Puget Sound Navy Yard as the most damaged ship ever received there. I was already on my way home and glad to be."

Reunited, Mary and Arthur set up housekeeping and began a family, two sons, Arthur Q. Davis, Jr., better known as Quint Davis, and James Davis, and a daughter, Pam. Pam married the late Frank Friedler, a much loved New Orleans businessman who played an active role in Democratic politics and civic affairs of New Orleans. Quint is the City's best known music ambassador. Their son James, who was the father of Mary and Arthur's three grandchildren with the former Jill Lassen, died in a tragic accident at home, falling from a ladder while trimming a tree.

After leaving the Navy, he received a Master of Architecture from the Harvard School of Design, studying on the G.I. Bill with Bauhaus school founder Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer before interning with Eero Saarinen. He joined forces with architect Nathaniel "Buster" Curtis Jr. in 1947, a time in which few New Orleans-based architects were designing modern architecture. Curtis and Davis soon began introducing modernist ideasto the skylineof their city.

Although the firm is best known for designing the Superdome, the firm also was building such modernist landmarks as The Rivergate Exhibition Center (shown at right), later torn down over the protests of all those who value the city's architectural heritage, to make way for Harrah's Casino. The firm's important

projects also included the University of New Orleans Events Center, the New Orleans Public Library, Oakwood Shopping Center, Angola Penitentiary, and the Hyatt Regency and Marriott hotels.The firm received more than 50 awards for design excellence and, at age 38, Davis was made the youngest Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

During the Cold War, Arthur went to West Berlin, to build a major medical center and acquired an old, dilapidated Mercedes 190. Its secondary use became covert—ferrying people out of East Berlin to freedom, concealed in a compartment under the seat. "East Berlin was in many ways a shuttered city but I could still find excuses to cross over: to attend the ballet, visit museums, search for Czechoslovakian art books. When possible, I would take my good friend the Spanish Ambassador with me for added safety, as diplomats from neutral countries were often just waved through without inspection. I would advise my West Berlin contacts when I would be going to the East and where I would park the car. Once there, I would take in the ballet or buy books and have an inferior dinner, then drive back through Checkpoint Charlie. In West Berlin, I would park again at a pre-designated location and the passengers would be retrieved. I never met any of the men and women I ferried across but was told that 14 friends and relatives of our German associates had been reunited with their families because of that beat up old Mercedes. It was a risk, of course, but it seemed the right thing to do. And, besides, I had my Voodoo charm."

A New Orleans office building designed by Arthur Davis.

Later, in Haiti for a project, where his school days French proved invaluable, he was introduced by a Haitian colleague to a Voodoo priest, a Hougon(a sort of witch doctor), who told his fortune, put him in a coffin and into a trance in a ceremony punctuated with beautiful chants in an exotically decorated studio. The Hougon granted him a single wish and promised it would come true if his instructions were followed. He was given potions to protect him and his home from evil and instructed in how to use them. "And, indeed, long after I left the island, my wish was granted." Asked to reveal his wish, Arthur says, "I'll never tell." And why? "Because he told me not to."

Since then, Arthur Davis has designed public and private works commissioned throughout the United States as well as in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Egypt, and the United Kingdom. For these projects and many others, Davis was recognized as Outstanding Alumnus of the Tulane School of Architecture in 1982. Since 1988, he has operated his own firm, Arthur Q. Davis, FAIA, and Partners. And, recently, he published his memoir, **It Happened by Design**, which provides an affecting and thorough narrative of his life and achievements. In this book, Davis explains how he fused Creole and Beaux-Arts ideas together, filtering those concepts through modernist aesthetics to create new forms while preserving the old. A good example is the firm's design for the Royal Orleans Hotel.

One of America's most distinguished and celebrated architects, he has enormously impacted the architectural landscape of the city. Yet, all the while, his interests have extended far beyond the field of architecture. Throughout his professional career, Davis has shared his talents and personal wealth with the academic, civic, and cultural communities of New Orleans.

Listed with the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, Davis is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and a former member of the AIA's National Committee on Aesthetics, the AIA's National Honor Awards Program, and the Architectural Advisory Committee to the U.S. Navy. He is also past chairman of the jury for the National Design Competition of American Telephone & Telegraph. Over the years, Davis has served as a visiting critic at Harvard University School of Design, the Pratt Institute of Design,

Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and Tulane University.

Mr. Davis also completed a lecture tour of the People's Republic of China as a guest of the Chinese government. A current member of the Tulane President's Council and the Newcomb College Art Advisory Council, Davis has funded, for several years, the annual Davis Visiting Critic at the School of Architecture. He also funded prizes to Newcomb art students.

Among the principals with his son Quint Davis behind the birth of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Mr. Davis secured the creation of the festival by providing an escrow fund. He was the first chair of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation. He is past president of the board of trustees of the New Orleans Museum of Art and a past board member of the United Way, the Metropolitan Area Committee, the Preservation Resource Center Foundation, and the Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission. In 1988, Davis was named one of the Ten Outstanding Persons by the Institute for Human Understanding, and, in 1990, he received the Young Leadership Council's Role Model Award. Davis is an honorary citizen of the City of Berlin, an honor conferred by Chancellor Willy Brand. As Honorary Consul-General for the Kingdom of Thailand, he was awarded the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant by King Bhumibol of Thailand.

Designed by Arthur Q. Davis, former residence of Arthur and Mary Davis on Bamboo Road in New Orleans.

More recently, he was the founding Chairman of the National World War II Museum's Board of Directors. He is a member of Advisory Council of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society and he has been a patron of both the Faulkner Society and the Tennessee Williams Festival.

With all of this going on, it's hard to believe, but Arthur has always managed to enjoy life, to have fun. He is, for instance, a member of the famed Bohemian Club of San Francisco, which has an equally famous property called The Grove in the redwood forests north of San Francisco. One of the most exclusive clubs in the country, its members, all male, annually go to The Grove for summer high jinks, an excursion which has often been spoofed as "Summer Camp for the Big Boys" by such wits as Harry Shearer, actor and creator of the film, **Teddy Bears Picnic**.

A congregation of Presidents and former Presidents, Fortune 500 CEOs, and you name it, men who have made it, the Bohemians annually write and perform an original operetta. Arthur's contribution one year was the original libretto for the Bohemian production, **Je Suis Lafitte.**

Arthur traveled widely with his wife for pleasure as well as business and he has loved the café society life of his city, enjoying the machinations of business and politics in private rooms over excellent meals. He has enjoyed being a man of both style and substance.

Arthur Q. Davis has, indeed, led a charmed life and he has let of us in on it with his exceptional grace and wit and his good deeds on our behalf. Mr. Davis passed away Novmember 30, 2011.

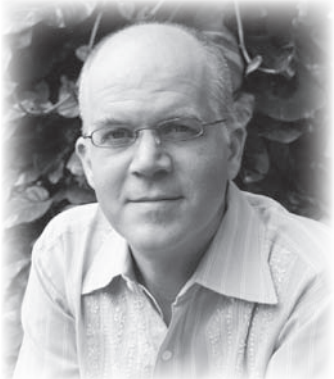
He was a legend in his own time.

Editor's Note: *Mr. Davis was awarded the ALI-HOT Award in November of 2010 at a gala event in his honor at the National World War II Museum, which featured British fiction writer Simon Mawer, author of* ***The Glass Room****, a novel focusing on an elegant modern residence and the impact it has on a succession of occupants. The fictional house was inspired by Villa Tugendhat, a legedary residence in Brno, Czechoslovakia, designed by Mies van der Rohe, a mentor of Mr. Davis. He died November 30, 2011. The Faulkner Society mourns the loss of a great friend and offers its deepest sympathy to his wife, Mary, and their children.*

William Faulkner – William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition

Winning Submissions

Sean Chadwell
2010 Best Novel Winner
Quit Claim



Sean Chadwell, a West Virginia native, has called Texas home for 17 years. From 1998 to 2009, he taught American literature, film studies, and advanced grammar on the U.S. Mexico border in Laredo. Though he missed the mountains of his home state, he learned to appreciate the physical and cultural landscape of South Texas, particularly the small ranching community of Encinal, where he and his wife Donna Lednicky lived for seven years. There, he came to know and admire the people whose perspectives and voices shape so much of **Quitclaim**.

Sean began writing fiction in earnest in 2009, when he relocated to Pune, India, to join Donna, who works there now. In addition to writing – since drafting the novel, he has been at work on several short stories and a screenplay set in West Virginia – Sean spends his time learning Hindi and volunteering as an English language instructor for a group of teachers who work in a rural farming village near Pune.

Judged by Stewart O' Nan, whose latest novel **Emily, Alone** *was released in March, 2011. O'Nan is the author of 15 critically acclaimed books of fiction and two books of creative non-fiction.*

The Judge's Comments: *Lovely handling of mood through the first person narrator. In its wistfulness, its use of empty landscapes and the way it looks to the past, it reminds me of* **The Last Picture Show**.

Sponsored by:

The Award of the 2010 Gold Medal for Best Novel is underwritten by a grant from Judith "Jude" Swenson. Jude is Honorary Chairman of Words & Music, 2010 and has been a generous supporter of all of the Society's works on behalf of writers for the last decade. She was Chairman of Juleps in June, 2009. A former journalist, Jude is devoted to good literature.

The award is given in Memory of Judith's late husband, James Swenson, a generous philanthropist and successful businessman who was Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Louisiana General Services, Inc. – with its largest subsidiary, Louisiana Gas Service Company serving much of Louisiana. Louisiana General Services, Inc. also encompassed ten various additional subsidiaries throughout Louisiana, Florida and Minnesota.

James was Professor of Finance at the University of New Orleans and the Tulane University MBA Program. A gifted teacher, Mr. Swenson was a visionary, ever seeking out and exploring new horizons. He was an outstanding leader of the utmost integrity. An astute chronicler of his own time and life, he was a voracious reader of history, valuing its ultimate contribution to the understanding of future perils and progress in human relations.

The old checkpoint is gone. For the last couple months I have seen different crews taking it apart piece by piece. They numbered each part of the old steel structure. You might remember it was just a simple open-sided shed next to that trailer they used as an office and holding cell. Then they took it down, carefully. They hauled it away as they did. They hauled away the trailer. They tore up what was left of the asphalt lane, with its deep impressions left by idling trucks on the days the sun turned the blacktop to molasses, and they hauled it away. They dismantled the chain-link kennels on their concrete pads and hauled them away. They brought out a tractor and turned the earth and spread buffle grass seed around and watered it, and it sprouted and grew like it does after the first half inch of rain. It looked like they were trying to hide the scene of a crime. They left two tall and lonely palms, though; they will die in time untended. They will probably last a few years, swaying there next to the northbound side of I-35, 150 miles from anyplace a palm tree chooses on its own to be, and then they will die and be cut down and the roots will be dug out with a backhoe and it will all be hauled away. In no time at all we will say that old checkpoint used to be right in here somewhere, right along here, because it is already fading fast into the monte, like the place that was there, that caused people to feel the way it caused them to feel, was erased from the horizon. The sky and the grass, the mesquite and retama and sunflowers will all just settle into sight instead, just claim the land in that quiet way they do, in that way they make it invisible.

I visited there a couple weeks ago. The day before, a boy had shot his father here on the ranch. Hunters. It seemed like that shooting, the sound or the flash of it or the hurt it caused, like it shook things up, like it made old surveys to fall from shoe boxes. Like it ruptured something and shone light on the memories of old men. Like it even affected the weather, and caused a cool front that pushed South and lifted the haze so that you could suddenly see all the way down to those Mexican mountains. That's why I stopped, anyway: the mountains. It was the day after the shooting and the same afternoon that Dale showed up at the house holding onto an old survey like it was a map to lost treasure.

You can still get to the old checkpoint from the access road. It is a natural high spot, the perfect place to stop and look at the mountains. They always shock me a little, when I have not seen them for a few months; they make me feel a dizzy kind of way, like I have not been living where I thought I had been living. Just the same way I feel after one of those rare dreams I have where, just by chance, I discover a shortcut to someplace like Chicago and, minutes away from my door, I can see skyscrapers. Like the world is smaller and all the places you have ever wanted to live, you already live in them, but you just cannot make them out everyday.

I kicked around over there for a little while, wandering over the hill where the agents used to gather. I felt kind of guilty about it, like you feel in a church that is no longer holy, where they have gone in and decommissioned it, evicted god, you could say, and whoever else might have been in there, and said: OK, this here is just a regular building henceforth. I have been in places like that, and it never feels like they got the job all the way done. Dalton has one on the Carson that dates back to the years when the big ranches had chapels and I gather a priest would come by every so often; some years back his grandfather had it officially undone and made into a little house, and those that went to church from the ranch just took to driving down to Laredo every Sunday. That house, with some of its original stone walls still showing on the inside, does not feel enough like it is not a church, if you ask me. You can sit in there and drink cold beers and swear and talk about ticks on wild hogs and it still feels like you are doing something a little bit holy. If you happen to say you hope your bucks are getting enough calcium, it feels too much like you are praying for it in there. It doesn't help that there is still a small family cemetery right outside. That is how the old checkpoint site felt, only not holy. It felt federal and secret.

Still, I wandered around, waiting for a Border Patrol truck to come racing up anytime. The grass was coming up well enough, despite the chunks of asphalt left behind. I found a penknife. I found an old Ford hubcap and put the penknife in it. I found a coffee mug advertising a Laredo pharmacy and a small broken flashlight and a dental mirror. Down among the asphalt chunks I found several coins, Mexican, and an ID tag for a dog, Sparky, that said he lived in Corpus Christi. I put it all in the mug. I found a badly-scratched CD, a tribute to Los Tigres del Norte, and I left it where it was but propped it up a little, so it might reflect the setting sun now and then and catch the curious eye of a trucker. I found a border patrol name badge, M. Gutierrez, and I put it in the mug. I found a baseball cap with an oil-company logo on it. I clipped the badge onto the ball cap.

I looked at all the things I had gathered and tried to think of a reason to put them together, some forgotten thing, some crime, a minor one, even, that featured this hat and knife and those other things. Some story that lingers here somehow and that I might divine by putting

it all in the hubcap and shaking it like a prospector. The shooting had left me feeling curious, I guess. But it was all just garbage. I could sooner find a story by digging a hole straight down. Probably hit Sparky the dog if I did.

The day before, the day of the shooting, Robert had called before 6:00 and I was yet asleep. You would not know Robert; he has only lived around here for fifteen years or so, and he helps out with just about everything.

Your hunters, father and son, he said. Father shot himself in the leg.

How, I said, sitting up, looking for my jeans and boots.

Shit if I know, he said. I'm on my way out there right now. I done called the EMS in Cotulla.

How bad is it, I said.

Listen to me when I'm talking, he said. I am not there yet. I don't know. The boy called me. He was so worked up I ain't even sure I know where they're at. But he said within sight of the tank that is closest to that house.

I told him I would see him there.

Adrenaline made me feel awake and clear-headed. I got down there as fast as I could and saw Robert's truck coming from the other direction. We ran through the brush toward the tank, just getting pricked and stabbed by every form of plant life out there. It was a cloudy dawn, white light and enough mist on everything to make you wet and forget where you were. Robert was shouting the boy's name, Derek, Derek and we finally heard a terrified answer and saw him waving a red bandana at us.

The man was down on his back holding onto the side of his right thigh, a thick shadow of blood spread all around where his hand was. His son stood over him and they both turned to look at us. Robert and I looked at each other, and I realized I didn't have any idea what to do. The boy seemed like he was in shock.

I called a doctor, Robert said.

I just stared at him. It was hard to think of a doctor nearby.

There's a lady hunter staying on the Jackson, he said. Judy Something. She's some kind of a doctor. She's on her way.

OK, I said. I was wondering how Robert knew so much about everything and wondering too why the boy had thought to call him first.

Soon enough Judy called Robert and he talked her there to the spot. She showed up with a it and her husband in tow. The five of us were all standing around this bleeding man in the thicket, and then, just like they do on television, Judy told us all to move back a little bit and give him some room. She got down on her knees next to him and spoke so softly we could not make out what she was saying. She laid her hand flat on his neck for a while.

She was satisfied with that and she asked him to move his hand away from the wound. She pulled out some scissors and commenced to cut his jeans all the way around a few inches above it. She lifted him gently like an expert to cut underneath. The whole time she was talking to him, telling him what she was doing. Then she cut down the length of the jeans to the cuff. The scissors slid silent through the parts that were soaked with blood. She opened up that long cut and left the whole pants leg there undone beneath his leg. He looked strange, in that badly lopsided pair of cutoffs with his boots still on. The wound looked terrible to me, but Judy said it didn't look bad at all. Of course a good doctor will say such things. She put a clean white cotton square on it and told him to hold it there. She told him the ambulance was going to be here soon and that he was not bad enough off for her to do anything else before then.

The shot father nodded at her and his face was all scrunched up like he had been crying.

Everyone except her looked up as the sound of sirens came through the open gate to the ranch, and right about then the kid started blubbering and he seemed real scared and she said he's going to be fine and Robert, who is not what you would call a soft man, or one of much feeling, he put his big arm around this kid's shoulders and said something to him about it being good how quick he called and got all of us out there. Then the guys in the ambulance called him and asked for directions to where we were. Robert said go out and show them the way. Halfway there I realized maybe I was in a kind of a shock, myself. Robert, lucky for me, was running the show.

Soon enough the ambulance parked nearby and a pair of EMS guys came trotting behind me quick through the brush with a stretcher. Right behind them in a patrol car was Pascual, the only sheriff's deputy to spend any time around this part of the county. Just a few seconds behind them a Border Patrol truck came tearing down the road, too. So before you knew it, there were about as many people here together at one spot on this ranch as there had been for twenty years or more. Pascual came over to me and the Border Patrol agents followed him.

One of the agents started talking before Pascual could, asking if everything was under control.

Yeah, Pascual said, looking behind him. He turned back to me. It looks that way anyhow.

Looks like it'll be OK, I told them. Hunting accident.

We'll leave you all to it then. Let us know, the agent said to Pascual, if you need anything. He and his part-

ner walked back to their truck. The first one was talking into his radio. Hunting accident he said, and some other things we did not understand.

Pascual rolled his eyes and turned to watch the EMS crew, who already had the man on a stretcher and were bringing him out to the ambulance. One of them leaned in close to the injured man and said what, like he was sure he had misunderstood something. Then he said cleaning your gun and looked behind him at where they had taken him from the ground. He shrugged.

Robert walked the boy to the ambulance and they let him climb in there. He sat down next to his father and took his hand.

They were driving away when Pascual looked back and forth between me and Robert and said I hear that right? He say he was cleaning his gun?

Yeah that's what he said, Robert said, but come on. You don't stop in the sand on your way back from taking a piss, which he was, and sit down to clean your gun.

Judy was heading our way and heard the last part.

Who was cleaning what gun, she said. Maybe if he had rubber arms six feet long he could have shot himself that way. I was beginning to like this lady hunter.

That's what I'm saying, Robert said. You could tell it they way they were acting that the kid shot him.

He must feel like shit, I said.

That's the least of it, Judy said.

Well. Pascual sighed. It happens. There's little hunting accidents down here all the damn time. He waved his hand in the direction of a hundred square miles of nothing.

You just don't hear about them is all, he said. He told us he was going on up to the hospital to talk to them both and straighten it out for the record. I told him call if he needed anything from me.

Will do, he said. He started to walk away and then he turned around and said here where it happened, leave it alone until I get back to you. And where they were staying, too.

Later on, Robert called me. You won't believe it, he said. Pascual came back down. I heard him spit. Saying it's a crime scene.

I said I didn't even know what that was supposed to mean.

Means he's putting up tape around it, he said. He went up there to the hospital and talked to the boy while they were working on his dad. I guess that kid broke down right away and admitted he done the shooting.

Jude Swenson, novel prize sponsor, with Sean Chadwell, novel winner, shown at Faulkner for All, 2010.

Yeah, I said. Like we didn't know it already. Does he really need to put up tape for that? I don't want that shit hung up in a tree.

That ain't all of it, Robert said. The boy told Pascual it wasn't an accident. He told him he shot his old man on purpose. On account of some fight.

Jesus Christ, I said. I could see they were mad at each other when they showed up, but.

Yeah, he said. I guess he shot him and right away came to his senses and called me.

I wonder, I said.

Yeah, he said, me too.

It had nothing to do with me, but the shooting had set me to thinking, to kicking and sifting at the old checkpoint. And it seems funny, now, that as soon as I got home from there the next day Dale showed up. Though he was feeling too shy to tell me why he came, something moved him.

He looked scrubbed after a hard day of lawn care and smelled like that fragrance they put in dandruff shampoo to hide the chemical odor. I thought he wanted to be paid for his work around here last week, but I had forgot to bring cash back from town and admitted as much as I invited him in. As he came through the door, he told me the money was no problem in a way that made me think he had come for some other reason.

So I asked if he had a cost estimate for a new bar and chain for his chain saw. A few weeks ago, I told him I wanted him to cut down a dying one or two of our old

Arizona Ash trees. The ones my father planted in it must have been the 70s, terrible trees for this place. They take forever to die completely, and they linger impatient and uncomfortable like old men with hairy ears. I offered to buy him the parts he needed to do the job. He said he had not looked into it.

He came into the kitchen and stood there, his back to the dining room, hands clasped in front of him, looking nervous. He moved his shoulders around like a boy does when he first wears a blazer. Something about his thin blond hair, parted on the side, added to that boyishness. He started to tell me about that day's work, about how he had gotten sunburned on one side of his body. I felt like I was supposed to find this funny, but Dale always acts so serious that it was hard to be sure.

I also felt like he was not telling me something he meant to, like he had lost his nerve. I started to think he had come to talk to me about something hard, like perhaps he needed more than the money I owed him. His wife Diane died just a couple of months ago, and he is yet fragile, like he is in need of something he cannot explain.

You want me to tell you, he said, how to cut any tree down.

How, I said. Sure, fire away.

You need three things. He gestured as though to begin counting these out on his left hand.

Gravity is one, I said.

No, he said. I wasn't going to say that. He laughed in his shy way.

Rope, time, and patience, he said, indeed counting them out on his fingers. Dale has a distinctive and serious way of pursing his lips slowly and repeatedly after he has made a point, like he is warming them up for the next round. He did this for a few seconds.

Then Dale and I talked about chainsaw parts, and he explained that he would be able, with a new bar and chain, to cut trees for the church in town, a Catholic church he attends. He will do this for free because he is a member. This is how it is to belong to a church, he told me. He told me he was not a member for a few years before his accident. A long while back Dale was helping someone to change a tire on the highway and was hit by another car. It left him very near dead and still now aching, wired-together, slow-moving and heavily drugged.

Addled, sort of, the way the Dalton girl was ever after she was snakebit. He was raised going to an Assembly of God church and returned to that same one after the accident; not long after that, though, he and Diane moved down here. He does not believe the particular church or sect matters very much, he told me, though he wishes the father over at the Sacred Heart of Mary had the time to be as attentive as his pastor in Arlington.

Dale told me that he went back to church after the accident because of snakes. He had been sensing snakes around him since the day he came out of a six-week coma. Late one night on the couch, he felt a snake under his head. He thought it was a joke. Some snake-raising friend, he thought, out to scare him. He decided to go to bed and try to find the snake in the morning, but once he shut his eyes, he told me, he felt himself turning into a snake. I took a beer from the fridge and opened it and tried to look the right amount of surprised to hear this.

A snake don't have no legs, he said, and so I felt my legs coming together and becoming like a snake. He demonstrated his legs coming together, and I imagined something like a Dale mermaid. He pursed his lips slowly.

And of course a snake don't have no arms, he said, pausing, smiling with his mouth wide open. He wanted to be sure I saw how obvious this was. He told me he felt his arms coming together above his head. He made this gesture, too, and now he looked ready to dive into something.

And they begin to stick together just like my legs, he said. I felt my eyes getting farther apart and my mouth changing shape. He was practically whispering, speaking so carefully I could read his lips if I wanted. He said, I could feel my nose getting smaller and my face turning into the face of a snake; I was real scared, but I was scared for Diane. She was asleep beside me in bed. I worried what might happen if I turned into a big snake right next to her, how scared she might be, or what the snake might do to her. So I tried to scream, but I realized I couldn't because snakes can't make no sound like that.

He cupped his hands around his mouth and mimed screaming, his eyes wide open with fear.

I just laid there, he said, scared to death, feeling like I was a snake.

When he told a friend about this, his friend said go back to church. Satan is trying to get in you, boy, his friend had explained. Church, whichever kind, seems to have fixed the snake business, he told me. Then he suddenly said he had better get on home. I still did not know what he wanted, or whether he wanted anything at all, or whether he had come to lead me to god.

* * * * *

Rochelle Distelheim
2010 Best Novel
First Runner Up
Jerusalem as a Second Language

Chapter One Excerpt
Jerusalem, 1993

Allow me to introduce myself: Manya Zalinikov. Zalinikova, if I choose the feminine ending. Russian emigre.

"Manya, please, do not call us emigres."

This is my husband, Yuri, an atheist, like myself, or so I thought, burning with a sudden fever to "live like a Jew."

"Russian emigre is where we have been. Speak up, speak up, Manya, say where we have arrived. Olim, say it: Ohh-leeem. Israelis, new Israelis, that is who we are."

Yuri is correct; our family is now, since eight months, Israeli. But olim does not evoke the sensation of caviar beads crushed against one's tongue, of sour cream over cinnamon-scented blinis the size of a thumb, steaming Black Crimean tea, sipped while seated at the stained glass windows of St. Petersburg's Cafe Novotny, overlooking the lights edging the Neva River embankment. Nor does it speak of the arousing sting of dry, fresh snow on the skin, or the heart-stopping thrill of opening night at the Kirov Ballet, Katarina Chedlenko dancing the Fire Bird.

I begin not with the beginning, but with the most painful. The Russsian authorities smashed the keyboard of my piano. Someone was enraged that a Jew would own such a magnificent instrument, that we would have such beauty in our possession. Such solace.

I speak of 1989, the year the Soviet Union came apart into a collection of smaller countries, as the dividing line between the old and the new. I speak of brave, but naive Mikhail Gorbachev, who, with his failed vision of a fully reborn, western-leaning Russia, brought a dollop of sanity, hoping this would produce a prosperous, democratic, free-from-corruption country, intent upon decent housing and modern schools and fastidious hospitals. It was Gorbachev –- and his brilliant Raisa, heavily, unfairly criticized for her addiction to credit card shopping –- who said to the Jews what had never before been said: Go, if you wish, find happiness, find love, good luck, sending us off in a blizzard of applications and visas and papers stamped in gold leaf.

Before 1989, the men who ran Russia – no Jews, women, gypsies or homosexuals; men, only men -- were called Comrades. Now they are known by western, democratic titles: managers, vice-presidents, coordinators. Perfuming a skunk, however, does not fully obliterate the odor.

On the day this atrocity was enacted on my piano, we had already left Russia with Galina, our daughter -- Yuri, eagerly, I with enormous resistance, Galina, twenty, beautiful, complicated, irritating, reluctant to abandon Gregor, the young man we, especially I, found unsuitable -- and were safe, if being in Israel can be considered safe.

Several trunks packed with our many books, family photographs, a few silver serving pieces, the brass samovar and cut-velvet shawls left to me by my mother, and my piano, were to follow. The piano: a Kesselstein-Beinberg concert grand. Rosewood. Hand-carved and gilt-edged. One hundred and twenty-five years old. Impossible to replace.

Someone in The Bureau of Emigration Affairs –- that name alone is a revolution -- someone squat and muscular with a primitive haircut, wearing a cheap woolen suit of undistinguished cut, white shirt, stiff collar, nondescript tie, committed this criminal act. How do I know these details? This man, these men, followed me, as they followed most Jews, down the streets of St. Petersburg on numerous evenings when I was at university, clumsily obvious, scribbling in black leather notebooks: Zhid! Zhid! Medium height, medium-sized, dark-haired young woman, nose difficult to assess, possibly –- probably -- guilty of something, Jews always are; of carrying black market money, subversive pamphlets, western literature? Matzos, perhaps? A ridiculous suspicion in my case. Until coming to Israel, I had not known the taste of matzos.

This man entered the warehouse where possessions

of departing Jews awaited transfer to ships, lifted the keyboard cover and, seeing the exquisite symmetry of black and white, said, "No," then put a sledge hammer to the keys – or was it an ax; yes, an ax, wholly in keeping with the barbarism that fueled the act –- lowering his weapon once, twice, cracking all but six keys in a clean line across the center, severing each one into two precisely equal segments.

In that moment between evil impulse and evil act, he must have regretted it was not my family he was about to maim. The random luck of living in the era of Gorbachov, and his fondness for perestroika, had placed us beyond this criminal's grasp, but not beyond his final, fierce wish to humiliate.

Where might I have been at that moment? In the absorption center/hotel in Jerusalem, perhaps, stumbling through instruction in beginning Hebrew. Or, perhaps, wandering Jerusalem's Old City, a labyrinth of pale, ancient stone walls within walls, willing myself to feel, as Yuri did immediately, that I had come home, feeling instead that I had lost one home and not yet found another.

Why this yearning for Russia, where, just a few years ago, one's Jewishness was treated as a birth defect? Unreasoned longing; or, to be more exact, a sad knowing that I cannot slip out of my St. Petersburg life as easily as a snake slips out of its skin.

One month after we had reached Israel, the piano was delivered to our flat in Jerusalem. I lifted the lid, wild to run my fingers across each key, to play for my family; a celebratory Strauss waltz, a Liszt mazurka, a Chopin ballade, Yuri and Galina dancing around the room, welcoming music once more into our lives. I saw the devastation and screamed, "Yuri, help!" as though struck. "Please," I said, "please," beating with my fisted hands at the air, at the damaged keys, imploring him to undo the crime.

Later, sitting in our small garden, we watched the lowering sun strike fire in the onion domes of the Russian Orthodox Church on the Mount of Olives to the west. Yuri, hoping to relieve my mourning, suggested we practice our Hebrew and, as though in an earlier life he had spoken this language, his harsh, guttural sounds instantly mingled with the fragrant night air in a series of graceful, if confusing, sentences.

"I am filled to my upper extremities with happiness," he said. Smiling, he waved his glass as though it were a baton, trying to thaw my frozen grief with the heat of his enthusiasm, while I huddled, miserable, inert, sour. Springing onto a stool –- emigration had turned my pale, sedentary husband into an athlete -- he lifted his face to the darkening azure sky and said, "This night is beautiful, like a healthy woman."

Galina, her luminous complexion already showing signs of sun and wind, despite my warnings -- Foolish girl, cover yourself, do you want to age early, like Israeli women? – caressed her honey-blonde hair, arranged that night in untamed splendor, settled back and giggled. "Bravo for you, Papa." Turning to me: "Eh, Mamushka, always so brilliant, say something."

At that moment I hated these sudden strangers who were attempting to lure me to the other side of a divide I could not negotiate.

"Yes, Manya, now you." Vodka and eagerness slurred Yuri's words.

My mouth, my voice, my being, refused at that moment to make peace with the severe demands of spoken Hebrew. I felt a hot surge of spite pickling my tongue. "How about this," I said, lapsing into the security of Russian: "I am filled up to here…" –- running a finger across my forehead –- "…with…" Diving into my small store of English words: "…farm animal excrement!"

Shocked silence followed. Then: "Bravo, Mamushka!" from Galina, who rarely flattered me, slapping her sandal against the concrete floor. Turning to Yuri, she said: "She means bullshit, Mama means bullshit." She regarded me with delight.

Annoyance, layered over surprise, flashed across my husband's face. I felt somewhat cheered.

When, one year ago, Yuri first spoke of leaving Russia, I said, "Why now?" I said, "The old Soviet is dead, no one asks who is, who is not a Jew."

"This is not enough," he said, "I want to live as a Jew." A stunning confession; what does it mean, to live as a Jew? How does one do that? One must have precedence, instruction. It is even more complicated; one must have feeling. Always, we had agreed, the less Jewish a Jew in the Soviet Union was, the better he lived. Deny, deny! My father, Stefan Gamerov, a Christian name, deliberately arrived at. My mother, the same: Tatiana. Hair the color of winter wheat, Galina's exactly; sliding green eyes. Tartar eyes. Few people guessed.

"You woke up from a dream, perhaps," I said, "where you dreamed you are Jewish?"

"I am Jewish," Yuri said, "we are, Galina is. The dream we've dreamed for all our lives told us we are not Jewish. Somewhere inside me is a Jewish nashoma. A Jewish soul." I had never seen such illumination on my husband's face. It brought to mind a painting of an angel by the Italian painter named Tintoretto I'd seen in the Her-

mitage Museum, on the east wall in the first room of the Italian collection, and made him appear more handsome, even intriguing. It was somewhat like meeting a stranger who introduced himself as my husband, a stranger who was saying what I didn't want to hear.

"I have no interest in being Jewish," I said.

"You know this?"

"Some things we know. I need not stand in front of a mirror and ask myself: Do you want to be Jewish, yes, or no? That word you used, nashoma, -- Yiddish? You are speaking Yiddish? You don't know Yiddish and, if you did – do -- we never admit. Too dangerous, we agreed."

"That was then."

"You sound feverish."

"Manya, don't doubt me now."

Until four years ago, we were masters of subterfuge, Yuri and I, discussing religion only at home, window blinds drawn, our voices obscured by the radio. If anyone spoke Yiddish to us in a public place, we blinked ignorance. Then our cleverness for concealment failed. A commisar in charge of causing difficulties for Jews, having nothing more pressing to do that day, idly flipped through personnel records at the prestigous Adamov Scientific Institute, where Yuri conducted mathematical research, and read: Zalinikov. Zalinikov! Anyone bearing this name must be a danger to classified information.

He stamped State Suspect in red letters on the appropriate papers, attached official gold seals, punched a certain key on his computer. Yuri's job no longer existed, Yuri no longer existed. Authorization cards for food, for gasoline, for telephone privileges, both domestic and international, were withdrawn. Permission to travel outside St. Petersburg, to own a tiny dacha, to send our child to the Academy for Gifted Children were withdrawn.

We Jews, however, are survival artists. Through the covert purchase, from sympathetic allies, of the required licenses, affixed with counterfeit signatures, and, again, the essential gold seals, I managed to hold onto my job as a teacher of piano students, and located for Yuri another, though less exalted, way of earning money, a way which served our purposes for a short time, but was ultimately responsible for our leaving Russia.

When exile was forced upon us, I'd said, "London or Paris, or, if good fortune strikes, New York. But never Jerusalem. Jerusalem is for believers, for pioneers. For warriors."

"Jerusalem is for Jews," Yuri said.

"We are Russians, but are we Jewish?"

"We will learn." ...

Rochelle Distelheim's *novel,* ***Jerusalem As a Second Language,*** *won the Faulkner Society's Gold Medal for Novel-in-Progress in 2004. This year, it placed as First Runner Up in the Novel category. Her work has been published in numerous literary journals; among these: the North American Review, Nimrod, Other Voices, Story Quarterly, Descant, and Confrontation, and has been widely anthologized. She has been awarded five Illinois Arts Council Fellowships in Fiction and her other literary awards include the Katharine Anne Porter Prize in Fiction. Her work has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. In 2010 a chapter of* Song of Sol*, her current novel-in-progress, was a Finalist in Press 53's Open Awards Competition.*

The Judge's Comments:

A large, well-drawn portrait of a family starting over in a new and strange land.

Linda Gorelova

2010 Best Novel, Second Runner Up

The Romanovs Wish You Health in the New Year

PART ONE

YEKATERINBERG, RUSSIA JULY 1918

That afternoon there would be jam with tea. From her secret lookout at the dining room window, Masha watched as the guard Jouni allowed a ragged hand to pass a jar through the briefly opened gate. At one time, accepting anything from such hands would have been unthinkable; in the early days of the Revolution Masha's mother turned away the Cossacks who had come to their aid due to excessive body odor—the last loyal regiment in Petrograd. But now? They would all eat the jam, scraping the last of the purple crystals off of the wax seal with tarnished pewter spoons.

Jouni held up the jam to the light where it glowed maroon, then thrust in his fingers to inspect for a weapon, or perhaps a key, and yes; even after his questionably clean hands had probed its depths, even then, their Imperial Highnesses were pleased to accept the weapon-free, sugary fruits for afternoon tea.

Masha swallowed the saliva pooling in her mouth. After weeks of cabbage and black bread, she longed for the taste of purple, indigo, or red—anything with the tang of summer about it.

She opened the window and stuck out her head. "Excuse me, Comrade, are your hands clean?" she called down to Jouni. She pinched her arm to remind herself that Jouni was member of the Red Guard; for them, privacy did not exist.

"Most certainly not! But the jam is safe, I will give a good report and Cook will bring it for tea." Licking his fingers, Jouni allowed his glance to fix on her.

Masha turned to hide her flushed face. "Well then, I must tell my parents."

Jouni bowed. "I impatiently await your return."

She told her mother first, smoothing her dress on the threshold of her parents' bedroom door. Her parents shared the largest bedroom with her brother Alyosha, while she and her three sisters had a room to themselves.

One suspected that Aleksandra, Masha's German-born mother, was always on the verge of some kind of attack; she had cried so much that her eyes were oddly dim and unfocused, their eyelids permanently tinged purple-red. And although they never doubted that she loved them, sometimes the depth of her religious devotion made them hesitate outside her closed door before knocking, debating whether their childish concerns were worth forcing their mother back down to earth. Her voice hoarse from prayer, knees stiff from kneeling on the floor in front of her icons, one first heard the taffeta, corseted rustle of her black skirt, the squeak of a rusty hinge on an Imperial door. Aleksandra then appeared, absent-mindedly making the sign of the cross over their foreheads, lips moving in a prayer known only to a very small circle of mortal and angelic beings.

Aleksandra was seated in a reed chaise by the window. She looked up from a game of Patience when her middle daughter burst into the room.

"Look, my little birdie has flown to see me," the Empress said in hurried English—any foreign language was outlawed. She put her hands on either side of Masha's face, forcing her to bow deep, since Aleksandra could not raise her arms above her head.

"Can you imagine it Mama, there will be jam with tea today, I saw the guard inspect a gift from a villager!" Masha said breathlessly.

Aleksandra clasped her hands for a moment, then allowed her arms to bounce limply on her lap. "Prelest' kakaya, how lovely! Quickly, run and tell you papa, he will be delighted."

Masha ran along the log walkway her father had built so that her mother and brother could sun themselves in their wheelchairs.

She always ran next to it, though her feet could carry her anywhere she wanted, past the rumpled bit of earth where the girls were coaxing vegetables to sprout, along the palisade fence that blocked any view of Yekaterinberg, or behind the storage shed, with its space between the lindens and honeysuckles that so

often shielded Jouni and her from prying eyes.

To him, Romanov's children were an endless source of fascination. From the perfect crescents of their toenails to the elegant ovals of their ear lobes, he had exhaustively filmed, photographed, cataloged, and memorized every feature, jotting notes on index cards filed in a special box he kept for each child, subdivided by age, occasion, body part, and anecdote. His children barged in at all hours and without ceremony. Even during Cabinet meetings, it was strictly understood that the space under the Tsar's desk was the province of dolls, soldiers, boats, lorries, and cars, while over their exquisitely coiffed little heads, the fate of millions hung in the balance. His Excellency continually disappeared, provoking hails of giggles and screams; upon rejoining the group, he politely inquired, "Forgive me, you were saying?"

Masha found her father chopping wood just in front of the palisade, the clops of passing horses reaching her from the other side of the fence. A large chip of wood stung as it hit her arm, and she stood just for a moment, rubbing the sore place, before she spoke. As a child, she dreamed of standing next to her father in military parades, red sash bisecting medals, gold epaulettes—impossible, since that spot was reserved for her baby brother Alyosha, heir to the throne.

Now, stripped of his regalia, Comrade Romanov wore the khaki shirt and pants of a peasant, tucked into worn boots. When he saw Masha, his face became wreathed in smiles, like a bony Santa's. Blade down, he leaned on his axe like the Kindly Woodsman.

"Papulia, today we will have jam with our tea!"

"Oh ho, this is very interesting," he said, comically arching his eyebrows.

"Don't be late, Papa, and do please wash before visiting the ladies."

"Duly noted, Comrade Duchess," said Papa, saluting his daughter until she was out of sight.

Although she often took meals in her room, the occasion of jam dictated that even Aleksandra should be at table; Nikolai carried her to the dining room for tea. Captivity rendered her light as a teenager, as if everything inconsequential had been boiled out of her.

The Empress smoothed her placemat, mentally checking the table. Seven settings, enough only for the immediate family. "Where are the others?"

"I gave them the afternoon off. Dr. Botkin and Monsieur Gilliard are bird watching, Demidova is at church, and Kharitonov, Trupp, and Nagorny are in town," Nikolai said.

"But how will we manage? We at least need Nagorny for Alyosha," Aleksandra said.

Nikolai patted his wife's hand. "We will manage, I can carry him."

The servants who shared their exile were now her closest friends; Aleksandra did not hesitate to share a meal with them. And since Lenin reduced their pension from 200,000 rubles a year to 7200, they had stayed on for months with no salary. The Empress' personal maid Demidova took the smallest of the three bedrooms in the Romanovs' living quarters, but there was no room for their personal physician Botkin, the tutor Gilliard, Alyosha's guard Nagorny, the cook Kharitonov, and the footman Trupp; they took rooms in a boarding house in town. Nagorny, Gilliard, and Botkin came by most days, but Kharitonov and Trupp now reported directly to Strakhov; Masha occasionally saw them working in the yard. They waved to each other, trying to be gay.

Everyone at the table silently wished for white bread with the jam, but no matter. The samovar was boiling, steaming black bread was piled high in the middle of the table, the butter nearby sweated from its heat. Jam with tea made up for the months of palace arrest and exile. Jam with tea proved that everything would be fine. Aleksandra asked what this taught them. The children waited, knowing from past experience that no one ever got it right. After a discrete hesitation, she gave the correct answer—Orthodoxy always wins in the end, and would never abandon them. Just as jam was about to appear on the table, so also a modern day savior awaited. They crossed themselves. "God grant it," they all murmured, looking over their shoulders to see if the soldiers heard. Only Masha did not cross herself. She had come in alone, upset because Jouni not waiting for her impatiently as promised; he was not even on sentry duty at the appointed time. She must see him every day; he knew that. Allowing herself to be distracted from the jam, she stood and edged next to her lookout window by the table, inching slowly behind the curtain so as not to raise her parents' suspicion.

For just a moment, Aleksandra's gaze floated away from her husband and onto the table, her eyes bouncing from cup to spoon as if traversing an uneven road. No jam. She forced her eyes to repeat the same bumpy procedure, with the same result: no crystal bowl with silver spoon suspended in purplish goo. "Papa, where is our jam?" cried Mama. "You must call Cook at once!"

"Comrade Cook, could you be so kind as to come here for a moment, please?" Nikolai called, his face containing a mixture of anger, fear, and confusion.

Cook's boots left mud swirls on the parquet floor. His face was red and meaty, as if he had just been stirring pots of steaming food.

"Were we mistaken in believing that we were prom-

ised jam for our tea today?"

"No, you were not, Comrade Romanov."

"Would you mind fetching it, please?" the Emperor asked.

"The political commissar decided that jam at this point in your rehabilitation could cause a dangerous relapse. It was decided to donate the jam to Orphanage no. 27, for children whose parents died as Bolshevik heroes, and who themselves tasted jam for the very first time today."

"Yes, of course, one mustn't forget the orphans," Nikolai said, fidgeting with his napkin, "but of course, one also feels sorry for one's own children," who were at that moment scraping bread crumbs on the table into little piles.

"And what of the millions you starved during your reign? No doubt, before their deaths, they also dreamed of sweet raspberry jam. Perhaps when your political re-education is complete you will no longer expect such bourgeois luxuries," the cook finished on a triumphant note.

"But I never starved. . . ." Color was rising in the Tsar's cheeks as he felt a painful kick to his shinbone and traced it to his eldest daughter Tanya, across the table from him.

He knew that message well: Quiet! The starch in her shirtwaists never yielded to summer's heat, and their whiteness was blazing—Tanya the governess, the one who inspected the children's toilet, corrected their homework, dress, piano technique, and the shading on their drawings, was frowning exactly like her mother.

After years of practice, Romanov could feel the waves, heading toward him like a tidal wave of disapproval.

Anastasia looked at her father solemnly.

"Papa, did Cook say we will have no jam today?" Nicknamed Nastya or Nastenka, at seventeen the youngest girl, she sat to her brother's left. Her hair was caught in a blue ribbon with an intriguing pattern of French knots in white that she had embroidered herself.

Nikolai was grateful for the chance to dodge Tanya's ire. "Yes, dearest, there are little orphans who need it more than we."

"And if there is no jam, will there also be no savior for us?"

In the old days, Cook would have been treated with curt civility and fired the next day. But this new cook—and Romanov used the term gingerly—worked for the Ural Soviet and could not be fired; his only recourse was to look at the cook in a pointed way. "No, my darling, there will still be a savior for us," Nikolai said, never taking his eyes off the cook. "Thank you, Comrade Cook. That will be all."

The cook started to leave but then turned around, as if forgetting an important detail. "Before I leave, there is one more thing. Your tutor has been dismissed, and I will now be in charge," he said.

"Monsieur Gilliard? But where will he go?" Tanya asked.

"Didn't anyone tell you? At this moment, he is on a westbound train. He can't wait to get back to Zurich. He even thanked us; he had been unhappy in your employ for quite a while, yet was unable to tell you goodbye," Cook said.

"That is a lie," Alyosha shouted, at almost fourteen, the youngest and would-be Tsar.

Romanov jumped to his feet, but unlike his son, he was more concerned about the quality of his children's education. "You? Please allow me to ask, of what will you be in charge?"

"That's right, tell him something, Papa," Alyosha said. He also attempted to stand, but the swelling in his right knee from his latest bout with hemophilia prevented him from fully extending his leg. Still, he managed to balance his weight on his left leg and used his hands to steady himself against the table.

"I will be in charge of your children's political re-education."

The Tsar's face became white. "How dare you," he said, moving forward to strike the cook.

Alyosha's eyes glittered in anticipation of seeing Papa trim the fat from Cook's bloated face. "Brilliant, Papa, stand up for yourself!"

Aleksandra tugged at her husband's sleeve. "Dearest, you mustn't, think of the children."

"Very well, dear, as you wish." Romanov took his seat like a dog caught with the neighbor's chicken in its mouth. Alyosha's cheeks flushed a painful red due to his father's cowardice.

His sisters focused all of their attention on their boots—brown ones with laces—at one time, they would have called them ugly.

"Later, an evaluation will be made as to their usefulness to the new society," continued the cook. Humiliating the Tsar made his mouth itch, as if anticipating his favorite foods—meat-filled pelmeni topped with melted butter with plenty of vodka. Or perhaps a cream puff with a nice sauterne.

On his way out, he grabbed a piece of black bread from the center of the table, took one bite out of it, and placed it back in the center of the pile.

Romanov again made to lunge at the cook, but Aleksandra grasped him about the elbow; for such a frail woman, she could pinch with deadly force when necessary.

"I see. You have delivered your news, now you may leave." The Tsar spoke with his head down, hand covering his mouth, his voice so hoarse that he could barely be heard.

"I see it is hard for you to get out of the habit of giving orders," the cook said. "Here, I am the boss."

"Stay then, if you wish."

"No thank you, I am wanted in the kitchen," the cook said. "Now that it is my choice, I will leave."

"Poor, dear Papa," Olishka said, as soon as Cook was gone, and kissed his cheeks. "It is not as bad as all that. Perhaps we will enjoy the new lessons."

At twenty-two, she fancied herself the most like Papa, the one most likely to appear in photographs with her arms draped on his shoulders, the only one bold enough to argue with her mother on his behalf. Nastenka soon joined her sister, kneeling by their father and resting her cheek against his knee.

The Tsar clasped first Olishka's hand then Nastya's, then the others'. "We will manage somehow, as long as we are together."

"Completely reasonable," Olishka agreed.

"Mamochka, does God no longer love us?" Nastenka asked, referring the ecclesiastical matter to her mother.

But Romanov answered instead. "No, my love, God will always love us, and never, ever forget us," he said, pointing his words at the kitchen.

Nobody spoke until Aleksandra laid her napkin on the table next to her plate in a gesture of resignation. "Well, that is all. And we were so looking forward to jam with tea. I suppose it can't be helped."

Long after everyone else had walked, limped, or been carried to their rooms, the dining room curtain refused to give up its duchess. How foolish Masha was to boast about the jam, what pain she had caused! Why couldn't she be known for something good, the way Nastya was clever, or Tanya graceful?

Time passed. Why had no one come for her? Were they angry? Had they forgotten stupid Masha?

She stayed in the drapes for such a long time that her view of the yard emerged like pinpricks through the velvet: the clump of honeysuckle, the log path, her father's chopping spot. She wished to be anyone but Masha. Surely she was not meant to be the dullard child; by naming her Masha, her mother had deprived her of her birthright. As she continued to peer through the curtain's warp and weft, something else focused within her. Didn't everyone say that she was just like her father's sister Ksenya, the beauty of the family? She must pour herself into a new mold--an exotic beauty, forcing even her mother to admit that her middle daughter was no Masha. From now on, her name was Ksenya.

This newly minted creature emerged from the drapes. Holding her chin as if balancing a heavy tiara, she tiptoed past the lounge with a grace still borrowed, not yet her own, and peeked in; she could not help herself. They were playing Bezique. Aleksandra scowled as Alyosha and Nastya slapped their cards on the table.

But no one had seen her walk by. Ksenya retired to her bedroom to wait for Jouni's knock. The first week of July was barely over; at midnight the sky was bright as a cloudy day; one could almost read by its light. She lay on the mahogany bed, identical to her sisters', and took her diary from its hiding place under the mattress. Now that its pages were almost spent, she was sorry that she had wasted page after page on crude drawings of train window scenery—churches, fields, and peasants, backs bent double. In the Ipatiev House, she drew the potted palm and the sideboard with its polished bronze samovar, overstuffed couches, spindly little chairs with uncomfortable cane seats, the bit of yard with its lindens and honeysuckle, faces of the guards. Only forty more blank pages remained in her diary, and she did not know when she might get a new one; from then on, she pledged to be brief in word and sketch. She flipped to her early impressions of Yekaterinberg, transferring a pencil from her right hand to her left.

"4/17.IV.18 My first day of using the old and new dates in my diary. We just found out that back in February, the Bolsheviks converted to the calendar used in the rest of Europe. I pretended that Mama and Papa's bedroom door was the looking glass in Alice in Wonderland, and when I opened it, I went back in time by thirteen days. They did not seem amused. Anyway, today—April 4 in the old style, or the seventeenth in Lenin's, we four—Mama, Papa, Demidova and I—arrived

at our second place of exile in Yekaterinberg amidst hoots and jeers. The people demanded to see us, and for the first time, I was afraid; I really believe that if they had been given their way, they would have torn us to shreds. The entire railway station had to be cleared out, and we were taken to our new home under heavy guard. Every other building in this town is a factory of some kind, belching grey smoke into the air, covering the little shops with a layer of grit. Everywhere you look, capitalist adverts are being removed, replaced with cheerless signs that say things like, "Food Store Number Fifteen." Every once in a while, I glimpsed a sign of life: a cluster of café tables on a sidewalk, a mannequin in a window wearing an absolutely presentable frock. Even a few weeks ago, this must have been a rather pleasant little town.

"The house where we will live has two stories, with a log fence all around. We are allowed only on the top floor, the bottom being guards' quarters and the storage area for our trunks. There are four bedrooms, lounge, dining room, lavatory, and water closet.

The commandant uses the southeast bedroom as his office; that leaves three for the rest of us.

Our maid Demidova will take the smallest, we four girls will share one, and Mama, Papa, and Alyosha will have the last; for now, I am alone in one bedroom and Mama and Papa in another.

We are at the complete mercy of the Godless Bolsheviks, as Papa calls them. If we close a door, the guards have the right to open it without warning; this extends to our lavatory activities.

"The piano in the lounge was the only bright spot of our journey—out of tune, but after the long trip, I was glad to sit down and play some simple things—a few Chopin nocturnes I knew from memory—ready for the music to wash away my nerves.

Mama closed her eyes, and her head swayed; really, out of all of us, she plays the best, although she rarely does so anymore.

Still, she gives me brilliant insights on my technique, phrasing them like questions, so that I feel that her conclusions are my own.

On the other hand, my sister Tanya chatters on like a metronome, and nothing pleases her; I would rather not play when she is nearby. We brought Alyosha's balalaika, but try as I might, I cannot produce a single note. I must admit that someday my brother will be a virtuoso.

"I was playing the B Flat Minor when the commandant rushed in, upbraiding me for my shameless bourgeois display, as he put it.

Papa made a joke, something to the effect that my playing was not all that bad, but this Bolshevik was not amused. He summoned a guard about my age who looked all over me, and the two of them hefted the piano down the stairs! The boy had the strangest eyes—wolf-shaped, light blue like ice, and when he looked at me with those eyes I shivered.

After the relatively humane treatment of Tobolsk, Yekaterinberg frightens me already. I hope that Alyosha recovers quickly so that the rest of the family can join us soon." ...

Editor's Note: *Linda Gorelova teaches Special Education in an urban high school in Columbus, Ohio, where she lives with her son. Previously, she worked for the State Department as a Russian/English interpreter. She has translated numerous articles, monographs, and a screenplay. Her story* Cat, Dog, Horse, *was published in the Spring 2008 issue of the* Bellevue Literary Review. *Her family is from Floyd County, Kentucky.*

The Judge's Comments:

Old-fashioned yet satisfying and intimate look at a legendary and mysterious moment in history.

Other Novel Finalists

Almost Perfect, Diane Daniels Manning, Houston, TX

American Captive, Richard Weber, Geneva, Switzerland

Raising Aphrodite, Kirk Curnutt, Montgomery, AL

The Ex-Suicide, Katherine Clark, New Orleans, LA

Katheryn Kratzer Laborde
2010 Novella Winner
His Name Was Mu Bob Wang

When her family moved to New Orleans in 1970, Katheryn had no idea she was moving to a place that would shape her soul and influence her to become a writer. In the years since, she has written short fiction and literary nonfiction, and has worked as a publicist, a freelance feature writer, and finally as an English professor at Xavier University of Louisiana.

A graduate of the University of New Orleans Creative Writing Workshop, she is a recipient of a Louisiana Division of the Arts Artists Fellowship and a Louisiana Cultural Economy Grant. Her book **Do Not Open: The Discarded Refrigerators of Post-Katrina New Orleans** (McFarland) explores the time when marked and messaged ice boxes not only dotted the ruined landscape, but gave tangible proof that residents of Orleans and Jefferson parishes had a collective spirit that could not be drowned and silenced.

The Judge's Comments:

Cleverly and deceptively, His Name Was Mu Bob Wang *begins as an atmospheric yet seemingly predictable story of another one-night stand in the Big Easy. What it becomes is something else entirely. On the surface, it's a tale about two estranged sisters reunited in a crisis. More significantly, it's an unusual contemporary fable about why we need stories: how the imagination, more seductively than any lover, can join disparate souls.*

Bertie and the late Joe D. Smith

Judged by National Book Award winner ***Julia Glass****, for her novel,* ***The Three Junes****. Julia's' latest novel is* ***The Widower's Tale.***

Sponsored by:

The Award of the 2010 Gold Medal for Best Novella is underwritten by a grant from Bertie Deming Smith & The Deming Foundation.

Mrs. Smith and The Deming Foundation also are Co-Presenters of Words & Music.

Mrs. Smith is shown here with her husband, the late Joe D. Smith, former publisher of the Alexandria Town Talk, *and a regular supporter of the annual Words & Music event. Mrs. Smith has been a strong supporter of Words & Music since it was founded on William Faulkner's 100th birthday.*

Excerpt From: "His Name Was Mu Bob Wang"

ONE

There was a Buddha, thin and somber, on a low table. To its back was the back of a dark leather couch stuck right there in the very center of the room, and a pole lamp casting circles of pure light on ceiling, floor, and wall. The brick walls of Robert's French Quarter apartment were artfully bare, but with the flick of a switch the black mantle went crazy with tiny, blinking glass peppers.

I stood to the side of Robert. My arms were crossed. He touched my shoulder. He asked if he could get me a drink. At first I said no but then said yes.

He took off his jacket. It was leather and large in the way that a man's jacket is.

He took off his Stetson. He placed it top of the bookshelf. Carefully.

His hair was long and dark. Straight. Pulled away from his face in a loose tail.

He grabbed a remote and, with a click, the room was thick with Fats Domino. "Kinda loud," I said and he nodded and clicked the volume down a notch. With another click, Fats was replaced by some jazz. Piano. Thelonious Monk, I think.

Then he suddenly said, "Oh, that drink!" then "Is beer OK?" Then "I'm out of brandy sorry," then "Hey, I've got some white wine in the fridge," then "OK, beer." He placed the remote on the coffee table, and was gone.

I sat on the couch. The large coffee table was black and square, and offered a still life of walnuts in a cut glass bowl, and marble coasters scattered here and there, and poetry journals lying there as casually as poetry journals can.

Despite the cold, or maybe in spite of it, the floor-to-ceiling windows were open. Sheer, snowy curtains rode wind. From where I was sitting I could see straight into the window of an apartment in the next building. I could make out a lighted candle on a low table and a woman on a couch, sitting barelegged, knees up, hugging a large pillow to her chest.

Robert came back with pale beers and an orange. He slid a marble coaster my way and proceeded to crack walnuts. I watched the silvery nutcracker in his hands, watched the pulverized shells speckle the table. He talked about being up for tenure at the university, and about needing to finish his manuscript over the holiday break.

I didn't really have anything to say at that moment. He went on to explain the thesis process and I wanted to tell him I know, but did not want to get into my own truth, which had something to do my mother dying.

He talked as he ate, as he gestured, as he split an orange with his hands and stuffed piece after piece into his mouth.

Across the hair's-breadth alley, the woman stretched out on the couch. Television light faded and glowed over her body. She was naked. Rain turned to hail. The wind blew ice that glistened in the streetlight like a diamond net.

Robert put his beer down, cleared his throat, turned to me. "Are you cold?' he asked in a way that made it seem he was asking himself. He settled back into the couch and took me with him. He touched my hair. Then he pulled away for a moment and reached for the lamp. With a click the light was gone and I remember seeing waves of speckled color. When my vision cleared I could see the woman across the way so much better. Television light fell in lightning flashes.

I leaned forward to put my beer on the table. "You know, I think I'm a little tired of this," I said. "The music, I mean."

He sat up straight. "Monk? Oh. What do you want?"

And I said, Nothing, I want nothing. And as Robert fumbled with the remote, I watched the woman lean over and blow out a candle. I wish I could say that, at that moment, she looked out her window and saw me, but she didn't, of course. She simply reached along the coffee table until her hand found the remote. A moment later, I lost her to darkness. And a short while after that, I followed Robert to his bed.

TWO

And that was the beginning and end of that.

I don't think of him, haven't really thought of him. Sometimes feel badly that I didn't contact him when I knew I was pregnant, that I didn't try to find him. But it seemed as though the world was coming to an end anyway. Everyone was talking about Y2k. Everyone was worried that the computers would fail, that time would stop, that the aliens would come and all the ancient predictions would come true. When I found out I was pregnant, I was ready for the world to explode and take me with it. But it didn't, and I scheduled the abortion three days after we had been, if noisily, de-

livered into the arms of the new century. By that time our hangovers had evaporated, and we had swept the streets and bushes clear of spent sparklers and firecracker remnants.

In the spirit on the millennium, I wanted to move on and put the abortion out of my mind as best I could. Joette, it seems, never quite could. Why else would she say to me, after all this time, I want to know about the father.

It was Joette I called after it was done. I really thought I would be OK, that I would be able to drive home afterwards, that I would be…fine. But I wasn't. I was in pain. The cramps were such that I couldn't straighten to walk. I could feel the blood trickling from my body, and I was nauseated. I was so glad it was over, I was so proud that I had faced the procedure, but then I would wonder if I had done the right thing. By that time, of course, it was neither right nor wrong. It was history.

So I called Joette from the clinic. I told her I would tell her about it later, just to please come now, and as I waited for her, I tried to find the words I could give her to tell her what had happened.

She walked in, and practically flew across the room to me. She put her arm around me as we walked to her car. She opened the back door for me, knowing I would want to lie down. She had a blanket back there for me, and a can of cold Diet Coke in the cupholder.

She started the car, and I started crying. She turned on the radio and drove. Suddenly I heard rain on the roof of her Corolla. Drops splattered the window. The windshield wipers made a squeaky sound as the passed back and forth. I remember thinking I would buy her new wiper blades as a present to thank her. Of course, I never did.

And when she stopped the car in the driveway, I realized we were at her apartment, not mine. She sat there for a while – the radio was still playing and to this day I can still hear Stevie Nicks' thrashing her way through a song, though I simply cannot remember just which one it was. With a flick of Joette's wrist, the music disappeared, and she turned to face me. "You are my sister," she said. "I love you, and I am here for you. But I don't want to know what happened."

"I had an abortion," I said, and started to cry.

"I know," she said. "I hate that word."

"There is no other word," I said.

She shook her head. "I know you had …it done. And you know how I feel about ..that sort of thing. And I am trying really hard right now not to feel…" She stopped.

"I'm sorry, Joette." I hated that I was crying. I just couldn't stop.

" Well, it's too late for…." She shook her head as though to get the rest of the sentence out of her mind. But I had already heard it: Well, it's too late for 'sorry'. That was the sentence that driven me away from her before. After Mom died, as we were planning her cremation, I mentioned being sad that I had not called her more often, or come home more weekends from LSU. And she snapped.

I finished the semester but I dropped out of the university. I decided to move to the Quarter and stay away from Joette. I was working and I had money. I didn't need her mothering.

Joette cleared her throat. "I don't want to know the details, is what I am saying. I didn't know you had a boyfriend these days. Or maybe you don't – that's worse. I guess if you had a boyfriend he would be here with you right now. Maybe not. " She looked out the window. "What I mean is, I'll go to the store for you. You can stay here until you are better. But I can't handle knowing about it. I'm sorry."

And so I stayed there for a week. I would have left earlier but I had a fever that would not go away. Joette

would come home from work and take my temperature, would call me from work and ask what I was doing answering the phone, I should be resting. She went to the store for me and brought home Chinese take-out. She didn't ask any questions and I stayed true to my end of the bargain.

I don't know why she is asking me now. To tell you the truth, I am way too worried about her to think about it. We knew the flu was going around, a bad strain; I had gotten my shot and had been bugging her for three weeks to go get hers. She said she would and, of course, she didn't. And, of course, I ragged her about this when she called me to tell me she had the flu, and ask if I could get a few things at the store. I was shocked by the call – we always emailed and left it at that. I bought Pepto Bismal, a few cans of soup, a tissue box, and came over. She was sleeping when I checked in on her. She was burning up.

The next day I called, and she was feeling terrible still, and was now vomiting. I had too much to do at the library that day to stay with her, but I went over that evening and offered to stay the night. She said there was nothing I could do. She called me early the next morning to say she felt too badly to move. I came over as soon as I could. There was something in her eyes that scared me, and when I took her temperature it was 104. I called the emergency room. Bring her in, they said.

Her blood pressure had dropped. She was dehydrated. They stabilized her blood pressure and lowered her fever by two degrees. They sent her back home.

The next day she was complaining that she was so tired of clear liquids, and we both took that, somehow, to be a good sign. But then around midnight her fever started to rise.

The day after that we realized that she was only getting worse. Finally, we called her doctor and before I knew it I was taking her to the hospital, which is where we are now. Two days into this and her fever will not go away. "She does not have the flu," we are told.

"Well, she does have the flu but we don't know what strain" is what we hear the next morning. And before the night nurse comes on: "No, not the flu. We must have missed something."

All I can do is be there with her when she wakes. She grows tired of TV, is sick of everything. But she likes to hear me talk, she says. She doesn't want to talk back, she says. And then she is quiet.

"I want to know about the father," she says, her voice small but full. "I want to know what happened."

I want to say, that was ten years ago next January. But I don't. I don't want to admit that I know that, and so quickly.

I want to say, Why do you want me to talk about it now, now that I don't need to?

Instead I say, OK. Give me a minute.

I walk to the window. Outside the day is hot, or so it looks. I feel frozen in the hospital room, and seem to have lost all sense of time and season. Outside, world burns and shimmers with its own fever. I stare, at cars, at the Interstate, and the imperfect shade of blue the sky has assumed. I cannot really remember much more about the man who fathered the child. Even that his name is Robert might be something I made up along the way.

I heard a soft snore. I moved to the chair and sat down. If I told her the truth, I knew that she would be disappointed. I knew she would somehow see it as her failure. And she would fight herself to not judge me, just as I know her not wanting to know all those years back was her way of fighting judgment.

"Janet…" she is saying. I wake to realize I had fallen asleep. My brain had been whirling yet I didn't realize I had dozed off until she called my name.

"You need something?"

"Tell me about him."

I felt her forehead. Hot. "Why do you want to know after all this time?"

"I've always wanted to know. But…I couldn't handle it."

"So you can handle it now?"

"Yes."

It occurred to me that she thought she was dying. "Let me get you a washcloth," I said. In the bathroom, I turned the faucet as hard as I could. I cried into my hands as I splashed water on my face.

When I put the towel on her forehead she cocked her eyebrow in the way she always has and said, "So, you gonna tell me or do I have to beat it out of you?"

I pulled the chair closer to her bed. "What do you want to know?"

She took a deep breath then released it. "Was he your boyfriend?"

I swallowed. "Yes. Of course."

"Well, at least that." She looked at her hands. "Did he leave you after you told him you were pregnant?"

I thought. "No. He was already gone by then."

"Oh, Janet. I wish we had been closer then. You could have called me."

"It's OK. I was OK. Is that all you want to know?"

"How did you meet him?"

"I met him…at work."

She frowned. "Where were you working then?"

"A club."

"A country club?"

"No, the kind with music. And it's not there any more so don't ask me the name. You wouldn't know it, anyway."

"What did he look like?"

My mind began to fly. "He was Chinese."

"Chinese?"

"Yes. And he had long hair. He was beautiful."

"What was his name?"

"Bob."

"He's Chinese and his name is Bob?"

"He's half Chinese."

"Half?"

"Yes. Half. He was half. Chinese."

"What was his last name?"

I paused. I wasn't too sure I knew any Chinese last names off the top of my head.

"C'mon. I'm not going to look him up in the phone book."

"His name was Mu Wang."

"Mu Wang? I thought you said it was Bob."

"It is. His name was Mu Bob Wang." I stood up, afraid that I would start to laugh at such a concoction. Surely there could be no one named Mu Bob Wang. Looking out the window, I gazed at the traffic on the interstate. I should place him out of town, I decided. "He wasn't from here."

"With a name like Mu Bob, he must be from Mississippi."

I knew not to have him come from Mississippi. Joette had been to Tupelo so many times on the anniversary of Elvis' death, making the pilgrimage from that cabin to the mansion at Graceland, that I wouldn't be able to take liberties with the state. She knew it too well.

"No. Texas." She had not been beyond Corpus Christi.

"Does he still live in town?"

"I don't know." I turned to face her. "He moved here from Texas. He could have moved back. It's been years. I don't know."

She took the wet rag from her head and turned, slowly, on her side. "Tell me about him. Tell me how you met." She closed her eyes.

"I told you. We met at work."

"That's where you met. I want to know how."

"You want me to tell you the story of how we met…"

"Yes. Tell me a story. I don't want to talk."

And so I settled back into my chair. I kicked my shoes off. And I told her a story. ...

Other Novella Finalists

Camp Olvido, Lawrence Coates, Bowling Green, OH

Diary of a Darling, Wendy Ralph, West Columbia, SC

If: An Allegory, Jonathan Byrd, Cropwell, AL

Life According to Rocking Chair, Nancy Brock, Columbia, SC

Next, Kevin Finucane, Denver, CO

Our Eyes Were Closed, Meagan McCollum, Eldridge, AL

Peace, Talila Millman, Highland Park, IL

That Strange Darkness, Matthew Boedy, Columbia, SC

The Blue Stoop, Zack O'Neill, Columbia, SC

Michael DeVault
2010 Novella
1st Runner-Up
Excerpt "The Patriot Joe Morton"

patriot (p□'tr□-□t)
n. one who loves, supports and defends one's country
-- The American Heritage Dictionary

Chapter 1

Joe Morton was never considered a stable man. He had never lashed out, was not taken to fighting in bars. In fact, no one could remember him ever going into a bar. But he wasn't what the good people of Cranston considered normal. If one were to put any of the twelve hundred or so citizens of the small, east Texas town on the spot, you would arrive at some variation of Joe simply didn't do things the way people expected. So the good people of Cranston had always approached him with a measure of caution, a caution of which for the most part, they were never quite sure of the cause. They kept their concerns about Joe's tenuous mental state in check with a healthy dose of just don't think about it until, one day in mid-September, the leather strip of bells went clattering against the glass door of the Truck Stop Café.

In those days, strangers so rarely came into the Truck Stop Café that Doris Greely, the waitress, didn't immediately know how she should react. She exchanged a quick glance with Harlan, her lone customer, before finally standing. For his part, the man stood in the doorway, patiently knocking imaginary dust spots from his blue suit and arranging a matching blue tie neatly beneath his lapels. It wasn't until the staccato beats of his shoes resonated against the tile that Doris looked down and recognized the patent leather shoes of a military man.

"Well howdy, son," she said. "You must be up from the base?"

"Yes, ma'am. You wouldn't happen to be able to tell me how to get Macomb Road, would you?" He removed a small notebook from his breast pocket and double-checked the address, adding a self-affirming nod. "Yes. Macomb Road."

Later, Harlan and Doris would remember this event in excruciating detail. They would recall the manner in which the young officer tilted his head just so to one side. They would repeat this and a hundred other trivial details to the news crews, to reporters, and to tourists so eager to get to know Cranston's story. These elements would become scorched into their memories, yet at the moment the young officer was standing in the Truck Stop Café, those details were the farthest thing from their minds. The glance they had shared at the mention of Macomb Road had nothing to do with the man and everything do with the only person who lived there. It was Harlan who gave voice to their concern.

"What you want with Joe Morton?"

"I'm sorry, sir. It's a personal matter," the officer replied.

"Well, we don't have much time for personal matters, young man," Harlan said. Doris shot him a sharp look.

"It's about his boy, ain't it?"

When the officer hesitated, Doris rested a hand on his shoulder. "It's okay, son. You don't have to tell us. Let me draw you a map."

The next morning, Doris arrived to open the Truck Stop Café the following morning and she was surprised to find Harlan's black Silverado idling in the parking lot beside Jimmy the cook's motorcycle. Doris double-checked her makeup, made sure her cell phone was in her purse, and thought about returning home and calling in sick. It was just too early to have to deal with Harlan and the boys.

Almost predictably, he was waiting at the door when she got there.

"Morning, Doris."

"You're up early, Harlan."

"We've got a lot of plans to make, now, don't we?"

Doris held the door for Harlan, impatiently ushering him into the diner. "Ain't like I got all morning, Harlan.

And plans? What on earth are you talking about?"

"The Morton boy. We got a hero coming home. That requires planning."

#

Every inch of the Cranston town square had been draped in cloth of red, white and blue that seemed to radiate its own heat in the late-September sun. On every building hung at least one American flag, if not two or three. The parking lots along Main Street had been kept empty the night before by orange traffic cones, which had in turn been replaced shortly before dawn by bunting-draped police barricades borrowed from Dallas and Houston.

People crowded two deep along the bunting and the crowd grew deeper near the bandstand, where the service would be held. Behind the rows of seats marked "reserved," two groups of children were alternately playing tag or duck duck goose. Doris tried to focus on something, anything really, that didn't remind her of the farce in which they were all taking part but all she could think about was the poor Air Force honor guard.

Three uniform-clad soldiers stood at unflinching attention, their rifles hoisted to one shoulder. Doris could see the beads of sweat forming on their cheeks. Their hats seemed to provide little in the way of shade. Doris wanted to offer the boys a drink of water or a ride out of town, but knew the soldiers and she had something in common. They were there not for the crowd, not for Casey, but for and Joe. Doris had come for one reason -- Casey's fiancée, Carly Machen.

In the distance, Doris heard the clop clop clop of hooves on pavement and turned. The limbers and caissons had turned onto Main Street for its ceremonial trip to the bandstand. Junior ROTC cadets from Cranston High marched at the head of the procession in solemn, deliberate steps. Behind them came first Casey's flag-wrapped coffin and then, immediately behind the carriage, members of the Cranston town council, the Mayor and Harlan Cotton.

"Isn't everything just perfect?" said a voice over Doris's shoulder. She looked up to find Margie Bartley standing beside her. "Don't tell Mister Johnson, but I think one of the new flag poles is crooked. Other than that, I mean. What do you think?"

"I think it's kind of ridiculous," Doris said.

Margie ignored her. "All of it is just so…patriotic! It makes you just want to go up and hug the Statue of Liberty."

"Yeah, that's what it makes you want to do," Doris said. She would have fled across the street to get away, but the cortege had arrived and the town fathers were in the process of assisting the six soldiers in removing the coffin from the cortege.

Before Doris could retreat into the crowd, Margie leaned into her and whispered, "What is the protocol?"

"What on earth are you talking about?" Doris said.

Margie nodded at the approaching funeral party, as if her meaning was apparent enough. When Doris did not immediately signal her understanding, Margie heaved a huge sigh.

"You know. With the coffin. I mean, should we bow or something?"

"Oh for the love of God, Margie. It's Casey Morton. Not the goddamned King of England."

Doris finally located Carly tucked into a corner of the bandstand, alone and crying. She managed to mount the steps up the rear of the bandstand just as the soldiers were setting the casket down. She slid into the chair beside Carly and rested her hand on the girl's shoulder. Carly turned with a start.

"Oh, it's you," Carly said. She entwined her fingers in Doris's, pulling her coworker closer to her. "I was afraid you were Uncle Harlan wanting another picture."

Carly watched the soldiers as they exited the bandstand, leaving Casey's coffin behind. Just as Reverend Smith mounted the podium, Carly released Doris's fingers and patted the back of her hand. The girl's eyes followed on her fiancé's coffin. Doris couldn't help but notice from her position Carly wasn't crying. Instead, her eyes were glassy, cold, the tearless eyes of a girl who had already done all the crying she could do. Carly turned to Doris and snorted.

"You know, the hardest part is I got a letter from him yesterday. It said he'd just been told he was coming home at the end of the month," Carly said, looking again at Casey's coffin. "I guess he was right.

* * * * *

If there was one thing Harlan liked more about life in Cranston than anything else, it was the relative ease of making everyday choices. Families going out to dinner went either to Mia's Pizza or Chow Yung's for Chinese. A working woman on a Tuesday morning off could always count on spending two hours for a wash, trim and roller set at Judy's On the Square, Cranston's only beauty shop. And a man in want of a new handle for his daddy's claw hammer went to Golson's Hardware.

"See, this one's got a bell face, so it's more forgiving if you miss," Golson said. He was attempting to show Harlan a new, composite-handled hammer with a bright,

fluorescent yellow grip. When it became apparent to the old man Harlan wasn't paying attention, the old man nudged him. "Just can't figure it out, Ernest."

"Hammers are a pretty straight forward idea, Harlan."

He shook his head. "No, no, no. The Creedmore Building. What do you suppose old Joe's up to in there?"

Golson shrugged. "I dunno. The guys said he came in yesterday and bought ten gallons of black paint and rollers and two sets of tin snips. Asked about an arc welder."

Harlan tried to work out the details. Joe's behavior had become even more erratic in the two months since Casey's funeral. The paint was easy enough -- all the ground floor windows of the building had been painted black. There could be any number of uses for tin snips and a welding machine, but none of them made any sense. As Harlan surveyed the building once again, he grew even more uneasy and unsure of what he was expecting to find.

Harlan decided to humor Golson and took the latest hammer he was offereing, even though he knew what it was he wanted to buy and would, in fact buy. He mimicked swinging it a couple of times, then shook his head.

Before Harlan could say anything about the hammer, though, a man entered the store with a teenaged boy in tow. He was tall, too tall in fact, and had to stoop when he entered to keep from towering over the store. Despite his deeply lined and weathered face, something in the man's bearing put Harlan off. He seemed too stiff, almost formal from beneath the brim of a crisp fedora, from where his eyes traced a path among the shelves. His eyes, dark and foreign, seemed almost to consume the room. When those same, dark eyes settled on Harlan and Ernest Golson, he smiled, placed a rusting toolbox on the floor and removed his hat.

"Please forgive the intrusion, gentlemen. I am Vítor Barros. This is my son, Téo," he said, pushing the boy forward slightly. "Can you tell me where to find Mister Joe Morton?"

###

Before dawn on the morning of the fourth of July, Carly Machen declared her independence.

She arose well before sunup, her brain burning with a nervous energy. She looked at the suitcase on the floor of her bedroom, packed neatly with socks, her toothbrush, a few changes of clothes. Everything she would need for a few weeks in her new home fit neatly into a single bag at the foot of her bed. She had written a note to Doris and a resignation letter to Jimmy, folded them separately, and addressed each of them before placing both letters into a single envelope. She took the suitcase from her bedroom and placed it gently into the trunk of Casey's Mustang and, under the cover of darkness, drove across town to Doris Greely's house, where again she considered calling the whole thing off and returning to the comfort and security of her apartment and her bed. But something inside of her told her what she needed to hear. The apartment wasn't home anymore. Home was something she would have to find in Austin.

Doris awoke a couple of hours later and found the envelope tucked in her screendoor. But she didn't need to open it to know what was inside of it. As she read Carly's note, Doris thought about the times she had spent with the girl, how she had watched her grow up and how Carly was about to embark on the biggest adventure of her life.

She read the brief letter thanking her for all she had done and inviting her to Austin, "whenever I get settled in," and she smiled to herself.

"You go, girl," she said to herself as she started her car and headed to the diner. That evening, Doris arrived at the town square so late she almost missed the fireworks. She was out of her car barely in time to see the first mortar fired into the sky over the bandstand. It burst, sending a shower of red, white and blue streamers spidering down. The crowd gasped, then clapped. With the second mortar, the music began. The crowd cheered. Doris searched the faces for Harlan or Noreen, but she couldn't find them. Nor did she see Shep or the Franklin brothers. In fact, there were so many people crammed into the square she couldn't pick out a single face. It was as if the whole of east Texas had merged into one collective mass, staring up at the heavens as twenty thousand dollars quite literally went up in smoke.

Even Doris began to get caught up in the euphoria of the display. Mortars and sparklers and streamers fired off in perfect time with the rising and falling notes of Tchaikovsky's overture. The sky became so filled with explosions, Doris could have read a book by the light cast down onto the townsfolk gathered below.

Children and parents stared up, agog at the show. At each pause, they all cheered. When the show continued, they cheered again. Doris's ears were ringing with explosions and shouts of glee and she glanced over to the Creedmore Building and almost expected to see Joe Morton standing on the roof, conducting his masterpiece. He wasn't there. But she did see Téo Barros standing on the corner, hugging a streetlamp and staring into the night sky.

"It's huge! Bigger and better than ever," Margie Bartley said.

It was, Doris knew. In previous years, the display would

have long been over. But here, now, because of Joe Morton's generosity, they were all still standing there, staring into the summer night, when the most familiar passages of the overture began. The pace of the sky bursts picked up in tempo with the music and, as the sky became increasingly filled with color and smoke and lights, the people of Cranston, Texas fell silent in awe. Like everyone else there, Doris had listened to the 1812 Overture so many times in the past two weeks that she had the music

committed to heart and was anxiously waiting for the cannon blasts. She wasn't disappointed.

The fireworks crew timed the launches perfectly so that each blast resulted in a spectacular, multi-staged explosion in the clear, deep black of the sky. At last, the trumpet fanfare came. The bells chimed, and the march began. The sky went mad. Hundreds of colors filled her entire field of vision until, at the very last, with the climax cacophony of music and light and sound, the sky went dark.

The crowd applauded loudly, shouts of "bravo!" and "way to go" filling the air. Then, almost in unison, the entire crowd turned to the Creedmore Building, chanting for Joe Morton. The lights atop the building went dark and everyone gasped as a large, dark form ascended above the building with a loud clatter and locked itself into place above the roof.

"What the hell is--" Margie began, but she was interrupted by an unearthly hum and a blazing light.

The people all looked up to the source of the light atop the Creedmore Building, a collective shock spreading across their faces. For there, wrought by sheer will from iron and aluminum and lights, towering to the heavens above Town Square, was Joe Morton's response to the good people of Cranston. His answer to the funeral, to Casey's death, to everything that had happened to him and around him. For all the things they had said and done, Joe had written them a message in seven, forty-foot tall, red white and blue block letters.

Fuck You.

The citizens of Cranston gazed up in stunned silence, unable to comprehend what they were seeing, as if they knew the sign was a hallucination or a dream brought on by the combined consumption of too many hotdogs and the inhalation of too much smoke. Where only seconds before the sticky night air had been filled with the crashing rockets and blaring with the soaring finale of a Tchaikovsky masterpiece, it was now silent, penetrated by only one small noise. Somewhere near the back of the crowd, Doris Greely was laughing.

Michael DeVault *began his writing career when his first short story won his school's literature competition. Since then, Michael has written extensively, both fiction and non-fiction. His Novella,* ***A Glimpse of Tuscany*** *was serialized in* SaucyVox - a Literary Journal*. In 2002, the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society selected his novel,* ***Anything But Ordinary*** *(Arctic Wolf, 2008), as a finalist for the Society's Novel-in-Progress gold medal. In addition to his fictional pursuits, Michael is a working journalist and critic. His work has appeared in newspapers throughout Louisiana as well as in* Delta Style Magazine *and* The Atlasphere.com*. He lives and works in Monroe, LA.*

The Judge's Comments:

A well-crafted portrait of modern small-town America, depicting how a group of private, ordinary lives are affected when a prominent and locally revered citizen commits a very public and quite out-of-the-ordinary act in response to a personal tragedy. There's a fine pinch of Thornton Wilder in its shifting point of view and the author's affection for all the characters involved.

Chris Waddington
2010 Novella
2nd Runner-Up
Excerpt:
"After Freddie Left"

After Freddie left, Carla must have swept the apartment a hundred times, and still, she found his hair in the dustpan — long strands of black that he had always gathered into a ponytail.

"You're pulling it out," she had warned him. If she felt frisky, she'd trace her index finger along his hairline, and Freddie would wave her away, too deep in his work for distraction. If she laughed at him, he'd slump in his desk chair, his high forehead folding like a brown paper accordion file packed with mathematical models of tropical storms.

"Convection currents," he called them, explaining the season's named hurricanes as a heat transfer model, like the noonday shimmer rising from an asphalt parking lot, like bubbles in a boiling pot — so simple.

"Of course," he continued. "One can only go so far with metaphors – or with math." He gestured at the sheaf of equations under his desk lamp. "You can't persuade a million people to board their windows and head north because of statistics. It's all too capricious: the numbers, the weather, and all those potential victims. The longer I work, the more I understand why they name these storms after people."

As it turned out, even Carla wouldn't go when Freddie insisted.

***

They had bickered for months, sitting side-by-side on the creaking wicker loveseat that previous tenants had left on the balcony.

"Can't you listen?"

"I hear you."

"That's not the same thing, Freddie!"

And yet, Freddie persisted, talking about his upcoming fellowship, the climate in Berkley, the promise of California, and the many promises they had made to each other. He grumbled about New Orleans: its pleasures had paled; its problems had come to the fore. By the end, even the view from the balcony no longer charmed him, although it had been the apartment's chief attraction when the couple had moved downriver, out of the Quarter, looking for cheaper rent. If she spotted a tree in flower, he'd cock an ear and mention approaching sirens. If she shouted excitedly, calling him from his desk to see a three-masted sailing ship on the river, he'd direct her attention to the upended shopping cart in the middle of Royal Street, remarking how every driver circled the obstacle without ever stopping to move it.

"I'm done with New Orleans," he'd say, and his long, pleasant face would pinch in a mask, as though someone had placed a toad on his tongue. Then he'd spit it out in a rush: "The weather, the crime, the mindless boogie approach to everything. If we stay here, we'll end up like that poor, lesbian singer —"

"Leave Junie Ray out of it, Freddie."

"From what you tell me, she's already out of it."

"She was drunk."

"Is that why she took those sleeping pills and locked herself in Linda's apartment?"

"It was a gesture. Linda betrayed her — and Linda's back in New Jersey."

"Lucky for Linda," he said.

On one such occasion, Freddie lit a joint, puffed silently, and presented it to Carla. She shifted away, chopping her brisk refusal with one hand while the other dispersed the perfumed smoke of bud shake from Humboldt County.

"Okay, I can see that you're mad at me," he announced.

Carla closed her eyes and sighed. "Don't tell me what I'm thinking, please. That's your most annoying habit — and you know that's saying a lot."

She held her arms close, expecting Freddie to elbow her ribs — another habit that once had seemed charming, a token of his boyishness, like his chatter

and his mad gaze as he peered beyond the slate roofs of neighboring houses, his eyes fixed on the steeples and gilded treetops of sunset, way out past the river which already lay in shadow.

In such moods, Freddie often launched conversations with sweeping statements, a style acquired in dorm rooms, during the wee hours, and honed in a thousand seminars. Even he joked about it: how his colleagues had so much trouble keeping shirttails tucked into pants, how dandruff rimmed their well-thumbed spectacles, how every excited utterance brought forth a mist of spittle. Carla had complained about that, making an elaborate show of wiping her face whenever Freddie spoke wildly. Of course, she also had warned him not to interrupt when she was reading, not to call through the bathroom door, not to keep her on the phone with nonsense, and to please brush the chalk from his trousers before coming home— a whole list of things that Freddie could never remember.

She looked at him now as he drew deeply on the joint.

"Are you going to smoke that whole damned thing by yourself?"

Freddie coughed out a cloud and giggled: "I knew you were mad at me!"

***

After Freddie left, Carla cocktailed to cover the rent. She dug out her black dress and outlined her eyes in kohl. She went back to the Catbird Club, the cozy, wood-paneled jazz joint where she had first found work in New Orleans. They knew Carla there. The club hadn't changed. Junie Ray still headlined on Friday and Saturday nights.

"It's temporary," she said to those who would listen, and that made it okay, although she had sworn not to wait on tables again, not in New Orleans, not anywhere if she could help it — a silent vow, taken drunkenly, as she'd pursed her lips and blown out 28 birthday candles. In Freddie's photographs, she had seemed quite determined: her face aglow and her eyes bright, lit from below by the flames.

"It's the blessed Saint Carla," he'd said. "Can't you give me a smile?"

Carla had shaken her head, spilling a wave of blond curls into her eyes.

"That's it!" Freddie howled. "That's so sexy!"

A year had passed, and she had gone back on her vow. Perhaps she had only been wishing. Isn't that what people did with birthday candles? In any case, Carla's wishes had not come true — not with work, and not with Freddie, who had packed up and left for Berkley.

Carla didn't plan to stick around either. She was leaving New Orleans as soon as she could. She told herself that. She told everybody — her former boss from the failed magazine, the club manager, her sister in Boston, her co-workers and her downstairs neighbor, the jazz historian, whose tiny, flat-faced dog looked a little like Freddie Hito. She even told Junie Ray, expecting a bit of sympathy from a girl who had wept on her shoulder after one of those fights with her lover.

Nobody believed her. Junie Ray just offered her sad, mysterious smile. The club owner asked her out on a date. The neighbor wondered if she could walk his little dog when he went in for elective surgery. It had been six weeks since Freddie had left, three years since Carla Swan had arrived in the city.

"I used to talk about leaving," the bartender said. "And I've been here since the World's Fair. That's 20 years — a lot of Bloody Marys under the bridge." He leaned forward and wheezed a little, pressing his big belly into the drain board as he loaded clinking beer bottles into the well. "Pass me the Heineken, Carla."

She slid the case down the copper-topped bar. The place was dead — filled with afternoon sunshine and a single plume of blue cigarette smoke rising from the bartender's ashtray.

"You just don't get it," she said. She rested her hand on the case and stayed in the tight spot behind the bar, awaiting an answer.

"Oh, but I do, little girl." He looked at her with pity, rolling his eyes. Then he lifted a hand in front of her face and made jawing motions. "I know you've been complaining forever. You need to let it go — or do something. And I don't see a whole lot of action."

***

After Freddie packed the U-haul and headed to Berkley, Carla sang in the half-empty apartment — songs she had learned from her mother before it was clear that she had been learning at all. She snapped her fingers and swayed. She discovered that certain spots yielded echoes, and that others amplified her voice— in the claw-foot bathtub, for instance, accompanied by the scratch and tap of palm fronds against the window; in the entrance hall, where her words stopped short at the scarred oak door with its deadbolt and chain.

Closing her eyes, Carla could have been on stage

again, or singing for tips with her mother. When she held a note, it carried her to the locked ward at St. Andrews Regional. It stirred her stage fright. It wafted her to the Catbird Club, at mid-afternoon, as Junie Ray picked out chords on an upright piano.

If I cried a little bit,
When I first learned the truth,
Don't blame it on my heart,
Blame it on my youth. . .

But the smells brought Carla back to her apartment: spilled garbage cans and diesel exhaust and sweet olive drifting over the high garden fence as if a hundred grandmas had died in the street. It was 6 p.m. — the bells still rang at St. Vincent's then — and her neighbor clomped upstairs from the building's dark foyer, as fixed in his schedule as the priest who officiated at Mass. She heard the neighbor pause on his climb. Sometimes his little dog yipped impatiently, but the man always took his time, even on these cool winter days when the blue sky rolled down from Canada and the city looked different: full of hard shadows and long vistas that opened where summer's greenery had once hidden everything. Carla listened to his wheezing, and guessed that he was listening, too: an audience for her songs.

Freddie had told her about the neighbor — "the fat guy," he called him, wrinkling his nose as he detailed their encounter on the stair landing. "I couldn't get past him without backing into the corner and then he had me — one of those conversations like you're trapped in the window seat on a plane. He kept wiping his face with a handkerchief. He was sweating, Carla — and it's not even summer. I thought he was going to drop dead right there on the landing."

"You're looking kind of sweaty, too."

"These people pursue me!"

"He lives downstairs?" Carla asked.

"Of course, he does. We'd hear him if he was upstairs. Like a one-man elephant herd on these hardwood floors."

Faced with Freddie's distress, Carla stood on her toes and lifted her arms like a dancer. "I wonder what he hears down there? How much of our witty chit-chat?"

As Carla spun, close to six feet tall in her slippers, Freddie stared at her in wonder, admiring the long limbs that wrapped him at night, the pale face framed by a mop of blond hair, the wide blue eyes and teasing smile that he had kept in his wallet for two years, expecting some revelation.

"The fat guy told me that he liked your singing. Your voice reminds him of Junie Ray," Freddie said. And then he laughed nervously. "What's that about? I didn't know that you sang."

"He must be hearing the radio."

Freddie cocked his head and studied her face for some hint of mockery. "What radio?" he asked. "We don't have a radio." ...

Editor's Note: Chris Waddington *of New Orleans writes about music and dance for* The Times-Picayune*. Notable magazine editors have published Waddington's fiction for more than a decade. Gordon Lish chose two pieces for* The Quarterly*. Andrei Codrescu ran short-shorts in* Exquisite Corpse*. Dawn Raffel picked his work for the New York-based online journal* Guernica*. John Biguenet published a story in* New Orleans Review*. Waddington's stories also ran in* The Rake*, a Minneapolis city magazine, where they appeared alongside fiction by Ron Carlson, Stuart Dybek and other established talents. Agent Ben Camardi of the Harold Matson Company represents Waddington's story collection,* ***A Rope Trick.*** *The collection includes two novellas, both set in New Orleans —where Waddington lives with his wife and three-year-old son.* ***After Freddie Left*** *is one of the two novellas in the collection. Waddington served as books editor of the* Minneapolis Star Tribune *for five years. His writing about visual art has appeared in the* Oxford American, Art and Antiques, Art in America*, and also in* The Times-Picayune*, where he has worked as a staff critic.*

The Judge's Comments:

This is one of several novellas I read that are set in post-Katrina New Orleans. It tells the story of a young woman who must find a way to rise from the ashes of a breakup she knows she may live to regret–and from the inertia of self-deception. Hard as it is to navigate the smoky maze of artistic cliché surrounding this city, a setting hazardous for all but the most clear-eyed writers, this writer clearly knows his way around its quirks, its sorrows, and its ever-resilient siren song.

Jennifer Stewart
2010 Best Novel-in-Progress Winner
Wanton Women

Jennifer Stewart is a 2006 graduate of the University of New Orleans' Low-Residency MFA in poetry. She currently works for the Low-Residency MFA Program at UNO as the Coordinator of the Study Abroad Programs in Writing.

Publications include *Florida English, Sentence, Exquisite Corpse, The Cream City Review,* and *Big Bridge*. She recently completed her first novel, **Wanton Women**.

Jennifer lives in New Orleans, writes in coffee shops, and in her spare time, teaches people how to bend funny ways.

The Judge's Comments:

*Using a unique twist on the epistolary novel, **Wanton Women** creates a life changing exchange between two women. Jillian Easter is a young woman living in Chicago, working on a Master's thesis in English, working her way through drunk men in bars, and missing her mother, the only family she's ever known, and then reading revealing letters written by her recently dead grandmother. What lifted this manuscript above all others in the competition was the beautifully realized character of Lillian, the grandmother. Through her letters describing her life in the mountains of North Carolina, Lillian becomes a notable voice and fully articulated personality to stand mid point between 11-year-old Ellen Foster (Kaye Gibbons) and 99-year-old Lucy Marsden (Allan Gurganus), as one of the strong Southern Women characters in contemporary works.*

Judged by Michael Murphy, Literary Agent with Max & Co. and regular faculty member and supporter of the annual Words & Music festival in New Orleans.

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*Rosemary and Joe are owners of the house where Faulkner wrote his first novel, **Soldiers Pay.** Faulkner House books, operated by Joe DeSalvo is one of the nation's premier independent book stores and a favorite of bibliophiles and serious book collectors.*

Rosemary and Joe are also co-founders of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society and the annual Words & Music: A Literary Feast in New Orleans. Together, they are world-reknowned for their contributions to the literary community, helping hudnreds of talented writers find publishing homes.

(Exodus 34:6-7) - "Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth; 7who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Chapter One

Jillian was almost home. She'd run farther and faster than she'd ever run this morning, close to ten miles by the GPS on her phone that sat perched on her arm. She had two blocks left, and was in that place where she felt like she could keep running and run forever, run to the coast and back if she so decided. Instead, she slowed her pace, and walked the last few steps to her door. On her porch she flowed into the yoga poses that were such a relief for her tired muscles. It was then that she felt the run, felt her muscles grimace under her cooling skin. Finishing her stretches she went inside and grabbed her giant water bottle and gulped half of it down. It was almost spring in the Chicago suburb where she lived, and she could feel it getting warmer. She stripped her sweaty outer clothes off, and was settling onto the floor for her ab routine when a loud snore from the bedroom caught her off guard.

"He was still here? Why was he still here?" She'd run ten miles for God's sake, "surely the man had woken up by now" she thought, her endorphins suddenly fleeing and her mood deflating. The snore indicated otherwise, though, and she grimaced. She hated when they didn't play by the rules, the men. She didn't even remember this one's name – Mack or Matt or Mark or something. He had a beard. She didn't typically go for beards, but since he seemed willing to buy her drink after drink, and looked at her legs with such longing, she thought she'd give it a shot. She had not been impressed. The beard scratched her in all the wrong places, and he had a paunch the moonlight couldn't hide and he'd grunted. She'd felt as though she were fucking a bearded pig. Of all the men she'd been with lately – and there'd been many – he was her least favorite. And HE was still here. All the others had understood when they'd woken and she wasn't there. They'd beat it out of there before she came back from her run. She'd always come back to her house just the way she liked it – empty of men, but still smelling like one. As she was thinking about how to rid herself of the bearded paunch, the doorbell rang.

Jillian sighed. She hated when the doorbell rang. Hated the thought of unexpected eyes in her house. Hated interrupting her workout. Still, she got up and went to the door, looking out to see a mailman standing before the door. She opened the door, and he handed her a thick certified envelope. She signed and he went away. She didn't recognize the return address of Green Apple Falls, North Carolina, though it sounded familiar. She thought there must be some mistake, but it was her name clearly emblazoned on the front of the package. Jillian Easter. Slowly Jillian sat down to open it.

Dear Miss Jillian Easter,

This letter is to inform you of the death of your maternal grandmother, Miss Lillian Easter. Please accept our sincere condolences. Miss Lillian passed away Saturday week in her sleep of natural causes. Enclosed is a packet of letters we found addressed to you. Additionally, she has made you her sole heir. Please contact us at our office as soon as possible to discuss the details of the will.

Sincerely,
Jack Harrington
Attorney at Law

Jillian read the brief letter over again. Her grandmother? That was her grandmother's name, but her mother, Elizabeth Easter, had told her that her grandmother had passed away a long time ago. When she was a girl. She could just barely remember something about her. A big kitchen, and the smell of food. Her mother yelling, and an older woman with soft hands brushing her hair. Clouds and cows and cats, lots of them. She could just remember, just. Why had her mother lied? She had never spoken much about her family, though Jillian had always hungered for information. Asked her all the time about where she grew up, how she grew up. Wanted the good stories and the bad. Wanted them all. Eventually her mother quit answering her. Eventually she learned not to ask. But she'd devoured everything she could. Been proud of her heritage, even though it made her mother thin lipped when she'd tell them her family lived in the mountains, raised cattle and corn. Momma had passed away too, and she'd thought alls he had was Aunt Annie, her mother's best friend. But if her grandmother had still been alive all this time, did she have other family too? Her mother always said

she was an only child, and Jillian supposed that if she were her grandmother's heir that she would be. But maybe her grandmother had family she could talk to? Or even friends? She guessed her mother had her reasons. But she felt as though she'd lost something, completely and utterly and suddenly, like a bursting balloon at a birthday party. Jillian opened the packet of letters and began to read the first one.

My Jillian,

I been looking for you for years. Ever since I got up out of the bed that day, that last day, your momma left. I won't say nothin' about how hard it was for me to lose my baby all over again. I won't say nothing about the letters I wrote and sent off and how it tore my heart in two each time they came back marked with that red little stamp from the post office that said my baby didn't want no letter from me, her mamma. And if I thought losin her was bad the first time, and it liked to kilt me, losin her again and YOU to boot was worse. I gets so's, sometimes, I don't know how I have any feelin' left.

She was my last tie to Imbry. If Imbry had been my reason for living for the longest time, she was my reason then. Your uncle Jeffrey was my son and I loved him, but your mother was my Imbry made over, and Imbry was what I needed to take a deep breathe every day. To put the one foot in front of the other and make the grits and stir the things I put in the pots. I can still see him, in my mind's eye. I can still know him. He was big enough for three lifetimes. They say things about the women in our family. That we have trouble with our minds. But as long as your mother was near me, with her bright green eyes and her quick sharp ways about her, I knew I could do it.

I spent many a year after they took yer momma away that first time not feelin much a anything. Eating what biscuit they put in front of me and shuffling between the bed and the kitchen. They were bad times, but these was just as bad. Only now I don't give up. Cause I know you're out there somewhere, and needin to hear what I got to say.

I've been waitin for you to be ready, baby girl. Ever since I heard from that man that yer momma was gone. If'n it hadn't been for you, baby girl, I woulda give up the ghost when that man came and told me. So angry at me he was. It was ok. I took his anger, like a little flame, and I tucked it away inside. It kept me warm in that big house in the holler. It kept me thinkin of you, and for you I am still here.

He said you want to know the thing yer momma wouldn't tell you. That you said you feel black and dark inside, and of the nights ya lie awake. This story's a cloud over us all my baby girl, and perhaps the telling of it will lift it. Cause ain't no mortal person left who knows the whole story but me. And I am gonna give it to you. For better or worse.

I know what that need is like, you know. Or maybe you haven't felt it yet. If'n not, chances are you will. It will find you in the middle of the night. You'll be lying there, maybe even next to someone. Maybe even your husband, and you'll feel like a rubber band has snapped somewhere deep inside you. They'll be tears, hot ones. They'll be hours lyin awake. There will be lying It happens this way in our family. Some women give into it, some don't. Your momma, she never did give into it. Did everything the right way, the expected way her whole life. Loved you, tolerated me, was a wife to your father even after he ran off with that woman from Tennessee. Me, as you know, was allus different. I followed a different path.

It got so's the wanting was too much you see. The night hours were too long, and my husband, he was way too small for everything. He couldn't even feed the pigs by hisself. I had to help. Lyin with him was too small. Lyin too him, too easy. The night, even, became too small for me and my aches. So I took my aches away. That's how I ended up in Chicago you know. That rubber band and them aches.

You may think you know what happened to me in Chicago. I know your mother had her ideas. I know everybody had their ideas. But what happened to me

in Chicago started right here. It started a long time ago. Its never stopped.

Oh, you was such a cute little girl. Black curls and grape jelly lips and biscuit crumbs at the breakfast table. Eyes that always seemed ringed all around with silver. Your granddaddy's dimples. And such a one for the animals. Never will forget that little chick you carried around in your red sweater till it done think you at three years old was its mamma. The sight of it grown and perched on your high chair.

There are things I should have showed you. How to make my great grannys bread and butter pickles, how to sew a dove in the window quilt. The names of the people in the pictures in the family bible, and where to put that bible when it don't make no logic sense. I needed to show you them things baby girl. Needed to. But yer momma done took you off the mountain and out and away and you weren't all mine to show things to, so I stayed out of it. But yer momma's been gone now these two long years, yer daddy ain't been heard tell of in longer years, and its time. Its time you come home to the mountain.

But for you to understand that, baby girl, you gotta understand what happened to me, and to Imbry, and even to your momma. Cause for all she was there for part of it, she never knew. She never knew this town, the good, bad, or ugly of it, and she never knew Imbry. She never knew why. But then, she never would listen to the story.

She listened to what everbody told her about the story, about how I was loose and they remembered that time when Charlie pulled me naked and pregnant out of the river. They said I was a glutton for the skin things and that I weren't no surprise to nobody, not no how. They called me a wanton woman baby girl and they was right, for once. I was wantin a whole lot. A whole lot I never got. But maybe you can have what I never had. And maybe you don't need to know nothin bout no dove in the window quilt.

But they's some things you think you know you don't rightly understand proper. And I just have you now for the story, and I find I'm past telling it. I find I'm weak here, when it counts. So you'll have to read about it as it happened. But promise me you'll read it April. It will explain things to you you don't know. That you need to know. It will bring the mountain to you, and everbody has to climb a mountain sometime.

Jillian sat back in the chair and felt as if her body was tingling all over. Her mind reeled. What the hell was her grandmother TALKIN about? And what man could have told her about her mother dying? She supposed it could only have been Annie's husband, Frank, but he was gone now too. Annie was her mother's best friend. Her only friend, really. She supposed she should call her and ask, but she was reluctant to do so. Annie had seemed to feel that she had to be Jillian's mother, since her own had died in a car accident two years ago. She was always asking Jillian where she'd been and who she'd been with, and Jillian resented her for it. On a deeper level she also appreciated it, knowing that someone still cared, but she felt as though Annie was spying on her. And since Annie had some sort of secret homeland security job, she figured the spying might actually be real. But here in hands was obviously another person who cared about her, deeply. So much that Jillian felt a terrible panging of loss. She picked up the next letter.

Jilly baby,

I know you're a grown lady now and probably off on your own. I bet you even went to college. I hope you went to college. Yer momma left and I won't say she was wrong to do it, if'n you went to college, but you was allus my Jilly baby and you allus will be. You'll probably want to know about your family, and your momma, and why she left and why you ain't seen me since you was knee high to a grasshopper and all of these things I'll explain. But first, first you need to know about drop biscuits. Drop biscuits is the best thing a woman can learn, for you can do anything with em. You can make em dessert with a little honey, or a little cream if'n you got some around. You can make em a sandwich with ham or eggs or tomatoes or chicken. You can feed the masses and it makes them masses happy to eat em if you make em right. This here's my recipe, and I'm a given it to you. You gotta know how to make yer granny's drop biscuits. Theys saved me with a surprise guest more'n once:

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup milk
1 teaspoon butter or margarine, melted

In a big bowl (I like Granny's big blue one for biscuits

and bread, as its so big ya can't knock nothing out of't), mix ya flour bakin powder an salt. In a different bowl mix ya milk and butter, then add em to the big blue bowl (now you make Beullah give you that bowl, otherwise her Nancy'll be grabbed it out the hosue quicker'n a cat laps milk). Then you spoon it up an drop it onto a greasy sheet. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. I like to add a bit a butter to the tops of mine just afore they's done, so they get right crispy and yummy on top.

It was my Momma what taught me how to make em. Told me no self respectin southern man would marry a woman didn't know how to make hand squashed biscuits. Course, the years would teach me no self respectin southern woman should be a'tall interested in a man who only married her for her biscuits.

They's also cornbread stuffing and apple pie and pecan cake and a whole host of other things the women in our family's a known for makin that you gotta know how to make. You gotta know because I know, because my momma knew, and her momma knew, and it goes back like that for a long time. Its longer than you, or me, or yer momma. Its stronger than that. People know us by our stuffins and pies and cakes, an whats more baby, we know ourselves by them too. They know us by our heaven and hell cake. I don't know if yer momma taught you. I don't know if yer momma knew. So I'm given these to you now Jilly baby. Make them all. But the heaven and hell cake has power Jilly baby and it ain't no everday cake. Like the bible says baby girl. As above, so below. I'll get to the cake later. You got lots you need to be a knowin before you gonna be ready for that cake. But remember. None-a them fancy electric gadgets. This cake you mix by hand. This cake you mix by hand and its a gonna take you all day.

Seems to me baby girl that its them all day things people forget how to do or even why to do it. They's good reason you roast summin all day long, or stand and count the strokes of a wire whisk in chocolate. They's more than one good reason, in fact.

Jillian finished reading and thought about the names in the letter. Beullah and Nancy. She would have other family as well. She didn't know who these people were, but she wanted to. She had family out there. She suddenly pulled her knees up to her chest and rocked herself silently, tears stinging her eyes. It was too much, suddenly. Her mother's lies, her grandmother's sentiment, her unnamed and unknown family. She didn't even know where Green Apple Falls was, but she reseolved to find out and fast. If she had family, she would go to them. She had nothing going on this semester but her thesis, and the research and writing of that she could do from anywhere.

"And of course, it'd be nice to leave all the bearded grunting men behind huh?" said the niggling voice in her head.

"There was just the one bearded grunter, she told it, and yes, this does make the perfect excuse for getting rid of him," she thought back at the voice, squaring her shoulders to wake the snoring.

The snoring didn't want to be woken, but when he finally opened his eyes (Mark apparently was his name) he tried to get her to come back to bed. Instead, she twisted out of his reach and tossed his clothes at him.

"I'm sorry, I've had a family emergency and I have to go out of town" she said, spur of the moment, but liking the way the word "family" sounded in her mouth.

He looked crushed, but started getting dressed. He wanted to talk, wanted to know what the emergency was, but she twisted away from the questions as easily has she had his grasp. Finally, she was shutting the door behind him.

Jillian started making preparations immediately. She called the attorney's office and got an answering service. She left a message, and got out her computer. She tried looking the lawyer up on the website but didn't get any hits. So then she put in the name of the town into google maps. It looked like it was an hour or so outside of Asheville, in the Pisgah View Mountains. The population of the town was less than 200. It said it was founded in 1740 by a group of Quakers who migrated from Virginia. There was a waterfall nearby which seemed to be the only item of interest, other than the orchards. The town had several acres of green apples, which were apparently brought from Virginia by the Quakers. The orchard now resided on private land, though it didn't say whose. That was the extent of the info on Wikipedia. Jillian sighed. She didn't remember any apples.

Jillian wondered how much Annie knew about all this. She picked up her cell phone, reluctantly, to call Annie's office.

"Jillian Easter for Annie Richards please," she said to the automated operator.

"One moment please," came back the tinny robotic voice. Jillian hated calling the impersonal line. Annie couldn't have her cell phone at work though. Jillian

suspected it really was homeland security, but Annie never said. After a moment she heard a click, and then Annie's voice came over the line.

"Jilly! How are you? How's the thesis?" Annie's voice sounded strained, as though she were trying too hard to cover up how tired she was. Jillian tried to remember the last time she'd actually seen Annie, instead of emailed or called, or dodged calls, and decided it had been over two weeks.

Jillian sighed. "The thesis is fine. Still doing research, but its coming along. Are you ok Aunt Annie?" Jillian asked, throwing in the Aunt on purpose. She knew it touched Annie when she called her aunt, and so she usually reserved it for occasions like this. Hell, until she'd opened her grandmother's letters she'd called her that in an almost desperate way, as she'd believed that but for Annie, and her husband Frank who'd passed away only a few months after her mother, she had no one.

"Just tired Jilly. How about we have dinner tonight though? I'm starving already. What if I come over tonight and we make something good? Your mom's cornbread?"

Jillian's mom had worked in a restaurant in Chicago. She had started out working in a diner, when Jillian was really little, and then ended up being a chef in a restaurant all on her own. She didn't own the restaurant, but she made it famous. Her Mom could cook anything, but she made the restaurant famous by cooking decadent southern dishes for people who had never been south of the Mason Dixon line. With few exceptions, she never let Jillian eat that stuff. She'd raised Jillian to be a vegetarian. The cornbread though, that was something her Mom would often make at home. She had a special cast iron skillet she would make it in. They would have cornbread and soup. Jillian hadn't made it since her Mom died, two years ago. In fact, Jillian had never made it on her own, though she'd watched her mother do it countless times.

"That sounds great Aunt Annie. I'd like that" Jillian said, glancing at the clock. She was suddenly antsy, ready to be on the road. Ready to find this mountain and read the rest of those letters and get on with everything she needed to be getting on with. But it was already 2 o clock, and she couldn't get on the road today anyhow.

"Six o'clock ok?" Annie asked.

"See you then" Jillian said, not asking anything about the letters. There would be time that night.

Jillian spent the rest of the afternoon getting ready to go. She changed out of her running clothes and into a pair of jeans and a red chenille sweater that set off her golden skin and tawny hair, whch she pulled back into a tight ponytail. She zipped knee high black boots up over her jeans, and tossed in a load of laundry before she left. She went first to the library. Heading to the printer she mapquested directions from her house to Green Apple Falls. Mapquest estimated the trip at just under 12 hours. Geez, she thought. She'd never been on a trip that long. She'd never really been anywhere, except a long weekend in New York for her 18th birthday, a present from Annie.

Next, she printed out a list of the five or six books she would need for her thesis. She wasn't sure how long she would be gone, so she intended to go prepared to write her thesis from Green Apple Falls. Heading up into the stacks to collect her books she avoided looking at the study carrels that lined the walls. She blushed anyhow. Even if her mind chose not to remember, her body did.

The previous semester Jillian had spent long hours in the library preparing for her comprehensive exams. She'd hated her empty house, devoid of her mother, but full of all her mother's things. She'd swear she could still smell her mother's cooking. So the library had been her refuge, and the works of Shakespeare her alternate reality. She was writing her thesis on the reflection of reality in Shakespeare's plays, chiefly using **Twelfth Night** and **The Taming of the Shrew**. So she'd studied everything she needed to pass her test, and immersed herself in middle English. Midway through the semester she'd looked up from her desk to see a boy staring at her. She could tell he was in undergrad from his skinny frame and youthful face. He wore black rimmed glasses. She liked his glasses. She could see her reflection in those glasses. She stared back. Weeks went on like this. He always seemed to be there when she was there. He would look at her, and she would look at him. She decided he had a crush on her. She decided he was too young for her. She decided she still liked those glasses. She began to look for him when she went to the library. One day he wasn't there when she got there. Disgruntled she settled down to work, but couldn't settle down. After about an hour she got up and went to the bathroom. On her way back, she saw him head into the stacks. She followed him. On a whim. On her legs whim. They moved of their own accord. ...

Elizabeth Thomas
2010 Best Novel-in-Progress 1st Runner-Up
Excerpt: "Subway"

Perhaps the chief property of a great city isn't that it has no failings, but that even failings magnify and explain, sprawling across the boundary between tragic and comic, defining life as what happens in between.

1.

A WANDERER in New York can make his way to Park Slope, Brooklyn NY 11215, taking the F-train, and getting off at Fifteenth Street Prospect Park, thinking he'll walk upstairs and find himself in a fashionable brownstone neighborhood, only to make a wrong turn, climb the wrong staircase, and discover Windsor Terrace, an enclave in a time warp, an ordinary place, a home to police and firefighters, sanitation workers, bus and subway drivers, steeplejacks and city clerks. The salt, not the sugar, of New York.

Retired FBI special agent Raymond O'Hara makes no mistake, when he leaves the subway station near ten at night, and strolls into Windsor Terrace.

Destination, Farrell's Bar.

Last of the old Brooklyn Irish saloons, Farrell's, a few well-sited steps from Holy Name Roman Catholic Church.

In front of the church, a beggar stops Raymond, and he hands the man a dollar, before entering Farrell's.

"Any good baddies?"

Raymond aims his remark at Brendan Ryan, whose back – stubbornly, defiantly – is turned to the only two women in the tavern, Ryan's eyes listlessly scanning the afternoon's *New York Post*.

The front page headline: Veep Names Traitor Dems.

Ryan folds the paper and tosses it on the bar. "Same old."

"Brendan, see that guy out there?" Raymond nods at the bar window, and at the man standing alone on the corner in front of the church. "Hit me up for a buck. First time that's ever happened to me here."

"I know, he got me, too. Broke my heart. Guy used to come in this place. So I gave him the buck. Used to be, someone said 'I'm hungry, pal, can you spare something?' you told him, 'Hey asshole, get a job.' Not no more. By the way, how's your granddaughter?"

"Terrific, thanks. Bouncing right back, chicken pox can't lick her. She's got the O'Hara constitution. We walked the dog tonight, and you won't believe what she says. 'You got your gun, Grandpa?'"

"How come?"

"Kids." Raymond shrugs. "They got kids scared, crap they hear on TV, and in school."

"Hey, let me tell you something, Ray, I wouldn't mind having mine back. My wife and me, both ex, so you'd think they'd at least let us share one. This is New York, right, not Virginia, or some crazy place like that. I'd feel a lot better. Even if I only ever got to use it once on the job."

"For what?"

"A Sicilian."

"Mob?"

"No such luck. Asshole smuggling salamis, no DOA license. Guy had a warehouse full of meat, just off Court Street. Pulls a knife on me. He lost a kidney."

"Good salamis?"

"Best, if you go for garlic. Really, you don't miss carrying a weapon?"

"Nothing happens. C'mon, life's good. It's like embassy duty, being retired."

"Tell me about it, I always wanted embassy work. See the world, sock away the allowance. Brussels, I was hoping for, supposed to have the world's best beers. Figured I'd get it for just being a good boy, couple of years left in the Bureau, a last post before retirement. But no way."

"What happened?"

"Clinton's what happened. I spent those two years in Little Rock, drilling barflies."

"They got beer in Little Rock."

"And more bimbos than Vegas. They don't even speak English. Listen to that drawl for two years? Coming back to Brooklyn, believe me, Ray, was like going to heaven."

"Find any there?"

"Any what?"

"Bimbos who blew Clinton."

"You kidding? They all did, you listen to them. Every one of them thought they'd get retirement money, swearing they knelt before the Commander in Chief. 'On a stack of bibles, officer, he's got a wart on it, left side.' So much bullshit, I couldn't wait to get back to New York. Meantime, the camel jockeys are planning the Towers. So Bush gets in, then what? Same old. Who listens to us? Bush sure as shit didn't. They got the Bureau drilling tourists, for chrissake. Fucking waste. Glad you're retired? I sure as hell am."

"No argument from me. Another round?"

The bartender brings Raymond O'Hara and Brendan Ryan two glasses of draft beer.

"And a couple of balls with that," Raymond says. "What the hell, retirement, right. Just a drop. But you know, I don't blame the Bureau, I don't hate them."

"Of course not, me neither. I'm grateful. People who hate anything? In my experience, Ray, they're fuckups. Hate will put you in as much trouble as too much loving. Prudence, remember that stuff we used to get? The nuns and brothers were right. That's what I miss now. Prudence."

The bartender fills two shot glasses with Tullamore Dew.

Raymond lifts his. "To retirement."

"No shit."

They knock back the whiskey, and go back to sipping beer. So the night rolls on, beers, wee drops, headshaking.

Around two a.m., snow starts falling, thick and heavy, fat wet flakes like snowballs blowing in off the Atlantic, splashing up against Farrell's windows, melting on the plate glass in long slow streaks.

Raymond O'Hara and Brendan Ryan are the last patrons to leave the bar, Raymond poking his nose out first.

"Jesus, look at this stuff. I'm taking the subway."

"Two lousy stops?"

"Beats Alaska. You're lucky, right around the corner. Me, I'll snooze on the platform. Catch a few zzz's."

The bartender in Farrell's locks the saloon door behind Raymond O'Hara and Brendan Ryan.

* * * * *

Ryan heads straight for home right around the corner.

And Raymond trudges through thickening snow past Holy Name church – the beggar is gone – towards the F-train subway station, a block away at Bartel Pritchard Square and Fifteenth Street, across from Prospect Park.

Behind him, the snow is blowing in harder, almost vertically, obscuring streetlights, swirling round in mini-tornados.

But Raymond doesn't feel the cold. The beer and whiskey work their own kind of warmth.

He picks his way slowly down slush-covered subway steps.

Eighteen minutes to three, when he swipes his MetroCard through the turnstile slot.

He's the only passenger on the platform.

He plans on riding the Coney Island F-train two stops to Church Avenue, then walking a long miserable block along MacDonald to 100 Caton Avenue, back to the apartment – 2H – where his wife Mary Margaret will be snoring, lightly, having given up on Raymond hours (if not years) before.

At eleven minutes to three, the F-train rumbles in, and he's delighted.

Lucky night …

Between midnight and five, a train arrives maybe once an hour.

Positioning himself near the middle of the platform, Raymond relishes this blessing, as the train pulls in, glistening wet from two outdoor stops – Smith and Ninth, then Fourth Avenue.

The driver's side window is a watery blur.

The train is short, only four cars for the small hours of the morning. The second car stops in front of Raymond.

Good positioning.

The doors don't open at once, maybe nothing unusual given the time. Through windows streaked with water, Raymond sees passengers in the car. The interior lights are bright …

… bright enough for him to also see, after a moment or two, that something is very wrong inside the second car.

A half dozen or so passengers, either sprawled on the floor …

… or toppled over across the seats.

No one upright.

No one standing.

No one moving.

But he detects no signs of violence. No broken glass, splattered blood, gaping wounds.

Before him is a clear tableau of terror.

Gas. They can't all be drunk …

Shouting, he runs towards the first car and the driver's compartment.

"Don't open the doors! Don't open the fucking doors!"

The effects of whiskey and beer vanish. He's terrifyingly sober, as he starts pounding on the driver's window.

The driver, a young African-American, looks annoyed. But he's not entirely unfamiliar with irate passengers in the middle of the night. His name badge says Friel Whitmore.

He opens his side window. "Hell you want, man …"

Raymond flashes his wallet, nothing there really, just a fast movement.

"FBI. Don't open the fucking doors. You got a car full of bodies. Your second car."

"Show me."

Friel Whitmore opens the first door of the front car, and steps onto the platform. He jogs briskly alongside Raymond, back to the second car.

Together, they peer in the first window, second, third. Nothing has changed inside the car, no one has moved.

But this time Raymond notices what he hadn't registered at first shock.

A man is on his knees, immobile, his head in a woman's lap, the woman slumped against a window. Next to the woman's thigh, the man's right hand rests on a gun.

Still Raymond detects no indications of violence: no wounds or blood, no other weapons, nothing.

"Got to call in." The driver Friel Whitmore races back to his compartment.

"Tell them, gas!"

And then Raymond O'Hara turns around to look again, transfixed.

The woman slumped against the window is a young attractive African-American, smartly dressed, grey fur Eddieet, navy slacks.

The man on his knees, head in her lap, is white, mid-thirties, short blond hair. He's wearing a tan raincoat, trench coat model, grey flannel trousers, cordovan shoes. The man's right hand covers most of the gun on the seat, and while Raymond isn't sure, the weapon appears to resemble the same Walther 7.65 Bureau-issued model he carried as a special agent with the Bureau.

Behind the couple's seat, on the floor at the far end of the car, is a khaki-colored plastic bucket about eighteen inches high, the collapsible kind made for backpacking campers.

No bodies at this end of the car.

Raymond walks from window to window. And he counts the passengers: seven, as if asleep, but only more so, as though closer to comatose: a montage of death beyond rational explanation.

He moves past the windows of the next car, where he sees only two riders, both awake, both unconcerned.

The last car is empty.

He turns back towards the front of the train, just as Friel Whitmore is stepping onto the platform, motioning to passengers in the first car to stay inside.

Good thinking …

Everyone on this train – except perhaps the driver – is a potential perp, a suspect. Or an unsuspecting witness.

He approaches Friel Whitmore.

He makes a mental note, that the first car holds at least as many passengers as the rest of train, and all of them look as if they've just awakened abruptly: confused, concerned, ignorant of death, innocent of slaughter.

Not yet panicked. They simply don't understand.

Raymond scans their faces.

No one is trying hide. No one looks ready to run. Only after a few seconds, do they start exhibiting the first signs of fright.

Soon, as knowledge of the catastrophe spreads, inchoate shock will grip them. Awareness does that, always, the first hints of danger simply build, until all reason vanishes, and terror takes over. …

Amy Boutell
2010 Novel-in-Progress Second Runner-Up
Excerpt:
The Invention of Violet

Chapter 3

I was walking in circles around the open-air pavilion at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, trying to intuit my way to the right entrance. The exhibition was on "Fashioning Fashion: European Dress from 1700-1915." The museum had recently acquired a major collection of European garments—"from the boudoir to the royal court," as the flyer put it. I was here to meet Nina Sterling, museum curator and owner of the premiere vintage couture atelier in Beverly Hills, to talk about how I might assist with the "Fashion & Surrealism" exhibition that would premiere at LACMA at the end of the summer.

I took a moment to walk through the streetlamp sculpture, Urban Light, which consisted of two hundred and two cast-iron antique streetlamps, according to the sign. The twelve rows of streetlamps were flanked by what I counted to be twelve gigantic palm trees, perfectly installed, like works of art. The palms were swaying in the breeze and casting shadows against the red saw-tooth roof and its angular beams, which were slanted for reasons having to do with capturing sunlight. Once the streetlamps all flickered on at once, it seemed time for the night to begin, so I headed inside.

It was impossible to decide what to wear tonight, but I finally settled on a peach and mint-green satin cut-on-the-bias gown from the 1930s with flower appliqués at the bust, which made me look like I'd spent the day lying around on a lily pad. I accessorized with a gold and bronze silk Lily Dache turban, several sparkly rhinestone celluloid bracelets, and my favorite pink floral beaded flapper handbag, which was shedding beads at an alarming rate. These were all items from the I'm-so-excited-I-get-to-vote-after-doing-my-part-in-the-war-effort-that-I'm-going-to-tape-down-my-breasts-and-dress-like-a-garconne era.

There were people gathered in small groups directly in front of the Resnick Pavilion—tall reedy brunette women in asymmetrical dresses, their heels revealing red soles of Christian Louboutins; and scruffy sinewy fair-skinned men wearing dark jeans, closely fitting jackets and aviator glasses a tad too late in the day. When I walked inside, the crowd became more put together, as if I'd just crossed the 405. Chloe Sevingy was all legs in a sea-green sequin mini dress, and Kit Clover, star of The Last Days of the Locust, which was apparently Studio 54 meets Nathaniel West in musical form, wore a gold lame halter dress that recalled both the 1930s and the 1970s. There was Rosanna Arquette in a sexy black tuxedo dress, an alligator clutch, gladiator heels, and big gold paisley-shaped earrings that brought to mind **Desperately Seeking Susan**. She was flanked by two men in their fifties—a media mogul in high-top sneakers and a Dodgers baseball cap, and a tall lanky man in a red suit and pinstriped socks who resembled the Grinch and was either a film director and/or mystery writer, I wasn't sure which since they looked exactly like (and may in fact be the same person).

Penelope Goodyear wore a long silver shimmery backless dress that I'd seen in the window of Evolution, while her twin sister Poppy was encased in a light bondage Vivienne Westwood number. The Goodyear sisters were chatting with the owner of Evolution, Calvin Armstrong, a very handsome gay man with sideburns and a widow's peak who wore a seersucker suit, his signature stopwatch, and alligator shoes. Calvin's date was the glamorous director of the Page Museum, Miranda Pines, a petite brunette with a pixie cut who was wearing a black eyelet Betsey Johnson baby doll dress that I once owned in high school (which made me feel old or young or just weird).

As I approached the Smoke sculpture in the atrium, I could've sworn I saw my ex-boyfriend, B., the British archivist, with his long black dreads and his impeccable Armani suit and a slight limp due to a soccer (or rather football) injury. I ducked inside the labyrinthine sculp-

ture to hide so he didn't see me. He seemed to be alone, as always, like a modern day flaneur. He really was such a dandy; all he needed was a top hat and a flower in his lapel. I suppose his Armani suit and Dolce & Gabbana "trousers" (British for briefs, not boxers) were the modern day metrosexual dandy equivalent. All I knew was that I was relieved that he no longer texted me photos of himself in his trousers from his transatlantic travels. But it unnerved me to see him on my turf, no doubt trolling the museum for women to have sex with and/or have proofread his obscure academic tomes that four people in the world would actually read.

I grabbed a glass of champagne from a bartender and looked at a few portraits by the European masters—lush dreamy depictions of fair-skinned blushing women—then people-watched for a few minutes before locating Nina and Tabitha Sterling.

The Sterling sisters were standing in front of the display describing the evolution of the silhouette through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from the wide-hooped silhouettes worn at court to the modern narrow silhouette still in favor today. Tabitha was resplendent in an emerald green peacock Theirry Mugler number, and Nina looked fierce in her crisp black suit and snaky gold Judith Lieber jewelry.

Tabitha said hello and complimented my dress. Nina acknowledged me by nodding and raising her eyebrows. "Come on, Violet, let's take a look at everything," Tabitha said, and I followed the sisters through the exhibition.

The mannequins had been placed in simple grey crates. The room itself looked like a warehouse, and seeing the garments in crates made it look as if the items had just arrived from Europe and been unpacked with great haste. It looked unfinished, as if this were a super sneak peek behind-the-scenes preview before the curators had decided on the themes of the exhibition or arrived at a strategy to place the items in their historical and visual context.

"Who are these little midgets? People were so short then!" Tabitha exclaimed.

"I think those are the children, Tabitha," Nina corrected her. "It was a luxury to wear white, since it soiled so easily."

We passed a silk champagne robe a la frances from the 1740s with a whalebone-supported corset, a deep décolletage with elaborate mint-green ties, and delicate hand-painted flowers on the bodice. With its six-foot-wide panniers, the silhouette was so wide you'd have to squeeze through a doorway sideways. We walked by another narrow-wasted French gown from the 1780s—this one with white and navy stripes— which recalled Marie Antoinette and somehow Vivienne Westwood. We were soon heading into a period in which they'd just discovered purple, during Victoria's big craze for the color.

After an array of purple gowns with bustles bunched up in the back to accommodate walking, we passed a display of undergarments from the 1870s and 1880s. There were bustles crafted from horsehair and padding, cage crinolines, and hybrid crinoline and bustle crinolettes, which allowed for the billowing drapes of massive skirts that bunched up in the back and emphasized the derriere. Then there was the "bust improver" or "bosom friend" circa 1890, a white cotton bra-like contraption that had drawstrings to shove breasts into so as to achieve the full-breasted look of the S-curve that was in fashion at the time.

Nina pointed to a simple white muslin dress from 1800, which she said was inspired by the French Revolution's nostalgia for the politics of the ancient world. The slim silhouette anticipated the look popular during the First World War, even down to the turbans and feathered headdresses worn at the time.

"These dresses were often inspired by Old Master paintings," Nina said. "Why didn't the curators decide to reference the paintings in murals? Or perhaps include a Delacroix or an Ingres along with the gown? These grey crates just aren't doing it for me."

I was getting impatient for modernity. I momentarily perked up around the 1880s with the Edith Wharton-esque walking suits and saddle-riding outfits. My imagination was finally captured at the turn-of-the-next-century—circa the Moulin Rogue-esque black leather corset and matching thigh-high fetish boots with silk red lining.

"These appear to have been worn at one of those tawdry Parisian burlesque shows that Manet's paintings only hint at," Nina said. "So this was what Manet's Olympia was doing at night. Perhaps disrobing the corset and flinging her fetish boots in a boudoir at the royal court."

Nina read from the gallery description. "'The slot-and-stud corset fastening was patented in 1828.' Just think—now you didn't even need a servant to help remove it; it could easily be ripped off in a heated moment."

There was a gorgeous sorbet tea gown by Poiret, who freed women from the corset in the 1910s, on one of the last mannequins. According to the gallery description, the mannequin was wearing a feather-plumed turban that Poiret's wife Denise wore to their **Arabian Nights**-inspired masquerade in 1911. If only the curators had decided to portray the masquerade in a mural to bring

the tea gown and the turban to life. I can see how the silhouette changed from the eighteenth to the early twentieth-century—from wide-hooped to vertical—but I want to see the images of daily life that go along with these gowns. I want to see an image of the boudoir, the royal court, perhaps the guillotine. Otherwise, it's just a

bunch of old stuff in grey crates to me.

I thought back to the exhibitions I worked on at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where I was ever-so-briefly a curatorial assistant. The exhibitions at the Costume Institute were like a time capsule to another era, completely immersing the viewer in another time and space. For "American Woman: Fashioning a National Identity," I conducted research on the major archetypes of femininity depicted from the 1880s through the 1930s—the Heiress, the Gibson Girl, the Suffragette, the Bohemian, the Flapper, the Screen Siren. I researched designers such as Charles James and Jessie Franklin Turner, located film clips to be projected in the Screen Siren gallery (Bringing up Baby, The Women), planned luncheons with donors in the Trustees Dining Room, and arranged appointments with the muralists who created the exhibition's stunning backdrops. (A reproduction of the Astors' ballroom in Newport for the turn-of-the-century "Heiress" mannequins decked out in cream silk chine and Argentan lace gowns by Worth; nighttime murals of Manhattan skyscrapers whose angles were echoed by the geometric, architectural dresses worn by the flapper mannequins: Chanel, Vionnet, and Madame Gres.)

Tabitha pointed to the last mannequin, which was wearing Callot Souers tulle-and-chamese pajamas and a white turban with a turquoise feather at the top. "That looks like something our grandmother Odette wore as a girl," Tabitha said.

"This is where our exhibit takes off—right after 1915," Nina said. "And this exhibition is exactly what we do not want to do for the Fashion & Surrealism exhibition we're curating. There are no backdrops here, there's no history, no context. The garments don't speak for themselves."

"So Violet," Nina said to me, "I'd like you to assist us with the exhibition. We need help locating a few of the pieces on our object list and conducting research on the items. I had my assistant email Leora at the Costume Institute and she sent a glowing response and said you're very hands-on and that you did wonders with the Goddess exhibit a few years back."

What I'd done was gotten my mother, a goddess in her own right, to gift some of her Jean Desses gowns to the institute. That was the pinnacle of my tenure at the Costume Institute, where I was actually fired after trying on a pair of Salvatore Ferragamo ankle-strap five-inch platform "rainbow" sandals from 1938, the heels of which were made of cork from wine bottles and lined with leather. At the time I had no idea that the shoes were created for Judy Garland, much less that they symbolized a radical rejection of fascism. That was pretty much it for my career at the Costume Institute. After that, I returned home to Santa Barbara to work at my family's architectural salvage shop and never expected to set foot in a museum much less get to work at a museum ever again. I was surprised that Leora had failed to mention the rainbow sandal debacle; perhaps she suspected that I might have more items to gift one of these days.

"Of course Leora is my sworn enemy so if you are completely mad she wouldn't tell me," Nina said. "But we don't have time to sort through the 500 resumes we've received in the past 48 hours. So let me tell you what we need help with starting Monday morning, which is everything from unwrapping the crates full if Schiaparelli pieces I purchased at auction, to verifying the garments are in the condition stated by the condition reports, to doing a little guerilla conservation work of a few items that need a little reworking. I'd like for you to handle the condition reporting and really take a look at each garment from the inside out, top to bottom, and make sure every zipper works, every hook and eye is in place, and that not a single hem is frayed."

"Any exhibition is very collaborative," she continued, "and I'm not collaborative in the least. It's endless—the installation and exhibit designers, the curatorial staff, conservators and assistants, art handlers and construction workers. It takes quite a team to help organize and install an exhibition. You need 3-4 people to dress a mannequin alone, given how fragile these gowns are and their complicated fastenings. Leora says you were very thorough in the condition reports and that's what I'd like done—really impeccable work, no detailed missed. I don't want a single seem to be frayed during this exhibit, otherwise I might as well simply hang the dresses up in my office and gaze at them myself. That's how protective I am."

I thought back to my work as an assistant at the Brooklyn Museum Costume Documentation Project several years ago, which was like a massive foundation-funded three-year closet cleaning endeavor to track nearly 25,000 objects spanning four centuries. I'd get lost writing too-long descriptions of garments for item tags, and I'd spend my free time researching the glamorous, mysterious donors—Millicent Rogers, Mrs. Frederick Prince, Dominique Menil, daughters of industry, philanthropists, artists and bon vivants. I loved reading their hand-written notes about where the dresses were worn, and with whom, imagining the secret lives of their wardrobes.

"I see from the resume you forwarded this afternoon that you have experience with conservation," Nina said. My resume listed historical preservation workshops I took at Vassar several years ago (nearly ten), along with links to the blog posts detailing my conservation work. Nina complimented my work re-stitching and restructuring a rust colored satin dress with an empire waistline from the 1890s. I had removed the added lace at the collar, replaced the delicate chiffon lining, steamed out the ruffles and reinforced the sleeves with conservation net. But it had been years since I'd worked with costumes or helped plan an exhibition. I'd barely fixed a seam or used an iron in the past few years. These were long-dormant skills that I wasn't sure if I had it in me to resuscitate. But even though I was scared, it was also a little thrilling.

It was hard to believe that I hadn't hallucinated the entire conversation with Nina Sterling: the opportunity to assist with my dream exhibition, my dream decades, and make use of my last few seemingly wayward years scavenging for pieces at Anachronism and salvaging finds from the 1920s that caught my fancy as I lived off cinematic castoffs and put off making decisions of my own. Despite that single misstep involving a pair of fantastical rainbow sandals, I'd finally lucked into a second chance.

Other Novel-in-Progress Finalists

And in the End, Martha Burns, La Luz, NM

Chance & Circumstances, Matthew A. Minson, Houston, TX

Comfort Food, Peggy O'Neal Peden, Nashville, TN

Hannah Delivered, Elizabeth Jared Andrew, Minneapolis, MN

Hannah's Left Hook, Brian McKeown, Worcester, MA

Here With The Saints, Paula Younger, Denver, CO

Kudzu Rising, Mary Brent Cantarutti, San Rafael, CA

Little Gods, John Malone, Lafayette, LA

Markers, Mary Hutchins Reed, Chicago, IL

The Principles of Mining, Sharon Thatcher, Boise, ID

The Unimaginable Joy of Waiting for the Queen of China, Chielo Eze, Chicago, IL

Visitors, Audrey Colombe, Tampa, FL

White Smoke, Elizabeth Thomas, Geneva, Switzerland

Brian Schneider
2010 Best Short Story Winner
Goodnight, Uncle Vincent

Brian Schneider, who also presented a paper on *The Literature of War & Collateral Damage* during *Words & Music, 2010*, is a former U.S. Air Force Sergeant, former military contractor, and veteran of the American war in Afghanistan. He grew up in the small town of St. Helen in northern Michigan and has also lived in Italy and Canada. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the University of Maryland and a Master of Arts Degree in English from the University of British Columbia. He currently is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of British and American Studies at the University of Constance in Germany where he focuses on contemporary American war writing. In addition, he also teaches English courses at U.S. military installations in Europe for the University of Maryland University College. His fiction has appeared in several magazines and he is currently working to publish his first novel, **This is Squalorville**, about his experiences with the war in Afghanistan and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

Judged by popular author Tom Franklin, whose newest novel, ***Crooked Letter****, released in 2010.*

The Judge's Comments:

A powerful story set in the great struggling city of Detroit, where one family faces dire circumstances at Christmas. But the two older sons, who ride bicycles to a nearby bar, refuse to be cowed by tragedy. The older tells his brother that they're Jameson men who can hold their own with Scotch drinkers, that they can hang in there. This story—with its honesty and the care which this writer took to make these characters people—moved me and stayed with me for days after I first read it.

Sponsored by:

The Award for the 2010 Gold Medal for Best Short Story was made possible by a grant by anonymous donors, members of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society.

As the first person awake I should've gotten the fire going, but my body instinctively went to the coffee maker instead. My younger brother had picked me up from the airport in Detroit the previous night. Victor hadn't been around when I passed through in August. We were a whole family again. My trip home would be different this time.

In the kitchen I looked out my mother's favorite window to the backyard. It was a mess. Christmas was in three days but there hadn't been a good snowfall yet. I was contemplating breakfast options in the pantry when my niece walked warily into the kitchen wearing bodysuit pajamas, her blankie dangling from one hand. She eyed me.

"Good morning Alison," I said. "You're up early." Alison stayed at the edge of the room, one foot on the kitchen linoleum and the other in the carpeted living room. The coffee gurgled to life.

"Do you remember me?" I asked.

"Uncle Victor," the little girl said.

I had to laugh. She saw my brother more than me.

"Close," I replied. "I'm Uncle Vincent. You had a fifty-fifty chance there, kid."

"What?"

"Nothing. Get over here and give me a hug."

She seemed unsure but let me pick her up – then dropped her blankie, making the embrace brief. I turned my attention to the coffee. There was only one travel mug in the cupboard, so I grabbed a ceramic one. Alison climbed a bar stool on the other side of the counter.

"Uncle Vincent, I'm hungry."

"I'm on the job." I went back to the pantry and pulled out a box of Kix. Kix and Cheerios were still the only cereals my mother bought.

"Mommy always gets the one with berries," Alison said.

"You'll have to talk to Grandma about that. Out of my jurisdiction."

I placed a bowl in front of her.

"Where's Uncle Victor?" my niece asked.

"Sleeping."

"He's always sleeping." Alison stirred her cereal.

"College life. You'll understand when you're older." I leaned on the counter, drinking my coffee. "Are you going to eat your breakfast or play with it?" She didn't answer. My father walked into the kitchen, pulling on a sweater.

"Grandpa!" Alison said. My father gave her a hug from behind.

"Here," I said, pouring coffee into the travel mug. "Take this one."

"Your mother doesn't like it when I drink coffee," my dad said.

"Tell her it was my idea."

Alison ooched down from the bar stool and came over to my knees.

"Can we play outside today?" she asked.

"I don't know. It's pretty dirty out."

"I wanna play in the snow."

I looked out the window again. Good old muddy Michigan weather. That hadn't changed. "You'll have to wait on the outdoor stuff."

"Why?"

"There isn't any snow. And Grandpa and I have to go to town this morning. But we'll be back soon."

My dad looked at me briefly, then returned to his coffee.

"Why are you leaving?" she asked.

"Just going to the bank," I explained.

"Why?"

"To take care of some things."

"What things?"

"Hey," I said, glancing at my father for help. "How about I bring you some ice cream when I come back?"

"Okay," the little one said, spotting her toy blocks in the living room. I'd nearly tripped over them last night.

My father smiled. "Is buying ice cream your solution to all kid questions?" he asked.

"As long as it works, yes." I picked up my mug. "You ready to go?"

"I should start the fire first. We've got the wood. And it does cut down on the heating bill."

"Let Victor do it when he gets up," I said. Tomorrow was Saturday. I wanted to get to the bank and not think about it anymore. My father paused, took his travel mug, and walked to the front door. I followed. "What about Alison?"

"She's fine," my dad said. "They're plenty of babysitters around." He placed the blankie over Alison's shoulders. "Grandma will be up soon. Tell her Uncle Vincent and I went to town."

"Okay," Alison said. The blankie fell from her back as my dad and I left.

The car ignition stuttered but turned over. The roads on the drive into town were surprisingly clean. Near the railroad tracks beat-up cars sat outside the mechanic shop with "$700 OBO" written in soap on the windshields.

"Does Pelfrey still own the shop?" I asked.

"Nope," my dad said. "Sold it and moved to Arizona."

After the post office we passed the video rental place. No sense asking about that. It was under new ownership every time I came home.

"Ran into your pal Ricky the other day," my dad said.

"Yeah? What's he up to?" I'd played basketball with Ricky in high school. He supposedly played D-III ball for a while, but that was the last I'd heard of him.

"He's working at the axle plant outside town. He asked about you."

"What'd you tell him?"

We reached the center of St. Helen and my father made a left turn into the bank parking lot.

"Said you'd got out of the military and now you're going to school in Canada." My dad looked at his watch. "Bank won't open for another fifteen minutes."

He left the car running and switched the dial to NPR.

"How's that plant doing?" I asked.

"Still open, but pretty sure it's shutting down next year." He ran his hand across his jaw. "Listen, something will come up after the new year. Has to get better."

The bank manager appeared, unlocked the bank doors, and waved us in. His daughter had been in the same grade as Victor.

My dad talked with the manager while I filled out slips of paper. My father was liked around town. He had a way of chatting with everyone. A skill I wished I'd inherited. Might've been useful in grad school. I handed him the slips and we stood side-by-side while the manager punched numbers into a calculator.

I had to get out of the bank.

"I'm going to get the ice cream," I said. My father nodded.

Outside I zipped my coat to the collar and walked across the street to the charred cement lot where my father's grocery store had stood. It was wet with mud and snow.

I was in Italy when the store burned down, my last days in the Air Force. I woke to find an email subject line from my sister that read, "Fire. Store GONE."

I called home and got the story from my mother. Saturday night after closing. The Fire Chief estimated the roof must've been burning for at least three hours before the call came in. Faulty circuit breaker on a compressor unit on top of the building. The place was so old it didn't stand a chance.

The store was gone, but I was scheduled for Afghanistan. We talked about what to do. I went to Kandahar. Over a year later, this was my first good look at the empty lot. The cleanup was done. I stood near the front, where the cash registers would've been. Bagging groceries in this spot was my last job before joining the Air Force. My father's store. Burned to the ground. Unbelievable. As the months went by in Afghanistan and Vancouver it still felt like I wasn't doing anything to help.

I went across the street to the pharmacy. They sold beer and liquor now. I couldn't stop myself from taking one more look at the empty lot. My dad had been at that place for thirty-seven years. Had worked his way up to manager. It was owned by businessmen downstate. The owners said they'd rebuild, but the employees knew better.

The pharmacy didn't carry Jameson so I bought a cheaper whiskey. I grabbed a carton of Moose Tracks ice cream for Alison. Outside my father was in the car, messing with the heater.

"All set?" I asked.

"Yep," my dad said, pausing. "Thanks."

As we neared our gravel driveway, he glanced at the paper bag with the whiskey.

"What's in there?"

"Ice cream cones," I said.

My father looked out his window to cover his grin.

"Just don't let your mother see."

Everyone except Victor was up when my dad and I returned. I got the whiskey upstairs while my mom took the car keys from my dad. She was going to clean houses for some retirees from church.

"Hey Vic," I said, entering our room. "How about you join the living?"

The room still held two twin-size beds. Victor groaned from the one near the window. "What time is it?"

"Past 0900 hours. Soldiers have put in a half day's work by now."

"Good for them," my brother mumbled.

Downstairs, I gave Julie a big hug.

"Great to have you home," she said. "How are you?"

"Fine. Everything's good."

Mom had made bacon and eggs for breakfast. I fixed myself a plate and sat down next to my niece, who had her own small portion.

"Eating again?" I asked Alison. She giggled.

"You have no idea," my sister said. "She'll probably have a third or fourth breakfast before lunch."

My dad looked over the remaining eggs in the frying pan.

"I'd better stick to oatmeal," he said. "I'm going to jump in the shower first."

He left. Julie sat across from me and watched me eat, periodically taking sips of coffee.

"Alison said you and dad went to the bank this morning. What did you do?"

"We robbed the joint."

"Be serious."

"I said I'd take care of it and I did."

"Fine. You don't have to tell me." Julie paused for a second. "I'm not trying to be pushy. I just worry, that's all. You know Joe and I would help out, but since I'm pregnant."

"You're pregnant again?" I said, taking my plate to the kitchen. "Since when?"

"Last month," Julie said confusedly. "Didn't mom tell you?"

"Geez. I'm the last person to find out anything." I looked out at the backyard. The rabbit hutch we'd al-

ways had was missing. I'd have to ask my mom about that.

"Maybe if you lived closer to home."

"Congratulations Julie," I said, ignoring her last remark. "I mean that. It's great."

"What do we do when unemployment runs out?" She shook her head. "Dad's not gonna get an extension. And no health care. Where's he supposed to find a job? He's fifty-eight years old."

I poured myself more coffee.

"You know the best lesson I learned in Afghanistan?"

"What?"

"Only deal with what's directly in front of you. Or wait for something to explode."

"That's lovely, Vince." Julie stood. "I'm just trying to think ahead. It could get worse."

Victor appeared in the living room and lifted Alison upside down, setting off squeals.

"If anything happens just call me, all right? I'm not in Kandahar anymore."

Julie didn't say anything. Victor and I took turns spinning Alison by her arms. After a while, Julie joined us, settling in our father's gray recliner.

"Tell us about Vancouver," she said.

"It's pretty cool," I said. "Great views of the Pacific with the Rockies in the background. Just beautiful. I've never seen anything like it." Nobody in my family had lived near an ocean, and prior to Vancouver basic training in San Antonio was the furthest west I'd been. "The restaurants are good," I continued. "The sushi's awesome. Beer and wine's kinda expensive though. And they have these dumb laws about selling it. No alcohol in the supermarkets. They have special stores for booze that are only open like three times a week."

"That sucks," Victor said, setting up the Playstation 2 he'd brought back from college.

"Hey, watch your mouth," Julie said.

"I said 'sucks,'" Victor responded.

"Not in front of Alison. She'll mimic whatever you two do."

I stretched out on the carpet next to Alison. Victor was playing Grand Theft Auto.

"Check this out, Vince. They even have a part where you can pick up hookers."

"Victor!" Julie said.

"What?" He looked at Alison. "She's three. She doesn't understand."

"That's not the point."

On the screen Victor stole a police car and started joyriding. I kept Alison's attention on the blocks.

"What are you building?" I asked her.

"A store," she said, concentrating on the stack.

"How are the girls in Vancouver?" Victor asked.

"I don't know," I said. "All right I guess."

"You meet anyone?" Julie asked. She was watching the television screen.

"Not you too. Last time I was home mom had me on a blind date with the organist's daughter."

"I remember that," Julie laughed. "That was hysterical."

"Maybe for you," I said. "I was the one that had to weasel out of it."

"You were going to Canada. Pretty good excuse."

I handed Alison another rectangle.

"But," Julie persisted. "Anyone interesting?"

I thought about the question. It seemed harmless in Michigan.

"There's a girl in my department," I said. "She's pretty cool."

"What's her name?"

"Eve."

"Sounds hot," Victor piped up.

"How's that going?" Julie asked, disregarding our brother.

"I don't know," I said. "She's a friend."

"You didn't buy her flowers, did you?" Victor asked. "I know you. You're always doing crap like that." He paused the game and turned. "Never buy a girl you like flowers. Once they know you're into them you're screwed." He laughed. "Well, not screwed actually."

"Hey! Hello?" Julie said. "Kid in the room."

"Play your stupid video game," I said, tossing a

block at Victor's back.

Our father stepped into the living room, shaking his head.

"Is it too much to get one of you to start the fire?"

"Get Victor to do it," I suggested. "He should pull his weight for something around here."

"You're jealous because I have a girlfriend," Victor responded.

"I've seen your blondes. Can they even count to twenty without taking their shoes off?"

"All right, enough bonding," my father said. "Vic, get some wood from outside. Don't take wet ones from the top. Reach for the dry stuff. And give me your car keys."

The wood stack had been moved near the shed. Victor grumbled but paused the game and got up. So did Julie.

"Okay Alison," my sister said. "Let's get you into some real clothes."

"But I'm playing with Uncle Vincent," the little girl protested.

"He'll still be here," Julie said. "Maybe you can draw him some animals this afternoon." Julie looked at me. "Grandma gave her a new set of crayons yesterday."

Julie took Alison upstairs. My father kneeled at the hearth, scooping ashes out of the fireplace into a cardboard box.

"I'm up to Roscommon this afternoon," he said. "One of my old wholesalers is in town and I'm gonna talk to him. See if he knows if anything is doing around here."

I was going to ask my dad if he had any job possibilities, but then I remembered it was northern Michigan during winter. Victor, arms full of logs, kicked the front door. I went over and opened it.

"Still two old ten-speed bikes in the shed," Victor said.

My father organized wood pieces and added scrunched-up newspaper. "I don't know if those things are in workable condition," he said.

"I'll have a look at them later." Victor turned to me. "Maybe if the roads are clear we can give them a go."

"Whatever you say, Lance Armstrong," I said.

Our father took a pack of matches and worked the fire. Victor returned to Grand Theft Auto. I looked around. To the left of the fireplace was a bookcase. My mother had put framed senior year photos of us kids on it. For the first time I noticed that my picture wasn't from high school. It was my Air Force photograph in full dress blues.

I resisted the temptation to lay the frame face down.

Our **World Book Encyclopedia** set, hard-backed maroon volumes with gold-edging on the pages, was also on the bookshelf. My mom had bought them on an installment plan from a door-to-door salesman years ago. I selected *A, I,* and *U-V.* I sat down in my dad's recliner and flipped through *A* to *Afghanistan*.

Sometime later I woke to pokes in my arm. Alison. The encyclopedia in my lap was open to *Vancouver.*

"Mommy says you're a hero," the little girl said.

"Did she?" I replied. "How about you help me stoke the fire? That'll be heroic."

"Stoke?" Alison questioned.

"Come here. I'll show you." We went to the fireplace. I added a fresh log, gave Alison the iron prod, and kneeled behind her. We stirred the coals until the new chunk caught fire. The flames mesmerized the kid.

Julie came down the stairs pulling back her hair.

"Have a nice little nap?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Alison, why don't you show Uncle Vince your crayons?"

My niece was up and down the stairs in a flash. "Look," she said, holding up a 64-count box of Crayolas. I turned it in my hands. "Do you have horses in Canada, Uncle Vincent?"

"Not where I'm at."

"I wanna draw horses."

"It's a free country."

Julie was already setting blank sheets of paper on the kitchen table.

"Can you watch her?" she asked. "I found our old **Little House on the Prairie** books upstairs. I want to look through them."

"Yeah, I got her."

Alison was sketching the bodies of three horses. I perused the crayons and went with yellow-orange. Her horses were all arranged together – and light green. They had fat bodies and lines for legs. I stuck with something simple. A bright sun. I took the black crayon and gave it sunglasses.

"Here," Alison said, trading sheets of paper. "Draw an animal."

"Why are your horses green?" I asked.

"I don't know."

She began making the same horses on the page with my sun. I switched crayons to a light brown.

"What animal should I draw?"

"Make a deer," Alison said. "Grandma says there

are deer outside the house every morning."

I jotted a deer on the paper. It didn't look too different from the horses, so I added horns. Alison drew two blue cats and went for another blank page.

"Here," she said, handing me the sheet. "We're making a book."

I drew another deer on the paper in front of me. This time I made black antlers. Alison was working faster than me. On her fresh page she had the horses, the cats, plus five red birds in the sky. She shifted that sheet to me and started another one, assembly line-style. I stuck with my brown deer. It got better each time.

Alison looked at the pages on the table.

"Why is your deer all alone?"

"I don't know," I said.

The front door opened and Victor appeared, cheeks pink from the cold.

"The bikes work," he said. "I've got the tires all pumped up. The brakes are dodgy. But we don't need those. Let's go down to Clear Lake."

"That's like seven miles," I said. "It's cold. And it gets dark fast."

"Don't be a pussy. We can ride those roads in the dark no problem."

"Victor," I said curtly, hoping Alison hadn't heard his choice of noun. Julie came down the stairs carrying an armful of yellowed books.

"Check this out," she said, holding up one titled **Farmer Boy.** "Do you guys remember when I used to read this aloud to you before bed?"

"No," we said simultaneously.

"Oh come on," Julie said. "You have to remember young Almanzo proving himself on the farm. He was your favorite character."

"How fast do you think we can make it to Clear Lake?" I asked Victor.

"Half-hour if you can keep up with me," he said. "Loser buys the first pitcher."

"You're on," I said.

"Wait," Julie protested. "You guys can't go now." She looked at me. "You just got here, Vince. What about Alison?"

I looked at the little girl. She was copying my sun onto all five pages.

"Hey Alison, I gotta go with Uncle Victor. But I'll be back later to finish our book, okay?"

"Okay."

I went upstairs before my sister could react. In my room I grabbed a sweatshirt and found the whiskey I'd bought that morning. I took a swig, winced, and headed down to the front door. Victor was outside, both bikes propped up by the old shed. He tossed me a stocking cap.

"Light's good now," he said, looking up at the winter afternoon sky.

We turned onto the asphalt road. "Ready?" Victor asked, leaving his seat to pedal harder. He barreled down the road while I figured out my gears. Then I left my seat too.

"You know the best thing about Central?" he said when I got near him again. "The Student Activity Center. Best gym of any college in the north. We should play racquetball. I'm getting good."

"I suppose I shouldn't ask how your classes are going?"

"Not unless you want to sound like mom and dad."

The road to Clear Lake borders two counties, no houses for miles. You were more likely to see deer than cars.

"You should come visit me in Vancouver," I offered. "You might like being in a city."

"Ready for the hill?" Victor charged ahead again.

This was the only steep patch on the road. Then another mile straight ahead followed by a winding right to Clear Lake.

As Victor crested the hill I got my legs pumping too. I was sweating pretty good despite the chill. Victor looked back at me.

"You don't really think I'm gonna let you win, do you?" He raced forward. I tried to keep it close, but I was running short on breath.

Why did everything look so empty today? The trees. The roads. St. Helen. Michigan. Like a ghost town.

My legs were tingling when I made the last ninety-degree turn to the bar. I slowed as best I could, tried the brakes, and used my feet to skid to a stop. Victor's bike was parked next to the entrance.

"'Bout time you made it," he said when I got inside. He was sitting at a table by a TV showing a billiards tournament. He looked at his watch. "Thirty-four minutes. Not bad. I did it in twenty-eight and a half."

"Look who's here," Rebecca said as I approached the counter. Victor and I knew her from high school – she'd graduated with Julie. That was why I liked coming to this bar. The watering holes in town didn't recognize me anymore.

"Hey Bec. How you doing?"

"Hanging in there. Just like everyone else." She

smiled and indicated Victor with her head. "He said first round was on you."

"Yeah. Something like that. Give me a pitcher of Amber Bock." I struggled to breathe normally. "And a big glass of water."

"Sure thing, Vince. How long you in town for?"

"Couple a weeks."

"Good to hear," she said. I smiled and went back to the table.

"It'll be dark when we head back," I said. "Sun's practically gone."

"There aren't any cars," Victor said. He looked pleased with himself. "The moonlight will be good enough."

Rebecca brought the beer and the water. Victor poured two glasses.

"Here's to my stage one cycling victory," he said.

I followed my drink of beer with gulps of water.

"I should take a bike back down to Mt. Pleasant with me," Victor said.

"Really. How is school going?"

"Don't get all big brother on me."

"I am your big brother."

Victor took a drink of beer and looked at the billiards on TV.

"It's not as much fun anymore," he said. "All my friends are graduating, moving away. Two got jobs in Florida."

"You could join them," I said, trying to sound casual. "Just a concept."

"I don't want to go to Florida," Victor said, not hiding his annoyance.

"I meant the graduating part." I reached for the pitcher. "How much longer you got?"

At first, Victor looked like he wasn't going to answer. "This is year five. I have to take classes next semester. Then I have to find a summer internship. I can't graduate without it."

"What's that? The six-year curriculum?" Victor gave me the finger. I smiled and picked up my beer. I noticed he always made sure to drink at the same time I did.

"Actually," he said. "I was thinking about joining the Army."

"Finish your degree first," I said instantly.

Victor leaned back in his chair. "Right. Because you've got it all figured out." He raised a hand to the nearly-empty bar. "The great Vince James everyone."

"It ain't like that," I said, getting up. "Finish your beer."

The liquor bottles were all lined up behind the bar. I spotted the Jameson and waved Rebecca over. "Can I have two double shots of Jameson, Bec?"

"Yeah sure. I'll bring 'em out in a sec."

I was about to head back to the table when I got an idea. "How much is left in that bottle?"

Rebecca held it to her eyes. "About three quarters."

"Can I have the whole thing?"

Rebecca looked taken aback. "Let me ask Stu."

Stu owned the place. He knew my dad well. Used to buy his supplies from the store.

"Thanks Bec," I said, and went back to the table.

"All right pretty boy," I said to Victor. "Let's see what you've got."

"What?"

"Just hold on a sec." I saw Rebecca return from the kitchen door and grab the bottle. She brought it, a bowl of ice, and two small tumblers to our table.

"You guys aren't driving tonight are you?" she asked.

"We're on bikes," I said.

She put her hand back on the bottle. "Motorcycles this time of year?"

"No," I corrected. "Pedal bikes."

She laughed. "In the middle of winter? You're crazy."

"What are they gonna do?" Victor said. "Throw us in jail for drunken bicycling?"

After Bec left Victor grabbed the whiskey.

"Dude," he said. "You paying for this?"

"Yeah, pour out two shots."

We raised the tumblers. "Merry Christmas," I said.

Victor refilled immediately. I added ice cubes and drank more slowly. Victor followed suit.

"How's it taste?" I asked.

"Fine."

"No. Pay attention. Smell it. Taste how smooth it is."

"You're not one of those drinking snobs are you?"

"Just listen for a second, will you?"

Victor smirked and tossed back his tumbler. I waited until he was done.

"Where we from, Vic?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Where do we come from?"

"St. Helen?"

"Good." I said, taking a drink. "Now what do you know about scotch and whiskey?"

"Not much."

"Okay," I continued. "You've got different levels, right? There's the cheap stuff. The real cringe-worthy ones. And then you've got the scotches. Stuff you'd pay

a hundred dollars for." I brought my glass to my lips and Victor did the same. "Smell the Jameson." We did. We drank. Victor refilled the tumblers.

"Now Jameson's good value," I said. "Better than the cheap stuff but not as expensive as the first-class scotches. It's how you fool everyone."

My brother was paying attention now.

"Whenever you're at a bar surrounded by people you don't know, and they're ordering scotch, get a Jameson and you'll be all right. It's how you fake your way to the next level. Everyone will know you have some taste in whiskey and good judgment. But since you didn't get the expensive stuff you're also showing you aren't some rich ass kid, a Glenfiddich or Bowmore punk."

Either Victor was getting drunk or he was hanging on my every word.

"We're Jameson men, Vic. Don't forget that. We can go to war. Go to college. Fake our way through. But we'll always be Jameson men."

Victor pondered the glass in front of him.

"Is that a good or bad thing?" he asked.

I made a motion to drink.

"This whole country can be one big charade." I was getting drunkenly confident. "It's important to fake your way to higher ground. So finish your degree, join the Air Force. Be an officer to pay your loans."

"The Air Force is for pussies," he said. "I want some action."

"Yeah, that your expert opinion having never been to a war zone?"

Victor poured more Jameson. "Enough, Vince. I'm supposed to bow down because you went to Afghanistan? You were a contractor for fuck's sake." He pushed my tumbler back towards me. "What about the soldiers and Marines?"

I thought about Dan'Tuan and Brandon and Manuel.

"The Army and the Marines can call me a pussy," I said. "You can fuck off."

My brother and I glared at each other. I'd done enough for one day.

"You all right?" I asked.

"Yeah. What about you?"

"As good as it gets. Let's go."

I went to the counter and gave Rebecca a handful of twenties. Outside Victor had both kickstands up. I rolled my head around my neck.

"Damn," I said. "If I fall in a ditch, stop and pull me out, all right?"

"I gotcha bro," Victor replied.

The ride back was significantly slower. We took turns leading each other, pretending we were drafting through the Tour de France. I watched the trees go by one by one, each silhouetted against the charcoal sky. Those gorgeous northern Michigan trees. Home. Victor stayed with me and neither of us spoke. We didn't see a single car the entire time.

I was cold, sweaty and a bit wobbly when we coasted into our driveway. Victor helped me get the bike inside the shed.

"Vince," he said. "All that stuff about faking our way through. Is that why you went to college after Afghanistan?"

I wanted to give a good answer, but nothing came to mind. "I'm not sure," I said. "The challenge is there, but I don't know if the meaning is. But I can do it." We walked to the front door. "Don't go to the Army or Air Force or anything without calling me first."

"Okay, fine," Victor said. "What about you? Back to Vancouver?"

"Yeah. Keeps me occupied. It's all right."

Julie and Alison were still at the kitchen table.

"Uncle Victor! Uncle Vincent! Look at my book," Alison called.

Julie and Victor crossed paths in the living room.

"Are you guys drunk?" Julie asked accusingly.

"No," Victor said. "We rode out to Clear Lake to drink orange juice."

"Damnit Vince," Julie cursed softly. "You're rubbing off on him."

"We were just having some fun," I said. "Where're mom and dad?"

"Mom called. She's buying groceries. Dad's not back yet." Julie tried to corral Alison, but the little girl snuck through.

"Look." Our colored pages had been stapled together, and Alison had made a title page.

"*The Brown Deer and Friends*," I read aloud.

"Can you help me write the words, Uncle Vincent?"

"Of course I can sweetie," I said, but I was having trouble concentrating. Home made me tired. Or maybe I slept better here.

"I'm gonna take a little nap," I told my niece. "And then we can start writing."

Maurice Carlos Ruffin
2010 Best Short Story First Runner-Up:
The Pie Man

The Pie Man tells Baby a man has got to grab his own future for his own self. The City of New Orleans pays good to work disaster cleanup and Baby would do well to cash in before all the money gets carted off. A lot more sensible, the Pie Man says, than running around punching on Spanish dudes. The Pie Man rambles across the living room in his chef's jacket. He plops down on the couch, making himself at home. Baby doesn't know where his future is, but he's damn sure it ain't scooping mold out of some abandoned school.

Baby sits at the plastic folding table in white briefs and a tank top, fingering the dry skin around his bulky, plastic ankle bracelet. He plucks a Vienna sausage from its tin and tosses the wiener in his mouth. Baby eyes the Pie Man. The Pie Man doesn't seem to get he has no claim on this place or anyone in it. Baby may be only 14, but this is his house. He's the man here.

The Pie Man's eyes are red. He kneads his face with both hands and then looks around like he doesn't remember why he's there. Sauced out of his mind before noon, thinks Baby. Probably spent the night with the winos back in Gert Town.

Baby's mom doesn't notice. She's too busy flapping around the room like a hen with a case of colic. She's really hot this time. As she gathers her things for the day care center, she keeps clucking at him about making the right choices in life. Her standard rave. It's like if she doesn't get enough pecks on Baby every morning, she'll lay an egg or something, Baby thinks.

She's on him because a Latino day-jobber got jumped outside Washington Package Liquor last night, the latest in a string of Black on Brown beatdowns in retaliation for what happened to Baby's boy, Chaney. Baby's mom thinks Baby is part of the jump squad. He's not. Yet. He doesn't tell her that. If she and everyone else think he's in on the attacks, it beats the alternative. Better to be feared than understood.

Baby's mom checks her hair in a hand-held mirror before placing the mirror on the table he's sitting at. It doubles as her dresser and the couch is her bed. When Baby sleeps on the floor in his fleece blanket, he looks like a papoose. A portable stovetop makes the bathroom their kitchen. All their real stuff was destroyed in the flood from the levee breech after Hurricane Katrina passed over three years ago. They live in the front half of the house since the back is sealed off with blue tarp to keep the fungus odor out. It doesn't work. Everything smells like old people's feet to Baby.

Baby's only laid eyes on the Pie Man a few times over the years. He's always suspected the drunk was his father, but his mom didn't confirm it until old Sanchez stopped fixing on their General Pershing Street home. Sanchez shot Chaney in cold blood, but the police called it self defense—as if Chaney's back had a chance against Sanchez' .38. With Sanchez and the rest of the Latinos afraid to work in Baby's neighborhood, Baby's mom can't afford a contractor with papers or real tools. That's why she called the Pie Man in to odd-job the house after his regular gigs. Learning the Pie Man was his father didn't make any real waves to Baby. At least his old man turned out to be full-blooded African-American, after all.

Chin on the table, eyes clamped shut, Baby realizes the Pie Man and his mom have been jabbering at him the whole time. Who knew? He wonders what they were like when they met each other back in the Stone Age. During the time of Public Enemy and parachute pants. Back when the Pie Man's uneven flat-top fade was in style. Back before they became voices in the wall.

They have a similar way of telephoning their rants in. No commitment. They talk at him like they're being watched. As if they'll get in big trouble for failing to pay the right amount of lip service. This has been Baby's new normal for about three months going.

The Pie Man tells Baby he ought to respect his mom, man, because that's the least she deserves for bringing him into this unbalanced world and if Baby's going to keep driving her up the wall like he's been doing, then Baby ain't no kind of man. The whole issue could be that Baby's not thinking, says the Pie Man, but he can start anytime now. He tells Baby to sit up and pay attention. Because he doesn't know the Pie Man well, Baby does as he's told. The Pie Man could be crazy or something, like Touché.

"What am I supposed to call you 'pops' or something?" says

Baby, nudging the skateboard under the table with his bare foot. The Pie Man's slacks, shoes and neckerchief match his jacket, mangy white from head to toe. He mismatched the cloth buttons so that his collar is higher on one side than the other. To Baby the Pie Man looks like a homeless chocolate Chef Boyardee.

The Pie Man is dark as a Hershey's bar so there's no trace of the freckles Baby got from his red-headed mom. The ones he catches hell for at school. The ones he tried to scrub off after reading the Dred Scott decision in American History the year before. Baby had never really thought of himself as Black or White until that day. It never dawned on him that he might have to pick a side. But he couldn't deny facts. Touché said their non-Black classmates watched him and Baby out of the corners of their eyes. Baby wondered if they were trying to figure out whether he really was three-fifths of a person.

A quick survey of pages 279 to 301 of **American Vision**, the class textbook, told Baby everything he needed to know. Black folks were like Francis the retarded kid who always came to school with a five dollar bill stapled to his shirt pocket. Permanent victims. Prey. Yet, even though Baby's freckles didn't come off, that didn't mean he couldn't become the next great civil rights leader like Malcolm X, Tupac Shakur or Lil' Wayne. Holding it down for the people. Real niggas.

Baby scratches the oval scab on his shin, thinking it's going to leave a mark when it heals. If it heals. Maybe he'll cover it with a Black fist tattoo when Mom's not looking, he thinks. The tattoo is Touché's idea. Touché wants everyone in the Mighty Black Ninja Krew to get Black fist tattoos after they find and stomp Sanchez today.

Baby gets up to leave. But his mom yells at him and makes him sit his rear back in that chair right this instant. He's a target, she says and Baby feels she's right. The Latinos have been dishing out hardcore payback. Curtis Thompson, the running back at Baby's school, got wacked in the knee with a galvanized steel pipe the other day. Out for the season, and with him any shot at a state championship. They say he never saw the guys that did it, but they had funny Spanish accents. Nobody's safe, thinks Baby. Baby's mom thinks she can protect him by sending him to the barber. His hair makes him look like a maniac, she says.

But Baby's afro is a matter of pride to him. It's a fuzzy crown that radiates out six inches going from black at the scalp to reddish brown at the tips. Like a halo made of rabbit's fur. Most of his friends think it's pretty cool. It counteracts the freckles.

One thing at a time, says the Pie Man to Baby's mom. Baby follows the Pie Man's lips. The way they form words. Inner tube round one second, then flat like a pair of rotten bananas. The Pie Man says he knows Baby doesn't want to go back on full house arrest. He looks at Baby as if expecting a response, which Baby doesn't give. Baby stares at those bananas.

The Pie Man tells Baby to get up because it's time to get to work.

"I ain't gutting out some cruddy old school," Baby says. "If that means I'm stuck inside for the summer, then so what."

Baby's mom sprays air freshener at Baby. She tells him she'll turn him in herself if he doesn't get that haircut and go to work. And he better be home before the street lights come on. If he's more than a half-centimeter from the front door by then, the SWAT team will come after him, Baby's mom reminds him for the umpteenth-and-a-half time. She kisses him on the forehead and leaves.

The Pie Man says he'll bring Baby to the barber now, but doesn't leave the couch. He continues to stare at the empty space behind Baby.

"I'll get ready." Baby rides his skateboard to the bathroom where he straps on his Chuck Taylors and a pair of brown plaid shorts before climbing out the window.

The outside of Lawrence D. Crocker Elementary isn't much different from how Baby remembers it growing up. Lots of brick walls and stucco pillars. Plenty of rectangles. Gravel lot. The narrow plastic windows had faded to opaque even before the storm came along. But the interior's totally different since Hurricane Katrina turned it out. It's been zombie-ized. Dried gack coats the tile and baseboards. Green paint curdles from the floodwater pox. Rivulets of rust and mold syrup rot down the walls. Water logged books, tiny chairs coated in sludge, poster boards covered in blue-black fungus. The dump smells like anchovies pickled in urine.

Baby hasn't cut his hair, but figures skipping the job would be going too far. He does skateboarding tricks on the retaining wall outside of the school, knowing it will be some time before the Pie Man puts his brain on and figures out to come. But the Pie Man's van appears at the street corner within minutes. The clunker has one headlight and "Nobody Starves When the Pie Man's Around" scrawled in faded orange letters across the side. Ever since the Pie Man decided he's Baby's pops again, he follows Baby around in that death trap even when they're not working.

The first time the Pie Man spoke to Baby outside Baby's house months ago, he laid it all out. He used to sell gumbo ya-ya, greens and bread pudding at barber shops and car washes, said the Pie Man. Sometimes he made pies. Pecan pies, apple pies, sweet potato pies, pumpkin pies, cherry pies, lemon meringue pies, lemon icebox pies, huckleberry pies, cream pies, bean pies, fudge pies, ice cream pies and ice cream fudge pies all from his own two hands. The Pie Man said he liked the Boston cream pie extra specially because it wasn't actually a pie, but a cake that people called a pie. Sometimes people misclassified things in a

way that caused no trouble, the Pie Man said, in a way that was perfectly aight.

Baby could tell the Pie Man had been real proud of his business selling catballs to the citizenry. Baby chuckled when he remembered the internet video he'd seen of a stupid toothless cat doing its best to gum a mouse to death. The mouse kept plopping out—pissed—but on the whole pretty much okay. The Pie Man said he got shut down when the health inspector caught him selling reconstituted meat. Baby asked him, reconstituted from what? Meat mostly, said the Pie Man.

Now two-by-fours and tangled wires choke the van's bay. The Pie Man must have had breakfast, thinks Baby, because he looks sober. He managed to button his jacket right and comb his flattop so that his head looks like an eraser.

"This is so stupid. Why can't they just bulldoze this hole and start from scratch?" Baby skates toward the Pie Man, who is unloading sledgehammers in the lobby outside of the cafeteria. Sanchez' tools were for assembling things. Baby had learned, to his own amazement, how to hang a door. It was harder than it looked, Sanchez told Baby, because you had to make many little decisions to get the right fit. Baby imagines taking a shot at Sanchez with one of those sledgehammers, Sanchez' head rolling across the ground like a basketball, after contact.

The Pie Man shrugs and tosses his jacket on a wheelbarrow. He has ink on his bicep. An eagle, perched above an earth and anchor, flaps its wings whenever the Pie Man flexes.

"You ever shot somebody?" asks Baby.

The Pie Man slings a wide shovel onto his shoulder and says he shot two people.

"Did they die?"

The Pie Man shrugs.

They work their way into the library where red wall pennants form a frieze around the room. The bookcases lean at odd angles, having dominoed during the flooding. All the books are on the floor, mush. As little boys, Baby and Chaney had filed these books for the librarian as punishment for starting a food fight. Today, the books look like Cream of Wheat to Baby.

They both died, says the Pie Man, but he's not entirely sure about whether he killed the second dude. The second dude he shot was an insurgent with his finger on a trip wire. The whole convoy unloaded on him and any one of them might have gotten the kill shot, he says. Or, he tells Baby, maybe the creep died of fear.

"What about the first one?" asks Baby.

The Pie Man shovels books into the wheelbarrow on top of his jacket. He says the first guy was his friend Freddie, the first person he met when he enlisted. He murdered Freddie dead. He tells Baby he's not sure if either situation matters because at war it's legit to kill anyone with a different sense of fashion than yours, but if you happen to kill someone with the same fashion sense you'd better have your reasons clean as a fresh latrine, which is what the Pie Man had. His friend had flipped the fuck out and tried to mow down the boys in the mess hall with a fifty cal. But the Pie Man capped him from behind with his M240, which took Freddie's arm clean off above the elbow.

The Pie Man says Baby and his boys shouldn't be so ready to settle scores with that Spanish guy. Baby notices the wall pennants each has a corroded picture of a serious looking Black person, Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey, Angela Davis, clipped to it.

"Sometimes you got to fight just to make your point." Baby kicks a grimy globe, which has come loose from its axis. "To show people who's on top."

The Pie Man asks Baby if he knows what he would get if he locked a man in a room full of mirrors overnight and checked on him the next morning bright and early.

"What would you get?" asks Baby.

A dead man, the Pie Man says.

Baby smacks his lips. He doesn't like being made fun of and thinks the Pie Man might be drunk after all.

"People will roll you, if you let them," says Baby as he points a finger from the Pie Man to himself. "I'm done getting rolled, you heard me?" Baby straightens to his full height. "We getting him tonight."

The Pie Man pops a pill and says he can't argue with that much. He says he can't argue with much anything except that the VA could stop screwing around and send him better medication. Baby grabs a push broom and shoves junk past a broken model of a ship. The model is split open like a clamshell on its side letting Baby see tiny men and boys stacked inside like French fries. The cutaway diagram reminds him of his skateboard. The brass tag says the ship sank during a revolt.

The Pie Man and Baby put on respirator masks. In their masks, Baby thinks he and the Pie Man look like futuristic rats. Baby grabs a sledgehammer with one hand near the base and one on the shaft. He zeros in on the face of Guy Bluford, the first brother launched into outer space. He swings and before long the walls are coming down all around him.

Touché and Turtle skate toward Baby in the driveway in front of the school. It's an hour to sundown and the Pie Man left Baby once they finished work for the day.

"What up, little man?" Touché does a 360 from a ramp angled over a mound of bricks and stops near Baby. "Welcome back to genitalia." Touché's got a faux hawk and, to Baby, seems to still be spinning in his striped hoody. General Taylor and Peniston are the streets closest to Crocker facing downtown. They've called the streets genitalia and peniston since the sixth grade. Dry ass Street runs perpendicular to them both, a few blocks closer to the streetcar line. "You still got your Oreo 'fro, bro?"

"My mama can't make a brother cut off his trademark," says Baby, trying to ignore Touché's comment. Baby hates it when Touché makes fun of his size almost as much as he hates when he makes fun of the fact he's practically half White. It isn't Baby's fault his mom's father wasn't Black like everyone else. Touché seems to know where everyone's buttons are. He's like a video game champ who's got all the secret codes by rote. X to kick you in the gizzards. Z plus turbo to take out your knees and dump you in Lake Pontchartrain. Sometimes you don't even know it was Touché who got you. Touché's manipulations bug Baby sometimes, but more often than not Baby is silently praying he one day learns how to do it himself.

"Yeah, I asked your mama for a haircut. She gave me a blowjob instead." Baby pokes his tongue against his cheek and pumps his fist. "The bitch still don't understand English."

"Your mama so fat," says Touché. "I pushed that hoe in the Mississippi River and rode her to the other side."

"I heard in Sunday school," Baby says, "Your mama so old she was Jesus' nanny."

"Your mama so fat she went to an all-you-can-eat buffet and ate the Chinese waitress," says Turtle, adjusting his thick glasses. "She be using Ethiopians as toothpicks."

"Your mama--" says Touché, but he stops and punches Turtle in the shoulder. No one makes fun of Turtle's real mom. Not even Touché. Not since the last time they saw her dry-skinned and strung out begging for change on Canal Street. She wore a tank top and jeans so small they could have fit a 10-year old, but loose enough to reveal her soiled lace underwear. "We need to get that Sanchez and pop him. Whap." Touché clutches his board and brings it down on Sanchez' imaginary head. "Or drag him across town by a rope."

"Kill that noise," says Turtle. "We ain't getting nobody." Turtle grabs Baby's shoulder. "I saw the Pie Man's van earlier." Turtle's nearly blind from getting his head kicked in. Baby always thinks he's staring at him through those binoculars from another world. A scarier world. "He playing camp counselor again?"

Baby nods.

"Come on." Turtle skates off with his glasses in hand. He doesn't need them to get where they're going.

All three boys glide to the lot behind the school. Scraggly grass forms a crescent along the edges of the fractured concrete. Baby's reminded of the Pie Man's receding hairline. They enter a rusting cargo container where the Mighty Black Ninja Krew keeps the gas canisters.

The Mighty BNK is what Baby and his boys do when they're bored. And for fame. Like the time they went berserk-boarding through the Catholic church by the house where Turtle's foster family lived. Baby videoed the others zipping across the checkerboard floors and leaping from the altar. As Touché spray-painted "MBNK" on the wooden doors during their escape, Baby noticed statues of old men in the gallery above. They wore flowing pink sheets, one statue dangling a key, the other a sword. Baby thought they looked like they wanted to kick his ass. He gave them the finger. The Mighty BNK got away clean. That time.

Touché posted the video, which went viral, on the web. The Mighty Black Ninja Krew were right behind a video of a White guy demonstrating nutty dance moves and that toothless cat trying to slurp up that mouse.

If he were being totally honest, Baby would admit he joined the Mighty BNK for the same reason as the others. To get laid. They hide their faces on camera with white stockings, but everybody at school knows who they are. It's worked out great for the rest of the Mighty BNK. Not so much for Baby.

He doesn't have the coolness of Turtle or the swagger of Touché or the wicked determination of Chaney, shot dead when the

Mighty BNK tried to loot Sanchez' garage. Baby's fourteen, but looks closer to nine since he's two heads shorter than the others and has no stubble on his chin, chest or pubes. It's caused trouble for him with the girls at school. When they call him Baby, they mean it.

Baby wants to lay some pipe on Trenisha, who plays center for the girls' basketball team. That shorty is over six-feet tall and a bit rough around the edges, but Baby knows he can smooth her out doggie-style like a Chihuahua on a Great Dane in the janitor's closet or, better yet, in the back seat of Principal Colton's Cadillac while the Mighty BNK cheers him on. The video would make him a legend in his own time.

But Baby doesn't know the first, second or third thing about girls, let alone what it might be like to go to any of the bases with them. He listens to the rest of the Mighty BNK kid around and is sure they've all done it—even Chaney who would

never do it again. Baby fears he'll die without doing it. He wonders if dying without doing it means he winds up in heaven as a kid for all eternity. Or hell.

Turtle fills a blue balloon from a canister and hands Baby the balloon. Baby's careful not to let any gas escape before he's ready. Touché sniggers in the corner of the rusty cargo container, having gone first. His arms are tight against his chest. Baby knows this pose means to leave him be. Tears stream down Touché's neck and soak his collar. He always cries when they fly.

Turtle tokes weed in a crouch. He offers to Baby, but Baby shakes his head. Baby takes a draw from the balloon, nearly as much as his lungs will hold. Then he sucks a bit of straight air on top to hold the gas steady. The nitrous oxide is sweet on his tongue. Sweet like he's just licked a birthday cake. Sweet and steady like his birthday was yesterday, is today and will be tomorrow and each day thereafter. Holding his breath, Baby clutches the tips of his Chuck Taylors for dear life. A tingling rips up his spine like electric spiders on parade. The spiders are angry this time. They rummage through Baby's innards for flies, bad ideas and mildew, but don't find enough.

Baby shoves the gas from his lungs. He feels like propeller blades are chopping him into finer and finer pieces. Every time he feels this Baby wonders what it would be like to choose how he puts himself back together. Maybe in Atlanta instead of New Orleans this time. Bigger and stronger this time. Taller and darker this time. This time hung like a mutant ox. Maybe this time feared by men and loved like a widow's diamond. Baby clutches his hair and falls onto his back, shivering.

Baby and the Mighty BNK jacked the nitrous oxide from Sanchez' to score a new high. They were tired of sniffing airplane glue and Freon, which burned the ever-loving b'jesus out of their noses.

Everything went fine until the alarm in Sanchez' shadetree garage went off. Baby saw the blazing muzzle of Sanchez' weapon and Chaney's eyes splayed open like full moons on his way to the ground. After Touché and Turtle ran away, the police found Baby frozen in place, his sneakers soiled by vomit, the only member of the Mighty BNK captured alive.

Touché finishes the weed before Baby gets a second tug. Touché's tapping the side of the cargo container with the club-like tree limb he sometimes uses as a walking stick.

"It's a war. The cops, the Latinos, the old folks." Touché flicks the spent bud away. "They running a terror campaign on all the Blacks in our 'hood."

The gas has different effects on each member of the Mighty BNK. It makes Touché paranoid. Well, more paranoid than normal, thinks Baby.

"Them rednecks can't just shoot any brother they feel like," says Touché.

"That's dumb," Turtle says. "Sanchez ain't no kind of redneck." The gas brings out Turtle's argumentative side. Sober, he would let Touché carry on until he got tired of hearing himself talk. "Old Sanchez' Hispanic."

"I don't care if he Jesus," says Touché. "His people coming over the borders taking our space, our girls."

Baby's never seen any of the neighborhood chicks doing anything like sex with the Latino dudes, but some of the girls like the Latinos good hair, which justifies a beatdown. Any of them deserve it. It just so happens Sanchez deserves it more than most.

"And what about you?" Touché asks Baby.

Baby toys with his ankle bracelet. It's a hunk of plastic in the shape of a watch, a faceless watch that refuses to let him know what time it is. Baby wonders what will happen after they get Sanchez. A smackdown won't bring Chaney back. Baby raises his eyebrows as if to say, "What about me?"

"You so fake." Touché spits. "You need to man up like me."

"What does any of that have to do with Sanchez?" says Turtle. "He's always lived here."

"He shot our boy. He got Baby with a tracking band on his leg. But he gets to walk around scot-free. This is our neighborhood. Shit, this is our country." Touché had been saying this since Chaney died, like a mantra. "We got a Black president. People can't screw with us like this anymore."

"Maybe we shouldn't have tried to take his stuff," says Turtle.

Baby skates across Claiborne Avenue, his hair bouncing in the wind. A police car with its sirens going nearly sideswipes him. He salutes it, but trips to his knees in the process. That's what the gas does to Baby. It kills his balance. Baby looks around to make sure no one saw him and picks up his board. He hurries past an abandoned double the Latinos tagged with graffiti. He can't accept that his own neighborhood isn't safe anymore. The jerkholes are everywhere.

It's almost dark and Baby's mom will start check-up calling for him from her night job laundering hospital bed sheets. She expects him to tell her he's safe and sound in their box of old people's feet. Baby doesn't care so much about the calls, but if he doesn't make it home soon the SWAT will be after him.

Baby thought Touché and Turtle might fight over getting Sanchez, but Touché dropped it and skated off, muttering. Baby's relieved. He feels like there might be a better way to avenge Chaney, but doesn't know what that way might be.

A Latino in overalls is perched on a ladder, applying stucco to the side of a two story house. The lawn is littered with empty stucco bags. Baby hums a stone at the man, but misses. The man waves at Baby. Baby searches for another good rock, but the world disappears. His head is covered by one of the bags and he can't breathe. Something hard whacks him senseless and even though he's defenseless, whoever's on top of him is hav-

ing too much fun to let up. He kicks Baby in the stomach and twice in the face. Footfalls carry Baby's attacker away. Baby pulls the bag off his head. He knows he's in trouble when he wipes his mouth and finds blood and flakey fragments of teeth.

When Baby gets home, the Pie Man is asleep in the van, using a paint can as a pillow. Baby goes inside the house and picks up the mirror his mom left on the plastic table. He's glad she's not around to see he's missing half an incisor or that his nose is smashed. Blood coats his chin and Baby thinks the dust from the stucco bag makes him look like a spook. He doesn't want to wash the dust off though. He's afraid water will activate the stucco mix and turn his head to stone.

Even his mom would agree somebody has to pay for this. If the Mighty BNK let this go, pretty soon Baby, Touché and every other kid in the neighborhood would be swinging from trees at Sunday picnics like piñatas. Baby runs outside and hops into the van. The Pie Man is still sleeping as Baby fingers keys from his pocket. Every color in the rainbow's on that grungy jacket. Baby finds it strange that the Pie Man is always passing out drunk, but never smells of whiskey or malt liquor like the other neighborhood alcoholics. In fact, Baby realizes he's never seen the Pie Man drink at all. He must use a ton of mouthwash so as not to piss off Baby's mom. Baby hops behind the wheel and cranks the ignition. The van is hard to drive since the pedals are so far from the seat, but Baby knows it's only a couple of blocks to Touché's.

The van seems fake like one of those 25-cent rides you'd plunk your kid brother into outside of a grocery store. The kind with two donut-sized steering wheels that don't do anything. Baby feels like either he or the Pie Man could be guiding the van. But neither is. Touché's in the driver's seat now.

"They rolled you like a blunt." Touché purses his lips in a mock whistle.

He almost seems to be enjoying this, thinks Baby. Baby rubs his mouth, but the sharp pain stops him. Although the bleeding has slowed, his jaw clicks when he moves it.

"Don't say I didn't try to warn you before. It's get or get got out here."

They stop at a gas station in Gert Town. There's a darkened church on the next lot. One of the neon cross arms is out so it looks like a machine gun turned on its nose. Touché leaps out and disappears into the station. The station lights are painfully bright to Baby. He swivels his seat around and watches the Pie Man drool in the bay of the van. Baby's starting to think taking the van is not the greatest plan. He knows that when the Pie Man comes to he's going to raise hell and demand they go home.

Touché sprints from the gas station, toting a bottle. He hands it to Baby. It's a bottle of Goose.

"Is Turtle coming?" Baby says.

"We don't need no pussies in the way. We mad dogs tonight."

Baby doesn't let the vodka bottle touch his sore lips when he drinks. Tilting his head back makes Baby woozy, but he recovers as his insides swelter. He tastes ashes and rust and pours a couple ounces onto the van floor.

"Why'd you do that for?" says Touché.

"That's for Sanchez," says Baby. "He's going to need it."

Touché chuckles and takes the bottle. "That's what I'm talking about."

The Pie Man groans and asks what the mission is.

Touché points at Baby's face. "We're going to deliver some whoop ass," he says.

Righteous, says the Pie Man.

They drive to Sanchez' garage and climb out. Touché and Baby slip white stockings over their heads. Baby's hair makes the stocking pooch out so that he looks like a light bulb. Baby immediately wants to tear the mask off. It mashes the swollen parts of his face and sandpapers the sweat-moistened stucco coating his skin. The Pie Man is bare-headed. He leans against the fence with his hands in his pockets as if he's come to see Sanchez about the power-steering on the pie van, thinks Baby.

It's still early enough that Sanchez is stooped under a hood like he's praying to the engine. Water tings as it circulates the van radiator.

"Yo, old man Sanchez! What's up, amigo?" Touché calls out before they enter the wooden fence. He says "amigo" wrong. His Spanish has always stunk, Baby thinks. Hi-meego, he says.

"Que pasa'migo?" says Sanchez, stuffing a rag into his overalls. He stops in place when Touché and Baby step into view. Baby figures Sanchez will take off running or go for a gun in his tool box. But he doesn't. He rakes a hand through his thin, white hair. Baby keeps expecting the Pie Man to slap Touché on the back and say they've had enough fun for one night. Instead, they stand in silence or in the silence of nature: a chamber orchestra of crickets and toads.

Sanchez steps toward them. He's short. Not Baby short, but not much taller.

"Move." Touché shoves Sanchez toward the van.

"You're Reverend Goodman's son?" says Sanchez to Touché. The stocking mask smushes Touché's features. It flattens out his cheekbones and tweaks his nose upward. Like he's wearing a mask under his mask, Baby thinks.

"You don't know me, nino," Touché says.

Sanchez calls the Pie Man's name too. The name that could have been Baby's. Sanchez looks to Baby, who turns away. Baby knows Sanchez can see his face through the mask. Touché cracks Sanchez in the back of the head with the shaft of his stick. Sanchez' out cold. Baby smells copper. Blood.

"It's on and popping," laughs Touché.

Baby thinks it's over, that they'll drive off and put this behind

them, but Touché stoops and wraps twine around Sanchez' wrists and ankles. Within seconds, they're speeding toward the levee on the back side of City Park. When they reach the muddy access road that shadows the levee, Touché nearly rolls the van. A dark landscape whizzes by, away from him, as Baby grips the metal handles in the van bay.

The Pie Man sits next to Sanchez on the bay floor. The Pie Man's face is scrunched up again like he's perplexed. He tells Baby he doesn't really sleep all that much, but it just seems like he does because he's always trying to will himself to unconsciousness by shutting his eyes. He ain't slept since Kirkuk. It never works, he says, because trying to force yourself to sleep is like trying to love someone you've never met. It might be nice. If it ever happened.

"What made you join the Marines?" asks Baby.

The Pie Man says they needed a chef and he needed a job for the future he had mapped out. It seemed like a fair exchange at the time, but he never baked a single pie in the military. When he came home, he'd forgotten how to make them or anything else.

The van pitches as they scale the levee, causing a box of nails to fall on Sanchez. He yelps. Baby wants to catch the next box to fall, but doesn't. Touché stops near the concrete flood wall which sits atop the levee. Touché takes Sanchez' ankles, Baby his armpits, as they haul him from the van. Sanchez is heavier than he looks. Baby wonders if he's worth his weight. They drop him in the moist grass at the foot of the wall. That wall might topple and crush every one of them, Baby thinks.

"Maybe we can just leave him," Baby says. Touché remains silent. The van's headlight floods the scene so there's no color. Sanchez prays into his bound hands.

"You first." Touché lifts his stick from the grass and hands it to Baby.

Baby steps toward Sanchez and water snakes in through the seams of his Chuck Taylors, sending a jolt up his spine. Sanchez looks up at him. The stick feels like it's covered with spikes. Because it is. Touché added nails to it, Baby realizes. Baby looks at the Pie Man, who is swatting at a wobbly crane fly, and then at Touché, grinning like a serpent.

"Take your shot, little man."

Baby grips the stick like a sledgehammer. The crooked nails glisten with moisture in the moonlight and seem like disembodied fingers, pointing every which way. Baby slings the stick over the wall and into the night.

Back at home, Baby and the Pie Man sit. Baby's rolls the stocking mask up to his forehead and taps an empty sausage tin against the table top. Baby knows there's going to be all kinds of reckoning from tonight. Sanchez probably called the police as soon as they dumped him in his yard and Baby's mom would jump on him the second she laid eyes on his face. Then there was Touché, who wouldn't let go of this betrayal. Who never let go of anything. Their beef would only grow, thinks Baby. It would get rancid and stink up Baby's life for a long time to come. And then there was The Pie Man lounging on the sofa, his jacket undone. Baby hurls the tin across the room.

"You were just going to stand by and let us do it, weren't you?" Baby paces the floor in his white briefs. He wishes there were some glue in the junk drawer to sniff, but they don't have a junk drawer any more. They don't have anything. A blue light flickers outside. Baby tramps to the front door and looks both ways down the street for the SWAT. He didn't get home until hours after curfew and they have every right haul him off. But there is no SWAT. The flickering is from a telephone repair truck parked at the intersection.

Baby grips the threshold and scratches his with his free foot.

"Why didn't you tell me what to do?" Baby turns to the Pie Man, but the Pie Man's mouth is agape and he's snoring from in his gut, deep down.

***Maurice Ruffin**, a native New Orleanian, is a founding member of the Peauxdunque Writers' Alliance, a multi-genre writers group formed under the auspices of the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society's Words & Music Writers' Alliance. Maurice is first runner-up for the Short Story Prize in the 2010 William Faulkner Wisdom Creative Writing Competition for his story* The Pie Man**.**

Maurice was also a finalist for two other short stories: Abracadabra ***in** 2009 and* Fit *in 2010. He has performed his work at the annual meeting of the Writers' Alliance during Words & Music.*

Currently, he is pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of New Orleans. Maurice also practices law with the firm of Adam & Reese.

The Judge's Comments:

A tragic story of American life gone askew but trying, ever trying, to right itself. This story's terrific voice is what you notice first, the narrative reflecting the consciousness of a boy named Baby as he maneuvers through the aftermath of a violent crime. And it's the story of The Pie Man, baby's his half-present perhaps-father, a character damaged by war and unforgettably drawn. A beautiful story.

Marylee MacDonald
2010 Best Short Story
Second Runner-Up:
Break

The moon shining like a searchlight on the cornfields made Billy Rippelmeyer proud to be an American. Steering one-handed, air streaming through his fingers and bugs stinging his outstretched palm, he wished his boss, sacked out between the racks of tools, would climb forward into the shotgun seat and help him stay awake. Mile markers flicked past, and the white line of the county road got sucked beneath the wheels of the panel truck. High beams blinded him. He took his eyes off the road. There had to be a way he could get from the life he had now to some other life he couldn't quite imagine.

Coming over the crest of a hill, he saw a yellow warning sign: two women's breasts. The road dipped into the cleavage, and he hit the brakes. His boss had warned him not to go too fast, and now the trailer was whipping like a tail. He took his foot off the pedal, gripped the wheel, and prayed. Then it was up again. He was making time. At the next downhill, in a pool of darkness far below, red lights flashed. A delay, damn it! Billy pulled up behind a school bus. Teens in hoodies scrambled across a culvert then disappeared into a wall of corn. Looked like a detasseling crew out before dawn. He'd started detasseling in seventh grade, getting his dose of the American work ethic. Now, he was getting his second dose. Truck stop coffee. Twelve hour days. After just six weeks, but remodeling malls was getting old.

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At Easton Town Center north of Columbus, he drove past the skeleton of a new anchor store. A tower-crane swung a load of I-beams onto the top deck. He had no idea how these steel monsters went together, but one of these days the economy was going to pick up, and construction was definitely a path to a better future. Back in Macomb, miners couldn't get work but two or three months a year, and Pella had laid off the third shift. His uncle, a plumber, made out okay, but couldn't justify a gofer.

Billy found the mall's service entrance and killed the engine. "Hey, wake up." Billy looked back. His boss, Tom Jovanovich, wormed out of the sleeping bag. His eyes looked bloodshot. He needed a shave.

"Did you get any rest?" Billy said.

"A little," Tom said.

"At least, one of us did."

"You got twenty years on me, kid." Tom was putting on his socks.

"Throw me my pills, will you?"

"Sure." Tom tossed Billy a paper bag.

Billy popped the lid on his antibiotics and swallowed a pill with the last of his coffee. Fatigue sat on him like the lead apron the dentist threw across his chest back in Davenport, when he'd had to make an emergency trip on account of an abscessed tooth. He'd worked for days in agony, milkshakes sending waves of pain through his jaw, until Tom had finally asked what was wrong. An afternoon at the dentist's had set them back time-wise and taken a chunk of change out of Billy's paycheck. Luckily, the Foot Locker in Davenport wasn't one of the big stores, but even so, they'd had to rush to get it wrapped up and move on to this one, three states away.

Grabbing the clipboard from the glove box, Billy hopped out and walked over to the service entrance, banging until a security guard let him in. The service corridor had the usual windowless block walls and gunmetal-gray doors. The Foot Locker was back by the theater. "Shit," Billy said, trying the key. "This is going to be one long carry." Inside, he found shoeboxes, register tape, pizza cartons, and the odd sneaker. At least the fuckers had left trash bags. He snapped one off.

Tom's last helper got tired of picking up the garbage and left Tom in the lurch. Leastwise, that's how Tom told it. The deal was this. Tom paid Billy by the hour. Cash, of course. "Training you's cutting into my productivity," Tom said. A week ago, Billy had asked for a raise. Thing

was, there were a lot more ways Billy was costing Tom money, ways Billy hadn't even considered. The first week, Billy had called out the wrong dimensions. Three whole sheets of slat-wall wasted. Then, there were the groceries—the gallons of milk, the jars of peanut butter, the jumbo Cocoa Puffs. "Understand?" Tom said. "I guess," Billy said. He came away feeling like a liability, like maybe he should be paying Tom instead of the other way around. He guessed he was lucky to work for eight bucks an hour, no benefits. "We can talk about a raise when you to develop a skill-set," Tom said.

Tom's skill-set was pretty high. He was an actual architect with A.I.A. after his name. The initials stood for American Institute of Architects. Tom hadn't started at a junior college. He'd gone straight from high school to the University of Illinois. And not just undergraduate. He had a Masters degree. He'd worked in an office in the Loop. He'd taken a licensing exam that lasted three days. A lot of book-learning before you ever got to that step. Billy learned better when he wasn't chained to a desk.

The first store they'd remodeled, Billy had learned something new every day. He had never used a laser level or installed a drop-ceiling. He'd never even heard of slat-wall, the grooved, Formica-covered sheets that came twenty feet long and were a bitch to carry. Now, he'd learned everything there was to learn, and the timeline for the build-out at this Easton store sounded like it was going to be another grueling push. Sighing, Billy threw the bags of garbage in the corner. At least they wouldn't be tripping on a lot of junk.

When Billy returned to the truck, Tom stood at the side-mirror. Like the former Illinois governor, Blagojevich, who was prideful about his thick, dark hair, Tom was never far from his lime-green comb. Billy looked in the van, trying to decide what to bring in first. Tools and supplies sat on the top shelves, and on the bottom shelf sat plastic crates that held Tom's espresso machine, his burr grinder, the Breville juicer, the Coleman cooler, and the George Foreman grill. After giving one final pass with his comb, Tom said, "Let's get a move on."

"I'll get this out of the way." Billy grabbed the sleeping bag and punched it into the stuff sack. His eyes closed.

"Wake up!" Tom said.

"Say, listen..." Billy said.

"How's the tooth?"

Billy probed with his tongue. Pain shot up to his eyeball, and he blinked back tears. "All right," he said.

"Good," Tom said.

"Are we going to put in a full day?"

"We have to."

"Maybe could go to the Extended Stay."

"Check-in's not till four."

Billy pulled at his overall straps. "I been wearing these since yesterday, and I could use a shower."

"Can't it wait?" Tom said.

Billy wasn't stupid. He could tell when something was a question and when it wasn't. Tom slung a nail apron over his shoulder and picked up drywall buckets. Tools clanked. "What the hell, Billy!" Tom dropped the buckets. "Put the tools where they belong. Don't just throw them any old where."

"I was tired, okay?"

"That's no excuse."

"Not saying it was."

"Well, then, do it without me having to remind you."

The guy could be such a prick. But no sense getting all heated up. Tom headed toward the service entrance. Billy unlocked the trailer and took out panels for the enclosure. Spray-painted blue, each flakeboard panel had a Foot Locker logo. "For brand recognition," Tom said. The panels cut into Billy's shoulder and bounced with each step. He kicked open the back door and grunted for Tom to unlock the front entrance. Tom raised the metal grille. Then Billy dropped the panels so they made the maximum amount of racket. He didn't like feeling all sullen, but he couldn't help it. His tooth hurt, he was tired from the drive, and he wanted a shower.

"Let's get the store closed off ASAP," Tom said. "I want the 'Tommy Horse' out of sight before those union dudes take their coffee break. You start the demo, and I'll deal with the enclosure."

"Whatever." Billy unwrapped a lemon drop. Antibiotics made his mouth taste funny. The food court wasn't open yet.

"C'mon," Tom said. "Your tooth put us a day behind schedule."

"Excuse me for living," Billy said.

Tom looked up. "Don't cop an attitude."

Billy thought of the dentist's bill. Four hundred bucks for a root canal. He couldn't afford to get himself fired. Somewhere on the road, he'd have to hunt up another dentist to finish the job. Either that or wait till he got back to Macomb.

Three more trips and he had all the sections of the enclosure stacked beyond the display windows. Time for Tom to get his butt in gear. All he had to do was set

the panels upright and tap in the hinge pins. Instead, Tom was leaning against the wall. Hand over his cell phone, he made a circle with his finger, and, covering the phone, said, "Give me some privacy. I'm on the line with my lawyer."

If Tom wasn't on the line with his lawyer, he was on the line with Foot Locker corporate or the mall managers. While Billy worked, Tom talked on the phone. It wasn't like that in agriculture. The farmer worked as hard as the hired hand. It was a point of pride almost, and even on the long days of getting in the corn, the seventy-year-old dudes kept pushing until all that was left was rabbits chopped to pieces in the fields.

Billy went back to the trailer for the panel saw and the Tommy Horses, the invention Tom was trying to patent. Made of plywood and as easy to assemble as a cardboard box, the Tommy Horse popped open and looked like the little stool Billy had stepped up on as a kid to brush his teeth. Tom might be a slave-driver, but he was a genuine inventor, like Thomas Alva Edison. Once when Billy was little, he had read a book about Edison. One of those Easy Readers. Whenever the inventor came up with an idea, the book showed a light bulb next to his head. Edison had been an average student. A "C" student. Then, all of a sudden, he'd become rich and famous. Back in the store, Billy unfolded the sawhorses and dropped in the T-shaped pieces that locked the plywood ends together. Made from a 2x4 screwed to a six-inch-wide strip of plywood, the "locking piece," as Tom called it, was what distinguished the Tommy Horse from other prefab sawhorses. Tom had filed a method patent on the idea.

"Done!" Tom clicked his phone shut. "If you ever invent something..."

"That'll be the day," Billy said.

"...remember this. Before you get the patent, you gotta be like a nun." Knock-kneed, Tom clamped one hand over his mouth and the other over his crotch. His grin was immediately followed by a blush.

"Don't be grabbing yourself or people'll think you're a homo," Billy said.

"You think I'm joking."

"Are you a homo? Because if you are, it's okay. Just as long as you don't..."

Tom rolled his eyes and gave his hair a swipe with the comb. "You are so dumb. I'm trying to educate you."

"Sorry," Billy said. "What were you going to say?"

Tom took a deep breath and pursed his lips. "If you ever get an idea for an invention, you've got to be absolutely close-mouthed before the patent's filed, but when you start marketing the product, you've got to put yourself out there and be a whore."

Billy felt like saying he was a whore anyway, so what was the difference. But he ought to be grateful. Tips like these were something they didn't teach in school. A pang of hunger leapt up from his gut.

"I'm about to pass out," Billy said.

"I thought you said eating hurt your tooth," Tom said.

"The medicine's not sitting well on an empty stomach."

"There's o.j. and coffee cake in the cooler," Tom said.

"I'll go get it."

"Don't stress about the enclosure," Tom said. "Since you're heading back to the truck, you can take out the trash."

Can take out the trash? Billy thought. Gee, thanks. "We don't have a Dumpster yet."

"It'll be here this afternoon."

Billy slung the bags of trash over his shoulder. "What do you want me to do with these, then?"

"See if the new store has a container," Tom said. "Don't call attention to yourself, or we'll have the union on us like a rash."

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The fresh air made Billy feel slightly more alert. He'd barely seen the sun all week, and the brightness hurt his eyes. He hugged the wall, going from shadow to shadow and past the loading docks. Finally, he was within spitting distance of the new store. Ironworkers in orange vests crisscrossed the steel skeleton, and above

him, carpenters in yellow hardhats scurried about. They were putting up steel studs. The parking lot was empty. The Dumpster corral, surrounded by a cyclone fence and camouflaged by canvas, sat out in the open. He looked around for spies. Companies were territorial about their Dumpsters, and if they caught him throwing in Foot Locker crapola, the mall managers would slap a big fine on Tom. This had happened up at Woodfield Mall. Tom hadn't even docked Billy's pay. Tom meant well, Billy told himself, but he was sick of people meaning well and screwing him.

After high school, Billy had taken out a student loan and enrolled at Macomb Community College. Along with his drafting class and one on computer-aided design, he had been forced to take English 100, which his advisor told him he had to pass with a grade of C or better if he wanted to transfer. In Davenport, his forwarded mail finally caught up to him. While Tom was cooking spaghetti with pine nuts and this green sauce that looked like fresh alfalfa, Billy sat at the counter and opened his grades. With the grade slip shaking in his hand, Billy had tried to tell Tom why the "D" he'd earned in English was unfair.

The teacher had told him to write a term paper on a topic he felt passionate about, so he wrote about the Trilateral Commission, a super secret club made up of top people from formerly Communist countries, plus leaders from the Socialist countries in Europe. Once a year, they met in Geneva to set food prices. Putin, who had headed up the KGB, was engineering a plot to keep food prices artificially low. As payback for the collapse of the Soviet Union, Putin wanted to crush the American family farmer and bring America to its knees. George Bush senior was a member of the Trilateral Commission. Very few people knew that, but Billy's dad subscribed to a newsletter for family farmers, and the newsletter had a lot stuff that didn't make it into the *Macomb Eagle*. According to his dad, the last decent agricultural subsidy had been back when Eisenhower was President. You couldn't question Ike's loyalty. He was as American as it gets.

"Don't believe everything you read," Tom had said, a smirk on his face, so Billy knew he was not being taken seriously. Sitting in the dentist's waiting room, Billy had brought up the Trilateral Commission again. Tom put up his hand. "Listen, Billy, I know you're sincere, but I can't listen to any more of this drivel. Give it a rest." What Billy's father said was true. No one cared about the little guy.

Billy heard the deep-deep-deep of a garbage truck. The driver opened the gate on the Dumpster corral. Billy watched the truck empty two fifteen-yard containers. That was costing someone money. The truck left. Billy jogged over, opened the gate, stomped his bags to make the contents less identifiable, and threw them in. Soon, his garbage would be covered with construction debris.

Hurrying to make his escape, he closed the gate.

"Hey, guy. What are you doing?" a man's voice called.

Billy froze.

A young carpenter, hustling toward the corral, was holding the head of his hammer to keep it from bouncing against his leg. At least it wasn't a guy in a tie and white shirt. All the same, best not to engage the enemy.

"I'm working around the other side." Billy tipped his head in a circle, indicating the far end of the mall. These guys were like ants. They'd send out scouts until they found a grain of sugar.

Introducing himself as Rick, the carpenter said, "You ever think about going union?"

"Nah," Billy said, turning to go. "I'm a self-employed contractor." Not true, but that's what Tom told him to say. The carpenter was gaining on him.

"Looks to me like you're a carpenter working for an hourly wage without benefits," he heard the voice behind him say. "Do you have medical insurance?"

Billy turned. He hated lying, but there'd be hell to pay if he didn't: matchsticks in the outlets; air let out of the truck-tires.

"I'm co-owner of the company," Billy said.

"You don't look much older than me."

"Yeah, well." Billy was eighteen and a half, but because of his dimples, people always pegged him for younger. This guy, with an Adam's apple pointy as an elbow, looked like he'd come from the work crew of a high-school project house. That was how Billy had learned to frame and trim, building a house under his shop teacher's supervision. Then, he'd had friends to hang out with. At three o'clock, they'd knock off for the day, spend half an hour sweeping up, then drive up Coal Road to Argyle Lake, stripping off their sweaty tee shirts and diving from the bank into cold, green water. He missed the splash fights and the way his body felt, tired, but not exhausted. Plus, he had buddies who knew what he was all about. He wanted to talk to this carpenter, but he was afraid.

"Shouldn't you be getting back?" Billy said.

"I'm on break," the young carpenter said.

"I don't take breaks," said Billy.

"You should. Half hour, morning and afternoon, plus

a forty-five minute lunch break. It's in our contract. The rest of the crew went to grab a soda, but I seen you out here and said, that's a farm boy. You got a slow walk, like you made too many trips to the milking barn."

"We don't have cows in Illinois," Billy said.

"That where you're from?" the carpenter said.

"Listen, I have work to do."

"You got to rest your body. Leastwise, that's what they're always telling me. I'm always go, go, go. Guess that's from Dad."

"We must have the same dad," Billy said.

His eyes on a '95 Ford Bronco in the parking lot, Billy started walking back. His dad Russ drove a Bronco, but with the rocker panels rusted out. Russ said the job remodeling mall boutiques sounded like a fine thing. After losing the farm, Russ had filed for bankruptcy, and he wanted Billy to do anything but farm. Billy didn't tell his dad, but he had never wanted to be a farmer, worrying about the price the elevator would give him or arguing with the bank about a loan. Anyways, he wasn't sure he could do the math.

After the farm got auctioned off, he'd been angry that Russ didn't help him with school. Russ said he didn't have the money, and anyhow, nobody gave him money to go to school, so he didn't see why Billy couldn't work and go part time. Lately, Billy had been thinking about his dad a lot. Russ had moved into town and fallen back on his trade as a soft shoe farrier. Billy's mom worked in a grocery store. Giving him a kiss goodbye, she's said, "Don't think we don't love you."

***

Tom bought lunch at McDonald's. Sitting on the Tommy Horse, Billy listened to his boss wonder aloud whom he should approach at Home Depot. Maybe Loewe's would be interested. If either one of the big stores nibbled, he would have to gear up to produce in volume, but, by and by, the Tommy Horse business would run itself. "If this thing goes," Tom said, "I'll set up a factory in Nogales."

"I thought everything came from China," Billy said, wiping his chin with the back of his hand.

"I thought about China, but shipping's prohibitive."

"How long's it going to take for the patents to come through?"

"Depends."

"On what?"

"On if the idea is in the public domain, my lawyer says. If every Tom, Dick, and Harry knew about the Tommy Horse, I couldn't prove it was my idea." Tom whipped out his comb. "C'mon. We gotta get going. We're about ready to start cutting."

While Tom had been erecting the enclosure, Billy had popped off the old slat-wall with his pry-bar and chiseled down the blobs of mastic. Boutique stores had to remodel every five years. It was part of their lease.

After swallowing another pill with the last of his shake, Billy wadded his aluminum wrapper and gestured at the gutted store. "What about all this?"

"The boutiques?" Tom said.

"Yeah."

Tom put away his comb and buckled on his nail apron. "We've only got one more on this contract."

"But that's two weeks." Billy tried to judge whether the pounding in his throat was making his voice sound funny. "When's the next contract start?"

"There isn't going to be one," Tom said.

"Did somebody lowball you?"

"Not exactly," Tom said.

Billy wondered if the Trilateral Commission had a hand in this.

"You made it sound like you'd need me another year."

Tom looked away and shrugged. "Yeah, well."

"You just don't want to do it anymore," Billy said.

Tom raised his eyebrows. "You're probably right."

"Did you decide not to put in a bid?"

"No, I could still do it."

"Then, what?" Billy said.

"It's a tradeoff."

"For making a go of the invention."

Tom nodded. "That's part of it. Once this patent goes through, I'm going to need to put on the full court press."

"And you can't be traveling."

"No, I can't."

Billy looked at the gutted space. Sealed off from the mall, the store was dark, illuminated only by a single droplight hanging from the ceiling struts. Before lunch, he hadn't noticed the smell of popcorn. Now, he did. "What if you handled the design, and I did the build-out? At least to start with."

Tom spread the legs of the laser level and bent over, his eye to the ocular. "You'd need a partner."

Maybe Rick, Billy thought. "Where would I find somebody?"

"I don't know. You'd have to sell yourself to Foot Locker."

"You could talk to them."

"I don't think so," Tom said, straightening up.

Basically, Tom was telling him his job was going to end. While Tom was out glad-handing it with home

improvement stores, Billy would be back in Macomb shoveling asphalt on a highway crew. "I wish I'd known," Billy said.

"Did you take your medicine at lunch?"

"Yeah," Billy said.

"Remember. You've got to take all the pills," Tom said. "Don't stop just because you're feeling better."

"I won't," Billy said, probing with his tongue.

"Go get the respirators from the truck, and cut the light on your way out, will you?" Tom said. "I want to shoot a level."

***

When he returned with the respirators, Billy threw them on the rolling tool chest. He didn't feel like suffocating behind the rubber mask. Wearing those things was about as much fun as putting on a condom. He knew he should, but something inside him didn't like the way they felt. His throat tickled. He coughed and popped a lemon drop. Tom held out his chalk box. Billy grabbed the hook. The chalk box's taut string snapped across the wall. Horizontal blue lines were struck. The one thing he'd learned was you had to have a continuous level-line around the store, or you were in deep doo-doo when it came time to hang the slat-wall. Considering how he'd busted his butt, it wasn't much of a take-home lesson.

Tom called out the dimensions, and Billy made hash marks, then tied a bandanna around his nose before lifting the slat-wall onto the panel saw's aluminum rack. He squeezed the saw's trigger. The blade zipped through the slat-wall and threw out a cloud of dust. For the last week and a half, the formaldehyde in the glue had been bothering him. He coughed and pounded his chest.

"Humor me and put on a respirator," Tom said. "I don't want you getting emphysema."

"You should wear one, too," Billy said.

"Okay, if you say so." Tom smiled and held out a hand. Billy tossed him the mask. After adjusting the strap, Tom pumped fresh adhesive on the wall and hoisted the slat-wall onto his knee. "Pick up your end," he said. Together, they lined it up with the chalk line. Billy felt the mastic squish. The fumes came right through the mask. He started coughing. Particulate cartridges didn't do shit for solvents. He ripped off the mask and headed for the door.

"Hey," Tom said, pushing the mask up on his forehead. "Wait till the adhesive grabs."

Billy came back. Palms flat, he pushed. His cough started up.

"I'm going to buy you some Robitussin," Tom said. "Get some air. And, while you're out, steal me a piece of dimension lumber from the Dumpster," Tom said.

"Why?"

Tom let go of the slat-wall and stood back. One end began to dip, and he rushed toward it, guiding it back to level.

"The patent attorney wants me to send him a photo of the Tommy Horse, and I want to show him a 2x6 on top."

"I thought I wasn't supposed to call attention to myself."

"A big lummox like you inevitably calls attention to himself."

Billy put his hands on his hips. He stared at the gouges in the concrete wall where his chisel had hit. Stones had fallen out and left deep dimples. "Is that why you hired me, for my size?"

"I didn't hire you for your brains," Tom said, turning and pressing his back against the slat-wall. He flipped open his phone.

With the toe of his boot, Billy made a circle on the floor. He unbuckled his nail apron and let it drop. He touched his tongue to his tooth. A pencil drove into his eyeball. He had to stop doing that.

"Why don't you take five," Tom said, "and don't forget the 2x6, long's you're out there."

***

In the corral, Billy climbed into the Dumpster to retrieve the dimension lumber. He knocked off dried concrete and hoisted himself back over the side, disgusted by the rotten smell clinging to his overalls.

A voice called, "Want a Coke?"

Billy turned and saw the apprentice holding two Big Gulps.

"I knew you'd come," Rick said, "so I quick drove over to Seven-Eleven."

"Sorry for stealing the lumber," Billy said.

"I don't care," Rick said. "The scrap's on its way to a landfill."

From the curb, Billy saw two ironworkers, feet dangling off a girder, opening their lunch pails.

"You work with a buddy?" Billy said.

"Yeah," Rick said, motioning to the job site with his drink. "He's over there having a cigarette."

"How long you been on this job?"

"Two months." Rick pulled out his wallet and passed Billy his scaffold card, which entitled him to erect and work on scaffold anywhere in the United States. "The card's a meal ticket," he said. "If you wanted to join the union, why, we'd be glad to have you."

Billy felt like he was sitting with one of the Jehovah's Witnesses who used to come by the farm. "Did someone send you out here to recruit me?" he said.

Rick smiled and shrugged. "Sort of." The Brotherhood wanted all working carpenters to earn a decent wage, and the only way to do that was to organize. And train. The Brotherhood would give him training better than any college.

"What do you learn?"

"Right now, I'm learning to build a sawhorse," Rick said. "They tell me, if I can build a sawhorse, I can frame a roof."

Billy looked at Rick's prominent Adam's apple and at his sincere grin. He reminded Billy of his high school friends who'd stayed behind to farm, work in the feed store, or repair tractors.

"Next time they ask you to build a sawhorse, do it like this," Billy said, picking up a scrap of cardboard. The one thing he'd been good at was drafting. He sketched the pieces of the Tommy Horse.

"You can make this out of five-eighths ply."

"It looks flimsy," Rick said.

"It'll hold my weight, no problem."

"Where'd you come up with the design?"

"I invented it," Billy said.

"You invented it?"

"Yeah," Billy said. "I filed a patent. I'm marketing it through Home Depot."

"What about Walmart?" Rick said.

"Them, too."

"Is it going to be made out of steel, or what?"

"No, plywood. With a 2x6 on top." Billy held up the scrap of lumber. "This here's the key that holds the legs together."

Rick stood and dusted off the seat of his pants. "I'll show it to my apprenticeship teacher. They're always looking for ideas."

"Do that," Billy said.

"Could you autograph this?" Rick held out the drawing.

Billy looked at the sketch and signed in neat block print. William Dwight Rippelmeyer, Inventor and Architect, A.I.A. His full name, with the initials beside it, looked important. He closed his eyes and, along with the sunshine, felt the importance of himself sink in. He was going to do great things.

***Marylee MacDonald**, a former carpenter with a Masters in Creative Writing from San Francisco State, lives in Arizona. She has published in* American Literary Review, New Delta Review, The Briar Cliff Review, North Atlantic Review, The Bellevue Literary Review, River Oak Review, Story Quarterly, Raven Chronicles, Ruminate, Four Quarters, *and the* Blue Moon Literary & Art Review.

Her short story, Almost Paradise, *won the 2009 Matt Clark Prize competition.* ***Finding Peter*** *won the American Literary Review 2010 Fiction Prize. Her novel,* ***Unpaid Labor****, about mothers who would do anything to keep fate from harming their children, was a finalist for the Bellwether Prize.*

The Judge's Comments:

It is a road and work story, and a times-are-tough story, and you feel yourself pulled along with these characters, feeling for both men, employer and employee, even as the former makes tough decisions and the latter is tempted by a better offer.

Good, clear writing and an earned ending make this a story to read and reread.

Other Short Story Finalists

Antoine, Simon Russell, Elwood, Victoria, Australia

Buy-One-Get-One, Jenn Marie Nunes, Baton Rouge, LA

Eagle Beach, Jim Fairhall, Chicago, IL

Float, Laura Forster Maheshwary, Chicago, IL

Grief, William Coles, Chapel Hill, NC

Hidden, Lisa Lopez Snyder, Columbia, SC

King's Highway, Catherine Brown, Chicago, IL

Leaving Halves, Julia Carey, New Orleans, LA

Second to Last, Derek Bridges, New Orleans, LA

Stitches of Light, Michael Zell, New Orleans, LA

The Weight of Grace, Naomi Benaron, Tucson, AZ

Wade's Technique, Mary Ann D'Agincourt, Westwood, MA

Beverly Blasingame
2010 Best Essay Winner

Train to Trebon

Beverly Blasingame writes fiction and nonfiction from her home in Iowa City, Iowa. Prior to relocating to her native state, she managed programs to support military families while employed with the federal government. She retired with her husband in Ocean Springs, Mississippi until Hurricane Katrina destroyed their neighborhood. While in Mississippi, she won a Creative Nonfiction Fellowship from Mississippi Arts Commission and worked as writer-in-residence and creative writing teacher for Community in the Schools. Literary prizes include the Dorothy Churchill Cappon Prize for the Essay from New Letters and John Woods Scholarships to Prague Summer Writing Program. She recently attended essay workshops in the University of Iowa's Nonfiction Program as a non-degree student. Her work has appeared in *New Letters* and *Stars and Stripes.*

The Judge's Comments:

I chose The Train to Trebon *because of its haunting, meditative quality and insight. While it appears at first to be a typical travel narrative, the piece surprises in that the author never arrives at his/her destination during the course of the essay. The train ride through the Czech Republic becomes less about arriving than about the circular nature of time and the writer's insights into how early childhood experiences shaped his/her lifelong stance as an observer who is most comfortable on the move. Finally, there are some gorgeous and accurate details here that make the journey a vivid one for the reader. It's very well done.*

Judged by Beth Ann Fennelly, a widely published poet and essayist.

Sponsored by:

The Award of the 2010 Gold Medal for Best Essay is underwritten by a grant from from E. Quinn Peeper. Quinn, a member of the Faulkner Society's Executive Board, is shown here with his partner, Michael Harold, and Society member Jeannie Clinton at Juleps in June, 2010. Quinn, Michael, and Jeannie chaired a most successful Juleps in June fundraiser for the Society several years ago and agreed to co-chair Juleps in June, 2011 as well. Quinn is both a gifted writer and musician.

"To ensure that the self doesn't shrink, to see that it hold on to its volume, memories have to be watered like potted flowers, and the watering calls for regular contact with the witnesses of the past…"

-- MILAN KUNDERS, Identity

Too late to change direction. Too early to get off a train speeding southward through the Czech Republic, I'm on a journey to Trebon near ancestral villages in the region once called Bohemia. Robert and Olga, cultural guides, will meet me at the station. They specialize in preserving the histories of families in the Lake District where I'm bound, and they make a business out of connecting the risk-takers who emigrated to the New World with the die-hards who remained in the old.

Relatives from Bohemia live no more than ten minutes from me in Iowa — people I know by name only — and I've come thousands of miles to visit strangers with the same marrow. I need to make sense of who we were back then, return to the source that leads into the 1600's in order to understand my blueprint. I'm stuck on this idea that family is fate. What isn't disclosed shapes us, and I intend to fill in the gaps in our history in order to be free of its secrets. Follow the trail to the end of the line.

Bales of hay in shimmering fields remind me of home. Eastern Iowa. It's a place I wandered into after living on the outskirts of elsewhere — a damn Yankee in the south; an infidel in Saudi Arabia; an uncouth American in an English village. For decades, I migrated from town to town, belonging nowhere, lacking a firm identity. Now I'm looking for something I can call mine, roots that belonged to others, a history with my name on it.

Two lovers sit facing me in a stuffy compartment. Dressed in spandex, they lean into one another, slick bicycle helmets over their heads on a brass rack and blink into the blurry landscape of their future. I sit with my back to the engine while I squint into the scenery of what has been. I ask myself something: Isn't this where a family begins, with two young travelers? My parents might have met on a train.

My mother would have been wearing a stylish hat and pencil skirt with kick pleats during the forties on her escape from Detroit to the west coast. My father, slightly rumpled in his WWII Merchant Marine uniform, traveled to a training base near Santa Barbara. At first glance, my mother couldn't possibly have guessed her future husband's history; my father couldn't have imagined that within a few years, he'd become his Czech father.

They would have been in their twenties — the ages of soldiers in the next compartment. I saw them pass through the aisle in Prague, four men dressed in rumpled uniforms carrying packs of pilsner. I didn't understand their words, but in my spine, I could feel the vibration of the Czech language, laden with consonants (my grandmother spoke it, her first language — her mother wouldn't allow a word of English in the house). Now, one of the boys thumps on the wall behind my back as he simulates sounds of sex. And I recognize the boasts of a braggart acting out the part of pleasing a lady. He fakes an orgasm (Holy Buckets, I hope he's faking) by imitating high-pitched, painful sounds of ecstasy.

The sun is hot over my right shoulder. To cool off, I step into the aisle, which smells faintly of country air, stale smoke and beer. One of the soldiers stands near a sign. It translates into any language: a red circle and a line that cuts through a sketch of a man leaning his head out the train window.

The boy glances at me. Indifferent, he spits on the rule before sliding the glass wide open and sticking his head through the gap. I watch wind tussle his hair, the color of shredded wheat, and worry that a tree or sign near the tracks will decapitate him. I wonder if we're related, not such a stretch to imagine a genetic link to the hooligan.

Divoky, my grandmother's maiden name, means wild in Czech. She married a Pecka, a cherry pit or hard man. When she gave birth to my father, she produced a wild pit, a man named after his nature.

The train slows. I can see from a weathered placard that we've arrived at Olbramovice station. We screak to a stop, and I return to my seat.

"Pardon," I say.

I step over the bicyclists' outstretched legs, then sit on the seat to fumble through my brown canvas bag for a notebook containing my itinerary. An hour to go before changing trains in Veseli n. Luznici. Time enough for a nap, but I'm afraid I'll sleep until the end of the line. So I look out the window. A silver train headed north slows next to us, and I watch people, their eye averted, except for the children — children want to see it all. They stare at me as if they've spotted their grandmother. I wave at a boy, and he looks to his mother for permission to signal back. Whoosh, they disappear down the track.

The couple on the seat across from me appears to have fallen asleep, their feet sprawled over an apricot

colored floor. A florescent light over our heads illuminates the dulled and scuffed linoleum. I stare at the palms of my hands and notice an M on my right, a V on the left. Recently, and I read this in a New Age book, I learned that our dead relatives stand behind us: paternal ghosts on the right; maternal on the left (unless a person is left-handed, as I am, and the order is then reversed). I feel the peasant spirits of my family queuing behind my shoulders, the Czechs from my father's side, the Irish/French from my mother's side, a large gap between them. They squeeze between my spine and a burgundy seat against the wall. The wall vibrates as the train picks up speed.

I press into the skin on my palms. Bone and tissue surround the empty lake in the center, and with my finger firmly wedged in the indentation, I can nearly reach the top of my hand where the veins rise above surface like tree roots. Family roots, I think. Harder I press, but I can't reach through to the side where those who went before me keep their secrets.

The boys in next compartment must have passed out. I can hear the train along the rails as I stare out the window at oiled tracks, black against light gravel. The pattern morphs into a familiar memory: Lines of light through Venetian blinds in a dark room, 1953.

A scene in my parents' bedroom appears to me daily against my will and without foreshadowing. Or maybe a warning announces the memory the way a migraine produces an aura, the sufferer ignoring the signals until pain gains the upper hand. In this recognized and yet ignored way, I know the memory will arrive. Still, it surprises.

A shadow takes possession of my father. It forces him to grab my pregnant mother by the shoulders. He slips his large knuckled fingers, hands evolved for farm work, the veins beneath his skin like logs in pond scum, around her neck.

What is it about train travel, I wonder, that stimulates traumatic memories? I see images of my mother's hair — lush, black curls — oh the memories shrouded in that head of hair, wrote Baudelaire. Something, perhaps the screech of my sister, distracts my father and prevents him from strangling my mother to death.

She collapses on the bed and cries a sound as old as Eve that changes me in ways I fail to comprehend. I sometimes wonder, did my father believe that he could kill his demons by choking them out of my mother? He couldn't stop a haunting any more than I can.

Let's face it, I tell myself. The past is just another word for the future. It circles. It claws at me, demands release, gets its way. In girlhood, for example, I reenacted what I had witnessed. I grabbed my dolls around the necks and tugged on their Shirley Temple curls. Twisted their chins to face their waxy backs. Occasionally, I performed a bloodless act of decapitation before chucking their heads on the floor.

But that was then. Now I'm a middle-aged woman on a train who should have "worked through" her childhood traumas. The closer I get to my destination, the fuzzier my motives become for traveling to this foreign place. What can I expect to accomplish on a weekend visit, I ask myself, a connection to people who've forgotten as much as we have? The Divokys, through me, come full circle, but I don't belong in the Czech Republic.

Soon, I'll arrive in the region my ancestors left in search of land grants in the New World. I stare into the rural scenery and see a road leading through cornfields. It takes me into Cedar Rapids where I follow it to the door of our little house on Williams Boulevard. Then I step inside as a child of two.

After my father tries to kill my mother, he orders my older sister to go with him for a ride. She refuses, calls him a bad man. "You hurt my mommy," she says.

I look through the V of his legs and raise my arms to him. Take me, I gesture. My mother, a housewife, can't drive. She can't show me the world.

"Come on," he says, and I follow him to the Chevrolet.

I crawl into the back seat and watch his cigarette smoke curl over the dashboard. His tires thump along Williams Boulevard and windshield wipers sing a slip-splash tune. Streetlights hang over us, tulips in a downpour.

Our cottage-sized house disappears through the rear window. I don't care about my mother crying in the bedroom or anyone else, just me, just me on the big bed of the back seat of the Chevy. I'm ignored by my father, yes, but I'm in motion. I'm going somewhere.

I want him to keep driving. I like the feel of speed, the color of raindrops trickling down the Chevy's windshield, the swoosh of air on my neck as the train sways along the tracks. Too soon, he stops, parks and leaves me alone. The train whistles as it approaches the next station.

Lights on a window in Cedar Rapids, a bar's advertisement, sizzles on, off. The colors and sounds of night sharpen: horns, loud laughter, the blink of the hideous neon bulbs. I hide on the floor of the Chevy. Grit grinds into my knees while I make myself invisible. I

wait. A long time. Maybe I sleep, I don't remember.

A train conductor startles me by pushing her badge under my nose and demanding a ticket. I smile. Nod my head while I fumble in my satchel for the wrinkled slip of paper. She examines it like a CIA agent or Communist bureaucrat — no trust allowed. I lower my eyes, someone with something to hide. She punches the ticket, and we pass by a village with nests in tiled roofs. The engine whistles.

Surely my father pocketed his train ticket from Uncle Sam, and my mother carried hers in a white purse to match her sandals. They got off at a California station and traveled to a ballroom where he punched her dance card to the sounds of swing. Then he shipped out to the Pacific Theater.

The farm boy from Iowa spent his tour of duty in Hawaii cultivating the bodies of war casualties. He cleansed them, raked a sponge over their skulls, necks and fingers for the final journey home. At least, this is the scene I imagine based on stories my Czech grandmother disclosed months before her one-hundredth birthday (before she stopped speaking English, altogether). She said that after he ran his hands over so many dead bodies, my father was never the same. But I believe more was involved in his rage, something undisclosed. The old bear of childhood trauma came out of hibernation when the season called to it.

Victory in Europe and America. Peace. My parents married, an odd couple, really, she from an Irish-French family with roots leading all the way to the Vatican. He was descended from a peasant family in Bohemia who spent centuries working the soil within the space of a U. By this, I mean that the ancestral cottage stood on the left, the kitchen in the center, and barn on the right with land for grazing and gardening in the middle, soil enough to barely sustain growing families. When the population outgrew the resources, many left for America.

As an offspring of immigrants, I feel a need to return to the source, the mother country, and I'm a traveler by nature. I want to go elsewhere with the same compulsiveness that drives me to go home. I imagine dandelions and white clover in the meadows surrounding Trebon, similar to what grows wild in Iowa.

Orange poppies bloom along the tracks in this region. The flowers or weeds, depending upon a person's outlook, will tickle my ankles as I take snapshots of the family cottage, a whitewashed structure I saw in pictures from the Communist era before I left home. Freedom is back in the Czech Republic, and I'm told that the property is renovated, now in the hands of a retired couple from Prague.

The scenery blurs as we enter morning fog rising from a pond near the Lake District, habitat of Natterjack Toads with legs evolved for long-distance puddle-jumping. I take a map of the Trebon region from my bag. On the back is a description of the landscape, something I read earlier, but I remember the part about the Natterjacks. I search for the passage, can't find it, and instead, read about the forest: "The remaining broad-leaved forests contain a rich flora, including the rare chamomile grape-fern, noble liverwort and matagon lily." And I read that the canals in the Trebon region have been "colonized by water violets."

I like the verb choice, colonized. My people, the Bohemians, colonized Iowa. The Divokys knew where they were going before they left because they followed villagers who had scouted the plains ahead of the exodus from the Old Country.

Lyrics come to mind, a song by the Talking Heads. We know where we're goin', but we don't know where we've been…we're on a ride to nowhere, come on inside.

I want to believe that I'm on a road to somewhere. Maybe I'll find an ancestor who can assure me the trip is worth it, but I can't say with certainty that home is a place you must leave in order to become free of the past. Before my return to Iowa several months ago, I had abandoned its coal-black, fossilized land to create a new identity and to forget. On the train to Trebon, I feel encumbered with family ghosts. Bohemia looks like the proper burial site for what haunts me. Time will tell.

Meanwhile, I travel through its drowsy countryside and water the flowers of memory while I hope to locate witnesses to the past. I ask myself, what do you expect to gain if you meet a Divoky — deep connection to a

foreigner? I ride the rails with a half-baked idea that has given me a slick excuse to leave home once again.

The couple sitting across from me stretches and gazes sleepily into one another's eyes, and the soldiers, as if by the same silent cue, wake from their stupor. I assume that the loudest among them plays the clown because the group bursts into laughter after he shouts. I stare out the window and see a girl walking across a meadow, her pants slung low to reveal a tattoo across her hips. A wire from her iPod is connected to her ear. She doesn't represent the girls I expected to find — country lasses wearing scarves around their heads, cotton skirts past their knees, aprons around their slender or swollen waists.

The present superimposes on the past, especially during travel. I've entered a liminal place with no apparent boundaries. Time belongs to the living, makes us all related to one another.

Still, I cling to my role as an outsider (remembering my father's assault on my mother has set me up to play the part of an observer), an identity that suits me. On the train to Trebon, I realize that though I've come in search of roots, I feel most at home during travel. I'm comfortable behind the mask of a middle-aged woman on a seat facing the wrong direction. No one thinks to ask where I've been or where I'm going.

The sun warms the back of my neck. The late spring air feels cool. Fully awake to the present, I check my itinerary for the umpteenth time. As the train rushes forward, I think about Robert and Olga waiting for me at the station, and I try not to worry about missing my connection. But would it be so terrible? The end of the line might contain what I came to find and then, to leave behind.

Shari Jean Stauch
2010 Best Essay
1st Runner-Up

Anti-Social Media

"…that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their inescapable social destiny."

--Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

It's official: Our own social destiny, overrun by digital media, seems ever more inescapable. Making me like it? That's going to be a problem. I fear for my real-time existence in this virtual world, a social dinosaur on the brink of extinction for whom, "C U L8R" is never going to be a full sentence, and 140 characters is never going to be a paragraph. My fellow resistance fighters are abandoning me one by one, climbing from the rubble of our once safe carrel bunkers in the local libraries, waving their white Kindle flags, babbling that they love Google…

I saw it coming and I was powerless to stop its infiltration. But know this: humanity's downhill slide into the new antisocial millennium came before passive web 1.0 evolved to interactive 2.0, before 3G became 4G. And for me it came over what should have been a simple dinner with friends on a getaway weekend, something people still did in the 90s, b.s. (before Skype).

From Chicago, Detroit, Nashville and Charlotte we'd jetted down to Savannah, trundling mini-suitcases on sturdy wheels as we met, laughing and hugging in the airport, exhilarated by the prospect of this brief untethered few days. No children, no husbands, no careers, no wake-up calls. Nowhere to be and nothing to be done but prowl Savannah's squares in search of the idyllic park bench, the consummate latte, the impeccable cabernet. It would be a modern gal's version of "Calgon, Take Me Away," fully loaded, with luxury suites and Jacuzzi tubs, tawny ports and decadent dark chocolates.

So there we sat, our first evening in town, four pairs of eyes sparkling with a warm sheen of inebriation and candlelight, slicing through tomatoes and moz-

zarella drizzled in balsamic vinegar, sipping vintage Sassicaia as we held our goblets up to the flickering light, remarking on the color, the "legs." We were reveling in sensory input without the usual barrage of life's insistent interruptions.

And then it happened, a low rumble of foreboding, a vibration felt by all through the velveteen cushions of our cozy corner booth. My first thought: earthquake. But no, worse. My dearest friends, break-aparts from the same carefree soul we were sure we each shared, reached for their purses, fumbling for… their cell phones?

At first it felt as if I were the only one who'd gotten the Emily Post supplement for phone etiquette in the new century (no movie theaters, no hospitals and most certainly no damned restaurants). Then I caught myself. Who was I to judge a soul mate? Surely an honest mistake had been made, a device left on in the shared excitement of our reunion. But my misgivings returned when not one rushed to turn off her phone or apologize for spilling this intrusion all over the clean, white tablecloth. Instead, Shelby snapped open her flip phone with a deft flick of her wrist, then listened to a full five-minute diatribe from a co-worker with a day's office gossip to share.

They fell from grace like dominoes, these friends of mine. Nancy, following Shelby's lead, reached for her own handheld annoyance, checking in on the home front even as she forked in another mouthful of ripe heirloom tomato. Jane looked at me, shrugged, and began texting away, her perfectly manicured nails a staccato click on the tiny keys of her new-fangled Blackberry.

The waiter approaching our table looked at me askance and I rolled my eyes towards the low lighting, embarrassed by – and for – my dearest friends. Yet, unwilling to be the prude among the mod squad, I kept silent. After all, I reasoned, my writing life surely didn't have the same urgency as Nancy's career owning an insurance agency, or Shelby's in advertising, or Jane's as a media trainer. No, I had but one editor to bitch at me at the moment, and a husband and a couple of teenagers. By comparison I was a hermit…

Thus began my unwilling foray into this brave new world. In that maddening blink of an eye we became a society so hungry for virtual connections, we were willing to forego live conversations, even as they sat at the same table.

As upwardly mobile phones replaced live conversations, the digital army launched another sneak attack: replacing mail with e-mail. I thought this would bother me more than it did; I'd always considered myself one of those elegant women who'd rather write a card than choose a Hallmark sentiment, and couldn't help but be a bit judgmental about the neighbor who'd barely scrawl her signature across the bottom of a holiday card without taking the extra moment to jot a personal note.

But the digital army's sneak attack worked; I bought into e-mail's immediacy and convenience, (not to mention its value against the rising cost of stamps and stationery). Every e-mail to a family member represented another slice of tree that wouldn't be pulped to feed my need to communicate, making me feel socially responsible. And people I didn't need or want to chat with on the phone could easily find me (or at least rest comfortable in the illusion that they'd found me), while I still controlled where and when and *if* I chose to answer.

And, while it wasn't linen stock and wax-sealed envelopes, it was writing. We writers the world over were lulled into complacency, warming to the notion that at least more people would need to be literate in this information age. That is, until the bad spelling and lousy grammar hit the fan.

Worse, we were soon bombarded by a new onslaught – the e-card – lazier even than choosing someone else's sentiment from a drugstore shelf full of canned sentiments. Then, before we could duck that blow, along came its evil twin with a wicked right hook, chain e-mail. A clever joke or parable meant to bring its voracious audience to tears, chain e-mails multiplied faster than rabbits, and always ended with what became for me the seven deadly words, "Forward this to five of your friends." To this day, nothing makes me click "junk" on an e-mail faster than that phrase.

Which brings me to junk mail, what is destined to go down as history's greatest time-suck. While real friends and colleagues tried to reach me by e-mail two and three times before they got through, 800 Viagra e-mails would manage to worm their way in, despite a personal e-mail address that was anything but gender ambiguous. I began devoting entire hours of my day figuring out how to eliminate junk mail, usually by closing old accounts and opening new ones.

I wasn't alone. In an attempt to skirt the junky side effects of e-mail, live chats became all the rage. Unsuspecting victims could type away to friends without

waiting for a "You've Got Mail," and have abbreviated conversations long distance without the benefit of a phone. Problem was, typing the conversation took longer than speaking it, and maintaining multiple conversations was an exercise in manual dexterity… and poor grammar. Digital immigrants – those of us over age 40 who'd learned to type on big, fat typewriter keys – struggled to keep up, and in doing so were forced to adopt the abbreviated language of the new world natives; LOL and LMAO and BFF and OMG.

Ah, but that wasn't enough! Enter the new reign of terror known as social media, a phenomenon we could only envision being created by tech geeks sequestered in their basements trying to find friends (and that vision proved mostly spot-on). But from bulletin boards to chat rooms to MySpace, the movement grew, not by thousands, but by millions. Most of us, presumably those of us who already had friends, tried to resist, and yet, soon no one – not even me – could help but recognize the commercial value that made the new media more and more difficult to criticize.

First, there were the obvious business advantages. Customers who were savvy enough to fast-forward through TV commercials and flip past print ads were not immune to listening in on company conversations and watching clever video clips (really just thinly disguised commercials). Viral marketing spread faster than swine flu.

But social media also appealed to this deeply rooted need among us humans to share. And that's when the resistance really began to crumble. Not only could we share connections, we could share information and opinions, and share with our entire network of friends, family and colleagues all at once if we chose. Social networking fed our need to connect with others like us, through blogs and niche sites that grouped together families, students, hobbyists, perhaps even cave dwellers. In the absence of real community, left behind as we juggled too many jobs and family members and junk mail folders, social networks began filling the void, becoming a virtual "block party" where folks could come hang out and share their days, without having to change clothes, conjure up a casserole or score a babysitter.

One of my colleagues, attempting to hold steadfast to those library carrels, tried to diminish the value of the new social media. "I think sites like Facebook will wind up only being used by business people and college kids."

A traitor to my own cause, I was forced to disagree. I'd personally seen Facebook become a destination site for families and friends to stay in touch across high traffic distances and high traffic lives. I explained how my own Facebook page kept me squarely in the lives of siblings scattered across three states. It even reconnected me with old high school friends who I was sure to never see at a class reunion, since I never planned to attend one.

My colleague acquiesced. "Well, families and friends then too, but that's probably all it will ever be."

Oh, how I wanted to agree with him. But at the risk of stating the obvious, who else was left? No, we needed a new weapon, one that would bring back some healthy resistance. So I began to ponder the "realness" of the connections. What was the real merit of all these links and friends and followers, without a way to distinguish the deep, lasting friendship from the guy who saw my name on a book jacket? A small but vital chink in the armor, perhaps, as there were no good, better or best rankings for friends. Joe could make a connection because he'd met Sally, some girl from high school, who also happened to dog sit for our best friend's border collie. And they were all out there telling other people they were our friends.

Still, the argument didn't hold much water. I'd write on my best friend's wall, not Joe's, and if Joe's posts were annoying me, I could hide him or un-follow him with the click of a button. Unlike trying to kill off junk mail, instant extermination worked when it came to unwanted virtual houseguests…

A few days ago I was out of town, checking e-mail in the solitude of my hotel room after a long day's conference. A hotel placard next to the phone advertised, "Free Wi-Fi: Keep Up With Your Connections in Your Home Away from Home." I sighed and placed it facedown on the nightstand, then turned back to see which e-mails needed attention and which I could quickly delete from my desktop. Up popped a message from my dad. "Have you been on Facebook today? I think an old friend of yours passed away."

I clicked the link he'd provided (yes, even my own sire had gone to the dark side), and my old friend Julie's page came into view. We had over one hundred "friends" in common, I noticed; though we'd been in touch rarely these past ten years. As I tried to remember the last time we'd spoken, down the center of her page swam messages from dozens of those common bonds:

"We had some good times Julie! May the kind words

and thoughts sent your way ease the heavy hearts of your family and friends."

"Julie: I celebrated when you were born, I grieve now that you're gone."

"Julie girl, I will miss you..."

Even as I read, scanning for any real information as to what possibly could have happened, more messages flooded the page as news of Julie's passing went airborne, finding its way to old friends scattered across states and countries and time zones. I watched in shock and awe as more and more connections chimed in for a poignant online version of **The Big Chill.**

They offered regrets, shared old memories, and, after learning Julie's death was a suicide (from another friend's wall post), lamented that we hadn't all stayed closer. A stark vision of each of us; sequestered in our own rooms somewhere, staring zombie-eyed and slack-jawed, our faces reflected pale in each glowing screen. Yet we shared this common thread of grief as if we sat cross-legged on the floor, together in a big circle, the kind we'd sat around as children, now passing the comment baton from one old friend to the next.

Finally, one of us (I wish it had been me), wrote, "Time to get together again… life is short and I don't need any more wake up calls to know how much you all mean to me…"

The days since that surreal evening have been filled with more shared memories, and uploaded photos of times we'd shared, and even plans for a dozen of us to gather live and in real time.

But make no mistake, I'm holding onto my last thread of resistance here: These weren't connections created online; simply renewed, and so I can still hold out hope that I haven't completely abandoned my post.

No, social networking will never feel as special as walking down the lane to the neighbor's with a warm pie in hand, anticipating that ancient 20th century ritual of shared coffee and chit-chat. But in this brave new world, I suppose we've got to take the connections as we find them, and hope they'll lead to more.

I'm already looking forward to our live reunion, revived through our virtual bonds, but born of the right stuff, real-life connections. We'll laugh, and talk about the good old days, and complain that we don't see each other enough or talk regularly on the phone. We'll go to dinner and drink lots of wine and laugh some more. And somebody's phone will ring. And I'll say nothing.

But I'm still keeping mine off.

Editor's Note: Shari Jean Stauch *has been involved in publishing, marketing, and public relatiions for 30 years. She is the co-creator of* Pool & Billiard Magazine, *and in 2004 retired from the Women's Pro Billiard Tour after a 20 year career as a top player and marketer/co-creator of the tour (inducted into the WPBA Hall of Fame in 2007) to pursue development of Shark Marketing Co. and serve a growing community of writers and authors. As an executive board member of Charleston, South Carolina's Center for Women, she heads the Center's Women's Writer Series. In 2008, Stauch signed on as Co-Director of Programming for Words & Music: A Literary Feast in New Orleans, and worked with team member Kendra Haskins to re-launch the organization's website. Stauch continues to work with the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society as well as with agents, editors, writers and aspiring authors throughout the U.S., using her marketing and PR talents to help authors broaden their audiences. Stauch is a certified coach, an award-winning essayist and fiction writer, and four-time Faulkner-Wisdom finalist, including twice as an Essay finalist. She has been a finalist and was First Runner-up in the novel-in progress category in 2007 as well. She is the author of four non-fiction books with publisher Human Kinetics and is working on completion of a novel set in her hometown of Chicago, IL.*

The Judge's Comments

This is an arch, witty, well-rendered essay on the prevalence of technology in our lives. While much has been written on the topic, the author of this essay brings fresh insight, personal anecdote, and wry social psychology to bear. The piece feels deftly paced and in control while still managing to delight.

Alexis Stratton
Essay 2nd Runner-Up
"Agashi, Eodi Gayo? (Young Lady, Where are You Going?)"

On the city bus from downtown, he turns to me—the bus driver—face wizened with lines, the starts of gray hairs showing at his temples. In front of me is an ajumma, an old lady, laden with the trademark black plastic bags of Yeosu's outdoor marketplace. What she has inside might vary—sweet corn, raw fish, octopus, cucumber, peaches.

The ajeossi, the driver, is looking at me—there amid the slow stream of traffic, and I barely hear him above my headphones, the rumble of car engines, the low Korean music piped through the bus's speakers.

"Agashi, eodi gayo?" he says.

Young lady, where are you going?

He says it with concern—this bus going from the bustling downtown to the quiet island corners of Dolsan, a small area usurped by Yeosu city, rural enough to house farms and fishermen, connected to Yeosu's peninsula by a single bridge and a ferry or two.

Young lady, where are you going?

Did he know I spoke Korean—brown-haired, blue-eyed me? Did he see in my calm, practiced entrance a veteran of Korea's trying habits, customs, and ways, a girl who's done this all before?

If he didn't, perhaps he hoped that, were I to look at him in bewildered confusion, body language could suffice or maybe a succinct, English, "Where?"

Instead, I answered him. "Dolsan-ae gayo."

I am going to Dolsan.

He nodded briefly and retrained his eyes on the road.

I looked back out on the busy streets—black hair, black hair, black hair—and turned up the music.

This is how it begins.

An application.

Two essays, three recommendation letters, an interview, and several months later, I'm on a plane to Korea. Ticket paid for, job awaiting me—twelve months at Jungang Girls' High School teaching English in Yeosu, a coastal city about five hours south of Seoul by bus.

In a city of about 250,000, there are about 60 native English speakers. We're foreign—foreigners, oegukin.

I knew I was oeguk the moment I got my first Korean meal on the 13-hour flight. I thrilled at the novelty of using the small chopsticks they gave us, eating my first bite of kimchi (fermented cabbage), and reading how to properly eat bibimbap (a catch-all dish of rice, red pepper paste, and various meat and veggies) as instructed by the card on my tray. When the plane touched down in Seoul, I marveled at the Korean script, at the many similar-looking faces all around me—black hair with almond-shaped, deep brown eyes. No wonder some Koreans stared at me, a honey-brown-haired American with blue eyes and, as my high school students would point out, a "pointy nose" and "small face." ("Our faces big, teacher—yours is so small, see?" they would say later.)

After my five weeks of Korean/teacher training, I liked it when cab drivers would comment on my Korean skills, ask me where I was from, or tease me about not having a boyfriend. I delighted when my fellow English teachers (the Korean ones) would gasp when I ate spicy food, drank the biting soju liquor with ease, mentioned that I like kimchi. "You know, most foreigners don't like spicy food/soju/kimchi/seaweed/squid/raw fish/etc.," they would say each time I ate or drank something and noted its tastiness.

However, the novelty of being oeguk quickly wore off. Sure, I was lauded for the attempts I made to blend in—my Korean pronunciation, my bowing, and the respectfulness I showed to my elders. Yet, for everything I did right, there were ten things I did wrong (or worried about doing wrong). For every time I attempted to take a bus to another city (which I'd mas-

tered after about the second try, in Korean and all), there were ten ajeossis telling me how to say "one ticket" and "I am going to Daejeon." My ways were strange—who has boys who are friends and not boyfriends? Who doesn't want to go to the hospital with a minor cold? Who doesn't want to drink soju and rice wine after running a 10k? Who is this person?

I tried so hard to fit in that it became ridiculous. I would say goodbye to an American friend and bow (more out of habit than pretentiousness). I would eat anything that was put on my plate (including raw meat, anchovies, and octopus). I would cover my mouth when I laughed, just like Korean women (and some men) do. After I poured a drink for my vice principal with two hands as is Korean custom, my vice principal noted, "Why, sometimes I almost mistake you for a Korean."

I was happy, thrilled even, when he said that. I had arrived, I thought.

But, then, I realized the truth—I'm not Korean. I'm American.

It was Christmas Eve—just turned midnight—and my homestay sister called to me. I looked into the living room and saw a snowman cake on the table, my homestay mom smiling. We cut the cake and passed around the snowman's body, ate and laughed as night turned cold outside. The warm smell of browned squid drifted in from the kitchen and a plate emerged.

I chewed on the dried bits, tore at the flesh with my teeth, tasted the salty-sweet strips as they mulled between my tongue and the roof of my mouth. Later, I would lie on the warm ondol floor, stomach full, a fluorescent glow hanging in the air like clean candlelight, listening to old American pop songs. And I'd lay my head on my host sister's shoulder, eyelids heavy and thick, unable to remember a time when I felt so at home.

I was so lonely that first winter in Korea that one day when I got off the bus, I knew I had to cry, so I stumbled in the dark to where no one could see me. Cars passed by and headlights swooshed over the bushes around me. I'd tried walking home from the bus stop, but I knew that when I walked in, my host mother would wonder what was wrong with my face, all distorted and red. Finally, in the bushes, I let the tears shake me and run down my cheeks onto my coat and pants and hands and grass. I wiped my nose and looked down at my hand and found it covered with blood.

I had no tissue. I let the blood drip to the dirt, hoping it wouldn't splash onto my coat, shirt. I rummaged in my bag but only found the number I wore in the 10k the week before. I pressed it to my nose, but for no good, and instead threw it into the bushes. I hated to litter, but where would I put it?

The bleeding stopped after several minutes. I took pictures of my face with my cell phone to see if there was blood there. I looked like the result of a domestic dispute. I had nothing to wipe my face.

So, I took off my shoe, took off my sock, and wiped my face with that. But, some of the blood was dry. So, I spit on the sock, wiping it over my nose, cheeks, chin, until the red went away, until I knew I could go home without anyone noticing.

Eating barbecued pork and drinking with some of the teachers, we go to a second and third round—beer and anju. Later in the night, I take a sip of soju, turning my head away from the table of men and my elders as I bring the small glass to my lips, shading my mouth like I was telling a secret—a sign of respect.

"No, no--" Mr. Kim says. He teaches history but doesn't speak much English. He translates through one of the English teachers who is with us. "We are your friends," he says. "I am older, he is older, but we're all friends here." He gestures around the table. We're all sitting cross-legged on the floor. "You don't have to turn away like that."

My first (and only) panic attack:

My homestay mom and I were at a local church, and we were listening to the same Christian singers that she played over and over again on the minivan stereo.

I didn't understand the prayers they were making to God, did not feel the weight of the Spirit as they poured out their hallelujahs and Hananim Abeojis—"Father God."

Jesus, Yesunim, was not speaking to me, not in my language, not among those people, not in my heart.

And all I thought was—this is my life, here in this church, this night. Everyone around me nods and sings along, cries and prays, turns to brother and sister alike and connects—and I am left an island at sea, pretending to know but always blind and deaf—needing, but not expressing, not connecting, not feeling the smiles I put on or sharing the tears that come

when I can't handle anything anymore.

And my life—these thoughts—swirled around me, all those times I lied with smiles and nods, all that I didn't understand, all the pain that was lost in a past that didn't make sense to me and I could not share—those why's, that suffocating feeling of entrapment.

And just when I thought I'd go—we were going, my homestay Mom and I—we met with the singers instead in this little office with the moksanim, the minister.

They spoke together in earnest.

They prayed.

They cried.

And then I felt it—that tightness in the left corner of my chest, that aching in my left arm. It's nothing, I told myself. But worry increased as the pain continued, and I started to imagine worst-case scenarios—those people who say "It's nothing" and then end up dead in the middle of the night, heart attack or aneurism or blood clot. "If only she'd gone to the doctor two hours earlier," the Dateline reporter would say in a grim tone, "she would've survived." But they never do, those people. They think they're okay.

Later, that night, when the pain had worsened, my homestay mom and homestay sister took me to the hospital at my request. I imagined my mom's voice in my head—I'm sure you're fine. And I was thinking, Maybe I'm fine. I'm probably fine.

The doctors ran tests and tried to get a translation of what was wrong through my host sister. They took X-rays, they examined, they asked questions. My host family looked on with worried faces.

Maybe half an hour later, a doctor came to me and spoke to my host sister. They said I was okay but that I had strained muscles. He asked if I'd participated in any athletic activities lately. I nodded—I'd run a relay race the weekend before at the children's home where I volunteered. "That must've been it," my host sister said. They gave me an hour's worth of muscle relaxant on an IV and an approximately $99 medical bill.

The realization that it was a panic attack came to me even while I was lying there—I put it together from the internet resources I'd consulted before I came to the hospital. Sure, WebMD said go to the hospital if you have sharp chest pains no matter what, just in case. But still, I felt like an idiot. There was nothing wrong with me. I'd thought I was having a heart attack, and really, my mind had just been playing tricks on me. Really, I just couldn't handle it.

Initially, I only told one friend in the U.S. I eventually would tell my homestay sister over a year later, when I returned home buzzed from a night of soju and beer, another night out with my old teachers/co-workers—barbecued pork and drinks.

She asked me why I didn't tell her when it happened.

But how would I begin?

Mr. Myeong, one of the Korean English teachers, takes me to lunch. He says, "Time flies like an arrow," and, "The time comes when even parents leave their children." He talks about jeong—that Korean word for something that's not family and different than love, but like them—beyond them, that connectedness between two people who really care for one another, people whose closeness goes beyond familial, cultural, national, or gendered lines.

"You see," he says when we finish, "this is why all the teachers will miss you so much."

She will cover her mouth when she laughs—a sign of modesty. He will not shout when angry, even when drunk, though he will sing karaoke—but only after enough shots of soju warm his voice.

And you will call her seonsaengnim or teacher and greet her with respect and bow—just slightly—when you pass her in the hall. And he will drink first and eat first and you will hold your glass with two hands when he pours rice wine into it.

You will leave the norae-bang singing songs, alcohol singing in your head, and you will wonder if this is what it means to be an expatriate.

When I walked into the house that night, wearing only one sock and my face still bloodstained, I hoped my host mother would see the change in my expression so she could tell I suffered, so I could feel her arms around me.

She was in her room. I went to the bathroom before she could see me, before she could see the few streaks of blood or tears or spit that remained on my cheeks. When I reappeared, she was in the kitchen.

My eyes were no longer red, my face was clean.

"Was your day good?" she asked in Korean.

I nodded. "Yes, good."

The feel of the place slips around my body like a comfortable, old sweater.

Broken in. Well-trod.

On the bus from Seoul to Yeosu, I remember bus rides and bus rides before—that mountainous, rice-paddy-laden countryside that's haunted my memory.

And this is how you bow: 60-degree angle, hands at sides, eyes on the ground.

And this is how you order food: bibimbap chuseyo. And this is how you accept your change: two hands, or right hand, with the left hand touching your right arm at the elbow.

My city comes into view—Yeosu, the bus terminal, E-Mart. And there is my homestay mom in the van with her sister, and she's still listening to the same CD she was listening to when I left.

Old hat, old sweater—but so familiar, so well-worn it can't be real.

I am going to Yeosu, that second home, second tongue, second family.

And here I am.

Editor's Note: Alexis Stratton *is a native of Illinois but has spent her life in many homes, from the Carolinas to South Korea. Although her nomadic self is calling her to see other parts of the world, she is currently working, teaching, and writing in Columbia, SC, where she's enrolled in the University of South Carolina's MFA in Creative Writing program. Her work has most recently appeared in* The Drum Literary Magazine, Two Hawks Quarterly, Pure Francis, *and* The Korea Fulbright Review, *and she received second place in The State Newspaper's Single Poem Contest last spring. Besides writing and reading, in her spare time, Alexis likes to practice Tae Kwon Do, cycle through Columbia's beautiful urban landscape, and volunteer at various local non-profits.*

The Judge's Comments

This essay makes quick cuts between different scenes during the author's time teaching English in Korea. I admire how many balls are kept in the air here. We have a nuanced sensory appreciation for the author's Korea, as well as a sense of the transformation the author went though and the main characters influencing her/his life during that time. The almost collage-like structure is efficient and graceful.

Other Essay Finalists

A Mean Marathon With Meaning, Linda M. Bui, Baton Rouge, LA

Death and Fat Sandwiches, Heather Phillis, Abu Dhabai, UAE

Fully Human, Anne Webster, Atlanta, GA

Mythmakers, Tad Bartlett, New Orleans, LA

Not Holding On, But Letting Go, Sudy Vance Leavy, Darien, GA

Secret Agent Man, Barbara Donnelly Lane, Marietta, GA

Signs From God, Cara Jones, Baton Rouge, LA

Take Me Out, Rachel Van Sickle, Baton Rouge, LA

The Homicide Detective, Franklin Cox, Atlanta, GA

The Purple Gown, Kira Holt, Wimberly, TX

Julia Carey
2010 Best Poetry Winner
"Sappho Sorts"

Julia Carey is a long-time resident of New Orleans and is an MFA candidate at Louisiana State University. Her work can be found at www.juliacarey.com and in **New Orleans: What Can't Be Lost, 88 Stories from the Sacred City** and **Louisiana in Words.** She has supported the journals *The New Orleans Review, The Dudley Review,* and the *New Delta Review* with her editorial labors. In the fall of 2010, the musical group Harvest, with whom Julia sings and plays keys, will release their first album: **Look What Volunteered.**

The Judge's Comments: I chose the wonderful series of poems Sappho Sorts as the first prize contest winner. I love this trio because of its inventive use of language, form and intertextuality. The use of ancient texts wonderfully illustrates Ezra Pound's dictum "Make it new." I admire the delicate and surprising images here that set Sappho's fragments against new lines to create an entirely new poetic universe, one that is rich and intricate and emotionally resonant.

Judged by Nicole Cooley, awarded the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets, a "Discovery"/ Nation Award, and the Emily Dickinson Award from the Poetry Society of America. She directs the new MFA Program in Creative Writing and Literary Translation at Queens College-City University of New York.

Sponsored by: The Award of the 2010 Gold Medal for Poem is underwritten by David Speights.

The award is given in memory of his late wife, Marti Speights, pictured here at Juleps in June, who was a serious reader, a tireless activist on behalf of the arts, and a member of the Faulkner Society's Advisory Council. She and David were Libris I and Thalia I at the first meeting of the Krewe of Libris in 2006.

a trio using Sappho fragments as either the title or first line

If Not, Winter

will it be Provence, cooling our faces
in the spray of the fountains
moving between the planes and their shade
taking more space with our growth
in each other, just as the Luberon lavender
stretches its summer scent and calms
so will we, as others smile at our joy
and remember their own, cheered
from the Mediterranean, a middle earth
steadied and healed

if not, winter and its mind will find us
with shaking stupor, numb
needs and words, the frost robs
at first stunning, a mirror ice
worse than a frozen wall
and me, arms flailing as I slip
from you, grasping

Christopher Hannan
2010 Best Poetry
1st Runner-Up

"Epithalamion For Emily"

Blame

no more than the bird with piercing voice
disturbed a vacuum slumber, diving
near to memory, sorting myopia
the tousled sheets folded and warm
scented with subconscious, healing held

no more than the nothing of unanswered prayer
still kneeling, unsaved and abandoned
loud loneliness clamoring a requiem
provides its own unwanted company
exacerbating list and loss

did you splinter our screen door
the one that kindly lifted and dropped
in the summer breezes, scuffed
by my boots while my hands were full
it felt our words stretch when arms could not
no more than one fist tore through

Then Guards

the one with violets in her lap
sits with eyes of void
one breast exposed, shoulders still
she holds a peace no longer within her
vacancy before the death resides
a sharp scythe leaves a longer bloom

even her humble warning wanes
as a modest martyr might allow
terror fades with accustom
we do not cover the dead for their comfort
but to empty our own eyes
now numb, now flashed and unfocused
we welcome the watching over
but only as we want

"EPITHALAMION For Emily"

Two bayous become a lake in this shoal mud,
shallow as shut eyes where the bottom can only be
felt in the dark, like breaths. Their mouths open and meet
the broad eternity of tides, merging in beds

of turtle grass. We see ourselves in the water,
swells folding always into each other to create
the shore, where spartina shimmers as we wade
through shallows, hazel eyes reflecting September.

The brackish tide tastes of warm skin, and your lips
feel the memory of rain in this ancient union
of Gulf salt and fresh streams. Our legs move as the waves' rhythms
surge through us and spend themselves in the ebbs

that feed the shrimp and crabs in this fertile silt. We rest
on the beach, aglow in the soft Fall sun, caressed

like sea-glass by the breeze. I reach for you as an egret
strides, rising from these waters he has known since the nest

on the sandbar where he feeds. Your eyes shine; salt-marsh mallows
violet and white in the green oyster grass
tremble like reason before the breath of the vast
afternoon, whose gusts play in your hair. Between us time goes

slow as the growth and erosion of shores. I kneel in the sand
and smell the age of an estuary rise around us.
The day dissolves in the shimmering of joined bodies
of water between the sky and earth and our hands,

and I ask you to become a lake with me,
to merge our headwatered hearts with the eternal
depth of salt that rises in springs, falls in neaps,
and reflects us on the mirror of these shoals.

Ralph Adamo
2010 Best Poetry Winner
2nd Runner-Up
"New Orleans River Morning Congress"

I
Low along the river the morning comes
as whisker-finned catfish swimming the river brown,
the morning catfish brown caught ten feet down
by a touch of sun that drowns where they crouch.

Low along the river when the east came up
when the river moved to the sky
where it wound by the deep mud
and the river dogs looked up
from their fish bones and growled
like last night's sky they stuck
unstuck their steps in the mud
and waited by the dumped car
for the man who comes with the sun
on a good day, the golden man.

II
Maybe it is easier to see our city
with eyes closed, an unlikely settlement
on shifting mud banks
rising through clouds of spirit
where we shelter what is barely there.

III
Here we dream and are dreams:
our city, a fly city in a toy time.
Pull the tongue from your eyes,
eyes for looking and nothing else.
Grow yourself over, come down to me,
I am the next fire to burn here.
You are my beautiful thrones,
my love and crawling things.

IV
Maybe you are living trailer displacement,
hell and high water just to be here,
home where each neighbor takes a turn
being the center of each other's labor.

V
When the river and the morning rise
we will be waiting in our false pastoral
imagining what is too near to hold.
We will call ourselves by other times,
do with our closing world, our peculiar
river city, as we are told.

VI
Home where visitors come under banners
like "Operation Blessing"
to help lost souls return
to this city where the spirit
outweighs the obvious,
where hawks feed at the bird feeder,
and saxophones soar.

VII
The dogs that return wild together,
lost from the hands of children
and vague women, have got their teeth
into something still or growing, warm.
What is torn or eaten and what moves
in small gestures still
seems to walk out of the river.

VIII
Lost on the Road Home, a man
was asked, "You applied yet?"
to which he answered, "Where's the water?"

A city of dancers, all waiting for
the music of coins and counting,
a city where children can play
and come back loved alive,
where black and white will talk to one another
and be a city you can't imagine leaving,
where birds alight and sugar
comes in black and gold,
will be where to launch
means more than for food.

IX
When suddenly the body's a flood
nobody better stand around counting how high it'll go
how fast if they want to stay dry.
This is an old time flood,
not like the promise made once kept never
in those rooms in south Louisiana
where reptiles walk on the ceiling
and everyone's heard it up here, no
this is a flood like the unborn will hear
turning their spoons in the rind,
looking for the last film of sleep
before their time comes
riding down river a lady on white palfrey,
to noon in the light of the female antiquarian,
almost cool enough to put a shirt on.

X
If you choose to walk the earth as a stranger,
you are walking to New Orleans.
If you choose to walk the earth as God's oldest friend,
you are walking to New Orleans.

XI
Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury
whose misfortune holds a candle
to your shades tonight?
Where would you look if all you wanted
was a good night's sleep, a lie?
Love's a fine sweat and everybody
wants what's coming,
another lie.
Why can't I think so tonight?
This is the good drowning we were waiting for.

XII
An old horse that fell down and died,
New Orleans trying to make the numbers
come out right like you really believed.
Are you a city that forgot to get rich?

XIII
Please the small hands of the pianist
here and now,
the plunge from wakefulness
into the flood to linger the sea
again on this ill-gotten land.

XIV
New Orleans, stick your toes in river mud,
we'll never see you again.
Hell, New Orleans, you're the heaven
we want to believe in friends.

Editor's Note: Ralph Adamo *is a New Orleans native and graduate of the Arkansas writer's workshop. He has published poetry in magazines and anthologies over the last 40 years and his work is collected in six published volumes, most recently* ***Waterblind: New & Selected Poems*** *(2002). He currently is seeking publishers for two new collections. He has worked as a journalist, and taught, since 1988, at UNO, LSU, Loyola, Tulane Universities, and since 2007 at Xavier University. He edited* Barataria Review *in the 1970s,* New Orleans Review *in the 90s, and will become editor of* Xavier Review *in 2011. He has won awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Louisiana Endowment for the Arts, the Open Society Institute, and a YADDO residency. He and his wife Kay are raising a fourth-grader, Jack, and a second-grader, Lily.*

The Judge's Comments:
This is a lovely poem that blends natural details describing the city's landscape with details that also reveal the landscape's new realities—trailers, Road Home payments, and the exodus of citizens. I admire the way this poem utilizes sections to show these merging parts of life in New Orleans.

Other Poetry Finalists

A Crown of Flowers, Ars Poetica,
Manfred Pollard, New Orleans, LA
Drift of Tallow, Mignon Fahr, Covington, LA
Finding John Banville, Irene Mosvold, Louisville, KY
Left Over Man, Pat Gallant, New York, NY
My Grandmother's Wedding,
Eve Brouwer, Covington, LA
'Nam, Abbie Hoffman, and So Much More,
Lynn Veach Sadler, Sanford, NC
Not Now, Dennis Formento, Slidell, LA
Song to a Floozie, Anne Webster, Atlanta, GA
The Clock Tower of Eternal Midnight,
David Saenz, Austin, TX
The Duck Lady of Center City, Philadelphia,
Paul Saluk, Pembroke Pines, FL
The Retired Ballerina Teaches Balanchine's Firebird To A Young Ballerina,
Wayne Lee Gay, Denton, TX

Sana Shuja
2010 Best Short Story by a High School Student
Winner
"Saturday, When He Told Them"

Sana Shuja graduated from St. Mary's Dominican High School and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) in May 2010. She is proud to call herself the daughter of Dr. Muhammad Shuja and Mrs. Aneela Shuja, a successful fiction writer whose father the late Brigadier General Nazir Ahmed was a non-fiction writer. Sana has been writing since middle school but began developing a sense of literary style during her junior and senior years while a student in the creative writing program at NOCCA, which she attended from the summer before sophomore year to the end of her high school career. During the last two years of high school, Sana began participating in spoken word events in the New Orleans area, leading eventually to her current position as one-sixth of the 2010 New Orleans Youth Slam team, with whom she traveled to Los Angeles, CA, in July to participate in the international youth slam festival, Brave New Voices. She is immensely grateful to her NOCCA instructors, especially Lara Naughton, for all their insight, encouragement, and commitment. Sana is presently in her first semester of college at the University of Southern California, where she is majoring in comparative literature with a double minor in human rights and cultural anthropology while on the pre-med track.

***Judged by George Bishop**, who said, "I was very impressed with the quality of the writing I saw in the finalists' stories from the High School Short Story Category... In the 18 that I read, there was a wonderful range of themes and styles."*

The Judge's Comments: The winning manuscript, *Saturday, When He Told Him,* in my estimation, scores in every category. It shows a strong command of language, has lovely, sharp descriptions, interesting characters, and deals with themes that resonate beyond the intimate scope of the story... The most impressive feature of this story is the writer's ability to give the reader the sense of being an invisible observer dropped into the middle of a very real family. We're not quite sure who they are or what they're arguing about at first, but we're compelled to watch them, and over the course of a few pages, as we grow to understand them, we begin to have the uneasy feeling that whatever happens with this family will have ramifications for all of us.

Sponsored by: The Award of the 2010 Gold Medal for Best Novel is underwritten by a grant from from: Nancy & Hartwig Moss, III.

Nancy Moss, shown here on William Faulkner's birthday with her husband Hartwig Moss, III, and mother-in-law, was a member of the Faulkner Society's board, and received the Society's ALIHOT Award for her dedicated service to the arts. Both Nancy and Hartwig currently are members of the Advisory Council. The high school short story prize is given annually in memory of his mother, shown here seated, the well known New Orleans architect and preservationist, Betty Moss.

No, his mother said again.

He tried an approach different from the tirades he'd been employing in response to her unconsciously cultivated notions of right and wrong. I'm acting on instinct. I'm trying to follow what I feel myself being… being called to. He made sure, as he followed her around on the cold linoleum tiles, to keep between them one or two clanking cream cabinets, which virtually lined the small kitchen, interrupted only by the fridge, the doorway, the dishwasher, and the oven. His mother was known to whip around quite rapidly for her age, and with a kitchen as small and packed with fruit, bran cereal, two microwaves (one operational, one defunct), and boxes of Shan masala mixes as theirs, her stout frame would meet catastrophically with his muscle-hungry body. Her expressive elbows threatened to pin his camouflage T-shirt, hanging far from his abdomen on all sides, to the navy-blue-tiled wall.

I don't have time for your jokes. Aur yeh kyaa, and what's this, called to? Is that the best you can do? All of this is silly, and you know that. You know it's going against what was intended for, for all of us. You know I don't have time for this. We never get any time together, Mumu, why can't you just stop all of this? Where is that damned, damned blender?

Intended? Ma, who intended it?

She paused for a second, on her toes, reaching for one of the higher cabinets.

Will you at least give me enough respect to take it seriously? I'm your son. This isn't some joke.

Still on her toes, she looked at his long, stubbled face. Maybe you should consider making it one. I'll give you a few minutes to figure out how best to do that.

I can't. I can't even say I wish I could. I can't, not anymore. It's been too long. It's just time for you to see me. Can't you do that?

With a deep breath, she resumed the search. I see you, she said without looking at him. Okay? Now, quiet, stay quiet. Help me find the blender. Your father wants a smoothie. She stopped again, bent over in front of one of the cabinets she had already rummaged through seven or eight times. Have you said anything about this to him?

He's still alive, isn't he? Muti folded his hairy arms and set to staring at the family photos on the fridge, taken on trips to Mexico and Australia.

Try acting like you're happy about that, eh? God forgive me, tobah. What's wrong with you?

Nothing, Amma. Nothing's wrong. Don't even worry about it. It's nothing at all.

Her eyebrows went up. Found it! she exclaimed and raised the appliance with a big smile in front of her son. The glass magnified her eye, making it all Muti could concentrate on. The ever-watching eye that would follow him wherever he went. All those eyes, always watching.

Where's your laundry? I'll get that started. She set the blender down on the granite countertop, in plain view, though it would invariably somehow disappear again when she came back.

In the garbage bag, by the couch. He stepped back to let her into the sunlit living room. She couldn't remember if she had remembered to change the sheets from when her sister visited a couple of weeks ago and made a detour to Muti's room, figuring she may as well throw them in with the rest of his laundry just to be sure he was sleeping in the clean he deserved after the few weeks he had spent with no visits home, in the city she saw through shit-tinted glasses.

She opened the door on the right in the narrow hall that led to his room, her and her husband's room, and the apartment's sole bathroom. She entered Muti's small, spotless room that held only his bed, a bedside table, a writing table with a black lamp, and some mob movie posters. She sat down on the bed and pulled back the comforter that covered the whole thing. She fell sideways onto the pillow, bunching up the plain light blue down comforter still in her fists, and lifted her legs so that she was laying on her right side on Muti's bed. With her head curled down, she stared at her broad thighs, mostly covered by the lower end of one of her husband's old XXL shirts that he had bought in a souvenir shop at Niagara Falls many years ago. She thought about Muti's face, how distorted it had just been on the other side of the blender, so that she couldn't tell where the sorrow ended and the satisfaction began in him. She wondered if she'd ever known anything about him at all.

She knew that much of the so-called Islamic teaching was simply a sexist, insecure assurance of power for the interpretative scholars of long ago, from whom the ignorant bastards that brought Islam under its current yellow spotlight took their cue. She knew it was time to distance Islam from the oppressive nature it had been wrongfully attributed.

When she was growing up, her parents had encouraged any questions she had about the beliefs she was being taught. They always had an answer, it seemed,

and they recited it with so much conviction that she saw no reason to challenge them. After agreeing to an arranged marriage at twenty two, fresh out of college with a bachelors in English, to a quiet, self-assured, and basically typical Desi, or South Asian, man who was vehemently opposed to her working, she found herself drowned in spare time. So, she read up on that Islam that had guided her parents, her grandparents, and a long line of ancestors before them through all sorts of trying situations. She read and reread the Qur'an, comparing different translations. She wanted to see why exactly almost a quarter of the world is so committed to Islam that oftentimes, it alone brings comfort through hardship, and how exactly it keeps them so humble that during any blessed occasion, all Muslims do is praise and thank God.

She personally discovered the beauty of Islam during those years. Sometimes, yes, she questioned whether the Book was truly the word of God, or whether there was even a God who had words to share with mankind. The goodness and truth of what she read resonated. She didn't care if it was bullshitted by a man or inspired by an angel. The magnificence of its echoes were equitable to those of the beloved qawwali singers of Pakistan. She affirmed those aspects of Islam that are usually shamelessly overlooked, like embracing differences and encouraging equality, through investigation into her personal and cosmic past.

But, somehow, when it came to what Muti had claimed to be a part of now, she couldn't help but feel sickened. The young Al Capone aiming a rifle at her with that heinous scar down his cheek certainly wasn't helping anything.

Was it really a learned reaction, never to be rid of despite all of her delving and discovery? Could she ever accept this? She loved her son. Loved him in every sense she was aware of and some more that were inexpressible. But, she would not be able to okay this. She could not. She sat up and looked around the room again before standing up and gathering the sheets off the bed.

She left his room, closing the door behind her quietly. She picked up the garbage bag of laundry and, avoiding any questions about what she was doing in there, went straight down to the dimly lit laundry room in the building's concrete-walled basement.

Beta, dear, can you get your clothes from downstairs? Muti looked in the direction of his mother's voice from his place on the brown sofa, where, bathed in sunlight from one of the two medium-sized windows on the wall facing the street, he had been watching TV. She was drying her tired hands on a ragged, frayed cloth.

Yeah. Sure. He hadn't been too talkative since their encounter two hours earlier that day. Since then, his mother had been flitting around cleaning and talking on the phone and shooting him strange looks like she was trying to tell him something that he couldn't understand.

I think it was dryer six. Might have been sev— But he had already closed the door behind him, the extra pulling he had to do to make sure it was shut seeming like an extra slap in the face to his mother. She went into her bedroom, where her husband Nabeel had been lying all day in nothing but lamplight, taking intermittent naps in his high fever, and sat down next to his incredibly solid body that seemed so out of place lying unused. Beel?

Hm.

Awake?

Hm.

Wanna act like it?

101 fever, woman.

Woman, woman, always with this woman business, she said softly, then raised her voice upon becoming aware of the smoothie which had lain untouched for hours. Beel, this is disgusting! Why didn't you drink the thing while it was still good?

Thick. His voice somehow took on an even deeper tone when he said this, as if to emphasize that she had either mixed the strawberries too well or not enough. She ran a hand over his forehead and halfway through his hair.

Have you been using that nasal spray I bought for you the day before yesterday?

Hm.

Beel… Come on, Beel. Allow yourself a little human interaction. I know you feel terrible, but the doctor said you'd be fine ekh ya dho dhin mein, in a couple of days. There was a slight cracking sound at the bedroom door, and she knew Muti had come back from the laundry room. He was such a quick boy. She wondered how long he had been standing there. That filthy eavesdropping blasphemer, she couldn't help but love him, could she?

It had only been a couple of minutes since Muti assumed his post, and he silently cursed himself for not being as silent about it as he had been as a child, certain that the momentary lapse in their conversation, or his mother's monologue, had been due to his unconscious habit of cracking his bony knuckles. So he was nervous. Was she going to say anything? Was she going to give herself time to think up reasons to justify not disinheriting him? Was she, was she, was she… well, was he going to be all right?

He lost his nerve and retreated to the living room, where he approached the African lilies he had ordered when he was eleven. He pulled a small weed from one of the pots. Weeds were the only things that he applied the get-'em-while-they're-young course of action to. He ran his hands over the funnel-shaped flowers, enjoying the gentle tickle, and sprinkled seconds' worth of water onto each of them from the small watering can next to the pots. Then, he got on his knees as though getting ready to pray and stared through the spaces between the flowers. If he closed his left eye, he could see a single cloud floating between two of the buildings opposite his own. If he closed his right eye, he could see a boy playing with a paddle ball. Every now and then, depending which way the boy was forced to turn in order to continue the game, the ball would get lost in the red of the boy's sweater.

Muti stood up and accidentally knocked one of the pots of African lilies off the windowsill. Careful not to repeat his mistake, he looked out of the window at the falling pot. It broke, splattering some mud on the black Camry parked in front of the building. Muti watched the flowers wave in the wind, as though saying Goodbye, we'll be going northwest. With a constricted chest, he looked up at the boy across the street to find him staring back. Kind of. His body was facing Muti, but the paddle, still in his hand, was held up, covering his face, the ball vanishing in front of his sweater. Muti returned to his post outside his parents' door with strategically slow steps on the cream carpet and heard his mother speaking.

I know you don't want to hear this right now, Beel, since a head cold is such a terrible thing in this age of genocide and nuclear war, but you need to. Muti trusted me, but I know he's probably uncomfortable discussing it with you. So I'm telling you, OK? I don't know if he wants you to know actually, I mean I guess he does, anyway I hope so, but, I'm, I'm just going to—

Woman. Speak.

Again with that word? I've a name, you know, damned maulvi fanatics, all of you, so much more useless than any of the people you have so much fun looking down on…

He stared at her.

Muti heard her repeat to his father the sentence that had come out of his mouth earlier that day in the kitchen. Muti counted to twenty, and then his father's baritone said, Bring the boy here. Bring him in. Andar lao. Bring him. I want to see him. Bring him here. No, just do it. Am I in any condition for something of that nature? Chhup, quiet, just bring him in. So Muti rushed back to the window, so as not to be caught when his mother opened the door.

Oh, beta, dear, can you come in for a second? As he passed her in the doorframe, she whispered, I'm sorry, I think.

He sat down on the other side of their queen size bed, as far from his father's gaze, hands, and feet as possible. Nabeel didn't say anything for at least four minutes, so Muti said, Look, listen, I don't need to hear any of it, okay? But, if you need to say it, say it now, say… say whatever it is you think you should say. Just do it.

Nabeel continued to breathe loudly, his nose hairs waving like Muti's lilies on the sidewalk. He began, We're of a line of Muslims. You know that. You grew up around Muslims, and you know we aren't all the same. You should know a man like me would not agree to being assigned a life, Muti. I may not know a life that doesn't include Islam, but that doesn't make me completely closed-minded. You make your decisions according to unadulterated and uncorrupted views of our religion, son, and I will continue to respect you. And the only reason I would worry for your straying from Islam is because I know it as the best way of life. I want what's best for you, Muti. You must be old enough to understand that now.

Muti moved from his place on the bed and walked to stand next to his mother, whose face was shining from the light thrown by the lamp, tinted blood red by the lampshade. He rested his lips on her temple, not enough to kiss her but still able to taste the salt of her sweat. She turned away, left the room, and sat on the couch. She pulled the end of her husband's shirt past her knees and remained like that, trying to fold into herself. She couldn't believe he had said that.

Muti gripped the edge of the bed, looking at his father, already drifting off after his short, but long and tiring declaration. He knew he could justify himself if

need be and would claim with as much resolve as the most respected scholars that his choices were defendable by Qur'anic verses. What worried him was his father. Could such honesty and clarity only emerge from him in times of fever, when it was indistinguishable from dreams?

He switched the lamp off and left the room as quietly as he had entered. He saw his mother on the floor, in front of the couch in the shadow of the space between the two windows in the living room, with her knees pulled close, staring at her feet. Muti was about to laugh and ask how she had managed to pack herself up so neatly and tightly, but then she looked up at him with the eyes of a rabid animal coming down from a manic bout. She seemed wholly conquered.

She could come up with no answers to any of the questions she couldn't stop asking herself. No words, self-constructed or as old as time, were joining in her head to form reasons for her to want to stay in the same room as her son. A train of whys were all she saw when she closed her eyes. She felt a hand on her arm and shrugged it off with all the rage of a gladiator's fear. She rocked to her feet and walked backwards to the open window, eyes never leaving the floor.

With her hands gripping the windowsill behind her, she raised her gaze to Muti, who was clearly clueless as to what he could do. She wanted to tell him to get out but found her voice had fled. Behind him, in the frame of the hallway, slouched Nabeel. Neither she nor Muti had heard Nabeel heave himself off the bed and walk up, dragging his size thirteen feet ponderously.

The wind lifted the smell of Muti's lilies to her nostrils, and she caught sight of one of their family photos framed on the wall. Muti's smile was brace-filled, and his ears seemed larger from the way his hair was combed back, which she had had the pleasure of doing when he was a child. Nabeel and she had a hand each on Muti's shoulders, and her head rested on Nabeel's shoulder. They were the very picture of family, of love and support and eternal promise.

She tried to back up further from her husband and son but couldn't without falling out onto the empty concrete sidewalk.

M'Bilia Meekers
2010 Best Short Story by a High School Student
Runner-Up
"Mr. Hooker's Inhabitants"

"Perhaps now is the best moment to unravel the very curious affair concerning John Lee Hooker's back. As we all know, the weight he feels there is growing increasingly over the years, but only those of us who were close to him actually knew of John's startling behavior. See, John had acquired a wound at the small of his back. No one knows when it appeared or how, although there have been some guesses: smashing beer bottles at 22, a lovers' quarrel at 25. This wound whose opening lies just above you, was, when I fell in, about the size of a tennis ball. It did not bleed often, but rather pulsed this familiar red, or sometimes a shock of white when prodded. Now, I know some of you haven't lived long enough to know how we all got sucked down here, but look around you: the wound is healing and soon there will be no way out."

"Sit down Henry," someone shouted.

"Just look. It's closing."

"That's enough now. Go on and finish your Coke."

"But but, the wound is closing," Henry said.

"Fanatic."

The word clamped onto Henry's earlobe and dangled there for a moment before dissipating into the dank air inside the pub. The men murmured around him, clinking their glasses together as the room grew darker and darker. Henry knew none of them believed in the wound and that baffled him every time he thought about it. Could they really believe that this was all there was to the world?

"Henry," Alice, the barmaid, said softly to him, "you

should be heading home before it gets too dark."

"I know, I know. I'm bad for business," he said, tapping two coins on the counter.

"Send my love to your wife."

"Yeah, yeah."

As Henry maneuvered around the tables, the ground beneath his feet sunk with his every step; the tables tipped to one side, beer sloshed against the glasses. Pushing open the meaty pub door, he stepped onto the street. That was one thing that Henry could never get used to: everything was made of muscle, the walls, the floors, even the furniture. That was Miss Georgia's idea of course; only a woman like that could have come up with it. Every day Henry watched her punch and kick the walls of her house to keep it from collapsing. "You've got to work the muscles," she'd tell him. "That's the only way they'll stay strong."

Miss Georgia was the one who found him the day he fell in. She crawled towards his voice across the moist ground. Then out of the darkness, her hands cupped his face, reassuring him that he wasn't dead; at least, that's what she told herself. They sat there for the rest of the day, trembling against one another, not knowing whether or not their companion was actually there at all.

Henry realized at that moment the hardship he would face, trying to escape the wound, but now it seemed crucial that he find a way out. The wound's opening glowed like a violet sun frozen just above him; never rising or setting even as night approached. Henry could only determine the time by watching the wound and the color of the world just beyond his reach: pink in the morning, cream-colored around noontime, purple in the evening, and coal black at night. But what use could the colors of daylight have when one has been living deep inside of a wound? Either way, Henry skulked through a mahogany world.

Henry had forgone his shoes many years ago and simply let his feet sink into John's flesh, like a child curling his toes into mud, rather than attempting to avoid the unpleasantness underfoot. His feet now flopped against the moist ground, fluid pooling around them every time they pressed against the muscle. His house wasn't far from the pub, only four blocks away. As Henry approached, the street lamps flickered on one by one; the pus that fueled them glowing even more as darkness encroached upon the town.

Henry discovered health spawning around the town everyday now: the pus wells were beginning to run dry, John's muscles were stronger, and now, less and less light tumbled in through the wound to light his face in the morning. Henry remembered two years ago, he'd wake up with a brilliant light piercing through his eyelids, and, outside, almost the whole sky would tremor with sunlight sneaking in through the wound. He should have made his escape then, when the wound's opening encompassed nearly everything above him, when they lived closer to the top, Henry thought as he walked up to his house.

His wife, Rachel, had tried so hard to start a garden when they moved in together, Henry recalled, as he passed the clumps of would-be flowers on his way to the door. She loved tulips and used to speak often about growing them when they got out; she rarely mentioned it nowadays.

"I'm home," Henry called out to her.

"Dinner's in the kitchen," she said, scooting across the little floor space they had left. He followed her into the kitchen where he took a seat at the table, more to catch his balance than to eat. The walls of the house curved inward like a magnifying glass as if they wanted to smother their inhabitants. Every once in a while, upon entering the house, Henry would be overcome by nausea and would have to take a seat before collapsing in on himself. Rachel never had this problem of course; she claimed to be the raised in cramped spaces.

"You won't believe what the guys down at the bar said."

"What dear?"

"They called me a fanatic. Can you believe it? I guess they suppose it's natural to live down here like moles."

"Eat your steak, Henry."

Lifting forkfuls of meat up to his mouth, he continued, "But me, I have a plan and you're coming with me, Rachel. Here's how we're going to do it. Miss Georgia still has some of the thread from John's stitches. Now, if we tie it to something heavy, metal shards or a stone, we can chuck it outside the wound. You still with me Rachel? …Rachel?" He watched her standing as if within her own thoughts.

Rachel was a pretty woman, even as she aged. Although she wasn't as slender as she used to be, she had still retained the youthful glisten in her eyes amid the crow's feet. Her hair, streaked with gray strands, cascaded down her back whenever she undid her hair. That's how he imagined her at least; in the darkness he could barely make her out.

"God, I hope John doesn't have a show tonight," she

muttered.

"He's playing in half an hour." Henry replied.

Rachel sighed. "I suppose there's no using to fall asleep tonight."

"You look tired," he commented, watching her eyes flutter; he imagined shadows dancing just below them like butterflies. "Why don't you shower and try to get a little sleep? I'll finish up here and tomorrow we'll get the thread from Miss Georgia."

"Oh Henry, will you please just stop talking about it?"

"About what?"

"Maybe I'm happy here," Rachel snapped. "Maybe I don't want to leave. I'm tired of all this nonsense."

"But what about your garden? The tulips?" Rachel said nothing. "We could start over if you wanted to."

"I'm fifty-eight, Henry. There is no starting over." She trudged into the bedroom, leaving Henry by himself with his thoughts. Pus trickled from the kitchen faucet as Henry placed a dish underneath it. She was just like everyone else, Henry thought. They didn't believe him. Turning off the faucet, he scavenged the cupboards for the matches. He wasn't crazy like they thought he was.

Henry stuck his hand into an empty cereal box and prodded the bottom with his middle finger; his nail scraping the bottom of the box as he imagined them laughing at him: "That stupid old man, he thinks the sun is a wound. Someone should lock him up before he hurts himself." The sound of their turbulent laughter rang in his ears until he had to cover them with his hands; he imagined their white teeth sinking into his limbs and ripping off chunks of his flesh with cheerful smiles.

The box of matches had tumbled on to the ground after he knocked the cereal box to the floor. As Henry snatched up the match box, the dank ground began to quake. He scraped the match and watched it burst aflame, setting it on the pus-soaked plate. He was not crazy. The wound was closing. He'd seen it, hadn't he? Wasn't that enough for them? A deep moan rattled the fiery plate against the counter as John began to sing: Boom boom boom boom.

As the burning plate smashed against the ground and the flames began to recede, he saw three images of himself reflected in the biggest pieces. Encompassing the whole of the first broken piece, Henry's left eye looked back him just as the bloodshot eyes of a prairie wolf meet the eyes of its leader. I'm gonna shoot you right down. The second piece was consumed by black blood spouting from the ground and there Henry saw the twisted beard of an old man slathered in blood. Right off of your feet. The ground trembled as John's deep voice reverberated within the wound. Take you home with me. Perhaps it was in the third broken piece that Henry imagined an iron crown resting upon his head, its jagged edges piercing the acrid air. And put you in my house. Perhaps it was then that he imagined himself raising a barbed steel goblet, toasting madness maddened. Boom boom boom boom. Fanatic? He'd show them all.

M'Bilia Meekers of New Orleans, LA is a student at Lusher Charter School. This year, she is completing the fourth level of Lusher's Certificate of Artistry in Creative Writing program, directed by her sponsoring teacher, poet Brad Richard. She lives with her parents, Anastasia Gage and Dominique Meekers, and hopes to pursue writing in college.

The Judge's Comments:

This story is about a middle-aged man convinced that he's living inside a wound on the back of John Lee Hooker, the blues singer. His friends in the neighborhood bar think he's crazy, but at the end, his wife Rachel confirms Henry's belief: they apparently really are living inside a wound on Hooker's back. I loved this story for its weird premise, and then the author's determination to follow through on the idea in such a logical, thorough manner. The characters and setting are nicely drawn, too. In a few descriptive strokes, with some choice dialogue, the writer brings to life Henry, his wife, and the strange world they inhabit.

Allie Casala
Best Short Story by a High School Student
Runner-Up

"Sister"

My ears. Are ringing. Again.

It started when we weren't allowed outside. Mother. Father. Sister. I. It's because outside isn't beautiful anymore. No darkened tree trunks, no sun-lit petals to tear off. Father told us this. What he learned from the thin packet of coffee spotted paper. Flyers. Slid under our door. Sister and I aren't allowed to read the articles. Mother says there are things only adults should read. But she cuts out pictures. Tapes them to the wall. One article: *Stars Over* Welcome! *Sign Don't Shine as Bright*. Black and white photographs of outside. Grass creeping up over the side of a building like lips curled over teeth. The photographs don't show us the sun, a caked yellow dish on autumn evenings. Don't show the silence of upcoming snow. Neighbors, like us, boarded inside.

Sister. This is how she is: Scream. A hand reaching up inside her. Wrapping cold fingers around her lungs. Tugging. Harder. Rush to the bathroom. Vomit. Back to bed. Morning. Repeat

The ringing creeps inside like a dream. Before we locked ourselves in, I could hear a whistle from a train I never rode beyond my bedroom window. There. I ride a train from my bed. Evening starts, first nestled behind humps and swirls of a setting day, then fevered into a midnight-sweat. I take myself, sleepily and mapped out. New York to Ohio. Ohio to Florida. Florida to California. I meet men who wrestle playfully with me, women who cook home meals, children to play in mud with. Since the papers started showing up, there was no more whistling from outside.

Sister. This is how she is: Candles. Burnt cinnamon sticks. Citrus body spray. How she smelled before we weren't allowed outside. Now. Rusted blood.

The photos hover above the couch. A photomap. Why we aren't allowed outside. Why outside isn't beautiful anymore. Mother and Father whisper over the papers, under black and white reasons. One article: Onyx Canvas in Sky Dims. Father tells me about something he just read, about outside. I don't hear about the grass growing two inches everyday. I don't hear about bugs mating and dying, about holidays creeping up. Christmas sales. He tells me outside visitors aren't allowed in the city. Guests in hotel rooms are taken into custody. Mother tapes another photo to the wall. An abandoned train station hidden by weeds.

Sister. This is how she is: Before the doors remained locked. With lip-glossed lips Sister told me she had something growing inside her. Something making her sick. She needed to get rid of it. Mother and Father refused to take her to the doctors, she told me. Ignore her noises. Her cries. Her screams.

The ringing always. Gets louder. Until it blocks everything out.

Mother and Sister argue. More now than they did before. Sister wants to leave. I hear her tell Mother that she needs a doctor. The infection is getting worse, gritting its teeth below her stomach. Mother says a doctor won't help her. No one would help her. Clinics in town closed because of one doctor. People left because of one doctor. Lock their doors, turn out the lights, pretend they're not home. Mother cuts out the article pictures, she says, to remind us of one doctor.

Our backyard used to have a pool. Sleeping above dead grass until Sister and I returned home from school. The heat would reflect off the water, golden diamonds, smelled like rain. She played with two naked Barbie dolls. One with brown hair. One with red. She threw her dolls across the water, skidding like an open palm in the sky. Sister made waves with her arms. Tsunami. I swam across to rescue the drowning dolls. Pulled them up from sinking. Sister would tell me I was the best little-brother-doll -rescuer. I told her I was the only.

Sister. This is how she is: A photograph. Black and white. Framed in plastic bubble gold. Matted image of her skin, brailled with scabs from childhood dirt. Her

hair, as dirty as the sun, hung over her shoulders. Thin. Lazy shirt and shorts stretched out from the humid heat from outside. Before sickness. Before the doctor.

My toy soldier, the one Sister gave me as a birthday present, grows ten times its size. Picks me up and nestles me between the safety of his gun strap. He takes me outside and we tower over houses and light posts. His feet keep moving farther away from my house and closer to the sun. The air feels sticky and damp from this height. I can't breathe, but the soldier's ear is too far away to tell him to slow down. The wind gets hotter and blows much faster, a train lost from its tracks. He hit a rock on his next step and I bounce off, wonder if I will break into a million pieces. I fall onto grass that wasn't dead or covering houses. The soldier continues to walk and melt from the heat of the sun.

Sister. This is how she is: How she was found. In the bathroom of a hotel. Five blocks away from the house. Water filled the bathtub, her body naked in dark water. Blood and vomit. Citrus body spray. Sticky insides of her legs.

Mother got a call from the hotel. They told her the man that rented the room left already. Mother and Father cried. Harder than Sister when she was in pain. We picked her up. A crowd formed outside the hotel. Riots. Signs. Someone told people what happened. The ground felt watery, cooled and silent. Father carried Sister home. Blood. Mother and Father whispered about an article already being published, people knowing it was their daughter. Protesting, about a doctor. Their voices distant. My ears. Rang. Harder.

This is how we are: Hungry and locked inside. Riots calm as the winter snow falls.

Mother. Father. Sister. I. Why we aren't allowed outside. Why outside isn't beautiful anymore. Sister. Slips inside clouds. On a white bird. A sun setting behind the moon.

Editor's Note: Allie Casala, a student of New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, whose sponsoring teacher is poet-essayist Andy Young, finds her inspiration from those around her and issues that raise her concern. She plans to attend college soon for either creative writing or zoology. She has studied with many inspiring writers at NOCCA and at the Kenyon Young Writers workshop at Kenyon college, and has "found her muses to be ever strong and, unfortunately, resistant."

The Judge's Comments

The story takes place in an apocalyptic future, where families are not allowed outside their homes and the only news comes from flyers slipped under their doors. The narrator's sister develops a mysterious "infection" and is found by her parents in a nearby hotel, bleeding in a bathtub. She's rescued and taken home, where the family locks themselves inside again. There's lots of compelling mystery and eeriness in this story. Its most powerful feature, though, is its stark and poetic use of language. Sentences are chopped up into fragments, creating a staccato shorthand that matches the grim urgency of the situation. Each phrase, each word, feels as though it has been chosen and placed for rhythm and sound, so that as you read the story, it seems to sing.

Other High School Finalists

Before the Land, Kayla Rodney, Terrytown, LA
Cats Left Around a Driveway, Kendall Daigle, River Ridge, LA
Fever-bruised, Analise Torcson, Covington, LA
Hellova Girl, Ash McCord, New Orleans, LA
In Love with a Ghost, Molly Malone, Nashville, TN
Keeping My Promise, Shauna K. Moore, Gretna, LA
Large Autumn Gold, Leigh Zook, Hampton Cove, AL
Never look Up, Brent Thibodeaux, New Orleans, LA
Orchids and Sugar, Scarlett McCarthy, Idyllwild, CA
That Day, Caroline Greene, Brentwood, TN
The Business Trip, Avery Friend, Covington, LA
Season of Flies, Cassidy McLoughlin, Covington, LA
Small Talk, Kelly Pettus, New Orleans, LA
Trivial Gatherings, Ryanne Autin, Metairie, LA
When a Dog Marries a Hog, Brianna Harrison, New Orleans, LA

Isaac Hellemn
Best Short Story by a High School Student
Runner-Up
"Just a Dog"

It was a dog. Lying on its side in the sun, on the blistering asphalt of the roadway. Dead. That much was obvious. Its belly was open, and ribs protruded from the lacerated abdomen. Blood had formed a small pool around the opening. Eyes wide and sightless, face frozen in a stupid slack-faced grin, the kind dogs always seem to have. Grinning in life, grinning in death. How nice that must be, he thought.

He looked around him at the affluent houses and manicured lawns. Hell of a place to go, he thought, right in front of someone's McMansion. He looked down at the dog. It was a mutt, a cross between a couple of breeds. Colorless. Unidentifiable. Alone. It would sit there and bake on the road until the police or the road cleaners found it. It could sit there for days, idle. Not good for things to remain idle, or unfinished.

He could bury it. It occurred to him to interfere in the process. Not good to interfere. Sometimes. But other times it makes things easier.

He looked up at the sun. Must be getting close to noon. Maybe eleven. But it did not really matter what time it was, much of his day was idle now. Not good to be idle.

So he would help the dog, do it a favor. He would walk to the hardware store two blocks up and buy a shovel. If the dog was there when he returned, he would bury it. If the dog was gone, he would have another shovel, which was not usually a bad thing.

While he walked he thought about how the dog had died. He was no veterinarian, he could not be sure, only speculate. It had probably been hit by a car. Perhaps it was killed by sadistic teenagers. That sort of thing had happened before, he had read it in the newspaper. Maybe it was attacked by a fox from the country club. But those weren't really reasons. There had been no leash, or much fat on the bones. The dog was a stray. Whatever made it a stray, that was the reason.

Maybe it bit someone, and the owners abandoned it rather than turn it over to be killed. Perhaps there was some well-meaning explanation that followed that line. Most likely the owners overreached or planned poorly and found that they could not really afford a dog. Whatever the reason, however well-meaning it might have been, the story ended with the dog dead on a road, in an affluent suburb, with a hollow grin on its face. Colorless and alone. Baking on the pavement.

He was pleased to see that the shovels were discounted. By buying them now he saved $1.17 over their pre-sale price. It occurred to him that he would need something to bury the dog in, and so he also picked out a newspaper at the register. He was surprised when the cashier asked him if he was a veteran. He had a three-day stubble, and wore a wrinkled blue shirt and faded blue jeans. He did not think that he looked much like a veteran. But he had served, and served well, and he answered the cashier. The cashier thanked him for serving. He asked the cashier if it entitled him to a further discount on his purchase, and the cashier shook his head in mock regret. He paid the cashier and left.

The dog was there when he returned. But he had not really expected that it would be gone. It couldn't get up and run off down the street, after all. He chuckled a little at that thought, and then stopped laughing. Not good to laugh in the presence of the dead.

He peered around him thoughtfully, squinting into the light of the early afternoon. He could not bury it in any of the houses' lawns. A dead dog is not worth a ruined lawn. But one house had a freshly turned flowerbed where he might bury the creature unobtrusively. It was a beautiful house, one that he would like to have lived in, had things turned out differently. But

then, things never do turn out differently, and no matter how much he wished they would, he always woke up each morning to find that they had turned out the same. Exactly the same. The dead dog grinned in agreement.

He first rang the doorbell of the house; he would ask permission, if anyone was home. Nobody was. That didn't particularly surprise him either. He wrapped the dog in the newspaper and carried it to the site. He considered closing the dog's eyes and mouth before burial, but didn't. No one wants to touch a dead dog.

The ground was harder than it looked, but still the hole did not take long. Soon he had dug about a foot square. Holding the newspaper-wrapped dog, he wondered if a eulogy was appropriate. Maybe even a prayer. But in the end he followed his first instinct and dropped the creature wordlessly in the hole.

It was still grinning. He wondered why that was. Weeks ago, he probably would not have been walking here. He probably would not have stopped to look at a dead dog. He probably would not have buried it. Maybe that was what the dog was grinning at. Well it didn't matter. He was satisfied in his little interference; it had occupied him.

Just as he was finishing with the covering of the hole, a car stopped in front of the house. A man wearing slacks and a tie got out of it.

What the fuck are you doing?

There was a dog in the road. I buried it.

Did anyone give you permission to bury it here?

It's just a dog.

The man thought about that a little. Maybe he wondered if the intruder was all there.

Seems like a lot of work, the man said a little uncertainly.

Well I was idle. It's not good to be idle.

The man let the silence hang a little, just to lightly accentuate his superiority over his intruder.

Okay, the man said decisively, now you can go.

He looked at the man.

Get out, go, scram, shoo! The man gestured down the street.

What could he do? He walked away, thinking furiously. Maybe the man would change his mind about the dog. The man might not like the idea of people burying animals in his flowerbed. Perhaps a dead dog is not worth a flowerbed. And if the man had the dead dog dug up and thrown out with the garbage or taken downtown and incinerated, then what would he do? What could he do?

Well fuck it. It was just a dog anyhow.

Editor's Note: Isaac Hellemn graduated in the fourth percentile of his class from Plano West Senior High School in Plano, TX. He was a member of the varsity swim team as well as a National Merit Scholar. He has earned perfect scores on all seven AP tests that he took and also finds time for such interests as jazz piano, creative story and screenplay writing. He speaks comfortable Spanish and some Chinese. One of his favorite hobbies is mountain climbing, and he has ascended Mt. Shasta in Northern California and Mt. Fuji in Tokyo, Japan. One of his most memorable service experiences was a local church group that cared for developmentally challenged children, at which he volunteered regularly for several years. Isaac enrolled at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to pursue a business major. To that end, Isaac recently took a major role in the running of his family-owned medical export business that operates in China. Isaac was sponsored in the Faulkner - Wisdom C by Lauren Hodum, his teacher in Advance Placement English Literature. Isaac credits Mrs. Hodum with greatly broadening his appreciation of literature and teaching him a more in-depth and emotional approach to creative writing.

The Judge's Comments:

This story is about a young war vet who finds a dead dog on the side of the road in an upscale neighborhood. The man buys a shovel and buries the dog in the flowerbed in the front yard of a house. As he's finishing up, he's confronted by another man in a car, and in the end, the vet wanders off, wondering about his actions. I admired the simplicity of this story: the clean language and the clarity of the action and situation. The underlying themes aren't simple, though, and the dead dog becomes the center around which revolve issues of life, death, war, and the fate of war vets.

The Literature of War & Collateral Damage

Presentation of Papers

Vietnam Era Survivors, the Literature of Survival, and The Psychology of Survival

Franklin Cox *was raised in Atlanta and received his undergraduate degree in English Literature from Saint Bernard College in 1963. He then gained a commission in the United States Marine Corps and served as a Forward Observer in Vietnam. His dramatic experiences with his fellow Marines in combat recently led him to write* ***Lullabies for Lieutenants: Memoir of a Marine Forward Observer in Vietnam, 1965-1966*****,** *his first book (McFarland and Co.).*

After his service in the Marine Corps he joined Wall Street and was a top-producing stockbroker for over twenty-five years with Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns. A few years ago he left the securities industry to devote his full time to writing. He is currently working on two other books. One is his memoir, ***Trust Me!: How Stockbrokers Tried to Steal Everything You Had.*** *The other is a book about what it takes to build a perennial championship high-school football program,* ***The Long Blue Line: the Ghosts of Marist Football.*** *Frank's photo of him as a soldier in Vietnam graces the introduction of this section.*

Anger
by Frank Cox

April 6, 1966 - Phong Luc

A personal account of the dilemma and physic trauma men in insurgent combat endure when encumbered by stringent Rules of Engagement while on patrol. This is Chapter Nine of Franklin Cox's memoir Lullaby for Lieutenants.

I followed the footsteps in front of me, stepping upon each one carefully, as I had for hours that day. They were easily discernable on the trail we were following, left by the rubber-soled jungle boots of the Marine five yards in front of me, boot prints etched into the spongy soil of a jungle trail by a 19-year-old American 9,200 mile from home. A watercock gulped a creepy, mournful cry from a nearby marsh.

The brush had gotten thicker. A sharp branch bowed and sprang back across my cheekbone. I hadn't seen the rifleman in front of me glide past it with his arm extended. I chided myself to be more alert but I was lulled by the tedium of hours on the move. The men on the point blazing the trail were new to the game and exceedingly slow. The thick bramble we traversed was darkened by the shadows cast from full-bloomed tree canopy that blocked most of the brilliant light strewn by a midday Asian sun. An occasional steady beam of sunlight streamed through and illuminated spider-webs and dust particles swirling in the light. The air was heavy and hard to pull in. Tiny spiders scuttled across vines that wove through the outlandishly lush growth.

Horseflies struck and withdrew when slapped, then struck again. Sudden streams of sweat broke free and dumped salt into my eyes, stinging differently than the insects. The trooper's shirt in front of me was now alabaster from his past dried sweat-salt, no longer olive-drab green. I extinguished a black ant as it bit a chunk of flesh from my forearm. I was dizzy from the march through the enervating heat. Each of these things was soon forgotten. Everything in the bush is irrelevant, except for your unit and the enemy.

Pay attention! Don't let your mind wander. Someday soon you'll be on the sofa in an air-conditioned den, watching The Mick crack another line drive into the short right field porch in Yankee Stadium, while drinking a frosty green bottle of Rolling Rock beer. But for right now watch what you are fucking doing!

I said this for the benefit not only of my radio operator just in front of me but also for myself.

The second platoon of Foxtrot Company, 2/9, was conducting an extended find-and-kill patrol south of the Song Bai Xay River, 12 miles south of Danang and a few miles west of Highway One. I was the rifle company's artillery FO. The good news was we had encountered no VC; the bad news was we had tripped a number of booby traps and mines and there had been several Marines casualties, no firefights but wounded Marines still the same. Frustration and fatigue consumed us. Double Eagle.

The column halted for a short rest. I took my pack off and placed it beside me, kneeling down and wiping the sweat from my face and throat. I could breathe again. I reached for my canteen and remembered what thirst did to me several weeks before.

Foxtrot Company was in a string of green Marine helicopters heading for our landing zone. Several thousand feet below I could see the white beach line meet the sunlight-speckled deep blue South China Sea. Soft powder puffs of clouds floated above us, seen past the door-gunner checking the linked ammo in his M-60 machine gun. A fishing village below had sent its watercraft out for spoils on a balmy morning. We veered away from the sea and headed west and up, up to the steep green hills of jungle that peered over the Bong Son plain. It was one large redoubt for battalions of VC strengthened with newly-arrived North Vietnamese Army units. Marine intelligence estimated the

enemy strength to be 6,000 regulars, reinforced by approximately 600 guerrillas. We were going there to try to correct that. We were a small part of a huge operation called Operation Double Eagle. The goal was to find as many VC as possible and turn them into dust for their families' altars. The chopper slowed and descended. I could see Marine gunships prepping and spraying our landing zone as we made our final approach. We encountered no contact at the LZ or on our way to set up camp for the night on a nearby wide ridge with miles of visibility in all directions.

The next morning I was sent to work with a company of the 1st Calvary Division, one of the most decorated and elite units in the United States Army. Only Marine artillery was available and the army wanted a Marine forward observer involved in case it became necessary to utilize our howitzers. I was chosen. I spent a full day with them running a sweep operation in a jungle. The army company's squad and platoon leaders weren't on the same level with their Marine counterparts. Hand-and-arm signals?...none. Flank security?...not enough for terrain perfectly suited for ambushes. Unit-to-unit communication?...sketchy and iffy. Leadership?...not even close. At dusk I felt relieved when I rejoined Foxtrot Company. After just a few minutes back with the jarheads my stress level was cut in half.

Late one morning three days later we were into our fourth hour of non-stop humping up and down the steep hills, at times slowly slashing our way through jungle so thick it was impossible to see more than five yards ahead, looking for NVA dinks. The smothering heat sucked out our sweat until we were on the south side of dehydration and challenged our body thermostats. Then we were out of water. As we descended a hill we saw our first sign of any civilization in two days. A lone peasant and his water buffalo were hard at work in a rice paddy. There was a place where the mucky brown paddy water slid off a ledge to a lower level. That's where we filled our canteens. The platoon sergeant gave halazone tablets to those without them. It sterilized water and killed bacteria that could eat holes in your guts. But it took 20 or more minutes to work after you dropped the tablets into the canteen. I weighed my risks. I was dizzy and had stopped sweating, not a good sign when you know you are overheated.

I unscrewed the cap and said, "Fuck it, sergeant. I'm not waiting."

I chugged huge gulps of the paddy water and felt mud particles in my teeth afterwards. I tried not to think about the buffalo waste that was pervasive in the paddy.

"Fuck it, if the lieutenant's drinking it I am, too," said the platoon sergeant.

Now that's thirst for you.

After the short rest we got the order to move out again. I decided to move forward and take over the point as we resumed our patrol. The new Marines were too slow, I thought. I turned to my radio operator and pointed to the head of our column. He smiled like he was getting an early Christmas present, anything to break the desultory mood that held us captive.

"Randy, stay four yards behind me and keep your eyes peeled," I told him.

He nodded, squelching the static from his radio as we leapfrogged to the front. The previous point man was surprised when we took over the lead. Officers don't usually walk point unless they are bored or pissed. In this case I was both.

I moved up the trail scanning for anything unusual, enemy footprints, slivers of fishing wire strung low between trees, freshly cut vegetation. I glanced back at Randy. He was alertly checking our flanks; our new role really had his attention. I stopped after about 10 minutes to listen for… whatever. The column of Marines behind me stopped, ordinary movements became robotic from the monotonous march and the blistering heat. Their bodies lurched and pitched. Young faces telegraphed signs of disassociation. I looked at the green canopy above us and pulled from my canteen and heard nothing. I moved forward once again.

We came upon an open crop field that stretched in front of us for over 200 yards. At its other end was a village complex behind a thick jungle tree line. I spotted a man in black bending over near the far end of the field next to a path we would likely take. He hadn't seen us yet. I halted and motioned at the four or five Marines just behind me.

"What's that gook doing?" I asked.

I was met with blank stares. They were all new replacements with no answer.

"Is he a farmer, or is he planting a booby-trap?" I asked.

Once again, none offered any assessment.

"Hey, you," I screamed. "Stay still!"

He looked up and froze. Two hundred yards away American Marines were sizing him up. Six, maybe eight seconds passed slowly. He made his decision, and like a jackrabbit made for the safety of the tree line behind him.

"What the fuck are you waiting for?" I screamed at the Marines near me. "Waste that fucker, he's a VC!"

I brought my M-14 quickly to a firing position, aligned my sights below his bobbing head at the widest part of his torso, breathed out slowly, and fired. And missed. The others next to me then opened up. The man in black was angling towards the nearest point of the tree line, running for his life. He made it. We fired over 15 rounds and missed him. If it had been a rifle range the scorer would have raised "Maggie's Drawers," a red disk signifying the target was missed.

Why had I fired? It was unclear whether he was a farmer, an enemy guerilla, or both. Therefore my action was against the rules of engagement. It was also very easy to rationalize. It was an ethical dilemma. He could have been an enemy warrior planting a booby-trapped grenade or a farmer planting yams for his family's next Buddhist feast. The combination of frustration, heat, fear, and exhaustion hijacked my heart and produced cold malice. Anger became the catalyst for unacceptable behavior. But I'll tell you what it really was. It wasn't just another example of our ongoing failure to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese citizens. It was attempted murder.

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"Tell it one more time:" Repetition as "Truth" in Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried

By Brian Schneider

Chronologically, the earliest vignette in Tim O'Brien's **The Things They Carried** is of three children in 1956: nine-year-olds Timmy O'Brien, Nick Veenhof and a surgery-stricken girl named Linda. Linda will soon die from her brain tumor. The crucial scene between these three is at school with Nick Veenhof cleverly sneaking through the classroom so he can get into position to, ever-so-delicately, lift Linda's red cap off her head to reveal the "glossy whiteness of her scalp" with "tufts of hair, little patches of grayish brown fuzz" (**Things They Carried** 235). Young Linda stays stoic, forcing the two boys to react in their own way, with their own emotions. Later, Nick confronts Timmy on the playground to inform "Your girlfriend… she kicked the bucket… She's dead… My mom told me at lunchtime. No lie, she actually kicked the goddang bucket" (237). The two boys are forced to cope with what may be the first significant trauma they have encountered in their young lives – Nick via a form of humor, or perhaps bullying, and Timmy with introspection. Each method seems marginally as effective as the other; two different avenues trying to reach the same destination. O'Brien opens this final story, *The Lives of the Dead*, with "But this too is true: stories can save us" (225). This is one of many goals in **The Things They Carried**. Saving yourself, in this case the young narrator Tim O'Brien, from trauma – a word that does not appear once in the text.

The traumas in this book mainly derive from the Vietnam War, and the stories are not in chronological order where a tale about writing and reflecting on war comes before several stories taking place in Vietnam during the war. For example, the pivotal, Vietnam-set tale of Kiowa's death by drowning in a shit field comes after the Norman Bowker and Tim O'Brien the narrator accounts of the event are told – both set once they are veterans returned from the war. One of the narrator's refrains in this book is "You can tell a true war story if you just keep on telling it" (85). However **The Things They Carried** is fiction, not a historical account – O'Brien seeks his "story-truths" (179) of Vietnam through fiction. The question here does not probe the validity of O'Brien's "truth," but rather how he creates it, and why: "I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why the story truth is truer sometimes then happening-truth" (179). How to bring war to those who have never seen it: tell it again. Create new avenues of accessibility. Change the perspective. Switch the setting. Tell it again.

Mark Heberle, tracing the use of Vietnam throughout O'Brien's career, writes "trauma is not so much the subject of O'Brien's works as it is the medium within which and out of which his protagonists are impelled to revisit and rewrite their life experiences" (xxi). However, in **The Things They Carried** one must not confuse Tim O'Brien the author with Tim O'Brien the narrator. The latter is, of course, a fictional character, thus any traumatic catharsis – if there is one – belongs to the character and not the author himself. Heberle connects many of O'Brien's books together with astonishing clarity, including pointing out that Kiowa's death in the shit field is also told in O'Brien's first work, the memoir **If I Die in a Combat Zone**. In the memoir's chapter *July*, a young soldier named McElhaney is killed in the muck of a swamp after being run over by American armor during an ambush (Heberle 181). The parallels between McElhaney's death and Kiowa's bear striking resemblance. The memoir recounts "We walked between and behind the monsters [tracks], looking for McElhaney. The mud came up to our knees, and the water was sometimes near the crotch" (**If I Die** 149). The fictional **The Things They Carried** story *In the Field* reads "Kiowa was gone. He was under the mud and water, folded in with the war, and their only thought was to find him and dig him out and then move on to someplace dry and warm" (**Things They Carried** 162) and goes on further to explain "they were tall men, but at times the muck came to midthigh, other times to the crotch" (165). Heberle identifies the similarities but does not pause to note key differences between the repeating of this particular event. In the memoir McElhaney's death is simply something that happened during an ambush but O'Brien does not dwell on the act itself. Instead, after McElhaney's body is found, the narrative moves immediately to a description detailing the incompetence of the situation's leadership. The O'Brien speaking in the memoir is in the middle of the moment, in Vietnam, and certainly in the war. Conversely, O'Brien the narrator in **The Things They Carried** offers far more nuance, reflection, and even futile attempts at reason for events of the war.

The significance of Kiowa's death by drowning in the shit field dominates the latter half of **The Things They Carried** in multiple stories, almost becoming a refrain for blame in general toward the death of soldiers and even the Vietnam

War itself: "'It wasn't the LT's fault,' Bowker said quietly. 'Whose then?' 'Nobody's. Nobody knew till afterward'" (**Things They Carried** 166) and further on Bowker amends his statement to "'Nobody's fault'… 'Everybody's'" (176). Here, through repeating an event from his memoir to his fiction, O'Brien illustrates his theory of happening-truth versus story-truth. McElhaney's death almost seems footnoted in a "by the way this happened sort of way," whereas Kiowa's death resonates through as a rumination on blame as O'Brien the narrator informs:

When a man died, there had to be blame. …You could blame the war. You could blame the idiots who made the war. You could blame Kiowa for going to it. You could blame the rain. You could blame the river. You could blame the field, the mud, the climate. You could blame the enemy. You could blame the mortar rounds. You could blame people who were too lazy to read a newspaper, who were bored by the daily body counts, who switched channels at the mention of politics. You could blame whole nations. You could blame God. You could blame the munitions makers or Karl Marx or a trick of fate or an old man in Omaha who forgot to vote. (177)

Ultimately, this meditation on blame – this story-truth – lands right back to the words of Norman Bowker: "Nobody's fault… Everybody's." The difference in medium, memoir versus fiction, showcases the different use of narrator and tone that O'Brien the author uses to juxtapose happening-truth versus story-truth. The characters McElhaney in **If I Die in a Combat Zone** and Kiowa in the **The Things They Carried** represent O'Brien repeating events between books written years apart. The link between these texts – and also the novel **Going After Cacciato** – expands to the whole of **The Things They Carried** with the story of Norman Bowker in *Speaking of Courage* and the metafictional "creation" of Bowker's tale in the story *Notes*.

In *Notes*, O'Brien the narrator identifies *Speaking of Courage* as a chapter originally ascribed to **Going After Cacciato**. The story was edited out of that text and later published by itself before finding a home in **The Things They Carried**. This story opens with the narrator, in full metafiction mode, showing a letter from Bowker mentioning both Kiowa and the memoir **If I Die in a Combat Zone**. Further on the narrator reflects on this letter:

At the time I was at work on a new novel, **Going After Cacciato**, and one morning I sat down and began a chapter titled *Speaking of Courage*. The emotional core came directly from Bowker's letter: the simple need to talk. … As the novel developed over the next year, and as my own ideas clarified, it became apparent that the chapter had no proper home in the larger narrative. **Going After Cacciato** was a war story; *Speaking of Courage* was a postwar story. Two different time periods, two different sets of issues. (**Things They Carried** 158-9)

The foundation of the narrator's statements here is true. The letter from Norman Bowker is fiction. Bowker himself, along with Kiowa and O'Brien the narrator, are all fictional characters. Once again happening-truth collides with story-truth. It's the emotional core that O'Brien the author is after. This emotional core starts in the memoir with McElhaney's death, carries into **Going after Cacciato** with the deleted version of Bowker's story, and is fully realized in **The Things They Carried** as the final reverberations of how Kiowa's death still affects Bowker and O'Brien the narrator even years after the event itself. As the narrator tells us, "you can tell a true war story if you just keep on telling it" (85).

The section *Notes* in **The Things They Carried** even names by title **Going After Cacciato** and also **If I Die in a Combat Zone** within the fictional story. The happening-truths are O'Brien's progression of these texts. The story-truths remain Norman Bowker circling a lake twelve times along the Iowa prairies, him writing a letter to the narrator O'Brien and the subsequent creation of the story, and finally Bowker's suicide by hanging. While maybe not a straight repetition of events along the lines of McElhaney and Kiowa, this continuation nonetheless shows O'Brien creating another avenue for readers to follow – another way for the reader to "feel" Vietnam. The character Bowker continues to show O'Brien's main concern with his storytelling and the repetition he uses; Bowker cannot talk about Vietnam but he could "feel it. … Some things you can feel" (154).

Additionally, the opening page of **Going After Cacciato** begins with a list of names of dead soldiers. The first living person, indeed living anything, starts when "Stink Harris woke up screaming one night with a leech on his tongue" (13). This detail, this fiction, of the screaming and the leech gets repeated midway through **The Things They Carried** in *How to Tell a True War Story*. O'Brien the narrator finishes this story:

All you can do is tell it one more time, patiently, adding and subtracting, making up a few things to get at the real truth. … Beginning to end, you tell her, it's all made up. Every goddamn detail… None of it happened. None of it. And if it did happen, it didn't happen in the mountains, it happened in this little village on the Batangan Peninsula, and it was raining like crazy, and one night a guy named Stink Harris woke up screaming with a leech on his tongue. (**Things They Carried** 85)

Stink Harris, originally belonging to the fictional novel **Going After Cacciato**, is repackaged as "truth" in **The Things They Carried**. O'Brien's irony on "truth" versus "fiction" here is obvious, but the deliberate meshing of texts over his career is telling. Stink Harris, via repetition, can be both "truth" and "fiction," for O'Brien, as Mark Heberle remarks, "[the] border between the two is strikingly permeable" (xxii). The space of this border area functions as the crux of O'Brien's storytelling. The statement "you can tell a true war story if you just keep on telling it" (85) is not just a metafictional device for **The Things They Carried**, nor only a theme within that text only, but rather a mode of operation for all of O'Brien's writing.

Heberle further states "O'Brien uses Vietnam itself as a resource to refigure trauma as a domestic and private wounding that leaves the war behind" (23). This "leaves the war behind" idea resonates particularly through **The Things They Carried** as O'Brien continually juxtaposes

Vietnam events with their post-war counterparts. The war event is directly compared with its post-war lingering effects.

For example, the series of stories chronicling Kiowa's death in the shit field are repeated several times from several perspectives. First, we receive Norman Bowker's glimpse of the night in the shit field and how it still affects him, along with other traumas, after the war at home in Iowa in the story *Speaking of Courage*. Bowker tries to imagine how he would tell the story of the shit field, but ultimately his failed telling and his inability to physically talk out this trauma culminate the end of the story:

He [Bowker] could not describe what happened next, not ever, but he would've tried anyway. He would've spoken carefully so as to make it real for anyone who would listen. There were bubbles where Kiowa's head should've been. (**Things They Carried** 149)

As already discussed, Bowker's tale – set post-war – is followed quickly by O'Brien the narrator's metafictional story *Notes* that explains the writing of this tale.

Now, after these two post-war tangents on Kiowa's death, O'Brien follows with the story *In the Field*, the "real-time," Vietnam-set rendering of Kiowa's death. O'Brien gives the reader many access points to try and understand how this night can affect a person. The reader can choose Bowker's version and his inability to tell the story. Or the reader can have O'Brien the narrator's version; after all, O'Brien the narrator is the "writer" and through Bowker's letter we know the narrator strives to tell the stories others cannot. Now, after these routes, further in the novel the reader is given yet another option to "feel" the ramifications of that night with *Field Trip*. This story is set not only post-war, but also post-metafictional creation of *Speaking of Courage, Notes*, and *In the Field*.

In Field Trip, O'Brien the narrator returns twenty years later to the spot of Kiowa's death. He wades out into the muck and buries Kiowa's moccasins into the mud and searches for something profound: "'Well… There it is'" (186). The narrator manages to "finish" Kiowa's story, and create an end of the road to recovery for this particular traumatic event: "Twenty years. A lot like yesterday, a lot like never. In a way, maybe, I'd gone under with Kiowa, and now after two decades I'd finally worked my way out" (187). For O'Brien the narrator and for the purposes of the novel, a trauma has been confronted and repeated, from many angles, and now the night of Kiowa's death is, as the narrator ends the story: "'All that's finished'" (188).

The larger irony, of course, is that none of it is finished – not Kiowa's death, not O'Brien the narrator's attempts at "recovery," not the entire text of **The Things They Carried**, and certainly not O'Brien the author's continued delving into the space of Vietnam and the domain of trauma. We must separate protagonist from author. Heberle remarks, "Whatever recovery is possible is realized as psychological catharsis for the protagonist, but as a closure of a fiction for the trauma artist" (xxii). However, in contrary to Heberle's statement, "closure" rarely seems to occurs in O'Brien's writing – events get repeated in another form, another story, another book. "A closure of a fiction" (emphasis added) may have happened, but other traumas, other fictions always continue.

While this paper focuses on repetition in **The Things They Carried**, O'Brien's fictions, traumas, and "truths" always continue onward. For every "closure" another event, another death, another trip to Vietnam lurks. For O'Brien it's "tell it again," but nothing will necessarily change.

Out of this murk of truths and untruths O'Brien gives his reader options other writers do not in regards to war and its aftermath. But the goal remains the same: to convey the horror of war to those who have not seen it. Maybe Kiowa slowly sinking into the mud is too terrible, too awful – or, in the story *The Lives of the Dead*, as another soldier asks a freshly arrived O'Brien: "'Maybe it's too real for you?' 'That's right,' I [O'Brien] said. 'Way too real'" (**Things They Carried** 226). So if the Vietnam sections seem too real or even perhaps too unreal, the reader can choose Norman Bowker circling a lake in Iowa, unable to talk about his war, and eventually committing suicide. Or there is O'Brien the narrator returning to Vietnam twenty years after the war still trying to reach some kind of closure. The reader can choose whichever roads of compassion and terror – or a combination of both – lead to these story-truths of Vietnam and its continuing aftermath, as the O'Brien the narrator explains:

War is hell, but that's not the half of it, because war is also mystery and terror and adventure and courage and discovery and holiness and pity and despair and longing and love. War is nasty; war is fun. War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man; war makes you dead. The truths are contradictory. (80)

Maybe this is why the novel ends with the memory of nine-year-old Timmy, tumor-stricken Linda, and Nick Veenhof. What if Linda and her terminal illness represent the war being covered up by her red cap? And then Nick Veenhof lightly lifts off the cap revealing truths maybe not everyone wanted or needed to know but now must deal with. Your emotions must deal with the event. Do you react as Nick, knowingly appalled and shameful for what he did but ultimately covering up his grief and confusion with jokes and hard words like "kicked the goddang bucket"(237) – distancing yourself from the trauma. Or do you react, still confused, but in a more sentimental way searching for your own compassion as Timmy? The choice is yours.

In **The Things They Carried**, O'Brien the narrator seeks to take away the abstractness of war not by giving the reader concrete slabs of truth explaining "this is exactly what it is," but rather slices of story-truths that need to be pieced together. Christopher Donovan challenges the reader further in this regard:

The moral onus lies, finally, on the reader, to the point it hardly seems to matter whether the strong poet in question writes solely for himself, toward some personal theory of

art, or whether he aspires to galvanize readers by addressing those contemporary social issues that concern him the most deeply. (2)

Tim O'Brien's writing gives the reader a roadmap to the Vietnam War. If you seek any "truth," plot your own path of understanding.

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"The Immense Serenity" of Vietnam: Flashes of Peace in Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried - What is peace after Vietnam?

by Kristin Kelly

I. Negotiating the Peace

Most Vietnam War novels, including those of Tim O'Brien, portray the relentless nature of war: the human loss, the psychological cost, and the lingering despair. But coexisting with the loss are small pockets of peace, even joy. After a firefight, soldiers exult in blood throbbing through their veins. Suddenly, the jungle radiates color and life. A few moments of oxygenated peace allow combatants to recall a world outside the terror of political fiasco. Peace survives even in a combat zone, but a soldier's experience of peace can be complex, elusive, and almost impossible to sustain. What a soldier considers peace may defy conventional definitions: post-war peace is not simply an absence of war, a freedom from anxiety, or a sinking into silence. Many soldiers and ex-soldiers work hard to negotiate their own peace; others find it by surprise, even after a firefight. Few find it at home.

After combat, soldiers may reject a prolonged state of peace and relaxation. Tim O'Brien's narrator named Tim O'Brien recalls fellow soldier Mitchell Sanders telling instructive "peace stories" early in the novel:

A guy goes AWOL. Shacks up in *Danang with a Red Cross Nurse.* It's a great time—the nurse loves him to death—the guy gets whatever he wants whenever he wants it. The war's over, he thinks. Just nookie and new angles. But then one day he rejoins his unit in the bush. Can't wait to get back into action. Finally one of his buddies asks what happened with the nurse, why so hot for combat, and the guy says, 'All that peace, man, it felt so good it hurt. I want to hurt it back.' (38)

In the middle of war, too much peace can also be unnerving. Soldiers may await the next firefight by fighting each other (sometimes after being ordered to do so by their superiors or elders). Sebastian Junger's 2010 account of combat in Afghanistan's remote Korengal Valley entitled **War** includes descriptions of how soldiers sometimes dealt with downtime:

The men who were killed or wounded were replaced with cherries, and if the older men got bored enough they sometimes made the cherries fight each other. They'd been trained in hand-to-hand combat, so they all knew how to choke someone out; if you do it right, with the forearm against the carotid artery, the person loses consciousness in seconds. (They die in a couple of minutes if you don't release the pressure.) Choking guys out was considered fine sport, so soldiers tended to keep their backs to something so no one could sneak up from behind. (23)

Sometimes you just need to hurt the peace back.

More often, the absence of combat brings the chills and anything but peace. In Benjamin Tupper's 2010 **Greetings from Afghanistan: Send More Ammo,** he provides an example:

Even during periods of relative peace and quiet, the war finds ways to creep into your personal space and violate your growing false sense of security.

Late one night, while going to snag a cold bottle of Gatorade out of the fridge in our TOC, my attention was diverted from my thirst by frantic voices coming over the radio.

Somewhere, out in the darkness, in some valley, at some random grid square, ETTs [Embedded Training Teams] were in a bad firefight. The urgency, the terror, the frantic tones of their voices had a paralyzing effect on me. The bottle of Gatorade became heavy, and it fell from my hands onto the floor. I immediately had a sense of being alone,

vulnerable, helpless.

Flashbacks to moments when I've found myself outflanked, outmaneuvered, outnumbered, and under fire. The hot summer night felt instantly cold, and I literally shook. As difficult as it was to stay and listen to desperate calls and orders on the radio, especially alone, I couldn't move. I had become part of their world. (61)

The more intense the combat has been, the harder it can be to let a sliver of peace back in. In **Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment,** John Briere and Catherine Scott discuss the persistence of hyper-arousal in soldiers who have experienced trauma. Such hyper-arousal "may present as 'jumpiness' (a lowered startle threshold), irritability, sleep disturbance or attention/concentration difficulties" (21). According to other accounts, soldiers may choose post-war careers that provide a necessary channel for the persistent hyperarousal. Combat veteran Ken Smith describes the life he chose after Vietnam:

I was in Vietnam 8 months, 11 days, 12 hours, and 45 minutes. These things you remember. I remember it exactly. I returned home a different person from when I left. I went to work as a paramedic, and I found a considerable amount of self-satisfaction out of doing that work. It was almost like a continuance of what I had been doing in Vietnam, but on a much, much lower capacity. There was no gunshot trauma, there was no burn trauma, I wasn't seeing sucking chest wounds or amputations or shrapnel. I was seeing a lot of medical emergencies…Once in awhile there would be an auto accident, which would be the juice. I would turn on the sirens and know that I'm going to something, and the adrenaline rush that would run through my body would fuel me for the next 100 calls." (qtd. in Herman 40-41)

Thus, blood and adrenaline help Smith find peace. Blood-spattered emergency vehicle peace can mean the ease of knowing what is expected—tragedy— in this familiar albeit sometimes bloody sphere. Not everyone negotiates the same peace.

II. Rejecting Suburban Peace

Rat Kiley, Alpha Company medic in Tim O'Brien's **The Things They Carried**, tells the story of Mary Anne Bell. Rat insists he tells the absolute truth, although narrator Tim O'Brien admits that "doesn't amount to much of a warranty" (101). Rat had been assigned to a medical detachment far up in the mountains west of Chu Lai before joining Alpha Company. These guys, to pass the time, talk about the "tantalizing" possibility of bringing in some women to "spice things up" (104). Young Mark Fossie obsessively revisits the idea and insists that bringing in a girl is a real possibility: "Six weeks later his girlfriend showed up"(105).

Mary Anne Bell is the picture of suburban bliss wearing white culottes and a pink sweater. She is sweet and demure and very good for morale. Sure, there is some envy of Mark, but the men "genuinely liked her" (106). And Mary Anne likes Vietnam. She is curious and a quick learner. She asks a lot of questions and is fascinated by the answers:

What exactly was a trip flare? How did a Claymore work? What was behind those scary green mountains to the west? Then she'd squint and listen quietly while somebody filled her in. She had a good quick mind. She paid attention. Often, especially during the hot afternoons, she would spend time with the ARVNs out along the perimeter, picking up little phrases of Vietnamese, learning how to cook rice over a can of Sterno, how to eat with her hands. (107)

Within a short time frame, Mary Anne ecstatically embraces Vietnam, and "she seem[s] comfortable and entirely at home; the hostile atmosphere did not seem to register" (107). She fuses perfectly with the land, stripping down to swim almost naked in the Song Tra Bong. She cares little about the stopping power of the AK-47 or the terror of an ambush. She gains comfort in the land she inhabits, she clips arteries and shoots in morphine, and she feels useful. She also feels the unmatched pleasure of the "adrenaline buzz that came with the job, that quick hot rush in your veins when the choppers settled down and you had to do things fast and right" (109).

But when Mary Anne begins to go missing at night, all is not peaceful at camp. Mark Fossie becomes unhinged, even after he realizes that she is not sleeping with any of his friends and really has no interest in them whatsoever. When she first comes back from an all-night ambush with the Greenies who live nearby, Mark tries for a fragile, negotiated peace by imposing restrictions upon her and scheduling her departure for the States, but she is too far gone to ever return home. Mary Anne tastes the electricity of life out in the bush and no longer cares to return to a life that mandates wearing a starched apron and bearing three tow-headed children in Cleveland Heights.

When Mary Anne goes to live with the Greenies, Fossie tries again to bring her back to his idea of a peaceful suburban life, but he has no chance at all. She dismisses his efforts and explains that returning home is no longer a possibility:

'You just don't know,' she said. 'You hide in this little fortress, behind wire and sandbags, and you don't know what's out there or what it's all about or how it feels to really live in it. Sometimes I want to eat this place. Vietnam. I want to swallow the whole country—the dirt, the death--I just want to eat it and have it there inside me….It's like… this appetite….When I'm out there at night, I feel close to my own body, I can feel my blood moving, my skin and my fingernails, everything, it's like I'm full of electricity and I'm glowing in the dark—I'm on fire almost—I'm burning away into nothing—but it doesn't matter because I know exactly who I am. You can't feel that way anywhere else.' (121)

Mary Anne has found her peace and identity simultaneously; she means to live without fear or constriction. The last time Mark talks to Mary Anne is anticlimactic: "For a

long while the girl gazed down at Fossie, almost blankly, and in the candlelight her face had the composure of someone perfectly at peace with herself. It took a few seconds to appreciate the full change" (120). Although she stands passively looking at Mark in the pink sweater in which she arrived, at her neck is a circle of human tongues. Her peace seems some private transaction, a deep fulfillment. According to Eddie Diamond who said he heard it from the Greenies, she even took great pleasure in the night patrols:

On occasion, when they were taken under fire, Mary Anne would stand quietly and watch the tracer rounds snap by, a little smile at her lips, intent on some private transaction with the war. Other times she would simply vanish altogether—for hours, for days.

And then one morning, all alone, Mary Anne walked into the mountains and did not come back. (124)

The peace Mary Anne negotiated costs her all her life before Vietnam, but she is not alone in paying this price.

III. Searching for Mercy Street

Norman Bowker circles the lake all day long on the 4th of July looking for a sort of peace which might include someone to talk to, but he ultimately comes up short. Bowker's father maintains some interest in the medals for bravery (in fact, Bowker thinks his father's interest in him extends only to his medals), but the father had fought his own war and "now preferred silence" (166). Sally Kramer, his former girlfriend, is safely married and not available for conversation. His friend Max Arnold, who used to enjoy talking about the possibility of the existence of God, had drowned in the lake one summer. He was now only an idea. Kiowa, of course, had died in a shit field, and Norman had not been able to save him: "There were bubbles where Kiowa's head should've been" (168). If Norman Bowker had someone to talk to,

He would have talked about this, and how he grabbed Kiowa by the boot and tried to pull him out. He pulled hard but Kiowa was gone, and then suddenly he felt himself going too. He could taste it. The shit was in his nose and eyes. There were flares and mortar rounds, and the stink was everywhere—it was inside him, in his lungs—and he could no longer tolerate it. Not here, he thought. Not like this. He released Kiowa's boot and watched it slide away. Slowly, working his way up, he hoisted himself out of the deep mud, and then he lay still and tasted the shit in his mouth and closed his eyes and listened to the rain and explosions and bubbling sounds. (168)

Norman has been back in his small town in Iowa for a while, but the town "seemed remote somehow" (159). He drives for hours, feeling safe in his father's big Chevy, but unable to stop looping around the lake even though the sun is beginning to set and the radio announcer's voice is noticeably more fatigued than when the sun was high in the sky.

STATIC ON RADIO?

When he pulls in at an A&W drive-in, still safely ensconced in the boat of his father's car, he sees masses of mosquitoes electrocuting themselves against an aluminum Pest-Rid machine (169). He turns away from the self-immolation to try to order a Mama Burger directly from the young carhop, but he has made yet another mistake, a misinterpretation. The carhop acts incredulous that he is trying to order from a live human being and sighs as she tells him that he is supposed to punch the button and speak toward the intercom, out into space. Bowker tries this, and to his surprise the voice at the other end tells him to loosen up and to talk if he needs to, no problem at all. Briefly, surprisingly, Bowker smiles and asks if he'd like to hear a story; then he stops. To the voice at the other end, Bowker says that he's finished talking after all. Nothing left to say, really. There is brief silence but no peace.

He begins to circle the lake for the tenth time, hollowness and loss complete, circling a baptismal pool, calm and serene, but a broken promise of ultimate forgiveness and New Life. When late summer twilight turns to dark and Norman must put on the headlights to see, Kiowa comes back to him, drowning in the dark and the waste, "folded in with the war" (O'Brien 172) . Bowker remembers and reworks Kiowa's final moments:

He wished he could have explained some of this. How he had been braver than he ever thought possible, but how he had not been so brave as he wanted to be. The distinction was important. Max Arnold, who loved fine lines, would've appreciated it. And his father, who already knew, would've nodded. (172)

Survivor's guilt loops endlessly in Norman's mind, pushing out logic and any possibility of human connection. At the end of *Speaking of Courage*, Bowker walks into the warm baptismal waters which neither cleanse nor sanctify him. He opens his lips slightly for the taste, but the waters will not save him. Independence Day fireworks explode overhead and yet again there is no peace.

IV. The Aftermath of War

The story of Norman Bowker's endless circles around his hometown lake is followed by a chapter entitled *Notes*. In this chapter, readers learn that after several years of searching for meaning in his life, Norman Bowker hangs himself in the locker room of a YMCA in his hometown in Central Iowa. His previous correspondence with narrator Tim O'Brien hints at the sense of disconnection that invaded his post-Vietnam life. Readers learn that going back to school, often given as a pat solution to all of life's disappointments, meant little to nothing to Bowker:

At one point he had enrolled in the junior college in his hometown, but the coursework, he said, seemed too abstract, too distant, with nothing real or tangible at stake, certainly not the stakes of a war. He dropped out after eight months. In the afternoons he played pickup basketball at the Y, and then at night he drove around in his father's car, mostly alone, or with a six-pack of beer, cruising.

'The thing is,' he wrote, 'there's no place to go.' (177)

There are no words to describe the trauma that Bowker has experienced; there is no college experience to teach him how to get the shit field out of his head. Norman

Bowker is part of no community even though he regularly visits and even dies at a small-town community center. Jonathan Shay, staff psychiatrist at the Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Boston, educates his patients and the public at large that there can be no true recovery without community. Shay could not be clearer in **Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming**: "The basic message is that whether recovery occurs spontaneously or in a defined treatment setting, recovery happens only in community" (4). Shay and other trauma experts know that the communalization of the trauma is key, and those who intend to be part of the community must commit to being ready to "experience some of the terror, grief, and rage that the victim did." In fact, without emotion in the listener, there is no communalization of the grief; without communalization of the grief, there is no recovery (Shay, **Achilles** 189) and never any peace.

VI. Conclusion

Judith Lewis Herman, author of **Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror** notes that traumatic events "violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis" (51). Herman employs Mardi Horowitz's standard definition of traumatic life events as "those that cannot be assimilated with the victim's 'inner schemata' of self in relation to the world" (qtd. in Herman 51). Soldiers especially must assimilate both the brutality of combat and the "secret joy" of eluding death and living to see the bright tableau of sun and clouds. As narrator Tim O'Brien states,

> You're pinned down in some filthy hellhole of a paddy, getting your ass delivered to kingdom come, but then for a few seconds, everything goes quiet and you look up and see the sun and a few puffy white clouds, and the immense serenity flashes against your eyeballs—the whole world gets rearranged—and even though you're pinned down by a war you never felt more at peace. (39)

O'Brien is, as Mark Heberle has aptly described him, a trauma artist: "Storytelling thus becomes a vehicle for the endless reproduction of trauma, revealing and covering it up, revising what has happened or inventing what has not" (204). O'Brien's stories are made up, even the silences and peace, but they are true to the cognitive strain of confronting war demons. Kali Tal, author of **Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma**, insists that there are no words that suffice to "retell" trauma in a simple, linear way anyway. Thus, O'Brien's work reflects the rearrangement of the psyche that must occur in the aftermath of carnage. Narrating the unspeakable marks the beginning of recovery but requires simulated moments of peace and metafictional asides; representing horror requires story truth instead of happening truth. Anything else may be a lie.

In the mind of some thinkers, especially James Hillman, there will be no end to war simply because human beings have now and will always have too great a love for it. In **A Terrible Love of War**, Hillman also posits that there is no peace in post-war peace:

> When peace follows war, the villages and towns erect memorials with tributes to the honor of the fallen, sculptures of victory, angels of compassion, and local names cut in granite. We pass by these same structures like obstacles to traffic. Even the immediate presence of war's aftermath, the rubble of London, the rubble of Frankfurt, the desolation through Russia, the Ukraine, become unremarkable to its citizens in the anesthesia of peace. The survivors themselves enter a state of unperturbed quiescence; they don't want to talk about it. (30)

Furthermore, says Hillman, The specific syndrome suffered by American veterans—post-traumatic stress disorder—occurs within the wider syndrome: the endemic numbing of the American homeland and its addiction to security. The present surroundings of the veteran in 'peacetime' can have as strong, if subtle, traumatic effect and can cause as much stress as past stress and trauma. PTSD breaks out in peacetime because peace as defined does not allow upsetting remembrances of war's continuing presence. War is never over….The trauma is not 'post' but acutely present… (31-32)

The trauma of war cannot simply be replicated and disseminated in the clean, bright pages of traditional, linear novels, and the reader can never be "brought to the other side," the darkness, in a purely nonfiction account of trauma either. To O'Brien, this is no impediment, only another triumph of storytelling. "Story truth" is "truer" than "happening truth" anyway, and the fictional silences belie real attempts to survive.

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The Lost Soldier: Effects of the Vietnam War on Noncombat Soldiers by Alan Pasternak, Ph.D.

War . . . what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!

This song by Erwin Starr (1970) was a production of the collective unconscious of the United States and voiced a universal theme that has been hailed through the centuries. This theme has not been embraced by all, but surely by the mothers and fathers who have lost their children and by young men who have lost their innocence as the result of war. In spite of this sentiment, war has been an epidemic that has killed people since the beginning of time. It began as far back as the hunter-gatherers defending themselves from wild animals and each other.

This paper brings to light some of the experiences of eight noncombat soldiers during the Vietnam War, as described in interviews conducted 30 years later. In addition, I have included my own experiences which inspired me to meet with other noncombat veterans to find out if there was a commonality between us. The clarity, with which each veteran remembered their experiences, 30 years later, attests to the impact these events had on their psyche. Each of the participants described situations in which the Vietnam War left an indelible mark. Each individual had a different story, with a different landscape, texture, and feel.

Soldiers have been sent to war since humankind first walked on Earth. They have paid the price for defending lands and people with their lives and souls. An anonymous statement by a World War II soldier encapsulates their experience:

There is one great fear in the heart of every serviceman and it is not that he will be killed or maimed, but that when he is finally allowed to go home and piece together what he can of life, that he will be made to feel that he has been a sucker for the sacrifices he has made. (Kulka, R., Schlenger, W., Hough, L., Jordan. K., Marmar, R., and Weiss, D., 1990, p. 290)

On August 5, 1964, the United States of America officially recognized a conflict in the country of Vietnam. Between this date and May 5, 1975, approximately 8 million soldiers served in the United States Armed Forces on active duty. Estimates range as low as 3 million soldiers to as high as 8 million. The number of dead and injured was staggering, and as many as half a million soldiers came home emotionally injured. Many studies have been published about this trauma, and numerous helping agencies have assisted these emotionally damaged soldiers. Unfortunately, a larger number of Vietnam War casualties have not been addressed in our culture. These are the individuals who fought the war from many other parts of the world, including personnel stationed all over the United States. Many of these noncombat soldiers also suffer from the effects of this war.

I had a numinous experience in a psychological based workshop I attended in Colorado Springs, Colorado. At this workshop, my interaction with the facilitator profoundly influenced the way I look at my experience during the Vietnam War, 34 years later. From this interaction, I asked myself: "Are other noncombat soldiers during the Vietnam War suffering from similar feeling and thoughts so many years later?"

I began the process by asking the following questions: "How have the medical journals addressed the experiences of hundreds of thousands or possibly millions of American soldiers who were in the military during the Vietnam War and did not go to a combat zone deal with the stresses of war? How many young people were soldiers during the late 1960s and early 1970s and never saw a buddy killed, never fired a shot at another human being, or killed an enemy soldier, or worse accidentally one of their own? How many soldiers flew into Saigon and worked in an office and never saw combat?" This paper looks into the lives of these soldiers and how this war has affected and continues to affect the lives of noncombat soldiers of the Vietnam Era.

My Story

At the age of 20, I went to the Army Recruiter and asked if I could join the Army and become a Warrant Officer flying helicopters: "No problem, just join up and go through basic training and we will put you on a list for flight school." I asked for a written "guarantee" and he laughed, "there are no guarantees in the Army because of the need for combat soldiers but , I am sure we can get you in." I enlisted in the Air Force the next day and served 3 years and 8 months in California and Goose Bay, Labrador. While in the Air Force, I volunteered for hazardous duty in Southeast Asia but never engaged in combat, nor did I go near a combat area.

After writing my Doctoral dissertation, I realized that I was holding a tremendous amount of pain for all of the young men and women who lost their lives as well as the ones who are physically maimed and emotionally destroyed today. I had carried the pain of Vietnam inside of me without consciously knowing it for over 34 years.

While stationed at Travis Air Force Base in California, I was a mechanic on B-52 bombers. These were the same

airplanes that were bombing North Vietnam throughout the war. Each day I walked out to the flight line to preflight the B-52 bomber for which I was responsible. This in itself was not a problem for my psyche. For me the war seemed distant, but I worried about another aspect of it. My airplane carried more killing power than 20 or 30 bombers dropped on Vietnam throughout the course of the war. My airplane was on alert status in case the United States needed to go to war with any of its "Communist enemies," especially the USSR. My airplane had two nuclear bombs in the bomb bay; each was capable of taking out a large city. Every day I thought about the United States going to war and my airplane dropping a nuclear bomb on a city. The higher the level of conflict in Vietnam, the more likely I felt that my airplane would take off in earnest.

Several times per month, a practice alert would take place to check the reliability of the aircraft for take-off and for deploying nuclear weapons against the United States' enemies. Sometimes at 2:00 in the morning, the Claxton would sound and all of the pilots, navigators, weapons officers, and gunnery sergeants would run from the building, not knowing whether this was finally war or just another drill. I would run with the crew and prepare the airplane to take off, never knowing if it was another test. The pilots would start the engines and I would look underneath the airplane to make sure that the bomb bay doors were clear. The two silver containers had a different impact on me during these drills than they had during morning preflight inspections.

A special cartridge was ignited to start the first of the large engines, followed by seven other engines, and then I would pull the chalks from under the wheels. Sometimes starting the engines was all that was required; sometimes the airplanes would taxi to the taxiway; but never in the year and a half I was stationed there did the airplanes actually take off. I would often stand and watch them taxi to the end of the runway, wondering if this was the real thing. The stress of the Cold War was with me for the year and a half that I was on alert status during the Vietnam War. The stress of those days and months still haunts me at times.

During my tour of duty at Travis Air Force Base, I also had direct contact with the consequences of the war. The C-141 cargo aircraft carrying the bodies of the soldiers killed in action would usually land between midnight and 2:00 a.m., when fewer people were around. Watching the black boxes come down the conveyor belt has a lasting memory that still haunts me: "Will the boxes never end? Does one of the boxes have a friend of mine inside?" These and many more thoughts continue to make me wonder, "Why did we fight this war!"

Between nuclear threats, the news each day about the war, and my own observations of the result of the war, my level of stress and trauma escalated. I had a sense of betrayal by the United States government, vicarious traumatization and concerns with public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier.

The following are eight stories from noncombat soldiers interviewed for my Doctoral dissertation completed in 2001; the level of distress was different for each person although all are attached to several common threads:

The Story of James

James was a 50-year-old male who entered the service when he was 18-year-old. He was in the Air Force 19 months during the Vietnam War. Before the war, he worked in several "high school-type jobs" and was in the Bottlers Union before volunteering to go into the military, "just an enlisted volunteer." While in the Air Force, he trained as a navigation computers specialist on nuclear-armed B-52 bombers. He was stationed at Castle Air Force Base after basis training and technical school.

Emerging Themes

Issues that appeared significant during the interview with James revolved around a sense of betrayal by the US government and his incomplete experience of being a soldier.

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. James described his view of the American government while he served as a "change in attitude from a belief and trust in the U.S. government to just complete mistrust." This change has followed him throughout his life and he describes it as, "just a switch that… as a result of that experience I came away believing that if the government says it… you can pretty well bet that it's a lie". His change of attitude first happened when the military forbid soldiers attending a speech that Richard Nixon was giving while he was stationed in Denver, Colorado, in training school. His curiosity brought him to the site of the speech; fear and anger resulting when, for the first time, "I was exposed to police force violence… coming up punching people… trying to start trouble". Thus began the many years of negative attitude toward the US government authority. He stated that he became alarmed:

The first time seeing the police armed on roof tops and feeling that I was in one of those countries that I had learned about in history books. I realized that I was surrounds by police with rifles… and then realized that the crowd had police who were infiltrators who were… who would attack people and… pretend that they weren't police but it became clear that they were policemen.

As a young man of 18, James had his first experience with the repercussions of the public's lack of support for the Vietnam War. The anger and the open aggressive attitude by demonstrators toward the civilian government were apparent to James and set in motion resentment toward the country that he served. He questioned why the U.S. was:

Intervening in a foreign country in the way that we were… I became skeptic… cynical about what we were doing in this country while I was in and then after I got out… it seemed as though the more I learned the worse it looked and the more I was opposed to it.

The incomplete experience of being a soldier. James discussed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., he calls the "Wall," and struggles with the thoughts of it: "I wonder about having missed an opportunity to experience…

an aspect of humanity that I read about from most ancient times and now there is a certain since of missed opportunity."

James discussed one aspect of being a non-combat soldier as a "wonder about combat." With his wonder about what it might be like to be in combat, the concern of his own psychological well being surfaced. He said, "there's a weird sort of envy… I have feelings of… you must be sick to… to envy this… from the safety of your distance you have romanticized something ugly." This loss continued and "I began to want to go see for myself."

James struggles with his feelings of not being in combat during Vietnam. He has talked often to his father-in-law about war from his experiences during World War II combat as, "It's weird… but I have spent… 25 years as son-in-law to a man who went off to World War II at 17 and did experience three year of combat." The stories that James has listened to from his father-in-law of "friends dying in his arms and the nearness to death that he had and the fear" have left vivid memories. He said, "maybe that's kind of envy… maybe a wishing that in some way I were… I guess more fully understand the things he says and feel more his equal." Loss of the opportunity to feel the warrior archetype is left with James and he feels, "Yeah… a loss… a missed opportunity to experience… the best and worst of being a young man."

The Story of Chris

Chris is a 50-year-old male who entered the service when he was 18-years-old. He was in the Army for two years during the Vietnam War. Before the war, he was a high school graduate. While in the Army, he trained as a medic, and he was drafted. He was primarily stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Emerging Themes

As an Army medic, Chris experienced a greater exposure to the war than most noncombat soldiers. Therefore, he more clearly described issues of emotional pain, a sense of betrayal by the United States government, public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier, and survivor guilt.

Vicarious traumatization. Chris discussed some of the stresses and traumas he experienced while serving in the U.S. by direct contact with Vietnam combat soldiers. He stated: "About every six to eight weeks we would have a C-141 come in at the air base… and you would get people with horrible injuries but they were also heroin addict or addicted to some other illicit drug."

Chris described another type of trauma that he was subjected to during his Army service:

The occasional soldier that would die in flight… that was just a gruesome reality of… these Vietnamese were intending to kill, and it just took a little while for some of them and they achieved their objective; and to have that in my hands was kind of tough.

Chris went into the army as a conscientious objector. He realized before entering the military that conscientious objectors were normally trained as medics, and he knew this would not keep him from being involved in combat. As a medic, he learned some important messages about combat: "I started to talk to people who had been in combat, and began to understand that on the battle field, the laws of physics trump the laws of theology."

Chris received vicarious trauma through the stories he heard from medics who had been in combat. He related a story told him by a combat medic:

Curtis was on an APC… he used to ride up on the outside of the APC… kept his M16 with him and was not afraid to kill Vietnamese. Even Vietnamese civilians, females, children, it doesn't matter… you tell them in Vietnamese stay away, if they approached, you just shot them… you didn't mess around with them because half the time, easily 50% of the time, we were told anyway… they would have trip wires, hand grenades and all that sort of stuff and they would even put them in their babies clothing and stuff like that, just trying to take out as many GI's as they could and so that was a whole paradigm that they lived

Chris discussed several of the stories about combat for medics he heard while in medical school that confirmed his feelings of how terrifying and dangerous combat was. He described what he was told it was like at be a medic in Vietnam:

We were told in medical school… that when you're on patrol… you're the medic assigned… they would look for the guy with two bags… the guy with the two bags has the psychological health of the entire group in his hands and the Vietnamese knew that because if you take out the medic then the guys can't even fix themselves, they all die… and this is a guy that knows every secret about you, you confide in him… he was gold… he was highly thought of and the Vietnamese knew that, so they could psychologically demoralize the unit by taking out the medic.

The stories have had a negative influence on Chris and his eyes welled up with tears when he told of the atrocities of war. Even though he had not witnessed the event, he still has sorrow and anger toward a war he never fought in.

Chris still feels the pain to the Vietnam War "I came to know, not the horror of war, but the price." He also learned to understand the meaning of loss in "the psychological price that they [combat soldiers] had to pay, because there is a different psychology to gearing yourself up to be able to take human life." Chris discussed how ending a life is difficult when you are 'socialized as a child all the way up to adulthood, to… that life is precious… to be able to go into that environment and come back into a life is precious, that had to be weird."

Public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier. The demonstrations and the protest against the military while he was in the army during Vietnam bothered him then and continues to bother him today.

The people that were doing a lot of those protests were the same age as me and… if we got Americans that are dying, somewhere, that to fail to support those guys, whether they are there for the right reasons or not… was unconscionable to me.

He found the best way to deal with his feelings was "to be part of the solution. It's real easy to sit on the sidelines and bitch about something; it's real hard to do something, especially put it on the line yourself and commit to it yourself." One of the most difficult parts of the protests for Chris came

from those that who were "spitting on Vietnam veterans that were returning."

Sense of Betrayal by the United States Government. Chris talked about his concern for the Cold War and nuclear threat during the Vietnam War. "I thought it was real. Global annihilation is certainly within our means today. I thought it was real." Since the end of the Cold War, Chris realizes that "now that we are finding out more and more about the Soviet Union was just a… they are 40 to 50 years technology-wise, behind us… their economy is trash." He still has concerns about the potential for nuclear war: "I hope that they don't sell their nuclear weapons to the highest bidder just to make money, short-term. But I came to distrust the Soviet government and from that I… I sense a threat."

Survivor Guilt. One of the reason that Chris did not go to Vietnam as a combat medic was that "I had two brothers in-country in Vietnam… one was on the aircraft carrier Coral Sea… my other brother was on river boats on the Saigon River." Chris believes that due to the Sullivan Act he could not be sent to combat, and this resulted in his staying in the United States. Chris has struggled with the fact that he had another brother who is not in the military. He discussed this situation with his superiors, and "for some reason they decided not to send me." Guilt has become a factor in not going to Vietnam because of an error by his superiors.

The incomplete experience of being a soldier. Chris struggled with the fact that he was not in combat. He did well as a medic in the army but that it was difficult when he was helping soldiers who had returned home from combat. He stated:

I tried to give them the best I had to give but there was a division between those who went and those who didn't and I kind of had the feeling I never fit that group. If you were there you're in a special club and if you weren't you're not in the club.

Finally, Chris talked about one of the largest changes that resulted from his time in the Army. "I lost a lot of innocents during that period of time. I grew up. I learned what death was. I learned the physical carnage of the human body… how it can be taken apart … I lost a lot of my innocence."

The Story of Edward

Edward is a 49-year-old male who entered the service when he was 19-years-old. He was in the Navy for three years between 1969 and 1971 and re-enlisted for a second 10-year active/reserve tour from 1983 to 1992. Before the war, he was an embalmer at a local funeral home in Indiana and did a few post high school jobs before going to college. While in the Navy he was a Navy corpsmen and decedent officer with advanced training as a combat corpsman. He was stationed at numerous naval hospitals throughout the United States.

Emerging Themes

As a corpsman during the Vietnam War, Edward experienced severe vicarious trauma, which was then aggravated, by subsequent experiences. He additionally reported on the incomplete experience of being a soldier, as well as his disappointment with the government, lack of public support, and survivor guilt.

Vicarious traumatization. Edward talked about the shock he received when he entered the military service from a small farming community in Indiana. He commented that he had witness death and dying before entering the service, yet he was not prepared for the enormous shock of the Vietnam War:

I was not in combat but I was in on the tail end of Vietnam where I actually did do treatment with Vietnam Vets, subsequently what happened was the reality of death and the finality of death and dismemberment and total disability impairment have had a profound effect on me in those early year.

His reality continued to crystallize around the death of soldiers due to war, and he said, "I'd never realized once you're dead, you're dead… a mine blows up and dismembers you, you're dead or you are maimed you're… the rest of your life is affected. So it was a substantial shock to see… this is a war." He continued to discuss his feelings on seeing other men leave for war. "They'd go intact, young and my age or a year younger, and would come back 4 days later, dismembered or deceased or 'bagged and tagged.'"

Edward re-enlisted in the early 1980's and had his second opportunity to witness the death and carnage of war in two separate incidents that resulted in the loss of American soldiers. The first was the bombing in Beirut. "I dealt with the Beirut bombing in 1983, were we lost 326 Marines in Beirut to a suicide bombing." The second incident that he was exposed to was the Challenger disaster, where he was "mobilized as a Navy corpsmen and counselor because by that time I had crossed over into command council, which means we were basically a low-grade mental health provider to the spaceship challenger in 1986…January '86." Both of these incident effected Edward in a deep emotional way but not the same way the Vietnam War had:

Those two were larger; they weren't casualty oriented to war but they were larger in scope, but they had less impact than Vietnam had… show me 326 corpses… now that's the most bizarre thing I've ever seen and nightmares still ensue but it still wasn't the same as an active… the act of war.

Edward remembered what it felt like to witness sailors going off to war happy and, "they would come back… they would look older even though they had been gone only 1 year… to me they looked 5 years older."

Vicarious traumatization from the Vietnam War became apparent to Edward when he went to Nicaragua. While there, he noticed circumstances that he envisioned must have been comparable to those of the Vietnam War:

I had a resurgence or I would say a recall… that 'oh my gosh' this smells, tastes, feels like a Vietnam scenario, we have high humidity, we have all of these components that go along with it and the geographical feelings of all of that.

So, I would say that there was some recall from the Vietnam theory… you get the sense of death again.

Edward became emotional when he discussed the feelings he still has after almost 30 years has lapsed since his noncombat experience of Vietnam. He said that it was difficult for him to understand, "how you could take human body… whew… how you can take the human body of the 18 or 19-year-old young man… when you can see this together mind, and a year later he has no arm, no eye, or no leg." His experience of the trauma becomes more pronounced when he goes to his hometown in Indiana and goes past the local cemetery: "You could not believe that the guy you were in history class with two years ago is buried there because someone shot him, in a land he didn't know."

Edward is haunted by nightmares of the Vietnam War that bring him back to the horrors of treating the wounded soldiers. "So those were nightmares, I would have nightmares that I had body parts missing… that I would look down and wouldn't have a hand." Although the nightmares have lessened over the years they follow the same theme: "I still have nightmares, not very frequently… but they have to deal with missing body parts; blood doesn't bother me, but missing body parts do. As I'm 49 and will be 50 in another 4 weeks, and I still have these nightmares."

The effect of the war on Edward was severe and traumatic. Because he only observed the carnage of those retuning from war, he was left with a lack of firsthand knowledge about combat, yet the sense of horror is nevertheless indelible. "I was a deputy coroner at the age 25 [when] I'd go off to wreck sites… I would have flashbacks then of what the scene must have looked like in Vietnam." He gave a vivid example of how deeply it affected him. "One time I remember the body was in house [although I thought]… 'so this must be what napalm looks like.'"

Edward suffered vicarious trauma when he attended the returning military personnel as a Navy corpsmen. These responsibilities did not end with the injured but continued with the dead. For example:

I would see a guy coming from CBTZ, the combat zone hospital to the secondary and he's bandaged just enough to keep him from bleeding to death and then we would suture and we would do whatever we needed to do, if he didn't make it then I was the decedent affairs guy, who would do everything.

As a decedent officer, he had many duties that were directly stressful: "I have actually drilled caskets for burial at sea, which is an interesting thing… 12 holes, 5/8 inch in diameter, in the bottom." When Edward returned to civilian life after Vietnam, he had questions about the American people's attitudes toward the war. He was "astonished that people who were still asking the question, 'why are we here'… 'I don't understand' and it was said under the breath because otherwise it was a non-patriotic venue."

The issues regarding the Vietnam War became evident at his home in Indiana. He feels the trauma and stress when he goes back to his hometown and finds "friends who actually were in combat. When I go back there, these people are still maimed and they are 50-year-old maimed people for life who have been, before they hit the age of 21 some of them." What this means to Edward this manifests in "resentment, anger and irritability about that."

The incomplete experience of being a soldier. Before Edward entered in the military, he had a high opinion of what being in the military would be like. "I looked at the military as in ego builder, I was kinda really proud to be in the military, because it brought me some notoriety and solidified my position." This attitude changed when he came home from the Navy and heard from former World War II veterans that "well, it wasn't like the big war; it wasn't like World War II." He began to notice that people regarded military personnel in a different light than he had idealized before his enlistment. "I noticed that people weren't really impressed with Vietnam, so the residents, especially the World War II veterans, would belittle the efforts of Vietnam."

Edward related his thoughts about not going to combat in Vietnam: "I think there was a mystique that happened to a lot people who would see… had not gone over yet… we felt like there was a missing piece and we were not entitled to it." He is still struggling with the feeling of loss and emotional confusion about not serving in combat.

Edward discussed a resentment that he felt toward another group of noncombat soldiers: "There was always a group in there who became a misfit in military, who would actually fabricate that they had been there, who hadn't been there." He recalled an example of the group, a high school friend he met in college during his first year who had previously injured his leg participating in sports at his high school:

He showed up for the first day of his freshman year walking with a cane, and for purposes of attention he told some of the girls that he was injured in Vietnam… until a couple of real vets found him and the kid was beaten beyond a reasonable… he was beaten to a pulp. This kid had never gone… he tried to bleed off the heroics of being a Vietnam vet for the sake of attention.

Edward believes that this rue by his high school acquaintance has caused psychological damage to Vietnam vets. "I think it actually did a secondary wounding or reinjured them because it diluted their heritage. The only thing I remembered about him was how he cheated so many veterans."

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. The political strife in the United States during the Vietnam War troubled Edward throughout his military service. He came from a family of men who served in uniform beginning with his father and included many uncles, "and it was considered the antithesis to patriotism if you did not support any war effort on the behalf of the United States." He went along with this family tradition but became disillusioned later in his life because "it [the Vietnam War] did not resemble any other war I had read about where we had a clear-cut protection of our domain and people."

Edward has a resentment about the Vietnam War as a result of research he has done the last several years. Based on an article written by a Vietnam Buddhist monk, he believes the war could have been stopped. He said that this monk told the United States official, "if you'll sit down with me around

the table and eat with me and listen to me, we can resolve these issues." He said he believed that if the American government had listened to this man, "we probably wouldn't have been involved in Vietnam, and so I often think of the… if the words of one man using a logical rational approach could've resolved the differences."

The Cold War and possible nuclear threat troubled Edward during the days of the war: "I find a lot of frustration in the escalation and the fear of nuclear war. I mean, I firmly felt that I would see a nuclear war, I thought I'd see the mushroom cloud one day." This fear became more evident recently, after his father's death.

My father viewed the explosion at Hiroshima. I brought home his Navy military records that actually have a photograph of Enole Gay, and I have a photograph of exposure to Hiroshima that was taken by a pilot for him; and I remember now seeing that as a kid before I went into the military thinking how cool it was, and that became my greatest terror in my 20s.

Edward felt anger toward the system that denied a prestigious combat medal to Navy personnel that had been used as Marines in Vietnam.

I remember there was another one were you had been actually in combat… you had to be either in the Army or the Marine Corps to get it… I would cross pass with people that felt jolted because they did not have the ground forces medal, because "were you really in there."

Public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier. This stigma of being in the military during the Vietnam War continued to followed Edward even after his initial tour of duty. He said:

You would talk to some of the new people coming in and they would find out you were, at least… you may not have been a Vietnam vet but you were a Vietnam-era participate in the military; you may have had some kind of exposure to it, and lots of times there was this sullen, I think it was almost like an eye rolling mentality like… "okay, know I'm going to hear about the Vietnam stuff."

Negative feedback also influenced Edward's opinion of those who came into the military after him: The younger military did not know how to process it, because I think there was a thought disturbance about Vietnam." He felt that the younger military personnel considered all Vietnam-era veterans: "crazy; everyone over there that went to Vietnam became mentally disturbed; it was a wasted war so therefore it diluted the effect of this… of those of us who served in some way, shape, or form."

Survivor Guilt. Guilt and confusion were evident when Edward talked about not serving in combat during the war. He said,"I keep going back to the word cheated, but I felt cheated, that I didn't see… I wanted to see the completion. It was that gap that tore me up." Edward continued:

I saw a dichotomy of emotions; one was "thank God I'm not over there" as opposed to the other group of people who would say, "I feel slighted to a degree because I'm not participating"; there seemed to be to clear-cut groups.

To go or not to go was a dilemma that Edward struggled with during his first tour in the Navy. He said that he and many others had difficulty understanding combat. "I saw a lot of people having conflicts with what was actually going on there… 'I'm seeing what is happening but I'm not seeing it visibly, therefore I can't comprehend it.'" He discussed his belief that it was difficult to live with the conflict of "well you weren't there" and well, I wanted to be there."

Guilt was a component of his feelings both during and after his first Vietnam-era tour. He acknowledged, "you'd feel guilty for not having taken… been under fire… although in your heart you knew you sure as hell didn't want to be." This pull of emotions was very basic for Edward: survival versus honor and experience.

In his practice as a therapist dealing with accident traumas/the aftermath of Vets, he observed:

They're still wearing their military jacket, which is full of moth holes, and they will not depart from it. They can't migrate out of that, and what I keep seeing is they weren't the ones who were actually in the trenches, and… they're reliving this thing as if "I wish I had been in the trenches; I feel cheated because I'm a Vietnam vet that didn't experience yet I didn't want to. So I think there's this ongoing turmoil of: what was I?" I don't think there's a strong identity in Vietnam.

Edward has compassion for those that served during the war as secondary forces but did not serve in combat. He talked about his thoughts that many noncombat vets, "feel incomplete." "There were those who had a purple heart and there are some people… see guys in my units who would say 'look, that guys got a purple heart'… it's like, I wish I had one, because there was nothing." Edward believes that the noncombat had to live with the thought of confusion in his identity during this war. "We got the National Defense Medal for serving in Vietnam but some people never left Luzon, the Philippines, or whatever but yet they were support forces. There was a dichotomy of lack of identification of what really was."

Finally, Edward summed up a noncombat soldier's story thoughts about his participation in the war: "As a deputy coroner, nothing ever bothered me and I saw more gore in real time as a coroner than Vietnam, but the stigma of Vietnam effected me."

The Story of Harold: Emerging Themes

Throughout the interview, Harold returned often to his feelings of being betrayed by his country. In addition, he discussed his vicarious traumatization and the continual impact on his life.

Harold is a 56-year-old male who entered the service when he was 25 years old. He was in the Air Force for 3 3/4 years during the Vietnam War. Before the war, he was a petroleum geologist and volunteered for military service. While in the Air Force, he trained as a weather observer. He was stationed in Sacramento after basic training and technical school.

Sense of betrayal by the United Stated government. Harold did not follow the prescribed political ideology that was

suggested by military personnel during the Vietnam War. He said "I campaigned for McGovern, which… I wasn't supposed to do." He was unhappy with the US government at that time, especially the president. Several times he stated his dislike: "I was ticked off at what Nixon was doing and then forgot about it."

His current opinion of the Vietnam War is that "it's real stupid; it was a bad decision… I kinda go through this whole thing about… what [Johnson] could've done and done different."

He discussed the fact that he felt angry with the government not only for the war itself, but also that he was underemployed for those 3 3/4 years and that the war has changed him. He said, "… friends of mine tell me before Vietnam or before I went in, that I was a hawk… I would vacillate… should we support it or not." He talked about his concerns with the war before going into the service, how he had considered leaving the United States for Canada to avoid the draft before he was able to enlist in the Air Force. He decided, "That's a bad idea… sacrificing whatever was in the future."

Harold's feelings about the Cold War or nuclear threat were that the government was involved for the right reasons, although this attitude has changed in looking back since he left the military. He said, "I think the threat was probably there." Today, Harold feels that his past fear of the Russians may have been inflated. He had a conversation with a friend who had been to Russia after the Cold War ended and the opening of tourism from the United States. He said, "a friend of mine went to Russia right when it opened and he couldn't even get hot water… it sticks with me, 'we were afraid these people.'"

Harold sense of betrayal extended to his father, who in his opinion sold out to the government. Harold discussed how he and his father had argued often about the Vietnam War: "my dad and I used to… we had some… he was a good old… 'do anything the government says' and we had some terrible flights… we don't talk about it anymore, we just can't do it." The war continued until he finally had to say 'enough', even with his own father. The differences between a war that is supported by a nation and one that is not can cause irreconcilable divisions that can damage a family.

Vicarious traumatization. Harold talked about how the Vietnam War affected people in his life. As an example, he stated, "I had a friend of mine that probably died because he…he had been wounded several times and had shrapnel in his head." Likewise, he visited a hospital in the Air Force to see one of his best friends from college, who had been wounded in combat during the war. He described the experience of listening to his friend tell the story of "one of those deals trying to take a hill…he was one of the few people that was alive." Seeing his friend seriously wounded has continued as a vivid memory for more than 30 years. He talked about not having be in combat during Vietnam and how he is grateful that he did not have to experience what so many others did. However, he stated, "believe me, I don't feel guilty about not going over there."

Harold discussed a recent incident that brought up some of the concerns that are still haunting him from his experiences during the Vietnam War. He said that he was having a conversation with a friend about the Gulf War. H. said that he was having a conversation about the Gulf War and how he, "really ticked me off and it was… I just tore him up one side and down the other… I mean I just tore in." He believes that this exaggerated reaction came from the hidden feelings dating back to the Vietnam War. He said, "it was kinda one of those things of stepping out of yourself and looking… looking and saying, 'is that me'… yeah… it goes back to Vietnam."

The Story of Robert

Robert is a 50-year-old male who entered the service when he was 22 years old. He was in the Air Force for 20 years, one month and a few days, then retired at the rank of major. Before the war, he was attending Ohio State University where he was involved in the ROTC program and made a commitment to the Air Force in exchange for a commission and a scholarship. While he was in the Air Force, in exchange for a commission and a scholarship. While in the Air Force he had a variety of career training areas. The first year he was trained in radar detection and was stationed at a radar site used to detect ballistic missiles against the United States. During the last years of the Vietnam War, he was stationed in Thailand.

Emerging Themes

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. As an officer in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, Robert had concerns about our involvement in a war that "did not have any real concrete goals and we were, in my mind, just riding out capabilities. In a situation where we are not trained in fighting a guerrilla war and attempted to do that." He continued, "It puts too much strain on us as a group of people who have been invited into a situation that is basically a civil war." Robert displayed concern about our involvement in the civil war in Vietnam and now in other countries such as Bosnia. He said, "We didn't, in the U.S. during our Civil War… did not want, desire or have interference by foreign military's coming into that war."

When Robert talked about the Cold War or the possibility of nuclear war, he remembered the lessons learned when the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Japan during World War II. He mentioned his horror of that incident: "To believe that someone would actually send a nuclear warhead over some area as we did in Japan… I know it still scares me… the Cold War, the nuclear threat is still there."

Robert's father served in the Navy during World War II, and Robert stated that desire to serve his country. His father's military service made it difficult for him to not support the war in Vietnam. Robert still believes in the U.S.: "I have a belief of defending the homeland; it is very strong within me." One of the reasons that Robert felt differently about the Vietnam War than his father was that it was "understood by a few people, but was not well understood by the masses." His understanding that the war was unpopular and not supported by the masses in this country weakened his patriotic bond during the Vietnam War.

Robert believed that United States military was not pre-

pared to fight this type of war as they had fought other wars in the past. He stated," It was a war that we, the U.S., were not trained to handle; it was a learning curve there and that… that the cost of life is… is not good."

Vicarious traumatization. Having served in Thailand in 1973 and 1974, Robert described the stresses and trauma of being stationed in a country protected by the United States, a country close to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. His concerns for the local people of Thailand brought about an apprehension for their safety: "Even the limited touch of that war onto the Thailand people, particularly where I was, in northern Thailand, it was something that people should not have to live under… that kind of feeling, under that kind of stress."

Robert discussed the tension caused by the heightened security from the Thailand National Guard that protected the U.S. base where he was stationed. This tension added stress and trauma to his everyday life: "We had Thailand National Guards that were… guards on the perimeter of the base… it was a presence and a security presence that I had not been familiar with previously." The need to protect classified information resulted in extreme stress while he was in Thailand. Every day he faced the potential of enemy "encroachment beyond the perimeter of the gate… there on the base." Even more disturbing to Robert was the knowledge that "an enlisted individual in the U.S. military… did have the right to pull a gun on me and kill if necessary." The threat of an American soldier being able to kill him for the security of classified material rested heavily on him. Robert and his fellow officers were constantly observed by military security personnel, and all of his movements were watched for fear he may allow a secret to leave the base. This stress became more real when the U.S. military would have exercises on handling a security breach: "You… prayed to God that you would not have to ever get to that type situation."

Robert spoke about how the war was publicized through the news media and how difficult it was to "see on TV the bodies that were coming back." At one point he listened to audiotapes of combat communications during the last 2 years of the war. He described what it was like to listen to live combat:

There was a lot of enthusiasm and anxiety too that was there, and then there were times where the tape would cut out… and you knew at that point in time that something that happened… that may be life-threatening, if not was life-threatening.

Today Robert still feels the effects of the Vietnam War on how he is "careful as far as where I walk… I notice at times with my wife… from making sure things are secured and maybe more than somebody else does, I don't know for sure." He goes on to say that, "… then to see what was going on in Vietnam, think about war situations, think about fighting in general… I think it puts you more on a cautious edge than what you might otherwise."

Public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier. Robert began the interview by talking about numerous negative experiences that he had while he was in the ROTC at Ohio State University. He talked about the Ohio State National Guard using teargas against antiwar protestors, commenting, "that was an interesting timeframe being up there… at Ohio State University." He discussed what it was like to wear a military uniform around campus with the student riots going on: "You can imagine the feedback that we would get." Robert expressed that it became so bad that, "we did not have parades outside… if you are outside, in the uniform, even a fenced area, you had eggs, bricks, whenever, being thrown at you." He mentioned how he and his friends would listen to police band radios that "described what was going on just not that far away, still on campus… of the riots and the effects of the riots and sorority and fraternity areas." Additionally, described what it was like to go to class after the National Guard soldiers would use teargas:

You would end up going to class during the day time frame and teargas was rampant all over campus, and especially when you'd try to be in class you would have teargas in the ducts, they were being pushed throughout the classes, and you'd be sitting in classes trying to write and listen with… with teargas in your eyes."

Robert sums up his thoughts about the influence of the Vietnam War on him:

Yes, there definitely was an impact here in the U.S. in hearing about and seeing activities going on and wanting to ask a question why, "why are we involved at the level that we are for such a long period of time," because the Vietnam War was over a long period of time."

The story of William

William is a 51-year-old male who entered the service when he was 19 years old, and he was drafted. He was in the Army for over 20 years and retired as a Warrant Officer. Before the war, he graduated from high school and did odd jobs for the year before he entered military service. While in the Army, he received training as a clerk and a combat engineer. He was stationed in Germany, Korea, and the United States during his 20 years in uniform.

Emerging Themes

William expressed his concerns with the betrayal of his government, which succumbed to public opinion against the military. He also described instances of vicarious traumatization and attacks by civilians when he was in uniform.

Public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier. William began the interview by discussing the difficulty he encountered when he traveled in uniform in the United States. He said, "when I got off the plane… there were some nasty comments made by people in the airport… the 'baby killers' and all that… the way that you were treated."

He recalled "experiences here in this country with people going through the airports…and you always ran into that person that just wanted to run you done because you were in the service… 'they're scum bags because they're over there killing babies." This stress did not end with the public, but continued when he was home. "The times I was home on leave, I had people that I was around and they knew I was in

the service, and 'how can you do that, and what are you guys doing over there?'"

He also recounted other times that he was traveling away from South East Asia and did not received negative comments due to different circumstances: "I was in civilian clothes and you had your hair cut so people knew, but you were going the other direction so that kind of made it okay, and by the time my tour in Germany was over, Vietnam was over."

Even with these circumstances, he was quick to mention that he knew when to wear his uniform and when not to: "You went to the civilian side of the airport and somewhere in between you changed clothes… just as a matter of course because you just didn't want to wear the uniform at the time."

William was frustrated because the Army and Marines received most of the negative thought and criticism from the civilian population. He stated that such criticism was directed at "the Army and Marines particularity, because they were the lance holders, they were the ones killing the babies, bombing the villages and massacring the people and all the other things."

He commented that the other branches of the military forces received less scrutiny, which he believed was because the "Navy was out at sea sending planes over and the Air Force was in Thailand, they weren't in Vietnam."

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. One of the major stresses that William mentioned about the Vietnam War was the negative consequence of the American People's dislike for the military. He said this negative opinion lasted for "about an 8-year period… Army, the armed services were really in disarray; it was such a bad thing to be in the service… we pulled ourselves down, we really did, we weren't the pride of the country." William cited a specific problem he saw: "We had guys that probably shouldn't have been on the streets, much less in uniform." Another aspect was the drug use by the military personnel after Vietnam:

Drug use was rampant… I mean we had cases where there was so much drug use going on that they literally took the doors off of soldiers' rooms so that you didn't have to bust the door down to get in, and you could always monitor what was going on those rooms.

William felt distress over the way the United States fought the war in Vietnam. He said he believed that the military "was all political from the reaction to the fact that we were even in Vietnam at all and the way that we fought or didn't fight, the war and the fact that we really didn't have any stated mission." He discussed some of the restriction that were placed on the military and the frustration those engendered: "You can't fire on unless you are fired upon, and you can't use any weapons larger than this caliber because they don't really have those." His anger toward this limited type of war brought up the sentiment that "well, what the hell is fair about war? The objective is to win; it's not to just be there, and so basically… I mean a lot of guys were just put over there as targets."

William described little concern with the Cold War and nuclear threat. "The threat to use it was almost empty from the beginning, the fact that both sides had it…other than the standoff in Cuba. He sees greater threat from "accidental launchings. I've been in a special weapons unit…I've seen people in charge of the triggers that I wouldn't want in charge of a pop gun, much less a 20 mega ton warhead."

Before being drafted, he considered the possibility of going to Canada to avoid the draft but said, "you either go to Canada or you refuse to go and go to jail or you go in the Army and do what you can to survive." Nevertheless, William reenlisted after his first tour as a draftee and became a member of the regular Army.

Vicarious traumatization. William talked about the trauma of listening to stories about the war from other military personnel. One story he told was about severe trauma that a combat soldier suffered in Vietnam:

A guy that I served with my first time in Korea… had been in Vietnam 2 or 3 years previous to when I met him and he had been a fairly successful soldier… his camp was overrun one night. One of the North Vietnamese came into the area where he was, he had just woken up…a guy comes up and puts a .45…a French .45 to his head and pulls the trigger three times and the bullets never go off.

William observed, "he doesn't die but he is never the same after that… he was a mess, he was really a mess… he had been in and out of psychiatric ward in Japan." This story has remained with him though his military career into the present. He also described the negative impact he has received from listening to other combat soldiers: "I had other guys that I served with that… not quite as stable as you would look for just because of their experiences. People that loud noises would cause them to jump and twitch and duck and everything."

The story of George

George is a 56-year-old male who entered the service when he was 24 years old. He was in the Army for 2 years during the Vietnam War. Before the war, he was a production manager at a publishing office. While in the Army, he was trained as a Chaplin's assistant. He was stationed primarily at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

Emerging Themes

George's main concern about the Vietnam War was the useless physical and emotional injuries to combat veterans, which translated into feelings of betrayal by the government. Additionally, he discussed vicarious traumatization, public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier, and survivor guilt.

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. George demonstrated his anger at the Vietnam War: "It was a senseless, useless, un-purposeful… waste of human lives and limbs and minds." His distress at the way the military was limited in the ability to fight was evident in his statement that there is no such thing as limited warfare, and that's what the term was. In a war you either win or lose, and if you limit yourself, it seems to me like you're going to lose, and that's what we did."

George recognized the stress and trauma when he interacted with people "coming back from Vietnam who were so emotionally fouled up. The alcohol and drug abuse these people had used as an escape, that was sobering and

disappointing, so it was hard not to get a bit cynical about it." The more George talked about the war, the angrier he became. For example, he commented:

From that perspective, to see the toll it took on the lives of the guys that were there...the direct toll that it took…a lot of them survived and seem to be fine, but there are many others that were... I mean, it was pathetic because you wonder what's going to happened to them, where their life was going to go from here. Because there were some of these guys that were just... they were in there 20's and they were complete alcoholics… their life was a total mess... what's going on... what's the future hold for these people. They were already emotional cripples.

He also mentioned seeing "the horrors of it there in our living room in the TV news every night," and this invasion of his home life was distressing.

George was angry at the political maneuverings that he observed while serving: "It was a war that seemed to be fought for political reasons that had no national interest tied to it. So the cynicism that was there... as a result of that was like 'I'm here I'll do my thing.'"

His choices were limited and he asked himself, "Why should you go over there and wade through a rice paddy and risk your life for a reason that doesn't seem clear?"

George first experienced the shock of being in the military when he was drafted and experienced the differences in cultures among other personnel. "I graduated from this Christian college and I was in this insulated environment. There was a dramatic culture shock." This culture shock caused real discord: "I remember one night getting kind of fed up with one and kind of unplugged this stereo system that was going full blast... the guy that owned it didn't go for that the I kinda got thrown across the room."

Vicarious traumatization. The stories of trauma haunt George even after 30 years of being home from the military. He related a story from a combat veteran about the craziness of war in Vietnam:

I recall one guy saying that he was in a company... he would see more than one kinda lose it and go berserk. I remember one guy who basically painted a white target on his shirt and started running out toward the Vietcong.

The effect of this story on George has left a permanent memory that "painted a vivid picture for me from his talking about that."

Survivor guilt. George not only heard the stories from combat soldiers he worked with, but also at home from his brother. "He was in the Air Force and he was over there. While I was here he was there." Whatever feelings run below "while I was here he was there," George kept hidden inside of himself. He believed that his brother was not in combat, except for "once in a while there would be a sniper shots."

The Vietnam War Memorial has had a powerful effect on George. "How really reverent and sobering that was... a guy who was a high school classmate or year behind me that had been a neighbor and I remember looking up his name on the wall." George knows that he was safe, not having to go to Vietnam, and may feel some guilt that other besides himself fought in hi place. In sharing his thought about "the Wall" he stated

By the grace of God… there would, I would've been there too… it is an emotional experience being there… it really is because these guys gave their life… they gave their lives in good faith. By and large, it was an honorable thing that was not really recognized at the time; it's more honored now, far more than it was then.

Public attacks resulting from the symbol of the soldier. George was effected by the Vietnam War and the public view when he would hitchhike in uniform. "Before that war you have on a uniform guaranteed you a ride but it didn't... there was a difference... it took a lot longer to get a ride in uniform. George has a high level of patriotism and is still proud that he served. "I wore a uniform with pride... I really felt like I did... I wasn't ashamed to do that when I was off base or if I was on leave." Even with his pride and feelings of patriotism, "I also didn't hesitate to take it off...but I knew that there were places I wasn't going to generate the pride that I had when I was a kid." He reflected back to his admiration of veterans who returned home from prior wars: "When you saw somebody come home from the military... they'd wear the uniform for a month after they were out of the Army. I haven't had mine on since the day I got home or got out."

The Story of Adam.

Adam is a 54-year-old male who entered the service when he was 22 years old. He was in the Army for 2 years during the Vietnam War. Before the war, he worked as a computer operator after completing college. He was drafted and spent all of his time in Berlin, Germany after training as an infantry soldier.

Emerging Themes

Adam experienced anticipatory fear due to the uncertainty of his position in the military, as well as his mistrust of the government. He also expressed strong feelings with regard to vicarious traumatization and the incomplete experience of being a soldier.

Sense of betrayal by the United States Government. Adam struggled with the military when he had to decide between continuing on after Officer Candidate School (OCS) or just being drafted in the Army. He spent a lot of time weighing the pros and cons of being an officer, and finally decided, "if you went through office candidates school… you would have had to give them 3 [three] as a lieutenant, which would have meant staying 2 years more beyond if you would have stayed a private." He eventually dropped out of OCS after learning that the only training spots left were infantry or artillery. His choice began clear with the realization that:

We would have to become either an infantry officer or a artillery officer, which basically negated one of the reasons we went to Officer Candidates School. So that was a very difficult time, because we realized at that point that, being infantry trained, we would more likely end up being either a

private in Vietnam or Lieutenant in Vietnam.

The nation's political atmosphere due to the Vietnam War was reflected in Adam's position against the war. "We didn't have really good positive feelings; one about the military in general, two about the war in specific."

Anticipatory fear. The Vietnam War became a high stressor between Adam's choice not to continue in OCS and his assignment after infantry school. That was a pretty difficult time because we knew we would be getting orders within about two weeks… we figure, 'well, let's see what happens; well, we might as well get stoned and see what happens… to dull the pain.'" Adam and his company got a reprieve from combat when they were assigned to Berlin, Germany instead of Vietnam.

However, Adam had weathered this storm and moved on to Berlin just in time to find out that a number of soldiers from his unit were being shipped to Vietnam:

We were informed that just because you are here, doesn't mean you're staying here. "They were sending down orders every month to ship infantry soldiers to Vietnam and so we basically… you were there going 'ah shit'… I could still end up going to Vietnam.

Again, the stress of not knowing was with Adam He remembered that his highest concern was the amount of time until he felt sure he was not going to Vietnam. "I pretty much had to survive the next 5 to 6 months, and then we were pretty well assured that we weren't going anywhere." Adam described how the waiting felt:

I guess I was a little frightened because here I was going into a regular Army unit; the other stuff was kinda like going to school, being in the Army and going to school, in a sense, and doing Army stuff but still you weren't in the real Army, so to speak. Here you are now in a regular army unit with the possibility of being shipped to a combat situation and it was a little frightening, and yet… you felt good in the fact you weren't in Vietnam.

Drug use became a way for Adam to deal with the stress of not knowing about his fait; he said, "I got linked up with an interesting group of guys who…smoking dope all of the time, and that was our way of coping. So we were our own little support group, helped on by some excellent, excellent drugs." With drugs, Adam could self-medicate his fears and anxiety, which continued throughout his time in the military.

Vicarious traumatization. Additionally, Adam dealt with the stress of watching his friends being shipped over to Vietnam. "It was very, very difficult to see your friends go… and that was pretty traumatic, especially when people you got close to ended up packing up and having to go." He mentioned concern for one individual in particular and how 30 years later he:

Managed to visit the Vietnam Memorial, I went to look up his name in hopes to not find it, and I was very gratified not to find it. So that impacted me for quite a long period of time… not knowing whether he was dead or alive.

One of Adam's most traumatic experiences occurred after the war. Back in New York, Adam met a friend, and inn the course of the conversation asked about his younger brother. "His brother was killed in Vietnam. It really shook me up." At this point of the interview, Adam began to sob and was unable to talk for several minutes. The thought of the loss of a friend's younger brother still affects him even today. To deal with this trauma, Adam said: by:

I go to the Vietnam Memorial every year, and ever since he told me that, I've been looking up his name on the wall and just kind of going there. I go to the Memorial every year when I go to D.C.; it's part of me; it's part of my life.

The Vietnam War has had numerous effects of Adam. He summarized his feelings with these words: "I think it is the entire weight of that period of time, and how it impacted us at the time and even late."

With regard to the Cold War, Adam felt especially vulnerable being stationed in Berlin. "We had a lot of thought about the escalation. The first was that we were one of the lines of defense of the Cold War in Berlin." As an infantry soldier, his duties included protecting the American assets in Germany. He learned that if the Berlin wall was breached, his job was "to provide about 30 minute or an hour of time for things to happen at very high levels… to get ambassadors and high-ranking military people out of Berlin or to burn documents or whenever." Protecting Americans was a job that Adam was prepared for, but "we were there to provide protection for the short run so that the government and the military could do whatever they needed to do to get out of Berlin and then we'd be dead." This knowledge reinforced Adam's fear about the cold War and he lived with this threat on a daily basis. With the Russian invaded Czechoslovakia, "it was kinda like, uh-oh, here we managed to avoid Vietnam and now were feeling like Custer surrounded by the Indians."

The incomplete experience of being a soldier. In addition to the stress of being in the military at a time when U.S. public opinion was against the war, Adam also felt the pressure from the German People. It became difficult for him to live a normal life; "we had warnings about going to certain places downtown, on our Friday nights out, or whenever… because they were hotbeds of political activity, anti-American activity." He continued, "I was concerned because we used to frequent a lot of clubs in downtown Berlin, and the concern, of course, was being physically attacked by some of those people."Primarily, Adam said, "we were concerned about attacks on Americans… we were also concerned individually. There were the attacks on the American community both verbal and in reality."

The Thread that connects us all

Each of the participants described situations in which the Vietnam War left an indelible mark. Each individual had a different story, with a different landscape, texture, and feel. However, a thread ran between each of them. This thread was similar to that of Theseus and the Minotaur. An excellent translation of this myth is found in **The Legend of Theseus**, (Renault, 1962). Theseus was able to find his way through the labyrinth built by King Minos only Ariadne, King Minos's daughter, gave him the thread. By following this thread, Theseus could navigate the many hallways, rooms and doorways, slay the Minotaur, and return safely to light and life. Just like Theseus was connected to Adriana by this thread, all of the men in this study are connected to each other by similar

experiences and this connection can lead to healing and wholeness. Although these men cannot claim to have fought and directly observed the horrors of war; nevertheless they were involved in many aspects of it. Like the thread that bound Theseus and the Minotaur together – that of being brothers – the individuals in this study are all brothers to each other.

One of the threads that ran most prominently through this group of men was the stresses and trauma caused by the Vietnam War both while they were in the military and after their service. Each individual had his own story of how the Vietnam War caused distress and trauma; each story different, each one had similar underlying issues.

The Archetype of War

From a depth Psychological perspective, this paper inquires into the archetype of war and its broad repercussions, even on soldiers who never saw battle. From the Greek myths of the gods who fought on Mount Olympus to the recent movie **Saving Private Ryan**, the warrior has been portrayed as the man or woman who fights the battle. All of these stories speak to the soldier in battle. Little has been written about war about the noncombat soldier, although typically more soldiers are involved in war as noncombatants than combatants.

One of the preeminent archetypes to rise from this study is that of the hero. The loss engendered by the absence of the full experience of the hero's journey is poignant. One of the veterans described his experience as "a feeling of loss at not participating in the hero's journey." Another spoke of his loss of not seeing combat like "a loss… a missed opportunity to experience… the best and the worst of being a young man" and my own experiences of guilt and fear. All of us began the hero's journey, but did not have the opportunity to finish the quest.

Campbell (1990) wrote about the hero's journey in the archetype of the hero, delineating five stages of the hero's journey. Many noncombat soldiers followed the same path during the Vietnam War. The first stage is the separation of the person from home. Each of the men in the present study left a place of comfort and safety at a young age to enter the military. An example of the shock of separation came from a veteran who said, "I got to the reception station at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and they put you through 10 days of tests." Afterward, he received training as a medic to patch together the remnants of the carnage of war. Although this man never went to the battlefield, he was all too familiar with the impact of the war on the human body. Another stated, "The initial contact with the military service was a substantial shock factor." Each man moved through the separation from their family and hometown into the military establishment.

Stage 2, according to Campbell, is the initial stage, which for this study's noncombat soldier took the form of basic training or boot camp. Each soldier had to face the challenge of learning about the forces of violence that are inherent in the military. I learned how to shoot an M-16 rifle on the firing range and to repair B-52 aircraft that had the ability to deliver nuclear bombs capable of destroying entire cities, home to millions of people. Both the combat and noncombat soldier shared this initiation experience.

The conflict stage is the next step on the hero's journey. During the Vietnam War, each man faced his tasks of war in a different way. Some noncombat soldiers believe that not participating in combat meant they had not contributed to the war effort. The present paper suggests that combat is not the only battle soldiers faced in military service during the Vietnam War, and the enemy was not always the Viet Cong or communist forces in Southeast Asia. For some, conflict came from working on the injured and emotionally battered soldiers returning from war. For another, it was the fear that one of his own soldiers might one day kill him, rather than see him captured by the enemy. The level of fear about the war increased for one participant when he learned that "on the battlefield, the laws of physics trump the law of theology."

After conflict comes the return stage. This phase in the hero's journey was difficult for all Vietnam veterans, whether in combat or not, as a result of the lack of support from the American people. In the hero's journey, the person should return to a celebration of their triumph. Not so for the Vietnam veteran: "I had… experiences here in this country with people going through the airports… and you always ran into that person that just wanted to run you down because you are in the service. 'They're scumbags because they're over there killing babies.'" For these heroes, the welcome home was absent, and instead they encountered disapproval and anger and were considered deplorable human beings for acts they may or may not have committed.

The Boon stage is the final stage of the hero's journey. For both noncombat and combat soldiers of the Vietnam era, this stage is missing. Most veterans experienced the trauma and stress, without gaining the prize the hero receives for his/her victory. Because the Vietnam War was not a victory for America, as were World Wars I and II, the Vietnam veteran lost both the prize of victory and his/her self-esteem. One veteran disclosed a telling memory: "when I was a kid, when you saw somebody come home from the military, they'd wear the uniform for a month after they were out of the Army. I haven't had mine on since the day I got home or got out."

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Gregory Anderson, MD, *has for the last eight years worked for the U. S. Army in the Department of Family Medicine at Joint Base Fort Lewis-McCord, WA. His job has been to provide primary medical care for soldiers deploying to and returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as their families. Now in his 40th year of medical practice, Dr. Anderson grew up in the Mid-West in the 50s during the Korean conflict and was educated during the Vietnam conflict. He attended Yale University, graduating in 1967 with a BA in Asian History. He attended the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, graduating in 1971. He interned in Pediatrics at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Then the Vietnam conflict caught up with him. He was drafted as a Navy doctor and spent two years on a submarine tender in San Diego, Portland and Bremerton. He has lived in the Northwest since 1975, spending 20 years in solo family practice before he began working for the Department of Defense. He is married. He and his wife Beth have six children, three boys and three girls.*

We Are All Victims
By Gregory Anderson

I see the devastating effects of war on the physical and psychological health of our soldiers, many of them young men and women in their 20s, the lives of their spouses and their children and those of us who care for them.

Then the Vietnam conflict caught up with me. I was drafted as a Navy doctor and spent 2 years on a submarine tender in San Diego, Portland and Bremerton. I have lived in the Northwest since 1975, spent 20 years in solo family practice before I began working for the Department of Defense. I am happily married, my wife's name is Beth and we have 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls, most are grown, but we have an 11-year-old and a 13-year-old at home.

As a family physician I become part of my practice. What affects my patients and their lives at some point begins to affect me. I have known some of the people I work with for 7 years. For the most part we know each other well and are a tightly knit group, recognized for the past several years as the best of Madigan Army Medical Center's Family Medicine Clinics for the quality of care we provide. It became apparent over time that we were being adversely affected by events in the lives of our patients. Some more than others, but nobody gets off free.

There is an awareness by the Department of the Army that many of our soldiers are suffering terribly while deployed with major problems returning to their lives when they get home. There are many programs and protocols for soldiers both physically and mentally injured. There are mandatory surveys given to each soldier for depression and PTSD when he or she returns from Iraq or Afghanistan. These programs are accessible for any soldier having problems. The current level of disability for returning soldiers is 30 to 40 percent.

This war is like other wars, but differs dramatically in the increased role of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) which cause tremendous physical damage to the human body and cause concussive injuries and traumatic brain injuries. There are instantly fatal injuries from IEDs at the time of the explosion, mutilating injuries to soldiers with shrapnel wounds, hearing loss, loss of vision and parts of bodies blown away. Some of these individuals survive, with significant lifelong disabilities. The level of surgical skill is so high now that many soldiers who would have died from their injuries in the past can now be saved. The most difficult aspect of these injuries to figure out are the blast injuries . Concussive and traumatic brain injuries are not always obvious and can be quite subjective. They are frequently difficult to diagnose, may require observation of behavioral changes with reevaluation over time. Sometimes there may be little treatment. Many of these injuries will need a year or two to figure out the scope of the injuries and unfortunately most will never recover enough to have a normal life. These are tragic and difficult cases, changing for ever the lives of the families involved. It would be difficult to look at the faces of the wives and children of these soldiers and call this collateral damage . How would you feel if this were the fate of someone you loved?

Another area of major interest, perhaps one that this war will contribute to, is the physiology, evaluation and treatment of PTSD. There are new treatments available based on physiological changes that have been studied in soldiers with PTSD. It is widely studied and all soldiers are screened for PTSD on return from deployment. We are beginning to understand how some individuals are more susceptible based on previous life traumas. Memory is an important function in the process of understanding. An event that is so horrible that it is overwhelming is put away in deep memory that removes it from conscious perception. These events can be relived when one is asleep. Sleep remains an important aspect of treating PTSD. Nightmares can be treated with medications to make them less disturbing. Recent clinical studies with rapid eye movements present in sleep have helped individuals be less crippled socially by their condition. There is a new area of brain research called neuroplasticity which shows that the brain can form new pathways, learn new behaviors even after a significant injury to other parts of the brain. This is an exciting area of research. We know that PTSD is not static but with treatment and the affected individual can resume a higher level of social functioning. While this war is giving us many new cases of PTSD, it is increasing our awareness and giving us the tools to identify and treat it. We can identify those who are at risk and help them, we need not wait for the cases

that don t show until a suicide or murder happens when a soldier gets home and is unable to live the life he had before he deployed.

We are seen as invaders in someone else's country where we are almost universally despised. Going where you are not wanted has a negative impact on the psyche. There is an actively mobilized, heavily resourced armed resistance to our presence. We are aggressor s invading their country in a war based on their religion. Most Muslims in Iraq (and other Middle eastern countries) have declared holy war on us. It goes beyond geographic boundaries. It says in the Koran that we do not have credibility. It is totally unacceptable for both cultural and religious reasons that we attempt to define the terms of the conflict and tell them what to do. As unbelievers we have no credibility and no right to attempt to control the destiny of their country. Our female physicians may not touch or uncover a male prisoner. They are often spit and urinated upon. A female physician I know returning from deployment after a year required in-patient treatment for depression, is able to care for her young children now, but is uncertain if she will return to medical practice.

Imagine how much less able to handle this a 20-year-old barely out of high school would be loading the body bags of dead soldiers onto a truck for return to the United States. Another young soldier was the only combat medic in his unit, the others had been killed or wounded. Sometimes after an explosion he would worry that he was getting the right body parts into a bag, not knowing if the arms or the legs belonged with that head or body. The great sadness is that there are so many stories like this that these soldiers have to tell. Collateral damage is meant to distract us from the horror of these events. We are all victims and any one of us would be damaged by them. Collateral has nothing to do with it.

Zachary J. George *is finishing his thesis in preparation for earning an MFA in fiction writing from the University of New Orleans. This project, a novel called* **Four Days to the Mile***, follows the life of an Amerasian born in Vietnam in 1967 up through 2002. George has taught English in South Korea, Vietnam, and Prague. It was during his travels in 2002 that he first became interested in the Vietnamese people and the strength of their character. In literature written about war there is an absence of reflection on what happens to a child abandoned by a foreign soldier. Using the research already compiled about the orphans abandoned in Vietnam as a starting point, George will explore the war and reveal the after effects through the voices of the children who had no choice. George worked on* **Voices Rising** *and* **Voices Rising II** *as assistant editor to Rebeca Antoine. He also gathered stories for the two books through interviews with victims of Hurricane Katrina. George worked for* Faiyo Magazine *in Prague, writing a bi-weekly story for each issue and has just begun a gardening column for* Nola Defender*, a new online magazine focusing on New Orleans.*

Vietnamese Amerasians
By Zachary George

Imagine being the black sheep and the ugly duckling rolled into one and having that notion reinforced from the time you are old enough to understand. Imagine trying to prove your mother was not a prostitute. Imagine knowing nothing about a culture that composes half your cells. Imagine listening to children taunt you with nonsensical phrases that rhyme in Vietnamese: "Amerasians have twelve assholes. Amerasians eat potatoes and beg; they eat in hiding because they are afraid of ghosts".

In his memoir, **The Unwanted**, Kien Nguyen's meets his extended family after the American military leaves. It is the first time he hears the word "half-breed". His cousins kill his dog, and his mother blames him. We see how the Amerasian becomes like a tornado, turning family against family. Nguyen's cousin says:

"A half-breed is a bastard child, usually the result from when a woman has slept with a foreigner. Like you" (Nguyen, 97).

The students at school also called him half-breed, and though Nguyen's teacher defends him, this wasn't usually the case. The teachers, now working for the communist government, turned a blind eye to these taunts and participated in their own discrimination. The opportunities for an Amerasian to excel academically were rare, and it was next to impossible for them to get into college.

The war did open previously shut doors: it was the first time a Vietnamese woman was able to liberate herself by working outside the home. Many left their villages to add support to their impoverished families by working as cashiers, waitresses, and maids. Kien Nguyen's mother runs away from Nhatrang to Saigon to escape an arranged marriage. There, she gets involved with an American after becoming his translator. He leaves three months after Nguyen is born. Both Vietnamese and Americans assumed that Amerasian children were born mostly to prostitutes. What we must keep in mind is that we were dealing with boys away from home for the first time and desperate girls from poor families. This is not to say prostitution wasn't rampant, but cases of puppy love did develop, some to the point where the couples even lived together, but in most cases, the man returned to the United States.

In a study of 115 single Vietnamese mothers of Am-

erasian children conducted at the Phillipine Refugee Processing Center, Leong and Johnson found that 12.5 percent of the mothers had been married to the child's father, but that 81 percent had lived with him. Over 60% of the relationships lasted more than a year. The sad fact: 63 percent of the women said they expected the father to return when he first left Vietnam (McKelvey, 45).

It was often the innocent desire to escape poverty that ended up trapping these young ladies. The same woman who left the family to help now came back with an unwanted burden. This Amerasian baby not only tarnished the reputation of the family, he or she also required more food and money. Rather than deal with mother and child, family often banished both. Liberation resulted in exile.

Were we to take away the danger posed by being seen as a collaborator with the enemy, there was still the social stigma that comes with taking up with one outside of your community. It goes against the Vietnamese saying, "It is better to marry the village dog than take up with a rich man elsewhere."

While this social stigma separated these women from their community, the communists saw a prostitute as less of a crime against humanity than those who engaged in capitalist activities. Like France and China before them, the United States was seen as another colonial power attempting to seize control of a country whose citizens had always struggled for independence, and that's what the Vietnamese people saw in the eyes of an Amerasian.

In a scene from **The Unwanted**, Nguyen's mother is being questioned in front of her peers about how she came about having these half-breed children. Nguyen poses a question for us to consider:

"What was the lesser of the two evils she could admit to—being a lowly prostitute or a greedy capitalist? To the new regime, capitalism was considered the higher crime" (Nguyen, 111).

In front of the entire community she loses face to save her life. Many other women left their children behind with relatives or friends and were never seen again. Some gave their babies to strangers. Some left them on the streets. Some killed themselves.

When Saigon fell and the communists took over, any assumed collaboration with the United States could have resulted in death or reeducation camps similar in horror to those imposed by the Nazis. Amerasian mothers often burned any photographs or letters, thereby erasing any connection the child may have had with the United States. In the case of Caucasian fathers, many mothers dyed their children's hair. The children of African-American descent, called "burnt rice" had it even harder. They were often sent to the New Economic Zones where they faced even worse discrimination. When a young Kien Nguyen asks his cousin what is wrong with his family, she responds, "Nothing, you just remind everyone of the past."

II.

As the Communists took over Danang and Nhatrang, relief workers scurried to get orphans out of Saigon. Maria Eitz, a volunteer for Friends for All Children contacted Charlotte Behrrendt, who contacted her father Edward J.Daly. He was flying supplies into Phnom Penh. On March 27,1975, he cabled President Ford and Henry Kissinger: "A human slaughter of massive proportions in Cambodia and Vietnam is imminent." Neither responded. On April 2, Captain Bill Keating dropped 45 tons of rice in Phnom Penh. That's when Daly informed him that he, along with Captain Kenneth Healy, would fly 550 orphans to the U.S. Chaos ensued as orphans, soldiers and citizens rushed to get aboard the planes. The planes were deemed unfit; there were no seats for the 550 infants, they were not cleared, everything was stacked against these heroes, but in the end, when the control tower radioed that they were not clear for takeoff, the DC-8 was already airborne.

A week after Daly first contacted him, Gerald Ford authorized the first official Operation Babylift which met with tragic consequences. Parts were missing from the rear fuselage of the C-5 Galaxy, and the door blew off shortly after takeoff. USAF Pilot Dennis Traynor was able to turn the plane around and head back toward the airport, but the plane crashed and broke in half just miles away from Saigon. More than half of the 300 aboard lost their lives.

In the early nineties Robert McIlvey interviewed numerous Amerasians at the Transit Center in Vietnam. These are some of their comments. "Americans need to understand that Vietnamese despise Amerasians. Most of us have never experienced love and affection." "Every time I see an American I wonder if he's my father." "To be a Vietnamese Amerasian in post-war Vietnam was to be a child growing up in the hands of your father's enemies. The hatred that the enemy had felt, and continued to feel, for your father and your country was directed against you, even though you were innocent of any wrongdoing."

Opportunities were denied. The political powers in the United States refused to accept any responsibility for many years after Operation Babylift, claiming that the children were Vietnam's problem. Any other tract would have betrayed the unspoken fight that was still going on, and politicians were not prepared to do anything that might have been seen as aiding and abetting the enemy.

Most Amerasians were denied formal education or any kind of training and could not read or write Vietnamese; they often knew no English. If the child was lucky enough to find a school where he or she might study there was another obstacle. Most families abandoned the mothers of these mixed children and they had to help support mother and themselves. Most resided in the New Economic Zones, collectives where Southerners were sent to promote agriculture and prevent urban crowding. They worked as laborers in agriculture, planting and harvesting rice, fishing, caring for animals, gathering firewood, or working on trucks and buses as driver's assistants. Those who did manage to stay in the cities often begged in the streets where they were treated like dogs. Some were lucky enough to run curbside businesses where they sold

cigarettes and drinks.

Some managed to get out through the Orderly Departure Program, a pact that permitted immigration of Vietnamese refugees to the United States in 1979 under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. While the Orderly Departure Program assisted nearly 500,000 Vietnamese refugees in resettling in the United States, the status of an Amerasian prevented him or her from being top priority. During his speech to a Senate state subcommittee in 1980, Senator Stewart B. McKinney spoke of the Amerasian issue as "a national embarassment" and called on America's patriotic duty to take full responsibility for Amerasians. The first Amerasian brought through the ODP did not arrive until 1982, and throughout the course of the eighties the orphans struggled with corrupt Vietnamese politicians who demanded bribes. The ODP was a slow process and brought only 8,000 Amerasian families "quote, unquote" to the States.

III.

Imagine going from the forgotten and taunted to the most sought after person in the country, from the "children of the dust" to the "children of the gold." This is what happened in the early nineties with the Amerasian Homecoming Act. This act of congress was written in 1987 and enacted in 1989, far too late for most Amerasians to fit into American life. Through this program, 23,000 Amerasians and 68,000 relatives entered the United States (Johnson, **Children of the Dust**). The only proof needed to get out of Vietnam and into the United States was worn on the individual's face in the way of Western characteristics. Few could document their identity anyway.

With the acceptance rate for Amerasians at ninety percent, they were seen as a "golden passport." For the first time in their lives these Amerasians were given affection—albeit false— from potential partners and their families. The individuals were also able to bring their "families," people who paid or coerced them into claiming relations. Quite often the son or daughter of a wealthy family would court an opposite-sex Amerasian, and because that person had been so starved for human affection, he or she was often unaware of the scam taking place. The fraud became so widespread that by the mid-nineties the acceptance rate fell between five and ten percent. Many Amerasians were denied entry. At that time, one interviewer told Robert McKelvey, "every Amerasian case is fraud until proven otherwise."

Most of the Amerasian children who had dreams of finding refuge in the United States were no longer children when they arrived. The average age was 18-24, long past the time when they might have benefited from educational opportunities. The six months of English language training and American assimilation provided in the Phillipines was a joke. It did little in the way of preparing them for the harsh realities America had in store. In a GAO study of 244 American fathers, 21 were found. 15 asked not to be contacted. Most of the adult Amerasians told McIlvey that they needed just a glimpse of their fathers to complete them. In a 1999 interview with 27 year ol Amerasian named Ket, McKelvey asked what she would say to her father if they met. "I'd ask him why he didn't write to my mother and me. We stayed behind in Vietnam and had lots of problems. We had to work hard to make a living and our neighbors didn't like us very much because my mother had lived with an American and gave birth to an Amerasian" (McKelvey, 65).

In the United States,they were spread out in 55 clusters composed of Vietnamese people throughout the United States, and though the Vietnamese language and traditions were firmly rooted, they still faced discrimination from the community and were seen as a source of an embarrassment because of the education denied in their birth country. Most ended up working menial jobs and living in impoverished neighborhoods where they not only faced danger, but were limited in their ability to ask for help because of the language barrier. They expected, like earlier immigrants, that the streets would be paved with gold. America pressured them to get jobs after thirty days without providing an adequate amount of time for them to learn English.

In Vietnam they had been considered American. In America they were considered Vietnamese. They went from a life of separation, with dreams of finding a world where they might fit in and finally feel whole, to coming to a new place where they were just another foreigner. In Robert Olen Butler's **The Deuce** the Amerasian protagonist called The Deuce runs away to New York City. When he meets a girl he likes, he says,

> "What do I look like to her? I realize I'm hoping it's not Vietnamese….if I have to be American to get her to like me, then goddamit, that's what I'll be."

In a study conducted by the GAO, 44% of Amerasians considered themselves Vietnamese, 5% American, and the other 51% considered themselves as other. Imagine feeling other. Other. That's the tragedy, to be out there, floating, to be connected to nothing, to nobody.

That's where these kids were left all those years ago.

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GAO, General Accounting Office of the United States

John David Hosemann *is a graduate student of literature at the University of Southern Mississippi. Having attained a bachelor's degree in psychology while also studying literature, Hosemann's approach to his work, whether science or humanities, has always been interdisciplinary in nature. Currently, his research interests include but are not limited to visual culture and literature, focusing specifically on the technology of looking (i.e. photography, cinema, television, and the internet) and how artists have come to represent such mass voyeurism. When he isn't teaching composition or writing paper proposals, Hosemann can be found in his own home practicing the same voyeuristic tendencies he studies via Facebook. He even fancies himself a "weekend photographer."*

"Here to Watch:" Voyeurism, Journalism, and War in Michael Herr's Dispatches
By John David Hosemann

Here to watch is a phrase from Michael Herr's **Dispatches** that connotes a certain conscious voyeurism present throughout the text. The current study investigates this voyeurism on several levels, illuminating issues such as the allure of war and catharsis as a theme in war literature.

Synopsis:

During an era when visual media began to transform the societal consciousness of a generation, the war in Vietnam became America's first shot of relatively live-action war images that would capture the attention of a nation and turn its citizens into voyeurs. In an essay on the Vietnam war and postmodern literature, Lucas Carpenter notes that "because the Vietnam War was the first war to be reported via television and where the media were given extensive and uncensored access to the combat, conflicting discourses claiming the 'truth' soon developed to explain the images flowing every evening into American living rooms" (34). It comes as no surprise, then, that Michael Herr's **Dispatches**, a book placed near the top of the Vietnam narrative hierarchy, is a text that acknowledges the evolving forms of media that affected not only his audience but also his subject, the war itself. Put simply, Herr's goal in writing this text was to arrive at a sufficiently described war that traditional journalists failed to illustrate for the American public. However, a more complex reading reveals Herr's awareness of the power of observation and the meaning of looking as that which allows this book to become a complex arrangement of fragmented bits of memory and images, performing the war rather than describing it.

Embedded throughout Dispatches are reminders of Herr's role as a correspondent and what it means to be a voyeur of war. Frequently, Herr's descriptions of death and fear teeter on a visceral and sometimes sexual allure of war, establishing himself as a conscious voyeur in the conventional sense of the term. While Herr's war-as-sex analogies are telling of his obsession with the allure of war, there are several layers of meaning in regards to voyeurism in the text. Beyond the aforementioned war gawking, Herr finds himself negotiating an ambiguous role of mediator between the subject of the gaze (war) and the voyeur (media consumers). By investigating voyeurism as a psychoanalytic concern, Dispatches becomes mimetic of a psychoanalytic theorist's interest in subconscious motivations of the subject in that Herr is concerned not with the superficial war, but with the war's substratum. This substratum, or subconscious motives, lie within the stories told by the grunts; stories that were frequently discarded by other, more conventional, journalists. In this endeavor, Herr gives American citizens a reality with more depth than was portrayed by the surface level stories concerned with statistics and strategies that left the media consumers feeling as if "the suffering was somehow unimpressive" (Herr, 201).

By focusing on voyeurism and its place in this work of creative non-fiction, multiple layers of meaning become apparent that speak to the psychology of war. First, Herr's fascination with the seduction of war and the images that come with it confronts the issue of our own attraction to war. However, Herr's awareness of his own conscious voyeurism (not to mention the fact that **Dispatches** was written in book form after several years of editing and psychological therapy) allows for a more complete Vietnam narrative, functioning as a cathartic rendering of images that have often proved problematic for those who have viewed them.

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James Pagel MS/MD *is an Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Colorado and Director of the Sleep Disorders Clinic of Southern Colorado. He is co-author of the diagnostic criteria for recurrent nightmares with his studies on PTSD including work on the association of PTSD with disaster (Hurricane Iniki), medication and behavioral approaches to treatment, and the role of nightmares in emotional processing. He has addressed the role of dreams and nightmares in creative processing through an on-going involvement with actors, screenwriters and directors in film programs at Sundance (Utah) and Milagro (New Mexico). His more than 120 publications in the fields of sleep and dream include several recent books:* **Primary Care Sleep Disorders: A Practical Guide,** *Humana Press (2007);* **The Limits of Dream – A Scientific Exploration of the Mind / Brain Interface,** *Academic Press (2008); and* **Dreams and Nightmares, Sleep Medicine Review, Elsevier** *(2010).*

The Nightmares Of War – The Stewart Stern Interview J.F. Pagel Ms/Md

In on our work with actors, directors and screenwriters at Sundance Institute, it has become obvious that almost all of these individuals frequently have dreams and nightmares that they use in their work. This interview is part of a series of interviews with successful artists that have trauma associated recurrent nightmares – what some would call PTSD. Almost all approaches to the treatment of PTSD include suppression of trauma associated nightmares with medication or therapy, approaches that unfortunately have had limited success. Our hypothesis, with a nod to Freud, is that for at least some individuals, such nightmares can be the source of creative insights and inspiration offering creative individuals the potential of reaching beyond the indigestible trauma of the experience.

Stewart Stern, born March 22, 1922, is a twice academy nominated and Emmy winning screenwriter best known for writing **Rebel Without a Cause** (1955). Stewart currently teaches a course in screenwriting at The Film School in Seattle as well as teaching each year at the Sundance Institute Film Labs. Stewart has famously said that, "the process of screenwriting is like falling off a cliff." This interview took place on one of those rare sunny late summer days in Seattle in a pagoda in the Zen Garden. The interview was recorded on film, and Stewart spoke about his nightmares with his eyes shut.

I find myself in NYC, the apartment in which I lived in as a child at 430 East 86th Street, Apartment 8-B. We lived there until my parents moved while I was away at war. That first apartment is what I think and write about.

I'm late and trying to get across the country somehow. I'm waiting in line for a train ticket, going by train back to California where I haven't been in years. But I'm running late – fearful that I'll miss the train or fearful I don't have the money to pay for the ticket. I'm terrified. I have to get to California and get my car out of hock. I am back at the old empty apartment and I realize that my father is dead and my mother is dead and the place is empty except for the suitcases stacked in the closet, none yet packed, and I know that I should have the telephone number to Grand Central Station but I've lost it. And I don't know what to pack and there are suitcases and it's almost super-human the effort to get even half of it in. But somehow I get to the station late and the train is about to leave and I can't find my ticket or my reservation, and there are all these suitcases and no one to help even to find the train. But somehow I get on another train, and sometimes it's a very fast plane breaking the sound barrier as we're launched upward, and the train takes me to the wrong place so I'm directed to another train that will take me back to another station where my bags are. I'm terrified. I panic. I don't know where I am. I have 50 cents. Should I use it to call the garage where I left my car for repair what seems 100 years ago? In some dreams I find the car, dusty, broken, and unusable. I'm supposed to pay and take it, but I just leave it there and decide to walk home.

I had a Pinocchio doll when I was a kid. I don't know what happened to it and long after we left Apartment 8 B, after I came back from the war, I wrote a letter and pleaded with the new tenants to let me visit. I think maybe I even looked for it. This dream recurs in many forms and ties into a series of other dreams.

But now I'm still looking for the house I deserted when I left California. I'm in country where I've never been, all up and down hills far above a place like Griffith Park. I walk down to Sunset Boulevard and I know that somewhere in the Hollywood Hills is the house I own and lived in. Someone changes my 50 cents into dimes and I phone my exchange. They don't know me anymore. I'm off their list. I pray for them to call a friend but they can't connect me and my folks don't live any more at the old number I had. Finally I climb the hills again and find my house and it's in terrible disrepair. At one time it had a view out over the city, back before there were tall buildings, and you could see all the way to the train station and Olvera Street. Then there's my house, but across the road from where I'd left it. It shocks me to see. And I'm so ashamed at having let it go to ruins. There's broken plaster and wallpaper hanging loose from the walls. And a room I've never seen before that's such a mess and maybe used to be my den. I have no one's phone number or address here either and no way to contact anyone. I go into my house. It's full of many new rooms. I look downstairs across the banister and below me there's a movie being shot in my living room. In order to get the best shots, they've taken out the whole front of the living room that overlooks the city. The crew is all

young women except for the guys pushing equipment. There is a row of hospital cots set up below me and there are actors in these cots pretending to be wounded, part of a dolly shot in which the camera moves very slowly across the front of the room above the heads of the wounded guys. And I think I see this one guy, Jimmy Framek.

I have all this love for Jimmy Framek, my buddy from when I flunked out of OCS and got thrown into an infantry division. They didn't have any combat boots that fit me so for days I was alone in the barracks while everyone else was up in the hills doing pretend fighting with Civil War maps and live ammunition. The boots came in and they trucked me up there. I was now in the 106th division as a corporal. Framek was from the tough side of Chicago. He was practically unschooled and very young and he liked me. Before he joined the Army and we became buddies, he'd thrown stink bombs into Synagogues and think it was funny. However, he turned into someone good as gold and physically powerful, someone to watch over me. One night, he beat a guy to a pulp for calling me a kike behind my back. The Battle of the Bulge began on December 16th, 1944. We had been hearing engines revving for at least three days along the Siegfried Line but when I'd call headquarters they said I was nuts. We dug ourselves deep into the mud and water and I would stand watch all night, waiting. I felt responsibility for the kids with me trying to sleep in the bunker and took 4 hour shifts. Since I lost the watch that my Grandma had given me, I kept track of time singing the whole album of **Thirty Minutes with Beatrice Lillie**. I'd sing all the songs 8 times under my breath and that kept me awake for 4 hours. We had been hearing engines revving for at least three days before along the Siegfried Line. We dug ourselves deep into the mud and water. I would stand watch all night, taking the squad leader thing to mean responsibility for the kids with me. After the Battle, Framek and I were put in different hospitals – trench foot so bad they wanted to take our legs. We must have written over 300 letters to one another during those 6 months in hospital.

I look down at the bunks and the men in the cots are no longer actors. They're the men that were with me in the hospitals after the battle, Jim included, I think. Well, they were actors in this dolly shot in my dream playing roles as soldiers in my living room. Then there's this one guy who makes eye contact with me. He looks at me and I look at him and I have this sense of homecoming, as if I'm dreaming of Jim, but I realize that he's Heath Ledger, just an actor I never met, but our eyes are locked together and he dies the next week. And I look around the room, thinking that these women should be held accountable! I gave no one permission to shoot a movie here! Somebody owes me money! My house has been destroyed. So I once again have come home without really coming home and this dream is the model for repeated dreams of missing trains and ocean liners like the one that took me to war, and of not looking for my mother and knowing that she is somewhere in the city and I haven't tried to call. And there's a dream of a slide off an endlessly high and scary chute with no banister and I see her playing cards at the bottom. I'm terrified and Joanne Woodward is at my side urging me to slide. My mother and father don't see me land. They don't seem dead but I know they are. And there's a theatre near their table where Beatrice Lillie is playing in a come-back performance. I know that she's dead too, but she's like an automaton approximating her voice. She sees me with no recognition. And the songs are so sad.

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A couple of weeks after our talk, I wrote up the interview from the notes I had taken and sent it to Stewart for comments and corrections. I received the following in reply:

"We are typing up a further new revision of what happened so please discard the one sent yesterday. Really, without the whole revision and expansion, the dream could never have happened. The origins I've just found solve the whole mystery - both of the dream and of the PTSD that still rules my life and causes the Writer's Block - and most of all, my dear friend Framek's part in all of it."

At dawn of the 16th the whole front exploded and the whole German army was coming over the snow at us. Orders came down for all Squad Leaders to retreat with half their squad across a forest and over the Belgian border. I had to leave Jim in the village with six of our guys while the rest of us groped through the pines all night chased by German artillery and looking back at the village we'd left with everything in it on fire. I never got over my guilt of leaving him there. Even when God spared him and he found me the next day, and even though I had withdrawn under orders, I could never make it right for myself. We clung to each other after that and somehow survived the war.

I moved to Seattle after developing writer's block. For me, starting the first page of a script is like looking over the edge of those cliffs that haunt my dreams and knowing that there's no way to survive the fall. In my dreams, I do somehow but it never feels like I will and I never have anyone to hold on to. After the war, when I went back to the NYC apartment, I went into my old closet still looking for the Pinocchio doll. I always loved it when I came to that point in the story where Pinocchio does one good deed and becomes a real boy – but the fact that I'd left Jim on that firey hill made me buy him his first house even before I bought one for myself. But the deed wasn't good enough. Pinocchio wasn't there. Perhaps he's in Central Park in that place where I used to bury my animals who had died, my turtles, my chameleons, my alligator.

"Sorry to cause you extra work, but I'm sure you'll agree that the changes are vital to insight, and for the causes and effects that shaped, and continue to shape, my whole post-war career. I will sleep on this tonight and send it off tomorrow."

Nitya Prema *is a licensed psychotherapist working with*

the military. When she began studying psychology in the early 70s she reveled in Carl Jung's spiritual work, then James Hillman brilliantly swung open the door of archetypal psychology with its multiplicity of realities. While studying for a doctorate in Organizational Development she started an international jewelry and kaleidoscope business, and owned a craft gallery. As a psychotherapist she worked in private practice, in San Francisco Bay area hospitals, did crisis work in San Jose jails, saw youth-at-risk clients in group homes. For the past ten years she has resided in the Sierra Nevada foothills. She is on the leadership council of The Southern Poverty Law Center. Nitya was a presenter at a conference on "Mythology and Violence" in 2008 and in 1994 for the Transpersonal Environmental conference in Ireland. More artist than academian; her main interest areas are in the cateogries of spirituality, mythology, archetypal and environmental psychology, she has been an environmental activist, and published a book **Rainbow Labyrinth Journey**. *Currently, she is working a memoir,* **Through the Tibetan Mirror** *and spending time with her six grandchildren.*

The Greening Of Consciousness: War And Quest By Nitya Prema

This is a depth psychology perspective of war initiating in the archi, beyond personal quests for meaning, beyond societal intents to impose or protect systems of governing. It addresses the archetypal. Archetypes are real, living forces of deep ingrained patterns in our personal and collective psyches, including the earth which has soul or psyche.

Mythic energies are universal gathered through common beliefs and stories, about gods, goddesses, demons and muses; they are protective, inspiring, mischievous and demonic spirits, with human and/or animal designated qualities. Throughout history, mythic forces and their various mythological stories influence our daily lives in both conscious and unconscious ways. Referred to as archetypal or the archi meaning the greater field. The warrior archetype is the deep influence of the urge to war against a threat no matter the cost…to go beyond ourselves; we are guided or taken over; possessed by archetypal force. It becomes a rite of passage in the transcendence; innocence is lost and the hidden mythic world moves into the fore front.

This paper was written while working in Okinawa Japan, the major turning point of World War II. To get to depth sources there is great need to acknowledge the subtle realms of war in the collective unconscious; however, to do so would be insensitive to not first address the great human tragedy war has cast on our future; with huge looming numbers of post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injuries, and military suicides. To begin the healing we need to embrace our determined young military, and the wise ones bearing the pain of war still continuing to serve, including crusty old veterans, bonded buddies reliving their war days as high times. These are the people that lived through our old rites of passage, followed our old myths about heroism and a better world. They live daily with the pain and agony of war inside themselves. I deeply appreciate Edward Tick; a clinical psychotherapist for writing **War and the Soul**, for addressing PTSD and the relationship with soul for weaving the mythic dimensions and the painstaking healing work that must be done. His work providing the springboard for this paper. The cultural hero archetype has outlived its usefulness; archetypal dynamics of war are evolving. Beginning where Edward Tick concludes:

We must return our charges - our children and our veterans, our deeds and our dreams, our soldiers and our adversaries - to the path of the mystic warrior…We must make the pursuit of peace as mythic as the pursuit of war has been.[1]

In the psyche of the universe war devastates like a wildfire - levels of consciousness collapse, in order to evolve. Just as a forest renews - myth comes up as the regenerative force weaving the archetypal realm into the collective consciousness. In encounters with the unknown the human psyche is stretched thin, boundaries transcended. Archetypal systems of complexity can bring expansion and regeneration in the midst of traumatic devastation. The process in its fierceness is creating global breakdown; from environmental sustainment, redistribution of wealth and power, we are on the brink of radical changes in the way we think. Mass evolution has never been kind. PTSD is a painful, identity wounding taking us beyond the personal psyche, ripping open the collective unconscious allowing an infusion of a dynamic multileveled consciousness. Something like the recent movie **Inception** with Leonardo DeCaprio, by altering the dream, within a dream, within a dream. By recognizing that many levels of realities exist we can better tend to archetypal relationships, making them part of our reality rather than ignoring or inflating their existence. The world psyche is reforming, making conscious what we now call the unconscious, peeling away another layer of the onion.

Psyche enters in subtle ordinary ways, unexpectedly connecting patterns in our individual and collective psyches. Often through artwork places of creativity where tension stirs, paradox exists and new thought begins. In an informal chat with a military family man named Greg, living in Okinawa for over twenty years he began to tell me of his concerns about the current state of psychological breakdown in the service then talks about something changing in our consciousness. This interpretative story encapsulates the onset of an emerging transition in the collective consciousness:

Greg starts telling me about one of his friends he is worried about. Speaking in a low monotone drawl, "He

is one of those guys that have seen a lot of combat. He keeps going out again and again, even though he has been diagnosed with PTSD. I don't know what we are going to do with these guys when they keep sending them out over and over, then no one wants to associate with them. If you look on the internet there aren't any jobs, no one wants to hire a vet, they're afraid of 'em."

While he looks at the internet the conversation takes a turn, he starts telling me about the Denver airport being loaded with occult imagery. He pulls up the site with all the pictures and tells me he studied the Masons saying "See here where it says 'New World' they don't say that under their logos. Look at these weird pictures. This one with a rainbow, kids and then that ghoulish death figure underneath. There's a lot about this on TV, just type in Denver airport. This design looks like something from outer space, makes me think of crop circles. Look, even the runways are like the Nazi swastika. There are underground tunnels, with condos in them, in case you have to get somewhere safe in a hurry. I guess if you're rich…I figure it's like when I go to the store and see soup on sale, I might pick up a few extra cans. Well, those rich guys, the billionaires, say to their self 'Why not pick up one of those', the underground condos. That's how I see it."

Will gets a phone call to go next door. In parting says to me "What do you think of 2012, you know thinking really changes every millennium or so, things are just moving so fast now. I bet in the next ten to twenty years we won't even recognize the way we think now."

Later, I look at the Denver airport site again, at the runways forming the swastika an ancient symbol of many cultures, my thoughts connecting the old alchemical adage "as above so below," how each new religion or spiritual movement overtakes former power symbols, utilizing them for their own purpose. How Hitler perverted ancient symbols, invaded Crete, once a center for peaceful goddess traditions, well known for its Greek Myth of the Minotaur and underground Labyrinth. Remembering Joseph Campbell stated that all myths relate to this one. Certainly, the "New World" imagery in this airport has evoked much suspicion; the United Air hub planted there in the mile high city next to the Great Divide of the Rockies. Once again, I wondered how we could have ever turned a blind eye to the onset of the Holocaust.

As new myths filter through the ethers, old movements arise to regain power. People intuitively know we are on a brink of radical change. The seeds of war lie in the archi beyond conspiracy theories, occult practices, religious fanaticism, shamanic tricksters, psychic overlords, beyond playing out the ancient hero/warrior archetype. These are simply soils in which they are allowed to grow. There is the opportunity to go into the "dream within a dream, within a dream, within a dream" awakening to varying levels where soul and spirit meet. Opportunity to discover core pivotal points, reclaim freshness and regrow ancient energies from dormancy. Like a forest after a wildfire brings itself anew in rapid growth with life unseen for years. Mystic warriors require altruism but altruism itself does not bring forth renewal. Radicals go to their grave attempting to gain spiritual benefits. Without a respect for archetypal forces, and a willingness to wrestle with them, an imbalance develops in the systems of the archi for future generations. War is a god game. The pathos of war erupts when these paths with the archi are lost or askew, particularly when dharma, our deepest calling is ignored. We need an understanding of spiritual surrender as the eastern mind has, to struggle in the grips of the archi, find the necessity to reclaim powers of humanness to be able to partner in a way we are in true relationship with the archetypal. Traditionally war has been a major vehicle for the archi to come in, tearing open the psyche to other realms. If we reach through the depths, beyond good and bad, there is a sense of just isness, the gods know who they are and what they stand for, constellated energies, drawing in with irresistible force. The field of archi is objective and indifferent, yet paradoxically deeply personal and loving. Powerful definite patterns, yet in times of changing consciousness there is archetypal morphing, where each influences the other, energies overlap, compete and exchange in the dance of the archi cosmos…including that of evil.

Creation myths are based on destruction and creation. Primal evil exists as a force that can't be destroyed only respected, redirected and diffused. By labeling only acts as evil we fail to recognize it for what it is. Unconsciously we invite it in and become a part. An insidious faceless evil manifesting; a dark creeping blanket with insatiable hunger for soul, driven to seek what it most needs but can't contain. In a flip of the script of Christian philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, as perversion, the powers of evil have been harnessed. Spiritual juices siphoned off, in-sourcing whatever feeds our addictions. Creating toxic growth in this world, seeding another world for future reign. The manifesting archetypal component is a dazzling magnetic attraction: to which a secret society is entry into the domain seeking control of defining beauty. Trust can never be built in union with soullessness. We are in a complex replay of the Christian myth with holocaust foundations. In healthier waters mysterious forces of good and evil exist more like dolphins and sharks, playing a part in the archi ecosystem.

Great periods of change bring opportunists, many myths competing, latching onto the energies. Personal soul safety strengthened through attention to intuitions, holding them as another level of reality. Listening to the earth, which has memory and informs when treading sacred grounds, where danger lurks, and healing needed. While in Japan I visited the Okinawa Peace Park, I walked down a path toward where the Okinawans jumped off the cliffs; part of a mass suicide and slaughter of fifty thousand. They were terrified of the Americans during World War II invasion, horrified and dismayed by having been forced into battle then abandoned by the Japanese Army. As descendants of the Ryukyu, part of the Pacific Islanders, few people in the world are aware of their peaceful ways. Even today almost no crimes are committed and

they are one of the world's longest living people. I had barely heard of this tragic event from the last battle of WWII, until a few years prior I saw an art exhibit by Yoko Ono in a London museum. Titled **Love**, an old film ran continuously showing real people leaping to their deaths, throwing babies, small children, women with bell skirts, hoards rushing off cliffs into the air only to land on beaches below. Heart wrenching stories emerge from both sides, for which we all weep throughout history, into the future.

Edward Tick draws in the conclusion of *War and the Soul* from the documentary **The Killing Fields**, how the Holocaust is not about just one people, stating "…the Holocaust is an evil force, visiting us now…it creeps like an international plague around the planet."[2]

The plague of war calls for something else to move us, peace is not exciting enough for our cravings when we know not what we hunger for. States of enlightenment bring seekers into realms of the ecstatic, too often reduced and then remaining in second chakra awareness. The power of the mystical ecstatic experience is binding but fraught with dangers with no safety container, Soul Siphons hover. Purification is needed in the waters of the collective ecstatic consciousness. The keys are in history's pivotal points, having created The Great Undermine of Consciousness. It will take mystical warriors with a knowing sense and with a twist of psyche; we can unlock the gates of the heavens. Awakening ourselves.

We can flip of the script again and return to Teilhard de Chardin's vision of "harnessing the energies of love…"[3] for the second time discovering fire, we allow in a now wiser love, compassion that knows both forces are necessary, but we have to stay awake. By honoring the old hero archetype and recognizing the appearance of new eclectic archetypes. Choosing to see beauty, practices like meditation, connecting our interior world with the outer unseen world. Especially, by treasuring the handful of peace loving societies remaining, those living close to the spirits of the land such as the Okinawans and Tibetans. For they are populations coded with peace in their DNA.

Among the archi; the gods, angels, muses and mythic spirits, I have a special liking for the Shisa; the lion dogs that sit on gate posts all over Okinawa, one with mouth open, tongue and teeth scaring away the evil spirits, the other with a closed mouth holding on to good spirits. As a society, we too can to develop the capacity to attract in and hold "good spirits." With the collateral damage of current wars, the great infliction it has on the world psyche, it will take recognition of the wounded military, seeing post traumatic stress as a "wounding by the gods."

Acknowledging both the seen and unseen worlds, within and around us, we will then hold the good spirits. Acknowledging the archetypal in our world consciousness begins the process of healing the split, awakening dormant benevolent energies.

In closing with Ticks' words "We crave war because we crave the mythic dimension…".[4] To which I add…the archi also craves to remain connected to the human experience. The mythoi are real worlds, calling to be tended rather than manipulated.

Notes:

1 Part III, *Conclusion* pg 289

2 Part III, *Conclusion* pg 283

3 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, **Toward the Future**, pgs 86-87

4 Part III, *Conclusion* pg 283

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***Sarah D. Holloway, Ph.D.**, of Portland, OR, recently gradu-*

ated from Pacifica Graduate Institute with her Doctorate in Mythological Studies & Depth Psychology. Her paper explores the concept of using theatrical performances of multicultural myths featuring the Wounded Hero archetype to help normalize post-war readjustment for injured veterans and their families.

The Wounded Hero: Explorations in Mythology and the Performing Arts

By Sarah D. Holloway, Ph.D.

In 2006 I was working at the Madigan Army Medical Center (MAMC) in Washington State as a Content Developer for afterdeployment.org. This psycho-educational website for returning military service members offers information, community resources, self-assessment tools, and interactive workshops on relevant topics such as Relationships, Anger Management, Parenting, Employment, and Post-Traumatic Stress. At the time that I was working for MAMC I was also completing my Masters degree and beginning my Doctorate in Mythological Studies from Pacifica Graduate Institute, based in Santa Barbara, California. For my doctoral dissertation I knew that I wanted to weave multicultural mythology, artistic expression, and healing from trauma into my research, and desperately hoped to find a way to fit my longtime love of puppetry into the mix as well. How to bring this eclectic combination of interests and passions together into a cohesive project, however, was not initially clear.

Much of my time working at MAMC was spent researching and writing for the Spirituality module of afterdeployment.org, during which time I discovered that a modern military service member's experience matched surprisingly well with almost all of the stages of Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey." Many people are familiar with Campbell's famous theory of comparative mythology; in his seminal work **The Hero with a Thousand Faces** Campbell delved into the concept of a universal, human story playing itself out in the myths and sacred stories of cultures from around the world and throughout history. The Hero's Journey is best explained in this well-known and oft-quoted passage by Campbell:

[…] the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. (25)

I imagine the Hero's Journey as a psycho-spiritual voyage, a death and rebirth of self-perception that can occur when the psyche is confronted with an experience that ruptures familiar assumptions about life and human existence. Symbolic manifestations of the Hero's Journey can be found in myths from all over the world – the ancient Greek epic the Odyssey, Jacob's midnight struggle with God in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ's miraculous life and death in the New Testament, the murder and resurrection of Osiris in Egyptian mythology, and Pele's celestial dismemberment and reintegration in traditional Hawaiian lore, to name a few.

What I found fascinating in my research was how accurately a modern military service member's experience of preparation, deployment, tour of duty, end of tour, and return to society fit into the Hero's Journey cycle of Call to Adventure, Initiation, Threshold of Adventure, Re-Initiation, and New Identity. The similarity of experiences was close – but not perfect. At the "end of tour" and "return to society" points in a service member's deployment (the Re-Initiation and New Identity points of the Hero's Journey), many service members interviewed for afterdeployment.org acknowledged experiencing a lack of adequate reintegration support from the military, the media, their community, and society in general. Some of those who had been wounded during deployment were finding reintegration especially difficult; the tumultuous process of returning from a combat zone to civilian society can be stressful for any service member, but wounded soldiers spoke of feeling as though they had to justify their "woundedness" with the robust, indestructible image of the conquering Hero that most of us are familiar with. This led to the first step in the development of my doctoral thesis as I realized how interesting it would be to compare the familiar theory of the Hero's Journey, where the hero triumphantly returns from his or her adventure with a "boon" that benefits the entire society, with the unexplored concept of the Wounded Hero's Journey, in which the hero must face his or her community bearing what appear to be unattractive, undesirable scars from the adventure. At this point I would like to make a clarification: when I talk about post-deployment "wounding" I am referring to all kinds of injuries: physical (as in shrapnel wounds, amputations and Traumatic Brain Injuries) and mental/emotional/spiritual scarring such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and nightmare-induced insomnia.

The next stage in the development of my dissertation topic came from the happy fact that I was eventually asked to write for the Parenting and Physical Injuries modules of afterdeployment.org as well. As I delved deeper into research on military children and the challenges faced by wounded service members and their families after military deployment, the final "puzzle piece" of my doctoral study became clear; I could apply a "mythic sensibility" to the Wounded Hero's Journey by creating puppet shows for military children featuring myths of the Wounded Hero. Through puppetry, a rich and expressive art form with a long and dynamic history across many cultures, I realized that myths of the Wounded Hero could be "brought

to life" for children, and provide an accessible language and landscape for families to communicate about post-deployment adjustment and parental reintegration. I have a great deal of experience creating psycho-educational puppet performances for children and communities that have experienced trauma, and this idea was a perfect fit with my desire to research the relationships between mythology, artistic manifestation, and healing.

It is my contention that facing the deep emotional and spiritual scars of trauma through art can create a paradigm shift in perception, opening new (and potentially healing) perspectives within the human imagination. According to Gilbert J. Rose, psychoanalyst and author of numerous books on neuroscience and aesthetics, "Art does not 'communicate' meanings as much as it generates them in the receptive mind. […] The more it urges the mind beyond experience, the more it opens up the realm of the possible, a balanced and free play of knowledge and imagination" that can have an associated flow of tension and release only limited by the mind of the beholder. In other words, artistic manifestation can stimulate empathic insight, offer a progressive reintegration of feeling, thought, and perception, and "result in a new perspective of external reality through the imaginative eye of new understanding."

My preferred expressive art form is puppetry; puppet productions include the fine arts of painting and sculpture, architectural stage design, fabric arts, woodworking, script writing, choreography, and much more. Puppetry in rituals, education, artistic expression and entertainment has flourished around the world for at least three thousand years. IIt is my experienced opinion that puppetry allows for a visceral relationship with a performance because the viewer is watching a symbolic self-representation that is three-dimensional; it is a communicative modality that speaks, interacts, and "lives" in a way that much two-dimensional art does not. Tina Bicat, renowned puppet artist and performer, explains the uniquely expressive power of puppetry in this way:

> The transformation of the tiny stage occurs in the minds of the audience; the often jaded imagination of the habitual theatre-goer is startled back to the excitement and involvement of the things that first made them love theatre. They are prompted to flesh out the wooden bodies of the performers with all the character inherent in the role and become silent actors themselves by virtue of their involvement with the puppets onstage.

Puppetry, therefore, is an art form that stimulates human imagination, innovation, and ingenuity due to the amazing variety of ways one can animate an inanimate object for aesthetic, emotional, psychological, and spiritual expression. Because of this, audience members become intimately involved with every aspect of the performance, infusing the subject matter of the show with resonance and intensity. This is one reason puppetry has remained my preferred expressive art form for almost 20 years.

The final step in the process of my doctoral project was to successfully combine my research on post-deployment familial reintegration, the Wounded Hero archetype in myths from around the world, and the expressive power of puppetry to demonstrate my conviction that these seemingly disparate subjects can and do work in tandem to inspire and encourage military families who are welcoming home a traumatized service member. In order to bring multicultural mythic representations of the Wounded Hero archetype "to life," so to speak, I created a puppet production titled Hero's Welcome that will be offered to military families, support groups and Veterans hospitals starting January 2011. Hero's Welcome consists of two stories, an ancient Norse myth called *Tyr's Hand* and a Korean folktale titled *The Tiger's Whisker*, each told by a modern-day storyteller puppet named Mr. Whitney.

The challenges faced by the children of wounded military service members, such as the loss of a sense of normalcy; anger and sadness towards the injured parent; an increased sense of fear and distrust; and problems communicating thoughts and feelings can make a parent's return from deployment fraught with tension and misunderstanding. Hero's Welcome does not attempt to tell children or parents how they should feel or what they should do to "get better." My intention with the production is to open the imagination of military families to the universality of seemingly personal and isolating experiences, suggesting a new, mythically-inspired lens through which to view their challenging circumstances. In this way I hope to give back to the military families in my community and my nation for the many sacrifices they have suffered in the name of duty and honor to their country. While I do not always support the reasons for war, I strive to support the warrior who risked life and limb on my behalf. Many of us missed opportunities to support veteran family members from WWII, Korea and Vietnam immediately upon their return from deployment. I hope it's not too late for us or for them to find peace and reconciliation. But if I can have even a small part in helping history's latest wounded heroes and their families readjust to civilian life after combat, Hero's Welcome will have resulted in far more than a doctoral degree and potential future career path. It will offer me the opportunity to find the language to finally welcome home the heroes in my own life.

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War, the Arts, and Archetype Imagery in Other Eras

Kathryn Pratt Russell, Ph.D. *is an Associate Professor of English at Clayton State University, where she teaches Romantic Literature and Critical Theory. As a child of military parents, Russell grew up in the Philippines and Britain, as well as in many Southern U.S. states. At the age of 13, she moved to north Louisiana, where she spent her teen years. At 16, she enrolled in a publicly-funded boarding school for gifted and talented students, the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, where a gifted teacher, Dr. Art Williams, introduced her to Byron's poetry. At LSU, she met her husband, the novelist Josh Russell, author of* **Yellow Jack** *(1999) and* **My Bright Midnight** *(2010). Kathryn earned her Ph.D. in Literature at Vanderbilt University, where she completed a dissertation on melancholia and Romantic culture. Kathryn became interested in the poetry of contemporary war poet Brian Turner after reading an article about him on the NPR website. She has published scholarly articles, poetry, and short fiction in nationally recognized journals including Studies in Romanticism,* Black Warrior Review, *and* Chelsea. *Kathryn is pictured here with the Russells' literary poodle Adiel, named after the faithful seraph in Milton.*

"Unbound by Time's Dominion": Thoughts on Islamic and Christian Nations at War in Modern Poetry

By Kathryn Pratt Russell

It might seem odd that I have chosen Lord Byron, an early nineteenth-century British poet, and Brian Turner, an early twenty-first century American poet, as the sole exemplars of large changes in post-Enlightenment Western thinking about Islamic and Christian states at war. However, in choosing these two poets I have been guided by their singular attention to issues of time and scope in warfare between nations. In his classic work **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism**, Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is a "fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (224). Of these "imagined communities" that go to war with each other, Anderson proposes that the historical evolution of print capitalism standardized language, land, and even time, and thus produced the idea of the "nation." Individual identity depends on the nation and its modern organization of time, a "'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (30). Anderson claims that the prenational, medieval world by contrast was divided into separate realms centered around "Script-languages" that "offered privileged access to ontological truth" (40). "It was this idea that called into being the great transcontinental sodalities of Christendom, the Ummah Islam, and the rest" (40), he continues. In contrast to these medieval realms, the modern nation "is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history":

An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (31).

This confidence, I argue, is shaken when American soldiers experience war and its clash of national identities. In his poetry, Brian Turner fully describes what Lord Byron anticipated almost two hundred years before him: a postnational world that reshapes the consciousnesses of those who experience war firsthand. A postnational consciousness reveals itself in the individual's perceptionof the disturbance of the ordered, calibrated, sequential time that integrates the citizen into the national community. A posttraumatic identity seems to be less a "fragmented" personality than a postnational understanding of time—as Turner writes, the veteran of war becomes "unbound by time's dominion" (**Phantom Noise** 80).

While Byron's swashbuckling reputation currently owes more to his feats of sexual prowess than to his pugilistic or martial endeavors, the poet was famous in his day as a martial poet whose ability to write scenes of battle and to evoke patriotic sentiment was widely admired. His mock-epic poem **Don Juan** (1818-24) does not fit the definition of "mock-epic" given by most guides to literary terms: the mock-epic supposedly "features an anti-hero whose activities illustrate the stupidity of the class or group he represents" (http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_m.html). Don Juan, the young, nominally Spanish hero of the poem, actually represents no specific group, class, or nation: he travels across the Continent and ends up in England, and his identity is by turns that of romantic Spanish lover, of disguised adventurer, of valorous European common soldier, and of cynical Anglicized nobleman, as the needs of Byron's satire require.

Written in 1822, Cantos Seven to Nine of **Don Juan**, known as the *War Cantos,* represent on a grand scale the Siege of Ismail in 1790, a crucial battle of the Russo-Turkish

war of 1787 to 1792 (these wars lasted for hundreds of years, flaring up regularly between 1568 and 1918). Although Byron chooses to set the action of his poem thirty years before its writing in 1822, the *War Cantos* show a modern, post-Napoleonic understanding of warfare and the vulnerable identities of European nations and their citizens. While Byron uses one heroic protagonist, Juan, to give emotional impact to the scenes of battle, his narrator, possessed a panoramic view of the whole field, including large clashes between Russian and Turkish battalions, and hand-to-hand combat between soldiers supposedly on the same Russian side (8.93). Byron consistently represents this battle as a conflict between religious forces, as in these lines:

When up the bristling Moslem rose at last,
Answering the Christian thunder with like voices:
Then one vast fire, air, earth, and stream embraced,
Which rocked as 't were beneath the mighty noises (Canto 8, Stanza 7).

Byron's use of grand religious archetypes and stereotypes to describe the struggle of nations places him in the Western tradition of literature that views war as a collective and honorable response to cultural clashes. However, his satiric epic manipulates these stereotypes by temporally displacing them in order to blur the boundaries of the national and religious identities that in a traditional epic would represent fixed moral truths.

Canto Seven of **Don Juan** opens not with the onward progress of the hero, Don Juan, but with one of the famous "digressions" that actually structure and link the entire wide-ranging poem. Byron's narrator confides to the reader:

When we know what all are, we must bewail us,
But ne'ertheless I hope it is no crime
To laugh at all things—for I wish to know
What, after all, are all things—but a show? (7.2).

The narrator's "show" or performance of the genre of epic battle in these cantos will rewrite the identities of individual and national combatants. The narrator enters from his general meditation into the story of the Siege of Ismail, which is definitely located comfortably in the past for both narrator and audience. He describes himself as "about to batter/A town which did a famous siege endure" (7.8). Yet Byron's description of the fortress moves immediately into the present tense: "The fortress is called Ismail" (7.9), yet then equivocates by showing how this seeming present-tense description of the fortress actually is subject to the passing of time and war:

But still a fortress of the foremost rank
Or was at least, unless 'tis since defaced
Which with your conquerors is a common prank (7.9).

Poetry becomes a more enduring monument than the fortress, surviving to speculate that the fortress itself might have been defaced since the present-tense consciousness of the narrator has become a past-tense consciousness for the reader. The construction of the fortress is doubly vulnerable to the time-traveling of Byron's satirical critique, which shows how the past actions of the Turks are reinterpreted by later events:

But from the river the town's open quite,
Because the Turks could never be persuaded
A Russian vessel e'er would heave in sight;
And such their creed was till they were invaded (7.13).

Yet when the action of the war begins, the narrative shifts into the seemingly stable past tense of national and international history—at least and if only for the soldiers caught up in the action. When Byron describes the Russian army that faced the Turks, he slily questions the national identity of the troops by describing the non-Russian mercenaries fighting for them:

Then there were foreigners of much renown,
Of various nations, and all volunteers;
Not fighting for their country or its crown,
But wishing to be one day brigadiers;
Also, to have the sacking of a town (7.18).

The English narrator shows young, foolish Englishmen caught up as mercenaries too, including Jack Smith, who falls only to become dubiously "immortal in a bulletin" (7.20). Immediately after this line, the narrator wrenches the narrative out of the past into the present with one of his present-tense speculations, punning on the anglicized French word "bulletin":

I wonder (although Mars no doubt's a god I
Praise) if a man's name in a bulletin
May make up for a bullet in his body? (7.21).

After a couple of stanzas, the narrator returns to his past-tense narration, but throughout the epic narrative of the conflict of nations, the narrator continues to forcibly remove the reader from the past to the present through his commentary, comparisons and speculations on the actions of battle. When the tyrannical Prince Potemkin (in the past) appoints Suvaroff to the head of the Russian forces, Suvaroff's training prepares them for the immanent successful assault on the fortress. However, between Cantos Seven and Eight, Byron moves the action of the armies into the present:

Hark! through the silence of the cold, dull night,
The hum of armies gathering rank on rank!
Lo, dusky masses steal in dubious sight
[. . .]
--how soon the smoke
Of Hell shall pall them in a deeper cloak! (7.86).

Finally Byron shows the mingling and confusion of the armies' identities in battle:

Here pause we for the present—as even then
That awful pause, dividing Life from Death,
Struck for an instant on the hearts of men,--
Thousands of whom were drawing their last breath!
A moment—and all will be Life again!
The march! The charge! The shouts of either faith,
Hurrah! And Allah! And one moment more—
The death-cry drowning in the Battle's roar. (7.87).

Religious identities are mingled in the shouts, so that the

last, essential criterion of these soldier's identities (since Russian national identity is already internationally compromised by mercenaries) is lost.

Byron's depiction of war might seem irrelevant to Americans today, were it not for our involvement in two wars in which, since the World Trade Center attacks of 2001, the nationalist propaganda of warring Christian and Muslim states has emerged with a vengeance from its short historical slumber. Critics Simon Bainbridge, Jerome McGann, and Malcolm Kelsall have shown that Byron's representations of Christian-Muslim conflict expose the realities of warfare and the lies of martial religious propaganda. For Jerome McGann, Byron's **Don Juan** "epitomizes how theatricality and and masquerade—deliberate strategies of deception—can serve the cause of deep truth" (**Byron and Romanticism** 73). Brian Turner, an American poet and soldier who served in the American war against Iraq in 2004, re-imagines war not as the performance of a mock-heroic international masquerade, but as lived experience at its most intimate and individual. Turner, like most contemporary American poets, is indebted to Byron and the other Romantics for his lyric consciousness, but in his two books, **Here Bullet** and **Phantom Noise**, Turner's perspective is limited and confessional, not satirical and omniscient like that of **Don Juan's** narrator. Even when Turner does depict Islamic forces against a historical background, he avoids the grand archetypal and idealizing portrayal of Christian-Muslim strife, instead showing individuals entrapped in a lived experience of history which belongs neither to one side nor the other. The masterful manipulation of time performed by Byron's poetic narrator is not achievable for the individual soldier who chronicles his and others' experience of war. Instead, the soldier experiences times non-sequentially, not an "empty" time that regulates the individual's experience of his own national identity, but a full, indeed over-full time that spills over the individual's perceptions of past, present and future.

Brian Turner's first collection, **Here Bullet**, which was published by Alice James Press in 2005 and has received national recognition, is related by a narrator whose encounter with a foreign otherness brings leaps of imagination that make him consciousness of other levels of time and history in the seemingly present moment of his life in Iraq in wartime. The opening poem, *A Soldier's Arabic* positions the narrating speaker as an interpreter for his American community, or for a larger community of English speakers or "Westerners" unfamiliar with the experience of this war:

> The word for love, habib, is written from right
> to left, starting where we would end it
> and ending where we might begin.
> Where we would end a war
> another might take as a beginning,
> or as an echo of history, recited again. (l. 1-6)

In this first poem, the unified time of the American/Western observers is reversed (from ending to beginning) and doubled (an echo of history), from the perspective of this possible foreign outsider to "our" ways. Yet the outsider is not necessarily an "Iraqi" national. The end of the poem is definitive about the nature of the Arabic language for the soldier:

> This is a language made of blood.
> It is made of sand, and time.
> To be spoken, it must be earned. (l. 10-12)

The opposite, American nationalist view sees language as existing in time, not being made of time. Turner's description of the Arabic language as being made of time (that is, somehow giving shape and form to time) foreshadows how his own poetic language will come to work within the two collections he has published, one a documentation of wartime experience and the other a testimony to postwar consciousness. In the collection, **Here Bullet**, time doubles, condenses hundreds of years into a few lines, and expands a moment into a whole poem, in order to show the fracture lines inside and between nationalist individual consciousnesses in wartime. In "Hwy 1," the "spice road/of old":

> the caravan trail
> of camel dust and heat, where Egyptian limes
> and sultani lemons swayed in crates (l. 7-9),

becomes in a seamless transition the same space (in time) where the American military convoy moves "past camels and waving children/who marvel at the painted guns" (l. 14-15). Instead of exoticizing the Middle East as an ancient, timeless otherness, Turner makes the older history of the road as real as, even identical in some features with, the present function of the route. Simultaneously, the "Iraqi" or even "Americanized" present of the road merges with older, prenationalist pasts of the road as international trade route where goods from Egypt were brought across Persia (unnamed in the poem). The contested, ultimately unidentifiable nationality of the highway is further emphasized by the epigraph that heads the poem, lines from the famous twentieth-century Iraqi poet Al-Jawahiri. While **Here Bullet** is obviously the creation of the mind of an American soldier, his empathy is not limited to those of his own nationality or military side. One poem, *Trowel,* shows a scarred Kurdish-Iraqi veteran smoothing builder's mud over a bullet pocked wall: "Hussein's arm is scarred/elbow to wrist from the long war with Iran" (l. 4-5). The narrator shows deep empathy with the veteran's experience:

> the cement
> an appeasement which Hussein pauses over,
> waiting out his hand's familiar tremor,
> then burying the lead, its signatures
> like dirt-filled pockets of bone
> which he smoothes over and over. (l. 9-14)

Nationalist propaganda claims that the otherness of the foreigner renders his consciousness alien to the Westerner, like the dehumanized "Japs" of World War II propaganda, or the "gooks" that American soldiers derided during the Vietnam War. Turner's narrator gives an alternative soldier's experience, not nationally bounded, but common to all inwardly or outwardly wounded veterans of wars.

Published in 2010, Turner's second collection **Phantom Noise** shows by its title and contents that the poetic

speaker has shifted his focus from the soldier's immediate experience of wartime Iraq to the point of view of a veteran returned home. The first, offset poem, *VA Hospital Confessional*, parallels *A Soldier's Arabic* from **Here Bullet** in its placement as the lead poem of the collection. *VA Hospital Confessional*, however, adds a third layer of time to the doubled consciousness of the soldier in Iraq: the triple time of memory as past, present, and future. The first lines tell the whole story:

Each night is different. Each night the same.
Sometimes I pull the trigger. Sometimes I don't.
When I pull the trigger, he often just stands there,
gesturing, as if saying, Aren't you ashamed? (l. 1-4).

In this eternal present in which every night ultimately belongs to the "same" time, both the past and the future fill the space of "difference": each night is also "different." In other words, in the ongoing present of the soldier's consciousness, many variations on the soldier's dream allow the soldier to mark the passing of time and to anticipate (or dread) future variations of the dream.

The clear message of the poems is that the altered sense of time belongs only to the veteran's consciousness:

Cash registers open and slide shut
with a sound of machine guns being charged.
Dead soldiers are laid out at the registers,
on the black conveyor belts,
and people in line still reach for their wallets. (*Lowe's*)

The soldier experiences the mechanistic operations of "normal" American time as an uncaring violence—Americans seem to be endorsing a soulless clockwork time used to buy more dead soldiers. The whole of **Phantom Noise** is an exploration of the overflowing of time in the traumatized veteran's consciousness, as the narrator recounts scenes of violence from his childhood in the 1970s, stories he has been told of those who died before he was born, entire scenes from past wartime, told in the present tense, and events from recent and ancient history.

The hallmark of all the poems is the narrator's inability, or refusal, to keep his focus on the orderly time and space of twenty-first century American life. In *Al-A'imma Bridge*, the narrator gives one of his largest panoramic views of time and traumatic history. Turner shows victims of war falling from the bridge over time:

they fall beside Shatha and Cantara and Sabeen,
Hakim, Askari, and Gabir—unraveling years and memory.

Toward the end of the poem, a kind of summation of the collection appears:

Gilgamesh can do nothing, knows that each life is the world
Dying anew, each body the deep pull of currents below, lost
And lost within each—the subtle, the sublime, the horrific,
The mundane, the tragic, the humorous and erotic—lost,
Unstudied in textbooks, courses on mathematics, the
equations quantifying fear,
Or the stoppage of time this eternal moment creates,
Unwritten history, forgotten in American hallways, but still—

The line breaks on this "yet/still" moment in time, and then the narrator continues, "give them flowers," an imperative that not only brings to mind cross-cultural mourning customs, but also possibly suggests the European-British literary tradition of representing poetry itself as a gift of flowers for the intended recipient. Here, Turner's poetic flowers do not lay the dead to rest in a beautified past, but instead exist as possible but tentative signs of ongoing or future value or meaning: "flowers that may light the darkness/as they [the dead] march deeper into the earth."

One diagnostic commonplace about traumatized war veterans is that they lose their empathy with others. Turner's poetry shows that for the American soldier in a postnational world, empathy is not eliminated, but rather unbound from its previous national and temporal limitations. While the soldier may experience this unbinding of feeling as traumatic, he also experiences it as true. In this way posttraumatic consciousness comes to challenge nationalist ideologies of the self and of patriotically limited feeling.

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Lori Adrien Roper *has been teaching English literature for eight years in schools located in Vienna, VA, Warren, NJ and Chatham, NJ. In each of these schools, Mrs. Roper has brought a dynamic, sophisticated approach to teaching and learning in the English classroom. As a student, Lori Roper, as a result of a commitment to diligence, continually met with success when focusing her efforts on creativity and expression. Yet what distinguishes Mrs. Roper is not only her accomplishments in the classroom as educator and student, but how in addition to teaching and learning, Mrs. Roper has been engaged in an on-going battle against the proliferation of ignorant, intolerant and racist ideas and experiences that fester rampantly in the American classroom. Her unique perspective of this calamity is drawn from her unique experiences as the only black person in the classroom both as teacher and as student, which have punctuated her life.*

Mrs. Roper is equally committed to educating students about the arts. During her three year tenure at Chatham High School, she has given life to a moribund literary magazine entitled PULP, *transformed a defunct poetry festival into an event featuring over 90 student performances with an attendance of over 500 students and faculty (which is half of the population of CHS). Mrs. Roper's work has been both widely and highly regarded by the press, CHS faculty and students as well as the Chatham community at large. In addition, Mrs. Roper created an open mic series entitled PULP Jam Open Mic Night, to serve as a fundraiser to support the publication of the CHS literary magazine. Likewise, in an on-going effort to enhance the meaningful experience of the students in her classroom, Mrs. Roper created the Chatham High School Guest Writer Series to provide honorariums to poet laureate, singer/song writers, members of Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and Fulbright Scholars who provided writing workshops for Mrs. Roper Honors English 12 and English 10 classes. Mrs. Roper was able to fund this program through a grant from ING Financial Services. The award, entitled the ING Unsung Heroes Award for Excellence in Education, was given for her fervent commitment to education and expression and her undaunted approach to engaging students in the study of literature and writing through a critical thoughtful approach which provides a catalyst for creative expression.*

Making War to Create Love: Lessons the United States Military Can Teach American Schools about Combating Exclusion and Racism.

By Lori Adrien Roper

Will V-Day Be Me-Day Too?
Langston Hughes

Over There,
World War II.

I've seen my buddy lying
Where he fell.
I've watched him dying
I promised him that I would try
To make our land a land
Where his son could be a man--
And there'd be no Jim Crow birds
Left in our sky.

Here in my own, my native land,
Will the Jim Crow laws still stand?
Will Dixie lynch me still
When I return?
Or will you comrades in arms
From the factories and the farms,
Have learned what this war
Was fought for us to learn?

WILL V-DAY BE ME-DAY, TOO?
That's what I want to know.

Sincerely,
GI Joe.

"Sweating, stinking together with everyone, every man has one man's life in his hands and that is what washes all the baggage from home away. When you are at war, you are fighting for your friends, not for your country. The daily demands of war create brotherhood and eradicate racism. And that is the beauty of the military," said Major Ronald Deloatch on a pleasant summer afternoon at his pristine home, a blue colonial in suburban Central, NJ. When I arrived the Major was polishing his already gleaming windows. The organization of fine accessories, positioned in precision, answered my questions about how an officer lives at home. As began a down and dirty discussion about race, the military, and education, we were surrounded by perfect order, down to a fragrant aroma being invisibly released throughout the Major's home. Major Deloatch and I taught together for several years at Chatham High School, a predominantly white, wealthy, lauded school in Chatham, NJ. Major Deloatch teaches history at the high school and we often created our own think tank during our shared study hall duty in the crowded cafeteria. The Major, for instance, shared the response of a student who described the African Diaspora as a psychological disorder suffered by slaves when entering the new world, illuminating the marginalized mindsets of the students.

Our conversation continued with candid comments about our individual struggles with exclusion. "Lori, I'm a little tired of being The Black History Teacher." I knew exactly what he meant; I was always "The Black English Teacher."

"I would think you'd be known as the history teacher who just fought in Afghanistan." I responded. The main concern with being identified first by your race and then by your occupation is that it immediately excludes you from the collective of teachers in the school. Somehow, being a Black teacher makes you an exception, an exception for which you often have to provide an explanation. Life as a hyphenated American drops a blockade between the individual and any chance at inclusion in every situation and quite often, life for a person of color becomes a confidence course fraught with hurdles emblazoned by prejudice. These hurdles were particularly high in a place content to mirror itself.

A colleague of mine in the English department at CHS once stated that the students in Chatham are "quite comfortable with their whiteness." We concurred that this security emerges not only from the lack of diversity in the township itself, but also because the students are never challenged with understanding the history and stories of people other than those who look like and have lived lives just like their own. F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his essay *The Crack Up* states "the test of a first–rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." Despite the high school's claims of promoting academic excellence, the curriculum at CHS, just as at many schools in the country, is designed by Caucasian men and is a white-washed homogeneity. Instead of presenting students with enriching scholarship, which celebrates academic rigor, they spoon feed students literature written by dead white men. Perhaps this behavior is an attempt to vicariously immortalize themselves, since they too will one day be dead white men. There is no valor in pollinating the minds of children with ignorance. Nonetheless, class after class of school children enter the world with antiquated notions about race and equality, notions that lead to an often condescending and unappreciative attitude about culture, diversity, and history. Students learn in the classroom first exactly how to dehumanize others and how to profit from the marginalized.

William James in his essay *The Moral Equivalent of War* argues:

"If now–and this is my idea- there were, instead of military conscription, a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the Nature (or the status quo), the injustice would tend to be evened out, the numerous other goods of the commonwealth would follow. The military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the growing fiber of the people. No one would remain blind as the luxurious classes now are blind.…

Richard Wright explores the toxic fallout, when white students who live a "luxurious" life, blind about their own ignorance, thoughtlessly display their lack of understanding of what it means to be, for instance, poor or, for instance, black and poor. Bigger Thomas, the protagonist in **Native Son** works as the driver for a wealthy white man, Mr. Dalton, who owns the slum in which Bigger's family barely survives. On a bleak, snowy, winter evening, Bigger chauffeurs Mr. Dalton's daughter Mary and her boyfriend Jan on their date night. Mary and Jan are well educated in the traditional sense, yet they brashly display their blindness in a scene stewing with ignorance.

"Say Jan, do you know any negroes, I want to meet some."

"I don't know any very well. But you'll meet them when you're in the party."

"They have so much emotion! What a people! If we could ever get them going…"

"And their songs-the spirituals! Aren't they marvelous?"

Bigger saw her face turn to him

"Say Bigger, can you sing?"

"I can't sing." He said.

"Aw Bigger," she said pouting. She tilted her head, closed her eyes and opened her mouth."

"Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home…"

Jan joined in and Bigger smiled derisively.

"Hell, that ain't the tune he thought."

Bigger is voiceless in this scene due in large part to his class, his race, and his rage. Bigger is trapped. Wright presents a warning about the perilous outcome that can ensue when the voices of blacks and the experiences of blacks are negated in the story of this country.

When students witness the hard fought battle for self-identification through the perspective of literary characters, they gain greater clarity about themselves and humanity at large. And result is unity and a circulation of energy and understanding whichpours from the wellspring of understanding into society.

In the military, training certainly creates a collected consciousness through their acknowledgement of diversity and difference. The military has somehow managed to manifest the ideal: E Pluribus Unum. Our schools have yet to do the same.

H.G. Wells summed it up:

Military organization is the most peaceful of activities. When the contemporary man steps from the street, of clamorous insincere advertisements, push, education and underselling and intermittent employment into the barrack-yard, he steps on to a higher social plane into an atmosphere of service and co-operation and of infinitely more honorable emulations.

The task at hand for educators is generating a luminous horizon of equanimity in which students may indulge in the energizing enlightenment, which illuminates from understanding and inquiry. The pacific atmosphere and compassion among troops in the barrack-yard needs replication in order to generate and sustain unity and understanding in the classroom.

Many schools across the country create a type of social battlefield through a project called "Challenge Day." During this event, students from a variety of racial, ethnic and social groups within a high school are challenged to reveal who they really are in order to dissolve the ignorance that often propagates bullying, hatred, racism and psychological warfare in high schools across the country. The hope is to create the elevated social plane Wells describes. Students' typically antiquated notions about one another are challenged and ultimately, as the students get to know one another, misunderstanding dissolves. This program is, essentially a high school version of sociological boot camp. This type of compassionate boundary breaking, which happens in the barracks or, in the case of Challenge day, a high school gymnasium, may make its way into the classroom through the development of inclusive explorations of the human experience. We will then see development in the attitudes of our students and the future leaders of this country will create the changes that we need as we continue to strive for freedom for everyone.

As my discussion with the Major DeLoach continued into evening, he revealed his thoughts about creating a Challenge Day – such as the implementation of curriculum allowing students to explore history and literature in a more authentic manner. Major Deloatch states flatly, "Lori, what we need to do is change the dynamics of the way that these kids think. Hold on, let me show you something, I hope this doesn't freak you out." Ron reappears with his weapon, a M-4 Carbine. "Lori, when you sleep with one of these, you gain perspective." Your friends are your family. I have a whole other family outside of relatives. Whether you are commanding troops or on the frontline fighting, once you are issued a weapon your perspectives about life changes, things like race, ethnicity, color, don't matter, friends matter." Clearly we can't hand kids guns in order to instigate understanding, but, Ron's idea of using the military as a means to establish changes in attitude, leads me to question, "Do we need to make war to create love?"

The military, somehow, has managed to generate an understanding and community of respect which breeds respect, admiration and love. Unfortunately, American schooling has yet to manage to do this despite the amazing accessibility of information to counter ignorance. I mention to Major Deloatch that a good number of students who graduate from CHS return to Chatham. He confirms this stating "The kids leave Chatham without any world view. They come back to the womb, the bubble that they grew up in because they do not have the skills or the desire to live in the real world. There is no way in the world you can continue the schooling that they receive here and not expect recidivism. These kids aren't taught the skills that they need to survive outside of this bubble."

Encouraging students to question and inquire is crucial. Henry Louis Gates describes this as "the exchange between discursive universes." Ultimately, the determination of meaning arises through the interpretation of a convergence of disparate voices which, when given equal time for exploration converge harmoniously to tell the truth about history, literature and life. Certainly, it is the responsibility of every curriculum writer in this country to provide this experience for our children. The brave, responsible educator welcomes the voices of minorities to penetrate the bubble of the zeit geist so that students can engage in thoughtful, inquisitive, meaningful conversation.

When juxtaposing Caucasian and African American literature, for instance, we regard the confrontation between two disparate modes of expression. This conflict reveals the social and cultural conflict, which has existed between black and white since the middle passage.

As long as the voices of non-whites remain silent, then the old boy's club that comprises the majority of school boards across the county, will continue to create new generations of old boys and girls with the sole purpose of keeping their power and money intact. These students, who return to the nest, will one day be, because of the achievements of their parents and the privilege ascribed by their race and class, become leaders in whatever field they choose. These leaders will be adults who see diversity as a threat to their way of life. The likely consequence of this is, that they most likely will not have a compassionate perspective of the disenfranchised. They will not have an understanding of the philosophical, spiritual and ethical perspectives of anyone who is not White and upwardly mobile. This will keep, as Langston Hughes states it, "Jim Crow birds left in our sky." Racism, economic disenfranchisement and marginalization will persist and the status quo will remain ostensibly intact, because these children have been taught that exclusion equals safety.

Let's face it. The frontline against ignorance and the struggle for freedom lies not only on the battlefield, but also in the classroom. Just as the military makes serious efforts to dissolve issues of race and as of late, sexual preference, so too must schools create curriculum that combats exclusion. Just as troops are brought together in barracks to form a brotherhood, to unite and fight for the mores, which define our nation, so too must our students come together to confront the same old same old. Children must learn to gain an appreciation and understanding of culture in order to develop their consciousness. They will then become as Emerson puts it, endogenous and able to thrive no matter what climate in which they find themselves. Certainly, the fact that this most often happens when our young people sleep with a gun is tragic. When students and teachers brandish arms against ignorance then, then they will be less likely to find guns and shoot each other.

The question of equal recognition that Hughes presents in his poem V-Day, will remain a lofty ideal for students of color and those strangled by poverty, until schools, genuinely create an environment that is inclusive, authentic, and accountable. The universal values of courage, integrity and honor often only displayed on the barracks or on the battlefield can be drawn out of students as they confront the truth. Robert Frost said "More than once I should have lost myself to radicalism….Originality and initiative are what I ask for my Country."

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Love and War in Paul Louis LeBlanc's The Festival of the Corn or The Heroism of Poucha-Houmma

By Nancy Dixon

According to the **Dictionary of Louisiana Biography and the editor and translator of The Festival of the Young Corn or The Heroism of Poucha-Houmma**, Mathé Allain, this is the earliest extant play performed in Louisiana at the Théâtre de la Rue St. Pierre (now Le Petit) in New Orleans on February 15, 1809. It was published five years later in 1814, and its author, Paul Louis LeBlanc, according to most accounts, died the year after its publication, in 1815.

LeBlanc was born in Crest, France, to Balthazar LeBlanc in 1734, and he tells us in his introduction to the play that his father died when he was only thirteen years old and that soon thereafter he lost his family fortune. Like many young men of prominent families no longer graced with the attending riches, he joined the French military and was sent to America in 1750. He states that he lived among the "Tchacta" Indians for seven years and that he had only been in Louisiana for a few days when he heard that Poucha-Houmma, the hero of his play, had sacrificed his life for his son, Cala-be. Almost sixty years later, LeBlanc writes this play, although he does state in his preface that he talked with Cala-be several times over the years about the death of his father.

LeBlanc was a devoted French subject until the Spanish rule of the Louisiana Territory in 1762. When the first Spanish governor, Ulloa arrived in New Orleans in 1766, he was not well-received and two years later the citizens rebelled. LeBlanc then worked with acting French governor Aubry to help Spain regain control of the territory. Finally, in 1803, when the French sold the territory to the United States, LeBlanc then pledged his allegiance to that country. However, throughout his military career no matter where his allegiance lay, he was called on all the administrations to work with the Native Americans in Louisiana.

In his introduction to LeBlanc's play, Allain writes that since New Orleans newspapers of the time did not review plays, there remains no record of how the play was received by the audience. However, he does translate the theater's enthusiastic announcement of the play on February 15, 1809 in Le Moniteur de la Louisiane: "A trait of heroic fatherly love is the subject of this interesting work. The most respected law among the savages is based on reciprocity: a murderer is punished by death. Cala-be, the son of Poucha-houmma, the chief of the Hoummas, killed a Tchacta while drunk. The law condemned him, but the father sacrificed his life to redeem that of his son" (i). Allain seems to believe that since there is no extant record of the performance the audience reception may have been rather cool. He also states that Governor Claiborne sent a manuscript of the play to then President Thomas Jefferson, but since it does not appear in the 1959, five-volume, **Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson** that Jefferson, like the New Orleans audience, was not impressed by the play (ii). However, the play is listed among Jefferson's papers on the 2004 website **The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series**, thus far a twenty-three volume online collection, and although we do not know what Jefferson thought of LeBlanc's play, or if he even read it, we do know that he thought enough of it to keep it among his papers.

Readers today will certainly find LeBlanc's writing style, the twelve-syllable alexandrine, to be inelegant, but it was the most popular measure in French poetry at the time. More problematic is the slow moving plot of the five-act play. All critics agree that it adheres—perhaps too rigidly--to the Aristotelian unities, but it does so by sacrificing much of the suspense so vital to dramatic tragedy. The French neo-classical style in which the play is written emphasizes reason over passion, which does not always allow for scintillating drama. Even the alexandrine's main metric principle is stress according to sense, further underscoring the play's reliance on reason.

As far as Aristotle's unity of time is concerned, the play adheres to it closely, as it takes place in one day when the Houma tribe is celebrating the festival of the young corn. Likewise, the play sticks to the unity of time. LeBlanc writes: "The Scene is set in the village of the Hoummas, on one of the banks of the Micha-Sepe" (8). As Allain notes, the real action of the play takes place in only two of the five acts, Acts III and IV, and that in Acts I and II "the action . . . is foreshadowed, foreseen, and forecast . . . then mulled over for an entire act of recapitulation and conclusion," in Act V (v). Therefore, the plot is predictable as is the formulaic characterization.

Poucha-Houmma, the wise and noble chief, makes the ultimate sacrifice of his own life for that of his rash, young son, Cala-be, who capitulates rather too readily to his father's selfless plan. In fact, once Cala-be is apprised of his father's intent in Act III, Scene iii, he speaks only ten lines in protest of the plan before rationalizing, "Since I betrayed the gods and deserved their anger,/ I must at least obey the will of my father" (31). He does not appear again until after his father

has been killed.

More interesting than the style or plot of the play is much of its historical value. As LeBlanc notes, this play is based on true events, and he himself was present when the governor's Chocktaw interpreter delivered the official report of Chief Poucha-Houmma's death in exchange for his son's life, so LeBlanc has third-hand information at best. Cala-be, drunk on "the burning liquid. . . ./Put an end to the days of a Tchacta, a friend," and as custom dictated, the Tchactas would exact revenge by taking Cala-be's life (20). Alcohol and drunkenness play a large role in New Orleans literature and in the city's culture itself, even today. Pat O'Brien's serves more alcohol than any bar in the world, and Bourbon Street is world famous. It is still surprising to discover that liquor played such an important part in this city's literary history from the very beginning. But as ignoble as Cala-be might seem, his father is truly the man of "primitive integrity" of whom LeBlanc writes in his dedication (3).

LeBlanc dedicates his play to Madame De Laussat, the wife of Pierre-Clement De Laussat, the French emissary chosen by Napoleon to reclaim Louisiana for France.

De Laussat arrived in New Orleans in March of 1803 for the transfer of Louisiana from Spain, an act which was delayed until November of that year, and the following month he officially represented France in the transfer of Louisiana to the United States. Naturally, he and his wife Marie were feted in grand New Orleans style, and she must have made quite an impression on LeBlanc, for he dedicated his play to her some six years later. And having the support of a popular diplomat's wife can only help to insure the success of the play.

According to LeBlanc, Madame De Laussat shares his admiration for the Native Americans in Louisiana. He recalls her generosity to "a family of these unhappy people who are called barbaric, whom prejudice rejects, whom pride despises, but whom a soul like yours appreciates and pities" (2). LeBlanc even goes so far as to blame the Europeans for any suffering these tribes have sustained, and entreats her to "be their advocate" (3). He writes this play in order to restore them to their former greatness, to proclaim their "generous hospitality" and "most commendable virtues," and he declares that Chief Poucha-Houmma embodies just those admirable qualities that "foreign customs corrupted" (3). In his play, LeBlanc also writes of some of the dubious Indian customs at the time, particularly the festival of the young corn, the play's alternate title.

LeBlanc describes that festival in his preface:

Its object was to offer to the Sun the first fruits of their crops. The ceremony of the day consisted essentially of blowing flour made from the new grain three times toward the East. Then they ate some of the flour and danced till the next day. This festival, generally marked by great joy, toward the end became quite unpleasant for the children since they, who otherwise were never beaten no matter what faults they committed, were then cruelly flogged by their own mothers. . . . Alas! So does custom tyrannize over helpless men in the four parts of the world. (6)

The dramatic staging of this part of the festival reads much like his description in his preface, and he even mentions his own explanation in the stage directions as the mothers leave the stage to beat their children: (The women leave and take with them their smallest children. A little later they should be heard screaming from pain, and all the actors on stage should manifest a sadness mixed with awe. In the Preface I spoke of this dreadful ceremony.) (26). In fact, this is the only action in the play until the final act. The first four acts are comprised entirely of conversation between the major players.

LeBlanc admits that the Louisiana Native Americans are far from perfect and states in his preface that he is more interested in presenting the truth than suppressing objectionable practices, such as flogging their children for no reason other than the fact that, in the words of Poucha-Houmma, "Our fathers have followed this custom/Ruthlessly prescribed by a grim prophecy" (26). Similarly, Poucha-Houmma's fate is sealed.

Even the central act of the play takes place offstage In Act V. Poucha-Houmma is beheaded, but other than the bloody shirt that is thrown on the stage by the Houma scout, Nachouba (Wolf), the entire scene is recounted to the chief's son, Cala-be and his brother, Tchilita-be. However, this treatment of Poucha-Houmma's murder is much more in keeping with the times. Audiences then were not accustomed to the guts and gore that seem to be de rigueur in drama today, and the second and third hand accounts of the murder, are in keeping with the way LeBlanc himself heard of the event.

In the end, LeBlanc's adherence to the truth has historical value, to be sure, but that does not always make for an interesting dramatic performance. Indeed, modern readers might find this play often difficult to read, but nonetheless fascinating. Moreover, what LeBlanc has created is a remarkable historical play that truly captures the European impression of the Native American community during the earliest days of French occupation in South Louisiana. Even in times of war between the tribes, there was a code to be followed and reason was the order of the day.

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"The Soul of Mars': New Orleans Sheet Music during the Civil War
By Florence M. Jumonville, Ph.D.

From the beginning, the procession of United States history has marched to the rhythm of music. The popular airs that accompanied this nation's development reported and commented on current affairs both great and small. In addition to remarking on the events of their era, these melodies provided entertainment, rallied patriotism, applauded new fads and innovations, and honored the famous and the obscure. Published in the form of sheet music, they were widely disseminated to an eager and appreciative public.

The publication of sheet music began to emerge in America during the second half of the 19th century and by 1800 had been established securely in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. As the frontier moved westward, sheet music followed it to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, and other towns. New Orleans, founded by the French in 1718 and during the early nineteenth century the governmental as well as the cultural capital of Louisiana, was among them. During the 1830s, music publishing in the Crescent City began in earnest. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, an estimated ten thousand pieces of sheet music, chiefly piano and vocal scores, issued from New Orleans publishing houses. Especially during and after the Civil War (1861-1865), the output of these publishers exceeded that of most competitors in distant parts of the country and surpassed the production of their counterparts in other Southern cities.

No previous event had so firmly grasped New Orleanians' emotions as did the Civil War. As throngs of men volunteered and the women they left behind fought privation and federal invasion, music—"the soul of Mars"—accompanied them to battle, both against Union troops at the front and against fear and despair at home. Music seems not, however, to have been intended as an instrument of propaganda; rather, it developed spontaneously in the emotional embrace of the people as a powerful weapon against their common foe. Soldiers were sustained by melodic reminders of home and loved ones, and camp tunes helped to pass the time. In song civilians found an expression for their unrealized dreams of victory, and all southerners were heartened by the promise of peace. Music inspired by the Confederate cause obviously could not be obtained from publishers in the North, and to Southern publishing firms fell the responsibility for creating an indigenous musical literature.

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(Editor's note: This is a synopsis of the paper presented by Dr. Jumonville during Words & Music, 2010.)

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When to make peace, and when to kill: A Jungian reading of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

By Jason Ferris

"If your opponent has a conscience, then follow Ghandi and non-violence. But if your enemy has no conscience like Hitler, then follow Bonhoeffer." – Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

People have long been fascinated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His life combines many different appealing roles: the mysterious spy; the pious mystic; the public intellectual; the man of resistance; the martyr. These are not superficial categories. Bonhoeffer's statue resides in Westminster Abbey, where he is one of 10 martyrs honored for their stands against tyranny and oppression.

Yet even among other famous martyrs, Bonhoeffer's popularity is unique. Sixty years after his death, there are now both a documentary and a feature film about him, several new biographies, not to mention a multitude of internet sites with discussions and debates about his legacy. More surprising than the level of his popularity, however, is the diversity of it. Both liberals and conservatives, the religious and the secular, passionately claim him as their own.

Nor are any of these groups necessarily wrong to claim him. Bonhoeffer's ideas were so far ranging and nuanced that he can legitimately be used in widely varying contexts. He was an advocate of social justice and was trained in modern Biblical criticism, which could put him squarely in the liberal camp. Yet he was also a passionately orthodox follower of Christ, whose book Discipleship has become a classic text for conservative Christians.

It is therefore difficult to locate Bonhoeffer on the typical theological spectrum form liberal to conservative. This difficulty is embodied nowhere more clearly than in the act that has become Bonhoeffer's most enduring legacy: his decision to join the conspiracy to kill Adolf Hitler. The fact that Bonhoeffer was a Christian pacifist makes his decision all the more complicated and intriguing.

There have been many attempts to explain Bonhoeffer's decision to abandon his pacifist principles and to support the plot to kill Hitler. These include historical, theological, and psychological analyses. In this paper, I take a more novel approach, using the insights of Carl Jung's post-war writings on social ethics.

Bonhoeffer's life cannot be considered apart from war. He is one of those individuals who are born in a particularly important time in history and whose fate is inextricably bound up in the vicissitudes of that era. In Bonhoeffer's case, this was the intersection of World War II, the murderous tyranny of Nazism, and the German church's collusion with the Nazis. All of which led to Bonhoeffer being murdered in a SS prison,

allegedly upon the order of Hitler himself.

As the Chinese saying goes, Bonhoeffer was cursed to have lived in "interesting times." It was Bonhoeffer's unfortunate fate to have lived during Nazi Germany; because of this, he ultimately paid with his life. Yet the pressures of his age forced him to crystallize an ethical vision that might never have emerged in a different context. It is this vision, forged in the darkest of times, that continues to make Bonhoeffer both fascinating and relevant.

The broad outlines of his life are as follows. Bonhoeffer was from a successful, well-educated aristocratic family living in Berlin. His decision to study theology was an unwelcome surprise to his high-achieving family, who thought that religion was an outdated and unimportant part of modern society. Dietrich's father Karl was one of the most famous psychiatrists in Germany and the other Bonhoeffers were academics, scientists, and public figures.

They believed in the life of the mind. In fact, so did Dietrich, who rose quickly to the top of his class, graduating summa cum laude from the University of Berlin and earning his doctorate at the age of 21. Here was a brilliant, sophisticated young theologian, using modern methods of philosophy and criticism, praised by his professors and ready to embark on a life of teaching and research. At this point in his life his relationship to the Christian faith was primarily intellectual. Although he served briefly as a pastoral assistant after graduation, he would later say that at this point in his life, he "had not yet become a Christian."1

This would soon change because of a year that Bonhoeffer spent in New York City, from 1930-1931. He moved to New York as a post-doctoral student and teaching fellow at Union Theological Seminary, which is located at the intersection of the Upper

West Side and Harlem. Bonhoeffer made two relationships there that would fundamentally change the course of his life.

One of these was his relationship to the French pastor Jean Lasserre. Lasserre was a committed pacifist who based his belief in non-violence on the words that Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers." Lasserre convinced Bonhoeffer that this passage was not some vague metaphorical philosophy, but was rather a direct commandment from Jesus to every Christian to always practice peace.

On one occasion, Laserre took him to see the film, **All**

Quiet on the Western Front, which at the time was unparalleled in its realistic portrayal of the violence of war.

According to Lasserre, both he and Bonhoeffer were greatly disturbed by the film and became more deeply committed to their mutual sense of Christian pacifism.2 In fact, Bonhoeffer was so convinced by Laserre's argument that he tried several times to travel to India to study with Mahatma Gandhi. One of many examples of Bonhoeffer's writings on non-violence comes from his classic book **Discipleship: Jesus**, however, tells us that it is just because we live in the world, and just because the world is evil, that the precept of non-resistance must be put into practice…The only way to overcome evil is to let it run itself to a standstill because it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames.[3]

But there was another experience that was even more important in Bonhoeffer's formation as a Christian. This was his awakening to the struggle of black Americans and, as a contravening force, to the power of the black church in America. Bonhoeffer was introduced to the black church by Frank Fisher, an African-American student at Union Seminary. Fisher took Bonhoeffer to the Abyssinian Baptist Church on 138th Street, which was famous for its wonderful choir and for the inspiring preaching of its pastor, the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell. Rev. Powell introduced Bonhoeffer to certain theological ideas that later become associated with Bonhoeffer, such as the idea of "cheap grace." But more importantly,

Bonhoeffer was exposed to the enormous emotional power of the black church service. A musician himself, Bonhoeffer fell in love with black spirituals. He also sat in, week after week, listening to Powell's sermons, which Bonhoeffer called "rapturous."

In the black church, Bonhoeffer learned to understand the Bible "from below." He later wrote to a friend: There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learned to see the great events of history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short from the perspective of those who suffer . . . This perspective from below must not become the particular possession of those who are eternally dissatisfied; rather, we must do justice to life in all its dimensions from a higher satisfaction, whose foundation is beyond any talk of, "from below" or "from above." This is the way in which we may affirm it.[4]

Bonhoeffer is saying that in Harlem he learned that the meaning of Christianity was intrinsically related to the fate of the oppressed. In other words, one cannot really understand Christianity unless one is able to look through the experience of those who are suffering, as the black community was in Harlem.

This experience fundamentally changed Bonhoeffer's intellectual understanding of theology. But more importantly, it made him a Christian. He later reflected that upon his return to Germany, he was transformed, from "phraseology to reality." Christianity was no longer simply an academic exercise; it was a force that had taken hold of his entire being.

A major effect of this transformation is that Bonhoeffer began to fight for the oppressed citizens of his own country: namely, German Jews. He was one of very few church leaders who not only perceived the danger of Nazism, but actually took steps to subvert it. Most of his fellow church leaders, even those who may have disliked Hitler, nonetheless took the Hitler Oath, pledging their loyalty to the Fuhrer. Bonhoeffer never did.

Throughout the 1930s, Bonhoeffer publicly fought the Nazis. He spoke out openly against the "Aryan paragraph" that prohibited non-Aryans from serving as clergy.

On a radio broadcast, he criticized the very notion of a "Fuhrer," arguing that Christians should have only one Fuhrer – Jesus Christ. The Nazis responded to Bonhoeffer's opposition, first banning him from teaching at his university, then banning him from even entering Berlin, then banning him completely from publishing and speaking in public.

But at a certain point, Bonhoeffer realized that his non-violent protests were not working. He decided that he needed to do more. Through family connections, he joined the Abwehr, a military intelligence office that was secretly the center of anti-Hitler resistance. Here Bonhoeffer learned the full extent of Nazi crimes against the Jews. At this point, he advocated Hitler's death, gave the plot to kill Hitler his pastoral approval, and worked furiously as a secret agent to help and protect those who would actually place jthe hidden bombs that were meant to kill Hitler.

There were many failed assassination attempts, the last of which was discovered. Bonhoeffer, who had already been arrested and imprisoned, was connected with the plot-Three weeks before the war ended, he was murdered by hanging at the Flossenburg concentration camp.

Among the many questions that remain, one stands out: What gave Bonhoeffer such moral insight, when so many others were in denial? Here is where the theories of Carl Jung may be instructive. Jung is best known for his theories about the individual human psyche. But toward the end of his life, Jung became deeply interested in social ethics. He too had lived in Europe during the War and had seen the crimes of the Nazis. But because Jung survived the War, he was also able to see the post-war European landscape that remained: a world divided between East and West, communist and democratic.

According to Jung, many of the problems that flourished under the Nazis continued to exist, albeit under a different guise. What Nazism, communism, and modern democracies all share in common, for Jung, is "mass-mindedness." This is the condition in which the individual person is reduced to an anonymous, like-thinking unit and is then easily manipulated by the few people who rule the system.

It seems obvious that this was the case in Nazi Germany. It also seems obvious when talking about communism, a system that limits all manner of individual physical and creative freedoms. But Jung was equally harsh on Western democracies, which we might ordinarily consider supportive of the individual. Jung's problem with the secular

West is its scientific rationalism, which, he claimed, reduced the individual to a soulless statistic.

"One of the chief factors responsible for psychological mass-mindedness is scientific rationalism, which robs the individual of his foundations and his dignity. As a social unit he has lost his individuality and become a mere abstract number in the bureau of statistics . . . from this point of view it seems positively absurd to go on talking about the value or meaning of the individual."[5]

This state of affairs has serious ethical repercussions. Jung argues that without the freedom of individual thought, there is also no individual responsibility. When moral responsibility is collectivized, as in communist systems, it absolves the individual of his or her own moral responsibility. Therefore, the only way to withstand "massmindedness" is to have a reference point that cannot be controlled by an institution like the government. This reference point must necessarily be fixed somewhere outside the domain of the State.

For Jung, the one human institution that promises such an other-worldly reference point is religion. Religion, therefore, can be a "counter-balance to mass-mindedness." But there is a catch: the individual is unlikely to have a religious experience in a church!

According to Jung, most churches have become institutions of mass-mindedness themselves. They promote a series of doctrines and creeds that do not make sense to the modern individual. Moreover, by insisting that the individual conform to their creeds, they limit individual experience in the same way as the State.

Creeds, no matter how magnanimous, fail to free the individual to make ethical choices. What makes the individual free is experience. It is not ethical principles, however lofty, or creeds, however orthodox, that lay the foundations for the freedom and autonomy of the individual, but simply and solely the empirical awareness, the incontrovertible experience of an intensely personal, reciprocal relationship between man and an extramundane authority which acts as a counterpoise to the "world" and its "reason."[6]

I would argue that Bonhoeffer's relationship with such an authority began in the richly aesthetic environment of the black church in Harlem. It was this experience – more than any doctrine or prior ethical principle – that gave Bonhoeffer the freedom to exercise his autonomy within the mass-mindedness of the Nazi State.

Bonhoeffer spent nearly two years in SS prisons before he was executed. From his small cell, he produced his most impassioned, searching writings. In one particular letter, he makes a statement that is a powerful parallel to Jung's theories. Here Bonhoeffer articulates precisely what Jung argues – that it is the relationship with an extramundane factor, not principles, that is the ground of ethical decision-making.

Only the one for whom the final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all these, when in faith and sole allegiance to God he is called to obedient and responsible action: the responsible person, whose life will be nothing but an answer to God's question and call.[7]

Bonhoeffer's authentic connection to that which he called God gave him the flexibility to adjust to circumstances on the ground. He was bound to neither the church, nor the State, nor to science. Rather, he followed the quiet voice that spoke to him through his experiences of fellowship with the oppressed. It was this voice that told him to choose the lesser of two evils, to kill the murderous Hitler.

1 Bethge, **Dietrich Bonhoeffer,** 204

2 *Newsletter,* International Bonhoeffer Society, no. 31 (1986)

3 **Discipleship**, 144, 142

4 **Letters from Prison**, 17

5 **The Undiscovered Self**, 9-10

6 Jung, **The Undiscovered Self,** 15-16

7 **Letters from Prison**, 5

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Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried: "From Purpose, to Passion, to Perception"

By Arlene Drachslin

In Tim O'Brien's Words & Music 2010 keynote speech, the prolific writer, lecturer, and compassionate father of two young boys, affirms the purpose of war literature, while eloquently illustrating the power inherent in storytelling for the ages, as well as for all ages. To paraphrase O'Brien, storytelling at its finest heals, consoles, helps audiences feel freshly, helps us feel less alone, tells us about ourselves, and binds us to the past and the future in a journey from birth to the grave (O'Brien). The bi-product generated through the art of storytelling is what O'Brien avows to as a "spiritual osmosis" that occurs when stories are received. The pairing of two American literature novels, in this particular "storytelling" case has resulted in an essay entitled, Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** and Tim O'Brien's **The Things They Carried**: "From Purpose, to Passion, to Perception."1 This project, based on Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man**, in connection with Tim O'Brien's **The Things They Carried**, explicates the natural phenomena marked by the main characters' gradual changes when met with harrowing challenges, while in pursuit of their goals, that ultimately moves the protagonists through to survival, in spite of the uncertain, overall psychological outcomes.

The paper explores the conflicts that motivate the protagonists' transitions in Ellison's **Invisible Man** (1952) and O'Brien's **The Things They Carried** (1990) from purpose, to passion, to perception: this journey constitutes survival. The paper focuses on survival of the consciousness via examination of the tangible and intangible things the characters carry with them as highly significant artifacts implemented as catalysts to advance the storyline in these two novels by utilizing a strategic theoretical framework: trauma theory, cultural studies, and psychoanalytic theory. A comparison of these fictionalized stories powerfully illustrates the ways in which the coping mechanisms of survival went against the grain of the cultural forces of the time. Although the protagonists do not perceive themselves as vulnerable, their will to survive remains at risk.

Trauma survivors share a communal bond, especially those survivors who have confronted battle. Ralph Ellison, a WWII Merchant Marine, and Tim O'Brien, a Vietnam Veteran, challenge the dominant ideologies of their respective eras in powerfully written, imaginative narratives. Two novels born of war, **Invisible Man** and **The Things They Carried** project a particular anxiety that resonates with the conscience of a post-modern America. In these narratives, the human condition shaped by cultural reality is defined by social conflict. The essay examines the complexity of human behavior when threatened by traumatic experiences amid the quest for survival and identity. The texts unleash a series of combative episodes that the characters must reckon with to remain alive, despite affliction and compromise. The focus centers on the survival of the protagonists' consciousness by way of the tangible and intangible "things they carried," which function as inescapable artifacts that decisively redefine their identity. O'Brien's and "Ellison's narrator[s] ultimately understand the delicate balance of possibility, chaos, individual will, and societal responsibility; these are "moral" conclusions that prepare [them] to reenter society" in the face of complex realities rooted in American democracy (Busby 75).

In Ellison's **Invisible Man**, in which the narrative is a metaphor for war, and O'Brien's **Things They Carried**, a testament to the Vietnam War experience, the protagonists begin their journeys in a mental state of innocence. The men radically depart from their starting places, under false pretenses, into uncharted territory whereby they gain experience. They find themselves in extremely deplorable destinations replete with tension spurred by battle. For Ellison's **Invisible Man**, his battles are fought against the enemy— bigotry, while O'Brien responds to his nemesis— the Vietnam War. The **Invisible Man** and O'Brien maintain individual purpose all the while knowing that their "[c]ommitment to an ideology requires a leap of faith, each time he commits himself, what he 'leaps' over threatens to destroy him. What [is] learn[ed] ultimately is that [neither the **Invisible Man**, nor O'Brien], will have control over his own life if he tries to play the [mental] game [of war] but not believe in it" (Smith 208). Karin C.A. Bongers, author of **Social Cognition** posits: "Thoughts concerning incomplete tasks or frustrated goals are persistent and powerful and will enter consciousness unintentionally" (263). Bongers hereby maintains a relevant cause for the behavioral changes endured by the protagonists. Moreover, research indicates that these "intrusive thoughts are caused by the heightened accessibility of goal-related concepts and are likely to keep intruding consciousness until the goal is either met or abandoned" (Bongers 263). Consequently, tumultuous realities present in the settings compromise the

characters' ability to maintain their identity and equilibrium in the quest to survive—in which, at times, becomes a seemingly remote goal.

In the face of reality, inner conflict intensifies as their consciousness confronts the external forces of society. Readers are attuned to this phenomenon by the evidence of the tangible "things they carry" throughout the characters' journeys, which become increasingly relevant to their identity and survival. Thus, the tangible things they carry are juxtaposed to the intangible things they carry with them in their fight to overcome adversity. Consequently, the realization of shattered dreams ignites an inner battle: they are at odds with their emotional selves, with whom they have become, while in danger in their physical surroundings, immersed in threatening environments. Physically and emotionally jarred, both men implicitly relinquish "self" for a sense of "otherness" as a result of their own perception of displacement. Alienated, during and after embattlement, the warriors find themselves in the wake of their own shadows. In both works of fiction, the protagonists exchange naivety for maturation that commands a call to duty; namely the will to survive.

Ralph Ellison's 1952, artistically rendered, American novel is situated among the canon of classic, literary works. The intangible things carried are readily apparent as the narrative opens with the Battle Royal, waging physical brutality thrust upon the young, ambitious, college-bound Invisible Man, thus setting in motion harsh realities in store for the protagonist. Battle Royal becomes a horrific event, whereby young black men are symbolically reduced to that of fighting animals. As the story progresses into northward territory, communist rallies and the outbreak of riots become central to the violence that ensues. The Invisible Man—confronted unexpectedly by battle—parallels O'Brien's gutsy chapter, The Rainy River, as O'Brien relinquishes bitter truths upon being drafted into the highly political, raging, senseless Vietnam war—one of many intangibles he carries, as a result, throughout the story. "The problem, [he argues] was that a draft board did not let you choose your war," thus signifying an intense inner conflict (O'Brien 47). The matter at heart resides within the state of human consciousness for the protagonists. The consciousness instinctively internalizes moral conflict, along with the repercussions of physical combat, not to mention the personal relationships forged throughout the narratives to comprise an inventory of the intangibles things carried. Ellison's and O'Brien's warriors not only survive the trauma, but have been most likely catalyzed by emotional and physical injury. John Callahan asserts, "This newfound territory becomes the first stage of the protagonists' development of consciousness" (qtd. in Smith 258). With one eye on reality and the other on conveying truth, the **Invisible Man** concedes, "Perhaps to lose a sense of where you are implies the danger of losing sense of who you are" (Ellison 577). For these protagonists, the ultimate test of character extends itself from the imminent danger of society's war to inheriting post-traumatic stress disorder, asymptomatic of the unavoidable traumatic combative experiences.

The protagonists remain impacted by living in pursuit of their purpose: the will to survive. As for the tangible things carried, Ellison and O'Brien keep their stories alive with vivid imagery in the anthropomorphizing of objects, all the while depicting historical accuracies. Ellison infuses the novel with images of physical art to define the essence of humanity thusly influencing American culture. Ellison's rich, complex artifacts symbolically convey inescapable stereotypes of Negroes, represented in 20th century America. The historically bound artistic images and literary devices, such as Sambo dolls, iron chinks, letters, and the iconic Negro bank shards, have shaped and defined African Americans in the United States for an entire century. These images, for Ellison's protagonist, serve a dual purpose in his quest for identity. **Invisible Man** depicts the life of a young, southern, African American man veiled by innocence, whose determination to succeed in his northward journey experiences the shock of American cultural realities. Inescapable stereotypes represent a double-voicedness (a term coined by Henry Louis Gates Jr.) as Ellison draws upon two voices and cultures, black and white, that historically comprise the racial consciousness of American culture.

Ellison does not conceive his 20th century work as a "Negro novel" yet, readers grasp the author's sense of responsibility to project black art for the symbolic meaning in the novel. To bespeak of his values, Ellison contends, "As for the Negro minority, he has been more willing perhaps than any other artist to start with stereotype, accept it as true, and then seek out the human truth which it hides" through storytelling (**Shadow and Act** 43). As for Ellison's fiction—**Invisible Man**—truth transcends a call to duty: "The will and ability to create cultural forms such as folklore and vernacular art are, as Ellison writes in *Harlem Is Nowhere*, 'a guide to action'. Ellison positions the black writer as a cultural worker charged with 'creat[ing] the consciousness of his oppressed nation'" (Lucy 19-21). The audience can certainly attest to a flawed protagonist inheriting Ellison's idea of consciousness, progressively throughout his journey thusly, never divorcing himself psychologically from the defining truths upheld by perception throughout his journey of despair, destruction, and death. There are striking parallels from Ellison to O'Brien's highly commendable work whose writing encompasses the sentiment of real wartime, so powerful it "steals your breath. It perfectly captures the moral confusions that is the legacy of the Vietnam War" as reported by Dave Hendrickson, a Milwaukee journalist. In these two novels, the unbearable truths juxtaposed by reality are undeniably forced upon the consciousness of the characters.

The protagonists in these two stories are subjected to violence, terror, and other catastrophic events that give trauma theory a voice in literary narratives. Cathy Caruth asserts, "In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature . . . the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). The texts chosen for this study therefore amount to more than books on war. Ellison's and O'Brien's master-

pieces contribute to the study of literary trauma. The intertextual connections aid in the interpretation of the ever-present, traumatic events projected within the framework of American literature: two artistically rendered "war" novels, both uniquely composed narratives of two distinctly different wartimes. When synthesized, the significance conveys life-altering moral responsibility for the purpose of "intertwin[ing] ideas from both sides of the dualities" such as war and love; good and evil; freedom and captivity; life and death; and identity and alienation to penetrate the hearts and souls of the characters (Busby 41). The analysis upholds the fundamental principle in that humans withstand culturally transmitted traumatic experiences at great personal cost. The things they carried signify both physical and metaphysical burdens maintaining social implications relevant today. In more recent history, a young soldier once said, "War tests the ability to hold onto one's humanity." (qtd. in Muckenfuss).

Storytelling at its finest, from Ralph Ellison and Tim O'Brien, explicate a tri-part structure to define and unfold a layer of complex issues: the purpose aspect explores ideals obstructed by boundaries, formed by uncharted territories. The passion element examines the tangible and intangible burdens respectively. And finally, the perception facet delineates how traumatic sources both stress and influence the consciousness, and as a result, morphs into inner conflict as perceived by the protagonists in and of themselves. Tim O'Brien identifies this phenomenon as "a warrior with two heads threatened between silence and truth" indicative of trauma theorists' concern with survival of the consciousness. The paper thereby expounds clear and present justification in necessitating an examination of human survival, identity, and consciousness in Ellison's and O'Brien's stirring, parallel works of fiction, to permeate the hearts and souls of readers who dare to withstand the ultimate test of great literature—let the stories be told.

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From Soldier's Pay to A Fable: Faulkner's Art of War
By Christopher Love

William Faulkner's biography figures prominently in discussions of Faulkner's treatment of war in his fiction. Indeed, any discussion of Faulkner and war inevitably indulges in retellings of the writer infamously posing as a wounded World War I RAF pilot, slyly leading people to believe that he had heroically survived dogfights with German planes. Additionally, scholars commonly refer to the legacies of the Civil War and Faulkner's Civil War veteran-turned-writer great-grandfather, the Colonel William Clark Falkner, whose adventurous life exerted great influence on his impressionable descendant. That the great wars of his and the preceding generation color Faulkner's work is no secret. In many of his novels, readers often notice that Faulkner offers a variety of representations of war and its effects. However, the reasons for these different and often contradictory portrayals of war have gone mostly unexplored. In this paper, I examine Faulkner's attempts to represent war and its aftermath in four of his novels: **Soldier's Pay** (1926), **Absalom, Absalom!** (1936), **The Unvanquished** (1938), and **A Fable** (1954). Although written at different phases of Faulkner's career, each of these novels reveals Faulkner's melding of different techniques, styles, genres, and modes, displaying the crisis of representation that those who write about war face.

In his article about Faulkner and war, Donald Kartiganer explains how Faulkner's representation of war throughout his work is consistent with his real-life pose as a wounded veteran. Faulkner, Kartiganer argues, "is a man playing at being in war …honoring combatants" of war "through the flattery of imitation and yet also mocking the mythology" that attaches itself to them, revealing Faulkner's "double consciousness" of war (Kartiganer 630-31). In honoring soldiers and yet deconstructing the myths that produce romantic or idealized perceptions of them, writers who write about war face great difficulty in representing such a paradox. This difficulty is an example of what is often referred to as a crisis of representation. In attempt to represent paradox, contradictions, and psychological reality, Modernist writers such as Faulkner sought new narrative techniques to convey a more complex interpretation of reality than previous writers, leading to stylistically difficult, fragmented, and disjointed narratives that are often inconsistent in perspective, voice, and mode. Writers of war have adapted these Modernist techniques in order to convey disillusionment, fractured psyches, trauma, and shredded senses of self that the war experience produces. Thus, Faulkner and other Modernists were among the first writers to represent war as not just what happens on the battlefield but the totality of its effect on societies and its psychological impact on individuals.

Faulkner's first novel, **Soldier's Pay**, demonstrates Faulkner's use of the Modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and stylistic difficulty. **Soldier's Pay** consists of nine chapters, shifting from character to character with no transitions, creating the fragmented effect, resulting in a story told from several perspectives—a technique that Faulkner would come to master. As Carolyn Porter notes, two of the novel's characters, Julian Lowe, the idealistic young flier who laments missing out on the war, and Donald Mahon, the wounded veteran who suffers as a result of his war experience, can be read as two versions of Faulkner himself, or as Kartiganer points out, Faulkner's double consciousness. Additionally, both characters represent two views of war: the romantic and the tragic. Despite the presence of this double consciousness, the tone of **Soldier's Pay** remains decidedly tragic as the novel centers on the tortuous decline of Mahon while dismissing Lowe as naïve and trivial. Indeed, Faulkner even moves beyond tragedy as the figure of Mahon takes on grotesque characteristics and seems to float, ghost-like, throughout the narrative. Critics cite Faulkner's strange portrayal of Mahon as one of the novel's weaknesses, indicating the failures of a beginning novelist taking on subject matter that is beyond his grasp. However, Mahon is more of a blend of an allegorical and Gothic figure, foreshadowing Faulkner's later and more extensive use of both modes. As an allegorical figure, Mahon represents an entire generation of young men either wasted in the trenches of Europe or who have returned home maimed and traumatized. But in an effort to intensify Mahon's suffering and add deeper layers of characterization, Faulkner infuses Mahon with Gothic characteristics. Mahon is so disfigured from a head wound that when he returns home his closest friends receive him with horror; his father already sees him as already dead (though he deludes himself into believing Donald can recover), and Mahon's fiancée, Cecily, becomes physically ill at the sight of him and ultimately breaks off their engagement. Mahon is the un-dead, no longer human, turned into a monstrous creature by the horrors of war. He is figuratively a walking

corpse, meandering through the novel in a zombie-like trance. The sheer grotesqueness and wraith-like portrayal of Mahon disrupts the allegory, indicating Faulkner's attempt to go beyond conventional representations by blending the two modes.

Nevermore apparent is Faulkner's shifting among modes, styles, and voice than in **Absalom, Absalom!** in which Faulkner divides the novel into several frantic, obsessive, and multi-perspective and multi-genre sections that try to articulate the destructive legacy of the causes behind and results of the Civil War. The plot focuses mainly on the degradation of the Sutpen family over a course of a generation, but the novel as a whole offers a crushing critique of the fundamental ideological elements of the antebellum South. Although actual battles are scarcely described in the novel, the Civil War plays a significant role. In fact, **Absalom, Absalom!** goes further than any other Faulkner novel in exploring the root causes of war. As the South is destroyed, so is Sutpen's family. Indeed, there are multiple civil wars occurring within the story: the one between North and South, the ones between a father and his two sons, and the one between two brothers. Once again, Faulkner has included an allegorical representation of war as the civil wars within the Sutpen family represent larger civil wars, not only between the Union and Confederacy, but a civil war between races—who are in fact blood related to one another—within the human family. Like **Soldier's Pay**, however, Faulkner is not content with just an allegorical telling. Instead, the different narrators give their own version and in their own style as a way of coping and trying to come to terms with the destruction of not only Sutpen but the entire Southern society. Faulkner not only turns to the Gothic, but also offers the tragic, romantic, and Biblical modes as ways of trying to explain the causes of the war. By using these different modes for different characters, Faulkner suggests that no singular mode of representation for something as complex as war and its far-reaching effects can accommodate the different ways in which individuals need to cope with and make sense of such devastation. Unlike **Soldier's Pay, Absalom, Absalom!** offers metacommentary on the failure of storytelling to make sense of the insensible. Thus, Faulkner suggests, we choose certain modes of storytelling particular to our own psychological needs to give the illusion of meaning to something as traumatic as war.

From **Absalom, Absalom!**, Faulkner tones down his narrative in The Unvanquished, moving toward more straightforward romance, a shift which Carolyn Porter refers to as Faulkner's siphoning "off any residual romanticism" that Faulkner may have harbored for the defeated South. But despite its romantic tone, **The Unvanquished** does not try to invoke nostalgia for a mythic, idyllic view of the Old South. Rather, the novel simplifies what **Absalom, Absalom!** complicates. **The Unvanquished** returns to the double consciousness of war Faulkner first tried to portray in **Soldier's Pay,** but this time with more consistency. The novel draws a distinct line between the romantic and realistic perceptions of war. As a child, the novel's main character, Bayard Sartoris, imagines his father's exploits in the Civil War as acts of gallantry, heroism, and adhering to the code of Southern chivalry. The young Bayard and his friend, a slave named Ringo, play at war, and years later the older Bayard recalls his childhood impressions of his father's uniform as smelling to him like "powder" and "glory." However, as the novel progresses, Bayard begins to understand the true destructive nature of war and violence, culminating in his refusal to avenge his father's murder. If **Absalom, Absalom!** portrays characters trapped by history, fate, and human frailty—in essence, a novel of despair—then **The Unvanquished**, as the title suggests, is its hopeful follow up. Moreover, **Absalom, Absalom!** offers explanations for causes of war and conflict, while **The Unvanquished** offers a solution, a way to break the cycles of violence. Through Bayard's refusal to follow the traditional feudal code, the novel offers the solution of individual renouncement of violence as a necessary means for progress. But this solution seems trite when considering the overwhelming matrix of history, ideology, economics, gender, and race that Faulkner presents as causes of war in **Absalom, Absalom!,** hence the **The Unvanquished's** reputation as a romantic and sentimental novel.

Although there is evidence to suggest that The Unvanquished was in part meant as a renouncement of war and violence, it lacks the power and force of **Absalom, Absalom!,** and so consequently **The Unvanquished** is too light for any sort of definitive statement on war, a sentiment that Faulkner himself must have realized, which would have certainly been exasperated with the onset of the Second World War. Indeed, World War II not only rekindled Faulkner's personal desire to see action (he made several failed attempts to enlist), but in 1943 he began to plan out the novel he hoped would be his masterpiece, and serve as that definitive statement on war that had eluded him. Throughout the 1940's, Faulkner struggled mightily for over a decade to complete **A Fable**, a novel about a World War I corporal who tries to convince both sides to lay down their arms. **A Fable** seems to acknowledge the weakness of the romantic solution offered in **The Unvanquished**. Like the earlier novel, **A Fable** offers a character who decides to renounce war. The French corporal and a few followers try to convince both the French and German soldiers in the trenches to simply to disobey orders to fight, and in these tense moments both sides cease fighting. However, **A Fable** acknowledges the feebleness of this act in the face of the overwhelming machinery that produces wars to begin with. The military leaders ultimately put down the mutiny and place the corporal under arrest. But in this philosophical novel, Faulkner turns to full-blown allegory as the corporal's story mimics the story of Jesus' final week before his crucifixion. Through allegory, Faulkner is able to avoid the sentimentality of **The Unvanquished** but also

the despair and hopelessness of both **Soldier's Pay** and **Absalom, Absalom!.** Although **A Fable** is hopeful, it is not necessarily entirely optimistic. From Faulkner's perspective, to appeal to humanity's practicality to prevent future and more destructive wars is pointless—for this is the very problem as many see war as, in fact, practical if not necessary. Through allegory, Faulkner hoped to stir the spiritual essence of mankind by invoking humanity's most enduring myths of sacrifice and salvation.

The vacillation between styles and modes and his continual return to the theme of war reveal Faulkner's and his characters' struggle to make meaning out of a world where wars persist and have such devastating effects on subsequent generations. Despite winning the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, critics have since considered A Fable an ambitious but jumbled, exhausting and ultimately failed work. Furthermore, the Christian allegory to which Faulkner resorts is often considered an ineffective cliché, a futile appeal to an abstract idea such as the human spirit. But Faulkner's "failure" also demonstrates the problem that he and other artists have grappled with since the end of World War I— to paraphrase Tim O'Brien—how does one write a war story?

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Drusilla Hawk Sartoris, Identity, and Women in the Military

By Capt. Sonja Pasquantonio

In almost every country in the world, women have–at some time–been considered inferior to men. The original Epicene, or Silent Women, were denied the right to forge their own destinies--destinies largely determined by men--and relegated to subservient roles that came to embody a series of disenfranchised gestures (Chan 118; Curtin 45). These gestures imply a repertoire of actions, but are mere ghosts of themselves on the page--and in real life (Curtin 118). So it's not surprising that Faulkner's presentation of female characters continues to challenge and puzzle readers through his varying attitudes and portrayal of fictional female characters (Lahey 517). Though Faulkner's works describe many iron-willed characters, like Linda Snopes Kohl of The Mansion, Susan Treadwill in Virginia, or Dorina Oakley of Barren Ground, he often vacillates between strong, independent women and an assembly of weak or passive women (Fowler and Abadie 287). The role of women in Faulkner's work is always problematic, but women's relation to war intensifies that situation in a particularly intricate and complex manner. War seems to reorder the world through opposition. As we've discovered, frontline combat is generally conducted (and perhaps controlled) by men, but morphing gender roles, transform formerly defenseless creatures into active speaking and acting subjects. Now women are the ones that trudge into combat wearing load-bearing vests packed with bullets and grenades.

Fluctuating military operations force women to assimilate, portraying themselves as battlefield warriors, who transpose traditional definitions of femininity into atypical roles that modify, transform, and compromise our values. Although it wasn't until recently that women played any role in shaping the battlefield, they've long had an active role in shaping the narrative of war. One of the changing dynamics in war is the idea that war inscribes authority

and empowerment. Men fight: women wait. War grants men (and now women) an authority of experience, both of combat and representation. Through Faulkner's female protagonist Drusilla Hawk Sartoris we can see how added societal pressure may induce trauma, and further explore how women grapple with not only the changing role of combat but also the expectation of maintaining perfection in diversified roles.

Even today, after years of critical study, Faulkner's work, and in particular his representation of women, is dismissed as facile and misogynistic (Clarke 580). I disagree. Faulkner's **The Unvanquished** delineates the beginning of a magnificent gender struggle, and perhaps a fragmentation of identity that still exists in women today. Faulkner outlines the tip of the gender iceberg and allows the epicene woman to, as in early modern usage; make some stealthy 'noise.' What makes **The Unvanquished** such a wonderful work is that for years, it was ignored in academic studies of gender treatment. And, typically, the literati dismiss **The Unvanquished** because it's not Faulkner's most interesting work. But part of what makes it interesting is his obvious struggle NOT to explore the connections of gender and empowerment, specifically in Drusilla (Kartiganer and Abadie 205).

Faulkner's fictional protagonist Drusilla masqueraded as a female cavalry soldier during the Civil War in The Unvanquished. Drusilla's exploits show how women, even fictional women, have become non-traditional heroes, modern military service members who, rather than shun their military duties, actually embrace and explore these mysterious locations, embedding themselves, sometimes too much, into roles traditionally assigned to men. Drusilla, who cut her hair and wore men's clothing, disappeared for a year and emerged imbedded with Col Sartoris and his cavalry. She altered her face, while adapting successfully, I would argue, to a masculine-dominated environment and culture that failed to appreciate or recognize the true visage of women and their varied accomplishments.

The chaos of war allowed Drusilla to escape the constraints of this code and temporarily enjoy an androgynous freedom, but when the war was over she was forced to revert to convention by marrying, wearing dresses and taking action only indirectly through the influence she exerts over men (Anderson 27). Drusilla's fictional adventures outline a profound discrepancy in today's military women. If Drusilla was unable to escape the confines of Southern gendered tradition in the pages of a fictional novel, what are the consequences of real deployments, and how do women, once spouses and mothers, cope with the features of war?

Today, war is arguably a 'gendering activity,' one that ritually marks all members of a society, combatant or otherwise (Berg). Yet if war inevitably inscribes gender, it does so in unexpected and contradictory ways. Delineating Drusilla's exploits in **The Unvanquished**, and true in today's Iraq and Afghanistan operations, women have become, "if as by some uncanny swing of history's pendulum, ever more powerful" (Berg 441).

But, this power doesn't come without a price. During World War I, the paradox is that women not only filled civilian roles, vacated by men, but also participated more directly in war's battles. Thinking of Faulkner's portrayal of women in **The Unvanquished**; we see that he is particularly concerned with the domestic front as the site of war's most significant combat. Women used war as a stepping stone, a catalyst to catapult themselves into the Paleolithic state of identity. And here, in a literary form posited by Faulkner, is where the dysmorphia begins.

Every war allows women to display heroism of their own. Early war was a time for resourcefulness and adventures and perhaps even a romanticized view of battle (Berg 441) Women's efforts were corroborated and femininity defined as part of the war effort. In a short timeframe, women managed to cull and expand their collective identity.

Like today's military women, Drusilla does not play the complementary feminine role, thus creating the beginning of an imbalance in gender privilege. But it's not just war that becomes a combat zone. The same battle appears in the domestic sphere. As Drusilla wears her 'uniform,' the yellow ball gown, she retains the strength of a warrior though she bows to social tradition, and has agreed to show a modicum of femininity, we see that it's as superficial as her submission to patriarchal authority. Thus, her woman's power cannot be permanently contained inside a pretty dress.

Although Faulkner allows Drusilla to play a prominent and courageous role, she doesn't enter his fictional world without impunity (Berg 446). Drusilla embodies male qualities: courage, aggressiveness, even violence, which cannot be allowed to continue in her domestic roles. After the war, Drusilla's mom beats her for flouting a southern principle of womanhood. In *Skirmish at Sartoris* Aunt Louisa refuses to utter—though Granny certainly knows and "thank heavens she's not blood kin" that Drusilla live sin—with roughly fifty other Confederate soldiers, but that's not the point (Faulkner 219). What the posse of southern gentlewomen women failed to understand is that women, as a collective unit, needed to fill in these fractured identity gaps, stabilizing and relieving pressure from a current, almost impossible existence. Similar to today's military women, Drusilla struggled to define a code by which to live that is not constrained by obsolete tradition (Anderson 23). Yet, she is ultimately vanquished by womenfolk who rigidly enforce gender roles (Berg 441). It's this expression, of women standing alone—or connected—that defines the concept of how we both fracture and heal our identities.

Similar to military women, Drusilla's ultimate decision to act like a male shows that her identity suffered a disruption, as a result of war and the barriers placed on women of that time. As critic David Arnold writes, perhaps Drusilla's dislocation focuses more on Faulkner's valorization of this

'out-of-the-box' woman, an epicene hoyden of his fantasies that becomes a true representation of the traumas of war (112). Somehow, Drusilla returns from war, not a woman undone by trauma, but by a woman who found her place in the world, one capable of tackling the changing notion of the South and ready to display her talent—and penchant—for morphing identities. She becomes a heroine who refuses to cow beneath the confines of traditional southern aristocratic women. A soldier one day, a wife and stepmother the next (Kartiganer and Abadie 207).

For Drusilla, war compelled her to fill roles that are perceived inappropriate for Southern women—or any women for that matter-- and society can't accept the steps she took to reinvent identity (Arnold 89). Though her adapted strategies emphasize the dislocation of social roles, the slipperiness of gender categorization and how women are both intensely and uneasily fragmented emphasizes this dislocation (Arnold 89).

Drusilla's attempts to transcend the perceived limitations of her society-imposed identity are much remarked upon and she exhibits signs-- like insomnia-- resembling Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, although those are dismissed as manifestations of insanity (Arnold 100). More importantly is her shunning of old routines, from which we see that she attempts to gain a sense of identity: she becomes sunburned, sweat-stained, calloused hands domestic worker. Faulkner cannot allow Drusilla to survive, but does afford an examination of her culture's addiction to tradition and how Drusilla's role as a soldier and later domestic usurps those traditions (Arnold 101).

Perhaps Faulkner unwittingly realized that war itself allows women to realize the full glory of their womanhood. Feasibly, he questions whether women can refuse their allotted roles and suggests an urgent need for cultural change; thus, Faulkner consigns Drusilla to a path of self-destruction (Arnold 113). In fact, many of his female characters are punished for their threat of equality in the forum of male-constructed, male-centered institutions (Lahey 517). Avant-garde in his writing, Faulkner still conceded to the antebellum South's notion of proper women—or he shows a culture sadly unprepared for changes in gender role and identity formation-- and allows Drusilla's future identity to hang in the balance, along with the definition of traditional southern femininity. Both may be accurate portrayals of the South, or an extension of his own prejudice. More importantly, Faulkner allowed his representation of war to be both destabilized and to reinscribe fixed categories of identity dysphonia.

Drusilla's disappearance in the ending paragraph relegates her to nothing more than a prop in Faulkner's fictional world, an example of where women with courage and a desire to change are sent to the margins, becoming abnormal and possibly insane (Kartiganer and Abadie 209). Her identity becomes a collage of the dominant culture's images that will not come together. And so, she comes apart at the seams. Drusilla sees the war as liberation from domesticity and marriage, yet once the war ends she must fall back into her 'proper' identity as men reestablish control (Kartiganer and Abadie 243).

You've seen the fictional representation, so let's look at the reality. I am connected to identity through anecdotal experiences, by knowledge I share and by the narratives I respond to, but I can never truly grasp the two dichotomies because my responses are categorically different. And so, women are polarized between roles in the professional and domestic spheres.

Like Drusilla, have women evolved into chameleons, camouflaging our real identities while adapting to changing situations? Is identity a superficial costume we put on, like Drusilla's dresses? Underneath the lace, have women created an episodic, fractured identity, living in a body at odds with war's destructiveness?

Upstarts like Drusilla Hawk do not embrace their prewar roles after imbibing in the freedom that being a "soldier" allows. Women's role in war involves a central conflict around attempts to re-construct the identities war disrupts, which Faulkner allows in **The Unvanquished.** Faulkner's fictional stories force women into new roles, which upsets the social order Southern society seeks to preserve. Although Faulkner challenged social mores, in the end, he pushed Drusilla off the pages, and into the margins.

Drusilla's symptoms of insomnia and heighted emotional response—she's nervous and hyper-aroused-- are a fascinating psychological aspect that correlates to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In the 1930's the diagnosis would have been different, but Drusilla's manifestations are clearly symptomatic. What is interesting is the symptomology occurs following traumas in the domestic sphere, not resultant from her combat adventures.

And this brings into the focus the crux of our problem. History tells us that societal pressures may induce trauma, yet there is little recent exploration on how women grapple with not only the changing role of combat, but also the fragmentation of identity. There is a perpetuation that with the continued crystallization of identity, without reaching self-actualization, women will be left confused and diffused (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma and de Vries 357). In other words, if women can't establish a basic foundation to build upon, our identity schism will facilitate a continued reactive posture. In 2006-2007, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported PTSD and Depression were in the top three diagnostic categories for all female veterans; sobering statistics released less than ten years after implementing their 1988 women's program, an initiative focused on medical and psychosocial services. Conservative estimates report that some 20 percent of deployed females (compared to 8 percent male) return with symptoms of PTSD, staggering numbers considering that of the 190 thousand people deployed to Iraq since 2001, women make up 15 percent of deployed forces (Affairs). Perhaps we, as Faulkner illustrates in Drusilla, should recognize the need for change and understand the importance of addressing research geared towards women's rapidly evolving identity.

The real questions is: Have inquiries been made to investigate the disparity in an ever-growing identity crisis?

While women write identity from within a cultural black hole that bears traces of every war, we blend individualities into a variety of colors and scents. Thus, female identity does not depend on male influence, but on the niche (and voice) women adopt as their own.

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Psyche & War: Carl Jung's The Red Book and Gabriel Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude

By Jacqueline J. West, Ph.D.

Several images of works by the European artist Anselm Kiefer will serve as a backdrop for the comments I'll be making about psyche and war as seen by the psychoanalyst C. G. Jung and by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who was awarded the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature. Jung presents an explicit theory about man's propensities to wage war in the recently and controversially published volume of his personal journals, **The Red Book**. Marquez implicitly weaves an interestingly related but significantly different hypothesis about warfare into his novel, **One Hundred Years of Solitude**.

I will consider each of these books in a moment; first, a note about the accompanying images of a large installation created by Kiefer, whose work consistently and carefully studies the ravaged landscape of war.

Image #1 – "The Breaking of the Vessels"

In this installation, we are faced with an enormous, tall set of massive lead books punctuated with large sheets of glass falling out from between the volumes. It is titled The Breaking of the Vessels, the name of the Kabbalistic creation story. It also may be understood as referencing Kristal Nacht, the night in 1938 when the Nazis systematically shattered the windows of Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues throughout Germany. The multi-dimensionality of the meanings embodied in the books we see here leads us quite directly into reflections about war: its underlying archetype of creation/destruction, its brutal manifestations in human life, and the many theories we construct about it.

The Red Book, by Carl Jung, is both a quintessential representation and a unique, compressed, and "raw" version of his full body of works. It is a synthesis of the personal journals

he wrote over a number of years, beginning in 1913. In this book, his ideas appear in the context of his own personal experiences, presented primarily in terms of conversations with figures and forces he meets in imaginal realms and his reflections about these dialogues.

For those of you who have not ventured into this book, I'd like to just briefly describe one of these exchanges so that you catch a glimpse of their energy. Jung writes about the process of calling out, night after night to his soul. After 25 long nights, he eventually begins to hear her voice and, following it, he finds himself in a terrifying descent into "the spirit of the depths." At this point, he meets a figure who identifies himself as Elijah and is accompanied by the present embodiment of Jung's soul figure, Salome. Jung's immediate, unchecked repulsion to Salome is extraordinarily bold; in response to her extended invitations, and Elijah's exhortations that he, Jung, not judge Salome, Jung turns to Salome and declares, in essence, No way, you're a bloodthirsty murderess; I want nothing to do with you! And yet – and this is crucial – he stays there; he stays engaged and their relationship develops, over numerous baffling and mysterious encounters, throughout the book. In this first exchange, we're introduced to the way in which Jung encounters the "other": he engages. He argues and agrees, complains and praises, attacks and is attacked, he desires and requests. He perseveres and then he sits back and waits.

As I ventured into **The Red Book**, I discovered that, as I was grappling with Jung's remarkable and at times extremely unnerving experiences, accompanied by his expansive reflections, I was above all deeply impressed by the outrageously bold interactions being portrayed. I'd swim through a few pages, sit back, and then peruse the points I'd underlined and notes I'd made. As I sat back, I'd find myself less prompted into further reflection about the content of it all and more moved into mulling about why, and also how, he stayed in these deep and probing conversations with his various inner companions. I'd marvel that he ultimately developed dynamic relationship with them, no matter how "other", irrational, godlike or demon-like they were.

As readers, when we proceed in this book, we find ourselves engaged with Jung's encounters with one character or natural force after another. Time and time again, Jung leads us into and through an extended conversation; even when it is rancorous or confusing, he "hangs in there." We witness how he invites both himself and the other to continue to interact, or how he struggles to respond to the invitation from the other in whatever form it arrives. As I repeated this process innumerable times, I slowly realized that these exchanges led me into experience-near moments of intense relatedness. This experience of relatedness emerges in Jung's determined forging of dialogue. As I read, and continue to re-read, **The Red Book** I find it awesome, and at times perplexing, to be let in on Jung's visions and the fascinating content of what his "companions" have to tell him, but even more impactfully, I find it inspiring to witness how their intense dialogue is the vessel for the emergence of these revelations.

These exchanges are truly an exercise, or in spiritual terms, a practice in relationship. Entering and re-entering dialogues between psychic figures, Jung explores questions of soul and spirit in a manner that charts how, by presenting their differences, conscious and unconscious can enter both conflict and collaboration at the same time. Jung concluded that "… open conflict and open collaboration . . . is the way human life should be" (and that in this way, the human is) forged into an indestructible whole, an 'individual.' " {C.G.Jung CW 9i Par 522}

I would like to propose that we can "generalize" this model of a dialogue between consciousness and the collective unconscious to conversations between the individual and all "others": ranging from the individual and the collective unconscious, to the individual and the collective conscious. In this way we can consider the importance of open conflict and open collaboration as essential in the interactions between the individual and her immediate others, that is her partner, family, and friends, as well as her local and national and international communities. We can also begin to wonder about our national, collective psyche and its capacity to tolerate open conflict and open collaboration within itself.

Once we extend these ideas about conflict and collaboration into the collective sphere, we can see that these dynamics are the essential ingredients of negotiations. Negotiations rely upon the capacity for dialogue, true dialogue requiring open conflict and open collaboration . The emergent reality in this case is an agreement that grants the most gain and yet costs the least to both parties, metaphorically yielding a sustainable whole – even if this might appear at a literal level in the formation of two separate, but viable, groups, e.g. in a creative divorce, or in an Institution splitting into two or more distinct organizations, or in a two nation solution, as in the case of Israel and Palestine. In **The Red Book**, Jung is implicitly coaching us (perhaps himself also) on how to develop this capacity for dialogue, how to strengthen this muscle and thereby how to contribute to an emergence from an oppositional stalemate. Seen from this perspective, this book exemplifies – and, by example, teaches - how to participate in an organization of psyche that facilitates responsible participation not only in our intra-personal but also in our interpersonal and political realities.

In this very large, grand canvas, we see a man lying under a vast expanse of stars, some of which are blackened and falling. He is directly connected to one specific star by a long thin line.

But what does this say about warfare?

Jung's own experiences in forging a synthesis by remaining committed to both poles of any particular opposition guided him into a formulation of a bold hypothesis about the genesis of war. As I've noted, over and over again in his dialogues, visions, and reflections, he describes how he experienced that a third position is not forged by archetypal forces alone, nor by consciousness alone, but by the sturdy exchange between the two which in turn leads to a change within each. His dialogues instruct us, page after page, in how to increase our capacity to plumb these depths and bring their depths into consciousness. On these grounds, he proposed that if we suffered and forged a conscious relationship to the darkest of the dark, to the depths of the archetypal realms within

ourselves, we could forestall enacting these forces in our lives. Foreseeing the impending disaster of WWI, Jung bemoaned that "man does not see the conflict in his own soul, which is however the source of the outer disaster." And he asserted, "Drink your fill of the bloody atrocities of war, feast upon the killing and destruction, then your eyes will open, you will see that you yourself are the bearers of such fruit."

We heard this hypothesis succinctly noted by Tim O'Brien in his Keynote address at the WWII Museum when he referred to Jung's comment that what we do not bring into consciousness, we act out as fate.

I think we have to acknowledge that, so far, Jung's bold hypothesis (that we plumb the depths and thus forge sufficient freedom from an unquestioned activation of warfare) has not come to fruition; that is, conscious turning towards the depths of psyche has not yet been able to sufficiently curtail and balance the almighty forces of war and destruction. One possible extension of Jung's hypothesis would propose that we have not yet truly "opened our eyes." However, following the dreadful agonies of WWI and the unspeakable atrocities of WWII, it is virtually impossible to imagine that yet another round, perhaps another level of utter chaos and even more unfathomable forms of bloodshed, is required to bring us to our knees. But perhaps it is. And at that point, with our eyes yet more open, we might then create a less war-torn world. Another extension of Jung's hypothesis would propose that we will, yet, develop a consciousness that is sufficiently strong and flexible to enable us to open our eyes, at least "enough", and that then we could effectively meet and establish a relationship with these archetypal forces and thus avert another, possibly even more unspeakable, enactment of them.

Meanwhile, a very different hypothesis about war is implicitly presented in the portrayal of life so brilliantly woven by Gabriel Marquez in **One Hundred Years of Solitude.** One of the defining volumes of "magical realism," this book ranges through innumerable levels of reality, capturing innumerable angles of life and death, all embodied in a multiplicity of exquisitely told tales. Its poetic leaps into brilliant otherness and its numinous images, coupled with heart-breaking stories of personal and political triumph and anguish, leave one feeling simultaneously astonished and refreshingly "free." The reader is inducted into a powerful experience of living in poetic time and space, ensconced in a fabric of magical moments.

This is an honest, if relentless, view of reality that invites the reader into the experience of living amongst the archetypes, ultimately immersing oneself in their reality. The timeless cycles of life and death, growth and decay, love and hate, tenderness and violence, peace and war weave their intense spell. Tossed and tumbled in the mysterious mix of these antinomies, the reader encounters great beauty, along with the cruelty of endless rounds of senseless wars, sexual enslavement, and mental entrapment, interlaced with violent oppression emerging from both human and inhuman natural forces. This wild chaos inexorably yields the repetitive return, generation after generation, of more of the same. From this perspective, war is seen implicitly as an inescapable reality of life, as inescapable and free from judgment as peace.

One Hundred Years of Solitude presents us with an instructive contrast to the portrait of psyche that Jung embodies in **The Red Book** where immersion in these magical realms is then considered and explored. In Jung's process, consciousness is held under the lens of conscious reflection, where it is mined for meaning, as well as for psychological and spiritual insight. From the perspective of this work, which extends an invitation for us to develop a relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, **One Hundred Years of Solitude** is a portrayal of lives insufficiently related to and mediated by a tension with consciousness.

The magical music of the archetypal realms can indeed be seductive; there is no doubt that reading **One Hundred Years of Solitude** is an entrancing trip.

However, as we follow Jung through **The Red Book**, we are invited to imagine that we do not have to live without the honest darkness and beauty of these realms when we bring their intensity into relationship with consciousness. Jung is dramatically making the case, embodied in his own suffering and reflections, narrated within his dialogues, that this act of relationship can offer humanity the possibility of forging alternatives to the repetitive enactment of archetypal forces, an alternative to the endless repetition of literal warfare. I am drawn to agree.

Here we see a complicated image of creation and destruction, enriched with symbolic reference to mythology, alchemy, history, and transcendence.

We, that is humanity, is clearly up against a mighty dilemma. Jung's emphasis upon the potential value of engagement in dialogue is his response to this dilemma. He consistently asks us to search for those moments, in our internal and communal lives, when we can turn towards and increase our capacity for dialogue. We are in truth constantly faced with choices about whether, and how, to support a more extended and/or deeper conversation. Our nighttime dreams and myriad daytime "voices," along with our interactions with families and friends, offer us virtually endless moments in which we choose how and at what level to engage. Our communities, local and national, do the same, though these collective situations generally challenge us even more in terms of how "other" the other is. In any case, the opportunity for an exchange with "the other" pervades our lives. Yet, in our daily lives, it seems to me that it is the dearth of dialogue that is the issue – in both our personal and political worlds. In The Red Book, Jung sets out an invitation for us all to follow his demanding, at times excruciating, but potentially very valuable process of the differentiation of consciousness so that one can then stand in a position to see and converse with "the other." This prepares us e.g., to risk, to face aggression, to tolerate opposition and to accept suffering. Practicing and honing our capacity to enter into and maintain a dialogic exchange with "the other," in effect, we increase our capacity to exercise our political muscle.

Liv Evensen, Ph.D. of Oslo, Norway, is Jungian-trained in spiritual psychology. She is an expressive arts therapist and poet who speaks internationally on myths, fables and fairy tales in multicultural communications, conducts creative courses and does international lectures on intuitive painting, creative writing, oral storytelling, and dreams. With the counseling of a Dream Mentor, she has been writing poems from her dreams since 2005. In the tradition of Dante with his guiding light Virgil, Ms. Evensen's dreams are spoken in the voice of a Druid or shaman. As a result of a course in the study of miracles, Ms. Evensen says, "I was lifted high and saw Europe below me as a bleak continent, no people, only depressive chains for borders between and around each country." Since then, she has immersed herself in the "miracle course," and believes universal love is the answer to breaking the chains of depression and ending war. Ms. Evenson introduced and read two of her poems related to war as commentary on her presentation, The True Missing Link.

The Fatherless Child
The Middle East And A Different Way
By *Liv Evensen*

I queried, I asked
God, where art thou
in this situation in The Middle East?
And wherever people are at war?
I mused on, does he not know
what is going on
up there in Heavens above?
Is Heaven too far removed
from our mundane matters
here below?
Is God so totally good
he/she sees not "at all"?
Seeing only through all the illusions
to the Beauty of us all?

The answer came
in a gentle silent fashion
like a bonding of Light
through the air to mine soul
to my Mind that I share
with the ones above
was I given to see
the Little Jewish boy
from Second World War
now as a picture, now as a metafore
with his hands up in the air
grey frock, small cap, big crowd
soldiers all around
probably on his way to concentration camp
the Little Jewish Boy
was fatherless

and so they all
feel
Fatherless

is what I understood
all people in all wars

investing millions of coins
in mechanical means
of "strength" to fight, to find
that longed for home.

Outside

Yet The Promised Land
is in a Mind who finds
that "Missing Link"
inside a Heart
to come Home again

Dearest warring, fighting Child
You never LEFT what can`t be lost
Your Inner Paradise
behind your anger, fear and hides
go find it there
Let Peace reside
when bombs of revenge and hurt
have all gone flat
you cannot die anyway
go find your peace where it resides
in Hearts behind your masks
of yesteryears.

Have fun, you forgot to laugh
and time began
yet Eternity is always here
don`t use mechanical means
to detonate your emotional bombs
scream instead
your message of hurt and grief and finally of
LOVE

May we feel it safe to receive each other again everywhere

on Planet Earth....

The Golden Fowl and the Missing String (On The Missing Link)

By *Liv Evensen*

Poeme Fable

Deep in the darkness of woods
inside the circle of animals and birds
a fire had almost burned down.

The animals had gathered from far and near
to have a Council deep in the woods.
The Guardian of The Fire and Light had died
since they last had a council
as strife had been ripe, warring forces rampant
by an act of blindness one had struck
the Guardian of The Fire and Light down.

This had come to the ears by ways of
birds and monkies to every animal
in the deep darkness of woods
so now they had gathered around
the almost burned down fire
to see if they could salvage the rest.

The situation was grave.
The warring parties had laid down their arms
were there in the Circle with them all
calling out:
The Light! The Light!

Bewildered they tried to look to each other
in the darkness of the woods
all they could see
were each others yellow, gleaming eyes
and hear the chanting
The Light, The Light!
The situation was graver than gravest

Suddenly a sound outside of the circles
of animals gathered around
the dying Fire once so bright

The Golden Fowl decided
she needed to go to God himself
to ask him to reattach
The Missing Link to all the animals
and to The Light of The Fire.

All the animals listened closely
as she stretched her wings and lifted upwards
through the darkness of the deep dark night.

She knew it would be dangerous
as she flew upwards
knew she had to get through a stretch
of huge, dark clouds.

Inside the clouds lived The King of Lightning
Bolts and Thunderstorms.
This was a very, very dangerous area
to try and enter
no one had tried it before.

The Golden Fowl who herself was small
and nothing but Light
was frightened as she flew into the clouds.

She could feel the winddrops on her wings settling
and the sight was becoming unclear.

Heavy with drops she flew further and further
inwards and upwards, she was frightened alright.
Far below her she could hear all the animals chanting
The Light, The Light!
She knew she had to fly onwards all night
she had to get hold of that Missing Link
the Golden Bond of Light from Heavens above
even if she felt the fright.

Very tired now with wings heavy from raindrops
the Golden Fowl almost began to fall
down and down she fell
until suddenly it felt as if angels` wings
were catching her
lifting her upwards again
angels` wings cleaned her wings dry
of all the heavy drops
so she could fly in lightness again.

The Golden Fowl did
up and up till suddenly she saw
something big and yellow between clearing grey skies
and Eureka she thought.
But as she flew near she suddenly realized
that the light was nothing but
the huge eyes of The Thunder God himself!

The Little Golden Fowl`s wings
froze in mid-cloud
so scared got she it felt as if not only her blood froze
but so did the newly forming drops on wings so fine!

A huge thunderous roar came through
the grey clouds
and the little one began to fall, downwards and downwards
away from the foe.
Downwards she plummeted so fast
she could hear down there
the animals`chant:
The Light! The Light!
Faster and faster, downwards she went
till suddenly she landed ever so softly!
Booomps!

She fell into something very light
so beautiful, so colorfull
and looking around
she shook her head heavy with raindrops
and saw nothing but beauty around her.

As far as her small eyes could see
she saw nothing but streams of colours
green, red, yellow, blue, indigo,
green, red, yellow, blue indigo...

Little Fowl had fallen down on a rainbow!

When God himself high in the sky
had heard from the whisperings of angels
that The Fire of Life had almost gone out
down below
and that Little Golden Fowl
had wanted to try and reconnect
the Missing Link from The Heavens above
he sent out his angels and sunny arms
to help her connecting.

Entering into the clouds
his arms transformed into huge rainbows
that could move so smoothly and fast
that not even the Thunder God himself could move past it
nor move fast enough to blow it away
with his ferocious breathing.

Little Fowl was lifted higher and higher
all into the Heart of the Sun!

She rested and bathed in Life, Love and Light
and when she was ready again
lifted her wings
carrying in her little beak
one single string.

The beginning of The Golden Bond
of The Missing Link
to bring it back down to Earth
to rekindle The Fire of Life
deep down there in The Forest so dark
where all the animals were living.

And so she did, Little Golden Fowl
now with protection of angels`wings
and rainbow arms in between
she landed safely on Earth again.
Flew gently over to the almost dying Fire
with bond of Golden Life from Above
and reignited it into
A Huge Golden Fire of Light
And all the animals were singing and chanting
The Light, The Light.
A Fire so bright
it lit up all woods and all of the heavens.

Author's Comments:
"I have based this in part on an African oral story of unknown origin, added more than one half and made my own "twist", and as a fable it works very well. However, directly transcribed into "a poem" it lacks the usual inner rhythm. Bear with me, I just wanted to share..."

Our Literary Icon

William Faulkner was just a youngster when he came to New Orleans and found his muse as a novelist. He was 27 when he wrote his first novel in the room that is now Faulkner House Books on the ground floor of 624 Pirate's Alley. He worried about the same things developing writers worry about today. Will I get it right? Will a publisher think I got it right? Will anyone remember what I have written after I am gone? Is it all for naught?

He found strength in the freedom of our city's laid back, easygoing society and, oddly, the concurrent heartfelt nurturing he found in New Orleans, support he needed to become America's most celebrated fiction writer.

To all the readers and writers visiting the pages of this year's *Double Dealer* we hope you will enjoy the talent and the inspiration.

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The Double Dealer, the Society's literary journal, was created in the image of the1920s and 30s *Double Dealer*, a New Orleans journal, which was first publisher of the work of William Faulkner and the early work of such important authors as Ernest Hemingway. The original *Double Dealer* was founded by Albert Goldstein, Julius Weiss Friend, John McClure, and Basil Thompson, with the assistance of a dedicated group of Louisiana guarantors, who were tired of hearing the South described as a literary backwater by Eastern Establishment critics, including notably H. L. Menken (who became a cheerleader for the journal). The Society's goals in re-establishing the journal were to provide a forum for showcasing developing writers alongside established authors, and to provide a resource for teachers of English, literature, and creative writing.