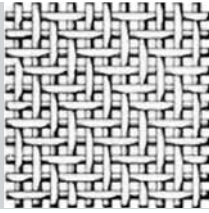


WEBER THE CONTEMPORARY WEST

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Interview and Film Focus



Deriving from the German *weben*—to weave—*weber* translates into the literal and figurative “weaver” of textiles and texts. *Weber* (the word is the same in singular and plural) are the artisans of textures and discourse, the artists of the beautiful fabricating the warp and weft of language into ever-changing patterns. *Weber*, the journal, understands itself as a tapestry of verbal and visual texts, a weave made from the threads of words and images.

A Commitment to Education

For the past 27 years, Weber State University has been hosting the National Undergraduate Literature Conference (NULC). The conference is held annually during the month of April on the WSU campus and recognizes the work of undergraduate students nationwide in literature, the humanities, film & the arts. As a forum aimed exclusively at an undergraduate body, the conference is the only one of its kind in the United States in that it enables advanced sophomores, juniors, and seniors to share their work with fellow students and faculty from across the country.

This year, NULC is complemented by NCUR, the 26th annual National Conference on Undergraduate Research taking place on the Weber State campus the last weekend in March. Similar to NULC, but with a focus across the entire academic curriculum including the sciences, economics, and engineering, among others, NCUR features the research activities of undergraduates in the form of posters, papers, and artistic performances. Both conferences are shining the national spotlight on the campus of Weber State University and its educational mission and accomplishments.

As a bonus to the proceedings of both conferences, distinguished authors and plenary speakers will share their work and invite reflection on the importance of research—undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate—and education. When it comes to determination, resolve, and the desire to succeed, few are more eloquent than Mario R. Capecchi, winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine and Distinguished Professor of Human Genetics and Biology at the University of Utah School of Medicine. After a difficult start in his early life that involved the internment of his mother in a Nazi prison camp, time in an orphanage, and his emigration to the United States, he overcame successive handicaps to become a distinguished molecular geneticist. As he notes in “The Making of a Scientist II,”

what I saw was that, despite the complete absence of an early nurturing environment, the intrinsic drive to make a difference in our world is not easily quenched and that given an opportunity, early handicaps can be overcome and dreams achieved. . . . [O]ur ability to identify the genetic and environmental factors that contribute to talents such as creativity are too complex for us to currently predict. In the absence of such wisdom our only recourse is to provide all children with the opportunities to pursue their passions and dreams. Our understanding of human development is too meager to allow us to predict the next Beethoven, Modigliani, or Martin Luther King.

May this serve as a call to all the aspiring young scholars and artists energizing the WSU campus in the weeks to come!

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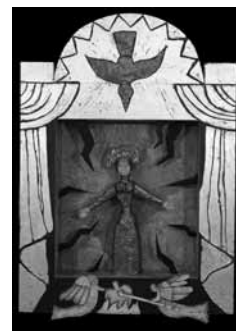
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Writing, Film, and the Cultural Revolution—

A Conversation with Yuan-tsung Chen



Yuan-tsung Chen

PRELUDE

Author Yuan-tsung Chen's unlikely personal saga began in Shanghai in 1932. The trappings of wealth afforded her a cosmopolitan upbringing on the fringe of the International Settlement, a Western missionary education, and fluency in English before the Communists arrived. In 1949, she volunteered to live in remote Gansu province to assist in the rebuilding of war-torn China. The trials and tribulations of failed Maoist revolutionary experiments like the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) led

*to Yuan-tsung's emigration to the U.S. (1972). Chen's first book, *The Dragon's Village* (1980), was based on her experiences with 1950s land reform in the Chinese hinterland. A second recent book, *Return to the Middle Kingdom* (2008) examines the multi-generational revolutionary family Chen married into against the backdrop of politics, war, and revolution. She now resides in Hong Kong and visited Weber State University soon after *Return to the Middle Kingdom* was published.*



*I'm interested in hearing about your life as a writer before you wrote *The Dragon's Village* and then *Return to the Middle Kingdom*. What kinds of writing had you been doing?*

I wanted to be a writer when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. So, I did write when I was in China. One was a novel, *Two Sisters*, and during that year, 1956, China was trying to liberalize. It was praised by many writers who read it in manuscript, so it seemed hopeful that I could publish that novel. But another purge caught me up and so I burned it. They would have charged me with being a Rightist, because that was during the Anti-Rightist purge. So I stopped writing when I was twenty-two or twenty-three.

Were you employed or had any other jobs as a writer?

In China, I only worked in one place, moving from one department to another in the film industry. First, it was in the script writing department and then in film distribution. In the U.S., I was lucky; I never worked a full-time job. It was always twenty hours a week or ten hours a week, so I had plenty of time to read and to write.

*In *The Dragon's Village*, we meet the protagonist of that story, Ling-ling, and I wondered whether her character was based on you very strongly?*

Yes, very much so, except for one thing: my family was not rich. That's why I said it's my

Uncle and Auntie. My family was not rich, but we had rich relatives.

But you certainly had a quality education or were well-educated. How easy was it for a young girl about nineteen, just really out of school, to go marching off to this revolution, especially if the parents were not in favor of it? I think any parent would be a little nervous. What was that like?

I was a very headstrong girl and my parents knew me, so they really didn't give me a hard time about going to Beijing. Some girls, probably, you know, had to argue back and forth. The more you argued with me, the more I wanted to do just the opposite.

The method that some young girls could use being forceful against their parents, saying, "This is what I'm doing," might not have been a good policy or a good strategy.

Well, I would not advise any young person to go one way or another because it's a great risk either way. Sometimes I just wonder how I have survived. It's real tough. I wouldn't tell a girl, "You fight on and get your own way, just go." I wouldn't do that. Nor would I say, "Oh, it's too risky, don't go." Having survived all those purges, I must say that I have lived a richer and a more varied life for them. I cherish that life and have something to write about.

Did you expect to end up in Beijing, or were you aware that you could be sent wherever you were needed, and you could be sent far from home, like Ling-ling?

Well, yes, anywhere. They could send me to a labor camp or wherever. But I managed to protect myself. And when my American friends read this book, they said, "Oh, wow, you really had an adventure." I said, that's the least of all adventures I had, because later on came the Cultural Revolution.

One of the villagers said to Ling-ling, "Well, you're going to be okay. You have a lucky face." (Laughter) Is that what people said?

Yes. A complete stranger, a woman, came to me and said, "You know, you have such a friendly face, you will be okay." Just like that.

I was a very headstrong girl and my parents knew me, so they really didn't give me a hard time about going to Beijing. Some girls, probably, you know, had to argue back and forth. The more you argued with me, the more I wanted to do just the opposite.

The Dragon's Village, the name of the novel, would have been a place you would have known well, having gone to a similar place to do your land reform. Could you tell us a bit about your activities as a land reformer? I'm expecting that they parallel Ling-ling's in the book, but maybe there

are some other stories that you didn't put in the book that are memorable, that you could tell us about.

The place in *The Dragon's Village* was indeed tough and poor. And for a Shanghai girl like me, it was another world, another universe. But I found the people as human as the friends of my family, like my rich Uncle and Auntie. Let me share one anecdote. One day I was busy lighting a fire and the servant was helping, but Auntie's son didn't come to help us. The servant said that he always helped at the neighbors but not at home. Then a neighbor said, "Oh, like any man, they have

time for others but not for their family.” In Shanghai I heard my family friends—women—saying the same thing, so this kind of patriarchal behavior is not unusual.

The Dragon’s Village is a novel full of unforgettable portraits of women—both strong women and beaten down women. Besides getting to know the story from Ling-ling’s point of view, we meet Mai Lei, Chu Hua, the virgin widow and old Don Yung. Those characters are surely more central than the two male characters, Malvolio Cheng and the district person Wang Sha. Did you have a specific objective in making the story to be so centered on the lives of the female characters?

I did. Even in affluent circles, many unhappy women lost their identity if the man abandoned or divorced them. That’s one reason I told myself that I wanted to make a life for myself. I didn’t just want to listen to my mother’s advice and get married. I wanted a career outside of marriage. I don’t object to marriage, but I wanted something of my own. Then when I went to the countryside, the men were very poor and the women were even more oppressed. You’d think only a rich man would have several wives

or concubines. No, the poor men also had a few women to work for them. Sometimes the first wife had to serve the younger wife because she had just given birth to a boy—a son. The first wife couldn’t produce a son. I just put myself in the first wife’s place.

To serve a woman who had intimate relations with my husband is something very terrible to me. That’s why I wanted to tell the stories of these women. I made a special effort to do so, especially the very down and out women like the broken Chu. She was a prostitute in the village. She was a virginal character before she got married, and when her fiancé died, her life was finished.

They could not entertain the possibility of remarrying and having any other kind of life. That was the belief.



Yuan-tsung Chen (top image: top row, far right, bottom image: bottom row, far left) Red Flag Commune, 1960.

Very few did. Because it was so poverty-stricken, nobody wanted to feed Chu. Then her in-laws wanted to send her away, to sell her. The husband’s parents and the relatives, they had the right to sell her to another man. Then she was cut off from her own children. This is something no mother would like to have happen to her. To be sold to a stranger and cut off from

your children. You would never see your children again. If she could manage, she would not get remarried. To get remarried required the sacrifice of her children.

Could you explain this bias towards sons and against daughters, and why women have such a low place in the culture. Where does that come from?

Well, that's a long story. China's Xià Dynasty formulated all kinds of rules and regulations in favor of men. The Zhou Dynasty considered the family to be a unit. They wanted a stable family so someone had to be in control. That was the patriarch. That history goes back three or four thousand years.

Women's position in China has improved a lot today, but only since the beginning of the 20th century. The Nationalist government didn't do much, but the Communist government proclaimed a new marriage law and said every woman must have her own name on the deed of land, like I described in the novel. That's a big thing. In the private sphere the man still has control of the land. Then the communists introduced collective farming, for which women directly received working points. That's how the peasant women's position improved. Why? Because the government redefined the family. Before, father, mother, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, the uncle, or whatever—were

all considered one big family. But in that movement they broke the family down. The basic unit now is just husband, wife, and children. So whatever the woman earned went to that family, her own small family. That again gave women more power.

We just saw an Olympics with this modern looking China doing the best Opening Ceremonies, the new wealth, the new

buildings. How do you get a country with such hardened family structures dating back thousands of years to the 2008 Olympics?

My particular focus is on the fate of peasant women. Many people didn't pay attention to them because they don't care very much about how women feel. That's why I keep saying that if we hear all the bad things and don't discuss some positive things, we are surprised that a poverty-stricken country can stage the Olympic Games.

I would also include the years under Chiang Kai-shek in that discussion. He had many disastrous policies during his regime, but that didn't mean he didn't do anything positive.

Can you put into historic perspective what Mao was trying to do by sending young city girls and boys into the countryside of China. What, do you think, was his purpose in doing so?

I didn't like Mao's policies, but I think he had two reasons: he didn't want un-



Yuan-tsung Chen, 1949

employed youngsters in the city, and he wanted to frighten them into being submissive. Because life in the countryside was so tough, so poverty-stricken, being sent there was a terrible punishment. He used fear to secure obedience. As a Christian, I wanted to help the poor, so I volunteered in land reform. I didn't know anything about Marxism or Communism, but to help the poor is the duty of a Christian. There were times I didn't want to go, but we young women went to the countryside and the young peasant women would say, "I want my daughter to have an education so they can one day work like you." Our presence there showed them that a woman can have a life outside of a small village if she is educated.

I suppose that the education went both ways. Did the peasants open your eyes as much as you did theirs?

Yes, we learned a lot from them. The experience humbled me. Before I volunteered in land reform, I looked down on manual work. Afterwards, I knew that peasant labor produced the food that I ate. It changed my perception of them and I began to respect them. Without food, there is no culture, nothing. We've got to fill our stomachs and peasant workers make that possible.

Your memoir, Return to the Middle Kingdom, took many years of research-

ing, writing and revision. How did you approach the process of writing it?

Many books have been written on the revolutionary period in China that I covered in *Return to the Middle Kingdom*. Other books tend to lump Leftists, communists, nationalists, and warlords together. In doing so, the reader sees the characters in the book as two-dimensional beings and they miss

something. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai are often lumped together, even though they were two very different politicians with sometimes opposing viewpoints. I wanted to write about these same historical events but



Yuan-tsung Chen and her husband, Jack Chen, 1958

make the characters who were involved in the story three-dimensional. That's why I described Chiang Kai-shek as an effective and strict commandant of the Whampoa Military Academy, but made it clear that breaking up the United Front was not all his doing. The left-leaning Kuomintang, my father-in-law, and the communists were also responsible. This clarification helped the reader to see how Chiang views power. If Chiang was all wrong, how could he have ruled China for twenty years? He must have done something right. I don't deny he did a lot of bad things; the same goes for Mao Zedong. My own father-in-law was my hero, but he was a flawed man. He was ambitious, but he also liked pretty women too much. My husband was my hero as well, but he also made his family members suffer. He

couldn't take care of us, because he was so dedicated to the revolution. I wanted to use three-dimensional characters in order to describe those nuances. My way of writing is especially about politicians.

Thirty years ago, things were simple. There were the good guys and the bad guys. We tried to look at everything through an ideological prism. You seem to be shifting away from that simple way of thinking. Your characters, Mao and Zhou Enlai, had a great variation in the way they did things.

They fought until they died.

You seem to also use these characters to suggest that getting caught up in an ideology can make you forget about the rest of your life. Mao and Zhou Enlai had families, and because they were ever political-minded their family suffered. Is that realization something that you wanted your readers to walk away with?

My husband was a Marxist, but that doesn't mean he didn't cherish family values. In my book, I show that he was against violence and that he took pains to teach our small son not to be violent. The world is complicated. We need to co-exist with people of different beliefs. We cannot wish them away or we cannot say, "Let's just fight it out." We need to work to understand each other.

Ancient cultures are deeply rooted in their mentality, so sometimes this is easier said than done.

The character Eugene experiences a conflict between the knowledge that he's acquired in the West and the reality of his traditions. How difficult is it to transition from Western living when you return home to China?

The first time I went back to China I was worried about feeling I had so much when they had so little. But when I went back in 1987, my colleagues lived quite well. I was very happy. I don't need to feel guilty anymore. I am proud that I am Chinese. That doesn't mean that I don't see the problems. China has enormous problems.

Was The Dragon's Village translated into Chinese, and what was the reception?

The reception was positive but the publisher let it go out of print. I think they sold five thousand copies in 1987. Now Chinese publishers are like American publishers—they carefully consider how to invest.

The current book you're writing is a direct translation.

Yes it is; I want it to read like Chinese. A translation would compromise the integrity of the book.



Yuan-tsung Chen with husband, Jack Chen, and their son, Jay. Beijing, 1961

The Dragon's Village was reissued.

Yes. My publisher told me that every year it sells steadily three thousand copies from the Penguin College Marketing Department.

I'm impressed with your writing style and storytelling technique. In both the novel and what I've read in the memoir, you write an accessible, clear prose that places the reader right into the world of the narrative in a very economical way. You don't have to spend a lot of time describing things, and you introduce your readers to unforgettable characters. As you're not a native English speaker, I'm curious to know how you develop your prose style in English. What influences or authors helped shape your writing?

I read a lot. I like to read the classics: American, English, Russian, and French classics. I am a book lover so I admire many writers, mainly nineteenth-century writers like William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Elizabeth Gaskell. I also read a lot of Russian novels in English translation. I love Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekov. China translated a lot of Russian novelists and they have influenced me. French authors such as Balzac, Flaubert, and Maupassant have also influenced me. I would say that I have been more heavily influenced by Western writers than by Chinese writers.

That's why I note in my new book, "If Chinese culture is my mother, Western culture is my wet nurse." In China, many children are more attached to their wet nurse than to their mother. Each

wet nurse looks after only one child, her love is concentrated on that child. As the poet Ai Qing (Ch'ing) said in his famous poem, "the river in my native place is like my wet nurse, not like my mother."

How do Western writers and Chinese writers differ?

In the Western classics, characters are revealed through psychological description. In the Chinese classics, characters are revealed through conversation or movement.

What are you reading these days and particularly, are you reading Chinese novelists? Are there any new themes that are being addressed by contemporary writers, and are those themes reflecting changes that are happening in China?

I don't read Chinese short stories very often. I read mainly in English because I want to publish in the West.

China's political situation is always changing. If I write in Chinese first, I don't have a guarantee that I will get published. That's why I read a lot. A writer has to spend so much time on publicity. So in the past two years, I have been reading English magazine articles. I find them interesting, amusing, and sometimes also frustrating.

Are there any fiction writers or novels that are in Chinese?

I don't remember them, because I don't find them particularly interesting. Chinese writers write to please readers, to attract readers.

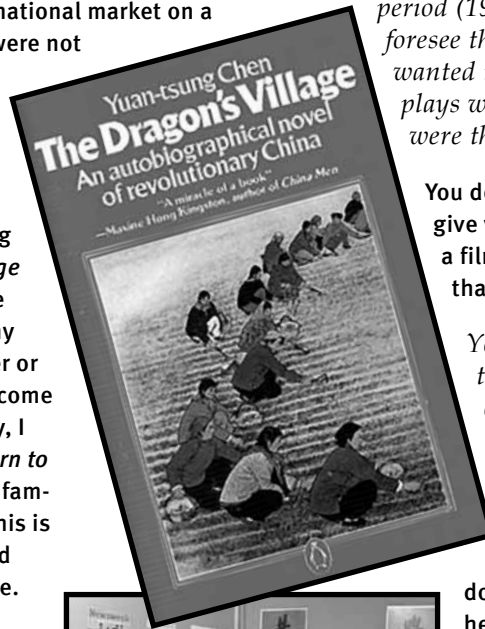
In filmmaking, Zhang Yimou, the famous director's first film, *Yellow Earth/Huangtudi*, was very good. He thought his later films would attract the international market on a greater level but they were not as interesting to me as his earlier work was. Self-censorship is as powerful as political censorship. I didn't produce anything like *The Dragon's Village* for a long time because I was struggling with my own demons of whether or not my work should become commercialized. Finally, I found the idea for *Return to the Middle Kingdom*, a family history. I thought, this is what I want to write and this is meaningful to me. I was not only writing for myself, but for my family and also for those who perished in many political upheavals.

Because this last book is based in historical fact, do you think that it is less prone to commercialization?

Yes.

This novel is quite dense in historical content and political upheaval. Because of this, it may be hard for young Chinese writers to relate to the novel. Their formative years are completely different from two or three generations removed.

Right.



Yuan-tsung Chen at *The Dragon's Village* book release party, 1980.

I'd like to shift to film because you mentioned Zhang Yimou. You worked in the film industry during the Mao Zedong period (1949-1976). Could you foresee the direction people who wanted to write great screenplays were going, and why were they pushed aside?

You don't get a producer to give you money. Producing a film is even more difficult than writing a novel.

You could have written screenplays. In the old days, did you ever aspire to that?

At the time you had to write according to the formulas. I didn't do that because I was headstrong, but I regret that. Not because of the money or propaganda, but because doing something is better than doing nothing. I did write, but just put manuscripts in my drawer.

Chinese authors see themselves as artists and there's no tradition of being able to explore aesthetics. In film, there has never been as much freedom as there is now. It's very easy to shoot a film, it's not as expensive. Is the dam being let loose because it's been

held back for so long?

Yes. I think so. My husband was an artist. Young Chinese painters tried to make their

paintings look modern or very innovative. My husband always said, “Picasso’s paintings are strange and fragmented, but he has roots in the western tradition. He could paint as well as a Renaissance painter.”

Young Chinese painters, by contrast, they just imitate. Maybe they make more money because of it, but eventually the artistic

value of their paintings is in question. The new way of writing makes the author more money and helps them sell their manuscripts, but artistic expression suffers because of it.

You had interesting experiences working with great films that came out before the Cultural Revolution. What was that like?

In the thirties and the forties we produced fine cinema artists. They had a purpose, they had a broad view of the world.

Later, *Lin Zexu* [The Opium War] (1959) and *Li Shuangshuang* (1962)—about the Great Famine—were also good films.

How did you come to work at the film bureau?

I wanted to go to Beijing to learn how to write. My sister had a friend from the Central Film Bureau. He said, “You should come to our place to work because many writers will come, and you will meet them and learn from them.” Later I went to a film publishing house to translate English film art-books

into Chinese. That gave me some access to what was happening outside of China in the world of artists.

You maintained a connection to film through your brother-in-law. Your sister, Si-lan Chen, was married to Jay Leyda, the great Soviet film historian.

Yes. He also wrote a Chinese film history called *Dianying*.

That’s a terrific book. He didn’t know Chinese films, but he wrote one of the best books on Chinese film in the seventies. What was your experience with him like?

We helped each other. When Jay came to China he worked in the film archives. He wanted me to work with

him. When we watched Chinese films, he would write down his comments. He taught me that the principles of any art—including that of film—were the same. Proportion was very important to him. How do you focus? How do you get the audience to cry or smile, or smile some more? I translated everything for him, including some materials for *Dianying*. He couldn’t acknowledge my contributions because he published *Dianying* during the Cultural Revolution, which would have been dangerous for me. He was a fine person, we

learned from each other, but I learned more from him because he was a real artist.

Si-lan, what connection did she have?

Dancing, her art was dancing. Not the art of arranging words.

Do you feel that the fifties' focus on worker peasant soldier, or gong-nang-bing films, was too narrow? Can you recall good films that focused only on worker peasant soldiers?

The big picture was confusion and chaos, but out of this chaos we did accomplish

something. As I wrote in *The Dragon's Village*, the poor peasants sometimes were on the landlord's side because the landlord was kind to them. Most of the Western writers wrote about the violence only from the peasants', not from the landlord's, side. That's of course excusable because they only got the material from Chiang Kai-shek and were not allowed to go to China. We didn't know what was really happening there. We didn't know because Chiang Kai-shek wouldn't tell. We missed something and that hurt.



Victoria Ramirez (Ph.D., SUNY-Binghamton) teaches English literature and writing at Weber State University, where she is Director of Creative Writing. When not hiking, cooking, or writing stories, she's creating lyrics and performing her own songs in Ogden.



Greg Lewis (Ph.D., Arizona State University) is a Professor of Asian and World History at Weber State University and recently completed a Fulbright Research stay in Beijing and Shanghai. He is currently writing a textbook on Chinese cinema history.

Yuan-Tsung Chen

A VIP-Pig

I must say this for my life under the reign of Mao Zedong: There was never a dull day. Purges or purges-in-reverse were not what I had bargained for, but I cannot say they were not exciting. The continuous class war, Mao reassured us, would keep the revolution from stagnating, from losing momentum. To make good on his words, Mao started manufacturing a new purge for 1958, when we were still in the throes of the 1957 anti-rightist purge. This new one was called the campaign of the Great Leap Forward. It had an attractive name and it had an even more

attractive agenda — a campaign to carry us into instant industrialization and the promised land of Communism. This paradise would materialize in the formation of the People's Commune. To call such an organization a commune was to blare out to the whole world that it would be the successor to the Paris Commune — an anti-bourgeois revolutionary municipal council, formed in the city of Paris after the Franco-Prussian War to attempt proletarian rule. But, the Paris Commune, lauded by Karl Marx, was nothing compared with our idyllic People's Commune, the communistic replacement for the socialist cooperatives in rural China. When the vast rural area turned communistic, Mao Zedong believed, the much smaller urban areas would turn communistic automatically.

The latter never came to pass because the People's Commune died almost instantly, although it did exist in name for quite a while. Mao's plan to industrialize China by brutally exploiting peasants was a total disaster. It killed their incentive, and famine stalked the land.

The year of 1960 saw the worst of the great famine, and I went to work in the Red Flag Village that had approximately two hundred fifty households. It was one of some fifteen or sixteen such units, larger and smaller, in a conglomerate baptized as the Red Flag People's Commune. I reported to work to the village Party secretary, Old Dong.



"What you see is typical of most of our communes," he said.

For a fraction of a second I caught a flicker of mockery in his small, protruding eyes. Was he telling me something between the lines? Red Flag Village might be an elucidative example of the havoc wreaked by the Great Leap Forward Campaign?

"I want to do some work that will enable me to understand how it feels to live under this brand of communism. I'll take on any such work no matter how hard and difficult it is." I spoke from the heart.

"What do you think the hardest and most difficult job in a paupers' communism is?" He answered me with a question that was more self-evident than any other explanation any person could come up with.

"Hunting for food."

"Precisely," he nodded.

OLD DONG FORMED A SPECIAL TASK FORCE THAT WOULD REAP A SPECIAL KIND of communal glory. I, with the other village cadres, became involved in a grand scheme to smuggle into our village a fat, live pig, a rarity in the great famine when human beings were underweight. This task had been assigned to Old Dong by his higher-ups in the commune headquarters, who would throw a dinner party in honor of their higher-up, an Inspector General. They conferred this honor on Old Dong because of village proximity — ours was closest to their town. To put a pampered pig on a longer journey would have risked exposure. The higher-ups had, after all, tried to make the peasants believe that in a revolutionary communistic famine, everyone was equally deprived. Exposure would render all their rhetoric null and void.

But they had another consideration. They did not want to be caught red-handed. The butchering of an unusually well-fed pig was an event that was hard to keep secret. Its disclosure could give Old Dong's higher-ups a lot of headaches and possibly lead to the discovery of more scandalous trafficking. So they designated Old Dong as the possible scapegoat. Old Dong knew this and tried to avoid that fate by directing the whole operation with the scrupulousness of a great military strategist.

The first question he had to tackle was how to get the Very Important Pig from there to here. Lotus Boy, nearly twenty years old, was the youngest cadre and without seniority, so naturally he was the one put to the test. He was a sort of cadre-at-large who was given jobs that the senior cadres dodged.

To walk the VIP was tantamount to broadcasting its arrival. That would not do. To have the slightly built Lotus Boy carry the pig on his back was an impossibility. We need a wheelbarrow and a person skilled in pushing it. We didn't want an "outsider," someone outside the village cadre hierarchy, in on this top secret. Who among us could handle the job? We looked at one another and found no answer. Maybe someone who was close to the cadre hierarchy would do.

"Orchid Perfume is almost betrothed to you, Lotus Boy. Why don't you ask her?" Winter Plum, a female cadre who was in charge of guiding and leading village women, suggested.

Lotus Boy squirmed under our stares. Two dull red spots appeared on his angular face.

"I encouraged her to learn a profession," Winter Plum said. "I was very frank with her. I told her that she was not much to look at, but she could make up for what she lacked by excelling in her work. Now there are not many men around who know how to use a wheelbarrow, not to mention women. You know, many men with some skills went elsewhere to seek better-paying jobs. Orchid Perfume is number one among all the pros. She has been very grateful for my support. She once told me, 'Winter Plum, my parents gave me life; you give me guidance.'" Winter Plum was warming up to the subject most interesting to herself—herself, proudly patting her hollow chest.

"Let's cut a long story short," Hunchback Fang, another cadre, interrupted. He was always impatient of braggarts, but inclined to make generous allowances for himself. "Orchid Perfume has a mute tongue. She won't let slip."

"Tongues will wag if I am seen alone with her and...at night." Lotus Boy mumbled his objections.

"You need a chaperone?" Hunchback Fang asked.

This kind of chaperone was deemed to be a woman's duty. The male eyes in the conference room moved back and forth between Winter Plum and me. I wanted to volunteer so I could gain deeper insights into life in this proletarian paradise on earth. But I played hard-to-get so that Winter Plum would appreciate my sacrifice for her and the fact I was venturing into a mined realm to substitute for her.

"First Pearl, you are young, quick-witted, and thirsty for knowledge. It's the best chance to learn. Live and learn, you know." She half-flattered and half-coaxed me.

"You must have learned enough to lecture me like this," I said.

"Whatever I have learned, I will share with you. How is that?" She hinted at opening more vistas for me to explore in the People's Commune.

I AGREED TO ACCOMPANY LOTUS BOY ON THE EXPEDITION. We played cloak-and-dagger. We covered the lower parts of our faces with white gauze masks that were commonly used to keep dust from blowing into the mouth on a windy day. Thus camouflaged, we easily blended into the crowd of the commune cadres and their family members.

The commune headquarters might have been the former residence of a big merchant or a big landlord. The county bureaucrats in charge of housing had probably felt they were doing our commune a favor by assigning us this house. It had many rooms that functioned as offices or were occupied by the cadres' families as living spaces. I saw children running in and out of their parents' offices. I saw a woman cadre writ-

ing at her desk while breast-feeding her baby. Although these arrangements may seem odd, they were commonplace then, even in the city of Beijing. Most cadres came from the peasant class and had worked in guerrilla areas. You were lucky if you had a whole roof over your head. There was no refined arrangement. It just might be that your bedroom was next to someone's office or the other way round.

A cadre met us at the gate. He had a grayish face with the two sides of his jaw jutting out prominently. The face was a hybrid, I imagined, of an executioner and an undertaker. He led us to a room in the third courtyard of the compound. The room was dark without a light. From the side window, I could see a dirty wall with furry mold that had grown from the used water the people upstairs had dumped from their windows. There were also scrawls of chalk and coal. A seedy, ominous corner. I wheeled about to call Lotus Boy who was squatting on his heels in a corner.

He hastened to my side. When I turned back to the window, I nearly screamed in terror. A pair of black sockets in a cadaverous face stared back at me.

"The hog is behind the rock hill," the man hissed.

Lotus Boy and I hastened into the back garden. We would slip out the backdoor. But to our dismay, the backdoor was locked. That gray-faced commune cadre had neglected to unlock it.

"I will get you out of here," Lotus Boy said, trying to calm me down.

I saw him march toward the backdoor with so much heroic determination that he tripped over a short wooden stool and fell.

I rushed to his side. Feeling utterly disconcerted at not being able to make a grand exit, Lotus Boy glowered.

"Are you okay?" I knew that my solicitude only added to his sense of mortification, but I couldn't help myself.

"Don't make a big fuss," he said peevishly.

"I am going to look for that Gray Face," I said.

"You stay here. I never go back on my word. I have promised you that I would get you out of here." Scrambling to his feet, and fumbling for a moment to pick up his black cap, he went to the locked door, and after a struggle, lifted it off its already loosening hinges.

"You get moving first with the hog," Lotus Boy said to me while trying to put the door back in its place.

"Why not just leave the door?"

"If someone comes here, what will he guess when he sees that the back door has been broken down?"

"I can't leave you alone to struggle with the door."

"You'll do me a great favor if you let me save my breath by not arguing with me. I need all my strength now," he said, moaning and panting as the door resisted his efforts. "Just go!"

I obeyed and walked away with the hog, but slowly. Lotus Boy was too busy to watch me. I stopped behind the wall of a house less than

ten steps away and waited in the shadows. I heard the door hinges click and saw him scurrying after me with wounded dignity, but his honor intact.

To avoid encountering anyone, we didn't walk on the streets. Rather, Lotus Boy took me through the maze of back alleys. I followed him from one narrow lane to another, and then into an open field. There Orchid Perfume was waiting with her wheelbarrow.

We put the pig in a large sack to minimize its visibility. For its comfort, we cut a hole for its snout. This way it could pleasantly doze to the gentle movements of the wheelbarrow like a baby rocking in a cradle. We placed the pig on one side of the two-part wheelbarrow and Lotus Boy sat on the other side.

Orchid Perfume was a young woman of few words. She seemed unexcited by the closeness of her young man, but the beads of perspiration on her forehead and the frown of concentration on her lopsided face—her eye was larger and her cheek was shorter on her left side—told me she had put her heart and soul into this task, perhaps the most important one of her life: the successful outcome of this mission would prompt the shillyshallying Lotus Boy and his mother to finalize the marriage agreement.

Thanks to Orchid Perfume's skill, strength, and dedication, the wheelbarrow moved on the bumpy road like a yacht cruising on a waveless sea. Lotus Boy and his charge were so comfortable that they both dozed, he, with his eyes slightly open, breathing evenly; the pig, with its snout half out of the hole, snoring rhythmically. I turned my head and looked over my shoulder, wanting to say a few appreciative words to Orchid Perfume. Just at that moment, she threw her head back with abandon and a sudden burst of passion came from her eyes, lighting up her face. I would never have dreamed that her face could shine so brightly. In fact, she looked beautiful to me.

She deposited us at the communal pigsty, where Old Dong was receiving his triumphant task force. We let the pig out.

"Mission accomplished and yet to be accomplished," Old Dong said with grave deliberation, scratching his bald head. "We cannot put it in the sty with the other pigs."

The communal sty was indeed no good for this sojourner. This sty was a muddy hole covered on one side by a warped thatch roof, which I did not understand why was even there. Half a roof was absolutely useless if there was rain, snow, or wind. And even without the perils of the elements, a late March night in this northern village would nearly freeze these communal pigs. But no one seemed to care. The communal pigs were like orphans since no one could call them his or her own. They were so emaciated that they no longer even looked like pigs, but more like the specter of hungry stray dogs. If they died, it meant less work and more pork for their collective caretakers. Indeed, good rid-dance!

But our VIP was different. Neglecting this pig was tantamount to neglecting our duty of insuring the health of our higher-ups and probably the higher-ups of our higher-ups. That was insubordination. We did not need anyone to tell us how heinous that crime would be.

We made a warm, clean bed in the loft over the animal pen. The bed was next to the trestle bed in which Lotus Boy would sleep and keep our distinguished guest company. To see our guest easing onto the fresh, soft straw relieved part of our anxiety. But there were other problems that still bothered us. How and what would we feed our pig? The higher-ups had told Old Dong that they would fetch the pig's carcass in two days. If we butchered it now, the meat would not taste as fresh as it should.

"Go figure," Old Dong said. After ten years at his job, he had mastered the art of being elusive. The safest way of carrying out one's superiors' instructions was to delegate the task to one's inferiors.

Lotus Boy and I turned to Bright Jade, the woman cadre who ran the communal kitchen. She now possessed the kind of authority that even Old Dong, our village Party secretary, lacked. She was the head of the kitchen cabinet where the food was prepared and distributed among the peasants. Food power! No other village cadre could wield that kind of power over us. The communal kitchen was another of Mao Zedong's great inventions during the Great Leap Forward Campaign; it was meant to control peasants' stomachs. Whoever refused to work would get no rations, though meagre.

"Potato peels will do," Lotus Boy said timidly.

"Nobody peels potatoes nowadays. If we give peeled potatoes to the villagers to eat, we are bound to arouse suspicion," Bright Jade said, pointing out the flaw in his suggestion.

"We can't give whole potatoes to the pig, you know, when our villagers eat leaves and weeds for most of the time?" Lotus Boy asked with his mouth hanging open in wonder. Without batting an eyelid, Bright Jade said in a firm voice: "Have you got a better idea? No. Well, that's it. I'll supply the potatoes, and I'll get my share of pork in return. Agree?"

FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS LOTUS BOY AND I WAITED ON THE VERY PAMPERED pig. To be fair, it did not give us much trouble. It luxuriated in a blissful life of eating and sleeping. Even as it lay down in its bed, it wheezed under the heavy load of its own fat.

On the night of the planned slaughter, we asked for Orchid Perfume's assistance once again. We did as we had done before, putting the pig on one side of the wheelbarrow and Lotus Boy on the other. The journey was uneventful, until we unloaded the pig. At the door of an abandoned barn, it saw three strangers, Old Dong, Winter Plum, and Hunchback Fang, closing in. The pig backed away. Lotus Boy and I pulled the rope around its neck. Hunchback pounced on it, but that scared the pig even more. It screamed. Our grips weakened for a sec-

ond as we tried to calm it down. We were afraid its endless squealing would awaken the whole village. Then, in that unguarded second, the pig broke free and ran away. Oh, how it led us on a wild chase!

The abandoned barn was near the edge of the village where a group of miserable-looking huts slumped behind mounds of earthen graves.

The place was an evil-smelling garbage dump. That was where our pig escaped to, and we plunged right in. We did not mind the dirt and the stink too much, but when we saw the pig running into a narrow lane between the huts, we halted.

This was enemy territory, where most of the village counter-revolutionaries and their families lived. As their number grew with each passing purge, it seemed natural to the higher-ups that they be concentrated into one area. They were political lepers who had to be quarantined.

The pig tested our mettle when it found refuge in enemy territory. Did we dare follow it?

"Pigs have good ears. You see, its ears are very large in proportion to the rest of its body. The footsteps of First Pearl and Lotus Boy are familiar to it, so it won't be frightened if they go after it," Hunchback Fang said with a justifiable smile. "Of course, if Old Dong, Winter Plum, or I join the chase, it will run even faster and farther away."

Lotus Boy and I could not fight Hunchback Fang's logic. We braced ourselves and plunged into the danger zone. There we saw total destitution: no trees, no bushes, not even weeds. There was no sign of life because the colony was under a curfew at this hour. Silence hung over the mounds and huts, and darkness enveloped them. The farther we sneaked into the colony, the darker the shadows became. I was beginning to lose my nerve, but just as I was thinking of turning back, I heard the faint sound of voices. Lotus Boy must have heard it too. He silently beckoned me forward. In a few steps I saw our pig sandwiched between two peasants squatting on their haunches. One was softly scratching the pig's back and the other was tenderly feeling its ears. The massage apparently was giving the pig pleasure. Its nerves were soothed and it had quieted down.

When I recognized these two peasants, I was at once embarrassed and relieved. It was embarrassing for us revolutionaries to be found embroiled in a very un-revolutionary activity by two counterrevolutionaries. Yet I preferred to be caught red-handed by young Yang and young Fu than by other even less friendly counter-revolutionaries. They had been labeled counter-revolutionaries because they had protested against the Great Leap Forward policy. Although they were quite antagonistic to their accusers, Old Dong, Hunchback Fang, and Winter Plum, they harbored no real grudge against Lotus Boy and me. We might be able to negotiate our way out.

We sheepishly thanked them. As we were about to turn and lead the pig back to its noble destiny, young Yang spoke. "Hold on. We cannot let you go with the hog."

"Why?" Lotus Boy asked under his breath.

"You don't know why?" young Yang studied him in mock surprise. "I haven't seen such a fat hog in a long time. It's not from our communal sty. Where did it come from? Or where did you get it? Doesn't it seem a little fishy to you? If there is an inquiry into this matter, I don't want to be named as your accomplice."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

Young Yang came out of the shadows, lifting his hand in a gesture of menace while he took hold of the pig. "If you don't mind, I'll try to win a little revolutionary merit so as to mend my ways."

Lotus Boy started. He was struck with amazement. "You are going to inform on us?" he whispered in disbelief.

Young Yang contemplated Lotus Boy condescendingly. "You have long ceased to be my friends."

At this remark, young Fu grinned darkly as if in anticipation of some fatal game.

"Old Dong is the Party secretary. You take us to him first and he will decide where to send us next," I said.

I DON'T THINK THAT OLD DONG OR HUNCHBACK FANG OR WINTER PLUM expected to see Lotus Boy and me back with more than the pig. They froze at the sight of young Yang and young Fu. I was so absorbed in watching this odd confrontation that it was several minutes before I became conscious of a deadly silence.

Finally it was Old Dong who rose to the occasion. After all, he couldn't be Head of our village for nothing. "Young Yang and young Fu, let me tell you this. What you see is not what you think you see."

"Tell me what you think I should see," young Yang said, barely holding back a smile.

"I am not at liberty to tell you that," Old Dong said.

Young Yang involuntarily took a look at the pig as if expecting it to transform into something other than what it was.

Hunchback Fang sneered insidiously. "What are you waiting for? You have caught the hog and you think you have demonstrated your enthusiasm for the revolution by returning it to its lawful place. Is that not enough? Maybe you are not happy with us because we don't seem pleased with your enthusiasm. We don't praise you. We don't give you the reward that you think is due you. So you stand here obstinately, making clear to us that no one is going to talk you out of this pig. Are you going to make a hue and cry against us? Where will it get you? You simpleton! Now, get out of here and we won't say anything to make you a dual counter-revolutionary."

I could almost hear young Yang's hair bristle with anger. There was nothing more insulting than to be forced to accept the favors of a man he had once thumbed his nose at. Young Yang's large ego had not shrunk because of his present counter-revolutionary status.

Young Fu, seeing his comrade-in-trouble being taunted, took a step closer to the pig and shot Hunchback Fang a look filled with hatred.

Old Dong watched the development of the situation with the self-possession befitting a hard-nosed politician. "Young Yang, I understand your enthusiasm. You are making strenuous efforts to rehabilitate yourself, and your ardor is inspired by your wish to return to the revolutionary rank and file. However, the demonstration of revolutionary enthusiasm might not be appreciated under certain circumstances. It could be interpreted as an affront to rather than affection for the Party. You are an intelligent lad and you know what I am saying. And you know I am admonishing you for your own good."

Young Yang involuntarily withdrew his hand from the rope that was tied around the pig's neck. It was probable that he was coming to the slow realization that what he saw was, indeed, not what he had thought. He fixed his eyes on the pig without blinking. What did he see now? The rich, juicy meat beneath its glossy black hair that would grace the kitchen tables of the higher-ups? At any rate, he backed away.

Old Dong's diplomatic skill led us all from the dangerous ground. Young Yang and young Fu left without another word.

The accomplices in the execution of the Very Important Pig each cut a piece of meat from it. The best parts of the carcass went legitimately to gratify appetites more revolutionary than ours.



Born in Shanghai, Yuan-tsung Chen in 1950 joined a group devoted to agrarian reform in Gansu Province, the setting of her first book, *The Dragon's Village*, published by Pantheon Books in 1980. Her recent book, *Return to the Middle Kingdom: One Family, Three Revolutionaries, and the Birth of Modern China*, was published by Union Square Press in 2008.

Carol Ugochukwu

Worldwide Organization of Women, Africa Executive Director

Exploring Diversity During Economic Crisis

*Keynote Address for the 11th Annual Weber State University Diversity Conference
in Collaboration with The Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW)*



Special guests, ladies and gentlemen. I wish to first of all let you know one thing simply: that I—my present appearance notwithstanding—am first and foremost a practical village woman. When you see me in my village, you realize that I am a rural woman. The clothes I have on are designed and made by women from handmade materials. So, one thing I have to ask and crave your indulgence for is this: while we are gathered here today to celebrate the diversity that makes for our common humanity, we speak in different tongues. While we

may look differently, we speak our own national and regional languages. I would like to ask you to be patient with me and listen to me because, as you know, English is a second language to me. I have my thoughts in my language, in my native dialect, but will try to convey them to you in English.

I want to thank you, Dr. Crawford, and the members of your faculty for giving me this opportunity to be here today. Imagine traveling from my village in Africa to the United States, to Utah and to Weber State University, and seeing and experiencing all that I have seen, and you can imagine that I have a lot of stories to tell. I remember that I was once traveling to London with my dear aunt—a blessed memory! She had never left the village, but was married for over fifty years and had raised all these children and done humanitarian work in the communities, and so we decided to honor her with a trip to London. She had never entered an airplane, and so when we boarded and she experienced the luxury of Western air travel, she was speechless. They of course gave her food, which she wouldn't eat, and they gave her magazines and newspapers, which she would not want to part with either. She kept everything, so that she could take it all as a souvenir back to the village. When we got to London, she saw

older women like her, and they were all in pants. We don't wear pants in my place, we dress the way I am dressed today. So she said to me, "Did you see that woman at the bus stop with those pants? That's how I'm going to look when I get home. I believe when I get home with these pants, people will start running into the bush."

Like my aunt, I always try to take back some of the things I experience to my village, and what I see and experience today is your tremendous hospitality and generosity. Thank you for making me part of this conference!

Well, the theme of this conference, "Exploring Diversity during Economic Crisis," is critically relevant to our present time. Although the effects of this truly global crisis can be felt worldwide, its impact is far greater in developing countries. Donor agencies have cut back on their support, and the consequences of such reduced funding are increased poverty, the spread of disease (in particular HIV/AIDS), and more crimes such as kidnapping, drug abuse, robbery and more domestic violence. People die needlessly every day.

Because we live in an interdependent world we cannot of course ignore these challenges and have to focus on solutions. In our individual communities we must strive to make a difference. The situation reminds me of the words the British philosopher and statesman, Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

I understand that I will speak to you about community and self-develop-

ment projects, community service and education as the key to development in the African diaspora. Having worked as an advocate and the voice for women and children in my community for many years, I would like to share some of my experiences with you today.

First, my first experiences of helping people who are hungry and desperate came from my mother. In my village

my mother cooked extra food on Sundays and served the children. These children looked forward to this meal every Sunday, for it was their best meal of the week for them.

She also gathered young mothers and their children and told them moonlight stories. The village children had no story books. They were told

folklore, which expanded their knowledge of the community and their world. The stories always centered on good and evil, the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do. It was a unique learning experience for many of them.

As I grew up, I noticed that there was a difference between how the girls and boys were treated. The boys went hunting for animals, for game. They went around with their sling shots hunting birds. Most of the time, it was they who played soccer (we call it football in my country). The girls, by contrast, stayed home all day doing one domestic chore after another. Even the names some of the girls were given tells a lot.

When it came to school, the boys were the first choice. With limited income in virtually all families, only the boys were sent to school, while the girls were given away for early marriage

Some of us were lucky to have had parents who cherished their daughters and sent us to school. Benefiting from a sound education has given us the privilege of having a better and more expanded view of the world.

from about age 13 or 14. Some parents did (and still do) this to get enough money from the dowry to send the boys to school, who will keep the family name going.

Some of us were lucky to have had parents who cherished their daughters and sent us to school. Benefiting from a sound education has given us the privilege of having a better and more expanded view of

the world. I grew up watching men and women come together to build a house for a destitute member of the community. Many successful people in my community were educated by members of the community contributing money to pay the fees for any child that was considered smart enough to go to school. Some

of these students, in turn, trained other children like them. Our community is an “us” community, not a “me, me” community. As we say in our village, “A tree does not make a forest.” Our belief is that when you offer an individual the opportunity for a good education, she or he will be able to have a good chance for a good job and may not likely end up in the streets.

The problem, however, is that in most developing countries unemployment and under-employment are a great concern. Our governments do not seem to be of much help. The positive side of this is that with a good education, people might be able to start their own businesses.

In poor families, most educational opportunities are more readily available to boys, and the girls are typically

In poor families, most educational opportunities are more readily available to boys, and the girls are typically left behind. Generally speaking, many of our cultural practices militate against the girl child. We cannot sit idle and watch this injustice go unaddressed.

left behind. Generally speaking, many of our cultural practices militate against the girl child. We cannot sit idle and watch this injustice go unaddressed. As my kinsman Chinua Achebe says: “As long as one people set on another and are deaf to their cry, so long will understanding and peace elude all of us.”

To really help young girls, educated women (including myself) have started an advocacy initiative for a change in attitude toward female children. Most of us have become recognizable role models in our culture and have worked with the National Council of Women’s Societies of Nigeria — an umbrella organization for non-governmental organizations led by women — to effect

changes on issues of female circumcision (female genital mutilation), early marriage, ill treatment of widows, domestic violence and child labor.

Widows were (and still are) denied the right of inheritance and access to land and property of their husbands. They were also subjected to inhuman treatment. In collaboration with WOW, we have started an Adult Literacy Center for young mothers to learn to read and write, and our curriculum includes self-development programs, personal hygiene, soap and pomade making, cloth and basket weaving, and sewing and knitting. We have also established a *garri* (cassava) processing plant which serves the village, and many women who have gone through our programs are now literate. The excitement and feeling of accomplishment shown

by these women when they learn to sign their names, instead of using a thumbprint, is truly indescribable.

WOW Africa offers micro-credit loans that have helped these women make a difference in their families' lives. The loans have been applied to many uses. They buy fresh fish and smoke them for sale; they buy food stuff in large quantities for resale; they sell plastic containers; and the loans have helped send their children to school and increase their family income. Our loans go to women because they apply them to good causes for the family. As well, the repayment rate for these loans is high because the loan is guaranteed by family elders.

WOW Africa also organizes medical outreach to help treat problems like ophthalmological and general health care. And with financial and moral support from WOW, villagers built a 264 foot-long bridge to connect their village that, up to that point, was kept isolated from other villages; the original bridge was destroyed 30 years ago. The good thing about this bridge is that an American engineer from Pennsylvania came down to live in my village for three months at no cost and taught the village men to build this bridge. This is what is called selfless service. Under his direction, the villagers who provided their labor learned technical knowledge and skill about bridge building. Most Americans are large-hearted, always willing to give. It is all about making a difference. I know that most people

have things they would be happy to give away or share with people living in poverty. The problem is funding.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that WOW Africa believes and lives the Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." We all have to get to work! I realize that many people complain of

being either too busy or unwilling to take the risk. We must get involved in our communities to make changes. Numerous opportunities and organizations and foundations offer causes worthy of support, such as helping at PTA or at church fundraisers. I am sure you could think of some other projects.

It is time for us to act. Talk should be over.

The problem in our cities is that neighbors don't know each other anymore. The village mentality of yore is completely gone. It's a challenge to get to know your neighbors because often they just want to be left alone. These days we are often told that we may just have to do things differently. We may just all text or twitter our messages, without personal contact. Against such indirection and impersonality, I urge another Chinese proverb, "Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand." Finally, I want to leave you with these words of Booker T. Washington: "A sure way for one to lift himself up is by lifting up someone else."

Are there any questions?

The problem in our cities is that neighbors don't know each other anymore. The village mentality of yore is completely gone. It's a challenge to get to know your neighbors because often they just want to be left alone.

Forrest Crawford & María Parrilla de Kokal

Poverty, Gender, and Education in Africa—

A Conversation with Carol Ugochukwu



Pierre Holtz for UNICEF, 2008

PRELUDE

Carol Ugochukwu is the Executive Director of the Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW) in Africa and the Vice President of WOW-USA. Widely traveled, Carol has participated in UN conferences in different parts of the world and is especially skilled in speaking out for the plight of women and children in Africa. She has been a panelist at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York and at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Carol received her early education in Jos and Kano in Northern Nigeria. She is a product of the renowned St. Louis College, Bompai, the first Catholic girl's school in Northern Nigeria, and a graduate of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the Royal Institute of Public Administration in London. She is also a graduate of Leadership Development in Interethnic Relations in Los Angeles.

An accomplished civil servant, Carol has served in various capacities, including as Secretary to the Anambra State Pilgrims Board and as Sole Administrator of Njikoka Local Government. She worked in various senior administrative capacities in government and retired as a Permanent Secretary, and currently devotes her time to community service. She was Anambra State President and National Vice President of the National Council of Women's Societies of Nigeria.

She also established WOW-Africa in Nigeria with chapters throughout the country

to promote strong families and responsible citizenship. WOW-Africa runs the Family Works Project, which provides programs promoting self-reliance for women. In her own village she also established an Adult Literacy Center where men and women learn life skills for educational and personal development. With support from donors, WOW-Africa grants micro-credit loans and arranges medical outreach for villagers. Through her efforts and support from donors, and aided by labor provided by the community, a 264 foot-long bridge was built to link Enugwu village with the rest of Ozubulu.

Carol is a Justice of the Peace and the recipient of many awards, including the Rotary Club Community Service Award, the WOW Global Humanitarian Award, and the Catholic Women Organization Precious Mother Award. She is also the Patroness of her local parish church, St. Francis of Assisi. In honor of her selfless service to her community, she was awarded a Chieftaincy title in 1992, the first woman to be so honored in Ozubulu. Carol is married to Ike Ugochukwu, her husband of many years.

This interview took place during the Worldwide Organization for Women Annual Conference on the campus of Weber State University, 10 October 2009. We want to thank Ms. Ugochukwu for her time and generosity and for her inspiring leadership on behalf of women in underdeveloped countries all over the world.



First of all, I want to thank you for being part of the 11th Annual Diversity Conference and, more importantly, for the wisdom and insight you gave us during the keynote address. Following up on your lecture, I wanted you to share with us a bit about your family and your professional development. How did, and does, your family and community upbringing influence your work? As you reflect on your family experiences, how does that shape what you do today?

Thank you, Dr. Crawford, for having me. I would say first of all that I had the best family any child could have. I had parents who were committed to the development of their child. They gave me all the love in the world, and that is so important, growing up in such a loving environment. They made me feel proud of myself, feel happy with myself, feel at ease with any environment. And they gave me a sense that you can do anything you wish to do that is beneficial to you. I always heard that phrase, "The sky is the limit." You could always reach for the stars.

At the time I was born, girls in my community had no choice except marriage. There was nothing like going to college. If you were lucky to finish high school, you just got married. But most girls didn't finish high school. They just went to elementary school, or they didn't go to school at all. But my father believed in the value of education. He believed that education was the key to development and put me on the right track. And that has informed whatever I have been doing. Then, when it came to school and marriage, I was blessed also to have the most

genuine, disciplined and loving husband. He also gave me the opportunity to do whatever I wanted to do. He never told me, "Don't do this, don't do that." I had all the freedom to do whatever I loved. He saw that I loved helping, even if was only in the local church. So that's why I'm doing what I'm doing. I had the support of my parents; I had the support of my husband. With this support, I was ready to go. And that's where I am today.

It's interesting that you say that, because one of the things I heard you say earlier is that, even though you grew up in poverty, you didn't even know you were poor because the support was so strong and significant there.

Yes, that's exactly so. I never knew that that was called poverty until I grew up. We were poor; I had to walk miles to go to school. The day I got my first shoes was a celebration. My father would always ask, "Have you done your homework? What did you have today? Let me see your school work." He was very supportive about me going to school, doing my homework and extracurricular activities.

When I went to college, my parents left me to live with these nuns in a boarding school. I had everything I could ever have asked for. When I left my family, I didn't know what tennis was, but when I went to this school run by Irish nuns, they wanted to bring us up like they do in their country, and so they said we should buy tennis racquets. My parents didn't know what they were talking about. And as we went looking for a racquet, they told us about the brand Wilson, which we didn't know anything about. So that's how I came to play

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tennis. Whenever I came back from school, I'd carry my Wilson. Anywhere I was going, if I was traveling, say, I'd carry my tennis racquet.

Judging from your background, you seem to have a very strong sense of civic duty, a service orientation, and I wanted you to talk a bit more about that. I get the impression that, as you've had this very strong community network and supportive family, this gave you an opportunity to really be able to understand the importance of giving back to others.

If you'll recall from my talk, my mother was my true inspiration. She made us believe that we had to give to those that were poorer than us. And then what she would do was to cook extra food and offer other people. And we also saw strangers, people from the village coming to stay in our house. From my community I learned that we were each our brother's keepers. We believed in the extended family system. I had my uncles, I had my aunts, all of them would come and do something for me, especially when they found out that I was the first to finish high school. They would say, "This is something special happening in our family." And they would come and give me support. The love and attention I got, the way people treated me, gave me the sense of wanting to pay back to the community. I wouldn't have finished high school without the support of some of my uncles and some of my aunts who would come to support my father, so I felt that I should do the same for others.

I was also very much touched as a child by the marriage of my childhood friend, who was from northern Nigeria. This girl, at age

ten, was given out to marriage. I remember it was on a day when we got to the tub to fetch water for the next day. (We felt we were better than the kids in the villages, because we could get water from a tub, not down by the river.) So one day she said that I would see her for the last time. I asked her what was the matter, and she said they were taking her away to get married. She said I should come to her house that day, a Friday, and they just came and took her to get married. I was eight

years old and had no idea about marriage. They just put her in a dress and we both started crying, but there was nothing we could do. I didn't see her again until many years later when I came back from college. When I returned home, I saw her in the market begging for alms. That touched me deeply. She had a baby and a dis-

ease that destroyed everything—they call it VVF, or Vistula Vagina Fistula.

Is that a result of female genital mutilation?

Yeah, it is connected to female genital mutilation and to underage mothers giving birth, when their cervix is not yet mature enough for delivery. She was having a baby at about thirteen or fourteen, and everything just stopped. She became a medical problem. Her in-laws disowned her. When I saw her, she still recognized that it was me and we started crying. That had a profound impact on me, that's what made me say, "I'm not going to let this happen to anybody else I know." So that's why I started community action.

As I think about what propels people into action, it's often an impact they had

never anticipated. So as you describe your situation, I can picture how deeply incensed and angry you must have felt, and which made you think, "I have to operate my life in a different way to try and make a difference." And as young as you were, was there anything that you could do at that stage?

There was not, but I kept asking my parents, "Why do Amina's parents leave her in that situation?" And my parents said, "You know, because they are Muslim. They don't treat their girls well." And I said, "Why should any parents do that? I see other Muslims and have other friends that are Muslim, and they treat their girls well. It doesn't matter what religion you are. It's just that Amina's parents did not treat her well." And my dad said, "Well, that is it, but this will never happen to you, which is why you have to go to school."

When you think of the mission of WOW—the World Organization for Women—what role did you play in it and what was your initial involvement in the organization?

I had already been doing work with other organizations like the National Council of Women Societies and related groups before getting involved in WOW. What attracted me to them was a curious story: on TV, we were told that people in the United States of America do not like to have children, or one or two at the most, as a result of which officials came up with a policy in our country that people could only have four children. People were of course laughing, saying, "You cannot tell us what to do, to have four kids. Whatever God gives, we will take. We are not going to

cut on the number of kids." So when I came to America, I saw women who had six children, and some had eight, and most came from this part of the United States where we are having this conference now. And that shocked me. So I said, "How come you Americans have so many kids?" And they said, "Well, we just love to have kids, and we support our families," and then they kept talking about these dogmas. I told them that I was of course in support of anything to uplift the family and that for us, in the Third World, family is a very

important unit of society as well. But we are faced with the task of sustaining these families. That's our own problem. It's not about having families or having kids, but about the social, economic, and financial wherewithal to support those kids. And so we have to have programs that

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help us support these kids—that's how I got involved with WOW.

My own agenda is not about going to conferences and talking, but about staying in the village and working with the villagers. I want to give families the tools for survival. As the Chinese proverb says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." That's why my own program is about work—about self-development programs, programs to learn skills, and the self-respect that comes from that.

So, as you've been involved in WOW, do you see that there are particular challenges or limitations that keep you from really uplifting other women or from achieving the advocacy that you are aiming for?

Yes, there are a lot of challenges. First of all, WOW came up with a program to be at the

United Nations to make sure that some of the discussions at the UN would include the welfare of the family. The UN would rather use the word household instead of family, which is a taboo word. So you see those technicalities—we were having problems with getting the right language. Also we have a lot of financial challenges. You may conceive a program, but you don't have the wherewithal to get the program going. You may want to send doctors and nurses to villages to do eye exams and general check-ups, or to administer drugs; or you may want to ship donated books or other materials to give to kids, but all of that costs money.

Can I get you to go back and clarify the difficulty in getting the United Nations to use the term family instead of household?

I don't know why the UN prefers to use the word *household*, when *family* would work just as well. My understanding is that a *household* is made up of many other things . . .

Family sounds more like relationship, and household sounds . . .

. . . so technical and out of place. We would spend one whole week arguing on *family*. And then when you state, "the family is a basic unit of society," you have committed a crime at the UN. And so when I go to a UN meeting and watch them argue over the meaning of a word like *family*, I realize it's better for me to go home and do what I know how to do: helping people on the ground. I'm not playing with these words.

Your anger connects to another question. How does your work intersect with the UN

declaration on human rights, the convention of women's rights, and related organizations. I get the impression that part of your role is helping to articulate language that helps to establish a particular goal or aspiration that you think WOW ought to be focusing its efforts on.

I was in Copenhagen in 1975 when it was decided that we were going to have a decade for women. That decade was from 1985-1995, the UN decade for women. And I was

privileged also to be in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985 for the beginning of that decade, where I represented my country, Nigeria. And the decade after Nairobi led to the Beijing conference of 1995, which I also attended. So it's been a privilege. But our work is far from over.

There is serious domestic violence all over the world, and we do nothing. There

is female circumcision. Why should anybody mutilate the human body just because they don't want the girl to be promiscuous? Nobody has the right to touch a creation by God. Why should anybody be forced into any marriage? Why should a child be hawking things on the streets? Why should any child be sold into slavery? Why should women be sold into prostitution in Asia, Thailand, and all those places that practice it? Why should people in China kill a child at birth or terminate the pregnancy just because it's a girl? Why should people demand a high dowry for a woman just to make gains? Most UN declarations are right and I agree with them and will continue to support them, but there are others that have to be reconsidered.

In your speech earlier today, you said that "education gives you the ability to know

and discover the world.” When you contrast American values of the civic-minded person with what you see in Nigeria, what stands out in your mind, and how does education relate to that? Do you see that citizens might be less involved because of their lack of education, or do you perhaps see them being more involved as a result? Do you see any contrasting differences, or perhaps even similarities, in the Nigerian community that you grew up in versus your experiences in America?

Sometimes when I come to America, I see kids on the streets that have messed themselves up with drugs and other things, and I always shake my head in sadness. And I wonder, why should students who have all this—well-equipped schools, good classrooms, a twenty-four hour supply of electricity, kitchens and running water, and drive-throughs—why should they end up on the streets? And the answer is: because they have failed to take heed of education. Instead of going to school, they sneak out and go and do things they should not do. I see a lot of this in America. By contrast, those kids that do decide to stay in school are building and flying airplanes. They become professors like you, and they are finding the right jobs, even if they’re riding the train. All these people are doing something.

In my country, people are struggling to have the basic necessities of life; education is considered a privilege, and children understand that something good can come from education: better employment, work in a bank, becoming a doctor, lawyer, professor,

or whatever they want to be. So the contrast for me is that some of the people that have so much don’t even see they have it, while our own people are still struggling to get there. For that reason, most everybody is serious about education in Nigeria. And those that aren’t often simply don’t have the financial wherewithal to get it. If you look at the popu-

lation of immigrants that come from Africa to the United States, you will find that most of them are striving to get a good education and to have a good job—they do not mess up. Some of them may, of course, but most of them know all too well what they left behind and know that they have a responsibility to fix something and help their people back home. That is the difference.

Could you say more about how you see youth in general, and girls in particular, developing the necessary educational skills you speak about to meet the global demand. What do you think we need to be doing to make sure young people have these skills and feel empowered and supported? How do we keep them from falling into these various traps you’ve spoken of earlier, and where they feel they don’t have the ability to make judgments about their future?

That’s a much-used word in UN documents that I really don’t like to use, but I think it’s apt here: empowerment, and that starts with education. Youth these days are so eager to get married, but they are often not prepared. They get into a marriage without knowing what they’re getting into. They’re

not prepared for raising their kids, and many girls do not know how to cook. Once my son brought home a girl, and I asked her to prepare one of our native dishes. Well, she wanted to go and get a cook book, but you just can't do that for most native foods. We don't have measures, and we don't have scales. You do it from learning from your mom, not by going to a textbook.

It's important for these young women to have these skills for purposes of communal engagement, and in a manner that they feel intellectually prepared for.

Yes. Call it professional preparedness and do it with ease, without complaint!

Would you add functional literacy to that?

Absolutely, that's important, too. Youth with literate and educated parents more often than not behave well, because they have positive role models to follow. But when you see kids without these models, they tend to fall by the wayside. I really feel sorry for kids that lack social role models.

Where do you see your work or the work of WOW, say, six, or ten, or fifteen years from now? What role does diversity play, in your judgment, in your work with WOW? Do you see yourself working out of a job, that is to say, moving to some other globally-based activist organization to achieve similar WOW missions? You were talking earlier about micro-loans. That's something that is done very locally within your village, and we may not ever know about it in the United States, but it helps someone in your community. I'm interested in how you envision your advocacy, your passion, your leadership, moving toward the future?

Well, first of all, we hope to have a new generation coming to step in and continuing our cause. I want younger people to be part of WOW. They can learn from us, and we

can pass the torch from one generation to the next. I also don't envision that our work will end with our community. WOW Africa is moving beyond villages into the cities. We've had some women from different cities in Nigeria form WOW Africa, and we've also had people in Kenya do that. We've tried to reach out to other African countries too, and we also want WOW's work to go global so that our message can go out to more people. We want our light to shine and shine onto other parts of the globe. We already have a woman from Nepal working with us, and another one from Sierra Leone. We have women coming together, and the more we host conferences like this, the more opportunities we get to network. Every organization survives by networking, and so we need to network with other organizations that have similar values and then spread the message. Because the message we are sending is a message of hope. The message to make the world a better place then when we found it—that is our goal.

I am wondering, how many years have you been involved with WOW? And as a follow-up, has there been significant involvement from other nations, or do you see that we have moved back at this point?

I have been involved with WOW since 1990, and then we started our own WOW in 1999. But I've also been working with another organization since the seventies, when I was in Copenhagen: the Third World Organization for Women.

Regarding your second question: No, we have not moved back. We are moving forward. That's why we have a representative in Geneva, working with women from all over the world. That's why this week, for this conference, we brought in a woman from Somalia, Asha Hafa Elmi, who is a peace maker and refugee living in Kenya. I met her in Kenya in 2004-2005. She is serving the cause of Somali children and women. We do a lot of networking, and we

have organizations that we work with both within and outside the United States.

When you were talking about functional literacy, I think you were referring to girls learning from their role models, not from a book, but from the family. Do you see boys as a part of that as well?

Yes, very much so. Any learning that is for girls alone without including boys doesn't make sense, does it? I am a strong advocate for boys and girls to have equal opportunities. What I'm talking about is equal opportunity for all, not equal opportunities for girls alone. We have to think in terms of a global humanity without prejudice of any sort. And an unprejudiced humanity of course connects to diversity. Diversity means bringing everybody to the table, regardless of skin or hair color.

I was wondering if I could ask you about your childhood friend. The image you created has stayed in my mind. Whatever became of her?

Her situation makes me want to cry. She turned out to be a beggar and lived on the streets. From what I know, she died a long time ago.

It's a tragedy that happens more often than we realize. Carol, I want to thank you for the privilege of giving us the opportunity to really have you reflect on your inspiring role in empowering women for purposes of peaceful resolution and global connection. Thank you very much.



Dr. Forrest C. Crawford (Ed.D., Brigham Young University) is currently a Professor of Teacher Education at Weber State University where he also serves as Assistant to the President for Diversity. He is also president of the Board for the Northern Utah HIV/Aids Coalition and has been elected as Secretary General to the International Society for Teacher Education (ISFTE). He is also active in Children's Heaven, an orphanage for teen girls in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Dr. Crawford was one of the major catalysts behind establishing a variety of local groups, including the Utah Coalition for the Advancement of Minorities in Higher Education, the Utah Black Leadership Forum, and the Mahatma Gandhi Alliance for Peace. He was also the co-founder of Utah's Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Commission.



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Don Chenhall

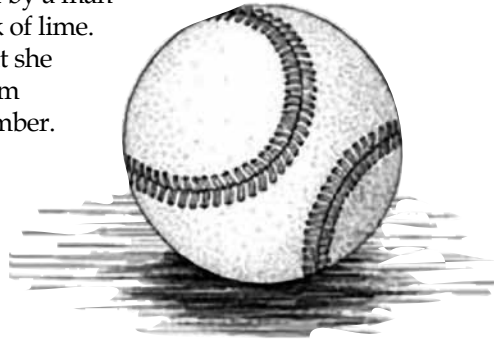
A Diamond in the Rough

Jenny eyed the small iron bleachers suspiciously as her practiced eye scanned for barnacles. She noted the recent coat of copper bottom paint, the kind used on boat hulls to retard marine growth. She settled on a scrap of blanket, in the front row at the far end.

The day had a snap to it, a clarity and brightness rare in the coastal forest of Southeast Alaska, where annual rainfall measures twelve to fifteen feet. The ball field had been cleared of boats, which now lay hull-to at the base of the long Stedman Street dock behind the left field line. Little boys raked seaweed, while bare-chested young men rolled drift logs off to the side with peaveys. Several teenage girls casually but carefully watched the young men from their perches on the sawmill dock above the right field line.

It was four hours past the high tide of plus eighteen, with the low tide of minus three still two hours away. The large alluvial flat where Ketchikan Creek flowed into Tongass Narrows was being paced off by the umpire, followed by a man leading a mule carrying a dribbling sack of lime.

Jenny had heard of baseball, but she had never seen it. She had moved in from the remote cannery at Loring last September. Francine, the mistress of the boarding house for young women, had strongly suggested that her girls turn out to support the local team against the visiting Pirates of Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The smell of low tide was overpowering, but the crisp uniforms on the handsome Canadian ball players kept her in her seat.



Jenny listened to the chatter around her as the bleachers filled with women. She was alert but relaxed, resigned to the enjoyment of a spectacle she didn't understand, one of many since she had come in. She had learned early on not to panic, not to have to know everything immediately. Her appearance was pleasantly stoic, but her insides were just getting by on patience and nerve.

She watched the Pirate outfielders walk out to the receding tide line, perhaps 200 feet from home plate, and check the footing. Each warily scanned the eel grass waving back and forth in the lapping wavelets twenty or thirty feet beyond, probably wondering what the footing would be like in the middle innings when the tide bottomed out.

Jenny observed the visiting players taking infield practice while Francine explained the game to her. Several boardinghouse girls began to

interrupt, arguing with Francine's version of the rules. Jenny's attention wandered as the discussion heated up.

She mentally reviewed what little she knew. It was like board games, which along with cards were the only organized games she had ever played. Instead of advancing a piece around the board with a throw of the dice, players themselves advanced around the lime line according to how far they hit the ball with a bat. She hadn't seen a bat yet, but she understood it to be a cross between an oar handle and a halibut club.

A throaty roar announced the local ballplayers as they sprinted onto the field. Catcalls and whistles continued from the bridge over the creek, lined now with gaudy-dressed whores from Creek Street, the collection of bordellos on pilings which snaked upstream. Single young men returned the catcalls, while others smiled and turned away. Later that night, after a taste of the whiskey from the two barrels brought along by the Canadians, the single men would walk up the lighted boardwalk to visit, while the rest would cross a footbridge upstream and sneak down Married Man's Trail in the dark.

Jenny watched a tall, slender ballplayer as he loped out the long lime line, which, as Francine had explained, separated fair from foul. Jenny thought it might be like where the ebb and flood tides met, one coming in and the other going out. The young man moved like a seal, a bundle of slick, effortless motion. Francine caught her staring.

"Carson James," she said. "Don't bother. He's not very friendly."

"Why not?" Jenny asked.

Francine squinted and remembered. "His father was a miner. They lived in Hadley, over on Prince of Wales Island. The family was on their way in from fishing when they hit a deadhead that stove in the hull. Carson made it to shore, but his parents drowned."

The game started, and the Ketchikan pitcher had the Pirates waving at air. Jenny was oblivious, her attention on Carson James as she followed his every move. At the end of the inning he trotted in from right field, passing ten feet in front of her. He glanced over quickly and then away, but it was enough.

Francine continued. "After that, Carson lived in a cabin up on the hill above town with his uncle, Jack James, who was a prospector. Then Jack disappeared over around El Capitan, fell into one of those cracks in the marble most likely."

"How old was Carson then?" Jenny asked.

"Oh, fourteen I guess. He didn't have any other relatives. He was used to fending for himself. Jack would be gone for months sometimes. Several families offered to take him in, but he stayed in the cabin by himself, cutting and selling firewood to get by."

Jenny's eyes followed Carson back to the outfield. "How did he come to be a baseball player?"

Francine chuckled. "Someone saw him throwing rocks on the beach. He could bean two out of three seagulls at fifty yards."

The Pirates started reading the curveball better by the third inning. After two groundouts and a triple, the team's star player, a huge In-

dian from up the Skeena River called The Chief, hit a screamer foul down the right field line. Carson took a perfect line to the spot, slid with one leg outstretched and caught the ball just as his foot hit a barnacle-encrusted piling. Momentum brought him to his feet and throwing in one motion. The runner tagged and headed for the plate, but Carson's smoking, one-hop bullet peg was in the catcher's mitt so fast that the runner turned halfway and headed back to third, and was picked off.

When Carson came in from the outfield, Jenny moved out from the bleachers and stood in his path. Carson slowed to a walk, approached the girl warily, and stopped.

"My name is Jenny Lang," the girl with the strawberry blonde hair said. "My parents drowned too."

Carson stared at her in disbelief, at her handsome face with its chin thrust forward and her deep blue eyes. He shook his head slowly from side to side like a buffalo, moved around her and sprinted in.

"I told you so," Francine said with a smirk, as Jenny sat back down.

Carson came up to bat third, and it was easy to see by the ferocity of his practice cuts that he was smoldering. He nailed the first pitch, harder and farther than anyone could ever remember, and some had been to Portland and watched professionals. The ball landed in the water fifty feet or more beyond the eel grass, which lay flat and glassy in the mud. The tide had just turned.

On his way back out to right field at the end of the inning, Carson hesitated in front of the bleachers, started on, then stopped and spun around with a violent jerk. Jenny walked out to him.

"I stood on the beach and watched my parents drown," Carson hissed through clenched teeth. "I listened to my mother scream, and I didn't do anything."

Jenny put her hand on his arm. He tried to yank it away, but she had incredibly strong hands. "You'd have drowned yourself. You know that."

"You don't tell me," he spat under his breath. "I watched them die." He abruptly jerked away from her and sprinted to the outfield.

An overcast began to move in and the southeast wind picked up, putting a little chop on the outfield-eating tide. The Chief came up again, and this time he hit one far out in the gap between center and right. Seeing it would land in the water, the center fielder gave up on it. Carson continued to run and closed fast, one step in the water, then two and three, each deeper, each with a larger splash. He dove and snagged the ball in the web of his glove as he planed on his belly, sending up a mighty rooster tail. He stood and shook the water off like a dog, then loped in.

Jenny was waiting for him on the foul line. He tried to run around her, but she stepped in front of him. He nearly knocked her over, then grabbed her so she wouldn't fall. Their faces were six inches apart, and hers was scarlet.

"At least you know what happened. My parents took a skiff out on a sunny day, took a picnic lunch. Never came back, not a trace." She was breathing hard, but there were no tears. "And you had your uncle. You had somebody." She turned and stalked back to the bleachers.

"You better calm down, Canny," Francine told her. The girls called her Canny when she got uppity, to remind her that she was nothing but an orphan cannery girl.

The overcast thickened and came down, the southeaster freshened, and a light rain began to fall. Carson got another hit, a wicked slicing liner that bounced once just inside the left field foul line before breaking out the window of a boat. When he stopped in front of the bleachers between innings, he was shivering. Jenny approached him.

"I had someone, you're right, and he disappeared, vanished," Carson told her. "Left me on my own."

"Yes, well," Jenny hesitated. "I would rather have been on my own. My uncle, who was my father's twin brother, committed suicide, blew his brains out a month later. That was four years ago. They put my aunt in an asylum last year. Can you imagine what it's like to live with someone who slowly goes crazy?"

Carson stared at her, not moving until the umpire yelled, "Batter up!" a second time.

The tide was now racing in, but the score was tied and the game went on. One of the kegs of whiskey was getting steady attention under the dock. The wind and rain and yelling gradually increased. Two innings went by without a score or further exchange between Carson and Jenny. The umpire finally announced last inning, win, lose or draw.

The Chief came up with two outs and an under-the-dock grin on his face. He swung wildly at the first two pitches. The vocal consensus of the crowd seemed to be that he was too drunk to hit anything, give him a 'tater' down the middle. The pitcher complied, knowing in a split second that he'd been taken in by a great act.

The waterlogged ball muffled the sound somewhat, but it was instantly clear that there wasn't a chance it would be caught. The towering fly seemed to melt into the low overcast. Carson turned and sprinted out, tracking it over his shoulder. Spectators reached out and grabbed each others' arms in anticipation.

Oh, they'd seen it before, such a glorious way to play the game, the intensity and flair. He would race full speed into the water, high-step until he was knee-deep, and finally trip headlong, sending up a frightful spray of water. Then he would wade out, one time even swam out, to retrieve the ball and heave it to home plate.

This time Carson ran back and back, then abruptly stopped at the water's edge. He stood without moving and watched the ball as it came down out of the overcast and landed with a muted splash, a hundred feet beyond. A squall seemed to envelop him as the rain beat down and the wind whipped his hair. He stood rigid and stared out over the water.

The spectators looked at each other, shrugged, and went home. The ballplayers milled around for a minute or so, but there would be no bottom half of the last inning.

Francine took Jenny's arm. "Come on, let's go."

"I'm not finished here yet," Jenny replied.

Francine left her, walked up the stairs to Stedman Street and down the dock. She stood under the eaves of a net shed, out of the rain, where she could watch.

When the tide had come up over his shoes, Carson finally turned and trudged toward the bleachers. He approached Jenny, who sat alone in the pouring rain, and took off his cap.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to be rude." He wrung the water out of his cap, looked around and then back at her. "All I want is a chance."

"A chance at what?" Jenny asked.

Carson gave his head a shake, and his black curls sent tiny droplets in all directions. "To prove myself. To make something of myself."

"That's what I want too, Carson."

Carson gave her a long, steady look. He finally moved as if to leave, but instead put the crook of his arm out like he'd seen gentlemen do. She stood and slid her hand through his arm, like she'd seen ladies do. They slowly walked off the field, up the stairs and down the dock.

When the two were almost abreast of Francine, a well-dressed man approached. "Excuse me," he said. "I wonder if I might have a word with you, Mr. James."

The couple stopped and eyed the man suspiciously. "About what?" Carson asked.

"My name is Hiram Troxel. I'm travelling with the Prince Rupert team on their tour of Southeast Alaska. I'm a scout for the Tacoma Rainiers."

Carson shrugged and shook his head.

Mr. Troxel extended his hand. "It's a professional baseball team."

Carson accepted the handshake warily. The scout looked over at Jenny for an introduction, but none was forthcoming.

"Could you possibly join me for dinner tonight? We're leaving for Juneau tomorrow, and there is something I want to talk to you about."

"Such as?"

This was not the kind of response Hiram was used to. He rocked back on his heels and let out a long sigh. He looked out over the field, noted how the choppy water was lapping the infield, and turned back to Carson with a warm smile.

"I'd like to offer you the opportunity to come to Tacoma for a tryout. All expenses paid, of course."

Carson stared at the man for several seconds as the magnitude of what he had just heard sank in. He turned to Jenny and gave her a long, searching look. At length he turned his attention back to the scout.

"What time does your boat leave tomorrow?"

"Noon," Mr. Troxel answered.

"Jenny and I already have plans for tonight. We'll meet you at the Palace Café for breakfast at nine o'clock."

Hiram looked back and forth between the two of them. "Nine o'clock it is, then." He tipped his hat to Jenny. "M'am," he said, and strolled off down the street.

One of Francine's self-appointed duties was making sure the girls in her boarding house deported themselves properly. After having watched the interaction between Jenny and Carson during the ballgame, seen them leave arm-in-arm, and overheard the conversation with Mr. Troxel, she knew for certain that they needed a chaperone. Stepping back into the shadows as the couple passed, she was equally certain that they would never have one.



A land surveyor by trade, Don Chenhall has worked in the construction, aviation, and commercial fishing industries. He has a BA in anthropology from the University of Arizona. His published writings include a dozen short stories in small journals, such as *Bellowing Ark*, *Blueline*, *Timber Creek Review*, and a novel, *The Aurora Reckoning* (Treble Heart Books).

Nathaniel Taggart

Cues

An ominous pinkish-orange foam mixture of seawater and crude oil streaked across large stretches of water in the northern Gulf and turned up on the shores of the Chandeleur Islands off southeastern Louisiana.

– CNN Wire Staff

The *foam* is both pulp and song.
The color of morning moves toward us.

Photos of sea birds and otters spread wide upon
a rocky Alaskan shore, each shimmers in reflective sludge.

*

16 years since county fairgrounds *streaked* in pink
splayed off the northeast tip of the Mojave.

Porous sandstone's iron oxide tints
summer evenings like science fiction.

*

Exxon Valdez tolls are tallied: 2,000 sea otters.
302 harbor seals. 250,000 seabirds.

Fish struggled to spawn for 4 years.
Dead things. Salmon eggs.

*

Air sweet from a *mixture* of diesel fumes and tobacco
smoke; dry and visibly stirred in kicked-up dust.

First love was bubblegum and turmoil, evening light
played off that of the Ferris Wheel, climbing.

*

Nothing could be still again.

*

And this new *foam*: color, weighted with recurrence.
The *Chandeleur Islands* suddenly mean something.

*

Connotations change over time.
Cue *ominous* and love. *Pinkish-orange*.

Some Dark Matter



Jennifer Duerden-Andrews

Today began in the rush of hands forced towards commotion.
It ends before, more suitably, it can be named. Before I dare
consider what fraction of all of this just spun by.

*

I woke today, choking, now count the way towards home (7
burnt-out street lamps, 9 motorists in commute). I notice a
funny rattle, a stomach ache, pink streaked weaves of evening.

*

*This is where the 21st century American poet inserts
a line or two about desire, about longing.*

*

There is no fixed point worth noting. The exercise jogs nothing.
Favorite lines slide through me like ghosts and I watch them go.
Every adjective: a judgment. Every metaphor: a constraint.

*

I woke this morning choking and imagined the mucous gray.
Speckled gray like galvanized—no, gray, heather gray like a
best knit sweater: aged well, a dozen years. It shrinks in
every washing, stretches just right with wear.

*

Seen through a large-enough lens all things contract or disappear.

*

This morning, sore. Breath in sleep labor enough to conjure.
Lactic acid. I cannot turn my head from tension. From wonder.

*

No. Gray like steel. Gray like this conflict of winter
haze obscuring the horizon outside my window.

*

If there was a thread, he's lost it.

*

Think what wage is lost when a man that's not a praying man prays.

*

We know dark matter only by its effect on other bodies:
elongations, refractions, vanishings. It may comprise
most of what's out there, most of what pulls.

*

Inasmuch as everything is always in motion,
inasmuch as the day will begin again with
a morning—forcing out words, it hurts.

*

*Awake, too late, his arm spans the spread of bed between
them. She's there, certainly, asleep, but he reaches still.*



Nathaniel Taggart is a founding editor of *Sugar House Review*. Some of his recent/forthcoming work can be seen in *A capella Zoo*, *DIAGRAM*, and *specs*. His BS in English and Literature from Utah State University rarely comes in handy at his day job as a licensed title searcher. He's been considering various graduate degrees for years.

Jayaram Panda

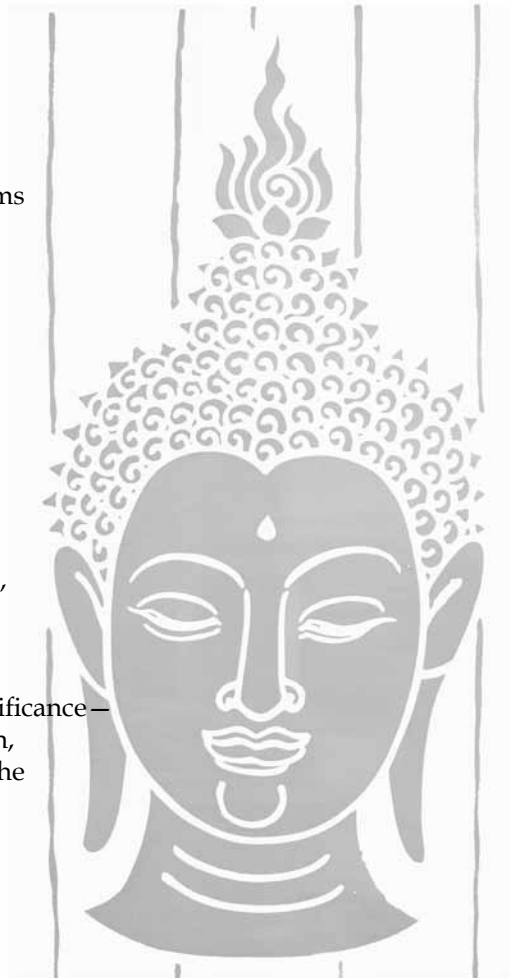
The Names of the Olden Time

The names of the olden time linger
wide-spread in my buoyant memory,
in each outburst they come out unaltered —
the same equivocation, intonation,
the same slow eyes:
when I lost the time, the butterfly,
the ridicule the trees inflicted upon me,
on my old mother when she reposed
a loud faith on my coming times,
my father always carving his fate of a
proud owner,
the priest extending his chant for my
secure place
(the distance narrowed in his closed palms
of water and sand) —
the fire still burning.

The names of the olden time appear
in my modern death.
In each lapse of my fragile power,
they show me the ugly shades —
the loneliness
the red dust of the city streets,
the unusual haze,
the rank anxiety that sits before me;
the palm trees do not show me their face,
the still eyes do not blink the peace.

The names of the olden time remind me
to stop all laws, all applications of a significance —
the blind strip that does not feel the earth,
a despicable mercy that winds through the
wronged door,
a reason that falls apart from its own
limitations,
a mind that moves through a
maligning vision.

The names of the olden time remind me
the timid exercises,
the destination that never arrived,
the dainty designs that never returned
in spite of loopholes in the closed door.



Republic Day: India

Siberian cranes arrive at Chilka lake.
It is winter. January.

Senseless gossip around the day.
It is festive. Oratory.

Olive Ridges, the sea turtles, swim the Pacific
towards this warmer region.
But they are dead these days,
by the fishermen's net,
by the polluted coast;
their heads lie low.

Human heads show up from the lorry tops —
heads that are transported from the maps
to cities — for rallies
by the perspiring rote
by the republican net.

Waves, like the brick walls of the city,
are in order,
one after the other,
the taller, the smaller;
they throw back the garbage and admonish.

It is the elections that flourish.

Like research sheets on a constitution
of cracked bones,
the day calls in clumsy tones
for restitution,
or to lift the remorse that blurs the vision?



Jayaram Panda's poetry has appeared in journals such as *The Literary Half-Yearly*, *New Quest*, and *The Heritage* in India, and *Ariel* in Canada. A collection of his poems was published by Writers' Workshop in Kolkata, India, under the title *A Jester's Vision*.

David Essinger

Off Trail



I sat in the middle of the empty trail, halfway down a mountain, digging with my fingers to un-knot a cramped calf muscle. Since turning an ankle three hours earlier, about five miles back and three thousand feet higher up, my good leg was tiring. I was already an hour behind my predicted finish time, with more than a mile horizontally and a quarter mile vertically to go—which, at my current pace, meant a good twenty minutes. And shouldn't I be hearing the finish line soon? My wife would be there waiting, certainly already finished herself, and beginning by now to worry. Shouldn't the parking lot come into view at some point? Shouldn't I get an occasional glimpse of downtown Bozeman by now? Shouldn't there be other runners on this trail?

Deeply dehydrated, my water pack empty but at least lighter on my back now, my quads throbbing, for one of the few times before or since, I wondered about a race, "Is this still fun?"

I dry-swallowed my last two electrolyte caps, rotated my bad ankle in a ginger half-circle, laced my trail shoe as tight as it would go, and stood up. A cold wet breath of air curled through the August midday. To the west, clouds curtained the Montana Rockies, and I remembered the pelting afternoon thundershowers that swept Bozeman's valley most summer afternoons. All around, the air had turned slate-blue. The Rockies, where I could still see their outline, loomed ominous as any movie scape of Mordor.

Injured, thirsty, and quite possibly far off trail, I considered how bad a supposedly fun thing could turn, and how quickly.

The organizers of the Bridger Ridge Run bill it as "possibly the most rugged, technical 20 mile trail race in existence." From the Fairy Lake trailhead northeast of Bozeman, Montana, the race's course climbs almost 2,000 feet in the first two miles and then follows the spine of the Bridger mountain range back to the eastern edge of Bozeman. The trail is largely a suggestion. Any better ideas or shortcuts to get you from start to finish under your own power are officially fair game.

At the time, I had no sensible business signing up for this race. I had next to zero experience with the altitude or terrain involved, and although I enjoy running long distances, the overwhelming majority of my miles were on flat Ohio roads and not trails. I'd never identified as a serious athlete, and it's not like I do anything remotely physi-

cal for a living. I teach—college English, no less. If I'd rather run across baking blacktop on a ninety degree day than grade one more freshman comp essay, I don't think that's utterly beyond reason. My wife Alice, for that matter, is a mild-mannered catalog librarian and as reasonable as they come. We've never even been very outdoorsy. Neither of us is the sort you would expect to find nine thousand feet up a mountain on an ordinary August day. Runners we admittedly are, but mountaineers? Not so much.

Little did I suspect at the time that this was really a wider conflict of interests, and one that would get to our identities *as* runners. Serious distance runners all seem to focus on either road marathons or trail "ultras"—an "ultra-marathon" being any race longer than a marathon's 26.2 miles, and usually at least 50 km—but few runners major in both. For that matter, those who even give trail running a try are a very minor subset of runners. It's hard work for slow going; the numbers look poor on a weekly mileage chart; the possibility of injury seems high, and races run on trails differ so greatly as to the level of challenging or "technical" terrain that times on any two courses are irrelevant for comparison. Trail runners are very much aware of their otherness, and to an extent define themselves against the masses pounding the pavements of every major city's annual marathon, whereas the mainstream runners are either unaware of the trail contingent or consider them lone nuts. Every runner knows what those little "26.2" bumper

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stickers mean, but rarer sightings are the T-shirts that proclaim “Trail Dogs Don’t Run Boston,” or “You Ran a Marathon? That’s Cute.”

The end-all be-all goal for the typical road marathoner is the Boston Marathon, and that summer I was training obsessively to qualify, because it’s the one big marathon you can’t just sign up for. For decades Boston has been limited to those who meet tough age-based qualifying times at another marathon, and I needed to take a good twelve minutes off

my previous best time to make the cut. I’d started a very aggressive training plan; Alice was already easily qualified by the women’s standard, and I was determined not to have to navigate our daughter’s stroller through the epic Boston crowds of spectators while Mommy ran the race.

Twenty miles of treacherous trail was no part whatsoever of this training plan. So what exactly was I doing on this trail, on this mountain, a thousand miles from home, with an ankle growing plumper and more purple by the minute? A road-runner perilously far from any road? What part of me had thought this would be a good idea, or a fun thing to do?

Trying to answer takes me back at least ten years. I had lived in Bozeman more by circumstance than by design for a few months after college and had heard of this “insane race over the mountain, that’s like fifteen miles, and everyone who finishes is just all beat up, as in, bleeding everywhere.” Naturally,

I had lived in Bozeman more by circumstance than by design for a few months after college and had heard of this “insane race over the mountain, that’s like fifteen miles, and everyone who finishes is just all beat up, as in, bleeding everywhere.” Naturally, my reaction then was, I want to do that.

my reaction then was, *I want to do that*, but being in rotten physical shape at the time (college the way I attended it will do that to you), and not suicidal or at least not that energetically so, I thought nothing more of it then.

Years later, Alice and I started running a bit before our wedding. I believe she was counting calories by some point system when I suggested that burning more of them might be at least as good as eating fewer. Then, because I had done track and cross country in high

school and supposedly liked running, when she laced up and hit the pavement I felt obligated to as well. It was probably a month or two before I could dog out a slow 5k, the distance I’d easily raced in high school. One day, a “real” runner—we could tell because his shoes looked expensive and he wore a fancy moisture-wicking shirt dotted with sponsorship logos—

stopped to tell us about a local race he was promoting.

We signed up right away. On race morning, I remember watching a solid mass of green on the weather radar as rain poured down outside, and regretting everything I’d told Alice about the fun of racing. I said there was nothing dishonorable about bailing, but she insisted we go, and we finished that 10k (soaked) in about forty-eight minutes. Their website had pictures, and the local paper published results, and neither of us was even last in our age groups.

After that, a pretty typical progression ensued, including injuries and

recovery, until, on a post-race high after a ten-miler — then the longest distance we'd tried — I could see no good reason not to sign up for a marathon. Toledo's was cheap, nearby, traveled practically through my grandparents' neighborhood, and would be thirty years old the same year I was. We did at least realize we'd need help, advice, and a coherent training plan, so we became regulars with our local running club. With plenty of advice, support and conservative training, we finished Toledo's Glass City Marathon under our modest goal of four hours, and after maybe a week felt recovered enough to consider someday, in the future, running another.

I'm still not sure whatever possessed us, three years and six or seven marathons later, to sign up for a 50k, but we did, and Alice and I spent at least the first 15 miles, a combination of easy trails and pleasant park roads, talking about how much fun we were having. We'd thought of the race as an experiment, an extra-long training run to be done at a very easy pace. This was until a volunteer growled, as we went past, "First female's about two minutes ahead. And she looks tired."

Alice looked at me, apologetic maybe, but not really conflicted. "I have to at least try to —"

"Well, yeah," I said, and we picked up the pace.

She caught the woman ahead and kept going until the finish, faster than I could keep up. Of course, I'd been on a training run anyway.

All of this furnished operative context when, after a family dinner, the topic turned to visiting Alice's brother Reid in Montana. No one could settle on a date. I'm not sure which of us had the thought first, but less than a minute after Alice swirled her glass of chardonnay and said, "I wonder if there are any races out there," I was online, looking.

Taking the long view, it was inevitable I'd end up off some mountainside racecourse at some time in the future, finally wondering if I'd started more than I could finish.

By any measure, running in this country is on the rapid rise. Boston reached capacity and closed earlier this year than ever before. Nearly 40,000 ran the New York Marathon, and thousands more were turned away in the lottery for entry. On the local level, 5k fun-runs proliferate like dandelions.

By any measure, running in this country is on the rapid rise. Due to skyrocketing demand, registration for the 2011 Boston Marathon closed in a shocking and unprecedented eight hours and change, and organizers have

responded by tightening qualifying times even further. Nearly 40,000 ran the New York Marathon, and thousands more are turned away in the annual entry lottery. On the local level, 5k fun-runs proliferate like dandelions. Not surprisingly, the more extreme events have seen the same growth: deeper fields than ever (numbering from dozens into hundreds) line up at the start of more new ultras every year, and series like Dances With Dirt break the distance up into manageable relay segments to allow even more runners to experience quicksand-deep mud, chest-high stream crossings and poison ivy by the thicket. Relays like Bourbon Chase and Hood to Coast offer two-hundred-

mile opportunities to bond with your closest dozen running buddies in a smelly van, and obstacle course adventure races like the Warrior Dash do big business in the name of mud, beer and Viking-horned helmets.

So it might seem surprising that the Bridger Ridge Run is such a relative secret. Without prior knowledge of the event's existence and a reason specifically to seek it out, Alice and I would never have thought to enter, as the BRR slipped under the radar of the big race calendars and all our broad searches. If I hadn't remembered enough from one long-past conversation to search for it by name, we never would have found it.

The low profile in this case, however, was no more or less than I had expected. Indeed, anything more public would have felt suspicious. I was familiar with a certain Montanan reticence toward outsiders: when I'd lived there, I had found it simpler not to mention being from Ohio, or for that matter, "from" anywhere. Not that people were unpleasant, necessarily, but if *you* lived someplace remote and beautiful and suddenly a bunch of people started moving in from California (or possibly even worse), buying up land and disallowing access and hunting on it, and also generally being rich and screwing up the standard of living, you'd feel less than welcoming. I'm sure I would. I, of course, am now and was then far from rich, and wouldn't dream of buying rangeland or establishing a

coffee shop. Still, I was not unaware of the local suspicions.

The BRR caps at a maximum of 350 entrants, it being impractical to support more runners on the mountain at a time. Online registration opened at 8am local time on June 1st, which happened to be our wedding anniversary; Alice and I were hoping to call our entry fees gifts to each other.

The race's website cautioned that registration filled earlier every year and would close out in hours, and past

rosters told us that more than two-thirds of recent entrants were from Gallatin County, Montana, while over 300 of the 350 total lived in-state. Almost all of the out-of-staters were from Idaho or Wyoming or

New Zealand or someplace ridiculously mountainous—at any rate, only a few anomalies in recent years had hailed from anywhere like Bluffton, Ohio, elevation 700 feet, give or take a few.

And so at 10am our time on the first day of June, Alice and I sat, credit cards poised, at separate computers. Seven minutes and twenty seconds later, the registration for the 2008 Ridge Run had closed, in record time.

We were in.

Although, when we first met, neither of us would have considered running a single step, much less voluntarily running for hours, Alice and I share certain predispositions: addictive personalities; admitted competitive streaks, less openly admitted versus each other;



and we seem drawn to manic depressives—at least, when they're on their up phases—as mutual friends.

Translating these traits into grown-up-land, our first major consumer investment as parents was a top-notch running stroller: bumblebee yellow, with pneumatic shock absorbers and the most silent, frictionless glide this side of a mag-lev train. The “B.O.B. Ironman SUV Stroller”

cost more than the car I then drove was worth, but luckily, our daughter June loved it. An accessory bar let her prop her feet at shoulder height and assume the pose of the baddest biker on a tricked-out hog, an illusion only marginally spoiled by her toddler-size-4 pink Crocs.

Crib, glider, changing table, all that came later; the Ironman running stroller was on order about when we got the first ultrasound. On tight budgets of cash and time alike, Alice and I prioritize running.

We knew this mountain race was ambitious (read, for me: terrifying) and essential to do right. We bought serious trail shoes with stiffened protective soles and grippy deep-lugged treads. Mine fit like a low-cut compression ankle brace, and on any paved surface it was like jogging in soccer cleats. And the sound? They crepitated on concrete like snow-tires down a summer street, and my boom and clatter crossing a wooden footbridge sounded like a one-man Roman legion.

Alice and I took these shoes straight to the black, knee-deep mud of a local state park as soon as we could; never has a shoe been “new” so briefly.

Still, where we live, there's no training for running at 10,000 feet. We knew this. A few yards of loose stone down a railroad embankment is no substitute for miles of shattered scree. We knew that churning through the mud of

flooded horse-tracks was no approximation of racing on a mountain, or along a series of mountains. But in terms of off-road, it was the best we could do: in Ohio, we have no sustained twenty-degree climbs, and nowhere to run steeply downhill for twenty, thirty minutes or longer.

The race's website is intentionally intimidating, with aerial shots exaggerating the ridgeline and flaunting

testimonials from past participants who had incurred injuries from sprained ankles to spiral fractures of the fibula. One began, “The Bridger Ridge Run sucks,” continued to enumerate runners sidelined with broken ankles in the first four miles, and ended strongly urging anyone against the run. “Clearly,” my wife and I agreed, “that woman wasn't prepared.”

“She's done, what's it say here, six or seven twenty-mile runs a year? Yeah. She didn't know what she was getting into.”

“Although, here it talks about this hundred-miler she did.”

“Hmm.”

The “B.O.B. Ironman SUV Stroller” cost more than the car I then drove was worth, but luckily, our daughter June loves it. An accessory bar lets her prop her feet at shoulder height and assume the pose of the baddest biker on a tricked-out hog, an illusion only marginally spoiled by her toddler-size-4 pink Crocs.

I hit the state park as often as I could, subbing trail days when my Boston-qualifier training plan called for easy runs.

Our approach into Bozeman International Airport gave us spectacular views of the exposed ridgeline we would be running three days later, but meanwhile, we busied ourselves with the standard family visit activities, tinged with the obligatories of summer in Montana. We drove an hour in one direction to hike up into the mountains, drove another way the next day with a cooler and my brother-in-law's dogs to a swimming hole, and traveled high up into a state park to perforate cans and old circular saw blades with high-powered weapons. And, we looked at mountains. Some seemed near and some unimaginably distant, but mountains in every direction, all of them sere, bare-looking rock high up, like dead hard nubs of skeleton protruding where the earth's flesh had weathered away. It looked like escarpment after wall after façade of one indifferent, unforgiving single piece of stone.

We drove into town to attend the mandatory pre-race meeting, where we sat with a hundred earnest, young, fit-looking types, and were admonished against hallucinating and wandering off trail (apparently, it's happened) and cautioned to be prepared for everything from raging snowstorm to ninety-degree heat to zero-visibility fog. It was

August, but ten thousand feet has its own weather. Finally, the race director shrugged and wished us luck. "The trail was well marked as of today," he said, "but sometimes deer and elk eat the flags."

We looked around us and wondered how many were intending to actually race the next day and how many were planning a challenging, somewhat supported power-hike. This was when we still believed there was much difference between really attacking the course at top speed and sustaining a fast walk.



Alice Essinger

My brother-in-law Reid, as near as I could put a finger on it, fits what you could call a Montana personality type. After an undergrad degree in psychology to which he seemed indif-

ferent, he moved immediately west and has since worked construction. He built his own house, in his free time after building other people's houses all day. His wife Kristi worked for years for the city Humane Society and brought home their current cat and wolf-mutt rescue dogs.

I knew they'd effectively gone native, as local as anyone, when they considered moving to Alaska or the Canadian Rockies, dissatisfied with the way Bozeman was getting built up. Not that the area wasn't changing radically: new pricey boutiques lined a Main Street I hardly recognized, and drive-up espresso joints had sprung from unten-

ded ground like mushrooms after a rain. With tourism came service industry and its own population boom, providing plenty of work in infrastructure and construction too, as housing developments swelled in every direction. An uneasy, ever-present tension pervades a population willing enough to take tourism's money, but unobligated to like or much tolerate the foolishness of those who bring it.

Reid and Kristi refrained from commentary on our upcoming race, neither gushing about the scenery we could expect nor shaking their heads and pronouncing us fools.

Well before dawn, we parked the car in a long line beside the road, and were jogging toward the race's staging area when a pickup slowed alongside. A guy asked if we needed rides to the start. We did.

While this seemed a nice gesture, race management was actively stopping and holding any cars headed to the start that weren't already full, and this guy grumbled that he didn't want to get tangled up in that mess—so, putting us in his back seat was expedient. He had a buddy to pick up, and we were off, on the nearly hour-long drive to the race's start.

Along the way, small talk ensued. Both guys in front were local. Our driver had done the ridge run before, and I heard him mention another notoriously tough, unsupported 50-miler where runners packed their own gear the whole way. At one point, one of

them asked, "So. You're from Ohio, huh?" We were both wearing our shells from the most recent Glass City Marathon, but the emblems on those are pretty small. And it was dark. And we were sitting in the back of a dark truck cab. All of this meaning, they hadn't read "Toledo, OH" off of our gear. And we were both pretty sure we'd never mentioned where we were from.

We sat with a hundred earnest, young, fit-looking types, and were admonished against hallucinating and wandering off trail (apparently, it's happened) and cautioned to be prepared for everything from raging snowstorm to ninety-degree heat to zero-visibility fog. It was August, but ten thousand feet has its own weather.

I felt self-conscious, like a curiosity. If anyone had been so blunt as to ask what we were doing there, why this race, I honestly have no idea what I would have said. I suspect my best attempt at the truth would have been far from it.

Roughly three hundred runners waiting in line for two portable toilets

did not delay the start, and from time to time laments like, "C'mon, already! I don't care about the turtle!" arose from the back of the line. We paused for photo-ops, and others appreciated the logo on Alice's tech shirt: "Our World Is Flat," the motto of the Columbus Marathon. Let no one say we went into this without irony.

As our wave was called, we crossed the start line to much yelling and fanfare, and then walked uphill for forty minutes. The two miles to the first checkpoint climbed almost two thousand feet. A few intrepid starters charged past us up the single-track trail, grunting "Excuse me," or "On your left," but for the most part we all

marched upward with little change of order, thumbs hooked under shoulder straps of packs, huffing clouds of wet breath as beads of sweat sprouted on our brows.

Alice and I had expected to be passed by plenty of runners early on and to make up some of that pace later, when the initial advantage of those better equipped for the altitude wore off and the question

become one more of pure endurance and sustainable lactate threshold. As it turned out, at 10,000 feet I was getting all the air I needed, but just couldn't place my feet fast enough to move forward at any speed while remaining upright. In the third mile's steep descent, my grippy trail shoe slipped off a wet rock. I scraped a shin, and the

resulting loss of confidence decreased my speed further. Soon I was constantly stepping aside to let others pass on the narrow trail, and Alice got annoyed; I told her to go on. A guy we had spoken to in the bathroom line bounded by, saying, "Way to go, Flatlanders! Great pace, keep it up!" I'd been on the other end of this before, telling someone who looked like pale trudging death they were "looking strong," so this was not especially encouraging.

I've since figured out that my greatest strength as a runner is a fairly long stride, an asset for road racing and not that bad for hills, as I can usually stretch out and make up in the downhill what

I lose versus the rest of the pack climbing up. Take away the unobstructed ground, though, to where I can't open up a regular stride, and it all comes apart. Add to this the fact that I'm tallish, a little over six feet, not graceful even without five pounds of water strapped to the top of my spine, and any downhill ability I have is predicated upon a visible end to said downhill

where excess momentum can safely burn off. Looking ahead, along the chain of progressively tinier bobbing figures that decorated each successive peak—waving in the air like some distantly observed procession of pilgrims—I knew this course was going to eat my best efforts whole.

We all plodded grimly

upward and further upward, then tiptoed down through clattering shale fields studded with razor-sharp vertical formations, then went back up. The whole scene was just glutted with natural beauty, dizzying from actual awe and not just oxygen deficit, as majestic birds of prey circled and soared thousands of feet below (yes, below us) and vistas spread out extravagantly on either side. Heading south on the ridge, the mid-morning sun warmed my left side, while occasional breaths of cooler moist air wafted up from the right. Whole valleys, entire communities, lay still shadowed to the west, yet to see the sun we'd been laboring under for hours.

The whole scene was just glutted with natural beauty, dizzying from actual awe and not just oxygen deficit, as majestic birds of prey circled and soared thousands of feet below (yes, below us) and vistas spread out extravagantly on either side. Heading south on the ridge, the mid-morning sun warmed my left side, while occasional breaths of cooler moist air wafted up from the right.

I stopped once to wave an arm and watch, imagining my gesture sweeping whole neighborhoods and ranches into day, and night, and back into day.

Even in August, pockets of snow filled high depressions in the rock. At the aid stations, hardy rosy-cheeked Nordic types handed out Gatorade and pretzels and water that had been packed up a few pints per volunteer. A blond-braided woman stood checking in runners, smiling and wearing a baby in a forward-facing papoose kind of sling. The child was tranquil as a Buddha, and the thought of the mother's long climb up made my own pack feel light.

While every step required a tactical decision, the course was still less death-defying and precipitous than advertised, and my secret fears of falling off the mountain proved mostly unfounded. The thing about a mountain is that it's big, by definition, and should you fall off one part, there's generally a whole lot more mountain. During portions that may have been actually dangerous, I was concentrating too completely on footwork to look down or be actively afraid of falling anywhere far. And even between orange ribbons, it was difficult to get lost: you're either on the mountain, or you're not; in other words, if in doubt, look up. If there's anything at all above you, go there.

By halfway, Alice was far enough ahead that I could no longer see

her cresting the next peak ahead as I descended. We'd planned to run together, but that was back when we both thought I could keep up with her over long stretches of broken ground. By the end of that year, when she'd gone undefeated, finishing either first female or winning outright five separate trail ultras back home, I'd learned to just run my own race for anything longer than a marathon, instead of burning myself out on her pace. On the

Ridge, I was still hoping to catch up when the ground got runnable, but by mile twelve I realized the crazy climbs and descents were never going to settle down and get friendly, and I knew I wasn't catching

anyone. Cumulative pace calculations—the longer the race, the more time there is for this kind of math—put me further and further off my predicted finish. Over and over, I wondered what I was doing here on this mountain, instead of paying attention to my training plan, pounding some flat featureless stretch of pavement back East where I belonged.

Such was my mindset when, at 13.2 miles by the GPS in my watch, I came upon a cluster of stopped runners. At their feet, a man rested his head on an empty water bottle, his eyes closed. He looked sick and dehydrated. The others assured me he was OK, and in another race I would have kept going. Instead,



a fairly complex set of motivations stopped me.

First, most simply, the race was getting to be hard work and this was an honorable excuse to rest a minute. Second, the inevitable mediocrity of my finish made the chance to play Good Samaritan look just a little redeeming.

Added to all this, the guy on the ground was the same person who had blown past me earlier with the "Flatlanders" line. I can't deny some *schadenfreude*: here was someone who had encouraged me from a position of strength and confidence, and now was taking a far worse beating from the course than I was.

Did I stop partly to acknowledge how fortunes had turned? To make the point that, naïve lowlander as I may be, I was still standing? I don't like to think so, but then, I can get unflatteringly competitive. It's a trait that exists in me.

Still, it's not like I had no genuine concern or desire to help, and I was surprised to be able to do so: no one else had water to spare. Feeling benevolent, I opened the valve to my own water pack and tanked off half what I had left, explaining, "It's screwing up my balance anyway." Evidently, the man had been throwing up for some time. I felt truly bad for him as one woman harangued, "Did you *drink* last night? Did you go out drinking, any night this week?" He declined my offer of salt/electrolyte capsules, and I didn't have the heart to pile further advice on top of the Carrie Nation lecture he was already receiving.

Because I had space in my pack, and because somewhere the website had called it a good idea, I had with me a cellphone and the Race Director's number. Considering that we were literally on top of a mountain, it was harder than I expected to launch a call out, but it worked. I reported our location, the downed runner's number, and gave the RD my own race number although I still don't know why he asked.

"You've burned a lot of time," a sunburned runner in a baseball cap observed as I repacked.

Then, just before mile fourteen, a rock turned one way beneath me and my left ankle bent the other. I was so surprised that I couldn't tell if I had heard or only felt the sharp pop. It must have looked bad when I hit the ground from the way the person following asked if I was OK.

"My wife's kicking my ass anyway," I replied. "At least now, I'll have an excuse." I suppose this is another trait of mine: quick to divulge the minor ulterior motives, especially if they deflect from less comfortable ones.

I went on, and by the time the RD called me back to say a team was hiking back from the next aid station, I was over the next peak and out of sightline. As I answered my cell, a passing runner commented suavely, as if she'd been waiting to deliver the line all day, "That must be an important call." I don't remember what I said back.

Then, just before mile fourteen, a rock turned one way beneath me and my left ankle bent the other. I was so surprised that I couldn't tell if I had heard or only felt the sharp pop. It must have looked bad when I hit the ground from the way the woman behind me asked if I was OK.

"Fine," I said back quickly, "it's fine," already fearing it wasn't. I got up, took a step, and told myself, "I can run on this," as long as I put almost no weight on it and leaned as hard as I could to the right.

This all led to my struggle with a calf muscle that wouldn't unclench, as I punched it with both fists and meditated on the nature of fun, sitting in the middle of a completely deserted trail. The Ridge Run's final descent offers

a choice of paths, between a shorter, steeper descent or a longer distance at a slightly shallower grade, and while most runners naturally choose the shorter distance and faster trip to the finish, I was in no shape for further cannonballing down a mountainside. Or, for that matter, even for mincing down something steeper than the big hill on some roller coasters,

arms out and braking with my quads all the way. Some miles back I'd done a chin-up on a convenient tree branch just to hang and let my throbbing legs enjoy the comparative rest. My guiding happy thought at the time the paths split was a ten-mile stretch of godforsaken, heat-shimmering, flat-as-the-Black-Swamp asphalt, anything with an inch of runnable terrain. At the fork in the trail, for me there was no choice: the longer shallower path definitely promised to get me down the mountain more easily. I'd expected at least occasional trail markings, though, and *some* other runners.

Sitting still was getting me liter-

ally nowhere, so as soon as my leg unlocked, I resumed alternately walking and dog-trotting the trail that led down. Two switchbacks after I thought the trail would never end, one last corner dumped me out anticlimactically a hundred yards from the finish line, where I fell in ahead of a shuffling white-haired man staring at his shoes and oblivious to the cheering crowd ahead.

I passed underneath a huge digital clock, surrendered the tag from my

race number, and someone might have handed me a finisher's medal or something, I don't remember. Clouds loomed blue-gray and heavy, but my in-laws were sunburned, and I was angry at myself for keeping them out here entertaining June for hours after I was supposed to have been done. I smiled impatiently through a couple of pictures

I resumed alternately walking and dog-trotting the trail that led down. Two switchbacks after I thought the trail would never end, one last corner dumped me out anticlimactically a hundred yards from the finish line, where I fell in ahead of a shuffling white-haired man who was staring at his shoes and oblivious to the cheering crowd ahead.

that recorded me appallingly pale and hollow-eyed, before stumbling off in search of ice.

It would make a disappointing story, or no story at all, to end here, but all the way home I kept thinking about "fun," the reasons why we run in general and why I run in particular, and the possibility that I'd approached the mountain all wrong — or, conversely, the nagging nonsensical idea that I was doing everything *else* wrong instead. Maybe focusing single-mindedly on trimming minutes and seconds off a marathon time on flat predictable road was already getting old; maybe nego-

tiating broken ground was a legitimate challenge on its own terms, and not just a series of frustrating obstacles to avoid out of fear of injury.

But that was no kind of thinking, I told myself, and led to no conclusion I was willing to entertain: I had a Boston qualifier marathon to run in two months. I pressed ice to my ankle and suspended mutinous thoughts.

However, I've kept coming back to the question of, is this fun? Like many worthwhile questions, it begs more questions and qualification. "Define fun," for example, and "Fun for whom?" If these races are not exclusively about fun, then what are the other appeals? And how much do I admit being influenced by "sign value," or the psychological and social aura cast by challenges bordering on the ridiculous—even without an acknowledging audience? For that matter, are exclusivity and obscurity appeals of their own? Though my Bridger Ridge Run T-shirt carries about zero recognition outside of Montana, when I wore it to pick up our bib numbers in Boston, I told Alice, "No one cares, but I know it's badass."

And, yes, I did end up qualifying for Boston, no more injured by the Ridge than a couple days of icepack and an anklebrace could address. I found a net-downhill, famously fast course in Scranton, PA, and finished seventy seconds better than required. After all the time I'd envisioned myself whooping in victory in the finish chute after qualifying for Boston, I crossed the line in Scranton so anaerobic I couldn't draw a breath or do much but double over and clutch the backs of my legs in a full-body charley-horse I haven't felt before or since.

As it turned out, qualifying *was* the fun part, or at least my favorite aspect of

the Boston experience: by the morning the next spring when I lined up in Hopkinton for the oldest and most revered event in the world of running, already I felt out of sync with the elated road-racers around me. Exclusivity? Check—but an awfully crowded brand of it, and the hype itself had become desensitizing. As I stood with a hundred or so others in my numbered start corral in Hopkinton, my mind was off in any obscure state park, ready to race five-plus largely solitary hours on poorly marked, complicated trail. Climbing the legendary hills of Newton, high-fiving giddy little kids for unbroken quarter-mile-long stretches, and milling afterward among the thousands of marathoners blissed-out by their medals and bling—all this left me somehow underwhelmed. Boston's legendary Heartbreak Hill rises a total of 88 feet over a quarter mile, and after 16,000 feet of vertical change on a twenty mile course, the most famous landmark in running struck me as barely a blip. I suspect, of the 26,000 runners surrounding me at Boston, I was one of the very few who almost missed Heartbreak for not paying attention.

Clearly, intentionally or not, when two paths diverged halfway down a mountain, I ended up on the one less traveled by. And what has been the difference? Well, the next fall, for the first season in years, I neither trained for nor raced a marathon, but the following June, I entered a 100-miler some call the toughest ultra in the Midwest. After finishing nearly last in over twenty nine hours with a stunningly slow overall pace, I was thrilled to be among the 50% who finished. This year, two more 100s and a handful of shorter ultras have left no room on my calendar for a road marathon—and I'm OK with that.

When a colleague recently asked if marathons have gotten "too easy" for

me, I surprised myself by answering, “No — too stressful.” All that concentration on the clock, and pace, and mile splits and goal times and individual seconds per mile, planning which water stops to hit on which side of the course, actually rehearsing the best ways to grab and gulp little paper cups of Gatorade without either choking or breaking stride....

Comparatively, halfway through a recent hilly southern Ohio 50k, I thought quite clearly, “I’ve been out here for hours, and I’m going to be running for hours more.” I was maintaining a moderately hard pace, walking up the bigger hills, and taking leisurely breaks at every aid station. I realized there was absolutely nothing I would rather be doing, for however long it took. *This* was fun, and needed no further justification.

Not that every minute of any race feels good; even if all goes well, some phases will be abjectly disheartening, and some will just plain hurt. Inadequately prepared and unexpectedly injured, long chunks of the Bridger Ridge Run were not what I would honestly call “fun.” Possibly parts of the BRR, like any tough race, were more enjoyable to have done, than to be present-tense doing, in the same way the desire to write is really the desire to have written.

Still, here I am writing again, and although it’s January now and twenty-some degrees out, I’ll soon be lacing up to meet friends for a few miles of deep snow and icy trails through woods. If any of them ask, “Is this fun?,” it will be as an old joke, the question that contains its own answer.



“Off Trail” is Dave Essinger’s first published essay. His recent fiction has appeared in *The Pinch*, *Quarter After Eight*, *Pindeldyboz* online and elsewhere, and work in other media includes the videopoem “Dark Flower.” He teaches creative writing at the University of Findlay in Ohio, and has recently finished a novel about ultrarunning.

John Randolph Carter

Prizes for Disguises



Relax and let the squirt gun tell you
when it's full and when it's empty.

Bart, the magnet, wants to be left alone.
He sneezes and a hundred tarantulas dance
the tango in their underwear.

The bullfighter is preparing for the corrida
as he slips into his silk jacket.

A thousand miles away, a black bear is preparing
to hibernate.
Thirty-five thousand feet overhead, three hundred
and fifty people are watching Brad Pitt and
Angelina Jolie prepare to make love.

Half the world is asleep.
Of those that are awake, a very small percentage,
perhaps one in a hundred, remember what they
dreamt the previous night.

I would like to help you find your way home but
you will have to tell me where you live.



John Randolph Carter is a poet and artist. A finalist for the National Poetry Series, his poetry has appeared in journals including *Bomb*, *The Cream City Review*, *LIT*, *Margie*, *North American Review* and *Verse*. He has been the recipient of N.E.A., New York State Council and Fulbright grants. His art is in thirty-two public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art. One-person exhibitions include The University of Michigan Art Museum and the Minneapolis Institute.

Susan Makov

The Lifeboat Just Came My Way



Lady of the Birds, 2002, wood, wax glass beads, acrylic paint



St. Agnes, 2002, silver photograph, acrylic paint on wood

The notion of simplicity in a garden has always appealed to me, and I have applied it to my philosophy of being a visual artist in the twenty-first century: Keep it simple and let it all grow as it will. Some plants that were once weeds are now prize flowers. Let things grow and weed them out in the end.

Trained as a printmaker of letterpress, woodcuts, and lithography, a painter and photographer, my work has gone in many directions. One patch of “weeds” is what I call *God Boxes*, sculptures influenced by carved *bultos* (wooden statues) made by artists of New Mexico in the nineteenth century. During research for a book about trading posts of the Southwestern United States, I discovered a form of carved or painted saint done by *santeros* of New Mexico. These were simple images of popular catholic saints used in both churches and households, carved and painted with great beauty

and directness. Combined with my interest in illuminated manuscripts, I began to paint, carve and construct what I would describe as representations of spiritual meditations.

Lady of the Birds takes on a typical pose of many *bultos* of “Nuestra Señora of Many Attributes.” The bead over wax and wood figure contains symbols from the Huichol Indians who are descendants of the Aztec, living in the mountains of Jalisco and Nayarit in Mexico. Known for their yarn and beadwork, they have a shamanistic relationship with nature. A forest of painted birds surrounds the figure of the woman. Most of these images can be described as being presented on a stage, though physically shallow, alluding to a deeper space.

In popular culture *St. Agnes* has a gruesome relationship to a story concerning breasts, so I decided to create my own myth around *St. Agnes* and breast cancer. (As a saint of youth and virgins there are many stories concerning her martyrdom,

from being beheaded, stabbed in the throat, to having her breasts removed.) *St. Agnes* is influenced by the New Mexican art form called *retablos*, simple paintings of saints painted on flat wooden boards. This version uses traditional symbols of *milagros*, small cast forms of body parts used in Mexican churches to plea for help, or given in thanks for a miracle. The piece is part paint, part photograph, and part wooden construction.

Two Ghosts of the Forest is similar in design to *Lady of the Birds*, but is a memorial to dead animals of the forest. *The Warrior Saint* is very much like a valkyrie figure. Surrounded by lightning bolts, flying skeletons and angels piercing a heart, she is covered by an armor of copper over wood, with a face and hands carved out of wax.

The fifth *God Box* is *Our Lady of the Ladders*. Angels are often represented as using ladders for ascending and descending, and function as a symbol of communication between the spiritual and physical aspects of the world. While the form of the saint is similar to many New Mexican *bultos*, this particular figure is covered with golden thread. The ladders pierce the space of the saint, representing the ease of movement from one plane of existence to another. Heaven and Hell are inferred without ever being identified.

While being influenced by the artistic forms of Hispanic and Native American people of the Southwest, I became increasingly concerned about what I perceived as the increasing despoliation of the earth, which is reflected in several sculptural pieces. Artistic development is not a one way, direct path. Imagine, while focusing on one aspect of one's art, another idea, or "life-boat," passes by—you can choose to jump or stay put.

As a trained printmaker, my interest in books began in high school. My most intensive interactions have been with artists who make books. My mentor, Todd Walker, came from photography into letterpress books.



Two Ghosts, 2003, silver photographs, acrylic paint on carved wood



Warrior Saint, 2003, wood, cooper over wood, acrylic, wax



Our Lady of the Ladders, 2004, wood, string, basket reed

GENERUM Characteres.

I. REPTILES pedati, spirantes ore :

- 103. TESTUDO Corpus Testa munitum.
- 104. DRACO Corpus Alis volatile.
- 105. LACERTA Corpus (Testa Alisve) nudum, caudatum.
- 106. RANA Corpus similiter nudum, e caudatum.

II. SERPENTES apodes, spirantes ore :

- 107. CROTALUS Scuta Abdominalia Caudaliaque cum Cre-
pitaculo.
- 108. BOA Scuta Abdominalia Caudaliaque absque Cre-
pitaculo.
- 109. COLUBER Scuta Abdominalia, Squama Caudales.
- 110. ANOMALUS Squama Abdominales Caudalesque.
- 111. AMPHIBIENA Scuta Abdominales Caudalesque.
- 112. COBREA Ranae modo laterales.

III. NANTES planarii, spirantes interiori :

- 113. PETROMIZON Spiracula 7.
- 114. RANA Spiracula 8, fimbriae Corporis.
- 115. SQUALUS Spiracula 5, lateralia.
- 116. CHIMARA Spiracula 3, fimbriae Corporis.
- 117. LOPHUS Spiracula 2, fimbriae Corporis.
- 118. ACIPENSA Spiracula 1, fimbriae Corporis.

I. REP.



This too, was my path. I had been doing printmaking, letterpress broadsides, photography — techniques I started in undergraduate school at Syracuse University and explored over the many years of my career. During the past 10 years I had been collaborating with authors such as Ray Bradbury, Margaret Atwood, Diane Ackerman, and Billy Collins, doing letterpress broadsides, illustrating poems, essays and short stories. I have loved working with these writers and enjoyed exploring visual interpretations of their work.

However as deeply as one might be concentrating on one form of one's art, "The lifeboat just came my way."

I was working on a project with my illustration class at Weber State University. Influenced by the History Channel's documentary *Life After People* — a series created by David de Vries and suggested by Alan Weisman's book, *The World Without Us* — I did some drawings for the class project and found myself imagining other world disasters. Timing is everything. The project ended in April 2010, and then disaster struck in the Gulf of Mexico.

My book *Earth Spheres* became a look at the scientific designation of spheres, layers of human and other natural forms of life on planet earth. Pages are linked with stories to tell. I became an artist-archeologist finding bones among the infill and other debris of an industrialized world.



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, digital image and woodcut on Arches paper



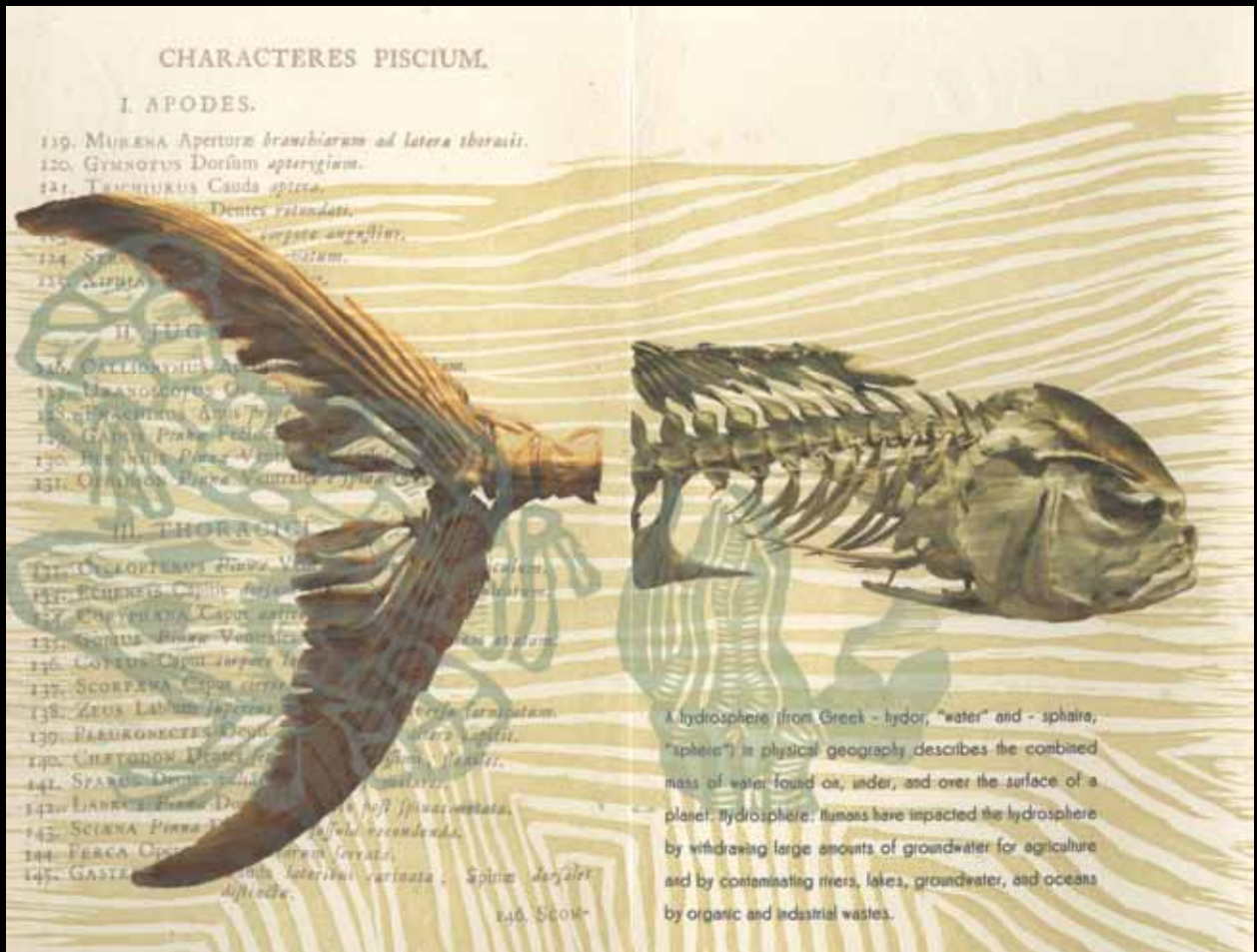
Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, woodcut and digital image on Japanese paper



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, woodcut on Japanese paper

My response began with dismay, with a search for historic and scientific evidence about our world through layers of organic and inorganic materials, interacting with layers of human activities for brief periods of time. The book is about the decay of nature, but also the decline of society.

The interaction of elements and various systems became visualized as a handmade book using woodcuts and digital images of layers of information. This seemed the best way to respond to what feels like an impending crisis. I began looking at the variety of life forms, places that had been explored on the surface of the earth, and I began wondering at the exploration of other planets when the depths of the oceans go unexplored and we continue to contaminate whatever we have explored and inhabited.



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, woodcut and digital image on Japanese paper

To counteract this direction I began searching for people who see the world more holistically, or who see the negative impact of humans and try to halt the ongoing march of global destruction. I would like to believe that humans are not so self-centered. Between politics and human behavior, I question the ulterior motives for activities such as our need for continuous entertainment. And most of all, I question what, I feel, is our politicians' often seemingly uninvolved concern with what is being done to our world.

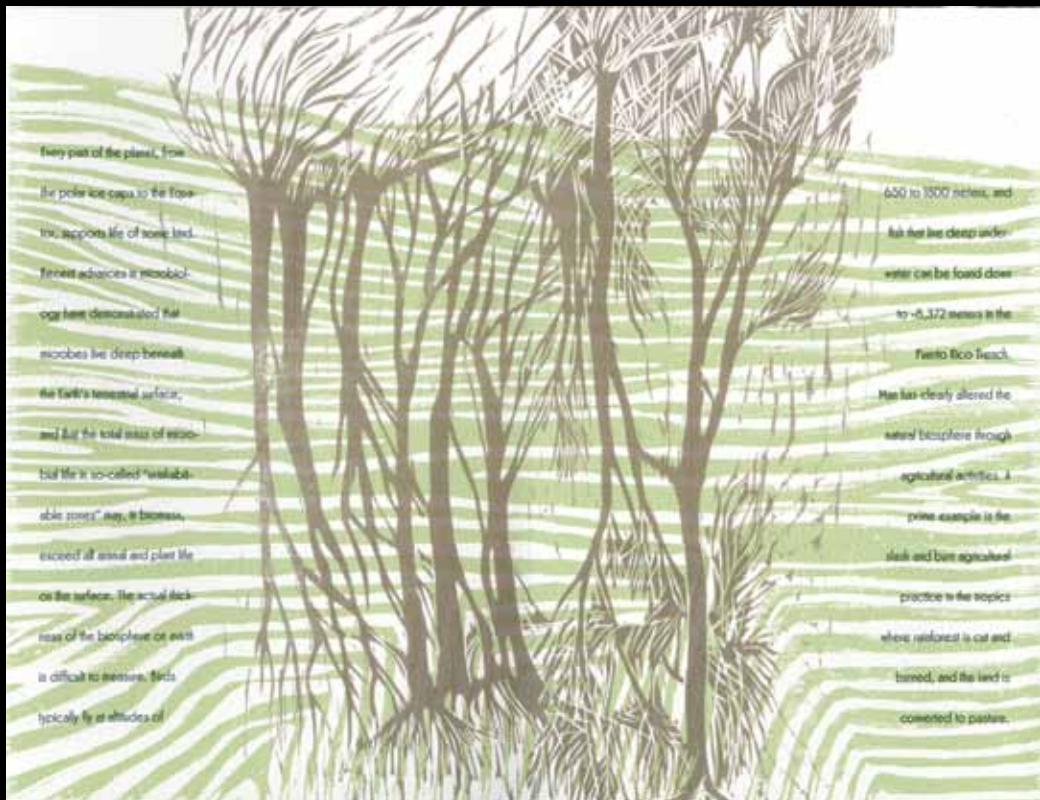
I turned to scientific terms to describe the layering of parts of the world, burying the past, building on the past, upheavals in terms of physical collisions of plate tectonics and collisions of people with power against the powerless. I turned to the Dalai Lama as one symbolic figure who sees the world in broader terms and understands the importance of a moral attitude towards the environment as a realistically balanced approach to human behavior. The result: I created a 29-paged accordion fold



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, digital image on Arches paper

book using woodcuts and digital images. It is hand printed and bound with leather and hand marbled paper.

And now I find once again, "The lifeboat rushing by."



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, digital image on Arches paper



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, digital image and woodcut on Arches paper



Earth Spheres: Accordion Fold book, 2010, woodcut on Japanese paper



Susan Makov has been a professor of Art in the Department of Visual Arts at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, since 1977. Influenced by artist parents, she received a BFA in Printmaking from Syracuse University, NY; a diploma from Brighton Polytechnic, UK; and an MFA in Printmaking and Photography from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She is the owner of Green Cat Press, a small private press, producing limited edition books and prints. Susan lives in Salt Lake City with her three cats.

Her work can be found in the following collections: The National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.; the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; Utah Museum of Fine Arts; J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah; University of Virginia; Harris Collection of American Poetry, John Hay Library at Brown University; State University of New York at Buffalo; Utah State University; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University; Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University; the University of Toronto, Fisher Library.

Dan Moreau

The Script Doctor



He moved to LA. He bought a book on screenwriting. He bought a gym membership. He bought expensive sunglasses. He took meetings. He dyed his hair. He used words like “back story,” “built-in audience,” and “rising action.” He went to parties where sushi was served on naked bodies. He went on a diet. He called producers pretending to be his own agent. He wrote scripts on spec and sent them to movie execs. He tried coke. He got a tan. He did lunch. He wondered if people still ate dinner. He saw Steven Spielberg at a premiere. He tried pushing his way through the crowd to hand him his script, all the while shouting, “Steven, Steven.” He drank lattes. He took classes on screenwriting. He asked his parents for a loan. He read *Back Stage West* and *Variety*. Desperate for money, he sold a screenplay to a UCLA film student who needed it for class. The film student got an A. More students wanted screenplays. One day the phone rang. “Is this Jake Cornell?”

"Speaking," Jake said.

"Like the university?"

"Yes," he said. His real name was Jacob Klein. Jake Cornell was his nom de plume.

"I have your script here, Jake."

"You read *Sayonara Sunset*?"

Sayonara Sunset was a script Jake had written on spec about a Japanese cop who comes to LA to solve a sting of yakuza related crimes. He had submitted the script to every agent and producer in town.

"No," the man said. "The script I have is *All About Evan*. It's the best thing I've read all semester." *All About Evan* was a gross-out teen comedy he'd sold to a UCLA student.

"Oh." The enthusiasm drained from Jake's voice. "You must be Professor Wetzel." Wetzel taught the introduction to screenwriting class at UCLA. Some idiot had probably forgotten to change the byline on the script before turning it in.

"How much are they paying you?" Wetzel asked.

"Three hundred. Four if they get an A."

"That's good money."

"It pays the rent."

"How would you like to make double that?"



The client lived in Van Nuys. His first script, which had won an award at a film festival in Vermont, was about a feuding brother and sister who, finding themselves trapped inside a video game, must work together as a team to beat the game and safely return home to their parents. Now he was working on a script for Disney about a disgraced former NBA coach who leads a ragtag crew of middle-schoolers to the state basketball championship. Armed with Sharpies, highlighters and a Venti foam latte with a double shot of espresso, Jake arrived at the house.

"Man, am I glad to see you. You come highly recommended by Professor Wetzel," the client said, a man in his mid-to-late twenties who, Jake could tell, had been up all night.

To protect everyone's anonymity, no names were ever exchanged.

"Where's the script?" Jake said.

"In my home office."

Jake locked the door and sat down with script. It wasn't half bad. Cliché, yes. Predictable, yes. But he liked the coach's back story and the redemption line. He envisioned Jaden Smith playing one of the middle-schoolers. He quickly diagnosed where the writer had gone wrong. He was trying to develop too many characters at once. It was confusing and the script lost its focus. Better to highlight just the coach and one of the players, the team captain. The rest of the kids were just stand-ins. Let the casting director deal with fleshing them out and giving them personalities. He sat down at the laptop and got to work.



A few days later Professor Wetzel called. The Disney execs loved the script. He had another job for him.

Jake drove up the canyon to Calabasas. The house looked like a David Hockney painting from the seventies, hard edges, straight lines, lots of steel and glass.

The client answered the door in robe and slippers. He was clutching an amber-colored tumbler of Scotch.

"We got a lot of work to do," the client said.

Off the bat Jake didn't like him. What was this "we"? Jake was the one doing all the work.

"If we don't get this script done by the end of the day, I'm going to be in a world of shit," the man said.

He showed Jake the script. It was not what Jake was used to. It was a bio pic about a Belgian priest who travels to a leper colony in Hawaii to minister to the natives. No priest will take the assignment. People warn him not to go. The priest takes the assignment anyway. He befriends the lepers and over time contracts leprosy himself. Instead of going back to Europe for treatment, he stays and eventually dies on the island. After his death the church canonizes him and the lepers rename the island in his honor.

"I can't do this," Jake said.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know anything about this priest. How am I going to write about him?"

"Professor Wetzel said you were the best. Are you going to help me or not?"

Jake shut himself in a room with the script. There were a bunch of books on the priest's life. Jake didn't have time to read them. The script opened with the priest's arrival on the leper colony. The ship captain won't take the priest ashore for fear of getting infected by the natives, so the priest has to row a boat onto the beach.

Several hours later, Jake emerged from the room. The client was pacing back and forth in his living room like an expectant father.

"Well?" he said.

Jake grinned. He was clutching the script. "I think I nailed it."



The movie won three Oscars, one for directing, best supporting acting, and screenwriting. Professor Wetzel stopped calling after a while. Jake's scripts were getting progressively worse. He had run out of good ideas. He tried convincing agents and producers he'd ghost-written the priest movie, but no one believed him.

He got a job at Spago's parking cars. He routinely left scripts in the backseats of big-time producers, agents and actors. Once, a BMW

pulled up and out of it stepped the credited screenwriter from the priest movie. Jake was ecstatic. He had been trying to contact him ever since his Oscar acceptance speech.

"Who you are?" the writer said.

"It's me. Jake."

The writer gave him a twenty and told him not to scratch the car.

He called a few lawyers. He wanted to sue the studio. It was an interesting case, the lawyers all said, but Jake didn't have a leg to stand on. Who was he? He was a nobody. He was a parking attendant at Spago's and that's what the jury would see him as. He kept writing, but he never wrote a script as good as the priest story. One day he bought a fake plastic Oscar at a tourist shop on Hollywood and Vine. He keeps it on his mantle. Sometimes he picks it up, stares into the mirror and practices thanking all the people who helped him along the way.



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Walter Metz

“Because it’s real difficult in life”: *Annie Hall* and the Theatrical Imagination



Annie Hall (MGM/Rollins-Joffe Productions, 1977): Tracking shot on the streets of New York City.

CRITICAL PRELUDE

Throughout his film, *Mighty Aphrodite* (1996), Woody Allen cuts back and forth between a stage containing an ancient Greek Chorus and the story of Lenny Winerib, a character searching for information about his adopted son’s birth parents.¹ The prominence given to Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, the dramatic source of the film, raises interesting questions about the importance of the theatrical to other Allen films. How are Allen’s roots in live theater—he was a Broadway playwright from the late 1960s through the mid-1990s—germane to an analysis of his film work?² Is there anything theatrical about Allen’s masterful works of cinema, such as *Annie Hall* (1977)?

This paper proposes that the theater scenes in *Mighty Aphrodite* merely literalize the theatrical influences circulating in Allen’s film work since the 1970s. Crucially, *Annie Hall*—Allen’s first “serious” art film—ends with the reconstruction of its narrative into a stage play.³ Having just broken up with Annie (Diane Keaton) in Los Angeles, Alvy (Woody Allen) returns to New York to write his first play. A shock cut from the scene in Los Angeles throws us, without warning, into a rehearsal for the play in which the two characters representing Alvy and Annie utter dialogue we have heard them exchange throughout the film. Thus, Alvy has followed that pithy aphorism doled



Annie Hall: Alvy drives his car in Los Angeles.

out by writing teachers trying to make a quick buck, “write what you know,” except of course in Alvy’s theatrical version he and Annie stay together. In direct address to the camera, Alvy explains, “What do you want? It was my first play. You know how you’re always trying to get things to come out perfect in art because it’s real difficult in life.”

Peter Cowie further layers the theatrical intertextuality of this scene: “Like Strindberg, who hissed at his critics that he would see them in his next play, Alvy writes a drama that, when rehearsed in Manhattan, contains most of the same lines as he and Annie exchange at the health restaurant on Sunset Blvd” (44). This connection seems logical enough: Cowie defines Alvy, a playwright, via a theatrical referent, August Strindberg. Considering Alvy as a stand-in for Woody Allen the film auteur, Cowie’s connection superficially reinforces Allen as the cinematic heir to Ingmar Bergman, himself the Scandinavian cinematic equivalent to Strindberg as dramatist. However, given that the ultimate form of Alvy’s artistic expression is

the theater, not the cinema, despite his penchant for Bergman films and *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971), I believe it is imperative that we consider the theatrical as an important signifier in itself, not just as an intermediary art form that leads us toward the cinema.

Mary Nichols favorably analyzes the use of the theatrical to override the cinematic in considering this crucial penultimate scene in *Annie Hall*: “He writes his first play—a dramatization of his and Annie’s relationship. His art does not reproduce reality exactly, however, for in the play Annie returns with him from L.A. to New York City. Alvy apologizes to the audience... But Allen’s movie is not like this, for it does not have the Hollywood ending of Alvy’s play” (45). In this way, *Annie Hall* can have it both ways, attracting both a spectator wanting to see things work out well—Alvy becomes a successful playwright and Annie is now empowered enough to teach her new boyfriend what she has learned from Alvy—while also attracting an audience interested in exploring the bitter nature of alienated modernity.

The film has two endings, one a happy one, the Hollywood romantic coupling, and the other, a bittersweet international art film dissolution of a relationship. That the latter is expressed cinematically, and the former theatrically, is crucial to understanding the theatrical as it pertains to *Annie Hall* in particular and the films of Woody Allen in general. I propose that the theater in Allen's cinema has come to represent a dead space of wish fulfillment and self-deception, whereas the cinematic itself has come to serve as a place of clear (in) sight and liberation.

The double-ending of *Annie Hall* has been most profitably analyzed by Thomas Schatz, in his exploration of the film as a postmodern text, combining classical textual features (the parting of the lovers on the streets of New York to end the film) and modernist ones (the juxtaposition of two levels of narrative, the theatrical space of the play explicitly contrasted with the seemingly more real space of the street). Schatz furthers Nichols' view of the two endings via an analysis of the aesthetic and narrative features of the film, producing an argument that *Annie Hall* is a postmodern

film in that it is both classically conservative and radically modernist:

Alvie [sic] Singer's first play, perhaps, but also Woody Allen's current film. Once again, and with abrupt finality, the ironic interfacing of author, narrator, and character ruptures the enclosed world of the narrative and this time casts the entire conceptual basis for the story into ambiguity. Are we to assume that the author/narrator (i.e., Woody Allen the filmmaker) is any less manipulative for the sake of dramatic effect than is Alvie the playwright? Apparently not, which renders the status of the entire "autobiographical" reverie unreliable and ambiguous. (231)

In Schatz's reading, *Annie Hall* becomes about the artist's retreat from real life into a theatrical world in which the male artist has control over his female characters. Such a feminist critique of *Annie Hall* indicates Allen's films' blurring of real and fictional stories—made creepy after the Soon-Yi Previn scandal, especially in *Husbands and Wives* (1992)—has in fact been a



Annie Hall: Alvy's triumph; Annie takes her date to *The Sorrow and the Pity*.

characteristic part of his gendered cinematic vision all along.

This specific reading of *Annie Hall*'s theatrical features will allow for a developmental exploration of the relationship between Allen's plays and films. For example, the theatrical meta-textuality of *Mighty Aphrodite* is a characteristic feature of Allen's specifically theatrical work from the 1970s. His play, *God* (1975), is set in 500 B.C. in Athens and concerns an actor and a writer

named Diabetes and Hepatitis, respectively, who attempt to understand the meaning of life, à la Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1948). *Mighty Aphrodite* thus represents, in the overall development of Allen's career, a kind of hybridization between the theatrical parody of the theater

in the guise of *God* and the international art cinema identity concerns of *Annie Hall*. Subsequent to these works would come more plays (1982's *The Floating Light Bulb*), more aggressive films about the theatrical tradition (1982's *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*), and more feminist-inflected cinema-theater hybridizations along the lines of *Annie Hall*.

THE THEATRICAL AND THE CINEMATIC IN THE FILMS OF WOODY ALLEN

Relationships between the theatrical and the cinematic take one of two major forms. First, there are direct references to plays within the film text meant to invoke a specific theme, mood, or atti-

tude. In the midst of hundreds of other cultural references, *Annie Hall* makes a number of gestures to theater history. In his BFI monograph on the film, Peter Cowie lists some fifty such cultural references, some of which have to do with the theatrical.

At the beginning of the film, in the famous tracking shot on the streets of New York, Alvy explains to Rob (Tony Roberts) that a clerk's suggestion that he consider their sale on the operas of

Wagner is an act of anti-Semitism. Later, Alvy's second wife, Robin (Janet Margolin), explaining why she no longer wants to have sex with Alvy, says that her headache is "like Oswald in *Ghosts*." Towards the end of the film, while telling people on the street how much he misses Annie,

Alvy responds to a query as to whether he is jealous: "a little bit like Medea." Finally, when Alvy tries to convince Rob to leave Los Angeles and return to New York, because he should be doing Shakespeare in the Park instead of mind-numbing television sitcoms, Max responds by saying that he did Shakespeare in the Park, the only result of which was that he got mugged and someone stole his leotard. In all these cases, the reference to the theater sets up a joke line that, like many of the other cultural references in the film, is not pursued any further.

A second, more nuanced and critically productive relationship between film and theater revolves around intertextual linkages between films and

Mighty Aphrodite thus represents, in the overall development of Allen's career, a kind of hybridization between the theatrical parody of the theater in the guise of God and the international art cinema identity concerns of Annie Hall.

plays that explore similar aesthetic, narrative, and ideological terrain. Of all modern American filmmakers, Allen has perhaps most profitably explored such linkages.

A *Midsummer's Night Sex Comedy* attempts a radical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, applying Shakespeare's plot structure to a turn of the century meditation on technology and modernity. *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) engages in a reworking of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1901), the project of which is all the more fascinating in intertextual contrast with Wendy Wasserstein's similarly-themed play, *The Sisters Rosensweig* (1992). In this intertextual triangle, we have

two modern Jewish artists, Wasserstein and Allen, applying Chekhov's plot structure of three different women's relationships with men, and simultaneously to a study of contemporary urban life, one from a male and the other from a female perspective. As a third example, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) reworks Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1922), exploring the nexus of power between real-life actors and fictional characters.

However, it is *Mighty Aphrodite* that continues to represent the most complex use of theatrical intertextuality in Allen's oeuvre. In *Mighty Aphrodite*, Allen returns to the roots of ancient Greek theater—*Oedipus Rex*—to build his modern story of reproductive miscommunication and its potentially tragic effects. By referencing ancient

Greek drama in *Mighty Aphrodite*, Allen has radically altered the proscenium form of theater that he previously employed as a referent in such films as *Annie Hall* and *Another Woman* (1988).

Instead of this modern theater, he has chosen a spectacular form of theater that is much less intimate. Allen speaks very favorably of the impact of such spectacular productions, whose clearest referent today is contemporary sporting events. After all, the ancient

Greek theatrical spaces seated 15,000 spectators, a scope approached in scale by contemporary NBA games. Allen explains his love for sports in very theatrical terms, terms that might have appealed to the



Mighty Aphrodite (Miramax/Magnolia Pictures, 1995): The basketball game as Greek spectacle.

ancient Greek love of theatrical drama: "I grew up with a great love of sports as a spectator. So I like sports very much to this day. Very often I lament the fact that the theater cannot achieve the tension that a good sporting event can achieve. I love many, many sports as a spectator now" (qtd. in Bjorkman 83).

Mighty Aphrodite relies on the key narrative device of ancient Greek drama, the Chorus, a set of characters used as a transition from one "act" (although they are not usually referred to in this modern manner) to the next. Sometimes this transition is sung (typically referred to as a Choral Ode) and sometimes the transition is a set of poems in which two demi-choruses (half of the Chorus) argue (these are called the Strophe and Antistrophe). *Mighty Aphrodite* features a Chorus that

makes fun of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. After Lenny Winerib (Allen) and his wife discuss adopting a baby at dinner



Mighty Aphrodite: The ancient Greek stage.

with friends one night, a shock cut takes us to a stage in ancient Greece in which the characters and Chorus from *Oedipus Rex* discuss the Wineribs' dilemma. Jocasta (Olympia Dukakis) laments her plight: "My son did slay unwittingly my noble husband, and did without realizing hasten with me, his loving mother, to lustful bed." The Choragos comically replies: "And a whole profession was born, charging sometimes \$200 an hour, and a fifty-minute hour at that." Jocasta continues, defending the urge to motherhood. The complete Chorus chants in response, parodying a stereotype of the Jewish mother: "Children grow up. They move out. Sometimes to ridiculous places like Cincinnati, or Boise, Idaho. Then you never see them again."

Mighty Aphrodite does not just connect its narrative to *Oedipus Rex* for cheap jokes. One of the central thematic concerns of *Oedipus Rex* is whether it is better to always know the Truth. The character who thinks it is, Oedipus, is brutally punished. *Oedipus Rex* is ultimately a detective story – a

whodunit? – in which the detective comes to find that he himself is the culprit. The end of *Mighty Aphrodite* pursues its *Oedipus Rex* intertext not in the direction of such tragedy, but instead towards comedy, arguing that it is not always best to know the Truth. Meeting at the F.A.O. Schwartz toy store, the two main protagonists, Lenny and Linda (Mira Sorvino), show off their babies. The film ends with Lenny not knowing that Linda's child is his, and Linda not knowing that Lenny's child is hers. The film thus converts *Oedipus*

Rex's tragic exploration of Oedipus' mad quest for the Truth into a comedy about how what we do not know will not hurt us.

The Choragos is puzzled and disturbed by this outcome, so very different from the one that ends the *Oedipus Rex* with which he is familiar: "But they have each other's child, and they don't know." The rest of the Chorus reassures him: "Yes, isn't life ironic?" The Choragos is soon won over, celebrating the vicissitudes of life: "Life is unbelievable...miraculous...sad...wonderful." The film ends with the Chorus leading a song, typical of ancient Greek comedy in its affirmation of the well-being of the social order, as we take leave of the narrative. In this case, the song is a big-production show tune, "When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you." The mad quest for Truth in *Oedipus Rex* is forestalled in *Mighty Aphrodite*; the film reworks the plot such that the story of the characters ends happily, in blissful ignorance.

Such a reading of *Mighty Aphrodite* demonstrates the power of the inter-

textual method for illuminating a film in a new critical light. While *Mighty Aphrodite* is a late Allen film in which the theatrical intertext is made explicit, indeed fully referential, prior Allen films rework theatrical material with significantly less fanfare. Connecting *Annie Hall* to George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913) reveals this transitional film as a mediation on female subjectivity as first controlled by, and then liberated from, male intellectual control.

ANNIE HALL AS AN INTERTEXTUAL
REWORKING OF *PYGMALION*

Allen explicitly wanted *Annie Hall* to be framed by the theatrical. As he says in his interview with Stig Bjorkman: "It's important for the beginning and ending to have a special quality of some sort, a special theatrical quality, or something to arrest the audience immediately" (qtd. in Cowie 23). In fact, this theatrical progression from beginning to ending is in microcosm the development of Allen's career from the theatrical to the cinematic, demarcated by *Annie Hall* as the turning point. Before *Annie Hall*, Allen wrote important plays and silly films; afterwards, he stopped writing plays, instead embracing the theatrical within these cinematic masterworks. *Annie Hall* is the first Allen film to use this gesture of the play-within-the-film.

The beginning of *Annie Hall* is a purely theatrical artifice, about a performer on a stage directly addressing the audience. This is of course the scene in which Woody makes his jokes about "bad food, but

such small portions" and about "not wanting to belong to a club who would have anyone like me as a member." The ending of the film is similarly theatrically framed through the window of a restaurant. We see Annie crossing the street. Alvy turns and walks out of the frame, leaving a long take with just the city street left to look at. In voice-over, Alvy continues his joking, but now a dramatic theatrical referent—the breakup of their relationship—tinges the previous comedy. Now his joke is one of desperation: "we all need the eggs."

Beyond this framing device, the theatrical in *Annie Hall* can also be traced via narrative structure: the film presents an implicit reworking of the Henry Higgins-Eliza Doolittle relationship in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Some critics have pointed to the general Shavian nature of all of Allen's cinema. Critics first compared Allen unfavorably to Shaw. In *Love, Sex, Death and the Meaning of Life*, Foster Hirsch argues:



Annie Hall: Alvy says a final goodbye to Annie.

"If not exactly a comedy of ideas in the Shavian sense, *Love and Death* [1975] is nonetheless a comedy about ideas, and about intellect, in which Woody clearly respects as well as makes fun of

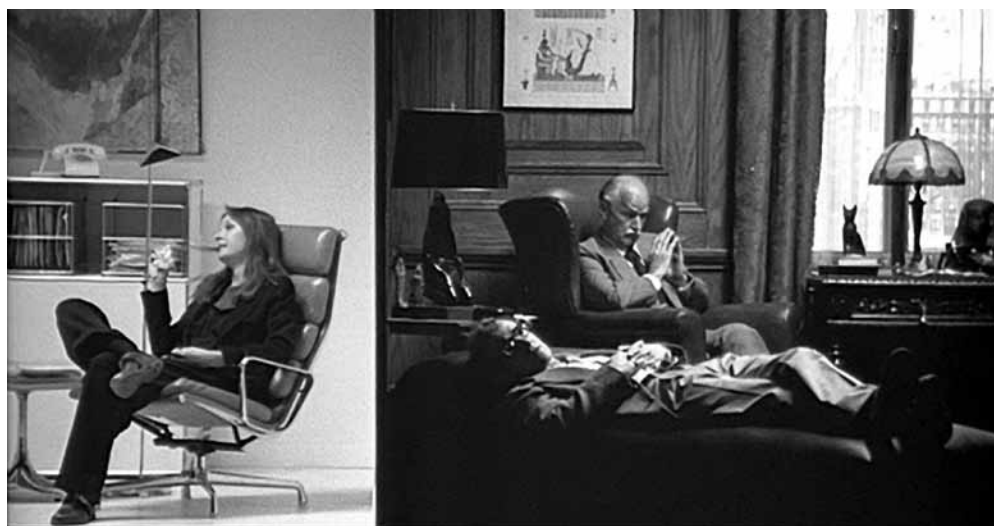
the life of the mind. His mockery is in fact a form of tribute, perhaps the only kind that this professional skeptic and scoffer can handle" (77).

Peter Cowie is one of the few critics to discuss the *Pygmalion* intertext in *Annie Hall*. Exploring the split-screen psychoanalysis scene, Cowie suggests that "[t]his also points to a Pygmalion and Galatea element in the relationship, as there has been in the real-life friendship between Woody Allen and Diane Keaton. Alvy longs to possess Annie, to shape her in his image.... The myth goes awry for Alvy because he cannot bring himself to marry his model and, like most latter-day Galateas, Annie eludes his clutches and transcends his sphere of influence" (38). Allen himself has described the construction of this scene using the theatrical as an ideal: "I thought it was an interesting thing how two people report the same phenomenon differently. I thought the point was most theatrically made that way" (qtd. in Bjorkman 88).

The connection between *Annie Hall* and *Pygmalion* extends far more thoroughly than has been previously analyzed. First, the original title of

Annie Hall, "Anhedonia," meaning "an inability to enjoy," is a precise way of understanding Henry Higgins' problem as a rationalist scientist detached from his emotions. In keeping with the misanthropic tradition of the theater, particularly via Moliere's *The Misanthrope* (1666), Shaw depicts Higgins as an anhedonic monster. Early in the first act, Higgins suggests that those who speak improper English have no right to live because they are destroying the language of Shakespeare, and thus Shavian language. Upon first agreeing to see Eliza in his study, Higgins immediately wants to throw her out a window.

While not nearly so violent, perhaps an indication of the transformations produced by feminism in the 20th century, Alvy also refuses to enjoy himself, fixating instead on morbidity as he begins converting Annie into a replication of himself. In the scene in the bookstore, he gives Annie two philosophical studies on the nature of death, rather than "you know, that cat book." When they are two minutes late to see *Face to Face* (1976), Alvy insists that they wait another two hours so that



Annie Hall: split-screen psychology.

they do not miss the credits; Annie's observation that said credits are in Swedish does not dissuade Alvy from his anhedonic position. Right before entering the theater, Alvy had directed his misanthropy elsewhere: surrounded by "the cast of *The Godfather*," Alvy asks for "the large polo mallet" so that he no longer has to meet his public.

Both *Annie Hall* and *Pygmalion* rely on a playful narration in order to get us to side initially with the male over the female protagonist. Shaw stops Eliza's incomprehensible dialogue, telling us in a stage direction: "Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London" (101). *Annie Hall* is of course laden with such modernist narrative interventions. One such rupture similarly asks the audience to side with Alvy as a beleaguered party to verbal conversation. While discussing adult education in the kitchen, Annie gives voice to a Freudian slip, saying "my wife" instead of "my life." When she refuses to acknowledge her mistake, Alvy asks us in the audience to note the error, seeking out evidence that he is sane.

At the ideological level, both *Annie Hall* and *Pygmalion* fundamentally raise questions about class and gender. Shaw, like the other great Victorian satirist, Oscar Wilde, exposes the hollow nature of middle-class morality. When Mrs. Hill, at one of Higgins' mother's soirées declares, "If people would only be frank and say what they really think," Higgins recoils in mock horror, "Lord forbid," echoing the Wildean satirical belief that soothing lies are better than harsh truths, stated most forcefully in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). *Annie Hall* is a similar satiric encounter with middle-class values. Like Higgins, Alvy bears

the weight of the satire; he, for example, gets physically ill in the presence of the scion of middle-class values, the American television sit-com.

Furthermore, both *Pygmalion* and *Annie Hall* tell similar stories about the journey from the ethnic working-class to a different location in the city wherein the protagonist is embraced by upwardly mobile society. In *Pygmalion*, Eliza makes the journey from her small flat with a coin-operated heater to the luxurious rooms where Higgins trains her to be a lady. In *Annie Hall*, Alvy makes the journey from ethnic, working-class Brooklyn to Manhattan where he becomes a successful writer. That particular journey – from Brooklyn to Manhattan – would become the key class signifier in American cinema of the late 1970s. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner analyze a similar journey in *Saturday Night Fever* (1978): "[Ethnic Italian] Tony's passage to Manhattan at the end is rendered cinematically in a highly metaphoric manner as a crucifixion and resurrection. He 'dies' to his dance life, descends into the subway hell, and is resurrected into a Manhattan sunrise" (114). In *Annie Hall*, Alvy shares a similar transformation with Annie by taking her to his former house under the Coney Island rollercoaster, quite a symbolic distance from their current world of upscale Manhattan nightclubs and art cinema movie houses.

Ultimately, the identity issue that most allows *Pygmalion* to illuminate *Annie Hall* is gender. At its core, *Annie Hall* is a film about Alvy teaching Annie how to behave like an intellectual, giving her the skills to realize that he is not good enough for her. *Pygmalion* similarly reworked Ovid's description of the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea into a story of Eliza coming to consciousness that she would be better

off marrying her suitor Freddy than continuing to put up with Higgins' misogynistic abuse.

Such an intertextual reading of *Annie Hall* explains what is otherwise the most perplexing scene in the film. Talking with a mounted policeman's horse, Alvy admits to liking the Wicked

ella, the slippers in *Pygmalion* in fact cause the final rift that sends Eliza into Freddy's arms, abandoning the abusive Higgins forever. Similarly, the Snow White scene, representing Alvy's vision of Annie as a nagging witch, predicts the ultimate demise of their relationship, as Annie comes to her senses

and leaves Alvy's stultifying New York for Toney Lacey, the Los Angeles record executive.

CONCLUSION

The methodology of this paper has resulted in both a new reading of *Annie Hall* as a theatrically-influenced work, and also a reconsideration of how the theater can be used to understand the cinema of Woody Allen more gener-

ally. In keeping with the thesis that the later, post-Soon Yi scandal films are the most explicit about such intertextual relationships, the clearest *Pygmalion* reference in Allen's oeuvre is to be found in *Deconstructing Harry* (1997). *Deconstructing Harry* can be seen as a sort of post-Soon Yi scandal one-upping of the *Pygmalion* themes first presented in *Annie Hall*. Whereas the *Pygmalion* intertext in *Annie Hall* is implied, in *Deconstructing Harry* it is rendered explicit.

In this more recent film, Harry Block (Allen) is invited by his former girlfriend, Fay (Elisabeth Shue), for a drink so that she may tell him she is marrying his best friend Larry (Billy Crystal), who Harry believes, correctly,



Annie Hall: The Snow White intertext.

Witch from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). This moment introduces a completely unexpected, and thoroughly unique, animated sequence in which a cartoon Alvy is subject to a scolding by Annie-cum-Wicked Witch. In similar fairy tale fashion, Shaw's *Pygmalion* illuminates the Pygmalion-Galatea roots of the Cinderella myth, in which a young girl is transformed by her fairy godmother into the belle of the ball. At the ambassadors' party, where Higgins tests out his creation on the unsuspecting linguists, Shaw refers to Eliza as the "princess" (125). Later, in a complex reversal of the Cinderella myth, Higgins is the one who loses his slippers. Unlike the slipper that reconciles Prince Charming to Cinder-

is the Devil. Whereas Henry Higgins is rendered hysterical by Eliza's announcement that she is to marry Freddy, Harry Block is devastated to learn the news, and he finally declares that he loves Fay. In *Pygmalion*, Higgins can never bring himself to this declaration of love for Eliza; in *Deconstructing Harry*, this declaration comes too late. When Harry refuses to give the couple his blessings, because he wants to reconcile with her, a jump cut leads into Fay's analysis of the situation: "I was your pupil. It was Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. That's what it was, and that's what you loved." Thus, unlike even Eliza before her, Fay has intertextual knowledge, building upon Eliza's life lessons, which she uses to analyze the present situation. Reminiscent of Alvy's lectures on death and foreign films in *Annie Hall*, Fay contemptuously describes "those endless lectures on love in the Western world."

Harry, on the other hand, has made little progress over his misogynistic forebear. Much like Higgins' play-ending hysterical laughter, Harry is left to make crude, sarcastic jokes. After another shock cut, he whines: "[You were] another jerk fan. You know, that I would fuck you and then move on to the next fan. But... but it didn't happen that way. You know, you were a fan and... ahh... a follower and then a pupil and then... then you were a roommate and before I knew it you were the one who had control of the

channel changer." Harry's stuttering delivery here indicates the way in which this supposedly great writer, appropriately named Block, has been far transcended in articulate and precise self-analysis by his former pupil. Thus, the process of reworking love relationships through the filter of Higgins and Doolittle, first begun in *Annie Hall*, finds its fruition in the gender politics of *Deconstructing Harry*, as brutally self-loathing as any of the post-Soon Yi Allen films.

By studying the connection between *Annie Hall* and *Pygmalion*, I offer a reading which allows us to see this quintessentially 1970s film in a new light. Furthermore, it allows us to rethink Allen's career. Contrary to



Deconstructing Harry (Fine Line Features/Jean Doumanian Productions, 1997): Harry drinks tequila with the Devil.

spiteful feminist assaults on Allen's character—for example, Marion Meade's assessment: "*Annie Hall* is not really about Annie, but about Alvy and his inability to relate to her or any other woman" (111)—such a reading reveals both an original engagement with questions of female liberation, as well as a

development of such consciousness in films such as *Deconstructing Harry*. I cannot think of a greater testament to *Annie Hall* as a thirty-year old masterpiece of contemporary American cinema.

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ENDNOTES

1. The tragic story of Oedipus' search for the truth about his natal origins has more indirectly haunted many Allen films, most humorously his short film, "Oedipus Wrecks," part of *New York Stories* (1989).
2. Allen's published plays are: *Death Knocks* (1966), *Don't Drink the Water* (1966), *Play It Again, Sam* (1969), *Death* (1972), *God* (1972), *The Query* (1975), *The Floating Light Bulb* (1981), and *Central Park West* (1996).
3. Allen's previous directorial efforts — *Take the Money and Run* (1969), *Bananas* (1971), *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (1972), *Sleeper* (1973), and *Love and Death* (1975) — all relied on very broad parody. This is in direct contrast with *Annie Hall*'s reliance on a self-reflexive interrogation of Allen's Jewish and masculine identities and their effects on his interpersonal relationships with women. These features, of course, are characteristics of the European art cinema, particularly the films of Ingmar Bergman. Significantly in this regard, Annie's lateness at the beginning of the film causes Alvy to miss a screening of Bergman's *Face to Face* (1976). Instead, they go to see *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a descriptor of not only the Nazi occupation of Paris, but of Allen's relationships within his films (and in his private life, for that matter).



Ben Wade

Walter C. Metz, Chair and Professor of the Department of Cinema and Photography at Southern Illinois University, is the author of two books: *Engaging Film Criticism: Film History and Contemporary American Cinema* (Peter Lang, 2004) and *Bewitched* (Wayne State University Press, 2007). His new book, *Gilligan's Island* (2012), is now available from Wayne State University Press. He is currently at work on a new book manuscript about Dr. Seuss, Pixar Animation Studios, and American culture.

Curt Wallin

Boys of Bonneville: Racing on a Ribbon of Salt—

The Making of a Documentary Film



Price Museum of Speed © 2011

It was still a secret when John Price, a well-known Utah businessman and car collector, approached me about producing a twenty-minute video describing the engine rebuild of Ab Jenkins' legendary 1938 Mormon Meteor III race car, which he had recently acquired. Considered one of the most historically significant and perhaps one of the most valuable automobiles in history, the Meteor III would be the centerpiece of Salt Lake City's Price Museum of Speed. In the early 1990s, Ab Jenkins' son Marv had completely rebuilt his father's car to perfection, with the exception of the massive 1924

Curtiss Conqueror V12 airplane engine. Both the Price Museum of Speed and Marv felt a historical obligation to have the engine meticulously rebuilt. John needed Marv's knowledge and Marv needed John's funds and modern technology. So, before the final transaction between Marv and John could be completed, they formed a partnership—and the final resurrection of the Mormon Meteor III would begin.

As a director of photography working 18 years in television and video production, I thought this would be another enjoyable, straightforward project lasting only a couple of months. After



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all, this was just another industrial video job. I shook John's hand and set off on what evolved into an incredibly challenging epic filmmaking odyssey. I soon came to the understanding that making *Boys of Bonneville: Racing on a Ribbon of Salt* was not just another documentary film; it was a personal journey, paralleling exactly what my main character, Ab Jenkins, personified. Perseverance, righteousness, hard work, and fighting self-doubt are just a few of the words that truly reveal this filmmaking adventure.

In April of 2008, I went to St. George, Utah, to meet Marv Jenkins. I was told that Marv had been storing his dad's (Ab's) car in his basement garage since 1996. According to his wife, Noma, "Marv spent just about every waking minute fiddling with that old beast." When I walked through the garage door, I could smell freshly cooked apple pie with a hint of motor oil. I couldn't believe it! There it was, the Mormon Meteor III race car—23 feet of orange and blue rocket-shaped speed sitting in a suburban Utah basement garage. This was the car in which

Ab Jenkins, in 1940, set all land speed endurance world records, including the heralded 24-hour record that it held for 50 years. This was also the last Duesenberg built by the legendary car builder, Augie Duesenberg. It was the giant Matchbox that rested in the basement of the Utah State Capitol, where so many children with glazed-over eyes dreamt about racing a rocket ship into infinity. I was one of those banjo-eyed kids.

Pushing his walker, Marv shuffled around the car, giving me the full historical rundown of Ab, along with the mechanical nuts and bolts surrounding the Meteor. Wandering around Marv's basement, I realized he had transformed the place into a museum and shrine celebrating his dad's life. There were saddles, guns, steering wheels, trophies, photos and detailed scrapbooks of everything Ab Jenkins. Rum-maging through the closet, Marv and I found a long-forgotten box that was too heavy for him to deal with, so he asked if I would lift it out and open it up. It was at this point that I was actually living a moment that all documentary filmmakers fantasize about. I was star-

ing at approximately 10,000 feet of film reels, each marked with dated titles, "Meteor III 1940," "Ab Jenkins 1933," and "Indy 1930s." I whispered to Marv that perhaps I should take these films to a proper facility to be viewed, restored and transferred. I guess, in this short afternoon span, I had gained a certain level of Marv's trust, enough to allow me to carefully take the films to a trustworthy lab for some rehab.

Shipping priceless film from Salt Lake to New York is not an inexpensive endeavor. Postal service and other shipping companies don't want the responsibility of such a transport, so I hired my trustworthy friend and sound mixer, Roger Davis, to accompany the giant suitcase of film by commercial airline. I bought a seat for the film next to Roger's, and off they went.

Several days later, I answered a call from an overly-excited, chattering film colorist in New York. With the exception of two reels, the film was in amazing shape, with both silent and sync sound accounts of Ab Jenkins racing on the Bonneville Salt Flats. Over the next two months, disks were sent to me to view and to log. This was the point at which I proposed to John Price that we change what we had initially envisioned as a little video production into a full-blown documentary filmmaking extravaganza. With images of the Meteor III in full 1940 color flying by his flatscreen, John was hooked and I was overwhelmed with ideas. This

was no longer an industrial project, it had morphed into a film production.

On the surface, the *Boys of Bonneville* is not a complicated story. In a nutshell, during the late 1920s through the mid 1950s, Ab Jenkins, a Utah-born Mormon, pioneered the art of cross-country and salt flats racing. He set all endurance land speed automobile world records, won nearly every hill-climbing auto race, and became one of America's, and even Europe's, biggest celebrities of the time. His mission was to help America's newly fledged car

industry produce safer, faster automobiles for the average consumer, and that's exactly what he accomplished. The story arc simply follows the history of Ab and his cars through this time period. This was a man struggling to succeed, against all odds. With the Great Depression and World War II constantly beating on him, he persisted

and heroically completed unimaginable goals. As the story progresses past the death of Ab, his son Marv spends a good portion of his life battling to save his father's most famous car, the Mormon Meteor III. Can Marv save the car, rebuild it, and thus resurrect his father's spirit? It seemed like a quick little story to tell, right?

As with our main character, Ab, one of the greatest challenges of documentary filmmaking is maintaining a clear vision while persistently pushing towards the final goal. Winston Churchill

There it was, the Mormon Meteor III race car – 23 feet of orange and blue rocket-shaped speed sitting in a suburban Utah basement garage. This was the car in which Ab Jenkins, in 1940, set all land speed endurance world records, including the heralded 24-hour record that it held for 50 years.

perhaps said it best in the by now clichéd phrase, “Never, never, never give up.” When I look at a well-produced documentary, it

seems so simple.

People have asked, why is it that so many big budget Hollywood narrative features take only a few years to complete, while *Boys of Bonneville* took almost five?

I attribute this to the fact that I, like most documentary filmmakers, was

limited to a handful of production team members. I also realized that we were strapped to a chronological series of events that I had little or no control over. When wooing potential interviewees, the team had to work around their schedule, and events such as the completion of the Meteor III engine rebuild and the 100th anniversary of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway were obviously non-negotiable timeline items. Another big challenge for all filmmaking is the always variable

Mother Nature. That’s right. One thunderstorm, a windy day, or the constant

setting of the sun can wreak havoc on the production schedule. Then there’s post production.



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I always say, be positive but definitely lay out the worst-case post production scenario. Numerous factors can destroy the predicted finish of a film, no matter how generously conceived. One of the most ominous issues is the process of organizing hundreds of hours of footage into meaningfully named sub clips that must be meticulously placed

into computer folders and subfolders. This is analogous to what would be considered the world’s most complicated Russian nested egg. This process alone took my unbelievably committed Producer, John Greene, Associate Producer, Natalie Avery, and myself, nine months to complete.

After surviving many self-doubt-induced mental breakdowns during the organization process, John and I began the nine-month quest to

layout the chronological rough cut. To make things even more complicated, I

had to leave the project to fulfill a one-month contract of filming at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. As my only trusted and committed colleague, John soldiered on cutting and sending clips to me for viewing on my iPhone. Many times while standing at the finish line of the Biathlon, I viewed scenes on the iPhone, then directed John to move clips around. The work just kept piling up with historical research, still photograph preparations, animations, music selections, legal rights issues, budget issues, stock footage acquisition, and of course the overall storytelling process.

After a year of post production, we finally had a 3.5 hour rough cut to show John Price. We had put together the entire century-long chronological story of Ab Jenkins, from his birth to the rebirth of the Meteor III. The time had come to take the rough cut and organize the beast into a 90 minute feature length that could entertain a general audience while still documenting the facts. I have marked this as the inevitable "Burnout Stage." We needed help.

A truism in film circles states that 99% of all documentary film productions don't make it past the rough cut stage, and I have come to honestly understand this fact. To make sure we would move forward, we sought help from our allies at the Utah Film Center. Academy Award Winner GERALYN Dreyfous, considered one of the most

influential producers in documentary filmmaking, happens to be the Director of the Utah Film Center and was kind enough to come onto our project as an Executive Producer. I guess our rough cut captured her imagination enough that she came on board and propelled the project to the "story doctoring" stage. GERALYN's connections brought

master filmmaker/ editor/writer Michael Chandler to the project.

Always remain humble and open to outside views and ideas. When Michael joined our team, he was tasked with filtering out the film's minutia, carefully manipulating the timeline, and re-writing the storyline related to my overall story goals. A storytelling genius, Michael is best known for editing such films as Milos For-

man's *Amadeus*, Judy Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith's *Most Dangerous Man in America*, and Carroll Ballard's *Never Cry Wolf*. There I was, staring at the man who edited the film that steered me in the direction of becoming, not a filmmaker, but a biologist. I have always considered *Never Cry Wolf* to be one of my top five movies. In fact, it was the first person narrative structure of the edit that influenced my initial idea of making *Boys of Bonneville* a first person storyline. I abandoned the first person approach during the rough cut stage, as I just couldn't find a way to organize the film based on Ab's journal entries. Knowing that Michael had great

There I was, staring at the man who edited the film that steered me in the direction of becoming, not a filmmaker, but a biologist. I have always considered Never Cry Wolf to be one of my top five movies. In fact, it was the first person narrative structure of the edit that influenced my initial idea of making Boys of Bonneville a first person storyline.



Price Museum of Speed © 2011

experience with first person filmmaking, I challenged him to rekindle this approach to the edit. He said he would give it a try, but there were no guarantees. Two weeks later, I sat in Michael's Moab studio and realized he had found a way to first person storytelling magic. Several months later, we had a refined 92 minute film. We even had the music of our composer, Gerald Hartley, gracing the images with fitting tones and accents. Our finishing editor, Stephen Smith of Lone Peak Productions, began the final animations followed by his meticulous color correction of every shot.

Finding a balance between catering to an often impatient audience and keeping true to the story is another great challenge in filmmaking. Soon after the 92 minute cut was viewed by a test audience, we hired producer/writer Jennifer Jordan to help us tighten

the film to a shorter 81 minute cut that would be appropriate for both television and film festivals. This turned out to be the single most stressful moment of the project. I have great respect for experienced producers that consult on a project late in post production; it is their job to arrive with—and at—an uncluttered, fresh vision of the story. They are tasked with the difficult job of mediating between the expectations of the general audience and the vision of the director. It was a month-long struggle in the edit room. At one point, I was arguing—or should I say, discussing—with several of my team members whether or not we should cut a good portion of the engine rebuild and the Meteor's rescue from its "tomb" at the Utah State Capitol. They all said the film was simply too long.

Again, taking constructive criticism and advice is essential in filmmaking,

but recognizing the delicate balance between others' ideas and sticking to one's ultimate vision is critical, too. My goal was to keep the final film centered on the father-and-son story and to keep it true to the actual events. My job was to make sure Marv and the other characters were portrayed as honestly and truthfully as possible, while at the same time capturing the attention of a broader audience. I kept Marv's rebuild and the rescue of the Meteor. If I didn't shorten the film, I was warned that my decisions would hurt our chances at getting into certain film festivals and television outlets. Today, the film has been in approximately 30 festivals and events; we have won audience and jury awards; the Jenkins family is all smiles; and we are just beginning our distribution to larger audiences. Perhaps, if the film was edited differently, we might have screened in larger festivals and scored an even larger distribution deal, but I know the Price Museum of Speed, the Jenkins family, the general audience, and last but not least I myself, are satisfied. An instinctual and honest creative process is always the correct path to a satisfied audience, as is attention to the absolute integrity of the story.

Strung out by four years of production, I found myself passed out on the couch with my girlfriend, Deana, one

evening. It was ten o'clock when, out of the blue, my phone rang: "Hey Curt," the voice said. "This is Patrick . . . I'm watching your screener and I had to call you. I want to be your narrator." Somewhat perplexed, I responded, "Patrick who?" And the voice replied, "Patrick Dempsey, that's who." Needless to say, I was shocked, and ecstatic.

Geralyn had sent a screener to Patrick Dempsey after I explained that we needed an actor who could read a first person narration, similar to Michael Chandler's placeholder voice, and preferably an actor with some experience in auto racing. That makes for a more passionate read. We had some connections to Patrick through our friends at Larry H. Miller's Motorsports Park in Tooele, Utah, where Patrick spends several weekends a year racing and training with his Mazda racing team. When I first proposed enlisting him as a voiceover,

I thought the idea was impossible, but Patrick was hooked—and we were elated and grateful. Two weeks later, Jennifer and I were in Santa Monica recording with "Dr. McDreamy." The 81 minute cut was now truly picture locked, and several months later the final technical details of sound mixing, graphics and credit roll were completed.

I remember hanging over the side of a pickup truck, speeding alongside the Meteor at 100 mph. I had burned in my mind an actual shot from the 1940 record run film, where the camera tracked Ab racing along the Salt. . . . I can't imagine how a cameraman in 1940 was able to steadily operate a heavy old film camera, while the wind battered the camera traveling at high speed. Not only was Ab a pioneer of auto racing, the cineomatographers were truly pioneers of filmmaking.

The making of *Boys of Bonneville* was at times the most enjoyable experience of my career and at other times the most tedious and challenging chapter in my life. As director, cinematographer and producer, I had a heavy burden on my shoulders, but I also had a chance to experience filmmaking at every level. One noteworthy experience occurred while filming the Meteor III on the Bonneville Salt Flats. I remember hanging over the side of a pickup truck, speeding alongside the Meteor at 100 mph. I had burned in my mind an actual shot from the 1940 record run film, where the camera tracked Ab racing along the Salt. I wanted to match this shot to edit a dissolve between then and now. This shot was unbelievably difficult. I can't imagine how a cameraman in 1940 was able to steadily operate a heavy old film camera, while the wind battered the camera traveling at high speed. Not only was Ab a pioneer of auto racing, the cinematographers were truly pioneers of filmmaking.



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I also remember being strapped backwards to a fire truck on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway filming the Meteor racing around one of the most famous racetracks in the world. After all, in 1938, this was the first place the Meteor was ever driven and tested. Imagine looking down the grill of the Meteor at 110 mph, one day before the Indianapolis 500. My sound man, Roger, who is actually a race car driver, had a tear in his eye while John Price

steered the Meteor with an ecstatic grin.

Two other great moments I consider the finest and most emotional experiences of the production. I remember Marv and John Price thanking one another when the refurbished engine was finally started. They both had tears in their eyes and smiles on their faces. Anyone who has seen the film will understand and recognize the significance of this moment. The other was

just a few months ago, when Marv's wife, Noma, gave me a tearful hug after seeing the film at the DocUtah festival

in St. George. She said, “Marv and Ab are surely proud to see what you have done.” I figure that’s what it’s all about.

In retrospect, I have to consider myself fortunate to have been given the chance to create *Boys of Bonneville*. From the day I opened the box of film in Marv’s basement, which could easily have turned into some Pandora’s Box, to the moment I showed the film on the big screen to 700 Salt Flats racers in Wendover, John Price respected and trusted my creative decisions. He allowed me to build a gifted and committed production team that helped tell the untold American story of the men that brought their perseverance, knowledge,

skill and heroism to the emerging sport of race car building and racing. John could easily have pulled the plug when the budget was bleeding and the timeline was languishing, but he didn’t, and I thank him for that. Like Ab and Marv Jenkins, the small but capable team was challenged with a tough goal: we had the moral obligation to reconstruct the story with integrity and complete historical honesty. Passion and hard work finished this project. It was truly an amazing ride, and I can only hope the audience will walk away empowered to charge forward through life’s ups and downs, in the spirited fashion of Ab and Marv Jenkins.

Passionate about telling stories of both the natural world and the history of humankind, Curt has spent the past twenty years filming and directing around the globe. Originally working in the scientific world as a biologist, Curt felt the need to teach beyond the classroom, finding the medium of film and television the best way to disperse information to the largest audience possible. As an accomplished



Josh Granger

director of photography, he has developed an eye for expressing the world’s stories with a unique approach. Whether shooting and producing for an Olympic broadcast or climbing the volcanoes of Central America, Curt will continue to meld the crafts of distinctive storytelling and exceptional cinematography. Over the years, filming, producing and directing documentaries has become Curt’s forte — making him one of today’s rising talents in the world of filmmaking. For more information on Curt, visit www.curtwallin.com.

For more information on *Boys of Bonneville: Racing on a Ribbon of Salt*, visit www.boysofbonneville.com. The Mormon Meteor III along with the Mormon Meteor I and 17 other historically significant race cars will be on exhibit during the Summer of 2012. Visit <http://umfa.utah.edu/> for information about “Speed: The Art of the Performance Automobile.”

Robert Lacy

Hollywood Losers



Sunset Boulevard (1950), still of opening shot, © Paramount Pictures.

Begin with a man lying face down in a swimming pool. Shoot him from below, up through the water. Have flashbulbs winking like fireflies from the pool's edge all around him. Then let him, *this dead man lying in the water*, start recounting for us, voice over, how he got there, and how fitting it all is somehow because he "had always wanted a pool."

This is the famous opening to Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. The man in the water is a failed screenwriter named Joe Gillis who had fled the copydesk of a newspaper back in Ohio to come out

to Hollywood and make it big. That he ends up dead in someone else's swimming pool shouldn't surprise us. Hollywood, we need to understand, can be a dangerous place

Ask Tod Hackett. He came out from the Yale School of Fine Arts, hoping to make his mark as a costume and set designer, and wound up screaming at the top of his lungs during a deadly riot outside a Hollywood premiere. The hapless Tod is the central character in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*, and it is his screams that provide the note on which that novel ends.

But even Tod fares better than Maria Wyeth. She came to Hollywood from Silver Wells, Nevada, population 28, and is the main character in Joan Didion's novel *Play It As It Lays*. Maria made only two movies before the drugs and the bad sex and her own desperate unhappiness overwhelmed her. She ends up being committed to a mental institution.

Joe Gillis...Tod Hackett...Maria Wyeth. It is a curious fact that the three best, and best known, tales about Hollywood should all deal with marginal figures—losers, in a word. To illustrate the oddity of this, try to imagine a Wall Street story that centers on a failed bond trader, or a baseball story that focuses on a utility infielder who never gets to play. Hard to envision, right? Yet when art has turned its baleful eye on Hollywood, it has done so most successfully by looking at those who've failed there.

Chronologically, *The Day of the Locust* came first. It was published in 1940 to huge critical acclaim, and then proceeded to flop commercially. West's vision of Hollywood and the California Dream was colored by the Great Depression, from which the nation was still struggling to emerge. *All* the characters in his tale are losers: a would-be starlet, a cowboy extra, a Mexican, a dwarf, an ex-vaudevillian reduced to selling silver polish door to door, a neurasthenic Iowan harboring a simmering potential for violence, and poor Tod Hackett. The novel's original title was *The Cheated*.

West himself, in explaining the book's lack of popular success, said it was filled with "private and unfunny jokes." One of these has to do with the Iowan, Homer Simpson (!), and his hands. They're huge, and they seem to have a life of their own. Time and again as the story unfolds we are asked to look at them, as they writhe, and wash themselves, and itch, and scratch, and dance. These are sinister, *dangerous* hands, we are made to know. Yet when the climax of the novel comes, outside the Hollywood premiere, and Homer precipitates the riot by assaulting and killing a child actor named Adore Loomis—how does he do it? *With his feet!* *By stomping him to death!* This is Westian humor at its private and unfunny pur-
est.



Sunset Boulevard movie poster (1950), © Paramount Pictures.

The novel is best approached as sharp social satire. And as such, after all these years, it still holds up. Partly because it is so well done. West had a Fauvist, painterly eye: "The path was silver, grained with streaks of rose-

gray, and the walls of the canyon were turquoise, mauve, chocolate and lavender. The air itself was vibrant pink." Tod Hackett, we are told at the outset, will live to pass judgment on his experience by producing a large, James Ensor-like painting to be called "The Burning of Los Angeles" in which characters in the story are depicted in full riot.

It is Tod's sexual frustration at being unable to bed Faye Greener, the would-be starlet, that provides much of the underlying tension in the book and makes for some of West's best writing. Here he is imagining what it would be like to make love to Faye: "If you threw yourself on her, it would be like throwing yourself from the parapet of a skyscraper. You would do it with a scream. You couldn't expect to rise again. Your teeth would be driven into your skull like nails into a pine board and your back would be broken. You wouldn't even have time to sweat or close your eyes."

The "cheated" of the novel are the Midwestern types like Homer Simpson, who have come to California expecting some sort of transformative experience and have been disappointed by what they have found. They make up the crowd of rioters running wild outside the movie

premiere at the novel's end. Once in California, West says of them, "they discover that sunshine isn't enough.

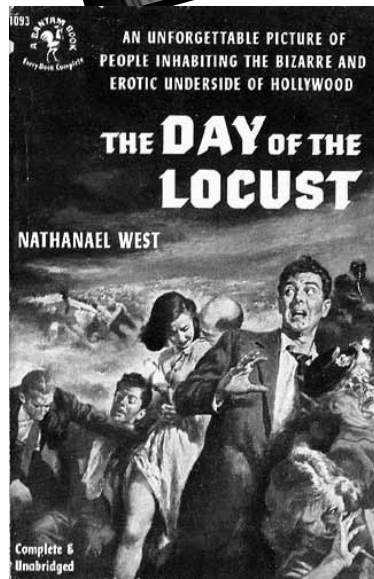
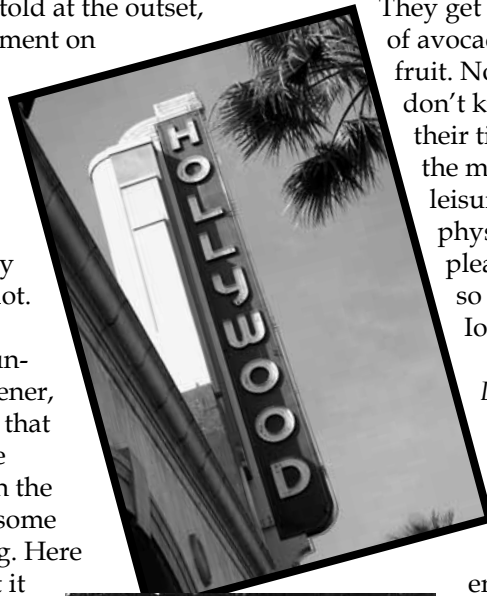
They get tired of oranges, even of avocado pears and passion fruit. Nothing happens. They don't know what to do with their time. They haven't the mental equipment for leisure, the money nor the physical equipment for pleasure. Did they slave so long just to go to an Iowa picnic?"

The Day of the Locust is a short book, and West spends the first half of it setting his *mise-en-scene*.

But the last half crackles with a fine energy in one scene after another. There is a cockfighting episode in Homer's garage that leads to a party-cum-sexual competition that all by itself is worth the price of admission. Even West's contemporary and fellow Hollywood scriptwriter F. Scott Fitzgerald, not noted for over-praising his fellow scribblers, admitted that the novel has "scenes of extraordinary power."

Interestingly, West, unlike his characters in *The Day of the*

Locust, found success in Hollywood and seemed to like it there. While none of his four novels ever made him any money, he became and was, until his death in a car crash at age thirty-eight, a very well paid scenarist (earning as



The Day of the Locust cover, 1953, © C. Binger

much as a thousand dollars a week or more at a time when fifty a week was considered good money elsewhere), with more than a dozen films to his credit.

Sunset Boulevard, Billy Wilder's version of Hollywood-as-snakepit, opened in 1950, ten years after the publication of *The Day of the Locust*. It won three Academy Awards and has become a durable Hollywood classic, inspiring even a stage musical version and making "Norma Desmond" a household name. Wilder directed the movie and with co-authors Charles Brackett and D.M. Marshman Jr. wrote the script. It was originally conceived as a comedy, but, according to his biographer Ed Sikov, "Wilder pushed for the film's bleaker, more sardonic tone."

The Joe Gillis character seems to have evolved slowly. In earlier drafts he was "Dan" Gillis and "Dick" Gillis. Wilder, an ex-newspaperman himself who had gotten into the movie business, found it easy enough to imagine a Joe Gillis trying to do the same. William Holden played the part of Gillis and went on to a solid film career afterwards partly as a result. Wilder and Brackett had originally wanted Montgomery Clift for the role, but he backed out at the last minute. Gloria Swanson, a silent film star herself, was a natural

for the role of Norma Desmond, the aging movie queen who falls in love with Joe, makes him her kept man, and then shoots him in the back—sending him splashing into that pool—when he tries to leave her.

The Hollywood Wilder depicts is not quite the one found in West's book. Because of the nature of his story, it is a Hollywood divided between the

old and the new, the has-beens of the silent era and the young strugglers like Gillis seeking to gain a foothold. Erich von Stroheim, Cecil B. de Mille, Buster Keaton, Anna Q. Nilsson and H.B. Warner all appear in the movie, along with Swanson herself, representing the older set. Gillis dubs them "the waxworks." A pre-*Dragnet* Jack Webb and pretty Nancy Olson, who becomes Gillis's love interest, help represent the younger set. They hang out at Schwab's Drugstore, party a lot, and plot their next moves. Olson, as a script girl, delivers

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a damning verdict on one of Gillis's efforts, a cliché-ridden clunker about a ball-player contriving to throw a World Series. Wilder and his fellow scripters make it clear in this way that Gillis, before his fateful encounter with Norma Desmond, was going nowhere on his own. The day he meets her he is fleeing two men seeking to repossess his car for nonpayment when what seems at the

moment to be a fortuitous flat tire sends him careening up into the driveway of her Sunset Boulevard mansion. She is engaged at the moment in preparing an elaborate funeral for a pet monkey and mistakenly takes him to be the man from the pet mortuary, come to help out.

It's good, funny-macabre stuff and sets the tone for what's to follow. Wilder, like West, knew his way around Hollywood. By the time *Sunset Boulevard* appeared, he had already firmly established himself there by co-writing and directing such films as *Double Indemnity* and *The Lost Weekend*. Still, Hollywood moguldom did not take kindly to Wilder's less-than-gentle mocking of their city and their industry in *Sunset Boulevard*. According to biographer Sikov, MGM's all-powerful Louis B. Mayer took particular exception. "You bastard!" he is said to have shouted at Wilder following a private screening of the film. "You have disgraced the industry that made and fed you! You should be tarred and feathered and run out of Hollywood!"

Wilder's reply to Mayer, according to Sikov, was either "Fuck you" or "Go shit in your hat." Accounts differ.

Wilder was not, needless to say, tarred and feathered and run out of town. He would go on to enjoy a hugely successful career in Hollywood, as both screenwriter and director. The critical and box-office success of such subsequent films as *The Apartment*, *Stalag 17*, *Sabrina*, and *Some Like It Hot* would make him a very wealthy man and something of a Hollywood icon. By the time he was through, the value of his personal art collection alone was put at more than \$32 million.

Play It As It Lays came out in 1970, a dismal year in the history of the republic. It was the year of the Cambodia bombings and the Kent

State shootings. America's opinion of itself was at low ebb. And Joan Didion's little novel seemed to tap right into all that. It's the story of Maria Wyeth, a lost soul from a tiny town in Nevada who has ascended to Hollywood as a young starlet and then descended, into near-



Norma Desmond (1950), © Paramount Pictures.

madness, just as quickly. Nothing goes right in Maria's world; by the time we meet her she's well on her way to self-destruction.

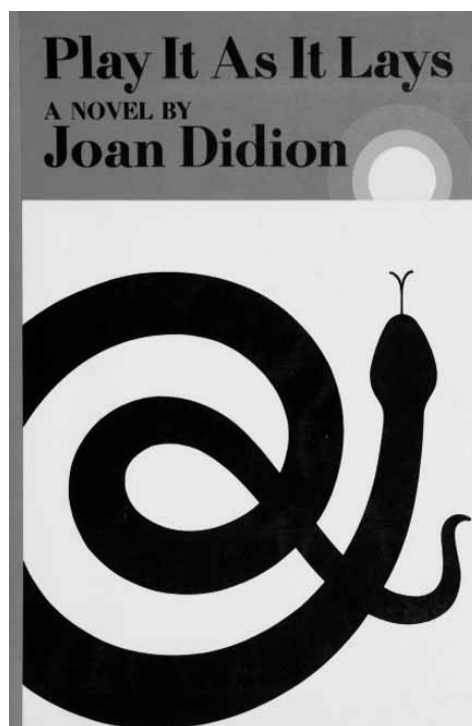
Maria (pronounced Mar-eye-ah, as in "They call the wind...") has a damaged child she dotes on and in the course of the novel undergoes a tawdry, clandestine abortion—they were still "illegal" back then—to rid herself of a second child. She is also in the process of being divorced from her movie-director husband, and what she does with her time, mainly, is drive the Los Angeles freeways endlessly, go to evil Hollywood parties, and berate herself and others for the sorry state of her affairs. Critics loved *Play It As It Lays*. "There hasn't been another American writer of Joan Didion's quality since Nathanael West," wrote John Leonard of *The New York Times*. Gloria Steinem, writing in *The Los Angeles Times*, applauded the novel's "finely observed terror in the ordinary." And Peter Prescott in *Look* magazine called it "[a] consummately skillful novel, one of the year's best." Reading it, he said, "is like driving a Maserati flat out. It is technically superb, with dead-on dialogue and no quaver of false emotion."

Like West, Didion paints an unappealing picture of the physical landscape of Southern California. But whereas West mocked the "nutburger stands" and the muddled architecture, the weirdo churches and funky funeral parlors, Didion concentrates on the heat, the emptiness, and the aridity of the place, and of neighboring Nevada. *Hot. Desert. Dry. Sand. Empty. Nothing.* These are words that recur constantly throughout the novel. And, re-read today, forty years later, they tend to weary a reader. Didion, one begins to suspect, protests too much, goes over the top in her existential despairing.

"I'm sick of everybody's sick arrangements," Maria says at one point.

"It's shit," a character named Helene says at another. "It's all shit."

On the other hand, though, Didion can be very good at sizing up scenes and situations. She has a great ear for cant, all those little lies we tell ourselves. And her depiction of Las Vegas as the soul of late-twentieth century America made visible is depressingly convincing. The city seems to be a state of mind. Of Maria's relationship to it, the author draws this fine distinction: "She did not decide to stay in Vegas: she only failed to leave."



Play It As It Lays novel cover, 1971.

Play It As It Lays is a quick read. And sentence for sentence Didion can be hard to beat. "Yet the question arises" — as essayist Joseph Epstein wrote in a piece on Didion and Renata Adler in *Commentary* back in the 1980s (sar-

castically titled "The Sunshine Girls") — "why would a writer be drawn to the subject of a rather inarticulate young woman having a nervous breakdown in expensive surroundings?"

Why indeed? By the time *Play It As It Lays* came out, Didion, like West and Wilder before her, was already on her

way to becoming a successful and highly remunerated Hollywood screenwriter. In partnership with writer-husband John Gregory Dunne, she had begun in the late sixties working on a script for *The Panic in Needle Park*, a film about heroin users in New York City that was finally released in 1971. She and Dunne would go on to collaborate on a script for *True Confessions*, based on Dunne's novel of the same name, and on the Barbra Streisand-produced remake of *A Star Is Born*, among other films.

Yet her Hollywood novel is nonstop gloom and nothingness. And her main character Maria is almost a parody of failure and bad luck. Maria makes cartoonist Al Capp's "Joe Btfsplk," the little guy with the eternal dark cloud over his head, look like an *American Idol* winner by comparison. So what is it with all these successful Hollywood screenwriters who treat the town like a giant piñata? Who feel the need to spin

tales about Hollywood losers during the course of which they constantly deride the primary source of their own income? Is it guilt over money too easily made? Is there an element of self-loathing involved? *Sure, I make a lot of dough out here, but it really is an awful place. My advice: don't come near it. Or*

So what is it with all these successful Hollywood screenwriters who treat the town like a giant piñata? Who feel the need to spin tales about Hollywood losers during the course of which they constantly deride the primary source of their own income? Is it guilt over money too easily made? Is there an element of self-loathing involved? Sure, I make a lot of dough out here, but it really is an awful place. My advice: don't come near it. Or is it simply a calculated strategy of attacking a fat, slow-moving target because they know there will always be a receptive audience for it?

is it simply a calculated strategy of attacking a fat, slow-moving target because they know there will always be a receptive audience for it? East Coast book publishers, out of envy or whatever, have over the years been notoriously disdainful of Hollywood and the whole West Coast way of life. Perhaps West and Didion, with their East Coast-published novels, were simply exploiting this disdain. (Wilder, on the other hand, seems

to have needed no ulterior motive; a cheeky Viennese immigrant who came to town speaking very little English, he was contrarian by instinct and rarely drew an unironic breath. Attack was his default position.)

But perhaps there is something larger at work. The movies have been an overpowering presence in the lives of all of us, whether we've wished them to be or not, and as such they have had an overpowering impact on us. We

tend to think in terms of movies, act in terms of movies. Humphrey Bogart taught us how to smoke. John Wayne taught us how to walk. Clara Bow, Jean Harlow, Grace Kelly, Marilyn Monroe, Faye Dunaway: each in turn became our feminine ideal. Our lives often seem to consist of a series of close-ups, two-shots, crowd scenes, pans. As the late novelist Richard Yates used to say, "The trouble with real life is there are no fadeouts." Maria is at a party in *Play It As It Lays*. At one point she simply says, "Crowd shot; the principles emerge." And we know what she's talking about! We know what she means! At another point, Didion says of Maria, "It came to her that in the scenario of her life this would be what was called an obligatory scene, and she wondered with distant interest just how long the scene would play." To a degree we're all like that, our lives an up-and-down series of best- and worse-case scenarios.

Is it possible, therefore, that tales like the three under discussion here simply bubble up from the id of our society, as a way of getting back at this overwhelming influence in our lives, this movieness that is so pervasive, so inescapable for us all? In *The Day*

of the Locust West makes it clear that the crowd outside the premiere hates the movie stars it has come there to goggle at every bit as much as it loves them. And that push-pull is part of the dynamic that triggers the riot. Closer to home, it's hard not to notice that a staple of those tabloids being snapped up each week at the neighborhood supermarket is the unflattering photographs of Hollywood celebrities adorning their covers: shots of celebrities gone fat (their cellulite-ridden thighs all cottage cheesy in their tiny bikinis), celebrities gone mad (their eyes all aglaze with drugs and dementia), celebrities in the throes of painful divorce and other domestic upheavals. Are West, Wilder, and Didion in their slamming of Hollywood simply acting out for us our own subconscious rage?

Or is it something even simpler than that? Something having to do with the *genus* "writer"? Wasn't it Didion herself who told us that she and her kind were not to be trusted? In the preface to *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, her book just preceding *Play It As It Lays*, she had rather grandly admitted as much. "Writers," she wrote back then, "are always selling somebody out."



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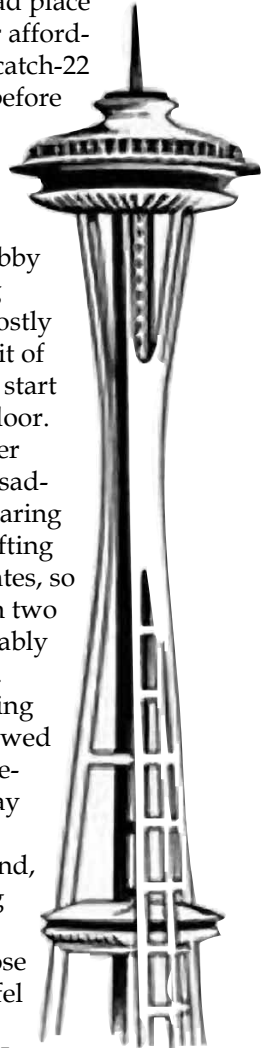
Francis Davis

Soft City Seattle

I moved to Seattle with Jill, my girlfriend, a jokey blonde with a wide Carly-Simon mouth, a girl I was sure I could love. I worked as a temp for the SHA, the Seattle Housing Authority, filing forms in triplet, sneaking into the bathroom for a post-lunch jerk every now and then. It wasn't a bad place to work, just sad, filled with lines of low-income folks looking for affordable housing, trying to figure a way around the surreally-stupid catch-22 placement criteria of having the same address for at least a year before you were placed in a new home. Hardly anyone seeking assistance had lived in the same place for a year. That was the point. That was why they were there. That was why they had risen early, skipped work, taken two buses, a plastic number, Styro-foam cups of coffee and waited for three hours in the cramped lobby with its fluorescent lighting and mean little rows of metal folding chairs. At least once a day, one of the home seekers, who were mostly poor and black, cracked once they got word of the bureaucratic bit of nonsense sitting between them and a decent place to live. They'd start hooting and hollering, what-the-fucking their way out the front door. I loved that point in the day. It felt like a coffee break, the screamer upsetting every ounce of dumb office decorum, screaming at the sad-sack placement clerks, who were mostly old, saddle-and-sock wearing hippies looking for an easy-going gig. This wasn't it. My own drifting ways had moved me twenty times in ten years, three different states, so I was always touched by the home seekers' anger. Me, a guy with two degrees, filing forms that left my thumbs chalky with black, probably cancer-causing, carbon dust. This was 1996. My heart was on fire.

One day, my friend Sean showed up on a Saturday wearing his smile. We were headed out for some Taco Bell but first he showed me the gun. Since I'd last seen him, about six months ago, right before I left Montana, Sean had grown out his hair long, and that day in Seattle he was wearing it in a ponytail, which he kept fiddling with, putting his arms behind his head to fool with the rubber band, debanding his tail before banding it up again and again. The long hair, but more the behind-the-head gesture when he was fooling with his hair, gave him a vague Christ-like look. It was one of those rubbery moments when he took the gun, a little .22, from his duffel bag and gave it to me like a whisper to a stranger.

Sean was in town for only a few hours, between flights. He was heading to California, probably. Sean was from Alabama, though he grew up in Houston, so he didn't have much of a drawl. He had shiny, intelligent eyes, and a



friendly band of freckles that stretched across his forehead and leaked down onto his cheeks like tears. Taking the gun, I cupped my hands, stupidly, like I was twelve and catching water for a drink from the spigot in my driveway after a hot night of release tag with my friends. We'd always stay out late, long after the street lamps came on and the fireflies emerged. We'd bat the bugs out of the air with whiffle ball bats, their tiny insect bodies making a satisfying popping sound when the bats made contact.

That day with Sean was the second time I'd touched a gun. The first was with my crazy friend Barry in the Bitterroot when we lined our Coors empties on a flat rock atop a mountain. Barry took a .44 magnum from his glove department, and we paced our paces before shooting. That gun had a barrel twice as long as my dick, scaring me as I squeezed the trigger, each booming shot jolting up my arms into my shoulders, but not as hard as I expected, before echoing back at us from the valley below. Boom-boom. Boom-boom. In the distance, beneath that, we heard dogs howling.

"It's not loaded," Sean said, snatching the gun out of my cupped hands, a little disgusted. "And the safety is on anyway."

"That's cool," I said, hoping Jill, who was at yoga, didn't pop back in before we stepped out for lunch.

Jill had discovered yoga in Seattle, and six times a week walked down the block to the studio where the windows were painted white. Last week, she'd run in flush-faced, excited, showing me a new move, posture, position, whatever you call those contortions, the breathing. It spooked me the way she squatted on the floor, put her palms flat between her thighs and leaned forward, rising up and balancing all her precious weight on her tender white palms. Her body was learning a new language in those days, and I'd hear it and almost gulp, knowing there was a good chance I might not be able to keep up — or want to. They all had names, these poses, and the one she did that day made her look like a crane and she called it *The Crane*.

For some reason Sean and I didn't realize our friendship was basically over. Before I'd moved away from Missoula to Seattle, we'd gotten drunk at a bar in Lolo and rode home in the back of someone's pickup, the cold air biting at our ears and fingertips as we lay flat in the pickup, staring up at the western sky until it felt like we weren't moving at all. The bad cold and good sky a pair of dice, pain and beauty shaken together in a cup. By the time I got home in the pickup my fingers were numb and I challenged Sean to a fight. When we unloaded ourselves from the truck we jitter-boxed down an alley, half-fooling and totally serious, where dumpsters loaded with rotten fruit gave off a gassy, medicinal odor, like ether. We started calling each other names until I shoved my chin close to his and dared him to punch me in the face, which he did three times, blackening one eye. I told stories about my black eye all weekend. People bought me drinks, calling Sean a son-of-a-bitch.

One thing I can't entirely remember is why Sean had a gun that day in Seattle, but it had something to do with his girlfriend's niece, whose mother's live-in boyfriend was molesting. Sean said if asked, he would shoot this man, and I remember shaking my head and saying, "yes," though I'm not entirely sure I did.

"Where's Jill?" he asked as he put the gun away and we gathered our things to go to Taco Bell.

"She's at yoga."

"Oh yeah, I didn't know she was into that."

"She's into it since we moved here."

He nodded sagely, didn't make a joke about new sexual positions or the such, but his forehead did turn redder as if he had. Sean was always a little vague when it came to Jill and it would be years before I understood. Apparently, he made a pass at Jill, maybe more, when we all first met at graduate school in Montana. Jill told me this a few years after we left Seattle, while in New Orleans, during the weekend-wedding of another of our grad-school friends, Bob Saggs from Kansas, as we sat on the porch of our B&B in the Garden District on a street shaded by magnolias, making me promise, before she told me, that I wouldn't get mad. I got mad. New Orleans was when I finally quit drinking. I came home from that wedding, my insides bruised, and instead of watching Bush beat Gore with a sixer and some wine, I stayed up long into the night, until the very bitter end, which turned out only to be a beginning, when Gore's limousine turned around midway to his concession speech. If I had been drinking I would have been asleep for hours by then, but instead, there I was, watching it live, listening to Wolf Blitzer. This seemed momentous at the time, that I was sober, late at night, watching TV, and witnessing something important happening, something I might even tell my children about. I couldn't believe Sean would do that. The pass, I mean. But it's the truth. It's what happened.

On the porch in New Orleans, as we sipped drinks from our sweaty pitcher of gin and tonics, Jill began to tell me by asking a question, "Remember that time I left the party, my party, the Christmas party at my house? The time when Dave got really drunk during Truth or Dare?"

I remembered. Jill had disappeared in the middle of the festivities, just about the time Dave, some trust-fund asshole from New York, was removing his pants on a dare. It was cold outside. I sat in the kitchen as Mr. Trust Fund (who would later go on to publish notable fiction in *The New Yorker*) removed his boxers to the hoots of the growing crowd in the living room. During the commotion, Sean, the ever-valiant knight, the misplaced Southern Gentleman, slipped down the back stairs to look for Jill who he found dreaming under a pine tree. Later that night, after we made love, I picked the pine needles from her hair and asked her why she had drifted away from the party like that. I don't remember her answer, but apparently Sean had kissed her when

he had found her. I imagined them rolling out from under the tree to sit with their shoulders touching, watching the yellow, bee-stung stars bunched densely across the heavens. The sky in Montana was always, at least, part of the story, like the first night I met Sean. We were driving back from a professor's party at a ranch in Stevensville, where during the ride there, I'd seen not only my first real live buffalo, a creature I thought extinct, but a llama too. Halfway home Sean had pulled over at a Conoco station, springing out of his truck to scramble up the side of a hill as I followed, brambles ripping at our hands as we spread the prickly branches and moved to the top where the sky was so beautiful we grew bored looking at it after only a few seconds. Something so perfect could teach us nothing, we knew. We compared the cuts on our hands and forearms, instead.

"Did you kiss him back," I said, that sweltering afternoon in New Orleans, feeling excited, crazy and dead all at once. Dully, I knew how important this was. I tried to pay attention to my life, but we were almost out of gin.

"No I didn't kiss him back. I stopped him."

"How did you stop him?"

"I just stopped him. I told him I was into you."

"But we weren't even a couple yet. I mean, not really."

"I liked you right away, you know that."

"But you wouldn't tell me right away. Or now. I mean if you hooked up with him. You wouldn't tell me."

"I'm telling you now. I didn't hook up with him. He kissed me once and then I told him to stop."

The funny thing is at the end Jill and I get kids. We're still together, but if you had told me that then, that day, sitting stiffly on my plastic green couch with Sean showing me his gun, I would have chuckled and then looked steady-dead into your eyes and said a little too seriously, "No, man, you miss my point. That's not what I'm trying to say here," like when I told my sister I was marrying Jill, and she said, "Really, I always thought you guys were more like buddies."

A couple of seven-layer burritos later, Sean and I went down the hall to Mr. Amens' place, a small, Chinese-looking older dude whom I liked to visit. He was always alone, except for his dog, Midnight, and he was always home, always wearing the baggy black wool pants, the blue oxford, usually shoeless. Bald, he had a little soul patch. All day long, I guessed, he shuffled around alone his apartment, which had the exact, L-shaped layout as our place, except his was filled with stacks of newspapers, magazines, and shoe boxes which lined the walls of his place and spilled from the closets. Amens was almost crazy, it seemed, but he was also something of a saint, in my eyes, though my Catholic days were long gone. Amens told me how he once put an ad in the paper, pretending to be blind, requesting a reader, and keeping at it a few times before calling the whole thing off.

"To be honest, I felt like a pervert," he explained, "sitting there listening to this girl pretending not to see her, sneaking peeks as she read."

I had so many questions; I didn't know where to begin.

"Was she pretty?" I asked. "Did she ever do anything weird when she read to you?"

"Weird? Like what, pick her nose?"

"Weirder."

"Weirder. Listen to you. You got one of those bad imaginations. Isn't it enough to say I felt dirty doing what I did so I stopped?"

"No, that's definitely not enough," I said, taking a pull off my beer. I usually brought a six pack when I visited Amens. "You're the one that put the ad in. Why did you say you were blind? Why tell me the story if you're not going to tell the story?"

"I'm telling you. I don't know. It was something to do. It was an experiment."

"Did you pull it off? Did she ever suspect you could see?"

He became uncomfortable talking about it, so he showed me instead, acting blind like that. He sat stiffly in his red chair with his hands on his knees, occasionally scratching his palm with the fingers of his other hand. I rose up and paced in front of him as we talked, doing little tricks like pretending to drop my beer or shaking my head back-and-forth, but he kept it up pretty well, never blinking out of place or moving his eyes in my direction even when I crouched down close enough to his face to see the specks of green in his irises and smell the onions on his breath. He just stared ahead like I wasn't even there.

Later I found out Amens couldn't read at all and that was why he had pretended to be blind. Like a lot of us, he was too embarrassed to tell the truth. All he wanted was someone to read to him, stories, or made-up things as he called them. I was amazed when he told me this, not believing it. We were stoned, looser than usually, and he put on some screeching, low-country delta blues and I asked how he could do his art without reading. Yes, Amens was an artist. Practically everyone I knew in those days was an artist of some kind, except maybe my sister. Amens' art was the found kind — he collected things with a capital T, mostly random scraps of papers: matchbooks, ticket stubs, receipts, old menus, a list of words from an eighth-grade spelling test. "Consciousness" one of the words, I remember. He put it all together like a puzzle, cutting up the paper, and lining the pieces on cork board so they told a funny little story that was always nonsensical with some truth sprinkled on, like kids' glitter, which he sometimes used. When I asked how he did this without reading, he paused and said he'd tell me if I'd promise not to bring anymore of the "wacky weed," as he called it. He never liked smoking pot, but couldn't resist when I brought it. I said sure, and then he said it was all about the shapes, putting them together.

"The shapes of the letters?" I asked.

"And the words too, putting the short ones next to the long

ones," he said, pointing to the "around" sign, an a with the circle around it, saying that was his favorite letter, and I didn't have the heart to tell him the truth.

"So it's like hieroglyphics," I asked.

"Hiero-what? What's that mean, college boy?"

That was the thing about Amens, he didn't know a lot of what I knew, but the way he processed the world always hit me like Sean did that night in the alley, a mini-revelation. Sometimes I think the truth has to have an ache to it, or you're just fooling yourself. I don't know. Back then, many people, even myself, seemed privy to secrets — like how that night I picked the needles from Jill's hair I knew she had done something with Sean. Knew not in any literal way, but down deep in what we call the bones. It wasn't the fact that Sean went looking for Jill but that he had found her under that tree. That night, after everyone left, the drunken remnants of the party scattered across her apartment — the trust fund guy had left his black Calvin Kleins on the orange rug and Jill's bedside table was filled with empty beer bottles, and plastic cups filled with brown beer and dead butts. Some other asshole had even put his cigarette out on the cover of Jill's *Sister Carrie*. In bed, I called her "my treasure," and she laughed.

What I'm trying to say is, Amens' cork boards had their own slippery logic, but I never really believed he couldn't read, even after I met his widow and she confirmed it.

That day, at Amens, Sean asked me to move to California with him. He was thinking of somewhere up in the northern part of the state, but I said I couldn't and he asked, "Why?"

"Jill," I said.

He nodded like he understood, like that made sense.

When I learned Amens couldn't read I thought that might make a great story but it also sounded too much like a story I'd already read, so I forgot about it and settled into my chair as Amens rambled on. Sometimes he would talk for ten or fifteen minutes and I wouldn't say a word. I always felt better quiet. It was then, that last time we got stoned together, that Amens told me his name was Stewart, just like mine.

"You're shitting me. You said your name was Sandy."

I always just called him Amens.

"That's a nickname," he said.

"There's no way I'm believing that."

"What's the difference?" he said. "Why would I lie?"

"Are you lying? Why would you bring it up and then say you were lying?"

"I didn't say I was lying. It's the truth. My name is Stuart Amens. I was born in Port Townsend, 55 years ago. I'm just saying."

"You're saying what?"

"The truth, the facts."

"You're stoned. Why would you never tell me that before now?"

"Why would I?"

"Because it's my name, dude."

"I'm not lying."

And then he got up and did something. He went to his back room, a room I had never been in, and I heard him rummaging through boxes. A few minutes later, he reappeared with his birth certificate. There it was: Stuart James Amens. His was spelled differently, with the "u" not the "ew," but it was the same name.

"No shit. That's so cool. What's your mother's maiden name?" I asked.

"Gill."

I told him his porn name and he just looked through me.

"What is this silly stuff you talk," he said.

"It's a joke," I've said. "You've never heard that joke? Your mother's maiden name is your porn name."

Jill said Amens' posture was terrible. She was into her man Mir, her yoga instructor, telling me how he rode his students hard. I imagined him standing in front of the class with a glass of water balanced on his open palm, instructing his disciples on various positions. He taught the power yoga, the ashtanga. Jill said each class ended with the corpse pose and Mir would walk around the room placing a felt bag filled with lavender on the forehead of each student, stopping long enough to gently rub their temples and murmur a few words of enlightenment. One day, Mir saw me walking down the street and told Jill I moved like a camel.

"Is that a good or bad thing?" I asked Jill over wine and cheese gnocchi one evening. Our apartment was small, but it held a view of the Sound. Indigo spliced between gray office towers. You could see the ferries chugging toward Bainbridge and Whidbey; some went as far as Vancouver and into Alaska, places like Ketchikan. I liked how the water turned colors with the light; the sparkle and the shine of the high sun on the water reminded me of Montana skies.

"It's an observation," she explained. "Mir says it's important to observe without evaluating."

Not then, but later, after she told me, in New Orleans, about Sean's pass at her under the pine tree, I began to reexamine her associations with different men and realized she had probably slept with Mir, or wanted to, but why get into all that now?

The thing that fascinated me about Amens was how he had quit drinking for seven years only to begin shortly after I appeared on the scene. He said seven years was long enough for his body to heal itself, cells regenerate and such, though he didn't use that type of language. Mixed in among the piles of junk lining his apartment walls were military paraphernalia — badges, pins, a shirt, a rusty mess kit. I

asked about that, why did he think people threw away or lost so much military stuff. He ignored the questions, saying the military was good for some. Amens was an optimist.

"It gets a bad rap but it shapes people up. It's a good thing because most people can't deal with freedom."

"That sounds wrong," I said. "I think I could do almost anything right now. I could get one of those ferries. I have absolutely no problem with it."

He shifted in his chair. "Wait. You're young. That feeling goes away. After a while you'll only want the basics."

"What's the basics?"

"Different things for different folks."

I told him how Sean had showed up with a gun in his duffel bag and he told me something that sounded like the fact that people carry around the seeds of their own destruction.

"A man's character is his fate," I chuckled.

"What's that? Is that what they taught you in school?" he asked.

"Yeah," I admitted.

The thing is, Amens died. Not then but later, after I moved back to Montana, to a place called Whitefish, with Jill to take a job as a high school sportswriter. Jill had spotted the advertisement at the library where she read the out-of-town papers. After studying with Mir for a year, what she wanted to do was move back to Whitefish and open her own studio, which she did, and which she still runs today. The place has blond-oak floors and a sauna in the back, next to the windowless room where they practice the hot yoga. She's thinking about starting a soup and salad service, maybe some sandwiches. On the lobby wall is a mural of two women posing in the shape of a mountain.

Now Jill's the one at the end of each session who goes around to her students and places the felt bags on their foreheads. I interview high school football coaches. Wrestlers. Boys who diet religiously and grope in unitards, and tell me afterwards, "You have to want it." Cross country runners are some of the smartest people I know. They talk about endurance, pacing yourself, how you can imagine an entire race, step-by-step, in your mind the night before the race. It's over before the gun goes off, the run like an afterthought. A lot of their language makes sense to me, not like the football coaches and all their war words, but I like the basketball guys too, especially the ones who advertise a running game over defense, how they preach speed and precision. I realize most of what these coaches say will stick with their athletes more than anything a teacher might tell them.

When Jill and I left Seattle, I left behind the ugly green plastic couch I purchased from a catalog, the one Sean and I sat on that day and which still is the single most uncomfortable piece of furniture

I've ever owned, and that's saying something. I had lugged it all the way from Montana to Seattle, but I left it in the basement lobby of our apartment complex when I returned to Montana to become a sports-writer.

Just last year, we visited Seattle, Jill and I. We visited the old place and I wanted to see if the couch was still there. It wasn't, and I went upstairs to Amens' place, admitting only then that was why I had come here, not only to the apartment complex, but to Seattle in the first place. I wanted to see my old friend. I went up to the sixth floor, 649. We lived at the other end, 609, the two apartments separated by a stretch of open-air stretch patio. I was thrilled and sick as I knocked on the door, the damp Seattle air like all those times I visited my friend, sixer in hand. I don't think I've changed much. I don't think most people do — not because they can't, but because they don't want to.

When I knocked on Amens' door, an old woman in a head scarf and glasses answered. I asked about Amens and she shook her head, saying she had lived here twenty years and there was no Amens. And here's the thing, here's the reason I've taped together all these ridiculous memories — there was one glorious moment when I believed her, that she had lived there, not Amens, for the last twenty years, and that I had only dreamt about my visits to Amens, dreamt, perhaps my whole time in that soft city, where, you know, of course, it rains all the time and where I went days without ever feeling dry, when for one reason or another I wore the same slightly soggy undergarments for several days and caught a bad cold.

My mind raced that day. Maybe I was on the wrong floor — but there was no way I could make that mistake. Jill and I used to joke about 609. No, it was maybe a good five seconds of limbo, as I rocked there on my heels listening to this old woman groan on, that I glimpsed into the empty inside of a life, not mine or Jill's, but a third one, one who has walked with us this entire time. I wonder if it's still there now, this third one, happily going about its business. It's a feeling I can still call up, if I concentrate, if I close my eyes and pretend. It's the feeling of waking up in a strange bed and for a few sneaky seconds forgetting your life. You feel in touch with something larger than yourself, what some people call God or irony. Yes, of course, I had imagined the entire thing. There was no Amens, but then I heard what the woman was saying to me. I understood her. She was explaining how Amens had died. She was his widow, the sad one, and she had lived there the entire time. Was I an old friend of his, she asked? He had a lot of friends. He died a couple years back, he fell down the stairs and hit his head. It was awful. He needed an operation to stop the swelling in his brain, but she didn't do it. He wouldn't have wanted to live like that, she said. I told her I was sorry about the misunderstanding. The woman invited me inside, offering mint tea and ginger snaps. We had an okay talk, but he was all cleaned out of there, Amens was, and though I thought I recognized some of the furniture, it was too unsettling so I didn't linger. At

the doorway, before I left, I asked her what Amens' mother's maiden name was.

"That's such a curious question," she said, "Why would anyone ask that?"

I shrugged. "I'm a curious guy."

She smiled and shook her head and said, "That's not good enough."

"Okay, I'm curious and maybe I've come with a sack of money and say, 'Here, take this. I knew him. He meant something to me. He was a friend of mine.'"

She laughed, showing strong, white teeth, "You poor boy. I can't believe he never told you about me, but I think I can understand that. He had his own ways. I'm sure he liked you."

I smiled back at her.

"Gill," she said, answering my question before closing the door.

When I came back to our hotel room, Jill waited in the Warrior pose, the furniture rearranged, the TV muted. Between breaths, she asked where I'd been. I didn't tell her, couldn't. We don't talk like that anymore. Instead, I just said I went to Taco Bell, had a seven-layer burrito. She grimaced, breathed deeply through her nostrils, held it for a moment, and then released it slowly, softly through her mouth, before telling me, "Someday, that stuff is going to kill you."



Francis Davis was born in Philadelphia, but has lived much of the past twenty years in the West, including Montana, Washington, Idaho, and California. Currently, he lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, with his wife and three children. Most recently his fiction has appeared in *Natural Bridge*, *The Gihon River Review*, and *Notes Magazine*.

James Green

Autumnal Rain /Gore-Tex™ Parka



The ocean, sky, the river all are gray, but
 The estuary air, blowing northerly, feels blue.
 My coat is blue, like cold November rain, or
 Elmore James sliding down The Sky is Crying:
 Cold beads of rain are sliding down my parka.
 Rain, storming from the north (Alaska's Bay),
 Blew on gales in sheets for a time, reducing
 In the during days to a fine, precision rinse.

Enduring dry measures of indigene summer
 Elwha had paled, pursing her lips, and slept;
 November came, rain commenced finally to fall;
 The river rose, infused, and continued to rise,
 Color and yawn; so salmon come, savoring
 The taste of earthy freshet, smelling Elwha's
 Gravel, and swell on slowly rolling tides —
 Big, chrome ocean cohos, strong and driven.
 They swarm in schools and churn the tidal basin.
 Elwha, so low and running clear mere days ago,
 Flows gray-but-turning-green from easing rain.

White floats submerge as fish connect with mesh.
 I'm watching a Klallam fisherman tend nets,
 Bonking on the floorboards of his riverboat
 To force the fish into the net before he hauls.
 The fisherfolk, antedating dates, have evolved
 Through long, anadromous symbiosis
 With riverrun salmon, and they understand
 Innate, riverain (a variant spelling form
 of riverine/riparian) ecology,
 For fish appear, porpoising here, by design.
 Their urge is purposive, their tribe piscine.

Living in Ish River Country

*Duwamish, Snohomish, Stillaguamish, Samish, Skokomish,
and Skykomish... all the ish rivers.*

—Robert Sund

Dark ridges, tall timbers are steaming — and the river,
streaming, is speaking her native tongue,
coursing her vowels and voicing her consonants;
and laden with a freight of vapor, a violet sky
is drawn into the sea, and surely, beyond breakers
great, restive salmon have gathered and wait,
patiently, for rain, but soon the Elwha will rise
to confluence with swelling waves: floodtide.

They return, over and over, to stage
this ancient enactment, like birds they re-turn
to continue the cycle: renewal of rivers, all
the Ish rivers, movements of repose... Skokomish
is one of those where humans have homed,
but all the Ish rivers don't end in -ish, it seems.
There is this native name: Duckabush, and also
the Sol Duc and Hoh; the Quinault, Quilcene,
the Quileute and Queets are Quish rivers too.

This is a land of tall conifers (like Sitka spruce).
This is a land of rain and quick rivers.
This is a land of gray and violet light,
of sunlight filtered through ocean fog,
diffused, Asian. Of a frog Robert Sund wrote
that when he faced his friend, the frog, and spoke,
it didn't matter that one was frog and one was man,
it only mattered that they loved the rain. Ish River,
like Cold Mountain, is also a place in the mind.
The wind blows the rain and the frogs ode and we
are sustained, for a moment. In Ish, we love the rain, O.



James Green was born in New Orleans, raised in Texas, and attended state universities in three states without obtaining a degree. He works as a painting contractor in Clallam County, WA, and lives near the Elwha River with his wife, Cynthia, and cats. Their daughter, Kendra often brings a fine film over on Tuesday nights.

Mercedes Lawry

Cajoling

Ah, small green beaks erupting
from the frozen mud, dauntless
echoes of a wreath of roots,
a lingering growth
in each extended hour.

Come soon, season of resurrection.

No need for trumpet or blare.
A prayer-hush is sufficient, a shift
in shadow, thickening of air.

Come, spring, and let me push my fingers
into the ground, loosening clumps
and the lattice of last year's plants,
the winter weeds, the heave of stones.

Come, light, in glad amplitude
and open the banks of our souls to leaf and bud.



As far as you can see

Island of black wings.
 Stink and sour wound.
 Rush of foul earth-guts empties into sea,
 stain of blood money reaching
 for grass and gull, turtle, shrimp,
 pelican, all creatures now gluttoned.

Phrases attach in a mire of rescue
 that is fractured, halting, stalled
 by petty greed and muddle.
 The massacre proceeds amid weeping.
 God is in none of these details.

Options in Diverse Territory

The respectable insects remain outdoors
 cherishing the plethora of flora.

The imbecilic insects steal inside
 risking death by poison or resounding smack.

Neither population takes note of sirens
 or incessant alarms. Only birdsong and pipe gurgle.

Creatures claim space on the porch and windowsill.
 Tenuous dreaming.

The characters of earth move about
 ungainly or sleek, lumbering or clipped.

Purpose in mandible or wing, hunger or song.
 The fictions we swear by.
 The science we imagine.

The Act of Locating

Pulled from the sky,
a wing, gray-green,
on its way west.

Now the wind gains force
and volume, shuddering trees
and loose things.

Birds in effusive flight
scroll clouds, cross-motions,
bluster and grace.

The wild is not beyond
but here, stripped
to muscle and bone, colliding.

Early Days

Roots in a fret,
branch angled like an elbow,
a rash of brush hides
the careful and the dead.
Bleak browns christen
this made up time, a new
year or the soft exhalation
as light creeps back.



Mercedes Lawry has been living in Seattle for over thirty years. She has published poetry in such journals as *Poetry*, *Rhino*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry East*, *Seattle Review*, and others. Her chapbook, *There Are Crows in My Blood*, was published by Pudding House Press in 2007. Her new chapbook, *Happy Darkness*, was published by Finishing Line Press. She has also published some fiction as well as stories and poems for children. Among the honors she has received are awards from the Seattle Arts Commission, Hugo House, and Artist Trust. She has also been a Jack Straw Writer and held a residency at Hedgebrook.

Sandy Yang

Take Me Away

After they married, Ken dropped out of college and told Tao that he had to sell vacuum cleaners on the road to support his new family. He said he had no choice but to leave her in a cramped apartment with their infant daughter for weeks at a time. When Tao had left Hong Kong with her family's blessing of marrying an American Chinese, she thought she would begin her adult life in cheerful,

open spaces. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, she saw cars move fluidly down the streets, trapped for only a few seconds at a stoplight before speeding off again. She could walk into a store without brushing against the shoulders and smells of strangers. But this world was not for her to enjoy, not without speaking English, not without a husband to help raise a baby, not without looking forward to the next day. She was twenty-one.

Sometimes, Tao didn't pick up her daughter when she cried, until a neighbor started banging on an adjacent wall. Eventually, Marilyn cried less, and as soon as she could walk, she would wobble over to her bottle sitting on a table and suck at the lukewarm milk.

On her first day of school, while other kids clung to their parents, almost tearing down skirts and pants with clenched fists, Marilyn disappeared inside the classroom without a word or glance. Standing alone in the playground, Tao felt like a voyeur watching other mothers tuck in a shirt or tie a pair of loose shoelaces, their knees planted on the gravelly blacktop. Maybe Tao simply did not possess the proper depth of feeling. She swallowed hard and walked home, among the mothers whose eyes were damp from kissing and hugging their kids goodbye.

That morning, Tao called her husband.

"Get another job, come home and take care of your family," Tao said when he picked up. "I don't want to live like a widow."



Ben Seto

"I can't," he said in English to his wife's Cantonese in a tone so cool and measured that Tao had once believed it was the foreign words that made him sound like this.

"I was let go. . . That means I have to find a new job."

"You're lying."

"I have some leads, but they're on the East Coast. I can't come home right now."

Tao usually shied away from speaking English, embarrassed by the slowness in which she could express a thought. But after twelve years of English classes in Hong Kong and from watching American television, she understood most of it. Now, Tao imagined her husband in some dark bedroom with another woman. She thought of the word "divorce," which on television meant that husbands and wives flung terrible accusations at each other until a judge banged down the gavel, demanding order in the court.

"I want a divorce," Tao said on the phone, saying the word "divorce" in English.

"You're just upset," Ken said.

Tao didn't expect to say "divorce" that first time, but only then did she begin to wonder if she really could leave Ken. With Marilyn in kindergarten, Tao began to look for part-time work. But again and again, Tao was told that the position was filled before she could conjugate the verbs in her question. Those who patiently listened said they needed a fluent speaker, including the Chinese businesses. Tao even thought of moving back to Hong Kong and bringing Marilyn with her. But in the end, she couldn't imagine it. Her parents must have told everyone that she had married an American and was raising a family in California. It was not something to be particularly boastful about, but at least it was something, after Tao had gotten pregnant at nineteen. But even before then, she had denied her parents years of bragging rights, since there were no grades, no talents, no accomplishments to speak of.

When Marilyn came home after school, she hid in the solitude of her books or watched TV with the volume turned down. If her little girl acted like she didn't need her mother, Tao would treat her that way. When Marilyn asked for a dollar for a class trip, Tao told her, "Sometimes, you don't get everything you ask for. It's better you learn this now so you can work hard for the things you want."

Marilyn didn't cry and scream like kids who pitched fits in store aisles. This time, Tao was grateful when Marilyn walked away. But later that night, when Tao tucked her daughter in to bed, she told her, "Daddy lost his job, that's why we need the money for food and rent."

That week, from the moment Marilyn arrived home, she immediately ran to her room and closed the door. Tao wondered what her daughter was hiding. What could a five-year-old possibly hide?

On the third day that Marilyn disappeared into her room, Tao twisted the doorknob and entered her daughter's space, stopping just a

foot behind Marilyn. From where she stood, Tao saw Marilyn hunched over the desk like she was huddling for warmth. Her right arm moved in a slow, circular motion, appearing and disappearing behind her determined little body. Tao tiptoed in for a closer look until she saw the chunky pair of safety scissors in her daughter's right hand chomping at the piece of red construction paper in her other hand. About a dozen mini hearts with ragged edges littered her desk, along with tiny plastic vials of glitter and glue.

At the corner of the desk, Tao could see Marilyn's neat printing – Happy Birthday Mom – written with a purple marker on a big circle of yellow construction paper. Tao wanted to hold her little girl. She imagined that one day she and Marilyn would open up a box of good memories, which all began with this card. Tao closed the door and left Marilyn alone.

Ken came home a week later, and Marilyn ran out of her room and into her father's arms. He picked her up and gave her a noisy kiss on the forehead. Normally, Tao would have felt stung that her daughter was indeed capable of affection, but this time, Tao had witnessed the pink grooves marked into Marilyn's fingers like bruises from where she had held the scissors.

"I have a surprise," Marilyn said to her father. "Wait here."

She ran back to her room, and Tao wondered if she was going to give her the card, an early present. She even wondered if Ken was in on the surprise all this time because who else would tell Marilyn about her mother's birthday? The idea brought Tao nearly to tears, but she kept her feelings from surfacing too soon. She didn't want to ruin the moment.

When Marilyn returned, she held out a dollar bill that looked almost too delicate to handle.

"What's this?" Ken asked, taking the money from her hand.

"It's for you because you lost your job," she said. "I made something for a friend for his Mama, and he gave me one dollar."

"You made that card for someone else?" Tao asked, but no one seemed to hear her.

"Thank you very much, Miss Marilyn, you are such a big girl to be making money," Ken enthused in his singsong voice. "What did you make?"

"She made a birthday card," Tao said a little louder. "I thought she made it for me, but I was wrong."

Ken looked at his wife and then at his daughter. He knelt down and talked to Marilyn at eye level. "Tell Daddy how you made this money."

"Teddy Kim wanted me to make a card for his Mama's birthday," she said, hesitantly now, as if she were testifying. "And he gave me a dollar for making it."

"It's for Teddy Kim's Mama?" Tao said. "Didn't you ever think that your own Mama has a birthday?"

Ken pulled Marilyn's little body to his chest, as if protecting her from Tao.

"That was very thoughtful and generous," he said and kissed his daughter on the cheek.

After Ken put Marilyn to bed that night, he climbed into bed next to her, but kept his distance as he reached for the metal cord of the lamp.

To Tao's relief, he still responded to her touch, and with the other hand, she lifted the skirt of her negligee under the covers. If her husband had truly been alone all those nights that he was away, he would not deny himself. He rolled over on top of her, interlaced his fingers with hers, pinned her hands above her head, and made love.

When Marilyn told her mother to "speak English," Tao signed up for adult classes at the local high school. When a car almost hit Marilyn because she tried to outpace her mother on their way to school, Tao learned to drive. But Marilyn never seemed to notice. Instead, she wanted to sleep over at a friend's house over the weekend; she wanted to spend the summer on the road with her father; she wanted to attend a middle school thirty miles away by bus.

When Ken showed up, he walked through the door, as if he had never left for four, six, eight weeks at a time. That wouldn't have been so bad, except that he could never say no to Marilyn, who would save up all her requests, all the forms and permission slips and wait until the very last minute for Ken to show up before she'd be forced to ask her mother. They would sneak out behind Tao's back, giggle at inside jokes when the day before, Marilyn would say she'd rather die than have her mother chaperone a birthday party or a school dance.

"Why did you take her?" Tao had yelled at Ken when Marilyn was twelve, after she had told her daughter specifically that she couldn't go to a boy-girl party.

"She's old enough," Ken had said. "Besides, I saw it, it was a nice house."

Then he walked to the refrigerator for a beer. He took a long gulp before he shuffled toward the easy chair and turned on the TV.

"She's too young," Tao said.

"Don't be such an Asian mother," he said, flipping the channels from the remote.

Tao expected him to inform her, "We're in America now," just as Marilyn had argued every time she didn't get her way.

Tao resisted the urge to embrace Marilyn when she returned that night. But just as Tao avoided her daughter and husband, they avoided



Ben Seto

her as Marilyn seemed to tell Ken about the party, but not in the bright tones that Tao had cautiously hoped for. Later, he let Marilyn stay up to watch a raunchy comedy on TV. From the bedroom, Tao could tell that Marilyn reacted only when her father did. Her laughs faithfully echoed Ken's, which could fill the room with good feeling.

Despite herself, Tao softened, knowing exactly what it was like to get drawn in so completely. When she met Ken, he told her that he had trespassed the Playboy Mansion and surfed Venice Beach at dusk. These were places that Tao had only seen in a Hollywood movie – the type that her parents frowned upon if it was playing in their living room.

It was past midnight when Tao heard the latch of Marilyn's door-knob click into place. Ken came in, and Tao could hear the metal teeth of a zipper unclench. She tucked her arms and legs tighter to her body.

Tao wished she hadn't moved when Ken whispered, "You awake?"

He slipped into his side of the bed. Tao let out a little snore, hoping he would leave her alone. But he laid his hand on her shoulder and shook her a little.

"Stop," she said.

"I just wanted to know if you were awake."

She tried to shake off his hand though it had already sent a warm current through her body. Sometimes, he would hold her in bed so tightly as if he had caught her from a fall. In these moments, usually in the early morning of a half-dream state, she would allow herself to believe that Ken wouldn't leave her this time.

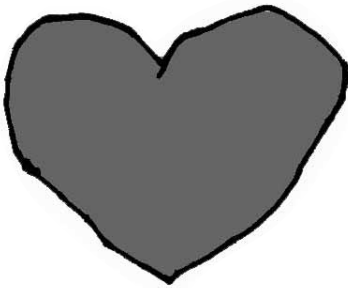
"It's late," she said, pulling away from her husband. "Go to sleep."

"You're just angry about the party."

Ken didn't wait for her to respond as he tunneled his hand under the blanket tucked around Tao's body.

"Stop," she said louder this time.

Ken stopped, but Tao couldn't be sure he wouldn't change her mind in the middle of the night. But then she remembered how uneasy she felt for Marilyn, who was only twelve years old. When she was ten, she could have drowned, following the other kids into an ocean at a beach party, walking in so deep that her feet no longer touched sand. Now, she was playing games designed to



Ben Seto

kiss boys and share intimate thoughts for everyone's amusement and ridicule.

"I told you not to take her," Tao said, facing her husband's outline in the dark.

"C'mon, I have to go tomorrow, let's not be angry," Ken said.

When he tried to touch her again, this time lightly across her cheek, Tao swung blindly in the dark and hit upon a wet hollow, Ken's mouth.

He yelled out garbled curse words, stumbled to the bathroom and shut the door. Tao hadn't intended to hit him, but she wasn't sorry.

When Ken emerged from the bathroom, Tao told him, "It's time we get a divorce."

The next morning, Ken rolled his luggage across the carpet of the living room. Marilyn was sitting on the couch, as if she had been waiting all night.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Daddy will come back soon, I promise," Ken said. "I'll be knocking on your door before summer's over, and we'll go to the beach and that dessert shop where they pound all the candies and fruit you want inside the ice cream."

Marilyn walked over and held Ken around the waist as she did when she was little.

"Can I come with you?" she asked.

"I can't, honey, I travel too much. It's no life for a girl."

Tao leaned against the doorway and crossed her arms. How would Ken say no to her this time and how would it end up that Marilyn would hate her mother even more.

By now, the hurt was a dull ache in Tao's chest, as Marilyn pleaded to Ken to take her away. Tao recalled her vision of Venice Beach, its waters reflecting the purple-red sky that Ken had painted in her mind so many years ago. He had made this other world appear so vibrant, so beautiful, unlike anything she had ever experienced, a world in which he was its manifestation, and she had wanted to believe him so badly.

"I told daddy you can't go," Tao said. "He's right; it's no place for a girl."

Even if Ken wasn't around much, Marilyn was undoubtedly his daughter in the way she could cut down a person with the tone of her voice. As Marilyn was printing the address of her new dorm in Chicago on a luggage tag, Tao pointed to the down blanket draped over the couch.

"It's summer," Marilyn said, attaching the tag to the baggage, parked now by the door.

"It's not like here, sunny all the time, over there, there's snow, wind, rain. . . ."

"I can't take any more luggage; they'll charge me."

"I'll give you money."

"I'll buy everything over there, OK," Marilyn said as she grabbed the remote, turned on the TV and turned up the volume. A golf game appeared on the screen before she flipped the channel to an infomercial and then a black-and-white movie. After a few more images flashed across the screen, Marilyn turned off the TV and disappeared into her room again. Tao heard the computer beep and guessed that Marilyn was looking for the traffic report.

Tao glanced at the clock again. They had half an hour before they

should leave for the airport. Tao stepped out to the balcony and dialed Ken's home number. His wife picked up and spoke in a crisp American accent, which sounded just like her daughter's – effortless, slightly bored. Instead of hanging up as she usually did, Tao asked where he was.

"Isn't he coming to your place?" she asked.

"Yes," Tao said and hung up.

Tao dialed Ken's cell phone. She remembered years ago, before she enrolled in English as a Second Language, how Ken would correct her grammar if he were caught on the defensive. She wondered how Ken deflected his wife's perfect English.

"Hello? Hello?" Ken said when he picked up, his voice breaking through the static.

"She's waiting for you," Tao said.

"I texted her that there's an accident and we're down to two lanes on the 405."

Tao hung up as Ken's voice was breaking up. She slid the heavy glass door and returned to the living room where Marilyn was trying to stuff some of her framed graduation photos, her thrift store jewelry into another crevice of her baggage.

After a half hour had passed, Marilyn said, "We can't wait any longer."

Just as Tao was about to pull the luggage up on its wheels, the screen door outside rattled in its frame. Tao opened it and saw Ken, red-faced and panting.

"I got a speeding ticket," Ken said as he hugged Marilyn. Then he took out the yellow slip of paper from his shirt pocket as if he had scored tickets to a rock concert.

"I told the cop to hurry so I wouldn't miss seeing you go."

Marilyn smiled and nodded. Tao clapped her hands and urged everyone to move to the car. Marilyn took the seat in front with her father while Tao sat behind them. From the back, she couldn't see anyone's face except for Ken's right eye in the rearview mirror. Tao thought he looked different, but probably he was just older.

When Ken was young, there was a severity in his face that suggested the demeanor of someone much more serious. His skin had been pulled tight across his thin mouth, flat cheeks and high forehead, but time had loosened his face, so that when he smiled, the lines that deepened around his eyes evoked a sense of time gone by, like an old friend, an old lover. Tao wasn't in danger of falling back in love. But riding in the car with their daughter, she could almost fall in love with this picture of her family – the one that she and Ken had conceived so long ago on the other side of the world.

Tao had planned her getaway as soon as she found out she was pregnant – with or without Ken. But when Ken proposed and insisted on asking her family for their approval, Tao imagined her parents find-

ing out the real reason and kicking her out of the house. As she helped her mother prepare a ginger sauce for the tilapia dish, she said that she was going to marry the man sitting in the living room. Her mother did not react; she didn't even look up.

"You are an adult now," she said. "You decide if he is the right one for you."

Tao remained quiet that night as Ken eased into conversation with her parents, speaking Cantonese in a clunky American accent, telling them that he was just a few credits shy of earning an engineering degree. At the end of the meal, he asked them for Tao's hand in marriage. Tao looked down at her lap, not knowing what to expect. But nothing fazed her parents that night. The same people who demanded perfection her entire life now gave their blessing to a man who had been a stranger just hours ago. Tao should have been happy with the outcome, except that she had been given up without a fight. It wasn't a fight she wanted, not exactly, but something, as her parents opened a bottle of champagne to celebrate. Tao excused herself and went to throw up in the bathroom.

Tao recalled another memory from when Marilyn was eight. Her daughter had opened a Chinese zodiac book to an illustration of two sets of animals drifting away from each other on separate boats.

"See, this is why we don't like each other," Marilyn said, pointing to her animal sign on one boat and Tao's sign on the other.

The idea that a celestial force was splitting Tao from her daughter may have been a strange comfort because then no one was to blame. It was easier to believe that this was simply the way it was, as surely as they were exiting the ramp to the airport and driving under the blue signs where the road eventually split off into two lanes — departing and arriving.



Annie Hsu

Sandy Yang holds an MFA in fiction from the University of Arizona, and her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Los Angeles Review*, *Santa Monica Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Many Mountains Moving* and other publications. She lives in Los Angeles.

Karla Linn Merrifield

From KLM to GO’K: Santa Fe Watercolor Abstraction on Paper: *Juniper, Titmouse*

Why a tufted titmouse’s
gray feathers are charcoaled
in morning shadows

Why he gives the crested impression
of shunning the piñon jay’s
indigo allure

Why he ignores me as he swallows
one powdered blue-black sphere
of a juniper berry

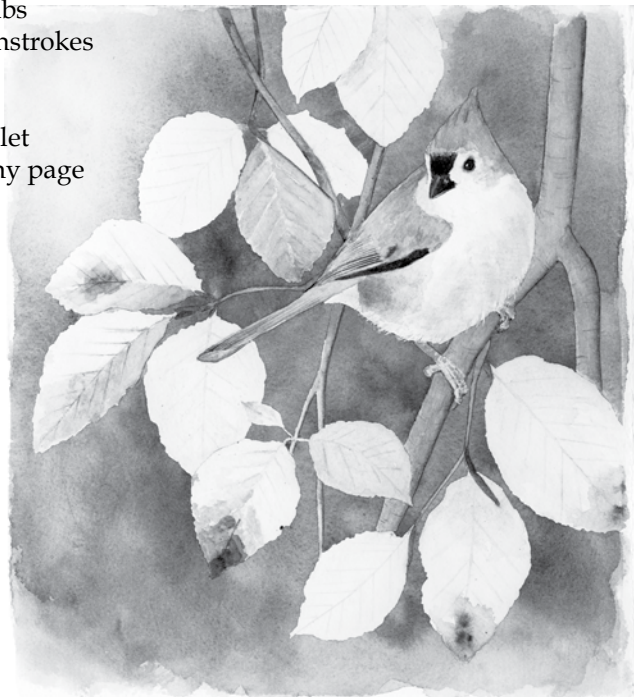
Why it will one day turn
New Mexico’s red hills
rocky dust fragrant green

Why the tree’s spiraled limbs
tinged yellow in bold brushstrokes
before my eyes

Whether in the desert’s violet
or its orange-hot light on my page
why a single seed passed

by a tiny bird became
my unexplainable thing
of nature—in their shades

seeing a new rainbow.



Tufted Titmouse, Megan Gnekow, 2009. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. www.birds.cornell.edu

High-Altitude Spectrum

Black bear in cinnamon morning coat,
snoozing on a hefty snag, Ursus widespread,
more sequoia red than the trees at this hour.

Stellar's jays, giants themselves
among such corvids, more black
than iconic indigo and blue,

sassing the ravens in their shade,
the black birds' dark calls now
raucous orange, more orange

than sunrise on bare granite.
Bald domes wake from violet sleep
and begin to glow.

Yellow-bellied marmots, more gold
than noon, rodentia auric,
perch on stony thrones.

Snowmelt has turned to white water;
the river's emerald pools and turquoise
eddies flash silver this mid-day

And all that is green —
lodgepole, sweat pine, Douglas fir,
all lichen, starburst and rock-posy alike —

shimmers a rainbow as if
a sudden summer thunderstorm
had washed the mountains iridescent.

And you, the witness of this Range of Light
that is the Sierra Nevada, see Her majesty
in living colors.

Tomorrow: wildflowers,
more avians,
and the wind.

The Missing Force at 36° N Latitude, 107° 57' 30" Longitude

With the sun in its summer
house, afternoon winds beat
the sand's message of heat.
Clouds assemble to drum
thunderstorms. But no rains come.

Where snake should swallow lizard,
eagle swallow snake,
time swallowed whole
the golden bird and its people
because no rains came.

The magnitude of their loss
is the magnitude of their epic
ancient civilization brought
asunder by all the erosional
forces you can name, except one.

When no rains came after
the solstice morning upon solstice morning,
endlessly rainless, the wind, worse
than the desert wind I mentioned,
a life-abrading wind, roared.

And I see gravity toppled the Anasazi
gods from atop their canyon temples.
I see great edifices of sandstone
and great walls of rock and mortar
baked and frozen for eons,

tumbled into ruins —
Chaco without the force
of water,
Chaco becoming a message
of the dust.

Top to Bottom

I follow my complex neo-cortex
along the Grand View canyon rim.
That reasonable and enlightened
animal insists I shall not fall
two thousand feet to my death—
splash in the Colorado River, splat
to the bottom. *Go ahead,
stand on the edge, you won't
slip on Kayenta sand, promise.
Geology is a good thing to witness.
Follow the peregrine's eye.*

But I follow my amygdala, that ancient
and deeply buried limbic creature.
I heed its voice; basic instinct
hisses at me: *Stay, stay away
from the basement rocks, avoid
at all cost the Paradox Formation.
Fear is the best thing
in your survivor's handbook,
o big-brained, two-legged woman.
Follow me like the whip-tailed
lizard; cling to the wall
of red sandstone, safe after all.
Go wild again; live.*



Award-winning poet, National Park Artist-in-residence, and assistant editor of *The Centrifugal Eye*, Karla Linn Merrifield has had work published in dozens of journals and anthologies. She has six books to her credit, including *Godwit: Poems of Canada*, which received the 2009 Andrew Eiseman Writers Award for Poetry, and her new chapbook, *The Urn*, from Finishing Line Press. Forthcoming from Salmon Press is her full-length collection *Athabaskan Fractal and Other Poems of the Far North*. You can read more about her and sample her poems and photographs at <http://karlalinn.blogspot.com>.

Ryan Shoemaker

Our Students



On Friday we were expected to ready our classrooms for Monday morning, the first day of school. I was arranging desks when one of the returning teachers walked in. Miller. He taught biology across the hall, a tall freckled man older than my father, in stone-washed jeans and a faded T-shirt. “So you and Stephenson are the new meat,” he said, extending his hand. “I hope you last longer than the guy you’re replacing. His students smelled the fear on his breath. They pounced.”

Miller grabbed the class rosters from my desk and looked at the names. “Bad, bad, pregnant, probation, psychopath, bad. Watch this Angel Rodriguez. He’s an annoying little shit. Stole money from me last year.” He threw the rosters back on the desk. “Hey, some of us are doing lunch today. Stephenson already turned me down. You in?”

An hour later we were huddled in a booth at Bill Johnson’s Big Apple with two other teachers: Hernandez and Gaines. I’d noticed them, with Miller, sitting together at orientation, exuding a seasoned camaraderie—passing notes, rolling their eyes, and yawning loudly—as Mr. Pitts, the principal, went on about state teaching standards and attendance reports. They’d taught at Pathway to Success Alternative High School for a few years and had the stories to prove it. They laughed and giggled and told their stories with a macabre gallows humor, and

I was their audience. Were they trying to impress me or scare me? I didn't know.

"Remember the fat teacher from a couple years back?" Miller asked.

Gaines lifted a sweaty glass to his lips. "Katz. Yes, enormous. Fat rolls over his belt."

Miller looked at me. "That's right. Katz. Big black guy. Taught business classes. His wife worked in the cafeteria. So one day after school I'm walking past the cafeteria and I hear this woman screaming. I run in there and Katz has his wife in a headlock and he's pounding her in the face. Boom, boom. No joke. So I'm wrestling Katz, trying to get his wife out of that headlock, and there's blood dripping from her nose and mouth and she's screaming, and I'm doing a little dance with Katz and my shoes are smearing the blood all over the floor. And then Gaines and Hernandez show up, and it's like we're all doing this dance with Katz and his screaming wife."

"Horrible breath," Hernandez said. "Like ammonia. That's what shocked me most."

"Yeah, the guy smelled like a gym locker," Gaines said.

"The guy was huge," Miller said, "and you can imagine the three of us swinging from his back. Well, suddenly he collapses onto the floor. Like somebody flipped a switch on him, and he starts crying like a little baby."

"The police came and took him away," Gaines said. He clucked his tongue. "Sad."

I chewed my steak. It tasted undercooked. It sat on my plate in a little pool of blood.

"What do you tell your students?" Miller asked me. "What do you say when they want to know what happened to Mr. Katz?"

"You tell them," Hernandez said quickly, almost panting, grabbing Miller's shoulder, "you tell them to tap twice on the bars if they want their grades." The three men erupted in titters, and I couldn't help laughing, too.

I pushed my plate away. Katz. An anomaly, I thought. But Miller went on. Story after story about incompetent teachers and sociopath students. The teacher fired for hiding a student's bag of weed in her file cabinet during a drug sweep. The teacher fired for having sex in her classroom with the guy who mopped the floors and took out the trash. The riot in the school's lobby when Hernandez got wonked across the back with a folding chair. The drunk student who'd pissed on the trophy case. These guys reveled in the chaos, accepted whatever absurdity awaited them and the story it would yield. But from what they told me about their personal lives, their futures had nothing to do with this run-down charter school. They were bidding their time until their real vocations presented

themselves. Even old Miller, not far from retirement, was taking a night class in real estate. Gaines had a catering business and painted houses in the summer. Hernandez played bass in a rock band. They were in a holding pattern, weighing their options and planning their escape.

They were the clowns, the comic relief, and because I'd been the clown, in high school, in college, and had always hung out with clowns, I liked them. They wanted to know what I was doing in this shit-hole. I told them: a year teaching and then law school. They smiled, maybe politely.

"So you want to be a lawyer," Miller said. "Why?"

I chewed on my straw. Why? Because someday I wanted more than the bland, middle-class neighborhood I grew up in outside Tucson, the sprawling grid of well-tended lawns and trampolines and minivans. I had fraternity brothers at Arizona State who grew up in Paradise Valley or in those modern homes riding the foothills below Camelback Mountain, and sometimes when their parents were in Vegas or Acapulco for the week, we swam in their pools and drank Coronas and tequila on stone terraces whose views made me dizzy. Even if you've never wanted for anything, you begin to think differently when you look down on the world like that.

And why was I there, teaching in that dilapidated charter school? Because some of the books I'd read on increasing my chances of acceptance to a top-ranked law program suggested either a stint in the Peace Corps or teaching a year in one of these urban, at-risk charter schools. I had no imagination or the fortitude for three years of third-world living, but I liked the idea of me as a teacher. I liked the idea of standing in front of a classroom, lecturing and fielding questions. A year teaching in one of Phoenix's inner-city slum schools—a year seemed doable, if it meant a shot at a more prestigious law school.

But I didn't tell them this.

"Why do I want to be a lawyer?" I ran my finger along the edge of the table. "I want to make a difference."

Hernandez swirled the ice in his empty glass and then waved to our server. Gaines sneezed into his hand and said what sounded like a profanity. Miller just stared at me.

"Come on," he said, rubbing his palms together. "Come on. Cut the crap. Make a difference. That's thick. You're insulting us." He smiled. "You want to be rich. Right?"

I shrugged. "Sure. I guess. Don't we all?"

Hernandez slapped me on the back. Miller had his hand on my shoulder. They were all laughing now, and I was laughing, too. But I could see they didn't believe me. They'd heard it before, I was sure, heard it from their own lips maybe. The dreams, the lofty ambitions. But I was serious. A year and no more.

And so the school year began. The chaos was dizzying. A constant chatter bubbled through the walls.

There was the hyperactive, attention-deficient black kid who couldn't stand still, who burst into my classroom in paroxysms of shouts and giggles, mid-lecture, mid-test, like a performer mounting a stage; the morose guy with the full beard who refused to answer my questions, who exuded a latent violence I didn't want to awake; the three girls in my second period with their stretch-marked breasts practically spilling from their tight V-neck T-shirts, mothers already at fifteen, who couldn't stop smacking their gum and giggling about the boy across the room with the oily hair and gold necklaces. Some of these kids had spent time in jail. Grand theft, drug possession, assault. They had probation officers, wore ankle monitors, got out of school early once a week to go piss in a cup. And I, their teacher, an educator in title only, was responsible for them.

At the end of the first week, I already disliked them. They tired me with their bored vacant eyes and stupid conversations about their dreams of stardom and wealth. They had adult bodies, but the minds of children.

How could I teach them Arizona state history? These kids didn't even bring pen and paper. They were absent for days at a time. They showed up high.

I had no training, no certification, no background in pedagogy. But for the first couple weeks I tried, arriving early in shirt and tie and smiling until my face felt sore from it. I crafted the kind of lessons that interested me at their age: a slide show of Arizona's geologic past, a PBS documentary on Geronimo, articles on current events, group work. My students couldn't care less. They quit at the first tingle of discomfort.

And then one day after school, sometime at the end of the second week, I looked up from my lesson plans and Miller was there. He smiled as he ran his nail down the length of the chalkboard. "Quit-tin' time," he said. "We usually go out for a drink. You coming?"

"Lesson plans," I said. "You done already?"

"I'm showing a movie tomorrow. And maybe the next day and the day after." He snapped his fingers. "Let them color some pictures, finger paint, weave baskets. Whatever. Come on. I'll buy the first round."

I looked down at my lesson plans, imagined the icy, indifferent faces that would greet me the next day, the incessant complaints regardless of how much preparation I put in.

I stood and followed Miller.

We drove to a place called McDuffy's, a dimly-lit decrepit bar off Van Buren with a western motif, an old swinging saloon door and a corrugated metal awning. Gaines was already deep into his

fourth beer when we got there, and Hernandez was on a raised stage near the back wall belting out "Hotel California" into a microphone while the lyrics scrolled across a large TV screen. A video showed two young lovers with terrified expressions running hand-in-hand through a maze of murky hallways.

"We aren't teachers," Miller said, when we found a place to sit, and I felt he was talking to me in some veiled, avuncular way, imparting his wisdom. "Teacher's a misnomer. We're the worn-out attendees at a recreation center. How are we supposed to discipline these kids?" Miller lifted his beer to his lips without taking his eyes off me. "What leverage do we have? Fifty-five dollars per student per day. That's what the State pays us. You tell Pitts we need to get rid of some bad seed and you see the dollar signs dance in his eyes. These kids know we can't get rid of them. They know we can't afford it."

Hernandez was still on stage, whipping his head around. The TV screen said *Instrumental: Guitar Solo*. The lovers were locked in a passionate embrace on the hood of a pink convertible Cadillac. Hernandez smiled at us and pumped his fist in the air. We raised our beers and nodded. "He's a horrible singer, isn't he?" Miller said from the corner of his mouth. "God-awful."

"Such a long song," Gaines said, his palms covering his face. "Terrible. I can't listen anymore." He stood and walked unsteadily to the bathroom.

Miller put his arm around my shoulder and pulled me closer. I felt his warm breath on my cheek. "I know you don't respect me," he said. "You think you're better than me because you'll be out in a year and I'll still be rotting away with these losers. Am I right?"

I tried to say something, but Miller cut me off. "You're right. Guilty as charged. I'm the ship that never left the harbor, the lazy, burned-out teacher. I'll be the first to admit it. Teaching's a gift and I don't have it. I don't have the desire or the ambition. Years ago when I got into this, there was a guy named Driscoll, old and tired, always at his desk with his face in a newspaper. I vowed never to become Driscoll. Teaching was temporary. My calling was elsewhere. I was pre-med in college. I'd been accepted to medical school at Temple. But I knocked this girl up at the end of my senior year. In those days you did the right thing. Today I'd have told her to get an abortion. Marriage. I deferred a year. And then another kid. Divorce. Child support. Another marriage. No medical school. The years pass quickly."

Gaines returned from the bathroom. He sat down heavily and looked around, eyes half-closed, his head drooping and then snapping upright. There was a spatter of greenish vomit on his shirt cuff.

"Watch this," Miller told me. "Gaines," he said loudly, cupping

his hands over his mouth. "Gaines, you're pathetic. Your fattest student wouldn't sleep with you. Your face looks like an ass with a nose and lips." And then Miller slapped him hard across the face. Gaines' head rolled onto his left shoulder and then righted itself. His eyes closed. "He won't remember that," Miller said, lowering Gaines' head slowly onto the oak table. He snored softly.

"Let me tell you something," Miller said, suddenly serious again. "I mean no disrespect to anyone. I'm no racist. I love all people. You understand? But we're not here to send these kids to college. This is educational triage. Basic skills. Maybe they'll stay out of jail. Maybe a few will manage to pay a rent some day, pay their taxes. That's it. Crossword puzzles. Word finds. Let them paint and color. Show movies. That's what these kids want. It's part of the social contract. They come to these schools because they're easy."

"And Pitts is all right with that?" I asked.

"It's an unspoken understanding." Miller jabbed at the table with his index finger. "Busy work. Distraction. Give them A's. Everyone's happy. No complaints. Pitts hates complaints."

I nodded and then looked at Gaines, still passed out on the table. His lips moved, but no sound came out.

I felt some relief in what Miller said. As a teacher, I didn't have the desire or ambition he'd spoken about, and I didn't care about acquiring these attributes. I needed to finish the year, and what I heard in Miller's advice was the road of least resistance.

The next day at lunch I shut myself away, and then the next day and the day after. I ignored the chaos simmering outside my door as I studied for the LSAT. During my prep period and after school I did the same, and then threw together some easy worksheets for class the next day. At four, suddenly thirsty, I'd close my LSAT study guide and wait for Miller to knock at the door.

And then there was Stephenson, a new teacher like myself. I'd noticed him at orientation. He stuck out with his starched white shirt and powder blue tie, intent and earnest on the front row, hurriedly scribbling in a notebook as Pitts blabbed on about state requirements, basic pedagogy, and health benefits.

He looked like a minister and acted like a Boy Scout. Miller didn't like him. Stephenson actually wanted to work with this crazed, attention-deficient demographic, a sentiment all of us had intoned on our applications and in interviews, because that's what Pitts wanted to hear. But Stephenson meant it.

While we showed up to school in jeans and T-shirts, bleary-eyed and dreading the next eight hours, Stephenson dressed everyday as if he were interviewing for a job or going to church, shirt and tie and pressed slacks, a toothy smile and a clean-shaven face, a well of

energy and honeyed optimism we couldn't muster or fake.

He had a bag of tricks. No grating din percolating through the thin sheetrock that separated our classrooms, no susurrus of discontent and boredom. His classroom had life. Students' work decorated the walls—posters with timelines and collages, tests and papers displayed under a banner that read *Wall of Fame*, rules and expectations posted above the chalkboard. Students came to my class continuing debates on immigration or freedom of speech they'd started in Stephenson's class. They worried over his tests and quizzed each other nervously. They spoke about a field trip to the State Capitol. These were students who sat listless and unresponsive in my class.

With all of Stephenson's squareness and nerdiness, these students, hardened and distrusting, adored him. They sought him out before and after school, left endearing messages on his chalkboard, spoke of him without the brass-knuckled parlance of the street that usually colored their speech. They ate lunch in his classroom, stayed there long after school ended. He seemed to have a reserve of time and patience we didn't, or were unwilling to give. We disliked Stephenson in the same way we disliked the overachiever from high school, the class darling for whom the teacher has a puppy dog affection.

I felt uneasy around Stephenson and avoided him. In his presence I felt a knavish guilt, felt troubled by a reoccurring thought that maybe we could do more than baby-sit these kids.

In the end, I was skeptical. I couldn't comprehend such magnanimity for these kids, such devotion. Did he really want to do this, live out his working years in a broken inner-city school? The thought baffled me.

"He's a Mormon, you know," Miller told me one night at McDuffy's. He blew into the top of his bottle. "Oh, yeah, he'll tell you all about it, how he left college to do a mission in the projects of Chicago's South Side, converting the same type of disenfranchised and impoverished breed who stumbles into his classroom every day. Not a coincidence that he's teaching here." Miller paused. He clicked his tongue and shook his head. "He's one of these people who's got some romantic notion from a dozen inspiring movies about ghetto high schools. I've seen it before. They invest so much and then wake up one day to realize the world doesn't change. This isn't Hollywood. He'll learn his lesson and get out. These kids will break your heart, even the good ones."

I started laughing and couldn't stop.

Miller pushed his empty bottle to the middle of the table.

"What's so funny? You drunk?"

Maybe I was. I suddenly had this image of Stephenson with angel wings and a halo, strumming a little harp and singing to his students in a high falsetto. It all made sense to me. He wanted to save these kids and really believed he could.

Pitts scheduled our parent-teacher night for the beginning of December.

All day in slacks and a starched shirt.

I waited in my classroom, pulled at the tie knotted around my neck and anticipated a rush of eager parents intent on scrutinizing their children's performances. Miller appeared in the doorway. He wore a wrinkled, white polo shirt with what looked like a hardened spot of egg yolk on the breast pocket, tucked into a pair of worn jeans he might have mown the lawn in.

"Nervous? Three years here and I've had four parents come in," he said. "No joke. And they want out as much as you do. *Habla Español?*" He rapped his knuckles against the wall. "Don't forget McDuffy's after. *Muy cerveza*. And we can still catch the second half of the Suns' game."

By eight-twenty-five, not one parent. I thought of slipping out the back door five minutes early, have a cold one in my hand when Miller and Hernandez walked into McDuffy's. I'd ask what took them so long. They'd get a kick out of that. And then just as I was about to leave, a woman walked in.

"Mr. McClelland," she said in a thickly accented voice. She stared at the floor, practically shaking, a short Hispanic woman with a freckled face. "My son in your first period. Angel Rodriguez."

I forced a smile and pointed to a seat near my desk.

"Angel," I said, to fill the empty, awkward space between us as I pulled his grade up on the computer. "He's failing." I turned the computer screen toward her and pointed to the long row of zeroes attached to Angel's name. I could've told her this without the computer. I could have, perhaps should have, told her how he bounced into class most days, every molecule of his clothes and body venting the stink of cheap weed, how he sketched in a little black notebook every day while his assignments sat untouched beside him. I could've told her this, but I needed to go. I needed to free myself of that classroom and get down to McDuffy's.

She nodded, as if she'd expected this failing grade.

"He failing all classes," she said. "I don't know what do with him." She spoke so slowly, as if she were dredging the words from the farthest corner of her mind and piecing them together. "He was at Durango for three months. He wear the bracelet on his leg after. Probation. He was good boy on probation. He'd be good boy if he on probation every day. And then after he started trouble again, started the drugs again . . . started hanging out with bad friends, started with gang." She twined her fingers together. "His father have other family. He never see Angel . . ."

I heard the clock ticking. Had three minutes passed? Had five? I wanted to get back on point. The drugs, the deadbeat father—what did this have to do with me? I wanted to be done and gone. Miller

stood in the hallway, his coat over his shoulder. He pointed to his watch, made a drinking motion with his hand, and then screwed up his eyes. He flipped me off and then walked on.

"He can do make-up work," I said, hoping this would cheer the woman, hoping she'd nod enthusiastically and beat a quick exit. "Tell him to come in after school."

She sat solemnly, staring at the floor. "He say you his favorite teacher." And for the first time she looked at me. "He say he like talking with you. Maybe you . . ." She stopped. Her thin lips formed a tight smile. "Maybe you help him. Talk with him. He like you. He listen you. Tell him importance of education. Not to waste time on drugs and bad friends."

I couldn't believe it. His favorite teacher. Liked talking to me. Maybe once or twice we'd talked about the Diamondbacks' mediocre season, if Bob Melvin was a better manager than Bob Brenly. That was it.

"I'll speak with him," I said, understanding I would never speak with him, understanding that this is what she wanted to hear and what would get her out of my classroom.

"Thank you," she said, her voice catching on the words. Her eyes glistened. "Thank you. God bless." And then, with bowed head, as if I might change my mind, she left quickly.

"Why so quiet?" Hernandez asked me later at McDuffy's. His eyes darted between me and the large TV screen above the bar.

"That little mama put the moves on you?" Miller asked.

"Wouldn't be the first time it happened."

"Hell no," I said. "I was putting the moves on her." Miller slapped my back. Hernandez giggled. Above me, a series of violent collisions played out on a painted wooden floor. But I didn't care about the game.

In early February, Pitts kept hammering away in staff meetings about an increased gang presence on campus. More graffiti. The colors kids were wearing. Bandanas hanging from their pockets. What did I know? All these kids looked the same to me, all swimming in oversize pants and shirts a three hundred pound man could fit comfortably. We had to be vigilant, Pitts said. Someone suggested school uniforms. Pitts thought uniforms were too constraining, not enough creativity and personal expression. Parents would pull their kids from the school. Someone suggested security guards.

And then it was Valentine's Day, another one of those interminable days of interruptions and unbridled merriment, kids strung out on sugar and whatever else and in no mood to learn. I abandoned my lesson plans halfway through second period and then handed out a photo copy of the state bird and told my students to color it.

Finally, the last bell rang and the school was quiet. I worked at my desk.

Law school applications were due in a week and I had to finish my statement of purpose. I was still teasing my time at that ghetto school into something meaningful, something that would lift me heads and shoulders above a thousand other candidates. Pitts, with a wink, had promised a glowing recommendation.

"Mr. McClelland," someone said.

Angel stood in the doorway, his twiggy body lost in a pair of saggy jeans and an oversized baseball jersey. "You think the Diamondbacks'll go all the way this season?" he asked. "You hear they're bringing Johnson back?"

I didn't look up from the computer screen. I told him I hadn't, though I had. I regretted not locking the door.

"Yeah," Angel said. "They say he can't throw that heat anymore, but I don't believe it. He's gonna be like Nolan Ryan. He'll go on for years."

Raul, one of Angel's friends, appeared outside the door.

"Angel," he said, "They're waiting. *Vamanos!*"

Angel didn't look over his shoulder, just stared at me with those Coca-Cola-colored eyes. "I failed your class," he said. "I deserve it. My mom was really pissed about that. But maybe I can make up the work. Maybe you have something I can do right now."

Raul was walking away. I could hear his voice down the hall.

"Angel, *andale*," he said.

I could have done it. Probably. It was in my power. What issue would Pitts have with a repentant student wanting to rectify a failing grade? He'd tout it as a success story. But I didn't do it. I wanted to be rid of Angel. I wanted solitude so I could finish my statement of purpose. I told him the opportunity had passed, and in that brief moment, the two of us facing each other in that classroom, I felt justified in my decision, because wasn't that the lesson Angel needed to learn? Wasn't that the tough love he needed to change his life, that all these kids needed?

He said nothing, only nodded before leaving.

I closed the door and returned to my desk. I couldn't think. I couldn't put words together. I thought of Angel, lost in those oversized pants, Angel drawing in that stupid sketchbook—the face of a child. I thought of his mother, kneading her dry hands together, her face a worn-out, puzzled mask.

I opened the door and looked into the hallway. Angel was gone. I walked toward the lobby, feeling a sense of urgency, but not knowing why.

The PA system crackled and Pitts's dry voice, more animated than usual, sounded through the hallway. "I need all teachers down at the bus stop on 27th Avenue. All teachers, immediately."

We walked quickly, saying nothing. Our eyes met. We smiled stupidly, as if to say, "What is it now? What insanity awaits us?" As always, we expected the ridiculous, two divas tearing out clumps of hair, wielding long painted nails like weapons, a giddy shoal of

over-caffeinated teenagers shouting insults or encouragement into the fray. I looked for Miller, but he wasn't there. He was where I would have been had I not been in the hallway: held up in my classroom.

And then we were running. We didn't know why. Stephenson ran beside me, tie flapping in his face, Wingtips clapping against the asphalt.

It was a brawl, fifteen or twenty boys grappling in the middle of the street. A group of students watched, jockeying for position, cell phones raised above their heads. Southbound traffic on 27th Avenue had stopped. Horns blared. People were out of their cars watching.

We pushed through the crowd toward the fight. Someone punched me in the ribs. I felt a kick to my left calf, then heard laughter. When I looked up to orient myself, I noticed a rusted Cutlass Sierra that had once been white wheezing around a line of cars in the southbound lane of 27th. It made to pull a U turn, then stopped in the northbound lane, parallel to the brawl. The windows were streaked and filthy. Two men I didn't recognize sat in the front seats. Raul and Angel were in the back. I stopped, wondering what they were doing, waiting for them to jump into the fight. Then the passenger window lowered and the man sitting there leaned out. I saw a thin black barrel and a wooden stock. Three quick shots, and then the scream of tires.

The effect was stunning.

Students fled in every direction, as if they'd choreographed their retreat. I was knocked to the ground. The pointed tip of a high heel jabbed me in the lower back. I covered my head.

I lay there, my cheek resting against the warm asphalt. I could see tiny bits of broken glass glittering, dull seams of sun-hardened tar. My palms burned. My left calf throbbed. A little bruised, but nothing more. I felt giddy, elated. My fingers trembled with the adrenaline. I thought what I'd tell Miller and Hernandez, how they'd want every detail of the shooting.

I got up and brushed the grit from my shirt. The street was empty, except for Stephenson and some other teachers and a couple mechanics from the garage across from the school. They stood in a circle near the sidewalk, staring sadly down at the pavement. Their presence confused me. What were they looking at? Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Riding, our English teachers, wept. Their hands covered their mouths.

I walked over and saw a girl on the ground, Jackie Elzy, elfin with long black hair and dark eyes, painfully shy. I had her fall semester. Often I saw her in Stephenson's class at lunch, smiling and chatty with her friends, a side of her I'd never coaxed out in my class. Her legs were twisted unnaturally beneath her. "It's so hot," she whispered. "It burns." And then her eyes widened. I could see the terror in those eyes, the consciousness of death.

One of the mechanics, an older Hispanic man with grease-stained hands, began chest compressions. At first a trickle of blood ran from Jackie's mouth and nose, and then it was like a gushing spout, blood puddling onto the street around that pile of black hair. He stopped, moved an oily hand across his forehead, and then said something in Spanish. There was a dark stain between Jackie's legs that grew until it soaked her thighs.

A hand covered my mouth, my hand, though I hadn't remembered raising it.

Cars idled past. Horror-struck passengers stared, their shocked faces absorbing the lifeless figure, the pooled blood. I knew their faces must look something like mine.

I wanted to run away and never look back, to find my car and drive. I wanted to scour Jackie from my mind forever, her inert image, scour away all the violence and thoughtlessness I associated with these kids. Let them hurt themselves, kill themselves, just as they'd always done and would always do. I didn't want to hear about it.

Stephenson stood by me, looking down at Jackie with eyes that seemed to extrude from the sockets. He'd gone pale, gasped for breath through parted lips. He began to whimper like a small dog.

I took his arm, feeling a measure of distraction and purpose as I led him toward the school. He hugged his body and sobbed uncontrollably.

A group of boys had emerged from their hiding place in an alleyway and walked toward the death scene, their voices animated with the excitement. I squeezed the soft flesh of Stephenson's arm just above the elbow and spoke to him in a whisper. "They'll see you," I said. He continued to sob. I pulled at his arm. "Don't let them see you like this. They'll laugh at you."

I pulled him behind a white Oleander hedge and pushed him against a brick wall. "Stop," I said.

His eyes oozed. A streak of clear mucus flowed from his nose and wet his lips. "She wanted out of this," he said, practically panting between sobs. "She wanted to go to college. She wanted to be a nurse." He laid his weepy face in his palms and sobbed.

I grabbed at his shirt, tearing off a button just below the collar, suddenly overcome with anger. "What did you think?" I said. He'd stopped sobbing and stared at me, stunned. He had the pale face of a child in an old painting. I pushed him against the brick and pressed a knuckle into his sternum until he winced. "Did you think you could change any of this? Did you think you could save them?" I felt my open hand rising, moving through the air, moving through the feeble defense of Stephenson's raised arms. I slapped his face. "Do you think this will ever change?"

I left him there, weeping into his palms.

That evening in Pitts' office, there were the statements we had to make for the police, the questions to answer. What had we seen? The color and make of the car? Could we identify the passengers? The shooter?

The next night, Angel and Raul were arrested outside a convenience store in south Phoenix. Both pleaded guilty. As far as I know, Angel never mentioned where he'd been before the shooting. Neither did I.

The effect of Jackie's death was immediate and irreparable. Enrollment diminished by three-quarters. Pathway's empty hallways and classrooms hinted with their eerie silence that something horrible and unmentionable had happened. Most teachers quit. They feared retribution. They feared the fight might come unexpectedly into the school lobby, into their classrooms. Stephenson never came back.

"Don't be a fool and quit," Miller told me. We were sitting in his classroom a week after the shooting. There was nothing to do, no one to teach. He crushed a sheet of paper into a ball and threw it across the room. It bounced off the wastebasket and under a desk. "I mean, it's horrible what happened, this dead girl, but we're on easy street now. By law Pitts has to pay your contract until the end of the year." He smiled, hefting a thick book on real estate from his desk and then dropping it. "Hope you brought something to read."

"What about next year?" I asked. "You'll stay here?"

"Ah, my boy," he said, winking. "Don't you see? Pathway's done. Finished." Miller slid the brown scuffed loafer from his left foot and massaged the arch. A swatch of scaly yellow skin showed through his sock's threadbare heel. "Another failed charter school. No, next year I'll be somewhere else. I hope. Who can afford to retire? At least I'll have a leg up on these wieners who quit. I'll be the guy who stuck it out to the bitter end." He looked up from his foot. "And you? You've recently found your love of teaching, I'm sure."

"Hell no," I said. "Law school, I hope."

"That's right. Pitts was really banking on that. He told me so. It means something when you can tell parents one of your teachers just went off to law school. Adds some prestige to this dump. So much for that. So much for the school. But you wait and see. Most charter schools die quietly, like a sinking ship slowly going under. Not this one. When somebody dies, it's never quiet."

Miller was right. There was blame to assign.

Jackie's family hired a lawyer. They believed the school had been negligent in fostering a safe environment on and near campus. The school hired a lawyer. Months later there was some kind of settlement.

I was admitted to Stanford, a school my slightly-above-average GPA and LSAT scores should have disqualified me from attending. In June, the law school's dean of admissions, a man with a deep,

commanding voice, called to tell me the admissions committee had awarded me a small scholarship. The admissions committee had been impressed with my personal statement. "It sounds like you did a lot of good at that school," he said. "Changed a lot of lives. I'm sure they'll miss you."

I didn't tell him that in May the doors closed and Pathway ceased to exist.

I'm an associate in a San Francisco law firm. I live in a Spanish Mediterranean home in the Marina District. From the master bedroom balcony, I look out onto a slice of the San Francisco Bay. Often with clients, I eat at Acqua and Gary Danko.

Not long after I started with my firm, Jack Farrell, a senior partner, called me to his office. He said the firm needed a softer image. He wanted people to associate Anders, Feddersen, and Farrell with a commitment to public responsibility and community service, and to that end he'd decided the firm would make a yearly donation to Boswell Alternative High School in Oakland. But more than that, he wanted a few of us to visit the school, hand out pencils and binders, speak with these kids. "You've worked with these types," he said. "You understand them." He leaned back in his chair. "This will be your project. You understand? I'm counting on you. Make us look good."

So every October a couple associates and I visit Boswell. It's strangely familiar, the same poorly-lit classrooms and graffiti-marked desks I remember from Pathway, the same sticky, dark grime covering the surface of things. The principal of the school, a short woman named Gonzales, always has an assembly when we visit. She sings Anders, Feddersen, and Farrell's praises and then invites us to say a few words to the students, something inspiring and motivating. I always speak on personal responsibility and then quote a few lines from *Invictus*. Isn't that what these kids need to hear? *I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul*. Isn't that what might have saved Angel and Jackie Elzy, what might save all these kids? I look out over that mass of dark faces and still feel something akin to terror.

Every year I sit on that stage in Boswell's dim auditorium and search out the teachers in the crowd, wondering if by some miraculous chance I might see Miller, Hernandez, or Gaines out there. "What a gas!" they'd say, yanking at my tie and grinning madly. "Look at you, counselor. Moved up in the world. But can't stay out of the jungle, can you?" For the longest time I looked for Stephenson, too. That cheesy smile. Those starched shirts. I had no ambition to teach, no real desire, no gift for it, but knowing Stephenson might be out there somewhere, awing his adoring students, still believing he could save them, always comforted me. But Stephenson doesn't teach anymore.

Walking back to the office from a client lunch not long ago, I saw him get out of a cab on Howard Street, briefcase in hand, garment bag slung over his shoulder. I followed him into the Charles Schwab Building and watched him speak with one of the security guards at the information desk. He'd put on some weight and his hair had receded, but he looked like the Stephenson I remembered, except for something in the face. No smile. That permanent grin that annoyed us so much had gone. He had on a nice suit, nice shoes. There was a thin gold band on his finger. I'm sure he had kids. I'm sure he was a good father. For a moment, I thought of saying something to him. But what? Tell him he looked well? Make a joke about how we'd gotten out alive? I said nothing, only turned and left the lobby. But if I could go back, I'd have asked Stephenson if he, too, even after a decade, still feels the needling guilt. I'd explain how sometimes on Market Street or near the Wharf, I hear them, voices booming and unabashed, their laughter piercing and annoying. Our students. I'd tell him that when I see them I cross the street.



Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Ryan Shoemaker is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Southern California. His fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Santa Monica Review*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Grist: A Journal for Writers*, and the *MacGuffin*. Ryan lives in Burbank, California, with his wife, Jennifer, and two children, Kieran and Haven.

Simon Peter Eggertsen

Deifying Gravity



The gods here do not try to hide their toys, piles of rock,
chunks of ingot-iron, glazed in the sun, randomly arranged —
careless, scattered bases for the arches further to the south.

Hurled down, unlike marbles that would bounce, roll, refuse
to stack, they pause in strong clumps, hold the desert floor down,
break the horizon's line.

First time passed, there were five stacks, now there are seven.
Could it be? I must not have been paying attention, must not
have been counting carefully enough.

Perhaps here the gods play their arithmetic quietly stoned.
Sometimes adding. Sometimes taking away.
A mathematician would understand their theory.

One thing sure, no one disturbs the piles in daylight.
No one would dare. Too many hot eyes watch,
too many hot eyes protect.
These gods would not trifle with mischievous day movers.
Anyway, the heft would be too great for one or many mortals.

But what happens at the edge of nightfall?

Just once, returning late in the day, I thought I saw
a newly shifted boulder, delicately holding on to the edge,
deifying gravity with a haughty laugh!

Next moment it was gone. Sent down by a whispered wind breath?
Less than a candle blowing would probably do.

Or was it I who had moved as I toppled along to Moab?

Lament for School Children and Wedding Guests

*"You too are now near this highway of archangels,
this theatre of heaven, this light garden of the godforgiven"*
Shah Jahan

From swirling pools of Hazarjati mountain air, nighthawks,
robed black as Taliban or the blue-gray of dismal
American smart bombs, summon you into the dread
of their flaked white spaces.
The rush abrupts, rumbles us into grief's confounded
labyrinth.

We wander the blinking fathoms of your eyes,
waning west to places in between,
make a tracery from Kabul to Herat, beyond Bamiyan
and the broken Buddhas, along the ravines
of the Hari Rud, where we think you might still linger,
some dragging your feet like you do not want to get
to school, some shuffling like you do not want
the happy dancing to end.

After another starless night, we will ask again to see you.
We will want to watch your lips float over and around
the squat vowels of

Maidan Shahr, Posth-e-mazar, Yahawlang, Buriabef, Rakwaje,
places you have come from.

We thought you would be here longer.

We will want to complain to God, or someone, sometime,
about the suddenness of all this.
We will want to question you further, sometime, in Dari:

Chetor hastid? Shahab khub ast? Jor hastid?
How are you? Are you well? Are you fine?

And to hear your answer: *Man khub hastam. Man khub hastam.*
I am fine. I am fine.

We will want to greet you with three kisses if we see you again
in Samarkand or Boston.

Asalaam aleikum.

Peace be with you.

On the Mountain Road to Taos

On the way out of Santa Fe, above our road,
an out-of-place Van Gogh sky rapt us in,
swirls and hovers, the blue shading pale to dark.

Here there is the light of southern France but
way too much height, too much width and length.
This sky is southwest, America big. Selfishly
occupies all the space it can or is allowed.

It weighs on the horizon, presses down on the stones,
subdues the mountain and the mesa fringe.
It would intimidate to awe any outsider —
even those self-assured Frenchmen!

Cotton puff clouds, gray beneath, billowy white above,
scud indolently across the sky, cows in pasture,
give us a child's wish to fall from airplanes,
trample a bit on a pillowed bed, like we used
to do in the sleep loft at Wildwood.

Higher up, the cedars yield naturally to the tall pines,
saw-jagged and sharp on the ridges, coyote's teeth,
irritating the under softness of the blue Western sky.

Never mind. The blue seems to jiggle with laughter
as we move along the road to Taos.

Due north, as we run, candy-like rock mountains,
resist the push of the sky, hoist themselves into view.

Maynard, Dixon that is, would have loved
to get a paint brush on these. Maybe he did.

Not that they need any touching up.
Nature did it pretty well the first time around.

And Georgia did it better than anyone else,
nearly better than God, herself.

Georgia painted them stark, and clean, and plain,
and complex, and then plain again.

She found colors not in nature, made these
black mesas hers, then ours.

Then quietly returned them here.

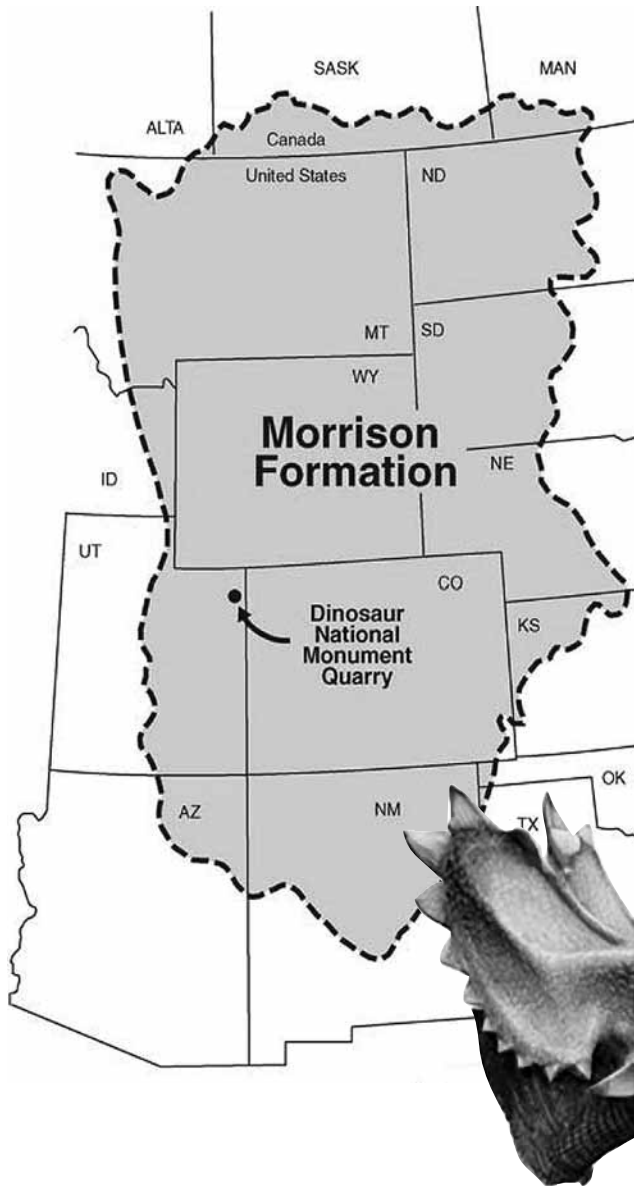


Simon Peter Eggertsen was born in Kansas, raised in Utah, and schooled in Virginia and England. His work has been published, or is forthcoming, in *Nimrod*, *Vallum* (Canada), *Atlanta Review*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Poui* (Barbados), *Dialogue* and *New Millennium Writings*. He was a finalist for the Pablo Neruda Prize in Poetry (2009), won the Founders' Circle Prize from Soundings Review (2010) and was longlisted for the Fish Poetry Prize (Ireland, 2011).

READING THE WEST

read-ing [from ME reden, to explain, hence to read] – vt. 1 to get the meaning of; 2 to understand the nature, significance, or thinking of; 3 to interpret or understand; 4 to apply oneself to; study.

DINOSAURS ROAMED THE WEST



The American West is a major source of dinosaur fossils. The United States contains rock outcrops spanning most of dinosaurian time. In the dry, eroded American West, the odds are good that evidence of those times has been preserved. The Morrison Formation is a fossil-rich rock layer which extends across 700,000 square miles of 11 states. In Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming, this Formation has proven particularly productive for dinosaurs. Just last year, two new species of dinosaur were discovered in southern Utah. Pete Spotts reported the finds for the Christian Science Monitor:

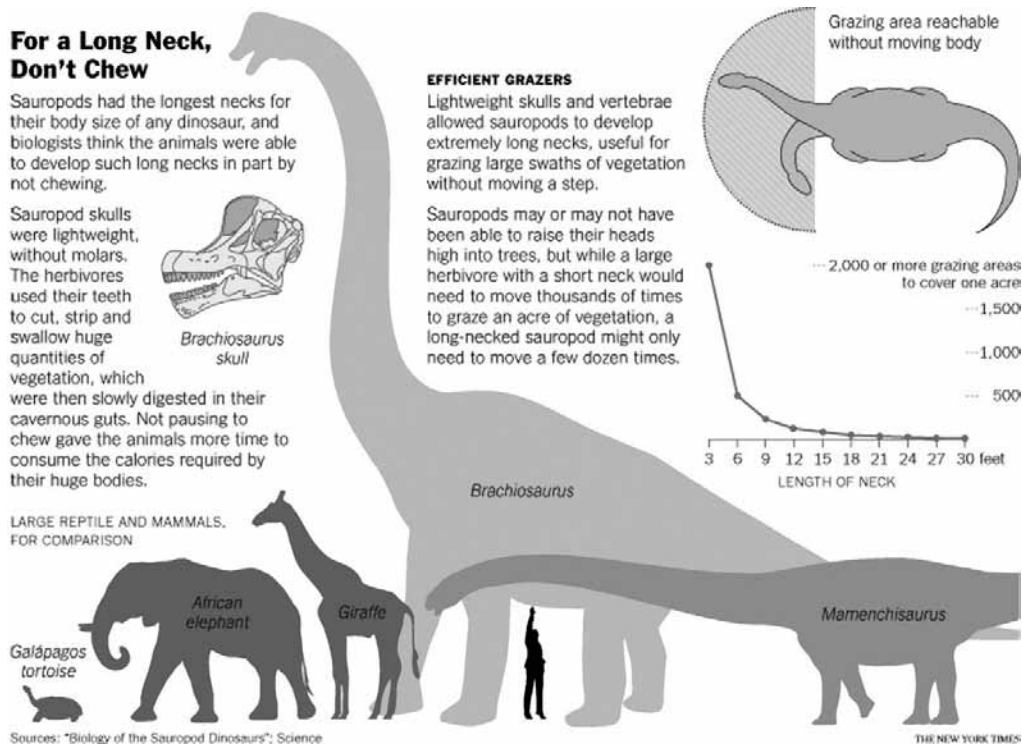
The finds come from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, a rugged patch of southern Utah that represents “one of the country’s last great, largely unexplored dinosaur bone yards,” says Scott Sampson, a curator at the Utah Museum of Natural History in Salt Lake City, who led the effort.

An artist’s rendering of what the two newly discovered species of dinosaur – *Utahceratops gettyi* (left) and *Kosmoceras richardsoni* – might have looked like.

Source: Pete Spotts, “The Peculiar Dinosaurs of Laramidia: Weird Horns and More,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 September 2010. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2010/0923/The-peculiar-dinosaurs-of-Laramidia-weird-horns-and-more>. Map source: <http://www.icr.org/article/dinosaur-national-monument-park-or-jurassic-jumble/>

SAUROPODS

Recently, the journal *Nature* published an article suggesting that 150 million years ago massive plant-eating dinosaurs (sauropods) roamed the semi-arid American West in search of food and water. The study, led by geologist Henry Fricke of Colorado College, was reported in several on-line publications. John Noble Wilford did so for the *New York Times*:



Sauropods (such as the iconic *Apatosaurus*) are among the very biggest creatures that ever lived. Their fossils have been found in the American West, preserved in the famous Jurassic-aged Morrison Formation and uncovered at places like Dinosaur National Monument. The geologic record tells us that this region was a seasonally dry floodplain at the time when sauropods roamed across it.

Many paleontologists have suggested that they would have had to migrate elsewhere to find food and water during the dry summer months.

Source: John Noble Wilford, "Giants who Scarfed Down Fast-Food Feasts," the *New York Times*, 12 April 2011; <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/12/science/12dinosaurs.html?pagewanted=all>

Scott K. Johnson reported the findings in *Arts Technica*:

The latest study is the best evidence yet that at least one kind of sauropod "took to the hills in search of food when times got tough in the lowlands," said paleontologist Kristi Curry Rogers at Macalester College in Minnesota....

The researchers analyzed 32 sauropod teeth collected in Wyoming and Utah. The teeth came from massive plant-eaters that roamed a semi-arid basin in the American West during the late Jurassic period about 150 million years ago.

The largest sauropods weighed 100 tons and were 120 feet long. The type in the study was smaller — about 60 feet in length and weighing 25 tons.

Scientists can get a glimpse into the source of the dinosaurs' drinking water by comparing the oxygen preserved in the tooth enamel to that found in ancient sediment.

Source: Scott K. Johnson, "Migrating Herds of Sauropods Once Travelled the American West," <http://arstechnica.com/science/news/2011/10/migrating-herds-of-sauropods-in-the-american-west.ars>

DEVILISH DISCOVERY

Informally known as the "Last Chance Ceratopsian" for the name of the stream near which it was found in southern Utah, this 26-horned dinosaur made its debut in 2010.

Described by paleontologists Jim Kirkland and Donald de Blieux, the 80-million-year-old dinosaur is called *Diabloceratops eatoni*, with the genus name evoking its "devilish" appearance and its species name honoring Weber State University paleontologist Jeffery Eaton. A long-time colleague of Kirkland's, Eaton is a fossil mammal specialist who has eschewed big dinosaurs in favor of studying the many fossil mammal specimens that lived alongside them during the Mesozoic.

There may also be a second species of *Diabloceratops* waiting to be classified from the Cretaceous strata of southern Utah. While Kirkland and de Blieux were not able to confidently give it a taxonomic assignment, they describe a second skull which is very similar to, yet slightly distinct from, the better-preserved "Last Chance" specimen.



<http://blogs.smithsonianmag.com/dinosaur/2010/05/diabloceratops-gets-ready-for-its-debut/>. Photo credit: http://fossil.wikia.com/wiki/File:Diabloceratops_skull_side2.jpg

DINOSAUR WARS IN THE AMERICAN WEST

The first documented dinosaur fossil discovery in North America was made by William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame, July 25, 1806, near the Yellowstone River. However, it was not until the late nineteenth century that fossil fever gripped the nation and the U.S. government came to spend more on science than any other country in the world.

In January 2011, PBS aired the film Dinosaur Wars as part of the American Experience series. The film, produced by Mark Davis, Anna Araceno and Mark Samels, tells the story of the bitter rivalry over fossil hunting between the self-taught amateur Edward Diringer Cope and the Yale University professor Othniel Charles Marsh. In the post-Civil War period, they and their crews uncovered the remains of hundreds of prehistoric animals in the American West, including dozens of previously undiscovered dinosaur species. Together they were responsible for the collections of tens of thousands of fossils, and for the exploration of Jurassic fossil beds at Como Bluff, Wyoming, among many other sites.

However, Cope and Marsh spied on one another, sabotaged one another's research, wrote competing papers about the same fossil species, and generally wasted a great deal of time and

fortune despising one another. Both eventually ruined their career and their lives. As writer-producer-director Mark Davis explained to HistoryNet.Com:

"It really is an American Western story.... And in some ways, even though they didn't shoot at each other, they behaved as though they were in a range war."

This range war started because the scientific world was beginning to embrace the theory of evolution that resulted from the publication of British scientist Charles Darwin's landmark work on his study of the natural world.

"The timing was really remarkable," says Davis. "Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The one thing he lacked to back up his theory was fossil evidence of animal species in transition from one form to another. Less than 10 years later, the transcontinental railroad opened the west to scientists for the first time, and the fossils were there for the taking. Just at the moment when science was asking the question, 'How did life evolve, what are the details of the story?,' bones became available, and Cope and Marsh were really the first two American scientists to go west and exploit it."

Source: Jay Wertz, "Dinosaur Wars in the American West," *Historynet.com*, 16 January 2011, <http://www.historynet.com/dinosaur-wars-in-the-american-west.htm>; <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dinosaur/>

SEEING THE BONES

According to *Best of America*, of the 11 best dinosaur museums in the country, six are in the West:

1. Wyoming Dinosaur Center - Thermopolis, WY
2. Rocky Mountain Dinosaur Resource Center - Woodland Park, CO
3. Dinosaur National Monument - Utah and Colorado
4. Dinosaur Journey - Fruita, CO
5. Peabody Museum of Natural History - New Haven, CT
6. Museum of the Rockies - Bozeman, MT
7. Field Museum of Natural History - Chicago, IL
8. Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History - Washington, DC
9. Academy of Natural Sciences - Philadelphia, PA
10. Thanksgiving Point - Lehi, UT, tied with American Museum of Natural History - New York, NY

<http://www.americasbestonline.com/Dinosaurs.html>

EDITORIAL MATTER

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**ANNOUNCING
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The Dr. Neila C. Seshachari Award of \$500 is presented annually to the author of the best fiction published in *Weber* during the previous year.

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