

Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society Anthology

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14th Edition

NOTA BENE

From the Founding Editor

It is with a great sense of pride that we present the 14th edition of *Nota Bene*, the literary anthology of Phi Theta Kappa. We delight in the words of these outstanding Phi Theta Kappa members and are honored to showcase their efforts.

In 1994 we embarked on a bold new venture to publish literary works by Phi Theta Kappa members, promoting the ideal of excellence in writing. Our initial efforts were rewarded with a gratifying response, both from our members who flooded our mailboxes with submissions and by the audience who enthusiastically read the printed book. After 14 years we continue to see increased results as the number of manuscripts received escalates.

One of Phi Theta Kappa's oldest traditions is to encourage, promote and reward excellence in writing. We believe the writings contained herein not only showcase the talents of Phi Theta Kappa members, but also affirm the commitment to academic excellence displayed by the community college arena. In more than 1,700 libraries nationwide and abroad, *Nota Bene* carries its banner of literary excellence to an ever-increasing audience. We are also pleased to offer the Citation and Reynolds scholarships to four outstanding *Nota Bene* authors.

Nota Bene takes its name from the Latin expression for "note well." We are hoping you will take note and be inspired to join us in our scholarly obligation to nourish good writing and exceptional authors.

We thank you for your continued support over the past 14 years. Without our members, chapter advisors, college presidents, librarians and friends, *Nota Bene* would not be possible. As we move forward, we encourage your continued patronage.

Sincerely,



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Citation Scholarship

David Kariuki
Essex County College
New Jersey

AFRICA: A BROKEN CONTINENT

Miswaak: The root of the Arak tree (*salvadora persica*), chewed to clean teeth

Malende: the village

Nsolo: A game usually played by scooping holes in the ground and using small stones for playing pieces.

Sojo: A game played with bottle tops

Kalambe: A form of tag

Before they came
We cradled more than two thousand tongues
We believed in evil spirits and sorcerers
We ate monkeys, pigeons and slugs
We smoked lemon leaves to cure coughs
We healed boils with root balms
We were like brother and sister

When they came
Papa was chewing *miswaak* outside
Bang! Bang! Bang!
They scared away the morning stillness
When they came
I was listening to the crickets
Gently singing the dusk into morn

...chirping
...chirping

They came
With rain on their shoulders
And thunder in their hands
Tearing me from Mama's grasp
Flinging me into the mud outside

I looked into Papa's lifeless eyes
Heard Mama's pleading screams
I implored in whispered cries, "Please stop!"
And they pointed their thunder at her too ...Bang! Bang!

Satisfied, they left
With sister on their shoulders,
With blood and smoke in their wake.
I watched *Malende* burn to embers
Whimpering my voice away.

Today we would not play *nsolo, kalambe*
And *sojo*
We would not sing:
Wanu ngia ngeeli! Ngeeli!
Wan'I tana keke ngeeli! Ngeeli!
The chicken would never return to the roost
I would never hear Papa's voice again
Telling me how to till the earth,
How to raise a family,
How to live in amity.

We were slaughtered mercilessly
For the stones under their feet
And the gold veins in their fields.
Driven by lust and greed,
Brother killed brother
For a sip
Of power



Citation Scholarship

Deidre S. Hopton
Raritan Valley Community College
New Jersey

Silent Communications

It was one of those perfect autumn mornings that you get sometimes in late September or early October, when you can't believe that much color is produced by nature. The sky was a cloudless, vivid azure blue, the sunlight was just making its golden, warm presence known, and the trees seemed ablaze with all their beautiful, warm colors. Jimmy didn't really notice all of that, though. He sat on his bed, in his room, feeling a vague apprehension about the day ahead. His class was going on a field trip.

It wasn't that Jimmy wasn't excited, per se, but new places always made him feel vaguely uneasy. The school year had only begun a month earlier; he had had just enough time to get used to his new teacher and classmates. He actually quite liked his teacher, Ms. McCormick, and had liked her right from the first day of class. She had been wearing a white shirt and a black blazer, and she reminded him of a penguin. Jimmy had a picture of penguins on his wall, in his room. Large groups of penguins that just stood silently, some looking at each other, some looking away.... Jimmy

understood penguins. He felt life would be much less nerve-wracking if he were allowed to behave like a penguin. He and his family and classmates could just stand around, sort of communicating through vibrations, if they communicated at all. It would be so much easier than trying to find words that expressed all the thoughts in his head. Jimmy often felt that there were no words designed for his specific needs, and that he would rather communicate like penguins did. That would upset his mother, though and his father, and even Ms. McCormick. They all wanted so badly for him to talk and interact with them.

He tried, he really did. However, on a day like today, with something new and different looming on the horizon and threatening to disrupt his routine, he felt comforted by gazing at the penguins in the picture on his wall, and imagining he was one of them.

It was about noon, and Ms. McCormick was getting a headache.

Her short, graying hair, normally so well-styled, was starting to stick out all to one side as she continually ran her hand through it out of nervous habit. Pain throbbed through her temples and behind her brown eyes. As she pinched the bridge of her nose, she found herself wondering why she had gone into teaching. If she had taken some sort of nice office job, this kind of stuff wouldn't happen.

It wasn't that she didn't like her job; quite the contrary, she loved each and every child that passed through her class, and felt she was doing very rewarding work. However, there were times that having an entire class of autistic children could be very stressful. As a whole, field trips could be described as "one of the times."

The day had started off well. The children were a bit excited, which had a tendency to manifest in rather strange ways in a special needs class. All in all, though, the bus trip to the aquarium had been uneventful, and the children seemed to be enjoying themselves. They had wandered from room to room in the aquarium as a group, staring in awe at the vast array of sea creatures swimming in the huge glass tanks. The stingrays had been a huge hit, and the penguin exhibit kept them entertained for the better part of an hour. The huge sharks in their tank had invoked a chorus of "ooh"s and "ahh"s from both the students and the adults watching over them. The day had been going so well.

Then, they had rounded up the children for lunch, and Ms. McCormick had taken a head count. Just following protocol, of course, she was certain that none of the children had gone missing. After twenty-three years of teaching, ten of those years devoted exclusively to autistic children,

Ms. McCormick was confident in her abilities. She was certain that she could not have misplaced a child, so certain she just knew it had to be a mistake when she counted sixteen children instead of seventeen. Of course it was a mistake, and then it was just her nervousness causing her to make the mistake again and again.

After the fourth count, she had to admit that a child had gone missing.

Ms. McCormick (Sheila, to her friends, but always Ms. McCormick when she was in teacher mode) had a list of all the students present. After comparing her list to the small crowd in front of her, she realized that Jimmy Acosta was definitely not with the group. She searched the little crowd frantically with her eyes, but the silent little brown-haired boy was just not there.

There was one other teacher present, and the three parental volunteers that had come along. They went and searched every corner of the aquarium while Ms. McCormick tried to keep the children entertained and unaffected by the crisis at hand. He never talks, she thought. He could've been snatched by a maniac and may not have made a sound.

She began to think that maybe she wasn't very good at her job. If she had been better at her job, this wouldn't have happened. If she had been better at her job, Jimmy would've been communicating with her by now. If she had been better at her job, she would have noticed when he left the group.

After searching for nearly half an hour, the adults reconvened.

"He's not in any of the rooms down that way," said Ms. Caputo, one of the parental volunteers. Her voice sounded high and breathy, as if she were on the verge of panic.

"Not by the sea lions display," said Ms. Randal, the gym teacher, with military efficiency. "I suggest we alert the management immediately."

"Perhaps we should get the kids their lunches first?" said Mr. DeSoto, the only father who had come along on the trip. "I know my Jill gets distressed when her schedule is disrupted, and I'd hate to see these kids all go haywire."

"Good point," said Ms. McCormick. It was decided that they would all go back to the bus to get the kids' sandwiches, while Ms. Randal went and alerted the staff to the fact that a lone child was wandering the premises somewhere.

Jimmy was fast asleep, and dreaming of friendship and quiet.

The morning had been amazing. He had actually been able to stand between his classmates and the penguins. There had been a moment that he stood in his crowd, and made eye contact with one of the penguins....he

knew, he just knew the penguin had felt the same kinship with him that he had felt with the penguin. It was like finding his long-lost brother or something. The excitement of it all had inspired him; he felt as if he would never be misunderstood again.

It had been obvious what he had to do, so he had done it. Then he went back to the bus, because it was safe and warm and he was tired and cold.

He slept, and he slept well.

The class trailed along behind Ms. McCormick and Ms. Caputo, with the other parents bringing up the rear. They had decided to eat their lunch on the bus, because the children would be most comfortable there. (The unspoken thought among the adults was that it would be harder to lose any more children on the bus.)

As Ms. McCormick approached the giant yellow vehicle, the bus driver opened the door from within, and mumbled, "Got a stowaway back there."

"What?"

"Kid came up 'bout an hour ago, climbed on board and went to sleep. Been sitting here keeping an eye on him ever since."

Ms. McCormick climbed aboard the bus excitedly, and breathed a sigh of relief as she saw Jimmy sprawled out across two seats, sleeping peacefully.

"Oh, thank God," she murmured, tiptoeing closer to him. She noticed that the area around his seat was a bit wet, but thought little of it; the boy had probably spilled a bottle of water.

"Let's not wake him," murmured Ms. Caputo, who had apparently crept up behind her. "He looks so peaceful. The children wouldn't mind eating in the pavilion over there; they're starting to like it here. And one of us can stay here to watch Jimmy."

"I'll keep an eye on the boy," said Dean, the bus driver. "He's been no trouble. If he wakes up, I'll just bring him on over to you."

Ms. McCormick smiled. Dean had been driving a school bus for nearly as many years as she'd been teaching, and she trusted him. "Thank you, Dean. You're a good man."

Dean grunted and unfolded the newspaper on his lap, burying his nose in it.

Feeling as if the weight of the world had been lifted from her shoulders, Ms. McCormick gathered up the children's lunches and led them over to the pavilion. Perhaps this field trip would be disaster-free, after all.

The rest of the afternoon went pretty smoothly. Ms. McCormick was congratulating herself as they all piled back onto the bus to head home.

Jimmy had apparently slept the whole time, according to Dean. As they climbed aboard the bus, though, the slumbering boy began to stir, and by the time the children were back in their seats, Jimmy was wide awake.

The adults all sat in the first two rows of seats, with the children sitting in pairs behind them. Everyone was quiet, subdued by the fatigue of a long day, but a feeling of contentedness seemed to hang in the air.

"What a perfectly lovely day," said Mr. DeSoto, grinning back at his daughter. "Jilly had a wonderful time, and I think the rest of the kids did, too."

"Thought we had a disaster on our hands for a second there, but the boy turned up. I'd have to agree, this has been a successful field trip," added Ms. Randal. "What's the matter, Mike?" This last comment was to a little boy sitting right behind her who had suddenly begun twisting around in his seat and making excited sounds. The boy turned back to her with wide eyes, but upon meeting the gym teacher's stern gaze, he sat down and stared out the window silently.

Ms. McCormick beamed as Susan, normally one of the quieter children in the class, ran up the aisle to sit in the empty seat next to her. The girl was pointing to the back of the bus. Ms. McCormick followed the direction of her pointing finger with her eyes, seeing only the children in their seats, and the traffic out the back window. "Ohhh, you want to go back."

Susan looked at her, then back toward the back window.

"I know, Susan dear, I'd like to go back to the aquarium too. Perhaps your mom and dad will take you there some time soon."

"I wouldn't be surprised if all of us get dragged back there soon," said Mr. DeSoto jovially. "The kids had so much fun, they're still all worked up." As he spoke, a loud laugh erupted from a child somewhere toward the middle of the bus.

"Ahhhh, well, they'll be tuckered out by the time we get home," said Ms. Caputo, her wide blue eyes looking tired. "At least I hope so! They really are excited today. It's gonna be hard to get Jamie to bed tonight."

Ali, a little girl sitting two rows from the rear of the bus, stood in the aisle and pulled her arms inward so that her hands seemed to stick out from her chest, her elbows extended to the side. She took a few small waddling steps. "Get back in your seat, Ali, don't want you to fall down," called Ms. Randal. Undeterred, Ali simply walked backward in that same, waddling motion.

"That's new," said Ms. Randal. "All that kid ever does is repeat what I say, usually."

“Perhaps I’d better go sit in the back,” murmured Ms. McCormick, “to calm them down.”

She made her way to the back of the bus, directing Ali to her seat. There was an open seat next to little Jimmy Acosta, so she headed toward it. “There’s our sleeping beauty,” she said, smiling at him. “Did you miss out on the afternoon fun? Or were your dreams better than our little aquarium trip?”

Jimmy didn’t respond, but she hadn’t expected him to. He just sat in his seat, with his green backpack propped up next to him as if it were a wall he could hid behind.

Ms. McCormick sat down next to the boy. “My, this seat’s awfully cold. Is it damp? It feels a bit damp. Did you....,” she lowered her voice a bit, “did you have an accident, Jimmy?” The boy said nothing, just held his backpack gently between them and stared at her calmly and silently. Ms. McCormick reached toward the handles of his backpack; perhaps if she moved it, she could see his pants and determine if he had indeed had an accident.

As she reached toward the backpack, though, some sort of....some small black creature popped its head out of the bag and looked her right in the eye with its small, black, evil-looking eyes. “Meh,” it said, quietly, and Ms. McCormick screamed.

Chaos broke out as the children reacted to her scream and the adults tried to make their way through the frightened children to the back of the bus. “Meh,” said the creature again, and Jimmy giggled a bit.

“What is it? What’s wrong?” said Ms. Randal, taking Ms. McCormick’s arm.

“Meh,” said the creature again.

“What the....” Said Ms. Randal, reaching slowly toward the backpack. The creature barely moved, just watched her hand come toward it. As she opened the front of the backpack, they saw that the creature was a small one with a white chest and stomach. Ms. McCormick felt she might faint, and entertained brief notions that an alien had gotten into Jimmy’s backpack.

“It’s a penguin,” breathed Ms. Randal. “It’s a frigging penguin.”

“Frigging penguin!” mimicked Ali. The adults ignored her; her tendency to mimic people was best ignored. If you made a fuss, she’d keep it up forever.

The penguin waddled out of the backpack and stood on the seat. It seemed to give them a cursory glance, then turned back toward Jimmy. Bird and boy stared at each other silently (Is it a bird, wondered Ms. McCormick. It can’t fly.), then turned and looked out the window.

“Oh dear.” Said Ms. McCormick. “Oh...I had thought he’d spilled water...when he was on the bus sleeping...there was wetness...” The world seemed to slow down for Ms. McCormick. She was vaguely aware of the other adults commenting that Jimmy must have gotten into the penguin tank without being noticed. She heard Ms. Randal calling the aquarium from a cell phone. She noticed in some peripheral sense as Dean the bus driver pulled off the next exit to turn around and head back to the aquarium. Mostly, though, all she was aware of was that Jimmy and the penguin seemed so peaceful and happy as they gazed out the window.

Her knees felt a bit weak after the initial shock, so she lowered herself to the seat beside them. The penguin turned and looked at her, and she stared back at it. Now that the fear had worn off, she was just astounded by the creature. It was so peaceful...so serene...so present. It was definitely present, on the bus. Oh dear, thought Ms. McCormick. This is just a mess.

Jimmy turned and looked at her with a benign half smile that made him seem almost angelic. She couldn’t help but smile back. The three of them sat there – well, Jimmy and Ms. McCormick sat, the penguin stood between them on the seat – and gazed at each other silently. Somehow, it seemed that everything would be okay.

Over the course of the next hour, there was an awful lot of activity. They brought the penguin back to the aquarium. The staff veterinarian assured them after a cursory examination of the bird that it was in perfect health, and no charges would be pressed. The adults bustled around, the children were abuzz with the mood of it all, and through it all, Ms. McCormick felt strangely detached. She felt peaceful. When the man came on the bus to take the penguin, she had felt almost sad until she looked at Jimmy. The expression of grave understanding on his face had been... calming. It was as if he understood the situation better than she did, and accepted it.

The next day at school, everybody had heard about the excitement. Some of the more vocal children were pointing and laughing at Jimmy as he entered the building. Little Ali kept saying, “What the hell was that boy thinking?” in a voice that sounded very much like Ms. Randal’s.

Jimmy trudged into the classroom with his head down, feeling very uncomfortable. Nothing felt right at all today. His parents had been questioning him the night before, and again over breakfast that morning. His mother had seemed distressed, just asking over and over, “Why would you do that, Jimmy? Did you want attention? Did you want to bring me a gift?”

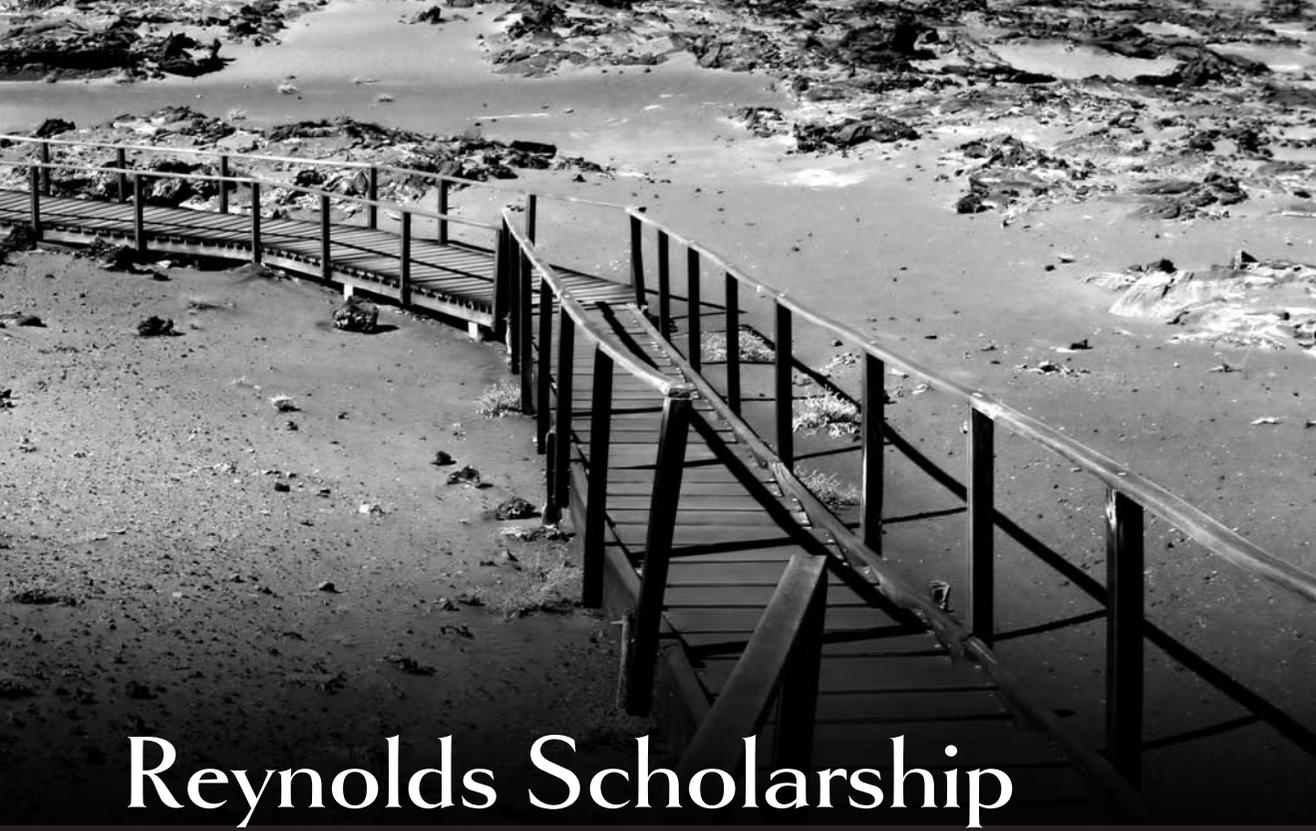
Then his father had turned to his mother and said, "You know damn well he's not going to answer you. What's the point of asking?"

He had felt sad, hearing those words. He wished he could explain to them everything that had gone through his head when he met the penguin. He wanted to tell them how the penguin made him feel as if he belonged, and he could communicate with ease. It was so difficult, though, to find words they might understand.

"Hello, Jimmy," said Ms. McCormick, as he entered the classroom. She stood in front of him, smiling gently and leaning on her desk. Her desk now had little penguin figurines lined up on the edge. Behind the desk, a big poster was freshly hung on the wall, very much like the one in Jimmy's own room. Jimmy gazed into the image of penguins and their peaceful society, then looked back at Ms. McCormick. She seemed different to him today; calmer, more understanding, in a way.

"How are you feeling today?" she asked.

"Better," he said, and he and Ms. McCormick smiled at each other.



Reynolds Scholarship

Jonathan Bedrava
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
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“On the Galapagos Islands: A Very Personal Essay”

A dirty yellow housecat brushed its muzzle against my leg and wove sloppy figure-eights between my ankles like a drunken confused pinball. Dried mud speckled its throat and caked the hair on its side into wide dirty spikes. It purred weakly and intermittently looked up to issue a delicate, strained meow.

“I should probably kill this miserable creature, right?” I said, nudging the cat away with the toe of my boot and scanning the ground for a rock, a stick, or anything else that might serve as a makeshift weapon.

Housecats on the Galapagos are considered an invasive species, *i.e.*, a non-native species that threatens the islands’ fragile ecosystem. They attack the islands’ rare birds, plunder their nests, and kill young marine iguanas and tortoises. Eradicating such pests is a chief duty of the Galapagos Islands’ environmental conservation groups, such as Jatun Sacha, the agency

hosting my tour of San Cristóbal. San Cristóbal is the eastern-most island in the Galapagos archipelago, the oldest inhabited island, and will be the first of the remaining large islands to crumble into the sea in the next few million years.

The Jatun Sacha Biological Station was set on the slopes of the island's highlands and consisted of several organic farms and rustic sleeping quarters anchored around a large fire pit and sheltered dining hall. The station's property extended all the way down to the rocky sea cliffs, which hid behind a mile-thick curtain of dense, dry forests. Each day, volunteers from all over the world joined the ranks of the island's inhabitants to strip the land of invasive plant species introduced by early settlers and pirates, such as raspberry bushes. Other daily chores include hunting goats, boars, and other invasive animal species; and tending to the Jatun Sacha farms, raising coffee, guava, plantains and other fruits and vegetables.

At night the volunteers lazed in hammocks, played cards or sat around a fire to chat, strum guitars and bang on bongo drums. Often they went to dance and play pool at one of the nearby wilderness pubs where my Jatun Sacha tour guide, Nathalia, and I sat, watching the mangy cat at my feet.

I refer to it as a pub, but only by the loosest definition of the word. It was actually a fairly unremarkable open-air shelter constructed of narrow and crooked stems of young hardwood trees. The "bar" was a small counter that overlooked a backroom with a refrigerator, from which all the drinks came. It was tended by a pleasant lady with many facial moles and a large friendly smile.

With few insects or night birds, the sinisterly black night was unsettlingly quiet except for the whisper of leaves rustling in the breeze that floated off the cool ocean waters and swept up the hillside. The volunteers had long since left the pub, exhausted from a day in the brutal equatorial sun. Members from my tour group stayed at the station, nestled into their beds or the station's cozy hammocks. The only thing keeping me at the pub was the weakness in my legs after swallowing too many drinks saturated with the island's vigorously potent sugarcane rum. That, and to be in the company of Nathalia, a biology student from mainland Ecuador.

She stared at me gravely and said, "The cat is probably just hungry."

I looked back at her. Her eyes were like large coffee beans, floating in her latte-colored skin. Wavy tendrils of hair with the shade of a strong espresso trickled to either side of her lovely, angular face.

I said, "I don't know." I looked back at the cat. "It looks pretty well-fed to me."

She tilted her head, glanced at the cat, and remarked, "I think she's pregnant." She sat upright, and folded her hands in front of her on the wooden table, waiting for my reply.

"Oh," was all I could say. After a brief pause spent watching the cat roll over on its back and paw the air, I said, "I don't think I could bring myself to kill a pregnant cat."

The cat, bored and resentful of my distinct lack of generosity, curled itself into a corner of the pub and shut its eyes. It promptly fell asleep, its purring harmonized with the breeze in the trees and the low hum of the pub's refrigerator.

"Hell, even a not-pregnant cat or any kind of animal," I added. "Whether or not doing so is saving the planet or whatever. I guess I don't care as much about the environment as I thought."

"Me neither. I was afraid you might be serious," she said, giggling softly. Her English was close to flawless and the lilting accent perfectly complemented her calm high voice.

"Well, I thought you might be impressed – you know, with you being the environmentalist and all – if I killed the thing. I don't know," I said.

"One time I hit a possum –"

"A possum?"

"Yeah, it's a, uh, kind of like a giant disgusting rat. Always running in the middle of the road at night and getting hit by cars."

"Oh, yeah. How do you call it? Possum? Anyway, continue, please."

"Well, I hit this possum and felt bad about it for a week," I said. What I didn't tell her is that I stopped the car to see if the possum was all right, and that I found it dragging itself off the road, hind legs crippled, leaving a bloody streak that shimmered in the moonlight. I didn't tell her that the five baby possums that had been riding on their mother's back were dead and scattered across the road in twisted piles of fur.

"It happens," she said, adding sorrowfully, "I felt bad for two weeks once after I accidentally drove my car into a group of nuns and schoolchildren."

"What?"

She laughed, loudly. "I'm just kidding!" she exclaimed, and continued laughing, pointing a slender finger at me. "You should have seen your face!" She continued laughing, while I asked the woman at the bar in stiff Spanish whether she had any coffee. She said something to me and disappeared into the back room.

I looked at Nathalia as if to ask, "What did that woman say?"

"She says, 'Yes, but it will take a while for the water to warm,'" Nathalia said wiping barely perceptible tears of laughter from the corners of her finely

slanted eyes. "It's probably going to be just like the coffee at the station," she said, craning her neck to see across the room and over the counter. "The stuff you did not like."

Perhaps shockingly, the coffee on the Galapagos was vile. Most of the island's inhabitants didn't drink the wonderful coffee that they cultivated, but instead drank instant coffee that tasted as though it had been stagnating for decades on the top shelf of some warehouse. It was bitter, tangy and mixed poorly with even the hottest water.

"I've reached my limit for alcohol," I said, "My head is kind of... something. It's funny. I only rarely ever drink. Never this much," I said, rubbing my eyes.

"You don't drink? That's good. Have you ever been drunk before?"

"Yeah, just once. It was horrible."

She smiled, leaned close and whispered in a conspiratorial tone, "Is it true what they say? That the room spins?"

"Sort of," I said. "More like the room was violently jerking itself away from wherever I tried to look. It was not a particularly enjoyable experience, and one I don't intend to repeat."

Nathalia sat up, smiled and said, "So, Jonathan, besides not drinking, what are your other hobbies?"

I blinked, thinking hard. "None, really," I said. "I used to read a lot. Not much these days. I roast my own coffee beans on my stovetop if that counts. It's a lot of work, but it produces the finest cup of coffee you can imagine. What about you?"

"I'm asking the questions here," she said, playfully imitating a low, serious voice. "What kind of music do you like?"

"None," I replied, "I listen to a lot of talk radio, though. Politics and news. Stuff like that."

"You prefer politics over music? Wow, there is something wrong with you. I suppose that means you do not dance."

"No, I don't dance."

"Can you?"

"I don't know. I've never tried."

"You should learn. It's good for you. Good exercise and good fun." She cocked her head and asked, "So you like politics? What's so special about politics that you do not enjoy music?"

The bar woman snuck up beside me and placed a yellowed saucer with a yellowed cup of yellow coffee on the table. I thanked her.

She nodded, smiling, and walked to the pool table, placed the cue ball on one end and watched it roll on its own to one corner. She adjusted the pile of books underneath one of the legs to level it and tried again, and again. The cat in the corner lifted its head, shot the woman a menacing look and went back to sleep.

“Can you think of anything more important than the rules by which men govern other men?”

She pondered this for a moment. “Perhaps the rules by which men govern themselves are more important. If men could govern themselves, they wouldn’t need others to do it for them.”

Her clarity of thought took me aback for a moment. “Oh,” I responded. “That’s important too, yes.” I did everything in my power to sip my coffee without making disgusted faces.

There was a long pause, with nothing but the sound of a cue ball slowly rolling across the pool table’s patchy felt and dropping into a pocket, when Nathalia said, “So, how do you like the Galapagos?”

“It’s great, albeit kind of weird, and foreign. Everything here seems tilted. The trees, structures, and landscape all lean to one side or another. I guess that’s a disadvantage of building on mountainsides. Back home and in the world of computer programming, everything I encounter on a typical day is oriented at perfect 90 degree angles, in boxes or otherwise straight lines. Here, well, sometimes I get this feeling in my stomach that’s not unlike vertigo, but still not quite.”

“You haven’t been drinking the water, have you?” she quipped.

“No,” I chuckled, “I haven’t been flushing the toilet either. What’s up with that?” Written in colorful crayon on a paper sign in the restroom at the station was the following rhyme: “If it is yellow, let it mellow. If it is brown, flush it down.”

Nathalia grinned, widely, as if this were her favorite aspect of the trip, “It is the primitive septic system here. Other than that, though, your trip has been much enjoyable?”

I told her that it had, and that I loved the islands’ weather: warm, but not blazing hot as one might expect from an island located on the equator, and with cool nights and a perpetual, tender breeze from the sea. I loved the sea lions, which lounged on the beaches like giant rubbery cats and played in the water, unafraid and inquisitive of people. Even though the landscape was often stark and even reminiscent of a barren wasteland, I loved it for its virginal serenity mixed with a peculiar surreality that I could not quite describe. It was as though I were walking on the surface of an alien planet.

I told her that even though I could scarcely speak a word of Spanish, I liked the people and their simple lives. I even like the way that the natives in town gawked at me, for the mere novelty of tourists was enough to gain their rapt attention. I loved the food, the earthy smell of the air in the highlands and the salty smell of the air on the shore.

I told her that I'd never felt so safe, walking through a dark forest at night – that I'd never imagined feeling safe walking anywhere at night. There were no large jungle cats lurking, eager to tear my arms off, or predators of any sort, not even insects large enough to cause me any anxiety.

I loved hiking to the seaside, peering over the edge of the cliffs, and watching the water pulverize itself into foamy mist against the rocks. I loved for the first time since I was a child, dirtying my hands with that exhilarating sting of adventure. I told her that I didn't even miss being home; that the island was a peaceful place, fun, beautiful place. I felt safe, I felt calm, and I felt happy, I told her.

"Just that you wish there was some decent coffee," she said.

"Yeah," I said, sourly, "Too bad. I kind of liked it here." I braced myself and sipped the swill from the cup in my hands.

"I should probably go. It's late," I said regretfully. As I stood, the world violently jerked itself out from under me. I steadied myself and took a step.

"I think I can make it now."

"Yes, it is late." Nathalia stood as well, thanked the woman at the bar, gave a soft comforting pat to the cat in the corner, and followed me into the inky darkness. When we were out of sight of the pub, she stopped suddenly, turned off her flashlight. Tilting her head back, she gazed at the stars, "It's beautiful up there. Turn off your light."

The stars shone like the sun through pinholes in a black curtain, far brighter and more dazzling than I'd ever seen them. "It certainly is," I said and looked at Nathalia, whose eyes each reflected the entire field of stars.

She looked back at me, staring for just a moment. "Take my hand," she said.

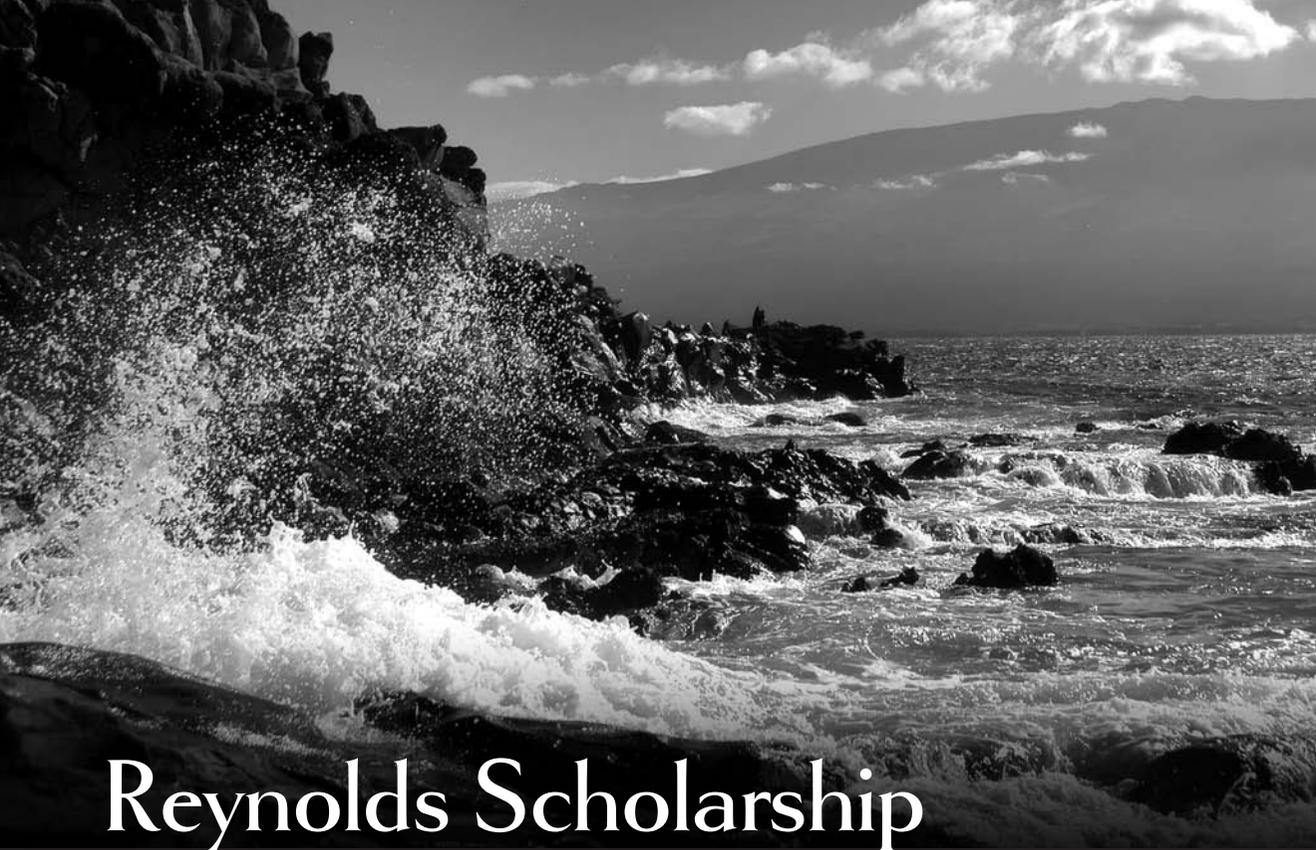
"Going to teach me to dance?" I replied, chuckling.

"Tomorrow, you will learn," she said. "Right now I just need a hand to hold, as dark as it is tonight."

"Afraid of the dark?"

"No, but there might be possums!" she joked.

I laughed, gently took her hand, and together we braved the silent, impenetrable darkness.



Reynolds Scholarship

Dale Nelson
Sacramento City College
California

Big Drink

Before that a crow standing on the corner one wing.
Before that me in the Big Mill, dazed, on drugs
watching wood sing in the cradle, building a tree fort,
hanging from a rope, that dog coming up
the path curling along the side of the road, eating blackberries
on a June day about three in the afternoon.

Before that stopped, held up, delayed – something stunning
about how the sea relaxes on a minus tide
sliding a platter of fried abalone past a drunken uncle

I was put in my place and the best I could do
walking down the hill, I know the best trail,
going through the elderberries on Miller's flat

head down watching for the bull, the soft brown fur around his ears
before that I was standing in the river itself.

Let me go back: I was walking a dog through the woods
and plucking at holes in the ground
the rent was due or something, I could no longer delay
but earlier I had taken the poet out there
and she, on her knees, in leafmold
believed what I showed her, this is the wild world,
as the light couldn't fall but insisted to break through:
we rolled a smoke and lay back soft,
all this escaped and found a way out here
only I know where to find it

on the bear trail I know where it goes up around that knob,
down into the other side, deep and steep
that creek running snowmelt two weeks then easy again, cold.

Before that standing alone Eureka Old Town buzzed
in the fog about midnight gunshots from tweakers
and in the morning silent October duck season shotgun
from way out on the water. Trawlers in the basin.

A fisherman suicidal with love walks toward me,
a poet asking where I get my ideas, the prostitute
wanting to come upstairs, out of the cold, we smoke,
looking out the window, neon buzzed by fog, this old street

runs right off the pier I go to sea the greatest of all the fishes
are tiniest, blooming behind groundswell then descending
into the swirl of countenance and competition looking always
allowing oneself to sink and be sunk and not climb
back: the ocean, great melt, big drink, big drunk.

We had only to walk: that's all we could do.
I said if I saw a raven meander or a talking dog, that was it,
If I saw a buzzard that flies like a crow
toward that great pile of meat stewing in the sun
where the blue whale came up over the horizon
to beach here and look with his eye

at bikini girls dancing in sunshine
while the ocean itself boomed against the cliff and shook
Trinidad Head still has the rusted moorings
and each morning in summer small businessmen
launch for salmon, out toward the shelf
in sixty fathoms, toiling with the great sea creatures

I sat with the poet in the wind of Usal beach
sand blowing past us as a single boat
circled a bite about a half-mile offshore, beating the whitecaps
and working the lines, it might have been a mirage

she didn't want to be a mother but the sea had impregnated her
while I lay between two logs watching cassiopeia turn
over between campground alders near the fire
and the mosquitoes were not so bad.

She didn't know about my brother and Big Blue squealing
and the vast lines up in Hotel Gulch full of merchantable sawlogs
most weekday afternoons in those days loading up in the crummy
to go home about four o'clock then a diet of highballs
a diet of raw beefsteak and runny eggs and the balls

of the male deer served on the half-shell, it's no wonder
she turned up ready to give birth but couldn't have a baby
it turned into a poem and crawled inside her
now her long fingers grip the chair arm
but then the wind kept up until sundown and we walked

through the ghost town while all of time opened,
before and behind and around us like small galaxies
the eternal souls of everyone look for that lost milk.

Before that lost milk under the tan oaks rolling around on acorns,
wobbling down a trail heavy with mint,
drinking tea in the rough dawn in a small town with a drunk

or the Russian mystic walking around the world greeting me
in the Arcata Safeway meat section two in the morning I took him home
one night he gave me a broken watch kept walking
two years later Nakgoon with strange Aleut customs in the Brewery
wanting a drink shows my girl how to tie her shoe in Russian
orthodox missionary style we drove him up past the lights
here and there we smoked a bowl he said
he was on a spirit journey in and out of the Humblodt Hilton,
biggest building between Pelican Bay State Prison
and the Sonoma County line that pink jailhouse
(you hear them shooting hoops if you stand on 4th street
under the window)
where the poet turned up dead, thinking he was Rimbaud
but the world was not pregnant enough to keep him

even blessed he was cursed and had to die that way,
strung to his door with a shoelace, paper in hands,
paper hands, a disguise, how he fled the world,
a record, notes on what he thought he had seen,
it was all so surreal but the police weren't, they just got tired
of the 5150s, the danger of public safety,
the gopher crawling on the lawn with an arrow
stuck in his belly like John Wayne wearing a ten gallon hat
the way the west was won: two trains, each a hundred cattle cars
and a coal slide pounding into each other
in a snow barn, killing 500 Chinese

and the next day Reservation types going over the trapped carcasses
looking for booty and flank steak among the smoking ties
while the Pinkertons ride over the ridge, you know it's business now,
John D. Rockefeller coming along in the Pullman car,

you can see it all spelled out if you know where to look.
California poppies volunteering in a rock garden.

Before that standing alone in the river a steelhead,
half-dead, coming downstream, into my hands,
I take it home and cook it, not so great, a little soft,
but with lemon it's ok, after all, something out of that sea
that fell into my hands.

Pregnant with ideas an hour and a half after dark
it's now the year two thousand seven they've got it all skinned
like a potato for the stewpot full of roadkill they
make a nice pot of chili for the inmates up at high desert
here try the jack-rabbit soufflé – never any trans-fat –
the golden eagle sweeping over the low crest of sage ridges
that radiate from here all the way to Salt Lake City

no outlet
in all this wide country the ancient seas
rest buried in stone
decorated in peculiar markings
that call out from under the sand:
you stand this way with a stone-tipped arrow
or simply pass away in the heat
where the wild horses
plow through old sand

only they can tell where the waterholes are
out of the juniper draws that turn backward
under light snow
and go nowhere.

Stand just this way under the pinon pine with hands outspread
this way under valley live oak, hand open, mouth open
a diamondback snake flat on the road,

a vast field of alfalfa, California, with a prison
cunningly applied directly to the landscape like a feature
where a million lifers go slowly mad
sinking their sly shivs into each other
as cassiopeia turns
through creekside pines
under the bridges of respectable middle-class vacations,
the sally-ports reach only by arduous travel
over empty sage (a mink in the creek at Alturas, nobody saw
it but me, another near Hyampom, or maybe on the other side,
the poet sat in her underwear near the water
but I was in the right place and saw
its wild movement over the rocks
where the kids play all summer but not today)

Steel bars between all of us and the spheres that sing
toward space, television satellites barely visible
clanging like bells between mountains if you lie quiet
at midnight on Horse Mountain after the bear has rummaged
around in the pantry, close your eyes, dear
and listen to the oil truck like a ghost howling
out of Willow Creek.

Before that we all had the same stars and I knew no better
than to walk over the edge of California, the actual border
under a scourge of dragonflies
and grasshoppers and the blue godlike tumble of thunder
toward us over the green, no that's not enough, it's greener,
it's deep green, it's the green of dollarbills wetted and alive,
pregnant, even, blooming out with light from the cloud

eating a strawberry in the ditch I believe I am five years old,
dangerously small but it's better, knowing nothing
except that if someone throws you in,
you have to swim.



Nota Bene Authors

Aaron Benavidez
Sacramento City College
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En Pursuit of Energy: 1876-1878, New Haven, United States

God knows, Newton had a hunch.

All that inter-discourse over F, W, K
Quickly led thinkers – like silver bullets,
With grey hair and worldly, wizened smiles,
Driving down country lanes – to
Think about: What there is
That drives a chemical reaction?

Enter Gibbs: after a long line of them,

AM₁₂₅₀ – AL=P-SL₁₇₈₀ – JD₁₈₀₈ – GH₁₈₄₀ – JJ₁₈₄₇ – RC₁₈₆₅ – LB₁₈₇₂

Carbon-chains of scientist after scientist,

Distinctly chiral, not one's work a mirror of the other,

Who most likely knew, like memorized Mendeleev charts,

The Philosopher's Platonic Companion:

The Life of the Mind.

Have we forgotten? J. Willard was a physicist (and mathematician!).

A Fact pumping veins of *la vérité et* yet

Keeping quite, calm tempos under our

Current scientific clamor composed, divisively,

In disheartening polyrhythms:

Who will look beyond standard states and build a bridge?

Who will remind us that physics lies at the heart of chemistry,

That chemistry, like ancient Roma from primordial Greece,

Borrows from its Brother.

– “every system seeks to achieve a minimum of free energy.”

Thankfully Gibbs got it, silently working in New Haven

Among erlenmeyers and swan-necked flasks, reaching out for uniformity,

Fusing the physiochemical, colliding what was considered

So divergent and distinct into that seminal, abstract scientific enjambment:

On the Equilibrium of Heterogeneous Substances.

Spontaneity, no longer a mystery, soon

Le Chatelier, always chatty about balancing effect, then, cause

Compared Gibbs to Lavoisier, predicting the emergence of

“A new department of chemical science.”

And Behold: Chemistry 101: Chapter 19.



Virginia Conner
Midlands Technical College
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Scavenger

I became a scavenger of society;
It possesses me to admit it;
To envy a world that never cares,
And to become that which doesn't seek truth,
Thinking it's better to not take a stand;
But blind survival craves no dignity.
Though you'll never understand why,
I sought the bliss of pure untamed ignorance.
Seeking that grass which never grows,
But that always look green in the distance;
There's a certain satisfaction with instant gratification,

If only for a second there's an instant rush you feel.
You pick the truth you like,
And that's what you believe;
But to pick nothing at all,
Is the essence of a scavenger;
To survive at any level,
Not caring how you do;
Saying what you have to,
So no one points at you;
Not caring how you look,
Not knowing how you feel;
Emotions trapped inside,
Every thought must stay concealed;
This astral-turf that never grows,
And has no scent at all;
Doesn't seek the rain,
Or the sunshine in the spring;
It stays winter there for years,
But that grass will never change;
Though it doesn't die,
It never really lived;
And the grass that was beneath,
Is smothered by its weight,
So the grass that has no roots,
Has a place to lie.



Thomas Perri
Community College of Philadelphia
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Down and Out Christmas

A diner can be a lonely place any time of year, but Christmas Eve in a diner is a special hell reserved only for society's dregs and the truly forgotten. If this were a movie the name of this dive would be the Down-and-Out Diner. The soundtrack would be some cool George Shearing jazz piano meandering out of an ancient jukebox. But this isn't a movie, and the only thing providing ambience here is a cigarette-smoke stained television set rerunning the "Brady Bunch" Christmas episode. Through a thick coating of nicotine, Cindy Brady whines to a department store Santa Claus about getting her mommy's voice back in time for Christmas. Well, kid, this is the Down-and-Out Diner. Find yourself here on Christmas Eve and you'll really have something to whine about.

A Christmas-themed commercial plays a techno version of "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas." Not to me it's not, I think to myself as I stare out the window. The television fades from my consciousness. A cold light drizzle wets the streets. Through the glare from my window seat I observe a smattering of shadows from the living as they scatter through the night to places they must go.

Inside, I survey my fellow diners. The police sergeant, well he's not a police sergeant anymore. He got drunk one night and got himself caught with a

prostitute in his own sting operation; his wife left him, he lost his job, he lost his pension, he lost everything, and now he's lost. You can find him here on almost any night slurping brown liquid into his broad Irish face from a chipped bowl. Once in a while he mutters to himself something unintelligible. His shoulders then jerk up and down in rhythm to his own laugh. I sometimes think I'll say hello to him; but then again, I don't feel like pretending to have something to laugh about.

The waitress gave up laughing years ago. In a world of mean waitresses this woman is a titan. The only other customer in the place besides the ex-cop and myself is a homeless woman. At least, I think she's homeless. I've seen her here plenty, and I think she frequents this dive because the food is the only thing in the world that smells worse than she does; she kind of blends in with the joint.

There's another commercial break in the "Brady Bunch" Christmas episode. A beautiful woman is showering her modeling school husband with kisses as they stand next to a brand new Lexus with a big red bow on its hood. "No one's getting a Lexus out of me this year," I mutter unintelligibly to no one. "Hell, the waitress will be lucky if she gets a tip." My shoulders jerk up and down in rhythm to my own laugh. Suddenly I stop; it's time to go, I think to myself. I'm starting to blend in with this joint.

I pull a hand full of change from my pocket and drop it on the tabletop. The coins spin wildly before coming to rest in various positions around my discarded paper utensil ring and crumpled napkin. As I watch the last dance of the American currency, I become aware of a reggae rhythm. Bob Marley's voice struggles from the yellowed television. "Let's get together and feel alright," he sings. It's easy for him to feel alright - he probably never ate here. But still he is right; if we could get together we would feel all right. Old Marley is dead, but maybe he's trying to tell me something.

Shooting a glance towards the homeless lady, I throw her a quick "Merry Christmas." She smiles. "It's alright baby," she says, "you still exist." The ex-sergeant mutters something and I decide to fake a laugh alone with him. Then he mutters something that ended with the word "Christmas." "Thanks," I say, "you too."

Another customer wanders into the Down-and-Out Diner dragging a fresh cut Christmas tree behind him. He seats himself at the counter. He looks a lot like Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Not that I know what Ferlinghetti looks like, but he's got to look like somebody and it might as well be him. I pass the stranger on my way out, and he places a hand on his Christmas tree as if I might steal it or something. "Don't worry pal," I say, "I don't want your tree... they killed Jesus on one of them things." The waitress smiles at that; she knew Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Then I go out into the night. The light drizzle has turned into a dusting of snow. I guess this is what Christmas looks like.



Gina Raye Felts
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The Bayeux Tapestry

A silent chunk of ice hurtles through space and becomes an unwitting participant in European history. The comet now named for Edmond Halley, clearly visible in the night sky that spring, was one more extraordinary event in a year of extraordinary events that saw three very different men rule over England. The pivotal year was 1066, and the victory ultimately of William, Duke of Normandy, over King Harold of England at the Battle of Hastings forever changed the European political landscape in ways still felt today. Many of the important events leading up to this decisive battle were captured in a unique domestic artwork known as the Bayeux Tapestry.

The Bayeux Tapestry, named for the French cathedral and city where it was displayed for centuries and still resides, is not a tapestry as we understand the term in modern textiles, but an embroidered wall hanging approximately 20 inches by 225 feet long (Wilson, p. 10). It is made from eight strips of natural colored linen pieced together into one cloth and embroidered "in colored wools of eight shades; blues, greens, yellow and terracotta red" (Synge, p. 37). The main storyline is illustrated in nearly chronological order in the horizontal center, with a border top and bottom alternating decorative motifs with allusions to fables, various animals and occasionally a veiled hint of a detail left unsaid in the main pictorial essay. A narrative in Latin identifying main characters in the drama and written in short phrases help to flesh out the story.

The provenance of the Tapestry remains a mystery. While nearly all scholars agree that the Tapestry dates to within approximately a decade of the events portrayed (Wilson, p. 212), current scholars continue the debates of the last two hundred years as to who the author and/or designer of the work may have been, the patron who paid for what would have been an expensive undertaking, as well as the nationality of the embroiders who completed the design. Wolfgang Grape's research on the Tapestry led him to believe in a Norman authorship and patronage by William the Conqueror's half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, which is, of course, understandable considering the Normans were victors of the conflict (p. 54). However, Andrew Bridgeford and David Wilson argue convincingly for an English creative team due to the Anglo-Saxon finer workmanship of the period as well as the design similarities to illustrative manuscripts produced in St. Augustine, Canterbury and other monastic houses in England during the 11th century (Bridgeford, p. 159; Wilson, p. 212). And Bridgeford offers the theory that the patron was instead an Englishman named Count Eustace II of Boulogne who directed the production of the Tapestry as a form of absolution towards Bishop Odo after the 1067 unsuccessful attack by Eustace on Odo's Castle (p. 165).

Regarding the artistic creators of the Tapestry, a close examination gives evidence of a single designer, perhaps a cleric or layman familiar with a monastery's treasured illustrated volumes. The immense size of the finished Tapestry would indicate a group of individuals did the actual couch stitch and outline embroidery. And while the gender of these artisans is unknown and not provable at present, it is known that at the time "there were certainly many female embroiderers in England" (Bridgeford, p. 157). As an art form during this century, embroidery

“was held in higher esteem than painting and illumination” (Synge, p. 39) as evidenced by the inclusion of embroidered household items bequeathed from Queen Matilda to the church of Holy Trinity in Caen when she died in 1083 (Bridgeforth, p. 158).

The exact story told in the Tapestry is also debated by scholars. It begins with a meeting between King Edward the Confessor and his brother-in-law Earl Harold Godwinson. After this meeting Harold leaves, prays at a church and embarks on a journey by boat. Harold, coming ashore in France, is seized by Guy, Count of Ponthieu, an area to the north of Normandy. Harold is then ransomed to William, Duke of Normandy. William takes Harold to his castle where he is well-treated and then invited to serve under him in a military campaign that William is beginning against Duke Conan II of Brittany. The Tapestry tells the story of the successful military campaign in Brittany ending with Harold swearing his allegiance to William on sacred relics, then returning to King Edward in England. The commonly held Norman interpretation of these events is that Edward, who was childless, asked Harold to go to Normandy and reiterate to William, Edward’s earlier promise that the crown would go to William upon Edward’s death and Harold’s oath was to support William’s succession (Wilson, pps. 197-200). The English version of these events tells a different reason for Harold’s trip to Normandy. Using that scenario, Harold travels to Normandy to secure the release of his brother and nephew from William’s custody, and his meeting with Edward before this trip is not the receipt of a mission, but a taking leave of his sovereign. Further, the English believe that Harold is a virtual but high-level prisoner of William and his pledge of loyalty is done under duress and not enforceable from a political or ethical standpoint (Bridgeford, pps. 48-55).

After he swears fidelity, Harold is released and returns to England, and again meets with a much frailer Edward. Next portrayed is the consecration of Edward’s church, Westminster Abbey, and immediately following is the death of Edward, which occurred in January, 1066. A deathbed scene in which Edward appears to bequeath the kingdom to Harold is shown, and Harold crowned as king. If the Norman version is the correct one, then Harold’s acceptance of the throne after swearing support of William justifies the war that follows and Harold’s defeat is just punishment for his treachery. However, if one accepts the English version of events with Harold’s pledge under duress being unenforceable, while understanding that legal precedent in England at the time maintained that Harold could rightfully be given the crown from Edward’s instructions

(Bridgeford, p. 51), then William initiated the military campaign to further his political goals and his actions become an unwarranted act of aggression against a bordering sovereign state. It is at this point the famed comet is included in the Tapestry border. This type of celestial phenomena would have been seen by the populace as a sign of heavenly feeling toward the newly crowned Harold, but whether considered a sign of confirmation or condemnation, the Tapestry does not reveal.

Next, word of Edward's death and Harold's accession gets to William in Normandy, and William orders preparations made for an invasion. Trees are felled; ships are built then supplied with weapons, provisions, and defensive pieces such as helmets, mail shirts and shields. Men and horses are loaded onto the many ships, which then sail for England. Arriving in Hastings, the Normans ravage the countryside, then prepare and eat a feast blessed by Bishop Odo. With the telescoping of time in the Tapestry, we next see the Normans mount their horses to lead their foot soldiers into battle against Harold's English forces who have joined them in Hastings. A horrific battle ensues where many men and horses die including Harold's two brothers, Gynth and Leofwine. Odo is shown shouting and encouraging the Norman troops while unarmed, and William is shown removing his helmet to assure his troops he is indeed still alive and fighting with them. Harold is then killed and the Tapestry comes to an abrupt, incomplete end with a scene of the Norman troops chasing the fleeing English. The end of the tapestry is torn as though the final chapter had been violently ripped from it, but history fills in the gap to rename William, Duke of Normandy, as William the Conqueror, King of England, and to tell us the ensuing consequences of this change in rulership.

The Bayeux Tapestry tells a chapter in European history in its own unique and fascinating way. That the Tapestry has survived more than 950 years as a fragile textile, and continues to tell its story nearly intact, is a compelling tale on its own. The pictorial references to life in the 11th century are unparalleled by any other surviving art, yet the mysteries of its origins and slant of its storyline remain to tantalize curious historians. Like Halley's Comet perhaps science and discovery will someday unravel the clues and reveal the rest of the story.

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THE 3rd OF JULY

We were headed south to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, for what seemed like the 50th time, to participate in battle reenactments and living history encampments. The six of us were members of Union artillery units, all part of the 2nd corps, and we camped and worked together. To pass the time on the long, boring drive down Route 95, we'd try to impress each other, especially the newbies, with weird tales of reenactments past, ones that made you stop and think how it must have been to really be there, in the actual battle, during those three horrific days of death and destruction. My turn came. I told about July 3, 1988, the 125th anniversary of the third day's battle of Gettysburg. This was the day of my indoctrination into the realm of the unknown.

We were bringing the now-famous Gettysburg Gun with us to the 125th commemorative battle. The 12-pound Napoleon belonged to original Civil War-era battery, and is the only existing, all-original cannon known to be at the battle. During the fierce cannonade of Pickett's Charge on the

third day, a Confederate shell hit the muzzle, exploded, and killed two gunners. The sergeant tried reloading, but the muzzle was badly dented. As the bronze cooled, the solid shot ball fused in its mouth. The army meant to scrap it, but the state rallied to have it returned as a relic.

We got to the Park late afternoon and my friend Private James and I decided to rest in a nearby grove before setting up camp. Within minutes he began acting strangely, almost as if he'd been spooked. His stance became submissive with head and shoulders bowed. He turned and stared at me with a haunted look in his eyes and said, "I want to go home!"

"You've got to be kidding!" I replied. "We just got here. People are counting on us. This is a chance in a lifetime, and you want to go home!"

"I can't explain it," he said. "I just don't feel I should be here now." He walked away by himself, and I could see he was crying.

This was not the gregarious, duty-bound Private James I knew. I was mystified and unsure of what to do. Next thing I knew he was walking toward me saying, "We'd better get back to camp to help unload the gun. This is going to be an amazing event, and I want to be there when the gun touches that sacred ground." So we rejoined the others, and the last half-hour seemed forgotten.

The Gettysburg Gun was unloaded as the sun set over the field at Pickett's Charge. We set up the tents and displays and dressed in our uniforms. Assignments were given for round-the-clock guards. We'd heard rumors that Rebs were out to grab souvenir pieces of our famous gun, even if they had to break them off, so guys from sister units pitched in, and all seemed right with the world.

As the sky darkened, an extraordinary scene unfolded. Across from camp was the Tammany Monument, a life-sized bronze Indian and teepee. Behind the monument rose the biggest, reddest, blood moon, giving the steamy sky an eerie glow. I rushed to get my camera. Private James was facing the monument with his back to the camera. Behind him was a replica iron gun. I included both in the photo for perspective. Within what seemed like minutes, the moon was high in the sky and appeared ordinary as usual. I couldn't wait to see that photo developed.

About an hour later Captain Johnson of the National Guard arrived. He was the one that helped us secure delivery of the Gettysburg Gun to the battlefield. Someone asked about his dealings with past-life regressions, and before long the conversation centered on reincarnation.

"Private James here claims to have lived before," remarked our Captain. "In fact, he believes he actually fought in the Civil War." Captain Johnson's interest was peaked, and he asked Private James if he'd consent to a regression here on the spot.

"I'm not so sure that's a good idea," said James, apprehensively. "Strange things are happening in my head today."

"All the better," said the Captain. "You're probably more receptive." James reluctantly agreed, maybe to satisfy his own curiosity, but he wouldn't do it in front of everyone.

"We'll go inside the wall tent," said Johnson. "There's a rope bed you can lie down on." So Johnson, James, and a few of his closest friends – me included – entered the tent.

After making James comfortable, Captain Johnson asked everyone inside the tent to sit quietly. "It's a privilege to be here," he said. "No talking, no interference of any kind." He began speaking to the private in a low, comforting tone.

"Let's begin by going back in this lifetime, back to your childhood, back to a happy memory. What are you wearing on your feet?"

"Cowboy boots," answered James.

"What do you see?"

"It's my birthday party. I'm five," said Private James.

"Let's go back further to a distant memory. Is there a time when you served in the military?"

Suddenly, as if on cue, loud bursts of fireworks shattered the peaceful night. They sounded amazingly like cannonade and added a strange authenticity to the scene.

Private James began moaning. "All my men are dead... all dead! It's not right!" he wailed.

"It's okay, James, you aren't really there," the Captain said, reassuringly. "You're an observer, not a participant. Nothing you see can hurt you now." He waited a few minutes for James to calm down.

"What country are you fighting for?" asked Johnson.

"The Confederacy," James replied, matter-of-factly.

"What's your name and unit?"

"Lt. Jeb Samuels, 9th Carolina."

"What happened to your men?"

"Yankee snipers in the trees. All dead except me. I let my men down!"

"Why weren't you with them?"

"I'm the lieutenant, I stayed behind." Then he howled, "I need to get out of here!"

Captain Johnson decided that James had had enough, so he said, "When I count to three, James, you'll wake up. 1...2...3."

James woke up, looked around at the shocked faces, then got up and walked out down the road. I followed him to make sure he was okay.

“Jeeze!” I exclaimed. “No wonder you felt weird when we got here. Who would’ve thought?”

“I’ve thought about it many times, and I’m sure I’ll think about it even more now,” said James. “I wish I’d never agreed to it. Knowing what came before can make it hard to live this life, with thoughts and memories scattered. I just hope I get it right this time around!” he exclaimed in all seriousness.

When I got my photos back, the one of the Tammany monument with the blood moon rising made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I couldn’t believe my eyes! There was Private James, standing in the dark looking toward the moon-lit monument, but the weird thing was that the wheels of the repro iron cannon behind him appeared to be ablaze, as if the battle was still raging, and the back of his jacket was lit from behind! But how was it possible? There was no campfire, no street lights – no light at all except the faint camera flash. Somehow, somehow a moment in time was captured on that film. The whole incredible event was an experience I’ll never forget.

It’s been nearly twenty years since that fateful day. Private James never returned to Gettysburg, not for reenactments or even remembrance days. He says there’s no need – no sense pretending to fight battles when you’ve done the real thing.



Kathleen Settels
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Till the Soil

She dug deep into the blackened earth
And as she did, the dirt found its way into her wayward fingernails
It felt cool in contrast to the heat that rose off her body
As if to remind her of the time clock
A clock she was crucified to now
She watched the hens rush by in a whirling dizzy frenzy
As her hand covered in mud, lay still while her feet dove into the soil
and grew roots



Kathleen Settels
Irvine Valley College
California

Twice

She was softer than a shadow
With a broken smile
That let the pain run down her thighs
So that all who entered were stung like a bee
Fractured beauty
She never thought twice about leaving this space
Moving toward an unfamiliar patch of ground
That her worn feet could walk upon
She only stood in a statue stance
Letting the wolves bark and howl at her knees



Samantha Eppes
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Old Dog

Little Old Dog is older than dirt, blind, deaf, arthritic and boney. He trembles and struggles feebly when we attempt to insert a catheter into his vein. But he needs fluids. His kidneys are failing. He comes to the veterinary hospital every weekend, to have blood tests or fluids or some other treatment for his failing health. His veins are tough and leathery from being poked with needles so often. The catheter will not go in easily.

I feel angry as I hold him, keeping him still as we make a second attempt to catheterize. Why do his owners insist in prolonging his suffering? He is old, his body is shutting down. When will they be ready to let him go? It is hard to lose a pet, I remind myself. But they must consider his quality of life. Soon he will have spent more of his life in a hospital than with his family. He is always in pain. What joy is left in living? The catheter is in at last. Fluids begin.

The day goes on. Take Old Dog outside, the veterinarian tells me. We need a urine sample. A pointless excursion, I think. Old Dog can't control his bladder anymore. We've never gotten a urinary sample without a urinary catheter. Old Dog quivers when I open the cage. I let him sniff me and lift his frail bones gently. I grab a cup for urine and we go out to the yard. I put him on the ground. He stands still for a moment, disoriented, before attempting to limp forward. He trips over the injection port that protrudes from the bandage securing the catheter in his vein. It is pitiful to behold.

But suddenly, Old Dog seems to realize that he is outside. He sniffs the grass. He hobbles a few more paces. His milky eyes gaze unseeingly at the sky. His tail lifts. It shudders jerkily, as though trying to remember some long forgotten task, and then it begins to wag. Old Dog wags his tail, continues wagging it, even as he trips again. Exhausted, he sits in the grass and lifts his face to the sun, shutting his useless eyes as his nose twitches at the cool breeze.

I sit beside him and reach out to stroke his head. I hold his crinkled ear between my fingertips. He turns to me, and kisses my hand. Just one brief, little kiss. Old Dog is happy, if only for a moment. And I understand why his owners can't let him go.



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Silent Society

“All that is necessary for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing.” This famous quote reflects the philosophy of Edmund Burke, an influential English politician in the late 1700s, who encouraged change in governments throughout the western world. Countless times throughout history, individuals noted trends of tyranny and demanded liberty and, driven onward by powerful ethical ideals, rose to make a difference in the world, unafraid of the opposition and undaunted by the status quo. However, an unresponsive community severely hinders the leader calling for action but unable to ameliorate problems alone. This inaction equates passive consent because the individuals within the society recognize a social problem but choose to remain silent. Often, this leads to the destruction not only of great leaders, but of entire communities and even ways of life.

Countless leaders realized the imperative that good men do *not* “do nothing,” thereby encouraging their communities toward action for the benefit of society. Sophocles, the ancient Greek general, politician and author, demonstrates a similar call to action in one of his earliest plays, *Antigone*, in which he demonstrates a gruesome effect of passivism in order to encourage action and change.

In the play, the young princess Antigone challenges the existing authority in order to follow her ethical guidelines, jolting her submissive community. *Antigone* takes place in Thebes after a great battle in which Antigone’s brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, kill each other fighting for the throne, leaving their uncle Creon to rule. As king, Creon orders an honorable burial for Eteocles, while leaving the body of Polynices, a traitor to the city, for the crows. This questionable edict risked offending the gods and denied Polynices any hope for the afterlife. Antigone brashly disobeys the edict and buries her brother with the traditional burial rights, wildly unashamed of defying the king. Creon, denoting her decision as an act of rebellion, orders her imprisonment. Several people implore Creon to reconsider his hasty decision, including Ismene, Antigone’s sister, and Haemon, son of Creon and betrothed to Antigone; however, Creon remains adamant about his decision. Antigone, sentenced to die in a tomb, impetuously hangs herself. Her death leads to the suicide of Haemon, and subsequently Creon’s wife, who stabs herself in anguish over her dead son. Too late, Creon realizes the painful consequence of his poor judgment and says, “Take me away, I beg you, out of sight. A rash, indiscriminate fool!” (Sophocles 1459-60).

The most obvious examples of individuals who take action are Antigone and Creon. Both, however, proved to make hasty decisions and act recklessly. In the opening scene, Antigone immediately calls on Ismene to join in her scheme to honor Polynices. Ismene refuses and implores her sister to pause to consider the best course of action saying, “Oh my sister, think...Why rush to extremes?” (Sophocles 60, 80). Later she adds, “Oh Antigone, you’re so rash – I’m so afraid for you!” (Sophocles 96). However, rashness seems to define Antigone’s decisions and character. Patricia M. Lines, a Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute and a Research Associate at the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute of Student Achievement, explains Antigone as flawed with self-sufficiency, drawing a quote from the chorus: “A self-determined impulse hath undone thee” (1497). She describes Creon, on the other hand, as flawed with “excessive harshness and tragically delayed conversion” (Lines 1496). His decrees, first to dishonor Polynices and later to punish Antigone, contradicted social beliefs, a mistake he doesn’t admit until the death of his wife and son. Joseph L. Badaracco, Professor of Business Ethics at Harvard Business School, states that both Creon and Antigone’s lack of consideration causes their downfall (172). He explains their destruction as a lack of “prudence... care, thoughtfulness, and concern about a wide range of practical considerations” (Badaracco 181). They both obstinately

hold to their own view points and refuse differing advice or opinions. Antigone's brash, self-centered nature and Creon's harsh laws and stubbornness create the dichotomy of their inner conflict. Both act impulsively on their own standard of right: Antigone on her sense of family duty and "religious tradition," and Creon on his "own authority" as ruler appointed by the gods (Gibbons 5, 9).

On the surface, the plot of *Antigone* tells a story of a young person who radically acts in opposition to an unjust authority. However, the heart of the story contains a much deeper struggle than that of hero and villain. Others in the play struggle with perhaps a more difficult decision. The relatives, elders, and community in general must decide which argument holds more weight, which leader to follow regardless, and finally, what action to take in support of their decision. Unfortunately, though they clearly disagree with the unethical decree, most of the citizens choose to support Creon, whether verbally or by passive consent. However, not everyone remains silent. A few individuals, especially those closely related to Antigone and Creon, make active decisions.

Haemon, arguably the closest person connected with the inner conflict, struggles as a son of the king and lover of the traitor. Haemon asserts that his love and devotion belong to his father saying, "No marriage could ever mean more to me than you, whatever good direction you may offer" (Sophocles 711-12). However, his love does not blind his discernment as he deliberates his father's decision. He asks his father to consider the opinion of the citizens who side with Antigone and suggests that he reconsider the punishment. Although he never defends Antigone, Haemon harshly rebukes Creon for his poor judgment, which only infuriates his father. Later, Haemon chooses to kill himself when he finds Antigone dead, distressed, perhaps, that he couldn't save her. Haemon, though a subsidiary character, displays a complex inner conflict of "love and filial piety" (Scodel 51). Originally, his loyalty to his father exceeds his love for Antigone, though he never wishes for her death. However, as he debates with his father he realizes the fallacies in the king's reasoning and makes a decision of action to follow his betrothed to a wedding of death. Although Haemon never opposed Antigone, he took the time to assess the situation before fighting for her cause. A few other characters also choose to observe before making a decision. Ismene initially declined Antigone's plan but later accepts it as her own at her sister's trial before the king. A wordy messenger bringing news of Antigone's participation in the burial diligently weighed both sides of his choices, contemplating so thoroughly that eventually Creon throws him out in frustration (Badaracco 172). These individuals don't alter Creon's plan and may not have made the wisest choices, but they give better examples of the foundation of a considered choice of action (Badaracco 172, 175-6).

While Antigone, Creon, and a few individuals decide and act, countless others watch from the sidelines, most notably the chorus and the citizens of

Thebes, who choose not to act. Sophocles addresses their position as much as the leading roles, pointing out another harsh truth about decision or the lack thereof. The Chorus can be thought of as elders in the land, common citizens with an acute perception of ethos and religion. Although the elders hate siding with a wild woman, they realize the consistency of Antigone's argument with their own beliefs. Ancient Greeks considered proper burial a crucial and sacred right. Denying that right would be regarded as sacrilegious and cruel, one that opposed the gods (Gibbons 8). Therefore, the Chorus must agree with Antigone because she "has on her side the weight of religious tradition [and] the universal recognition of the rights of burial" (Gibbons 5). However, they choose to remain silent rather than confront their leader. The citizens of Thebes react similarly, Haemon relates to his father:

... [I]t's for me to catch the murmurs in the dark, the way the city mourns for this young girl. "No woman," [the men of the city] say, "ever deserved death less, and such a brutal death for such a glorious action...Death? She deserves a glowing crown of glory." (Sophocles 775-782)

The people believe in Antigone's cause, elevating her to a position of a leader, or person of honor, by saying "she deserves a glowing crown of glory;" however, they don't act on their position. Instead, they conspire with rumors "spread in secret, darkly" (Sophocles 783-784). In a way, both the Chorus and the community passively consent to the tyranny by doing nothing, regardless of whether or not they approve of the action.

Antigone's society can be thought of as brainwashed with fear of the King's power. Traditions of kings' sovereignty by divine right (for all kings were believed to be appointed by the gods) locked good men's mouths in silence (Sophocles 566). The Chorus reveals this fear when Creon appeals that they support his unethical decree, demanding enmity towards anyone who disobeys (Ierulli 482). The Chorus consents by saying, "The power is yours, I suppose, to enforce it with the laws, both for the dead and all of us, the living...Only a fool could be in love with death" (Sophocles 236-246). Though the Chorus knows the traditions of the times and laws of the gods, the fear of the king, and his powerful weapon, death, thwarts their good judgment. As Antigone says, "What greater glory could I win than to give my own brother decent burial? These citizens here [the Chorus] would all agree...but defer you and keep their tongues in leash" (Sophocles 561-570). Ironically, Antigone walks to her death in full view of countless citizens who agree with her cause but let her die rather than risk their own lives.

By pointing out the inconsistency of the citizens and Chorus, Sophocles leaves the audience no excuse for passivism. Instead, he shows that every viewer,

regardless of his or her station in life, must be responsible to keep authority in check by demanding ethical rights throughout the community. Sophocles, as many ancient Greek authors, used his influence as a popular writer and politician to expose moral and political concerns of the community (Kennedy 1361). Through *Antigone* and similar plays, Sophocles flagrantly pointed out inconsistencies and injustices he noted in the Athenian government and society. During the opening scene, Sophocles seemed to rouse his fellow Athenians to note the consequences of an unchecked ruler when Ismene implores her sister not to “violate the laws and override the fixed decree of the throne” (Sophocles 73-74). According to Molly Ierulli, author of *The Politics of Pathos: Electra and Antigone in the Polis*, the word “decree” derives from the same word for “voting,” or the outcome of the vote; a strange irony when compared to Creon’s autocracy (482). Ierulli comments on this word usage by saying:

“[D]ecree” in conjunction with “tyrants” must have amounted, in the time of Sophocles, to a virtual oxymoron; fifth-century Athens considered itself a society founded, as it were, on tyrannicide, a context in which ‘voting,’ the exercise of power by citizens, would contrast sharply with the ‘power of tyrants.’ If the memory of tyranny constituted a ‘permanent trauma’ in the Athenian collective unconscious, then a reference to the defining privilege of democracy in association with tyranny would surely have reawakened the trauma.” (482)

Sophocles intends the “reawaken[ing]” in *Antigone* to warn the Athenians, who already feared returning to totalitarianism, of the possible downfall of their society if they continue overlooking blatant problems.

At the time of Sophocles, the Athenians took pride in the first established democracy, a republic of free, male citizens, elected through city-wide voting (Manville 55). In theory, the government encouraged Athenians to actively participate in public affairs; however, few citizens received complete freedom in actual practice. Ruth Scodel, a professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Michigan, writes that a close contemporary of Sophocles abused his political power over the Athenians, making the government “in name democracy, but in fact the rule of the first man” (Scodel 3). On one hand, Sophocles uses *Antigone* to point out the effect of a poor leader, but on the other, he challenges the common people, those with rights abused, to realize their responsibility to make choices and not to allow fear to hinder good judgment.

Eleanor Kaufman, professor of Comparative Literature, wrote an extensive analysis on the reasons for action within *Antigone*. She believes that essentially the ethics of each individual drives them to make decisions. She says, “The *Antigone*-event...openly represents an extreme particularity that may affect

general change, and in any case, it highlights the fraught nature of ethical action" (149). This in mind, Antigone warns not only her own people, but everyone for generations, any society cowering before a tyrant; any individual who would sacrifice ethics to fear. Our own post-modern society parallels that of Sophocles' time in this respect. We take pride in our democracy, in our policy to allow everyone a voice; in actuality, however, rules and decisions fall on the shoulders of a few individuals and not the consent of the people. Appallingly, many people do not notice and do not mind. Though we may complain, vent, or grumble, we do little to actually change things for the better. The danger of passivism throughout history, and even today, can result in a reoccurring "*Antigone*-event": an event in which an individual stands against mainstream society, upholding the ethics and justice, while those agreeing with the hero's ideals hold back, afraid of the risk it might involve (Kaufman 149).

Our society would be wise to consider Sophocles' warning. Though the tyrant Creon ordered the death of Antigone, those standing by, in a way, killed her by their silence. Tongues "locked in fear" hinder good men and allow "evil to prevail," but when "great unwritten, unshakable traditions" are upheld and acted upon even death becomes glory (Sophocles 506, 566).

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Things I Need to Do

Water the plants
Wash the dishes
Clean the clothes
Cry
Feed the dogs
Open the bottle
Drink its contents
Dry
Find a realtor
See an attorney
Pay the bills
Cry
Shampoo the carpet
Divide the assets
Tell our children
Why



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Vietnam War Poets

The Vietnam War, a war that lasted over fifteen years, stirring controversy and causing millions of fatalities, also started a movement in poetry. Many poets, such as Bruce Weigl and Walter McDonald, found their voices in poetry, which enabled them to speak their thoughts and feelings about the war and its effects. Some of these poets wrote about personal experiences and the direct effects of the war, like Bruce Weigl, a Vietnam veteran; yet others wrote about how the war affected them indirectly, like Walter McDonald, a retired Air Force officer and English professor (“Bruce (Allan)” 1; “Walter” 3).

Bruce Weigl has written numerous poems, many of which have focused on the Vietnam War. In 1988, a collection of his war poems was published in book form and titled *Song of Napalm*. The title poem, “‘Song of Napalm’ is a free verse poem of forty-five lines divided into five stanzas” (Henningfeld 1). Another war poet, Walter McDonald, has contributed over 1,500 works to various literary journals (“Walter” 4). One of his poems, “Black Granite Burns Like Ice”, reprinted in the literary anthology *Retellings*, is a free verse poem of twenty-eight lines divided into seven stanzas (McDonald 913). Both of these writers show similarities in their poems, such as dealing with life after the war, using a significant degree of figurative language, and using violent and painful imagery, but they also have

many differences, such as their personal perspectives and their themes. These similarities and differences between Bruce Weigl's and Walter McDonald's poems stem from four categories of analysis including setting and situation, figurative language, imagery and detail, and theme.

The first category of analysis for these two poems is the setting and situation. The two poems are similar because they both are set in the outdoors and in the mind and both are dealing with the after-effects of the Vietnam War; however, there are many differences between the two poems in these same areas. Weigl's poem is set presently in a pasture with hills, but also in the Vietnamese jungle, which is the setting of the flashback. "Song of Napalm" fluctuates between the speaker's reality of watching horses in the pasture and his flashback of a girl burning to death in Vietnam, which interrupts his thoughts repeatedly. In essence, the situation of the poem is an apology to his wife for her having to deal with his post-traumatic stress and flashbacks. This can be assumed from the words "For My Wife" printed under the title (Weigl). On the other hand, McDonald's poem is set in the desert with "hardscrabble fields with cactus and the ghosts of rattlers" (McDonald 913). The situation of "Black Granite Burns Like Ice" is that the speaker is depressed after the war by the loss of many of his friends, which can be assumed by the lines "I've been to the wall/ and placed my fingers on their names" (913). Also, the speaker is noticing the similarities between the carnage of the animal world and the carnage that happened during the war.

Second, both poems contain an abundance of figurative language including similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia and personification, but the poets use these different types of figurative language to purvey different feelings. Weigl uses metaphors mostly to show how reality is being confused with flashback. The receded storm has affected the pasture, leaving mist and rain-swept air, which is causing the grass to reflect different colors of light. This storm becomes a metaphor for the time spent in Vietnam and how it has affected the speaker, or Weigl (Henningfeld 2). The pounding rain becomes the pounding of mortar (2). Also, the black screen, through which the speaker and his wife watch the horses in the pasture, alters the vision through the distance just as the screen of memory would alter through time, the alternate vision of the girl burning (2). Weigl's use of similes comes more obviously, such as the "Branches criss-crossed the sky like barbed wire" and the "napalm stuck to her dress like jelly" (Weigl). He also uses personification when he gives the trees voices in line 12: "trees scraped their voices into the wind" (Weigl). A good example of onomatopoeia is shown in the "crackling" of the girl's muscles as she burns (Weigl). These other forms of figurative language are used for description and also to continue the confusion of reality and horrific past.

Contrarily, McDonald uses figurative language to express his feelings about the war and its after-effects. An ongoing metaphor in "Black Granite Burns Like Ice" is the comparison between the violence of nature and animals and the violence of the war. More obvious metaphors show the speaker's obsession with his pain and depression over the war and the loss of his friends, such as "all fallen friends applaud/ in blisters on our backs", "my dreams are napalm", "sad music's/ on my mind, a war on every channel" (McDonald 913). Also the title of the poem is a good example of a simile: "Black Granite Burns Like Ice" (McDonald).

Third, both poets use a lot of imagery and detail that focus on the pain and savagery of war and also the pain of coping with the after-effects of war; however, the poets differ in the other imagery and detail they employ. Weigl tries to stimulate

all the senses through his imagery and detail. He captures the senses of sight, through his vivid and colorful descriptions; hearing, through the trees' scraping voices and the crackling of the burning muscles; smell, through the "stinking jungle" and the thought of things burning that often evokes a smell; and touch, through the "waves of heat" (Weigl). He also uses kinesthetic imagery with the girl "running" and "reaching" and all of the other action words that give movement to his images. Weigl's intense use of detail is unforgettable, which is why many people believe he is one of the best at "being authentic about the experiences of war" and "[telling] us, with accuracy, what war is like" (Stephens 1; "Bruce Weigl" 2). However, perhaps more importantly, Weigl does not cease to be human and "has become a poet who overtly seeks to understand the worst of human aggression and to move toward peace and harmony ... a powerful poet of violence merging with calm" (Humes 2). McDonald also uses imagery and detail to show pain and violence, but he also uses it to show toughness and death. The "hardscrabble fields/ with cactus and the ghosts of rattlers", feeding field mice and rabbits to hawks, circling buzzards, dying livestock, goats "ripped open/ by barbed wire", diving owls, and snakes ready to strike a grandchild are all very strong images of pain, death and toughness (McDonald 913). Again, he continues the comparison of the animal kingdom to war (913).

The last category for analysis is theme. While both poems are dealing with the after-effects of the war, the two poets also have other themes that are very different. Weigl's poem is seen as an apology to his wife for needing time to get back to normal after experiencing war, if he ever can. Also, another theme of Weigl's is to show civilians what war is like and how flashbacks can consume a person's mind. On the other hand, McDonald's themes focus on the link between the animal world and ours and on the animalistic Vietnam War. McDonald seems to imply that some aspects of humanity, like war, are unnatural or oppositional to nature. He also does a good job at expressing the pain of losing friends to war. According to Patricia Monaghan, in a brief article printed in *Booklist*, McDonald's poems generally focus on "masculinity: war and hunting, work and wilderness" (1).

Bruce Weigl and Walter McDonald are two Vietnam War poets who focus on the after-effects of war and can be compared and contrasted by their themes, settings and situations, uses of figurative language, and styles of imagery and detail. Their tragic experiences have given them talent which makes them memorable and well-known poets. According to the *Biography Resource Center*, Bruce Weigl himself sums it up best when he says:

[T]he war ruined my life and in return gave me my art...
The war took away my life and gave my poetry in return.
The war taught me irony; that I among the others would
survive is ironic. All of my heroes are dead. That is the
particular paradox of my experience as a writer. The fate
the world has given me is to write so beautifully as to draw
the others into the horror. ("Bruce (Allan)" 1)

Perhaps what Weigl says should apply to all people; they must express their suffering in order for the rest of the world to understand what they themselves have not experienced.

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The Theme of Magic in *Othello*

"If Humpty Dumpty's an egg, witchcraft cannot even make him wobble. If Humpty Dumpty's sentient, witchcraft can make him fall off the wall and perhaps break his neck..." (Seabrook 13).

By the time William Shakespeare penned the first line of what would become his masterpiece, *Othello, The Moor of Venice*, magic, one form of it or another had been around for awhile. It was known to Elizabethan England as the shadowy counterfeit of divine grace, the dread traffic of demons, evil spirits or evil people under their power. In the centuries that followed, science drastically reshaped the landscape of belief, and these fanciful attributions lost their appeal. Finally the advent of psychology opened a whole new way of understanding man's experience of the supernatural. And yet, here lay a pitfall. How appallingly easy it was to conclude that since devils and all their works were psychological in nature that they consequently had no teeth in the real world, and that magic was nothing but impotent nonsense. This was wrong, as Shakespeare well knew.

It is clear at least that his understanding of the real nature of magic far exceeded the wisdom of his age. At a time when Europeans were burning each other alive over charges of witchcraft, Shakespeare was writing *Othello*, a work that not only anticipates the psychological understanding of magic by over three hundred years,¹ but offers a brilliant object lesson in the actual use of magic, properly understood and practically applied.

¹The idea of the unconscious mind reached a general readership with the publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899.

In Act One, Scene Three, Othello is accused of bewitching Desdemona, of using sorcery to warp her mind and possess her body. Othello answers this by recounting how he and Desdemona became lovers.

“She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used” (1.3 166-168).

By giving the name of witchcraft to the love between Othello and Desdemona, Shakespeare is making an interesting contrast. This delineation of two distinct kinds of magic is important, as we shall see. But before we speak any more of kinds of magic, we should probably consider what exactly the word signifies.

It’s a tricky definition to lay hold of, because wherever the word appears it refers to an operational obscurity, the action of a force not understood or at least inexplicable. Nonetheless, I believe it suits us to call magic the perceived interaction of subjective awareness with objective reality. We find some precedence for this in Lucien Levy-Bruhl’s concept of participation mystique, that being the state of consciousness general to primitive peoples (and occasionally resonant in moderns), whereby the individual feels that his thoughts participate directly with nature and the community, to the point of subsuming his own individuality. In Freudian lingo it is the omnipotence of thoughts, and the same idea corresponds to Jean Gebser’s most descriptive category of magical consciousness (Jung 14; Freud 73; Gebser 45).

Many paths open to this garden of mysteries, whether by ritual emersion, drug use, psychosis or meditation. We spend much of our early childhoods there, lost in an imaginary dimension that overlays and outstrips the real. Lovers like Othello and Desdemona enter this awareness via their raptures, each experiencing a loss of identity in the other, a participation in each other’s experience at a level transcending the duality of their physical bodies. This kind of magic is so universally recognized that even great religions have drawn legitimacy from its familiar forms.

It is the same universal, ante-doctrinal legitimacy that Othello and his bride invoke before the lords of Venice in answer to her father’s suit. And love wins a victory here, but with a disquieting caveat. Desdemona’s father, his charges defeated, gives over his daughter with the following words to Othello. “Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see. She has deceived her father, and may thee” (1.3 291-292).

No sooner have the happy lovers left the stage than evil show its face, in the person of Iago. Othello’s ensign, who suspects the Moor of seducing his wife and feels he has been passed over for promotion in favor of the Florentine Cassio, has some plans of his own. “I haven’t. It is engendered. Hell and night // Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light” (1.3 385-386).

It sounds almost like an invocation. What sort of magic is this?

William Seabrook, an eccentric and underappreciated writer of the Lost Generation, contributes a useful theory here. It formed the basis for his 1940 book *Witchcraft, Its Power in the World Today*, and stemmed from a paradox that he sets down on the very first page beneath the cover:

“A confirmed disbeliever in the supernatural, refusing to believe in demons, jungle gods, and devils... I yet became convinced after years in the jungle that the witch doctors wield a seemingly “occult” power, deadly, dangerous, and real. ...I became convinced they can kill by the use of witchcraft solely, that is, by pure sorcery, without recourse to poison, pseudo-accident, violence, or any chemical-physical-material contributory causes whatsoever” (Seabrook *i*).

Seabrook believed that the essence of the witch doctors’ power amounted to what he termed *induced autosuggestion*, and explained it with a simple analogy. If one were to continually berate a child over being awkward, the child would eventually internalize the criticism and become awkward. Tell a man he looks ill, and by and by he begins to feel ill. Convince him to his bones that he is marked to die, and watch him waste away.

The term *induced autosuggestion* signifies that this process is seeded in the victim’s mind by an outside agent (rather like poison), and that it then takes hold and becomes self-perpetuation, a psychic malignancy feeding on itself. Magic dolls, death charms, dead animals or inscriptions of power are the physical props of this psychological terrorism, as are nail clippings, locks of hair, and articles of clothing stolen from the victim.

The aim of this kind of magic is to warp the victim’s subjective relation to the objective world, to bedevil and confuse in the dualistic pomp of *maya*. It is the polar opposite of that love-magic mentioned earlier, which by shared subjective experience, overcomes duality and *transcends* the world of objects. Iago’s *modus operandi* is essentially the same as that of Seabrook’s witch doctors, with the exception that Iago has cast aside the crutch of superstition and acts with full understanding of his method. “Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons...” (3.3 330).

The *inducement* comes in the third act of scene three, as Othello and Iago spy Cassio departing from Desdemona. Just a few cryptic words, the ancient to his general: “Ha, I like not that” (3.3 33). It’s enough to snare Othello, and from this point on Iago need not venture any unsolicited accusation or conspicuous opinion. He makes Othello pry the most damning testimony from him, always feigning reluctance, and this strategy keeps Othello from asking the one question that could save him: *What if Iago is not honest?*

But is it not enough that he thinks Desdemona honest? “My life upon her faith,” he tells Brabantio (1.3 293). Is his faith in his wife not sufficient vaccine against creeping jealousy, just as the scornful sophisticate may shrug off a jungle curse with an assured eye to his science or his God? Seabrook weighs in on this as well.

“The intended victim [of witchcraft] may be armed with complete intellectual disbelief, defiance, scorn, against the witch doctor’s mumbo jumbo, but if a residue of unconscious or subconscious fear is there, he may succumb even more quickly than the victim whose fear is on the surface” (Seabrook 12).

And so Othello, who secretly doubts Desdemona could ever really love him, finds his mind revolting against his heart’s most noble aim. This is the true tragedy of the play: the failure of the valiant Moor to keep love’s faith.

Having drawn Othello into his trap, Iago works his venom slowly into the wound. "I see this hath a little dashed your spirits... I'faith, I fear it has... But I do see you're moved... My lord, I see you're moved" (3.3 228-229).

In the course of the two short dialogues Iago has whipped Othello into a froth of vengeful torment, and the Moor at last declares his intentions to kill her. It is here that Iago raises the specter of the handkerchief, the physical token that binds the imagined affair to the world of concrete reality in a meaningful interaction of subjective and objective, just as in fetish magic a doll or a charm anchors the victim's fears and makes the curse *real*. Iago knows: "Trifles light as air // Are to the jealous confirmations strong // As proofs of Holy Writ" (3.3 326-328).

Murder dolls and death charms are known to be most effective when they are constructed from intimate possessions of the victim, and since Othello and Desdemona are Iago's dual-victims, what could serve better than a token of their courtship? Nor is this a common handkerchief, but one crafted by an Egyptian sorceress, given to Othello's mother. "There's magic in the web of it," he tells Desdemona (3.4 68).

This is not the first mention we've heard of a web. "With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio" (2.1 169). This, as Iago observes an innocent handshake between Cassio and Desdemona, the physical sign which he will bring to bear on Roderigo's jealous, lust-addled mind. And later he speaks of using Desdemona's virtue and fondness for Cassio as a net "That shall enmesh them all" (2.3 336).

Shakespearean scholar Louis Marder estimated that Shakespeare used some 7,000 words – more than all the words in the King James Bible – only once and never again (Pressly 1). Surely two webs and a net add up to something. We may parse our question down even more and simply ask: what is a web?

A web does not occur spontaneously in nature, but is the meticulous and purposive construction of consciousness, of a wondrous little locus of same, called spider. It is perhaps nature's most elementary and lucid expression of the tenuous border between real and imagined, of the will of consciousness to cross over and become actualized in the world. It binds spider to life as it binds fly to death, and so we have the dual nature of Shakespeare's metaphor, the potential in magic for good or for ill. To find the same idea reflected in another culture, we need look no further than the Native American tradition of the *dream-catcher*, a net-like construction which stands for the web woven by Spider Woman, the purpose of which is to filter evil emanations from the minds of sleeping children. But if such a web were differently woven and evil filtered *through* rather than out...?

We get a pretty good idea in Act Four. The image of Iago gloating over the unmade hero as he lies in paroxysms of anguish, is one of the most inhuman in all of Shakespeare's works, and strongly underscores his magic theme by showing the physical manifestation of a psychological state.

"Work on // My medicine, work!" intones the villain. "Thus credulous fools are caught // And many worthy and chaste dames even thus // All guiltless, meet reproach" (4.1 41-43).

Now comes the little farce Iago plays with Cassio, causing Othello to think that he hears a confession of adultery with his wife. This ruse would likely fail if Othello could still perceive clearly, but his mind is so eaten up with

jealousy, his relation to reality so warped, that he sees what he expects to see, what Iago has primed him to see, and not what actually transpires. It's a case of stage magic (misdirection of the eye), being used to achieve real magic (misdirection of the mind).

When Iago bluntly exhorts Othello to strangle his wife in her bed, he is in direct contradiction of his earlier advice to spare her. But he wraps all these changes in the guise of an earnest and tortured friend, and times his reversals to match Othello's shifting moods. His work is mostly done now. Othello has essentially gone mad with jealousy, unable to check his violence even in public. The witchcraft has done its work, and we all know what happens next.

These days, we might comfortably label Iago a sociopath, and note how well he fits the profile, citing his lack of conscience, his charisma, his ability to overthrow weaker and less guarded minds. Our task would be made easy by ready-made profiles and warmed-over theories. But it is important to remember that Shakespeare crafted his monster in the dark, without precedent in literature or science, a feat of sheer intuitive genius. Such prescience in a writer is instructive, especially in an age where it has become fashionable to regard authors as mere "author functions," disposable stenographers of the prevailing hegemony. It reminds us that writers are not mere mouthpieces of culture, but movers and shapers of culture as well.

It is hard not to read in *Othello* a despairing lament for the failures of love to overcome deceit and jealousy. I do not believe Shakespeare intended to shield us from such a reading; the lifeless bodies on the bed give heavy testimony. But if we stop there, we overlook something.

Desdemona never renounces her love for Othello. Even as she watches him grow dangerously unstable, even as he strikes her, even as he murders her, she keeps love's faith. Shakespeare even hazards a highly improbable moment in his play when he revives her – after she is stifled – long enough to reaffirm her love for her killer. This may be one of those rare instances where we catch Shakespeare being a writer – a mortal one – leaning on the drama just enough to say what's in his heart. If so, what he seems to be saying is this: that love, the *right* kind of magic, can and does prevail in some. That the struggle is within us.

That all is not lost.

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Let Them Eat Pan Dulce: Violence, Ideology and Death during the Mexican Revolution of 1910

To make an absolute, monolithic statement regarding the motivations behind the Mexican Revolution of 1910 would be more a statement of fiction than objective history. The truth (certainly a fluid construct when “history” is concerned) was that the Revolution actually took on a matrix-like multiplicity with mixed reasons for it, mixed ways of interpreting it from the historians’ 20/20 advantage, and even mixed opinions regarding exactly when the Mexican Revolution began and dove-tailed into Mexico’s real period of modernity. In the “Introduction” to the 1967 text, *The Meaning of the Mexican Revolution*, Michigan State University historian Charles C. Cumberland similarly stated that historical exactitude regarding the Mexican Revolution was difficult to come by: “Mexicans agree that a revolution has taken place, but they do not agree among themselves on the meaning of the Revolution. Each has his own interpretation of the movement’s philosophy, the course of development and the terminal date” (Cumberland vii). Cumberland further wrote that while the perspectives surrounding the Mexican Revolution were numerous, most concerns dealt with land distribution, labor relations and the role of the church, but mostly (and is not it always the case) money, power, control and the artifice thereof: “To some, the real cause of the Revolution was the antiquated land system,

with all its injustices and inefficiencies; to these men the purpose of the movement was land reform, and nothing more. . . . To a number of those who fought, the Revolution's principal cause was labor injustice and its aim, therefore, [was] an amelioration of the working man's plight through proper labor-management relations" (vii). Despite the complexity and the lack of one singular platform upon which the Revolution would spring into life, the period leading up to 1910 and lasting into the next decade would be a monumental moment in Mexican history.

That said, the Mexican Revolution not only changed the course of Mexican history, but was also a dynamic force in the lives of Mexican citizens during the time the Revolution was actually taking place: "In one way or another, the Revolution touched, intimately, all Mexicans, save those indigenes who lived in extreme isolation. Violence became a way of life, either something to take part in or to flee from. Under these circumstances, the Revolution, in upper case, engendered violent emotions on the part of those who experienced it" (Cumberland vii). Thus, it becomes paramount to first evaluate the general and immediate causes of the Revolution. In the conclusion to the chapter titled "The Liberal Indictment," Michael C. Meyer suggested that the reasons for the Revolution resulted from the marked difference between the "prosperity" of the select few and the socio-politico-economic depravity from which the rest of the population of Mexico was slowly dying:

"The centennial celebrations epitomized everything that was right and everything that was wrong with the Díaz regime. Beggars were pushed off the streets of the capital city for the duration so that the guests would receive the proper impression of a prosperous Mexico. The cost of the celebration exceeded the entire education budget for the year 1910. Mexico was at last enjoying its place in the international sun – respect was no longer lacking. But while the champagne was flowing for a few, tens of thousands were suffering from malnutrition. While guests were treated to young female companions, Indian women in the Yucatán were dying in childbirth. While European waiters served at banquets, urban Mexicans were unemployed. While letters of congratulation arrived on time, 85 percent of the population was still illiterate. While visitors rode in shiny new motorcars on well-paved streets in the center of the city, mud and filth engulfed the workers' barrios in the suburbs. In September 1910 Mexico appeared, to many, to be enjoying its finest hour. But with social reform still alien to the Porfirian mentality, the peace would soon prove to be fragile and the showy façade would collapse with it." (Meyer 476).

Like the French Revolution of 1789, the Mexican Revolution was, in part, spurred by the poor state of affairs for the majority of the population, as the national administration seemed to say, abstractly and not-so-abstractly: "Let them eat *pan dulce*."

But the Revolution was also a reaction to a dictatorship masked as a democracy, to the long-time (since 1876) "President" Díaz, who had not only *not* dished out enough *pan*, but was also guilty of too much *palo*. During the decade before 1910, "[p]eriodic food riots, including one in Durango involving more than four thousand people, unsettled the social equilibrium in the countryside" (Gonzales 63). In 1906, Díaz had dispatched troops and ordered them to shoot into the sea of Mexican workers who were protesting the French capitalist Garcín at the Rio Blanco textile mill. In the end, between 50 and 70 workers were killed. Díaz later

said: "Thank God I can still kill" (63). Additionally, in June 1906, when 3,000 Mexican miners at Cananea asked for pay increases, the end of dual pay scale for Mexicans and foreign workers, the hiring of Mexican foremen and an eight-hour work day, Díaz stood – ideologically, politically and otherwise – behind the indiscriminate shooting of the workers, of volleys of bullets blasting into the mass of Mexican citizens. At least 50 people were killed (67-68). Of course, it was known throughout Mexico that Díaz had rigged his presidential elections, that the issue of presidential succession was neither fair nor democratic, and that the land distribution was not about what was best for the Mexican people, but what was best to keep the Porfirian administration in power. Thus it becomes rather understandable that in 1908, when the President told the North American journalist James Creelman in an article for *Pearson's Magazine* that he was considering leaving office, the Mexican literati, intellectuals and political power players sprung into action (Gonzales 71).

The Revolution – it can be argued – had largely been mobilized by three major characters: Francisco I. Madero, Emiliano Zapata and Poncho Villa. "[It was] the moment...for the three Revolutionary leaders, the *caudillos* whose purpose had been 'liberation': Madero, "the apostle of democracy," with his *Plan de San Luis* designed to liberate Mexico from dictatorship; Zapata, "the *Caudillo* of the South," whose *Plan de Ayala* was meant to return the land to the peasants, liberating them from the yoke of the *haciendas*; and Villa, "the Centaur of the North," who was like a blind force, acting not in response to a program but to an implacable, and often bloodthirsty, hunger for 'justice'" (Krauze 242). These three men were most influential in shaping the character of the Mexican Revolution.

Specifically, Madero (1873-1913) was the Mexican president after the overthrow of Díaz. According to Meyer, "he had a faith in democracy that proved ill suited to the political realities of the day." While sociologist Andrés Molina Enríquez published *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, which was a brilliant analysis of contemporary Mexican society, the more influential book was *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* that came from Madero. The following assessment of Madero's hand in the Mexican Revolution comes from *The Course of Mexican History*: "The greatest danger to Mexico, as Madero perceived it, was continued military dictatorship. Although Madero himself did not believe that Díaz was going to step down voluntarily, he urged Mexicans to take the dictator at his word and to begin forming an opposition party, an anti-re-electionist party dedicated to the principles of effective suffrage and no-re-election. He was convinced that the desired change could be effected through the ballot box. The document proved to be much more important historically as, together with the Creelman interview, it set into motion the political forces that would ultimately lead to the conflagration in the fall of 1910. It would also put Madero on the political map. On Election Day, June 21, 1910, Madero found himself in prison in San Luis Potosí and thousands of his Anti-Re-election colleagues in jails throughout the republic. Nobody was surprised when the government announced that Díaz and Ramón Corral had been overwhelmingly re-elected for still another term. The Madero family was able to arrange for Madero's release on bail with the proviso that he confined himself to the city of San Luis Potosí. He did remain in the city for several months, but in early October, when the rigor of his confinement was relaxed, he boarded a northbound train in disguise and escaped to the United States. Then in the middle of October 1910, as supporters gathered around him in San Antonio, Francisco Madero began to draft a revolutionary plan. To avoid any international complication with the United States, he dated the plan October 5, the last day he had been in San Luis Potosí, and in fact, called it the *plan de San Luis Potosí*: "I declare," he stated "the last election illegal and accordingly the republic, being without rulers, I assume the provisional presidency of the republic until the people designate their ruler pursuant to the law...I have designated Sunday, the 20th day of next November, for all towns in the republic to rise in arms after 6 o'clock p.m." Ultimately, Madero wanted to have at least the vice president be re-elected, in an attempt to truly bring democracy to Mexico.

While Madero focused on the political process of the presidential elections, Zapata was most concerned with the land distribution and ownership issue – especially in Morelos where he was elected in 1909 to the local office by the villagers of Anenecuilco (Meyer 487). Interestingly, Zapata did not advocate for the villagers to participate in the realization of the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*. Zapata, who was not originally as concerned with unseating the dictator, believed that the overthrow of the government would only matter if the land problems could be resolved. Additionally, Zapata did have some victories over the Díaz military before Díaz' resignation in May 1911, but ultimately Zapata's assassination in 1919 gave him his current popularity as the revolutionary for the "peasant class." Specifically, the program associated with Zapata was rich with history. *The Course of Mexican History* outlines the Zapata-inspired, November 1911 Plan of Ayala: "The general principles were those of Zapata himself, but the development and articulation were the work of Otilio Montaño, a schoolteacher from Ayala. After withdrawing recognition of Madero and Chihuahuan Pascual Orozco as titular head of the rebellion, the plan spelled out its program of agrarian reform." The following is an excerpt from the *Plan of Ayala*:

"The lands, woods, and water that the landlords, *científicos*, or bosses have usurped ... will immediately restored to the villages or citizens who hold the corresponding titles to them... Because the great majority of Mexicans own nothing more than the land they walk on, and are unable to improve their social condition in any way... because lands, woods, and water are monopolized in a few hands ... one-third of these properties will be expropriated, with prior indemnification, so that the villages and citizens of Mexico may obtain *ejidos*, townsites, and fields."

Finally, Pancho Villa's role in the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was not as much about programs as perhaps it was about pummeling opponents. Said to be "never an armchair general," Villa (1878-1923) was commander of the some-50,000 strong Division of the North, which was the largest revolutionary force in America to date (Meyer 519). At one point and on at least a superficial level, Villa was aligned with Zapata in opposition of First Chief Carranza. However, many of the warlords of the Mexican chaos around 1915, historians argue, "employed military force for reasons no more profound than instant political gratification," and Pancho Villa, ruling from Chihuahua, may certainly be criticized for being in this number. Perhaps Villa can be viewed, however, as at least good for fostering a collective pro-Mexican spirit against the typical and the too-often felt condescending presence of United States political and exploitive, *capitalistic-style*, hand in Mexico – it was, after all, William Randolph Hearst who once wrote to his mother: "I really don't see what is to prevent us from owning all of Mexico and running it to suit ourselves" (Gonzales 8). That is, when the United States spent \$130 million in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Villa in Mexico – after Villa and his revolutionary troopers had killed 18 United States citizens and wounded many others in Columbus, New Mexico, shouting *!Viva Villa!* and *!Muerte a los Gringos!* – the rural Mexicans followed suit, greeting the United States troops with shouts of *!Viva Mexico, Viva Villa!*

In retrospect, however, the real *vida* of the Mexico's Revolution was hoped to be made material in the country's Constitution of 1917. Despite this hope, the overall significance of the Constitution of 1917 was minimal at best. To paraphrase Meyer: the Constitution – in and of itself – was more revision than revolutionary. And moreover, during the Obregón presidency from 1920 to 1924, the actual implementation of the provisions made by the Constitution of 1917 left much to be desired. In other words, the reality was a watered-down version of an already watered-down constitution. For example, Article 3 (which passed by a margin of

almost two to one by the Querétaro Congress) was meant to provide free, obligatory and – most importantly – secular primary education to children. But in actuality, the Article was not fully achieved, nor realized. While more than a thousand rural schools were built between 1920 and 1924 – more than had been built during all of the Díaz tyrannical presidency – “the church was not removed entirely from the educational field because the state had neither the funds nor the teachers to educate all children in Mexico” (Meyer 552). Ultimately, a similar fate would follow Article 123, which provided “an eight-hour day, a six-day work-week, a minimum wage, equal pay for equal work regardless of sex or nationality,” and the ability for laborers to organize and collectively bargain. Time and time again, when President Obregón was asked to intervene on behalf of workers with whom he had once seemed sympathetic, he responded that the labor issue should ultimately be resolved at the state and local levels. Moreover, the arguably, Zapata-inspired Article 27, which “required that lands seized illegally from the peasantry during the Porfiriato reign be restored and provision be made for those communities that could not prove legal title,” also were, for lack of a better word, short-coming. Radical agrarians still made note that Luis Terrazas alone owned as much land as the total distributed by the national administration, which from 1920 to 1924 was 3 million acres to 624 villagers (554). Even so, these lands went to the community by a form of *ejidos*, or cooperatives, not to specific individuals, which rendered the rural Mexicans still disempowered. Thus, the idea of land ownership for the *peones* became the stuff of infrequent privilege, not of right, while the *ultimate* privilege would be in the hands of the state’s interpretation of Article 27’s eminent domain clause – which “could be invoked at the *pleasure* of the state” [*italics are the author’s*]. In sum and in reality, the Constitution of 1917 – much like the Constitution of the United State of America when concerning “democracy” – proved to be an idealistic document that, like a stubby Obregón-like-right-arm reach, merely and pathetically only achieved a short-sighted, limited version of its ultimate intention.

In conclusion and in general, the changing character of the Revolution between 1910 and 1920 can be best summarized by the following words, respectively: criticism, idealism, overthrow, death, resignation, death, chaos, death, criticism, codification of laws, death, criticism, death and a presidential assassination. According to one historian, there is no Mexican designation for names such as Auschwitz or My Lai to connote a collective human tragedy, but the insinuation is that the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1920 certainly deserves one: “[T]he cumulative stress of exhaustion and constant exposure to death did produce its psychiatric casualties during the first decade of the Revolution and, on occasion, led to behavior that can only be termed sadistic. The inhumanity visited upon civilians by soldiers became legendary in the folklore of the Revolution. One could pass off stories of mutilated prisoners hanging from trees or telephone posts as exaggerations had not scores of eager photographers captured hundreds of horrifying scenes for posterity” (Meyer 531). And yet, the even more depressing historical assessment of the Mexican Revolution is that thousands died for so little gain, when considering the actual socio-politico-economic progress that Mexico ultimately achieved.

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Translations:

- pan dulce* - sweet bread
pan - bread
palo - force
caudillos - leaders
haciendas - estates
viva - hurray (for)
meurle a los gringos - death to the foreigners
vida - life
ejidos - farming cooperatives
peones - laborers





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