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EDITORS' NOTE

Author Bertram Wyatt-Brown describes humor as “the antidote to high hopes unceremoniously dashed by the gods.” While admittedly poignant, it is a highly cynical expression of one of man’s most familiar coping mechanisms. With maturation comes an increasing recognition of just how difficult our fallen lives can be. With alarming frequency, the center does not seem to hold, and life as we know it comes tumbling down. Humor indeed serves its valued purpose. But as Christians, we know and need to remember the framework of Christ’s death and resurrection that underwrites our lives. As Christians, we have more than humor to redeem the brokenness. We have grace.

Like Sam Perry’s new cover design, the pieces in this issue are an amalgamation of the particulars that constitute our human experience. Short stories such as Brittney Todd’s “Means of Grace” and Jordan Nichols’s “A Reprise” depict with striking poignancy not only man’s self-destructive tendencies but also the possibility for regeneration and hope. Sam Perry’s “Michael Eth” provides an admittedly humorous but honest look at our motivations in their uncensored, prepubescent form. Andy Walker reviews Jonathan Franzen’s twin portraits of brokenness – his best-seller *The Corrections* and the most recent, *Freedom*.

In Tyler Estes’s poem, “Parabolic Grace,” he takes a look at the often paradoxically destructive nature of grace, but focuses on the rebirth that results. James Davison Hunter’s examination of Evangelical engagement with culture *To Change the World* is one of those books so noteworthy that it seems like everyone is reading it. In our special Scholar’s Armchair Symposium, three Grove City Professors thoughtfully engage with Hunter, recounting the parts of his book that they find especially noteworthy.

Over this past issue, Keely Breen has enjoyed the privilege of sloshing about in Hannah’s sizeable shoes following her graduation in January. Both Keely and co-editor Andy Walker are thankful for grace in this time of transition, as *The Quad* attempts to redesign its exterior while holding to the high standard for content established over the years.

Keely Breen
Senior Editor

Andy Walker
Junior Editor

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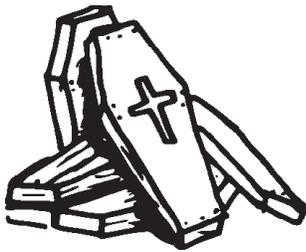
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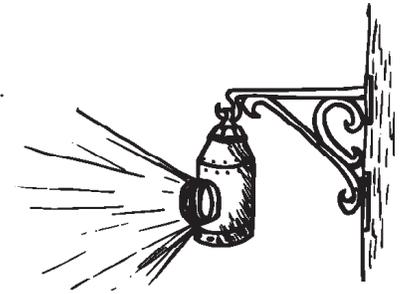


1.
 Bring your Ghosts to shed their light
 Diamond dust lingering
 On your boot straps and your shoulders.
 You are their mouthpiece,
 Over you their light passes
 Your form paves an avenue.
 Let not their ghostly frame
 Become your very bones.
 Create a new classic
 Your deference still,
 Your name your own
 We are enrobed in their light, but we cast
 Our own shadows, free

2.
 Bring your Friends to build a home
 We claw at the ground for any sort of foothold
 Grasping at the straws, the twigs, the scraps
 We create for ourselves something safe,
 Something isolated yet vulnerable
 At night we all sit
 Inside our private dens
 Dreaming of the stars.
 Lift your eyes to the hills, child
 You're still just a boy dressing in your father's clothes.



3.
 Fix the face the Monsters made for you
 It's wearing thin, words
 Disposable.
 At night we cry out
 "LORD, lull me to sleep,
 Take the tickle from my eyes.
 Drown me in your dreams and I'll
 Strip off all my lies."
 Simply bones, skeletal
 No name but our own.



4.
 Every day is the best day ever.
 The beauty in even the most pleasant of fictions
 The lure of her smile, every day
 An endless summer.
 We dwell in light, our chariots
 Blazing across the skies.
 The certainty of going home
 Makes nothing seem so bad.

*These are the four main points of Sam Perry's artist manifesto
 which is being visually represented at a gallery show in April.*

JONATHAN FRANZEN

BY ANDY WALKER

It is rare for any author to make it big. For an author like Jonathan Franzen, it is almost miraculous. For Franzen, 2010 began with his nine-year-old novel, *The Corrections*, making several “best books of the decade” lists and ended with his follow up novel, *Freedom*, becoming a publishing phenomenon. The President read *Freedom* on vacation, reviewers hyped the book (then wondered if it was over-hyped), and it even ended up on the Wal-Mart bestseller shelves, right between Grisham and Clancy. Franzen became a minor celebrity overnight, talking about his book on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and gracing the cover of *Time* magazine (the first author to do so since Stephen King, ten years earlier).

Oddly, however, Franzen’s books are almost anti-bestsellers. Both *The Corrections* and *Freedom* are realistic, narrative-driven fiction — more in the tradition of Cheever and Tolstoy than of King and Clancy. Anyone who has read the first few pages of *Freedom* or *The Corrections*, however, can understand what the big deal is. As a craftsman, Franzen’s work is simply masterful — his prose is quick and sharp, his plott engaging, and his characters allow us to step inside the heads of people we would otherwise never really get to know. While parts of his work, including very large parts of *Freedom*, are hit and miss, Franzen is a talented observer of human life whose novels seek to show a wide view of our society as a whole.

The Corrections details a year in the life of the Lamberts. Each member of the family has his own identity and her own cross to bear. Alfred, the father, is a retired railroad engineer suffering from dementia. Enid is a longsuffering housewife who has been planning a Christmas family reunion since last January. Gary, the oldest child, is a successful banker. Chip, the youngest child, is a fired and disgraced professor. Slowly (often very slowly) Franzen shows how these characters’ lives are falling apart. Each character builds his life on some central principle: careers, families, personal integrity, and in each case the character’s central

principle fails to make him happy. They are not just alienated from each member of the family, but from themselves. As the book goes on it becomes clear that Enid’s Christmas family reunion may be these characters’ last chances at working out their crippling issues.

In *Freedom*, Franzen focuses on a younger family, the Berglunds: liberal members of what the book jacket calls “the Whole Foods generation.” Patty is heavily invested in gentrifying their neighborhood and feeding their children organic food, Walter is passionate about his job as an environmental lawyer, and their two children are either geniuses or spoiled, depending on whom you talk to. Like the Lamberts in *The Corrections*, the Berglund family, on

the surface full of so much more promise than the other families around them, slowly falls apart. Patty becomes obsessed with herself and

with Walter’s best friend from college. Walter becomes a bitter crank, detached from his family and obsessed with population growth. Joey, their son, runs away from home at sixteen and moves in with the family next door. As the book progresses, each member of the family devolves further until all four are flirting with outright disaster.

On paper, the plots of *The Corrections* and *Freedom* seem subpar — at best painfully literary and at worst almost soapy. Franzen’s strength as a writer, however, comes from his ability to take these boilerplate plots and make them seem important, urgent, and fascinating. His dialogue and prose, while not notable on their own merits, are sharp enough to make his novels incredibly compelling. Often I found myself excitedly rushing through these books in the same way that I would rush through a good thriller. Maybe in this area Franzen does have something in common with John Grisham and Dean Koontz.

That is not to say both novels are created equal. *The Corrections* is by far the better of the two. Franzen’s combination of characters in this book is unforgettable. Each individual family member in the book is at once recognizable,

The Corrections, Freedom
by Jonathan Franzen
The Corrections; Picador, 2002.
Freedom; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010



reprehensible, and sympathetic. For example, while Alfred is a quintessential, crotchety old man who manages to make everyone around him miserable, Franzen is able to make the reader feel Alfred's pain, his loss of the world, and his disgust for his family, all the while refusing to soften Alfred's rough edges. Franzen not only creates great characters, but also writes darkly and satirically. For example, his portrait of the spoiled antics of Gary's children veers between painful and funny. Ultimately, the book causes us to root desperately for each of the Lamberts, even though most readers will be fully aware that things will not work out well for any of them.

Freedom, on the other hand, is a much weaker work. Possibly this is because Franzen's writing seems sloppier. His characters are less sharp, his plot more meandering, and his satire is off-base (several chapters are devoted to one character's attempts to "privatize the Iraqi bread industry," which is about as boring as it sounds). It also might be because Franzen is attempting to impress upon us a 'big idea,' pointing out the dangers of unchecked freedom every chance he gets. Early in the book, this authorial underlining seems a tad clunky — obvious quotes like "use thy Freedom well" pop up from chapter to chapter. Worse

authorial intrusions are yet to come, however. As the book progresses, Franzen has several characters speak in outright editorials about the American dream, whole chapters are actually set in the middle of Washington think-tank sections. By the time the book is over, Franzen makes the meaning of the book's title almost comically clear.

In both books, Franzen displays prodigious talent. While his method (obscene language and actions abound) will certainly be objectionable to many Christian readers, both the power and the frustration of his work is his message — which barely falls short of something genuinely truthful. Franzen's characters build their lives around a principle of their own choosing, and discover that the center of their lives cannot hold. Their reaction — far from typical angst — is an overpowering anger at the wrongness of the world. That sense of the wrongness of things and ache for something more is ultimately the take away from both of Franzen's novels. One hopes that, as his career progresses, Franzen will find the answers he so desperately seeks.

Andy Walker spent some of last summer building a fence with a man named Bub



PARABOLIC GRACE

TYLER ESTES

*The paragon of animals, and yet
Our broken parts are nowhere formed to wholes;
We, lathered in complacency, forget
The messy rooms and habits of our souls.*

*A fire must be built, our souls made wax,
To scrape and scrub their crayoned walls and floors;
A fireman, to save, must wield his axe
And chop his way through cherished cherry doors.*

*The wrenching of the bones back into place,
Cauterized, amputated limbs,
The scalpel to the heart, its heartbeat to replace,
The sorrows which inspire heartfelt hymns —*

*To bloom in spring, trees first must go through ice,
For grace will sometimes violently suffice.*



Tyler Estes is this-and-that'n and doing who-knows-what in May; hopes to make the big time; and misses his young sapling of a nephew Bean.

THE NEXT CHRISTIANS: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE END OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA

FAITH THOMPSON

“I realized that ‘Christian America’ was dead on a cool morning in the middle of May” (11).

Gabe Lyons is not the only one to have noticed. I need cite no evidence here to convince you that the influence of the Christian faith in our country’s public life is waning. As Lyons expresses it, “A perfect storm of change is brewing over America” (19).

So how has this happened? Opinions vary. I think most of us recognize that it’s partially our own fault – our own failure to live up to Christ’s example – which has driven

people away. If you haven’t recognized this yet, go pick up a copy of Lyon’s first book, written with David Kinnaman, *UnChristian: What a New Generation*

The Next Christians: The Good News About the End of Christian America
by Gabe Lyons
Doubleday Religion, 2010

Really Thinks About Christianity and Why It Matters. Others blame the media. The government. The collapse of the nuclear family. Science. Globalization. Rock ‘n’ roll music. Whatever the cause Lyons explains that the result among most American Christians has been pretty uniform. Some just fold – tuck their Bibles away and try to blend in with the dominant culture as best they can. Others choose to separate themselves from it. This type of Christian likes to whine. A lot. You can hear it in churches, families, and classrooms. It’s in Christian books and music and it’s on Christian television and radio. As Lyons writes, these Christians “long for the good ole days when life and faith seemed simpler . . . when Christian values were accepted at face value, no matter what else was going on in the world” (26).

In his new book, *The Next Christians: The Good News About the End of Christian America*, Gabe Lyons presents the possibility of a third and very different response:

When you stop and evaluate it, is this perfect

storm of change all that bad? What if it’s not a category 5 typhoon of spiritual death? What if it’s not the bleak trumpet of the apocalypse? What if it’s actually a harnessable wind that can refill the sails of our faith? (28)

Many Americans no longer believe that there is only one way to God. A lot of them dislike organized religion, and some even have a particular bias against Christianity. But most of these people, Lyons says, “are seeking truth” – and they are “compelled to experiment” (28). For “a growing

group of believers,” Lyons writes, “this change represents another chapter in the story God is telling through a new generation” (28).

He calls them “the Next Christians.” Their distinguishing characteristic? An obsession with what Lyons calls “restoration.” –

I call them restorers because they envision the world as it was meant to be and they work toward that vision . . . Through sowing seeds of restoration, they believe others will see Christ through us and the Christian faith will reap a much larger harvest . . . They don’t separate from the world or blend in; rather, they thoughtfully engage. Fully aware of the seachange under way, they are optimistic that God is on the move – doing something unique in our time. (47)

Lyons spends most of the book describing this group of Christians in more detail; they are, he says, “provoked, not offended; creators, not critics; called, not employed; grounded, not distracted; in community, not alone; [and] countercultural, not ‘relevant’” (67).

Lyons has me convinced.

When it comes to projected changes on a large scale, my



tendency is always skepticism. I believe that humans now are more or less the same as they have always been. That's why men like Plato, Jesus, Augustine, and Shakespeare could speak and write about me so accurately hundreds and thousands of years ago. As a result, I'm slow to believe in the reality of change. When I first read Lyons's claim, then, that we are approaching "a time of transformation" on par with the Protestant Reformation and the conversion of Constantine, you can imagine my reaction (189).

Lyons knows, though, how to back up his claims. He bases his observations on real research. Along with David Kinnaman (his partner in writing *UnChristian*), Lyons has commissioned and conducted thousands of interviews and focus groups. The pages of *The Next Christians* teem with real people, stories, and conversations.

I also found myself reassured by his recognition that what the "Next Christians" are doing "isn't some new strategy – it's the way Christianity has flourished ever since it began" (194). In a society too apt to swoon over innovation, this is refreshing. He realizes that for the movement of the Next Christians to have any lasting value, first things must come first and second things must come second – in other

words, we must stay rooted in our first, best truths – in the Gospel.

I think that Gabe Lyons is above all a keen observer. He has perceived the cultural forces at work in America today, and with hard work he has gained a nuanced understanding of the reactions these forces have garnered in different groups of Christians across the country. He assesses the strengths and weaknesses of each of these reactions with intelligence and constant reference to solid biblical principles. And I really believe that he has discovered something to rejoice at in the large and still largely unrecognized restorative work of the *Next Christians*.

Christians have a historical affinity for "good news." Here is one more place for them to find it.

Faith Thompson will shamelessly use this bio as a plug: go to Jubilee! It's a Christian conference that the CCO puts it on every February in Pittsburgh. It's where I first encountered Lyons. I find myself wanting to write "it rocks!" – but I'll refrain. Suffice it to say that, unlike most other Christian conferences I've been to, it's thoughtful and it's not emotionally manipulative. Jubilee: many good books, and many people you will want to best-befriend.

THE BOOK DAVE BARRY WANTS YOU TO READ

RACHEL WERNER

Just a glance at the cover of *The Fiddler in the Subway* gives the reader multiple reasons to like the book. The shiny gold imprint that proclaims the book to be the winner of the Pulitzer prize lends the assurance of quality; but my guess would be that the commendation from comedian Dave Barry that “Gene Weingarten is the best writer in American journalism” wins the book just as many readers as the Pulitzer medal does. In case those two details have not earned the book enough credit, the introduction provides a few more reasons to invest time in this collection of short feature stories. Weingarten’s first line to his readers — the one that may decide whether they consume the book in one night or banish it to the top shelf — is: “I was drunk the night I learned to write.” Oh, this is going to be good.

One might be tempted to snatch this book up and turn immediately to the title story about Joshua Bell, the amiable virtuoso violinist who is roughly one million times better looking than Gene Weingarten, and how Weingarten convinced him to “fiddle in the subway” in Washington D.C. I think, however, that Weingarten has placed his account of this now legendary event at the back of the collection for a reason. That reason might be that he had also written a story titled “The Great Zucchini.” Here Weingarten showcases one of his primary talents as a writer: the ability to capture the pathos and character of a human being through narrative. “Fiddler” is a study in human nature and the modern rush to get from point A to point B without smelling the roses or taking in a free concert from the country’s best musician. “The Great Zucchini,” on the other hand, introduces the reader to Eric Knaus, an eccentric and wildly popular children’s entertainer with some deep character flaws. As Weingarten follows Knaus through his daily routines and performances, the reader finds a rare glimpse into a real — if highly unusual — human

being. Nineteenth century novelist Wilkie Collins offered this formula for a good story: “Make ‘em laugh, make ‘em cry, make ‘em wait.” Weingarten is the master of fluidly integrating humor, pathos, and suspense. Each story compels the reader to flip pages as fast as possible until the resolution.

The scope of Weingarten’s subject matter throughout the collection is incredible. No one story sets the overall tone of the book, as Weingarten ranges from tragic and haunting to exhilarating and life-affirming. Weingarten introduces most of the stories with a brief, informal background paragraph explaining his motivation for writing a story, how the writing process affected him personally, and other such snippets. While he admits that the writing process is frequently difficult, Weingarten is absolutely fearless when it comes to subject matter. “Fatal Distraction” is a story about parents who accidentally kill their babies by forgetting them in cars. According to Weingarten’s introduction to the piece, he chose to write about such cases because he once almost did it to his baby daughter. Weingarten’s story gives an honest yet compassionate look at the harrowing lives of failed people whom society easily condemns. Weingarten does not sugar-coat anything, which led his editor to suggest that he “caution parents with infants that they may find what follows extremely disturbing.” I made the mistake of reading the story right before bed, and can personally attest that the editor’s caution applies to more people than just parents.

If one were trying to find a single thing to criticize about Weingarten’s writing, it might be his penchant for too-tidy endings. For example, the spiritual issues raised in “Tears for Audrey” are difficult for even a Christian to wrestle with, and Weingarten avoids the questions by ending on a feel-good, love of humanity note. If anything, Weingarten

The Fiddler in the Subway
by Gene Weingarten
Simon & Schuster, 2010



sometimes risks not doing his own stories justice.

Amid these serious and heart-rending moments, however, Weingarten also has hilarious snapshots of Americana at its worst (best?) in stories such as “The Armpit of America.” Weingarten explains that what began as a smart-(aleck) project to find the “One True Armpit” town of America, changed drastically in his mind on September 11, 2001. The change is truly for the better as Weingarten finds not the armpit, but the heart of America in the backwater almost ghost town of Battle Mountain, Nevada. As in so many of his stories, Weingarten weaves his account with line after line of surprising perspective and hysterical humor as he explores “Battle Mountain, where genius comes to die.”

Other stories are filled with interesting perspective on people and places throughout America and throughout history. Who knew President Woodrow Wilson was involved in a romantic secret affair (“An Honorable Affair”)? What does it feel like to ride a bus route in Jerusalem that could be bombed by a terrorist any day (“Fear Itself”)? Did the icons in Little Audrey’s house really weep holy oil after her tragic accident (“Tears for Audrey”)? Should students of literature be embarrassed of having loved *Nancy Drew* and *The Hardy Boys* (The Ghost of the Hardy Boys)? Can we prove that Bill Clinton has an older illegitimate half-brother (“The First Father”)? As readers we may not be willing to do the book and field research to find these answers ourselves, and

that’s where Weingarten fills in for us with his delightful first-hand accounts. He goes to extraordinary lengths to get his story – from living for a month at the edge of the world in desolate Savoonga, Alaska (“Snowbound”) to outright offending an entire nationality to see if the stereotypes were true (“Pardon my French...”).

The problem with writing a review of Weingarten’s wonderful collection is the awful temptation to give the story away, but then the review would deprive readers of Weingarten’s delightful storytelling. Aside from the excellent writing style, the book is compelling because every story is absolutely true. Weingarten truly has a gift for bringing news, history, and the facts of journalism to life for the everyday reader. To aspiring writers, Weingarten offers sympathy and encouragement. Even this virtuoso of the written word admits, “A writer is someone for whom writing process is a terrible ordeal.” Fortunately, Weingarten’s love of his craft transcends the ordeal. His book is well worth the read. I, Dave Barry, and a Pulitzer can’t all be wrong.

Rachel Werner is a Junior English major whose latest celebrity crush is American Shakespeare Center actor Tyler Moss. Between acts he performs a mean Michael Jackson impersonation. Would that all Shakespearean actors had such dance moves.



IMAGINARY PAINTING

BY ZOË PERRIN



1. HOW I WOULD PAINT THE FUTURE.

a plot of land, the way it quivers at sunrise.

2. HOW I WOULD PAINT HAPPINESS.

our hands kneading
the bread dough
in the summer kitchen,
pressing hard into the mound
of it, our faces wound
in the afternoon light,
my small palms miniatures
of yours – web of veins and bones.

3. HOW I WOULD PAINT DEATH.

the lines birds draw in air
and fish draw in water,
as they cut through wind and sea,
rushing forward, forward.

4. HOW I WOULD PAINT LOVE.

the fracture of tree limbs
in a summer storm.

5. HOW I WOULD PAINT THE LEAP OF FAITH.

the first burst into the rolling
salt swells and sea fog of the ocean.

6. HOW I WOULD PAINT NOSTALGIA.

the green lungs
of the backyard
willow, swelling
and releasing
with the summer breeze.

Zoë Perrin has been known to check out as many as twelve books of poetry at a time from the Henry Buhl Library, causing librarians to assume she writes frequent research papers on various poets. In truth, she keeps the books as treats for rainy days, which, of course, exist in abundance in Grove City.

MICHAEL ETH

SAM PERRY

When I was still young enough that I had people “over to play,” Michael became my next door neighbor.

For years, I had only my brothers and sister and the girl across the street who inexplicably got a bloody nose every time we played Bongo bat, and in an even more bizarre manner, she would always lay down on the road until the blood dried up, the prospect of death making our empathy far greater for a girl who obviously picked her nose too often.

Michael and his family moved in to the house next door and quickly assimilated to Briar Hill culture. A house that I had been to only once before to get a cup of sugar was now a new territory – with the warm, glassy surface of an untouched swimming pool. I can now look back on my childhood summers knowing that children are just as selfish as any greedy New York executive.

Even today, I can say that I’ve always had high standards for the people with which I surround myself. And there’s just no way to redeem Michael’s personality as something I would have thought worthy of me.

Michael had a staccato last name filled with many a letter “s”, accompanied by a defined lisp and far more defined smell. Michael pooped his pants until fifth grade. He was also in a very successful Greek dancing troupe and constantly told lies at the age of nine about having secret passageways in his home.

But Michael had a pool.

Every day of the summer, Michael would ask to play and I would oblige with the canned plea, “Well, I’m not allowed to play inside all day because it’s so nice out and I think my dad might be mowing the lawn later so, I mean, Michael it’s so hot, swim?”

Michael hated swimming. He would usually build a fort out of noodles or bring me food, poolside, waiting for me to want to talk about him.

In the winter, Michael and I would still play together. One disastrous time in particular, I dared Michael to go sled riding into his pool, thinking that it was frozen and

that he’d be fine. I was wrong and like a good friend, he carried the blame, soggy and freezing into the foyer.

Another time, the worst time of all, Michael and I were inside his house waiting for the pool to heat up, wrestling, and I had just bested him so I was running towards his piano room in triumph. Michael spent a lot of time in his piano room composing pieces, trying to get me to listen to them, the wooden French doors opened to the living room so that his mother could hear him playing.

I was running through these same doors, Michael behind me, and as I planted myself sturdily on the cream carpet of the piano room and slammed the door shut, the tip of Michael’s jeering, laughing, lisping tongue was caught in the lock of the door.

I have never known horror so keenly.

This stinky boy who I didn’t even enjoy being around unless he had SimCity pulled up on his Windows95 or his N64 humming in the basement, was locked by the tongue, staring into his beloved piano room, his hands pressed against the cool glass.

And I ran. I ran home just like the time Michael and I were exploring the woods and got our feet caught in the largest ant hole we could find and I left him there, trapped, screaming as fire ants crawled up his legs.

After a while, Michael and I no longer spoke. This was the result of his healing cadaver tongue and the BB gun incident between Michael’s brother and mine. Or perhaps it was because after weeks of carpooling to acting lessons, I told Michael’s mother that I couldn’t go anymore because I was going to Disney World for a month. Or maybe because of my mother’s childhood sled, hand-built by her father, that Michael had torn apart, and the time that he broke into our garage to ride my brand new bicycle while the Perry family took a vacation, pulling into the drive-way, my brand new red bicycle stranded on the front lawn where Michael had tried to sell bags of chips countless times, one mile from any major road in a twelve home establishment mostly full of retired individuals.



Even so, I'll always remember those times in the pool, the tree house and the creek bed. And of the Halloween party, seventh grade, at Michael's house, my first kiss. Her name was Roxanne, she was wearing a red kimono. *Poltergeist 3* was playing in the background.

Nightmares for weeks. Q

Sam Perry is still just as awful to his friends. In the 6th grade he told his best friend Jared that he didn't like labels, dissolving the term "best friend." He has a fear that has been instilled in him by his mother that any child he has will have a speech impediment and awful smell due to karmic punishment.

A GRAPEFRUIT FOR WHITMAN

BY RACHEL WERNER

My thumbnail cuts into the porous, sunrise rind,
Zest sprays: a morning perfume, daylight musk.
Juice squirts from the fullness bursting.

It is to other citrus what wine is to grape juice;
A deeper flavor of morning rays through tree leaves.
The energy of dew-specked grass and the color of starling songs
Entwine with somber contemplation
Of bitter tree bark and sorrowing thrush.

A pale papery skin – like mine
Contains its iridescent gems,
Like mine.

Here is a whole, a world.
All parts together; together it is large.
Like a child, I take two hands to grasp it.
Each bite I take satisfies,
And I am filled.

As a child, Rachel Werner practiced her "barbaric yawp" all over the backyard after reading Horton Hears a Who. Sure, Dr. Seuss may have changed the spelling to "Yop," but his inspiration from Whitman is pretty obvious. Horton the elephant talks to people on a dust mote because even a speck is "large, [it] contains multitudes" ("Song of Myself" 51). I see what you did there, Seuss.

WHERE THE KILLING LEAVES US: FOUR YEARS AFTER NICKEL MINES

PHILIP GRUBER

On April 25, 2003, I was eating in the cafeteria with my eighth-grade classmates. I had just heard that a middle-school student in Red Lion, Pa. had shot his principal and then himself in their school cafeteria. Several school shootings had happened around the United States since Columbine in 1999, but the Red Lion shooting was only about an hour's drive from my house. I predicted that day that school shooting would someday cross the Susquehanna River and come to Lancaster County. On October 2, 2006, a man pulled up at an Amish school.

I was a senior in high school, and my third block composition teacher had signed out the computer lab. We were supposed to do some Internet research about a place for a description essay. Of course, we all knocked off the assignment in thirty, forty minutes and spent the other forty minutes screwing around on the Internet and talking. I was researching Grand Forks, North Dakota, a city where we had stopped that summer while driving to Manitoba for a canoeing trip. I was sitting next to David, my best friend from elementary school and a more distant friend in high school, a Quaker. We sat in the last row of the lab, working on the school's cheap PCs. The athletic girls were in the row in front of us to our left. Four minutes before the bell signaling the end of third block, the girls began telling the athletic guys next to them about a shooting at an Amish school. Penn Manor's Internet Explorer homepage had some school district links on the left side, current weather for Millersville on the right, and a Google News feed in the main section. Before the block had ended, everyone in the class had felt that formal feeling born of disaster.

I was the first person to fourth block, a seminar class, and I told my teacher to type Nickel Mines, Pa. into Google Maps. I showed her the link on the homepage. The website showed that Nickel Mines was near Georgetown and White Oak Road, places my family had driven through just a few weeks earlier to go to my grandparents' for Labor Day.

The news report was brief on Monday, but over the course of the week we got the whole story. Charles Carl Roberts IV, a local milk truck driver, had barricaded himself into the Nickel Mines Amish School after dismissing the boys and teachers. He had lined up the ten girls, zip-tied their arms and legs, and shot them. Five girls died, and five were wounded. As the police stormed the school, Roberts shot himself. Within hours, Amish families were bringing food and consolation to Roberts's widow and children, whom many of the local Amish knew. Roberts's motive has of course never been totally clarified, though when he called his wife from the schoolhouse, he indicated that he was angry about the death of their twenty-minute-old daughter nine years earlier and that he had to get revenge. He also seemed distraught about molesting some family members years before, an offense his purported victims did not remember. The Bart Fire Company collected donations and letters for months afterward to help the Amish and the Roberts family.

The shooting was front page news on the *Lancaster New Era* every day until Sunday. My seminar class subscribed to The New York Times, and that paper ran a few stories about the event. I learned that Lancaster County was "bucolic" by reading one of those stories. Andrea, the well-meaning but naïve and garrulous liberal girl who sat to my left, said she thought her family had driven past the Nickel Mines schoolhouse the previous weekend. "No, I don't think you did," I snapped. "There're a lot of Amish schools out there. You probably passed the one at Buena Vista." As if she could know anything.

In truth, I did not think I had ever even seen the Nickel Mines schoolhouse. (I have never been very interested in finding its exact location, and the school was razed anyway shortly after the attack.). My family did indeed pass many Amish schools on the way to my grandparents' house in northern Chester County, but the map in the paper placed



the school on a road not on our route. The only time I had even heard the words nickel and mine put together before was in the name of Nickel Mine Floor Covering, a business in Quarryville (between my house in southwestern Lancaster County and Nickel Mines in the southeast) where my family had bought some carpeting. The flooring company expanded twice during the housing boom that still existed in 2006.

Andrea, I decided, was suffering from a little of the tourism disease that infected the New Jerseyans and Canadians who vacationed in Intercourse, Bird-in-Hand, and Strasburg during the summer. She, like the clueless TV and newspaper journalists who had parked their vans between corn and tobacco fields, suffered from the propensity to ogle at the Amish. We Lancastrians knew before the sociologists “discovered” that the only people other people go on vacation to see are Hollywood celebrities and the Amish — and the Amish eschew most of the things that come with tourism, such as picture taking. Some of us English (non-Amish) have had almost no contact with the Amish, even though we have lived near each other all our lives, but we can tell the Amish and Old Order Mennonites apart by their clothing, and we know the proper way to pass a buggy in a car. We feared in 2006 that the outside reporters covering the shooting would incorrectly infer that because the Amish are pacifists, guns are absent from Amish life. In fact, many Amishmen are avid hunters (and therefore are probably more comfortable with firearms than many journalists). While we know more about the Amish than the gulls from Louisiana and Chicago who keep Abe’s Buggy Rides and the Amish Farm and House — actually a Mennonite home before it was a tourist trap — in business, we could know much more about our neighbors. We devoted a day in the seminar class to researching the Amish (Amish brides apparently wear blue) to bolster our knowledge. We can feel a little indignant for the Amish when outsiders do not know how to respond to them as fellow human beings, we know that they are capable of taking care of themselves.

The Amish and the English have never been Montague and Capulet; we have always been neighbors. The Amish

plant and harvest corn and tobacco in the field behind my parents’ house. Amish children began riding my elementary-school bus when I was in fourth grade after an Amish school was built between the public school and the bus station. My mother had given them rubbers (waterproof shoe coverings) we had outgrown, and their mother gave us a loaf of homemade bread in return. We always wave to the Amish who pass in their buggies and wagons. The Amish go to some of the stores we frequent in Quarryville, particularly the Mennonite-owned good’s store. Once at the Quarryville Library I saw two Amish boys playing kids’ games on one of the computers. I laughed and let them alone.

Indeed, that feeling of wanting to be left alone by the ogglers, who range from affluent to white trash, is common to rural people across the country. Lancastrians are friendly people, but we know that our Pennsylvania Dutch culture is increasingly marginal and commercial. The ethnic tongue is now restricted to the Old Order Anabaptists and a few old people. My great-grandmother spoke it and made scrapple, dandelion tea, and *Speck und Eie* (bacon and eggs), but we successive generations know only a few words apiece, many of which — *ay yi yi*, *Rumspringa*, *Scherenschnitte*, *rutsch*, *outen the lights onct* — sound opprobrious and foolish against our standard English.

We like to identify with the Amish, to the extent that we can, on the basis of our shared ethnic heritage and ZIP codes. We admire their relative indifference to the crass American culture that feeds our pettiness and money hunger. We wonder who can fail to admire such a demure people, so dedicated to their families and to each other and to the aid of those beyond themselves. Even if conventional wisdom suggests that the Amish sometimes take a mile when given an inch. We also love to be distinct (when we remember to be) from the British people who colonized much of the rest of the East Coast. The Scots and the English seem to have abused everyone in sight — whipping slaves, killing Indians, and rebelling against each other — while German and Susquehannock children played together in the Pequea Creek. The Amish are our shadow



selves, dressed, appropriately, in black.

Still, we know we are distinct from the Amish, and we do not want to be Amish. My family tree has some Amish last names in it, but those records are not necessarily accurate and generally appear before the Amish split from the Mennonites in the 1700s. Most of my ancestors came to Pennsylvania as Mennonites between 1710 and the Revolution, but only my grandfather can remember a family member who wore a prayer cap. Additionally, a few Irish, English, Dutch, and French people wheedled their way into the tree among the Swiss and Germans. In Amish parlance I am English, but to everyone else I am German-American or simply white. The Anabaptists, of course, fled German and Swiss persecution but kept as much of their native culture as they could. I am not even an Anabaptist, though I am a member of that most Anabaptist-influenced of all major denominations, Methodism. We English have theological reservations about Amish religion, and we have no interest in replacing electricity with air compressors and kerosene. Still, whatever circumspection we may have is outstripped by our respect and love for, even awe at our neighbors. As my reaction to my classmate Andrea shows, we English want to like the Amish but are a little unsure if we are admiring them with due propriety.

Every October since the Nickel Mines shooting I have remembered the killing, if only privately. I have felt a special burden to mourn the dead of Nickel Mines because I have spent every October 2 since the shooting in a far corner of the state where (I suppose) the girls have no one else to remember them. On the first anniversary, most of the news sources I checked had not released any articles memorializing the shooting; the *Chicago Tribune* posted a video from Fox 43 in York, Pa. I was indignant about the dearth of remembrance, but I understood.

On October 1, 2010 (at some point I had mistakenly shifted the date in my mind) I attended a hymn sing at college. Throughout the long service I flipped through the hymnal, seeking a song we could sing in memory of the tragedy. Something German – what was that Johann Crüger one? “Now Thank We All Our God,” written

during the Thirty Years’ War. I should have stayed with that one, but I switched to “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People,” “Holy God, We Praise Your Name,” and was on “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” by the time the service ended, remembrance hymn unsung. I saw an acquaintance from Lancaster County as the service was breaking up, but we just smiled hello. I longed to tell someone what that night was (well, wasn’t), but it was nearly time for bed on a Friday night, and I had little voice left.

God’s remembrance matters more than mine anyway.

I later read *Amish Grace*, the book a local scholar of the Amish co-wrote about the shooting and its aftermath (which, unbelievably, Lifetime has turned into a movie). The book, along with the news accounts, mentioned Roberts had some paraphernalia with him that suggested he wanted to sexually molest the girls. I had forgotten that. I may again. In Lancaster we speak of *Amish Grace* as “the Nickel Mines book” or “the Amish school book” or even “the Amish book.” We know what we mean.

“Is that the one about the school . . .”

“Yeah.”

I no longer think about the shooting when I am among the Amish at the Solanco Fair or at Good’s in Quarryville. The Amish now lock their schools more securely. I still pass buggies when I am home from college. I have not seen the pew wagon in ten years or more. I bought a book of Amish hymns at the same time I bought a Mennonite novel, which totaled half of my entertainment spending that year. I think often about the way we got here: persecution.

No one in America will understand the Amish until we get rid of our cult of face. Yes, save face and give face; yes, look the other person in the eye while having a conversation; but learn from Amish girls’ dolls: they have no faces (in accordance with the group’s interpretation of the Second Commandment). In the culture that has produced a novel called *Till We Have Faces*, that treats with a great deal of angst (but not *Angst*) the mostly hypochondriac language of wearing masks, that fears becoming one of the “faceless masses,” we have forgotten that faces are given. However much we long for expression of our own face, we



are faceless until we are endowed with faces. Five girls are dead. As they gave with their minds faces to their dolls, God knows the faces of his elect, and we know our neighbors' faces from living with each other. We must hear together what the man with the redundant name could not: "The

Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

We can only have faces together. Q

Philip Gruber is a senior English and communication studies major.

GRASS IN A TIME OF SNOW

BY NOAH GRISSETT



Grass grows greenest in the time of snow.
When six inches suffocate its every pore,
And seven weeks of harsh, blank whiteness
Separate it from the life-giving energy of the sun.

It speaks of defiance to scrap away this bleakness
And see every pigment scream a rich, bold green
Against the heavy blanket pressing to check
Its growth in a season of desolation and loneliness.

The lush green of countless summer suns
Radiating out from a background of uninviting white
Recalls a time when the light once held sway
And the weight of this new presence wasn't considered.

It speaks of our own self-induced inadequacy
To see how we fear life on the other side
And turn from the chance to be grass in a time of snow.
We forget that grass is always greener on the other side.



When not writing poetry, Noah Grissett can be found enjoying a bowl of fine tobacco in The Shire, sharing his legendary coffee with fellow studiers (i.e. attractive females) in the Library, sleeping, kickin' it with the boys, or watching youtube videos. It has been said that one day he will become the greatest Grandfather to ever walk this earth. – J.B.

A REPRISE

JORDAN NICHOLS

It wasn't that my father was a bad father, he was just a dreamer. He was a dreamer and people didn't help him as much as he thought they would.

I was seven the first time I remember him telling me and my brothers and sister about his ideas – his great ideas that would make so much money. Franny, Hank, myself, and Phillip all sat cramped and wide-eyed in the living room. My mother was never really around, even then. She was usually either watching daytime television or just sitting by the front porch window. If she wasn't there, she was out somewhere – my father never said where, just “running errands.”

It was always that way, even as we grew older. My mother would be sitting quietly in the next room, while my brothers, sister, and I sat around the small, musty living room listening to my father tell us of his new idea.

The idea that made him leave was his idea to head north, to New England, selling televisions. The problem was his timing. The year was 1981 – my father was about thirty years late. At this point, anyone that wanted a TV had one. Unfortunately, he was blind to all of this. “Oh that's just a detail, son” he would say. “You've got to look at the big picture.”

Not unlike all of his other ideas, he talked about it for a while. What surprised us, my mother more than anyone, was that he actually left. And what seemed to surprise her even more was that he actually had TVs in the bed of his goldenrod, rusted El Camino. Of course there weren't many TVs. There wasn't much room in his car to hold many. And they weren't even new. But he dressed them up in newer boxes, so you couldn't really tell until you opened them. Once he sold those TVs he was planning on buying brand new ones with the money he made. “Everyone's crooked when they start selling, son. Once I get some money, I'll start shooting straight,” my father told me.

It was a day not unlike any other day in Naples, New York when my father drove away with those TVs, his car coughing out exhaust like it always did. I remember the

weather because I was looking at the sky for some kind of omen – dark storm clouds or maybe a rainbow. I wanted something to tell me that he was coming back. I was nine when my Dad left. It would be nearly that long before I would see him again.

I was born in the car on the way to the hospital. My mother drank while pregnant with all of us kids. Hank was the only one that didn't quite turn out right. He was in a different class at school and often said whatever was on his mind. He and Phil got along well. Though they were eight years apart, they had the same interests – jumping off stuff and picking their noses and laughing. Hank and Phil were always laughing. If Hank wasn't laughing, he was smiling. “We didn't know any better back then,” my mother would say, referring to her drinking while pregnant. But I think she knew. My grandmother Dorothy, my father's mother, told us she knew but drank anyway.

Grandma Dorothy's visits were legendary. They were infrequent, and always at some point someone cried. Her husband Ray, my grandfather, had passed away when my father was just three years old. But my grandma didn't live alone. Her brother, my great uncle Jack, lived with her and had since he graduated high school and began working at Newheimer's Deli. It was ironic – though fitting – that Uncle Jack, a man who worked with meat all his life, would die from meat – *E. coli* he contracted from a bad batch of hamburger he bought from Newheimer's. His demise was the demise of Newheimer's as well, but that was later.

They came to visit a few days after my father left. At the time, Dorothy was seventy-four and Uncle Jack was seventy. It was different with my father not around, noticeably different, but I remember neither of them mentioned the difference. It wasn't long until they began arguing. It was an argument they frequently got into. Grandma Dorothy was mocking Uncle Jack for being spoiled when he was younger. “He was the prince of the family. Prince Jacky,” she said. Uncle Jack's reply was at the time, and always, this: “Well you were the one born in the hospital with all



the fancy doctors and machines. I was born right on the kitchen table. I had it rough, Miss Hospital.” “You were born in the hospital, Jacky, I was born at home. I am the eldest, why would you, the younger one, be born at home?” She had a good point. But my father told me his theory. He said he never felt comfortable, really, bringing it up. He was on Uncle Jack’s side of the argument for this reason: Uncle Jack was uncircumcised. It seems there would not be much of a reason for Jack not to be circumcised unless he was born at home. How did my father know Uncle Jack was uncircumcised? He saw him – it – one night after Uncle Jack had a bit too much bourbon. He had fallen asleep, naked, on his back on the kitchen table. “Let’s just keep that between us, boy. I’m not even sure Jacky knows that I know his, well, situation,” my father told me once. My father was putting his trust in me—sharing a secret. And my father was right. At Uncle Jack’s funeral, I overheard my grandmother saying, through tears, “That son-of-a-bitch was uncircumcised. He was born at home.”

Dorothy and Jack’s argument dissolved and the visit continued until around dinnertime, when my mother, never one to ask a guest to stay for dinner, began to cough and yawn and give any other subtle hint that my grandmother and Jack should leave. “We’ll come visit you soon, Grammy,” Phil said. “We’ll see,” said my mother. They took the hint, and as they stepped off the porch Hank, crying, said, “Grandma, Dad’s gone. He left with TVs and went to England.” “New England, Hank. New England,” Franny said.

Hank helped me blow out the candles when I turned ten. My father still had not come back. “Kids, there’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you,” my mother said one night sitting at the dinner table. Her hands were folded on her lap like she did when she was serious. “Your father is not coming back. He called a few weeks ago, said he’s staying. Met someone. I’m sorry.” As Hank began to cry, Franny asked what her name was. “What? Oh. Um, Suzanne something or other,” my mother replied. How was I to know she wasn’t telling the truth? How was I to know Suzanne was the name of my mother’s hairdresser,

whom she had seen earlier that day, the name fresh in her mind. You are supposed to trust your mother when you are ten. My father was the one I couldn’t trust. He left us for another woman. That’s what I was supposed to believe. So I did. So we all did.

Life without my father became normal. My mother began taking different boyfriends and she would bring them home or they would pick her up and she would leave. Franny would watch us, but Franny was beginning to take an interest in the boys in her high school. Franny and I were close, but really only because Hank and Phil were close. We were close until around Christmas when I was thirteen. Franny was sixteen and she had a boyfriend, Ryan.

Ryan was on the football team and he drove a red Ford pickup truck and he would pick Franny up late at night and sometimes she wouldn’t come back. She stopped watching us when my mother went out with her boyfriends. Although Hank was fifteen, he wasn’t really capable of being a caretaker. That responsibility was left to me and I didn’t want it. I missed my father. I missed him telling me stories. Stories that began, “Well son, when I was your age...” I missed him and I didn’t want to have to be in charge of Hank and Phil. Franny said what happened to Hank was her fault, she should have been there. But it wasn’t her fault, it was mine.

For all Hank couldn’t do, he could do one thing better than anyone I’ve ever known – Hank could catch nearly anything in his mouth. If it fit, he was going to catch it – M&Ms, grapes, marshmallows, acorns. Once he caught an apple. He just tossed it into the air and sunk his teeth right in as it landed in his mouth. My mother wouldn’t let Hank do it very often. “Hank, you will choke and no one will be around to save you,” she would warn. Like anything my mother said, we believed her. So the only time Hank could catch things in his mouth, without getting scolded, was when my mother wasn’t home. He and Phil would make a game of it – Phil the pitcher and Hank the catcher. One night when Franny was not there, I was left in charge. I didn’t want to be in charge, so I left. I went to town on my bicycle by myself. It wasn’t even a good excuse not to be



there, I just didn't want to be there. I wanted to be alone.

From what it looked like, Hank and Phil initially got out some board games — *Chutes and Ladders* and *Operation* were strewn across the room. It must not have been long before they decided to play “The Game,” their game. They used grapes, but this time, they added a variation. “Hanky, I just thought of something,” I could imagine Phil saying. Instead of catching the grapes and eating them one at a time, they decided to see how many Hank could catch while keeping them all in his mouth. I can see them starting, “One . . . haha . . . two . . . haha. Hank! Don't choke! Haha!” I'm sure Hank had quite a few in his mouth before he choked. I'm sure he was laughing and that's why he choked. I can almost hear his laughter. When he laughed, it sounded like he was someone who had just learned how to laugh and, like a kid with a new toy who can't stop playing with it, Hank couldn't stop laughing. And when you heard it, you didn't want him to stop. I can see he and Phil laughing until Hank started to choke. Phil probably said, uneasily, “Hanky, stop joking around.” But with Hank there was no joking around, I don't think he really knew how.

It was dark when I came home, except for the lights flashing red and blue on our house. A graying, stern looking policeman was talking to my mom and Franny was holding Phil in her lap, rocking him.

I thought my father would have come for Hank's funeral, but he didn't. “Your father doesn't care,” my mother assured us. And we believed her because we had no reason not to.

Phil didn't talk for a long time after Hank died. Franny didn't talk much either. My mother, of course, never talked much. Slowly, we forgot each other's birthdays, and I wanted my father again, I wanted someone to hold me when I cried, and I wanted Hank back. But I was too old to tell this to anyone. I was too old to do much of anything that I wanted to do.

Franny graduated high school and left. Went off to college. “Take care of Phil, please,” she said to me when she left

My mother was less frequently even at home anymore.

I graduated high school myself, and left. But I didn't go to college. “I'm just leaving,” I said to my mother. She hugged me goodbye and looked as if she had something to say to me. “What, mom?” I asked. She sighed, hugged me again. “Be good,” she said.

My mother knew what I didn't tell her — I wasn't “just leaving.” I was going to find my father and I knew where to find him. A few months earlier, I had been looking for cigarettes in my mother's room, and opened a drawer to find, to my estimate, 200 letters. 200 letters written in handwriting I vaguely recognized. 200 letters with the same return address: 402 Fairhaven Dr, North Tonawanda, NY 14120. That was Grandma Dorothy's house. There were letters addressed to each of us — even Hank. A lot were addressed to Hank. After the first few, I wasn't consciously opening the letters anymore. I felt like I was dreaming. It was as if the letters were opening themselves — opening because they had to. Someone has to know the truth, they were saying.

I read every letter and cried for the first time since my father left. It was in the letters that I learned about my mother's affairs. I learned she was the one who made my father leave. He bought the TVs to make it look like he was leaving for a reason — he thought we would have a better life with her. The truth was, she wouldn't let him take us.

I stepped off the Greyhound happy to disassociate myself with the smells that public buses are born of and I walked the three blocks that I had walked so many times before when I was young. I stepped onto the porch that I knew so well and with an unsteady hand rang the doorbell. My father, grayer than I remembered, came to the door. “My God. Simon.” he said. 

Jordan Nichols was born into a Jewish family of postal workers and folk-singers. His epitaph will read, quoting poet John Berryman, “I conclude now I have no inner resources.” Jordan has yet to leave his hometown and, as best he can, he remembers his ancestors.

EMPTY SACRAMENT: JOHN UPDIKE AND THE MAPLE STORIES

ELLIOT DUNN

William Faulkner, in his 1949 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, defined true literature as not only “the record of man,” but an encourager of man, a perpetual reminder of “the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past.”¹ The role of the artist, as defined by Faulkner, is not only to provide an accurate and compelling account of the human condition but to encourage man in his inevitably difficult journey through life. John Updike shoulders this burden, clothing himself in the “agony and the sweat,” to portray the troubled marriage of Richard and Joan Maple. Through a total of eighteen stories, Updike traces their relationship from marriage through separation and finally to divorce. The Maples represent the standard American couple, drowning in affluence and a pervading social triviality. This stagnation, which Updike terms “middleness,” cannot exist without a fundamental understanding of the depraved human condition. The Maples, as the quintessential couple of middleness, struggle to find meaning in a world of waste and sin. Yet it is in their marriage, their sacramental intimacy, that Updike finds ultimate and undeniable reality. Through three Maple stories in particular, “Giving Blood” (1963), “Separating” (1975), and “Gesturing” (1980), John Updike connects reality to the marriage relationship, particularly in the total sexual act, as a redeeming passion in the midst of middleness.

Middleness is the center of John Updike’s writing. The lives of Richard and Joan Maple lack excitement. These are not heroic stories; their plots are not filled with twists and turns. In “Giving Blood,” Updike chronicles the relatively mundane sequence in which Richard and Joan donate blood to a distant relative in need. “Separating” describes the unfortunately common difficulties of two parents as they tell their kids that they do “not make each

other happy enough.”² “Gesturing” discusses the further estrangement of the couple as Joan asks Richard to move to another city. Despite their mundane existences, the Maples are the medium through which Updike establishes his themes. Updike understands the challenge of middleness, the airy nothingness of affluence, and stated his approach as an attempt to “transcribe middleness with all its grits, bumps, and anonymities in its fullness of satisfaction and mystery.”³

Updike’s world, therefore, is the world of wealth and leisure. He describes the communal values of the Maples’ society: “[They] had observed how often, among their friends, divorce followed a dramatic home improvement, as if the marriage were making one last twitchy effort to live; their own worst crisis had come amid the plaster dust and exposed plumbing of a kitchen renovation.”⁴ Updike tells the reader early on that “[t]he Maples had been married now nine years, which is almost too long.”⁵ From the start society expects, even approves, of failed marriages. Triviality ferments amongst the wealthy, and relationships, once deemed holy, fall to the ground like crumbling dry-wall. Within this context, humanity’s frailty takes center stage. The opening paragraph of “Separating” describes the beauty of a cool June morning yet, in the midst of growth and renewal, the Maples notice “their sad murmuring selves the only stain in Nature.”⁶ James A. Schiff remarks on this contrast: “While the earth renews itself through the resurrection of spring and summer, the marriage cannot.”⁷ Updike perfectly captures the disintegration of the Maples’

² John Updike, *Giving Blood*. (The Music School. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1966). p 2716

³ D. Q Miller, *Updike, Middleness, and the Spell of ‘Subjective Geography’* (Ed. Stacey Olster. The Cambridge Companion to John Updike. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p 16

⁴ John Updike, *Separating*. (The Norton Anthology of American Literature. By Nina Baym. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007) p 2713

⁵ Updike, *Giving Blood*. p 18

⁶ Updike, *Separating*. p 2713

¹ William Faulkner, *William Faulkner - Banquet Speech* (Nobelprize.org. 1949. 04 May 2010)



marriage, their depleted sacrament. Kristiaan Versluys comments: “Updike’s realism, then, is a curious mix. It foregrounds the tangible and the everyday, but more importantly, it lifts them into the realm of the transcendental.”⁸ Middleness serves as the perfect backdrop for Updike’s narrative, because it offers a canvas against which to measure the common man. Through his prototypal relationship, Updike is freed to express his understanding of reality in the context of the human stain.

Perhaps no institution is quite as mundane as the ordinance of marriage. Indeed, marriage seems to be a building block from which middleness originates, for without marriage, manicured lawns, competitive neighbors, even soccer moms, would be obsolete. Wendell Berry defines marriage as the centerpiece of community: “This joining of two who know, love, and trust one another brings them in the same breath into the freedom of sexual consent and into the fullest earthly recognition of the image of God. . . . It is the fundamental connection without which nothing holds.”⁹ Berry suggests that man reaches his fullest capacity as God’s image-bearer through marriage, particularly in sexuality. Equally implicit in his text is that marriage is the sanctified realm for sex, and, by default, sex outside of marriage degrades a beautiful connection. Berry continues: “Because of [man’s] determination to separate sex from the practice of love in marriage and in family and community life, [his] public morality is confused, sentimental, bitter, complexly destructive, and hypocritical.”¹⁰ Marriage, then, enters the realm of sacrament, a holy and sacred union, and its fundamental ritual, the sexual act, brings man into a closer understanding of his place. Outside of marriage, the sexual act is false, hollow, and ultimately destructive.

In the marriage of Richard and Joan Maple, Updike establishes sacramental unity, particularly in the sexual act, as a mystical yet real practice. In “Giving Blood,” Richard

and Joan lie on opposite tables, stuck with needles, and slowly bleeding into bags. Though on separate sides of the room, the tubes containing their physical essences cross: “His blood and Joan’s merged on the floor, and together their spirits glided from crack to crack, from star to star on the ceiling.” In this passage, Updike renders the sexual act in all its totality: body and soul. Unlike the Gnostics who would see the physical as secondary to the spiritual, Updike celebrates the physical and spiritual connection of sanctified sex. He continues, narrating as the doctor enters the room and quietly discusses with an intern “as if not to disturb the mystical union of the couple sacrificially bedded together.”¹¹ As a married couple, as Berry’s “fullest earthly recognition of the image of God,” Richard and Joan experience a sacred, sacrificial unity — they are joined as no man can separate.

Yet they do separate, and that which was once sacred becomes trivial and trite. Middleness, perhaps conquered in their married moments of sublimity, nonetheless continues to define reality as Richard and Joan watch their marriage die. When Richard returns from Boston to visit Joan and his children, he and his wife lunch at a favorite restaurant. Richard looks at the faces around him, a community in which he is well known, and wonders if they can guess that he and his wife have separated: “Did they know? It didn’t matter, in this country of temporary arrangements.”¹² Alice and Kenneth Hamilton, joint authors of *The Elements of John Updike*, discuss the significance of marriage in the land of middleness: “Marriage, in which two individuals must either share a common existence or destroy each other’s happiness, becomes a test case for the ability of contemporary man to understand his world—and, by natural sequence, himself.”¹³ Updike, like Berry, presents marriage as the realm of pure sexual interaction yet struggles to find it successful in an adulterous and muddled reality.

Though Richard knows true intimacy with Joan, he

⁷ James A Schiff, *John Updike Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1998) p 122

⁸ Kristiaan Versluys, ‘Nakedness’ or Realism in Updike’s Early Short Stories (Ed. Stacey Olster. *The Cambridge Companion to John Updike*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p 30

⁹ Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon, 1993) p 138-139

¹⁰ Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community* p 14

¹¹ Updike, *Giving Blood*. p 27

¹² John Updike, *Gesturing* (The Best American Short Stories of the Century. Ed. John Updike. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999) p 573

¹³ Hamilton, Alice, and Kenneth Hamilton. *The Elements of John Updike*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Co, 1970) p 62



rejects his marriage and, instead of pursuing a passionate, sacred communion with his wife, forsakes his family. In “Separating,” Richard gazes across his town, past the “gutted fort” of a church long since silenced, and into his lover’s house, where “her bedroom light burned.”¹⁴ Though he has successfully muted any religious consciousness, Richard struggles to leave his family. Their last meal together is riddled with confusion and chaos. Richard selfishly breaks his pact with his wife, crying at the table. In the bedroom later that night, Joan rebukes him: “It really wasn’t fair. It’s your idea, and you made it look as though I was kicking you out.”¹⁵ Speaking to this selfishness, James A. Schiff says that “Richard [perhaps] is a parodic or quasi-Christ figure... since he sacrifices not himself but his family. He kills the marriage rather than have it kill him, and his anticipated resurrection lies outside of his marriage, where he will be joined with another woman.”¹⁶ Perversity enters into sacrament and that which was meant to last eternally disintegrates at the kitchen table. Indeed, eternity negatively affects Richard for, when asking if his daughter intends to live from now on in England, he is overwhelmed by “forever: [and] the concept, now a reality upon him, presse[s] and scratch[es] at the back of his throat.”¹⁷ Richard realizes that through his selfishness, he is not only permanently separating himself from Joan and their children, but revoking a previous pledge, a previous forever in which he and Joan would live in holy matrimony until death.

Richard cannot be read as a cold-hearted, determined adulterer. Throughout “Separating” he struggles with the reality of his decision. In the final paragraphs, Richard is overcome by his wife’s form: “When she stood, an inexplicable light – the moon? – outlined her body through the nightie”¹⁸ This radiant figure reminds the reader of the previous story, “Giving Blood,” and the mystical communion between two humans who experience intimacy in marriage. Updike, in a short essay entitled “Lust,” elaborates on this concept of sexual desire and its uniquely structured unity: “We are attracted not merely to the bodies of others but to their psyches, the shimmering non-material identities that

used to be called souls.”¹⁹ “Gesturing,” however, transgresses this mystical communion between body and spirit. A few months after the separation, Richard and Joan both have lovers. In the story, Joan asks Richard to leave their town, a community in which “the Maples were know . . . they had lived here most of their married life.”²⁰ Richard decides on Boston and leaves home. When his mistress, Ruth, visits him, their intimacy lacks the mystical sacrament seen in previous stories. Ruth is described crudely, “a plump little steed, long hair swinging, soft breasts swaying.”²¹ Instead of the thinly glowing form of Joan, Richard is confronted with this physical being, devoid of spiritual communication. The transformation from sacramental intimacy to mundane physicality completes itself when Richard refers to his and his lover’s “glorious f-----.”²² The sacred act, the sacrificial, cherished totality of sexuality in marriage has been reduced to pure physicality in the most vulgar terms.

Through the confusion of middleness and the torment of separation, Richard and Joan struggle to define reality. Donald J. Greiner says that Updike’s primary question, through his marriage narratives, is “how can a person pursue the promise of tomorrow when struck in the disintegration of today?”²³ The Maples’ relationship has progressed to irreconcilable difficulties – both are bedded with lovers, both are estranged from the marital intimacy of their youth. Yet, even in this, Richard experiences rising intensity in memory. In “Gesturing,” as he sits beside the wife of his youth, he cannot help but be “struck, for the thousandth time, by the perfection of her teeth, even and rounded and white, bared by her lips as if in proof of a perfect skull, an immaculate soul.”²⁴ The faded sacramental unity of the past still holds and reality, once dimmed by infidelity and betrayal, floods Richard’s consciousness, overcoming his resilience. As the Maples sit and discuss their

¹⁹ John Updike, *Lust* (More Matter: Essays and Criticism. New York: Knopf, 1999) p 45

²⁰⁻²² Updike, *Gesturing*. p 565, 570, 573.

²³ Greiner, Donald J. *The World as Host: John Updike and the Cultural Affirmation of Faith*. (John Updike and Religion: the Sense of the Sacred and the Motions of Grace. Ed. James Yerkes. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999)

²⁴ Updike, *Gesturing*. p 574

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ Updike, *Separating*. p 2719, 2717, 124, 2715, 1720.



extramarital affairs, Richard understands the truth about their relationship: “He saw through [Joan’s] words to what she was saying – that these lovers however we love them, are not us, are not sacred as reality is sacred. We are reality. We have made children. We gave each other our young bodies. We promised to grow old together.”²⁵ “Separating,” then, becomes all the more painful. Richard quakes at the idea of telling his first born, Judith, about the split for “they had raised her; he and Joan had endured together to raise her, alone of the four.”²⁶ Judith’s existence stands as the fruit of their marriage, and though Richard would like to think that the separation “should have no practical effect” on his children’s lives, he understands the gravity of the circumstance.²⁷ He watches his illumined wife, unfading reality, in his son’s bedroom, yet Dickie’s kiss fully undoes him. At that point the burning light of his lover’s bedroom fades and he, surprised, finds “the white face . . . gone, the darkness . . . featureless. Richard had forgotten why.”²⁸ Faced with sacred reality, Richard’s reasoning shatters. He confesses to his wife that his lover and their desecration of the sacramental act are “not real to me, the way – you are.”²⁹

Through the lens of reality, the past circumstances align, allowing the reader to make sense of their story. Versluys comments, “The stories register the infinitesimally small mental adjustments which allow the protagonist to find a vantage point from which the intensely studied shards of his life begin to make sense and reality becomes not only bearable but strangely enchanting.”³⁰ Reality, then,

is defined by the sacramental unity of the couple even in the darkness of their separation and adultery. The scenes in “Separating” and “Gesturing” push the reader back to the mystical communion of Richard and Joan, spread on opposite tables, blood mingling, souls ascending. Their unity proves fruitful, their four children a testament to eternal reality. Faced with the desecration of the sexual act and the overwhelming loss of body and soul intimacy, Richard and Joan are left wandering in the vain memory of sacrament. Their marriage, once holy, godlike, and meaningful, has crumpled under the weight of their infidelity.

John Updike in “Giving Blood,” “Separating,” and “Gesturing,” struggles with the meaning of reality in the face of overwhelming meaninglessness and sinfulness. The noxious human stain, the pervading atmosphere of Updike’s setting, dramatically affects the lives of the Maples and pushes them away from truth. In their marriage, they discover sacramental intimacy, true unity of body and soul. In their estrangement, however, they suffer under the crumbling loss of connection. Their lovers’ bodies, so physically sensuous, can never mean as much to them as their marriage, their unity based on promise and commitment. What they thought would give them joy only further robbed them of true bliss. Hopelessly they realize the sanctity of a reality squandered. Yet, through them, Updike encourages his readers to hold on to reality, to embrace sacrament and to stand, unlike the Maples, against the raging torrent of meaningless middleness. **Q**

²⁵ Updike, *Gesturing*. p 574

²⁶⁻²⁸ Updike, *Separating*. p 2715, 2719, 2720.

²⁹ Updike, *Gesturing*. p 574

³⁰ Versluys, ‘Nakedness’ p 30

Elliot Dunn only submits to The Quad to pad his résumé.

THREE PARABLES

LAURA HERMESMANN

I.

Corn
In swaying
Fraying
Dress
Shedding silky
Goldenness –

Do you know
your tassel crowns
Crumble
as they touch the ground?

II.

Crows with glossy feathers teem
(in purple sheen)

Cawing through stalks and brittle knobs
(gnawing cobs)

It was a sower's yield they stole
(they swallowed souls)

III.

Then they swell
From tattered husks;
Brown decaying
Sheaths
De-leaf
Dropping kernels
Indiscreet.

At the roots the seeds collect;
From the ashes resurrect.



Laura dedicates this poem to her Father, who sometimes gets philosophical as he drives past the fields of New Jersey summer corn.

SCHOLAR'S ARMCHAIR SYMPOSIUM

RESPONDING TO JAMES DAVISON HUNTER'S *TO CHANGE THE WORLD:*

THE IRONY, TRAGEDY, AND POSSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE LATE MODERN WORLD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010

DRS. STEVEN JONES, P.C. KEMENY, & GEORGE V. CAMPBELL



Dr. Steven Jones –

The College's own literature puts it succinctly:

“When the College was chartered, a broad, Christian-based cultural consensus prevailed in America . . . Believing that the fruits of civilization would be destroyed if religious and ethical roots were allowed to wither, the founders intended that the claims of Christ as God and Savior and of inspired Scripture be presented to all Grove City College remains true to the vision of its founders. Rejecting relativism and secularism, it fosters intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social development consistent with a commitment to Christian truth, morals, and freedom” More than description, the College “unapologetically advocates [the] preservation of America’s religious, political, and economic heritage of individual freedom and responsibility.”

Bold language to be sure, but as with many statements of institutional identity it establishes goals more than methods, and ends more than means. Implicit in the College’s statement is the narrative of displacement and decline. The Christian ethos that was once at the center of American social life is now at the periphery, and our society has lost something of value because of that historical trajectory. How, then, should Christians respond? For some, a defensive posture seems the best alternative. Withdrawal from social institutions that are now seen, to varying degrees, as hostile to orthodox Christian faith and practice is the order of the day. Often this strategy is accompanied by the construction of parallel institutions built on Christian foundations. Faith-based schooling, Christian news and other mass media outlets, and the emergence of Christian-faith are cases in point. There have also been attempts to “retake” the culture for Christ. The most obvious examples of this strategy come from politics more than culture, but the impetus is often the same. Put in positions of power, the argument goes, and Christians (or anyone else, presumably, who embraced this strategy) could mandate at least outward acceptance of their terms.

But will either of these work? James Hunter, the

Labrosse-Levinson Professor of Religion and Social Theory at the University of Virginia, has his doubts. In his new book, appropriately entitled *To Change the World; the Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, Hunter has at least two goals. First, he develops a model of how cultures change, and in doing so he dismisses many of the efforts made by American Christians to shape their social environment as unworkable and shortsighted. Second, he offers a new strategy for how Christians should interact with their culture. (In the interest of full disclosure, I am a former student of Hunter’s. He chaired my dissertation, and the issues at play in this essay and his book were the backdrop for many an argument around his dinner table.)

To understand what Hunter advocates, we must start with his anthropology. Humans are world creators. Our species always and everywhere constructs culture, that tangled web of ideas, physical objects, and crucially, symbols that embody various conceptions of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Precisely because so much is at stake, Christians and other groups within society often attempt to influence or even control the production of culture. Among the most basic and important insights in Hunter’s book is the simple recognition that cultures, which are always in somewhat of a state of flux to begin with, are often changed by purposeful action. For those who want to see their society embrace the Christian consensus noted above then, the question is one of means. How do you change the world?

His model of cultural change has been much anticipated and has already generated considerable interest. It is notable not just for what he sees as the only real method to effect change, but for what he rejects in arriving at his model. He rejects the idea that culture is really just the sum total of the individual values and ideals we possess. Such a thin view of culture, he holds, leads some Christians to believe that if they could just engage in enough soul winning, if they could just convert enough people to their side, then the culture itself would change to reflect the values and beliefs of the new majority. While he does not eschew evangelism, he holds that this will never really produce a change in culture because it ignores the powerful role played by



various gatekeepers, the elites in various culture-shaping institutions that are fairly immune to demands from the masses. To his credit, Hunter offers eleven specific propositions for how cultures operate and how they change, all of which point to the importance of networks and institutions (as opposed to individual “great men”) as the primary movers and shakers when it comes to shaping culture. He offers several examples from world history to buttress his point, ranging from the conversion of barbarian Europe to the Protestant Reformation to the abolitionist crusades of the 19th century. While historians will no doubt find much to wrestle with in his examples, his overall point is that many of the most significant transitions in western culture have not been the result of essentially populist crusades. Rather, social elites made possible the survival, flourishing, and eventual triumph of various cultural ideals.

If the key to cultural change is social location (serving as gatekeepers), should Christians try and take over these positions? This might seem to follow, but Hunter rejects this approach as well. That is, he does not think Christians should seek to become the gatekeepers. Such a move brings Christians into ultimately untenable relationships with earthly entanglements and, more troublingly, relies on methods that are both theologically and sociologically suspect. The entire second essay of the book is dedicated to “rethinking power,” and some of his most provocative and compelling insights emerge in this section.

The break-up of the old order and the lack of a cultural consensus in America has led various movements, many of them Christian in origin, to focus on politics as the means for achieving a collective identity. The problem is that all political action ultimately rests on the coercive power of the state, and, building off of Nietzsche, Hunter holds that focusing action on this realm promotes the political psychology of “ressentiment.” The mix of envy, distrust, and anger so indicative of contemporary politics. Christians of whatever ideological stripe often give in to this resentment when they enter the political process. Whether this is inevitable or not is not really the issue. America’s recent political history gives more than ample evidence for Hunter

to show that both the Christian Right and the Christian Left engage in the worst sort of political maneuvering and gamesmanship all too frequently (no doubt alienating readers on both sides of the spectrum as well since Hunter spares no persons or causes from dissection). A third chapter examines the Neo-Anabaptists (think John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas) and their aggressive rejection of politics and the market as inconsistent with Christian witness. In Hunter’s analysis, this sort of withdrawal cannot be the answer since it is essentially critical rather than contributory in terms of the common good. Though attractive to many young Christians in America, this strategy too is doomed if the goal is to effect change in the culture.

In the final section of the book Hunter offers what he considers a better approach, but in doing so he changes the game. Though we are world makers, attempts to change the culture are really not the goal of Christian living:

If there are benevolent consequences of our engagement with the world. . . it is precisely because it is not rooted in a desire to change the world for the better but rather because it is an expression of a desire to honor the creator of all goodness, beauty, and truth, a manifestation of our loving obedience to God, and a fulfillment of God’s command to love our neighbor” (Hunter 234).

In short, purposeful attempts to change the culture are a distraction from what we should really be doing, and they are probably going to be unsuccessful anyway. Of course, participation in culture is inevitable, so Hunter calls on Christians to practice what he calls “faithful presence.” Earmarked by the pursuit of excellence and, crucially, a concern for the common good, faithful presence means that Christians would be present in every aspect of cultural production. Faithful presence is not oriented toward individual distinction and influence as much as a genuine commitment to working for the good of all. This means that Christians should be present in both the center of society and the periphery. It also means Christians would reject using dominance and coercion in favor of persuasion and demonstration.



Ultimately, then, faithful presence is an end more than a means. At the very least it is a rich vision of Christian participation in the world and a nuanced understanding of Christian identity as citizens of two kingdoms. In Biblical language, it is the fulfillment of God's word to the Israelites as delivered through Jeremiah. During the Babylonian exile, as the people no doubt wondered what they were to do in this strange and perhaps hostile world, God told them to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare," (Jeremiah 29 4-7, in Hunter, 276).

As I noted earlier, I am deeply indebted to James Hunter, and there is no one I would rather be reading on these topics. That is not to say that I don't have questions. I do, chief among them is whether or not there even is a dominant culture anymore. My own sense is that the realities of multiculturalism are more widespread than even Hunter suspects, such that there are now several "centers" in society rather than an overlapping network of elites that forms a single center. I'm not convinced, then, that his model of cultural change is applicable in the contemporary period (though I do like his focus on elites). I also think the Anabaptist tradition has more going for it than Hunter does. The institutions that have emerged and identified themselves as alternatives to the mainstream (usually and thinly characterized by secularism) culture are, in my view, more dynamic than he indicates. As such, they have a significant contribution to make to the larger society, even if it is only modeling an alternative vision. There are several features of faithful presence that I find promising, and I particularly like the commitment to the common good which is all too often missing among conservative Christians, steeped as they are in the politics of resentment.

In the end this is a provocative and thoughtful book, well worth the time. The implications of what Hunter advocates for institutions and individual Christians alike are numerous and significant. Indeed, I can think of no better starting point for thinking about what we do here at the College, even if we are not in fact changing the world.

P.C. Kemeny –

James Davison Hunter is one of the few nationally-recognized scholars who is a conservative Christian. He graduated from a Christian college (Gordon), earned a legitimate Ph.D. from a major research university (Rutgers), and teaches at a prestigious university (Virginia). Hunter does not waste his time with op-ed pieces but instead publishes serious books with major university presses (e.g., University of Chicago). He not only has an endowed chair at UVA but even runs his own research center (the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture). One of his scholarly works, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1992) casts a scholarly light upon the dramatic changes in the restructuring of religion in contemporary America. In fact, *Culture Wars* is one of the few scholarly books that has made it into popular American culture in recent years.

Hunter is also an evangelical Christian. He is an elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, part of the conservative Presbyterian Church of America (not the liberal mainline Presbyterian denomination). Grove City College students probably take it for granted that their professors go to church. At a secular university, however, just attending a church – any church – is a major confessional statement. So serving as a leader at a PCA church is an act of remarkable commitment and political bravery. Hunter, in short, has the bona fides of a genuine Christian who is a serious scholar. He cannot be easily trivialized as one of those "socialist" professors that Glenn Beck loves to ridicule in order to dismiss academe.

Hunter's latest offering, *To Change the World*, should give liberal Christians, Neo-Anabaptist Christians, and Conservative Christians a great deal to ponder. I found the work to be constructive and intellectually-engaging. The first essay, which explores Christianity and culture, is fascinating. In the third essay, he outlines a theology of faithful presence. I would love to have an opportunity to think with other Christians about Hunter's theology and how it fits into a Reformed doctrine of the church.

Hunter's second essay, however, gave me pause to reflect



upon several issues crucial to the welfare of the church in America and our work here at Grove City College. In this second essay, Hunter analyzes the politics of liberal Christians, Neo-Anabaptists, and conservative Christians. Hunter's essay on conservative Christians should give Grove City College's students and faculty plenty to ponder. According to Hunter, the mythic ideal of a rightly-ordered society animates conservatives. Based upon a highly selective reading of American history, Hunter contends, conservative Christians assert that America was founded as a "Christian nation." Consequently, they insist that the Christian faith once played a determinative role in shaping every aspect of American culture, especially public policies and laws. Measured against this "golden age," any change provides evidence of America's slide into secularism, which threatens conservative Christians' custodianship and sense of entitlement over American culture. To be sure, as Hunter notes, many aspects of American culture clearly contradict evangelical Christian values, and several of Hunter's other books provide irrefutable documentation of these changes. However, conservative Christians prey upon the fears about secularization in order to marshal support for their political agenda. According to Hunter, conservative Christians employ two tactics: prayer and, more importantly, political action to "take back America for Christ." Despite strategic claims of nonpartisanship, which enable lobbying organizations to preserve their tax-exempt status, the Religious Right engages in unbridled political action in order to gain a controlling influence over American politics and culture. The Religious Right has written-off Democrats as part of America's problem. Rather, they see the Republican party as the best means of achieving its agenda. If Republicans even appear to depart from that agenda, leaders are eager to play political hardball. For instance, when James Dobson perceived that Republicans in the 2004 presidential election might not fully back the Religious Right's social agenda, he threatened to withdraw the support of millions of evangelical voters. Hunter discerns that certain changes among conservative Christians are afoot. Some of the leaders of the Religious Right, such as Jerry Falwell and

D. James Kennedy, have died and other leaders of the Evangelical movement, such as Rick Warren, are not so openly political. While some evidence also indicates that younger Evangelicals are turned off by the Religious Right's militancy and partisanship, Hunter concludes that conservative Christians continue to place their trust in politics for achieving their well-meaning hope to make the world a better place.

To Change the World is not the woeful lament of an Evangelical longing for the good-old-days of Protestant cultural hegemony. Nor is it another rant by some ex-Evangelical embarrassed by his fundamentalist parents; Hunter's analysis of the Religious Life and Neo-Anabaptist tradition is as rigorous and scathing as his critique of conservative Christians. The work cannot be easily dismissed as another diatribe against the Religious Right. Instead, it is a serious work of cultural analysis. I found Hunter's analysis insightful for several reasons. The Religious Right does seem to trade upon histrionics in order to motivate political action. For instance, in the days leading up to the November 2010 election, I received a flurry of emails from Focus on the Family informing me that the forthcoming election was the single most important one in all of American history. While all elections are important, I doubt the most recent one really trumped the 1860 election in terms of long-term significance. The Civil War followed Abraham Lincoln's election. Hunter is also correct when he points to the pivotal role that history plays in generating a sense of entitlement. At many points, the Religious Right's selective reading of religion's role in America's founding is as problematic as secular revisionists' (re-)interpretations of the evidence. Simply put, any decent historian recognizes the Religious Right's reading of history is often a one-sided interpretation of highly selective facts. If Christians treated the Bible as capriciously, they would be drummed out of their Sunday School class. Finally, Hunter's analysis also raises doubts about the long-term effectiveness of political action as the crucial cure for America's problems. It subverts the notion of the common good that is essential for our Democratic Republic because it uses politics as the first



and last resort to coerce conformity.

In my mind, Hunter's work also raises some impertinent questions for our collegiate community to consider. Do we unwittingly foster the sense of "ressentiment" that Hunter describes, especially in our Humanities curriculum? Do our curriculum and extra-curricular activities, especially guest speakers, nurture an uncritical commitment to partisan politics in a way that trivializes a biblically-robust doctrine of the church? The reason why conservative Christians lack influence in our culture, Hunter contends, is not because they do not have enough faith or fail to think as Christians. Instead, he argues, it is because Christians are absent from the key culture-shaping institutions that have the greatest influence over culture. If culture lies upstream from politics, as Hunter maintains, could we do a better job of encouraging students to discern their Christian vocation and see it within the framework of serving God as a faithful presence in a culture-shaping institution? *To Change the World* might be a game-changer. His analysis could be flawed and proposed solutions might be wrong. Only time will tell. Conservative Christians, however, should not ignore this work. Given Hunter's credentials and demonstrated evangelical commitment, we might do so at our own peril.

George V. Campbell –

Touché! is my response to Hunter's argument: "precisely because the dominant public witness of the church is a political witness, often of the crudest, most manipulative, and arrogant kind, there are good reasons to keep politics at arm's length. Put differently, it would be salutary for the church and its leadership to remain silent for a season until [they learn] . . . how to enact their faith in public through acts of shalom rather than to try again to represent it publicly through law, policy, and political mobilization"

(Hunter, 186, 281). Hunter defends this persuasively in a book-length indictment of the last generation of Christian activism, coupled with a constructive alternative.

Hunter's first contribution is a sophisticated explanation of what culture is and how it changes (esp. pages 32-47). Christian leaders must read this. Understanding what Hunter teaches explains why current Christian beliefs and tactics for changing culture are shallow (and why they have accomplished so little), whether they come from the Christian Left, the Christian Right, or the Anabaptist tradition. It also makes clear that Christians overestimate what politics can do, highlighting that in politics as in other realms, Christians have largely assimilated to American beliefs and practices (e.g., p. 185). Hunter also hints at the deeper root: Biblical ignorance.

Another signal contribution of the book is Hunter's justification for working for the common good. American Christians too often notice individual implications of Biblical truths but fail to develop social ones. Sociologist Hunter rightly argues, "The practice of faithful presence, then, generates relationships and institutions that are fundamentally covenantal in character, the ends of which are the fostering of meaning, purpose, truth, beauty, belonging, and fairness—not just for Christians but for everyone" (263).

I will state one reservation. Hunter is convincing that Christians are mistaken to believe that successful evangelism alone will not automatically change a culture. Nevertheless, he may underestimate evangelism. Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* (1904-05) argues that massive conversion to vital Christian faith during the Protestant Reformation changed social values and norms enough to dramatically change northern European culture.

The book is a great advance in the conversation about how Christians might change the world. **Q**

THE MEANS OF GRACE

BRITTNEY TODD

Kate walked into the room slowly. Her niece Emery sat on the hospital table in a paper gown, with her hands tucked firmly beneath her thighs, the crinkly thin paper bunched under her. The cheap leather of the table pad was cracked along the seams, like stale caramels. Emery's face was pale, and her lips had the blue sheen of a bruise. Despite the beeping of machinery and the murmur of voices in the hall, Kate seemed to have entered a vacuous silence. She hovered just inside the door, her nostrils stinging with the sharpness of hospital sterility. Her heartbeat was quickening – with uncertainty, discomfort, fear, sadness, she couldn't be sure which. Emery stared straight ahead.

Kate glanced around the room, her gaze flickering over details that seemed to shift and stiffen under the oppressive weight of the cold, stale air. The blinds were cracked and the midnight sky beyond them endless. Dead flowers in a vase on a side table hung their heads, flanked on both sides by stark walls. The monitor shrilled a soulless beeping rhythm, and the thin tick of the clock was relentless.

It was just Kate and just Emery, in silence. Kate stepped forward. One large step, then one small, halting step brought her within arm's distance of the table. Emery looked at Kate, her gaze blank, as though she were staring but not seeing. Kate moved to lay her hand on Emery's knee, but paused just barely too long and instead stood awkwardly, one hand clutching her purse, the other hovering toward Emery briefly before stuffing itself into her jacket pocket.

"Emery," Kate said and startled herself with the sound of it.

"I know what you want to say, Auntie Kate," Emery said in a voice that seemed quieter than the silence had. She spoke without looking up. "Don't bother. I'm sick of it, of everything."

Her words hovered in the air, pounding in earnestness, posed by lips near-blue and near-still. The dread that had been lingering around Kate's heart since the phone call hours ago settled deeper into her middle as she found

herself with no reply. Emery did not look surprised by her silence.

A chorus of clicking heels in the hallway announced the approach of the nurses. Two women marched in. One had faded red hair, frizzy under her cap, and her white skirt clung in tight wrinkles around her middle. She carried a clipboard. The second nurse was younger, tall and straight. As a unit, the nurses marched to a cabinet in the corner of the room, snapping plastic gloves, carefully unwrapping tongue depressors, preparing for a routine inspection. The older nurse stationed herself behind Emery and, with her gaze aimed directly over Emery's head, pressed the silver end of her stethoscope against the white skin of Emery's back.

"Breathe in," she barked.

If possible, Emery's eyes grew even colder as she drew in a slow breath.

"Breathe out."

Another long, slow breath. The nurse marched around to stand before the table.

"Hold your arm straight," she ordered, grabbing Emery's hand and straightening her arm in a violent demonstration. She fastened a thick black cuff above the sharp jut of Emery's elbow and, with eyes on the dial, began to inflate it. She barked the blood pressure reading to the second nurse, who stood to the side with clipboard and charts in hand. Her pencil moved sharply, not a stroke wasted. Once finished, the older nurse stood squarely in front of Emery, arms clasped behind her, feet spread. For the first time since entering, she looked Emery in the eye. The girl shuddered in her thin gown. Kate shuddered, too.

"Child," the nurse said, "you're lucky to be alive. Go home. Eat something. Don't let me see you here again."

The nurses marched out. After a long moment in which neither Kate nor Emery moved, Kate shook her head slowly, as if waking from a thick dream.

"Come on, Em," she said. "Put your clothes on. You can stay with me tonight."



Kate and Emery drove home in the chill of pre-dawn. They hadn't spoken since the hospital room. Kate had never expected to make this hospital visit. And yet, tonight had happened. She had seen Emery alive only because she had been unwillingly pulled back into life. And, she admitted silently, her chief emotion was not sorrow, but bewilderment. Kate thought of her sister, Emery's mother, and how worried she was, of her panicked phone call that Emery was in the hospital, and could Kate please pick her up.

"Your mom will be worried sick," Kate said. She hadn't decided to talk, and immediately she knew they were the wrong words.

"She can deal. She can do whatever the hell she wants."

"Emery." Kate's tone was mildly reproachful. Silence from the passenger seat. "Well anyway, she knows you'll be at my place till she gets back tomorrow."

They drove on through the lingering night. In the heaviness of silence and the tension of Kate's uncertainty, the dew seemed frozen on the sharp grass like still-born promises, and the world held its breath, as if afraid to hope the sun would rise again. All seemed sinister and harsh, the stars like sharp pin-pricks, the moonlight slicing through darkness like a knife, the road always about to veer unexpectedly. Kate drove slowly, peering into the thick darkness, carefully feeling out the way home. She suddenly felt the need to talk and again heard her own voice before deciding to speak.

"I have ice cream at home." As if that would solve anything. "Chocolate, your favorite. Your mom hates chocolate ice cream. She says it just steals the thunder from chocolate syrup. I couldn't disagree more. I love it. You love it, too, right? Well, we'll have some when we get home." Stupid. Ice cream.

"I'm not hungry," Emery said. Shocker.

"Emery." Kate hesitated. "Sweetheart, you've got to eat."

"Not if I'm not hungry. I don't get hungry."

"Emery, everyone gets hungry."

Silence hung heavy again, like a curtain between them, and Kate heard herself trying again to push it aside.

"Well, you're in luck, anyway," she said, "because I just did laundry, so you'll be sleeping on clean sheets, those rose ones that used to be at Grandma's house." She couldn't believe that she was chatting when so much needed to be said and heard, but stopping was not an option. They were close to home, and Kate could feel the relief of her bed around the corner. "You must be exhausted. I know I —"

"Shut. Up." Like a gunshot.

"Excuse me?" It was more a reflex than an actual question. They turned onto the road where Kate lived.

"I said shut up!" Emery was not yelling. The car was stopped in the driveway. "This is it, this is how it always goes. Nothing you say means anything anymore! You're just like my mom is now. I hate all of it. I hate you both!"

Kate felt her heart tighten and then expand in a huge, swelling gasp. Her eyes smarted with shocking tears, and she was angry that she wanted to cry. She was angry? Oh, yes, she was angry. She knew she was in over her head here, but she was trying. She clutched her anger but felt it swell into her lungs, into her throat, and out into the still car.

"Emery Marie Stockton, how dare you? How. Dare. You. After all your mother has done for you? After all I have done for you? After you've been given everything?" Kate was yelling. "You think your life is bad? Your life is fantastic. Except, what, you have really hard homework and fight with your mom sometimes? Everyone has problems, but that doesn't mean you get to do this and expect us to love it! Damn it, Emery, stop being so selfish and grow up!"

The silence that followed was sickening. Emery did not look at Kate. She did not move. She did not cry. Kate, to her chagrin, sobbed. The sun was rising behind the long row of sleepy houses. A faint blush dusted the horizon, and every leaf was dusky against the rising pink. Kate cried, loudly, deeply, angrily, helplessly, her hands gripping the steering wheel of the parked car in white-knuckled desperation. Her shoulders heaved and her chest came close to bursting with the force of a resentment she hated herself for feeling toward this girl she had once known. The reflection of herself glimpsed in the rear-view mirror was of a face so red it bordered purple. When Emery finally stirred, the sky



was liquid with molten gold and the last star was making its exit.

“Kate. I’m sorry to be a burden.” Her voice carried no hint of self-pity. Emery spoke so quietly that Kate had to choke back a sob to be sure she was speaking. “I never wanted you to have to deal with this.”

And without a glance, she stepped out of the car and let herself into the house.

Emery’s mother did not arrive back in town until late the next afternoon. Kate and Emery had both slept until the house was warm with pervasive light. They had not spoken. Kate had awoken first, heavy with thoughts of the night before. She had silently brewed coffee, finished washing dishes that had been left half-clean in her rush, glanced through the paper at the kitchen table. There was comfort in the details she let herself be arrested by while deeper thoughts churned. She breathed deeply the velvet scent of coffee. She rubbed her thumb absently on the rough fabric of the kitchen chair till her skin tingled. She turned the water on so hot it sent a chill up her arm when she washed out her mug. She shrugged her shoulders slowly, feeling every long stretch of the muscles, and under these details she listened for any sound from her niece in the room upstairs. When Emery appeared at the top of the stairs, Kate was standing at the refrigerator door, a carton of eggs in her hand. She turned and watched her niece descend, long hair (blonde like her mother’s) hanging straight about her shoulders, wearing the same wrinkled t-shirt and jeans of the night before. Without looking at Kate she walked into the living room and sat silently upon the couch.

“Morning, Emery,” Kate said quietly.

Emery did not respond.

“Can I make you some breakfast? I was just about to scramble some eggs.” Silence. Kate shut the refrigerator door and tried again. “All right. Honey, you know you’re welcome to anything in my closet if you want to put on something clean. And how about a shower? A hot shower works wonders.” Kate set down the eggs and walked around to the couch. She carefully positioned herself on the edge of the cushion next to her niece, angled toward her, hands

limp in her own lap. Emery would not look at her.

“Em, about last night,” Kate began. “I’m so sorry, I just – ”

“Please don’t.” The shadows under Emery’s eyes had grown deeper, gray shadows under blue eyes, like a pond under the winter sky. Kate noticed the sharp angle of Emery’s collarbone visible under stretched skin, silk-thin, and her heart stumbled over the realization. But all she said was, “Okay. Well, your mom will be here within the hour. Make yourself at home.”

It was a long, silent hour during which Emery did not leave the couch and Kate hovered uncertainly between the living room and the kitchen before making her scrambled eggs and settling at the table to poke at them. Finally the doorbell rang. Kate could see Emery’s shoulders stiffen. She put her plate of eggs in the sink and paused behind Emery on the couch, wanting to say something of comfort. But no words came, and instead she rushed to the door.

Emery’s mother, still in a business suit, walked straight to the living room with a long, even stride and the thunk of heels upon hardwood. She was trailed, to Kate’s surprise, by a man who wore a suit the color of dust and a mustache like a shoe brush. Kate nodded to him in greeting and followed them into the living room. Emery’s mother was sitting on the coffee table, concernedly searching her daughter’s countenance for signs of trauma.

“Oh my gosh, Emery, are you okay?” Kate cringed at the question. “Oh, you’re so pale. Oh, you look so tired. What did the doctors say? What did you tell them? Oh, Emery, why do you do this? I’ve been so worried.” She turned toward Kate and the man, who was now standing behind her. “I left my conference early, even though I was supposed to have a very important meeting with a potential client this afternoon. He’s a Wall Street tycoon of sorts. It would have been a fabulous account. But I left,” she turned back to her daughter, “to come back here and see you. To help you.” She was speaking slowly now, as if to a child or a foreigner. “I’ve brought a doctor with me, Emery.” She motioned for the man to step nearer. “He’s a specialist. He deals with problems like yours all the time.”



Kate was watching Emery's face over her mother's shoulder. She had been staring blankly past her mother, but now her eyes flickered briefly to the man's face. Her mother continued.

"Dear, we just want to make sure you're safe and to fix whatever's wrong with you." Kate watched the sunlight filtering through the window and falling like a golden weight on Emery's shoulders. "He can help."

"Yes," the man spoke up, in a voice that rattled. "I think a session every day or two, the chance for you to discuss your concerns." Emery's mother was nodding with each statement, like an agreeable bobblehead doll. Emery's eyes flickered back and forth between mother and specialist. "Tell me, dear, how do you feel this morning?"

Emery stared at him.

"What emotion?" he asked.

Emery's face was a blank. Kate could see her retreating behind her eyes. The man stared her down. Emery didn't blink.

"Well, then," the man said after a long pause. His mouth contracted in a fleeting smile. "There are other options. We have a home center for more intense therapeutic assistance, should you find it necessary." At the mention of the home center, Emery's mother began a long string of laments, concerns, and plans, and the trace of a thoughtful wrinkle that had creased Emery's forehead erased itself in total defeat.

It was decided that Emery had two days to show herself willing to eat and become well again. If she continued to refuse food, Monday morning would find her an occupant at a home for nutritional therapy. The conversation was entirely between mother and specialist; Emery did not speak at all.

"Well, come, dear," her mother finally concluded with a sigh and a glance toward the couch. "You've been in Auntie Kate's way long enough. We'll go straight home, as soon as I've made a few necessary stops."

Emery's eyes were closed, and she showed no immediate signs of moving. "Emery," her mother said impatiently. Kate studied the peaked white face and felt that she was

watching Emery give up, watching her slip away, watching the girl of the night before with blue-tinged lips that unwillingly drew in air. She felt a throb of pain remembering her own words of the night before. She noted the map of purple veins visible on Emery's impossibly thin wrists. She spoke.

"Or," she said, "she could stay here."

Emery's eyes opened wide. Her mother turned to look at Kate. The specialist looked disgruntled.

"What?" Emery's mother asked.

"She could stay here." Kate checked Emery's face for response and was surprised to see her eyebrows raised. It was the most emotion she had shown yet. "At least for the weekend. I wouldn't mind dropping her off at school on Monday, or at the counselors' office"—a nod toward the mustached man—"or wherever else. And we've always been good pals. I'd love to have her here." Kate's eyes were filling with tears again, but she smiled at her niece. "What do you say, Em? Want to try?"

A slight nod was her only answer.

And so it was arranged.

Kate walked her sister and the specialist to the door, shook hands with the specialist, hugged her sister farewell and assured her of every intention to see Emery eat a square meal. She leaned against the door jamb, watching the doctor pull sharply away in his little Volkswagen. Her sister was on the phone now, climbing into her Lexus, juggling purse, briefcase, and keys. Kate sighed and turned toward the living room, where Emery still sat.

"Well, Em," she said. "What now?"

Before Emery could answer, through the open front door came the gut-wrenching clamor of honking horn, screeching brakes, and twisting tons of metal. Kate was out the door in the time it would have taken her heart to beat once had it not stopped entirely at the sound. The Lexus was barely out of the driveway, crushed like a soda can around the front end of a pickup. The horn of the Lexus screamed long and steadily, on its own, white noise in the world of horror Kate seemed to have entered.

She found herself running forward. She found herself



at the door of the car. She found the door open and her arms around her sister, pulling, pulling. She found that her sister was stuck. Still she pulled. She saw a thin, white arm reach under hers, unfasten the seatbelt, and give a tug that pulled her sister loose of the wreckage. Blood ran in a steady stream down her sister's forehead. Her head flopped like a newborn's, her eyes wouldn't open. Kate found herself on the lawn, her sister cradled in her lap. A man in flannel sat next to her. She noticed now that both the car and truck were empty. The man was crying, blubbering apologies, but Kate couldn't quite think for what. She stared vacantly at him and clutched her sister.

The sound of sirens called her out of the fog in which she had been sitting. Lights flashed with startling color and speed. She found that Emery was next to her and that she had been talking.

"It's okay, Aunt Kate. I called the ambulance. They're here. It's okay, it's okay. Stop crying. It's okay."

Kate found that she had been crying. As the paramedics lifted her sister into the back of the ambulance, she found that there was blood blooming in patches across her shirt. She found Emery's thin arms wrapped around her, and she wrapped her numb arms around Emery. "It's going to be okay," they told each other. "It's going to be okay."

The sun rose the next morning in a crimson flush, and its light found Kate and Emery sitting beneath a small window in the ER. They had passed a sleepless night waiting for news from beyond the swinging double-doors of surgery. Kate had cried. Emery had cried. They had held hands, Emery's small fingers intertwined with Kate's soft ones, muttering reassurances and prayers. Finally, when they had begun to feel that time had forgotten them completely, a doctor walked toward them.

It was Emery who, after squeezing Kate's hand, stood to meet the doctor and asked simply, "Well?"

The doctor's smile faded into weary wrinkles at the corner of his mouth. "There was severe trauma to the head," he said, "but you got her here just in time. She's going to live, but she's going to need a lot of help, especially from

you, her family. It's going to take time and patience for her to regain her strength."

Kate and Emery thanked the doctor. They discussed recovery, insurance, and physical therapy, and then he retreated behind swinging double doors. Kate and Emery wandered the stark hall in the direction of the cafeteria, their relief a shared though unspoken warmth. Kate broke the silence.

"You did it, you know, Em. She's alive because of you. You got her out of the car. You called the ambulance. You saved your mom's life. I'm so glad you were there when she needed you. I'm so glad you weren't in that car."

The cafeteria was nearly empty. A few nurses in wrinkled scrubs sat over a weary breakfast in one corner. Kate stepped up to the shining counter without surveying the menu.

"I'll just have a cup of black coffee, please." Her wallet was already in hand when she was startled by Emery's voice at her elbow.

"And I'll have a cup of orange juice and an order of scrambled eggs with toast, please."

Emery selected a table and sat down. Kate watched her over the plate of steaming eggs, eyebrows raised, head cocked suspiciously. Emery met her look of surprise with her own look of mock wonder.

"What, Aunt Kate?" she said. "I'm hungry." She laughed. The sound was tinny, like a piano out of tune, but her cheeks were the translucent pink of the year's first rose.

"Of course you are." Kate stirred sugar into the milky fog of her coffee. "Everyone hungers, Em. Everyone." She smiled and then drank slowly, savoring the bitter and the sweet, feeling the hot drink warm her till her very toes seemed more comfortable, and watching toast crumbs collect around Emery's plate. 

Brittney Todd is still coming to terms with the fact that her eyes are green

CONUNDRUMS



I. You're given a single wall outlet and 10 surge protectors, each one having 9 outlets of its own. If you hook one up to the wall and branch the rest out, then you'll have 81 free outlets, no matter how you arrange them. But how many different ways can you arrange them?

Note that each surge protector is a different color, so you can tell them apart. And you don't care which particular outlets the plugs go into on a given strip; all that matters is which strips are dependent on which others. (Tip: Draw examples for the same situation when you have 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 power strips, then look for a pattern or formula. And please don't try this at home.)

II. In a single-elimination tournament for a particular 64-team sports league, each fan has one favorite team and completely turns against the team that beats it. From then on, the fan roots for each new opponent of his defeater. The team that first beats this defeater, avenging the fan's original favorite, becomes his new favorite, and is subject to the same principles as the original, through the end of the tournament. Given that each team has an equal initial number of fans and a 50-50 chance of winning each match, what percentage of fans can you expect to be happy with the final outcome of the tournament?

If you'd like to submit an answer to Conundrum I or Conundrum II, please email our conundrumer, Doug Smith, at smithdp1@gcc.edu. There will be a \$20 prize for the first correct answer.

Congratulations to Sion Kim, who solved last issue's Conundrum I. The sum of all gifts given to the second generation was 12376. This also happens to be the 12th 6-simplex number; for more on this type of addition, see simplicial polytopic numbers.

No one solved Conundrum II: the letter u starts "upside down," is always inside "out," and often finishes "lost" in France (perdu/e/s).



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