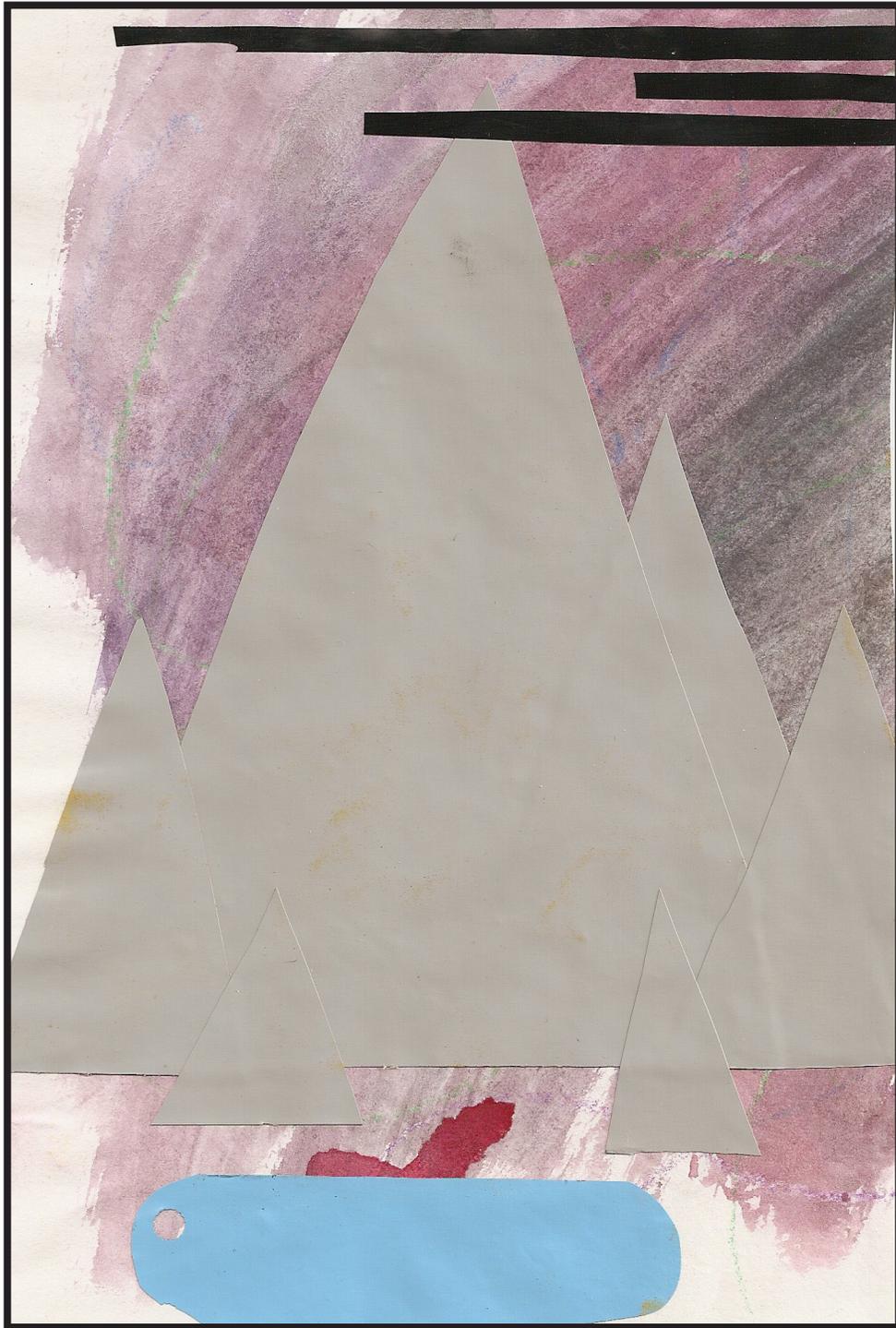


THE

Winter 2011

QUAD

of Grove City College



THE QUAD

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EDITORS' NOTE

If any season is connected to the telling of tales, it is most certainly winter. It is in its chill and darkness that we relive the slow advent of our Christ, the beginning of the story of our faith. And it is during this time of the year, when the outdoors become cold, the sky turns bleak, and the work of the year comes in never-ending waves, that we turn to stories in order to remind ourselves of who we are, and to transport ourselves to new places of adventure and discovery. Narratives serve as more than distraction or entertainment. Our histories tell us about our past, our fiction tells us about ourselves, and the stories of the Bible—especially the story of The Gospel—tell us about our Creator and his relationship with humanity.

In this issue of *The Quad*, we examine stories from a number of perspectives. Zoë Perrin, Ethan Kreimeyer, and Joanna Lawson tell stories of their own making. In the book reviews, Dr. Graham examines "*The Roman Revolution of Constantine*" and discusses the way that culture can subtly warp our views of the past. Heather VanderWall looks at "*Art That Tells A Story*," which seeks to discuss visual representations of the Gospel. Andy Walker, in his review of "*Onward*," looks at what a CEO's self-aggrandizing story unintentionally reveals about himself. Perhaps the editors' favorite piece in the issue is Dr. Diane Dixon's examination of the life of Vargas Llosa, an international storyteller recently awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.

We hope that these stories will work on you as they have worked on us, transport you to foreign places, and spur you to consider your own narrative.

Andrew Walker
Senior Editor

Zoë Perrin
Junior Editor

Volume 4, Issue 4, Winter 2011. *The Quad* is published quarterly by students of Grove City College and funded by the college. The works in this magazine, however, do not necessarily represent the views of Grove City College, the editors, the advisor, or the editorial advisory board. The editors are responsible for the selection of articles; responsibility for opinions and accuracy of facts in articles published rests solely with the individual authors. *The Quad* grants permission for any original article to be photocopied for local use, provided that no more than 1,000 copies are made, are distributed at no cost, and *The Quad* is properly cited as the source.

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REVIEW: *THE ROMAN REVOLUTION OF CONSTANTINE*

MARK W. GRAHAM

In 1939, Sir Ronald Syme published one of the twentieth century's most influential and controversial historical studies. His *Roman Revolution* (Oxford University Press) upended the world of classical scholarship by interpreting the first Roman emperor, Octavian/Augustus, in light of the recent rise of Mussolini and Hitler. For almost nineteen hundred years, scholars had been stuck in a polarized debate over whether Augustus had in fact restored the Roman Republic (as he publicly claimed) or instituted a bald monarchy (which Romans were supposed to abhor). Syme proposed to read between (and above and below) the lines of historical sources to untie this Gordian knot by arguing that Augustus, like Mussolini and Hitler, had skillfully manipulated, networked, and secretly schemed to seize power and restore order in desperate times. Like Mussolini and Hitler (in Syme's view), Augustus and a network of political cronies, through systematic exploitation of the people and the media, had essentially and brilliantly pulled one over on the Roman people. Even though Syme's historical method tended to be close and careful, historians today still debate whether Syme's Augustus could possibly have appeared at any time other than the 1930s or thereafter.

Raymond Van Dam's *Roman Revolution of Constantine* self-consciously echoes far more than just the title of Syme's famous work – and the current book promises to be no less controversial. For Van Dam, Constantine's Roman Revolution was on par with Augustus'. For just as Augustus had transformed the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire, Constantine oversaw the transition of a Roman Empire into a Christian Empire. Van Dam passes on many important lessons from Syme, perhaps most importantly that the historian must treat contemporary pronouncements and accounts of famous political figures as “sources whose contents and intentions require repeated scrutiny” (5). All

competent historians and biographers, of course, know that the scholar cannot take any source – even pronouncements of faith by the subject of study – at face value. A vexing issue arises when close analysis beyond “face value” simply becomes inserting the scholar's own assumptions, age, or outlook “between the lines.”

Invoking Syme's famous analysis, Van Dam proposes that “the question of the sincerity of Constantine's religious commitment is hence an analogue to the question about the sincerity of Augustus' political claim to have restored the Republic” (6). The question of sincerity – be it in reference to a political program and/or

The Roman Revolution of Constantine
Raymond Van Dam
New York: Cambridge University
Press, 2007

a religious conversion – is a notoriously thorny one; and Van Dam is one of few living historians eminently up to the task of representing Constantine. Rather than give us a simplistically straightforward narrative of Constantine's famous reign or conversion or sincerity, Van Dam, in each chapter and in a unique way, revels in the alternative and competing narratives of his reign, ancient and modern. In doing so, he, in one sense, tells the truth about both the historian through time as much as his emperor subject. All scholars, from Constantine's contemporaries (such as his famous biographer Eusebius) onward, have fashioned an image of Constantine that fits their own political, theological, philosophical, epistemological, and interpretive agenda. Sometimes Van Dam seems to fault this although most of the time he presents it as an inevitable (if not desirable) practice of the historian. How and why he condones or criticizes this does not come across consistently in his analysis. For example, he argues that it is wrong to claim that the hagiographical biographer Eusebius misrepresents Constantine, because Eusebius is simply representing the emperor “in a particular way that happened to correspond to and support his own doctrines,” just like all historians



essentially do (14-15). On what grounds, then, does Van Dam later fault two nineteenth-century scholars for their sense of “cultural romanticism about the East and intellectual superiority about their own Western scholarship” (218)? Are they not merely fashioning a view based on their own assumptions or cultural doctrines?

Yet Van Dam is far from proposing that all views are equally valid, and he soundly and consistently critiques one of the most common historical errors of our day. He writes, “one imposing requirement for interpreting the past is to forget the future” (9). Too often, our retrospective and teleological perspective distorts historical study by making the outcome seem inevitable. Many Christians and secularists alike seem to interpret all of Constantine’s reign as if Christendom already existed or, at least, was bound to exist regardless of any contingencies arising during Constantine’s own age. For some Christians, this teleology becomes a way of praising the inevitable and glorious advent of Christendom; for secularists, it can cause them to despise Constantine for “erecting the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the capitol,” to borrow Edward Gibbon’s unforgettable phrase. Contrarily (but no less teleologically), other Christians, particularly radical Protestants, have tended to dismiss Constantine as “the ruination of Christianity” as though he himself deliberately set out to permanently undermine their own anachronistic notions of the separation of church and state. All of these perspectives and approaches are wrong-headed. Van Dam’s study makes a powerful case for analyzing Constantine’s rule as one of uncertainty, sincerity, brutality, deception, experimentation, rashness, fickleness, devotion, and might-have-dismally-failed intrigue. Van Dam’s Constantine emerges as a real, irreducibly complex human being and emperor consumed with many other things (becoming emperor, surviving as emperor, eliminating rivals, strengthening frontiers, buttressing the eastern part of the Empire) than just converting to or “using” Christianity. To what extent Van Dam allows his own philosophical and theological perspectives to inform his own research and analysis is not always explicit. What image of Constantine is Van Dam

fashioning in his own interpretive image?

On that question, my review of this work is mixed. Fundamentally, Van Dam (a Calvin College graduate who does not currently identify with the Christian faith), defines Christianity throughout as an identity rather than beliefs. To his credit, Van Dam is thoroughly and impressively informed on the substance of Christian doctrine and practice throughout time—something that many current ancient historians decidedly are not. When he does discuss doctrine, he never passes on common stereotypes and caricatures. His major themes come out here, though, with which all readers of this work will have to wrestle. First, Van Dam claims that Constantine was consistently struggling with how and when to identify himself in public with Christianity. The emperors before Constantine had identified with major deities; Constantine often does so himself, albeit generally with a rather different sort of deity than Jupiter, Hercules, or Apollo (although he does identify with Apollo long after he claims Christianity). Second, Van Dam clearly connects Constantine’s identification with Christ with the famous fourth-century debates over the identification of Jesus the Son with God the Father. Just before and in the early parts of Constantine’s reign there was much speculation over how multiple emperors could simultaneously hold the office of emperor (recall, from HUMA 101, Diocletian’s Tetrarchy). To Van Dam, the central issue at the Council of Nicaea and Constantine’s own identification with Christ are simultaneous.

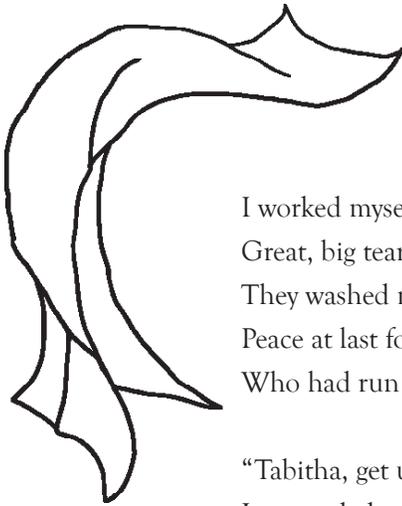
Intriguingly, but ultimately unconvincingly, Van Dam ties political debates over how multiple emperors could rule at the same time with theological debates over how the members of the Trinity related to each other (248). In this analysis, Trinitarian discussion itself was primarily, if not exclusively, a political debate. “And since both discussions used similar terms and ideas, a debate about doctrines was simultaneously a debate about Christian emperorship” (249). During Constantine’s rule, both Jesus and the Roman emperor had to be rather suddenly redefined, owing to political exigencies and contingencies (250). In such a view, the heresy of Arianism “would have made a perfectly



respectable orthodox Christianity” (252-53), but only became reviled because of how the politics played out during Constantine’s reign. Here, Van Dam himself no longer looks revolutionary, original, and innovative, but rather fairly typical of the “multiple and competing Christianities” model popular for the past half century or so. Orthodox Christians cannot follow Van Dam to the conclusion that orthodoxy itself is merely a retrospective teleology. It is one thing to acknowledge that historical events – even doctrinal formulations – have contingency, quite another to

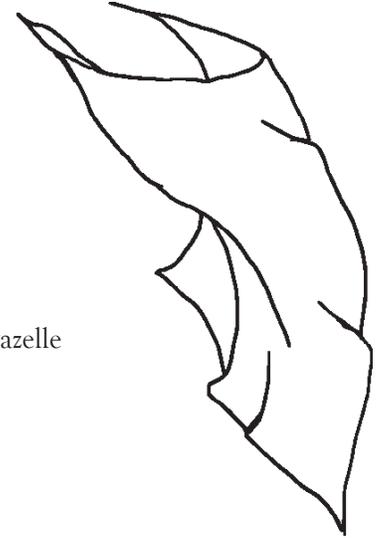
maintain that doctrine and orthodoxy are simply products of political process. There is no room for a “faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) in Van Dam’s analysis. Though Van Dam’s reconstructoin of Constaine is innovative, interesting, and at times downright convincing, he has demonstrated his own adage, and ultimately created (as did Sir Ronald Syme with Augustus) a Constantine for his own age. Q

Dr. Graham is a professor of history at Grove City College.



JANUARY 27TH

ANDREW BARTEL



I worked myself to death, they said,
Great, big tears in their eyes for their own personal seamstress.
They washed me, put me in an upper room to display;
Peace at last for an obedient disciple, much-deserved rest for a gazelle
Who had run her race well.

“Tabitha, get up,” he said.
I pretended not to hear him.
“Tabitha, get up.”
“Five more minutes.”
“Tabitha, get up,”

“Tabitha, get up, there’s more work to do.”

I sighed the sigh of the long-suffering; the sigh of the wife, the widow, the servant.
I sighed the sigh of the world-weary, the futile sigh of the exhausted.

I sighed the sigh of Moses leading the Israelites,
The sigh of the patriarchs, the sigh of the judges,
The sigh of an obedient disciple,

And I got up.

Since coming to college, Andrew Bartel has transcended eating and sleeping. He is now powered entirely by tea and a very small black hole.

REVIEW: ART THAT TELLS THE STORY

HEATHER VANDER WALL

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, ESV).

As we are reminded in the gospel of St. John, the Incarnation is about the Image of God dwelling on earth. Yet what sort of groundwork does this lay for a Christian view of art and images? The dispute is ancient but relevant to evangelicals. In his recent book *Art that Tells the Story*, Christopher Brewer enters into the conversation with his own attempt to synchronize artistic expression with Christian pedagogy.

The layout of Brewer’s work is that of a coffee-table art book. The paintings, a collection by living Christian artists, are divided thematically into chapters of an over-arching narrative: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. Short theological reflections, scripture quotations, and brief commentary are interspersed with the artwork. Thankfully, the focus of the book is on the works themselves, allowing each piece to speak without much restraint from an overbearing text. Brewer’s vision is to incorporate the art into a broader Christian narrative without using it merely as an illustration of that narrative.

Makoto Fujimura further develops Brewer’s idea in the introduction, claiming that the aim of the book is to synthesize two distinctive Christian views on art. Rather than using art merely as an evangelical tool or holding it as an entity of neutral value entirely unrelated to Christianity, this third view “allows the purposes for the arts to integrate with the Gospel perspective without losing the integrity of art in the process” (Fujimura, 10). Recognizing art as overtly useless, Brewer finds its true use of it in relating to our humanity implicitly in the same way as story and narrative.

The task of compiling and presenting this idea of

Brewer’s, however, is rather daunting. To affirm that art is an essentially Christian idea tied to Creation and Incarnation is not to affirm that every Christian artwork is worthwhile. Nor does believing that artwork should speak for itself ensure that a given piece of art has something to say.

While a majority of the works in *Art that Tells the Story* are fairly straightforward in theme and execution, there were a few striking abstract works which fostered a deep contemplation of truth in me as a viewer.

The selection overall however was inconsistent and a few of the images were so poorly composed and conceived that I was unable to rest my eye on them for more than a minute. Flipping through the pages (as one does with a coffee-table book), I found a sentimental, ‘warm-fuzzies’ illustration of “Let the little children come to me” only a few pages away from an Annunciation scene rendered poignantly in oil and gold-leaf, blending abstract and realist techniques to depict the complex spiritual and physical interactions of the Incarnation. The disparity between these two paintings—to mention only one example—was unnerving. How can one claim that art essentially speaks on its own, and yet fail to distinguish between art whose form speaks and art which fails to do so?

Likewise, the design and layout of the text was somewhat concerning as it incorporated a hip and trendy font with poor graphics that distracted from the artwork. In addition, most of the theological reflections and artistic commentary, while straightforward, were often less than insightful and seemed extraneous to the purpose of the book, especially following the brilliant introduction by Makoto Fujimura. Is it really helpful to note that; “the Fall throws a long, dark shadow over God’s creation, but it is only a shadow,” or God “could have washed his hands of the mess we had made and started over someplace else” (Wittmer 35, 47)? These Sunday-school mottos fall a little

Art that Tells the Story
Christopher Brewer
Grand Rapids: Gospel Through
Shared Experience, (2011)



flat after Fujimura's consideration of the role of Christian art as a possible pedagogical form.

Critiques aside, however, the central idea of the book is important in the current discussion of art in Christianity. The perspective that it promotes of art as an essentially Christian entity substantive enough to speak in its own right without the aid (or abuse) of text, is beyond valuable

for the current discussion. It is unfortunate that this book lacks a coherence of composition that might have more effectively accomplished its goals. 

Heather Vander Wall is studying French in order to 1) understand wine labels, 2) read about medieval theatre and Thomist thought, and 3) be more pretentious. But really, she'd rather take a nap than write phrases in the Subjunctive mood.

THE SPIDER'S WEB

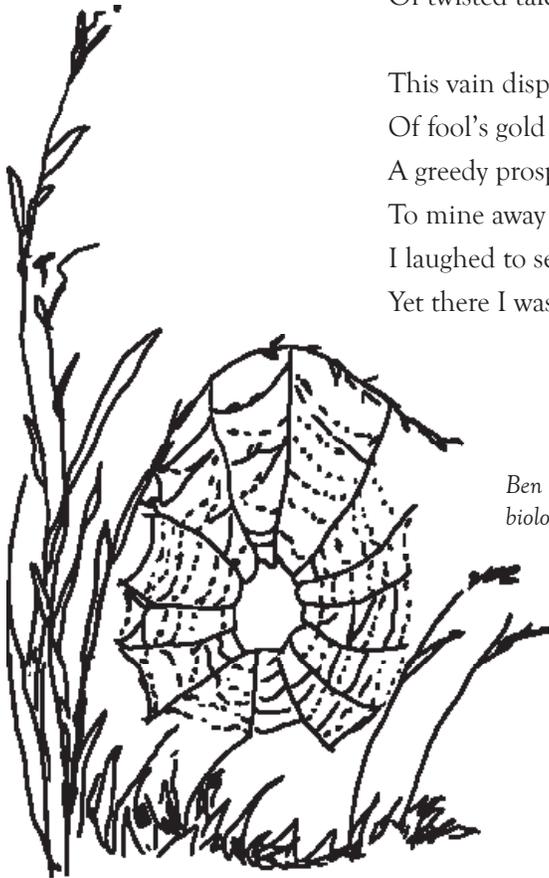
BEN COX



I sat upon the wetted blades of grass
And watched the spider busily at work:
Eight fingers strung the tinsel,
With silvered strand pulled taut between t
The master jeweler with his string of pearls
Strewn about from limb to limb.
From leaf to leaf he wove his tapestry
Of twisted tales that spun the reader's head

This vain display, this dazzling array
Of fool's gold lures the lusty fly.
A greedy prospector he must be
To mine away at folly's lode.
I laughed to see him struggle in the silver;
Yet there I was, caught.

Ben Cox is a senior student of molecular biology and is deathly afraid of spiders.



YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

ETHAN KREIMEYER

Loneliness is and always has been the central and inevitable experience of every man. — Thomas Wolfe

I can hear Wolf Creek babbling as it flows under the bridge. The bridge arches like a stone rainbow over the shallow chasm the creek has formed in the earth. Students are dappled around the creek as if placed by an artist's hand. A tiny garden grows at the edge of my toes. Witch-hazels bump their heads against my white tennis shoes. Wild geranium, doll's eyes, and bellflower leap up from the earth. They are shaking their heads in the sunshine's first gleam.

I can hear the autumnal call.

The sun struggles to throw off its nightly slumber. The star remains wrapped in the tendrils of a cloud; the air feels heavy and thick. I close my eyes, and my nose fills with the scent of fresh cut grass and the musky earth.

Autumn will soon be coming.

Everything looks different when you take the time to notice it. A few hundred feet behind me stands a white gazebo glittering in the sunlight—fern and tall coreopsis with playful brown centered yellow flowers march around the small edifice.

A truck's horn forces its way into my meditation. Industry is intruding upon Nature. A football stadium two hundred feet to the gazebo's left remains dead in the early morning. A few hundred feet beyond the stadium a city prepares to greet the new day in the form of briefcases and dark suits.

I wonder if this is why Thoreau escaped to Walden Pond—seeking solitude from man's noise. I can see him plodding reverently in the forest, stooping to smell a flower. Thoreau wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately." He found a home in Nature. I wonder if I am doing the same here.

I just want to nibble on the landscape for a few minutes.

I never stand still this long—few people allow themselves this simple leisure. We can only think of what we will miss if we take a moment to breathe. We would rather suck at the dry bones of life than find fresh muses. So I stand still and breathe for a moment. A bell chimes; I like the sound of its echo in the corridors of the air.

It reminds me of home.

But my home is 300 miles away from this creek in distance—more than a thousand miles away in my mind. The spring of childhood has past. The summer of adolescence is coming to an end. The autumn of adulthood is germinating. Nature will always have the last laugh.

I look again upon the wandering creek; the sky above continues to darken. Raindrops hit my hand as I stand beneath the fir trees. For a moment, I want to control Nature. I want pull the sun out of the clouds and feel its warm breath on my neck instead of Earth's cold tears.

But we can never govern Nature. We merely parallel its relentless march with civilization. We cut down the pines at the edge of Wolf Creek; someday they will return. Like Wolf Creek's dam miles away we can only hold back the waters of life for a short time. All rivers will eventually flee to the vastness of the ocean. Someday all of us will return to the dust of the earth.

I look at the pine trees overhanging Wolf Creek. They stretch their branches out toward the stone bridge as if beckoning to a lost lover. A girl is walking over the bridge; she doesn't see me by the elms. I have no idea who she is, or where she's from, or where she's heading. In another life she could have been a close friend; now she is just an unknown face.

Silence falls.

The trees become still as the wind dies to a whisper. I am filled with the sudden desire to call them awake—to watch as they burst into bloom at my command. I wish to re-awaken the dead blue curls, butterfly weed, black cohosh, and woodland asters to life—to bring their fresh color back into a dying world. But their petals merely crumble between my fingertips.

I hear the cry of a cardinal calling to his lover. She doesn't respond to his voice.

You can't go home again. 

Better known as the son of the Savior of American Fiction, Jonathan Franzen, Ethan has realized that one hand-clap is a much more sardonic sound than that of one hand clapping and that penguins are necessary for any good book-signing.

A RUN-ON

ALICE HODGKINS

I wish I could fill these margins with a crowd so that my edges would be leaking people that were native to the tip of a pencil and as they were released, lines spilt into selfhood, they would strut away into my notes and letters to see what could be found, shuffle though my uncertain spelling of Nietzsche and the scribble of telos, some settling down on the corner of enlightenment and taboo, but the ones, whose fire was too grand for hearth, picking and choosing till they'd bound enough ideas together to form a raft and float right off my page into the round colored world, and all the while my pencil would be birthing with deep breaths.



Alice is a sophomore English major who likes boots that lace up and keeps a picture of Dr. Jewell on her wall.

THE INCREDIBLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING... STARBUCKS

ANDY WALKER

In the book *Onward*, Starbucks CEO Howard Schulz describes how he revitalized the Starbucks brand, keeping the floundering company from almost certain collapse. In his quest to save Starbucks, Schulz overcame the challenges of the Great Recession, the demands of angry shareholders, and the company's over-reliance on selling really bad breakfast sandwiches. Schulz claims that he accomplished this feat by rallying the company around its core values of coffee, community, and authenticity. Though *Onward* was written to document the power of these values, any reader who finishes the book believing Schulz's claims probably is probably more naïve than he realizes. As a writer, Schulz suffers from the inability to communicate clearly and honestly. When taken as a business textbook or a primer on the power of passion, *Onward* is pretty bad. If the book has any real value, it lies in the way it unintentionally reveals the cynicism of a CEO like Howard Schulz.

It's no surprise that *Onward* is selling very well. Although most of us make frequent use of coffee, few of us know very much about it. What's more, everyone loves to hear about the humble beginnings of a business success. Anyone who picks up this book looking for stories about coffee and the start of Starbucks, however, will likely be disappointed. Schulz already detailed coffee basics and the tale of Starbucks' foundation in his previous book, *Pour Your Heart Into It*. In *Onward*, Schulz focuses almost exclusively on presenting each of the steps that turned Starbucks around. Although this subject matter might seem a bit dryer than what readers might expect, it isn't why the book fails. In the hands of the right author, an account of the processes underlying, say, the firing of an ineffective CEO or the gamble of proposing an expensive new product line could become an engaging read. Making these events interesting, however, would require Schulz to be open and

frank-qualities that, at least in print, he seems to lack.

Immediately Schulz's prose reveals his inability to speak directly. Schulz seems to have never met a superlative he didn't like, and the book is littered with flowery and dramatic description of events that are, at best, merely ordinary. Though it's initially obnoxious, Schulz's overblown style can sometimes be hilarious. As a writer, Schulz possesses the ability to utilize an almost inhuman number of clichés. For example, Schulz's decision to switch some of Starbucks' stores from automatic to manual espresso machines wasn't just an upgrade in company hardware. It was part of a series of "bold moves" focused on "reigniting emotional connections to our coffee" and a move that "required courage." For the record, I haven't broken Schulz's quotes up to make them seem more ridiculous; I've simply edited them for clarity. Of course, Schulz's grandiose sensibilities extend to his chapter headings. The book divided into four sections, each named after sweeping abstractions like "Courage," that might be more at home in a memoir by Winston Churchill than they are in a case study by a West Coast businessman.

Though Schulz's aggrandizing style makes *Onward* a hard book to read, it doesn't ruin it completely. At times, Schulz bombastically describes events that were, at their core, pretty good decisions. For example, though Starbucks' decision to close stores early to re-train employees probably wasn't the life-or-death rally point that Schulz presents it as is, it likely was a wise short-term sacrifice that paid off in the long run. The cumulative effect of reading one over-wrought vignette after another might make the reader feel like he just read 200-pages of ad copy, but they aren't so wrong in and of themselves. The reader can still understand these stories, perhaps learning something about business management in the process.

The book's real problems begin when Schulz moves

Onward
Howard Schultz
Rodale Books 2011



beyond advertising Starbucks and instead applies his Madison Avenue style-gloss to himself. Like all high-powered CEOs, Schulz was forced to make some incredibly difficult decisions. To hear him tell it, however, it was never possible that Schulz could be wrong. Schulz's arbitrary termination of thousands of employees wasn't a cold-hearted decision to appease shareholders, it was necessary for Starbucks's very survival. An angry memo that resulted in the firing of a Starbucks CEO wasn't calculated politicking on Schulz's part. It was simply an expression of "passion." One can't fault Schulz the CEO for making tough calls. However, one can fault Schulz the author for always presenting himself in the most glowing light possible. As a reader, I finished the book without any knowledge about the difficulties of leadership, an understanding of the process that Schulz used to make his decisions, or even a sense of who Schulz was as a man. The only thing I'm now aware of is the fact that Starbucks CEO Howard Schulz thinks of himself as a pretty great guy who did pretty great things.

The most prominent, and confusing, example of Schulz's shameless spinning is his account of the Starbucks breakfast sandwiches. Early in the book, Schulz, extensively details his crusade to do away with Starbucks' breakfast sandwich line. Convinced that the stench of egg and cheese is neutralizing the coffee aroma in Starbucks stores, Schulz, against the protestations of most Starbucks employees, axes the sandwiches completely. For the next hundred pages, he references this decision as one of the courageous and bold moves that put Starbucks back on top. Then, out of nowhere, Schulz mentions that Starbucks profits were up in a particular quarter because of — wait for it — the reintroduction of breakfast sandwiches. An honest author might have held up the breakfast sandwich debacle as an example of the way even the passionate can make honest mistakes. A less scrupulous writer probably would have just glossed over the problem. Schulz's decision to hold up the failed decision as an example of courage, without any explanation, is simply confusing.

In order to glean any real business information from the book, one has to read very far between the lines of *Onward*.

Schulz seems to be obsessed with big ideas like passion and service. Throughout the course of the book, Schulz talks at length about his memos, his study of the Beatles, and a New Orleans leadership conference. In casual asides, however, he reveals that Starbucks had more problems than just a lack of passion. At the start of the great recession, Starbucks had some real structural problems that had gone unaddressed for years. These problems included poor staff training, too many money-losing locations, woefully outdated technology, and even an inability to take basic inventory.

Difficulties such as these didn't just sap Starbucks of passion; it lost the company lots of money. To the Starbucks shareholders, who were, in a sense, Schulz's employers, not making money was a big problem. If Schulz succeeded as a CEO, it wasn't just because he rekindled the passion of Starbucks — it was because he made the company profitable again, dealing with money-losing problems aggressively and efficiently. As a writer, Schulz seems to be uninterested in these actually critical decisions, choosing instead to sell us a long tale about growth and passion. Schulz's inability to write clearly, talk about himself honestly, or talk about Starbucks's real problems directly makes *Onward* a muddled mess.

In the world of coffee, Starbucks is a giant. Americans seem to have the same relationship with the company that we have with all of our corporate giants. A lot of us vocally complain about the business: we turn our noses up at the way it roasts its coffee, wring our hands about the harm it does to small-business, and bemoan the way it impersonally treats its employees. At the same time, however, all of us have turned the company into what it is today. We're the ones who bought its treats and coffee drinks. We've done this because they're tastier, more convenient, and occasionally cheaper than the local coffee shop down the street. Compared to local businesses, Starbucks gives us the most bang for our buck. If the company really is a negative force, it's a force that we've created. In a way, most of us who have an attitude about big business are hypocrites in our own way. Although we criticize the greedy corporate structure,



we're the ones feed it as we seek to get all that we can out of our money. *Onward* has a lot of problems: it's hard to read, overblown, overwritten, and something of an egoist's manifesto. Its biggest problem, however, may come from the way it ignores the nitty-gritty aspects of running a business and making money, instead throwing around meaningless buzzwords like "passion" and "courage." Perhaps, in this area, though, Howard Schulz knows us a bit better than we know

ourselves. Distrusting our ability to deal with the reality of a company like Starbucks, Schulz distracts us with tales of team building, memos, and inventions. As a memoir or piece of business writing, *Onward* is an utter failure. It might, however, only be meant as a façade. **Q**

One time, when Andy Walker said he preferred tea to coffee, his parents made him sleep in the sandbox for a week. In January.

SOPORIFIQUE

JOSIAH CAVANAUGH

and in that day
your young men shall see visions
and your old men shall dream dreams

dozing alone in a darkling parlor
grey head haunted by indistinct impressions
grave and remarkable

at the crepuscular hour
when the nodding comes
the catch

followed closely by
the falter
and finally

the failure—
overcome
at the dim delay

in the moment when
the world thaws
and drains

to stand in pools
along the borders
of vision.

Josiah likes G.K. Chesterton quotes. "Grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. . . . It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."

ON ONE-DIMENSIONAL POLITICAL SPECTRA

ALLEN SCHEIE

A few summers ago, I had a conversation which opened my eyes to the state of modern American politics. At the end of that conversation, the fellow I was talking with did not understand how I could endorse free-market economics and at the same time disapprove of the use of the atomic bomb during WWII. My disapproval obviously made me a liberal, and liberals don't like free-market economics. I was truly astonished at his accusation. In my mind, my views on war-time ethics don't inform my opinion of economic theory whatsoever. Nevertheless, he failed to understand how I could hold opinions that didn't fit into the typical liberal-conservative spectrum.

In political discussions today, one will always hear terms like "right-wing" and "left-wing," "conservative" and "liberal," or "Democrat" and "Republican," thrown around to describe the two sides of an issue. And anybody who doesn't fit into one side or the other are just called "moderate" as if they are somewhere between the extremes. This is the prevailing view of politics; the liberals on one side, the conservatives on the other, and everybody else fits into the spectrum in-between. Even those who understand that the conservative-liberal dichotomy is artificial, still think in terms of one-dimension: anarchists at one end, communists on the other, and everybody else somewhere in the middle. The phenomenon of this "political spectrum" not only fails to represent reality but has a devastating effect on public discourse.

How many dimensions?

So-called "one dimensional" thinking is filled with problems. Consider the two independent issues of government bailouts and abortion. Since there are two basic positions for each issue, together there are four possible combinations of issues. It is possible to be in favor of bailouts but not abortion, in favor of abortion but not bailouts, in favor of both, or in favor of neither. In order to accurately

represent all four positions, we have to visualize this as a square rather than a single line, with the abortion issue on one axis and the bailouts issue on the other. An attempt to flatten this into one dimension will ultimately prove unsuccessful – either we ignore differences on one of the issues, or arbitrarily line them up. In both cases, this spectrum is no longer accurate and is of no real use.

The complexity is only compounded with more issues. Adding another issue, like military intervention policy, to the two-dimensional spectrum results in a three-dimensional cube. Each of the four positions above now has two possible positions on military policy. With only three issues, there are eight basic positions across three dimensions – which cannot be flattened to a single dimensional line without making things inaccurate or meaningless.

In reality, every political issue is its own dimension at least, so long as it is independent of the other issues; the three-dimensional cube could be expanded to include more issues like alternative energy subsidies, affirmative action, government welfare, government healthcare, etc.; and each would be a separate dimension.

There obviously isn't time to address the myriad issues of the political sphere in their entirety; the point here is that in order to have a perspective that is realistic, one must reject a one-dimensional spectrum, and engage the topics individually. Every issue is its own dimension.

Objections and Responses:

There are several objections one may have to this new way of looking at the political perspective.

First, one could object by saying that there are really no individual political issues. All political issues are tied to one another because individuals' worldviews inform all their beliefs.

To a certain extent, this is true. I, for example, believe



that neither abortion nor homosexual marriage should be legalized because of my Christian beliefs – despite the fact that they are technically two separate issues that do not overlap. It is not uncommon for people to unify technically separate issues because of their worldview. The problem is that there are dozens of worldviews out there, and people like to form factions within their general worldviews, which means we can't simplify to one dimension. In order to be able to accurately think in a one-dimensional spectrum, there would have to be only two worldviews. Even a cursory look at modern society shows that this is not so. There are humanists; there are many different brands of Christians; there are Muslims; there are Mormons; there are secularists; there are Amish, etc. And then within each general worldview, there are always factions that oppose each other on smaller topics (for example, the Tea Party versus Republicans). So while it is true that worldviews inform political stances, there are too many worldviews and sub-worldviews out there to justify simplification to only two. This is a generalization that is neither realistic nor advantageous.

Second, one could object and say that while there are many individual issues in the political realm, most people still fit on a scale of “more government intervention” to “less government intervention.”

My response is that this can only be done in the most general sense. It is fairly easy to see that libertarians want less government involvement than most conservatives do, and most conservatives want less government involvement than socialists do. However, when applying this to individual issues, one runs into the same problems outlined above. What do you do with a person who is in favor of government intervention for the environment, but not for the economy? What about a person who believes the opposite? It is difficult to say which is more “interventionist.” One could say that the fellow who favors economic intervention is more “interventionist,” however, this one-dimensional spectrum primarily describes economics, and doesn't account for other issues. Such a scale, while it looks

pretty, must single out one issue to define “intervention,” and necessarily ignores the other disputes. Therefore, it is not useful for describing political beliefs as a whole.

Third and finally, one could object by saying that technically, there are dozens of possible positions; but in reality, most people fall into the liberal and conservative positions. This is perhaps the weightiest objection. On the surface, it does look like there are mostly liberals and conservatives. Nevertheless, this is not a valid objection, for two reasons.

First, if one were only to talk to individuals, it becomes clear that there is far from solidarity within the liberal and conservative camps. In addition, the mere existence of “moderates,” which align themselves with neither side but disagree with each other, should indicate that a single dimension – or even two dimensions – is not enough. There are many people who agree with “conservative” economics, but are decidedly “liberal” in social policies. Libertarians often define themselves in this category. Likewise, there are also individuals who favor “liberal” economics, but “conservative” social policies. Many would say former presidential candidate John McCain falls into this category. The mere existence of these groups of people should indicate that a one-dimensional spectrum does not reflect reality. There are a significant number of people who do not fit the spectrum, and we must not ignore them for the sake of simplification.

Second, this may seem to be the case only because everybody thinks this way about politics. To put it simply, it is very unclear whether the tail is wagging the dog or the other way around. Given that political candidates and the media tend to polarize things in terms of their political spectrum, those who don't fit into it do feel pressure to jump on the bandwagon. Therefore, just because a majority of people say they fit the spectrum does not mean that this is the way it should or would be without imposed ideologies.

In any event, as it is evident that people hold positions all across the board, it cannot be asserted that a linear spectrum is adequate.



So who cares? The Impacts:

The reader may be asking, as he should, “So who cares? Why does it matter what way I think about the political spectrum? Even if a one-dimensional spectrum is not the most realistic, isn’t it useful?” Absolutely not – it does matter what way you think about the political spectrum. The problem is that the notion of a one-dimensional political spectrum is destroying our political discourse. The consequences of thinking one-dimensionally are numerous and severe.

1. Mob-politics

When politics are reduced to a one-dimensional spectrum, the individual issues get lost, and politics very quickly becomes an “us vs. them” arena. A political spectrum is very important, in that it shows perceived differences between us and our opponents. A one-dimensional approach presents politics not in terms of the individual issues that separate candidates, but in terms of the labels on the line. This plays out in three major ways.

First, there are rampant genetic fallacies – condemnation of an argument based on the source rather than the argument itself – which are compounded by the formation of political dichotomies. Whenever one hears an argument from a candidate in the opposite camp, the knee-jerk reaction is always to oppose it. “Don’t listen to a word that candidate says about economics – he favors legalizing marijuana.” The problem with this is that this is absolute nonsense – wrong ideas on one thing don’t necessitate wrong ideas on another. People elsewhere on the spectrum may very well have good ideas. Condemnation of an argument based only on its source is a logical fallacy and should never be employed.

Second, people attack the ideology and not the issue. If things are one-dimensional, then the individual issues aren’t the important thing. As a result, people are less willing to tackle individual topics and use most of their energy attacking the other side as a whole. In internet blogs, in political debates, and in arguments in college dorm-rooms, one cannot start a debate about one issue without bringing

the “liberal” and “conservative” bashing into it. The fact of the matter is it doesn’t matter if a political party is wrong about nearly everything they say – it doesn’t mean they are wrong about the topic at hand. This is the fallacy of hasty generalization: just because you’re wrong somewhere doesn’t mean you’re wrong everywhere. Nevertheless, when liberals attack conservatives, the response is all too often, “oh yeah? Well liberals are terrible in this other area!” This not only ruins our discourse, it is also highly unlikely to convince anybody on the other side.

Third, and most importantly, politics becomes a game of alternatives. With one dimensional thinking, politics becomes an endless battle between two ends of the spectrum; the only two important extremes. The many camps along the line don’t have to prove that they are actually right; they just have to prove they’re right on more issues than any of the other groups. So what the voter is left to do is compare the stances on the issues and see who’s more right than the other. In essence, compromise is tacitly encouraged. A recent example of this is the 2010 congressional election. The majority of voters voted Republican, even though the polls showed the majority of voters also held an unfavorable view of the Republican Party. The tea party’s emergence notwithstanding, a large number of voters voted for the GOP simply because they were frustrated with the Democrats in office and saw them as their only alternative. In other words, Republicans won a majority because they were an alternative, not because they were right. With a one-dimensional mentality, the very possibility that neither side is actually right is often never even considered, or if it is, it is commonly brushed away as idealistic thinking.

This is what I call “mob-politics,” where the real issues get lost under the fighting about positions on the spectrum.

2. Lack of Introspection

With a single-dimensional political spectrum, individuals are much less willing to reflect on the rightness of our own side. Very often, people get into a spot where they think, “To the left of me are liberals, and I know they’re not right. To the right of me are libertarians and I know they’re



not right; so I must be right where I am.” It doesn’t matter which political party or ideology you align yourself with, there is no way that your ideology is right on everything, and the folks on the other side of the fence are wrong on everything. Most would probably agree with me. Nevertheless, when there are obvious flaws in the ideologies next-door on that artificial line called the political spectrum, it’s hard to admit that that one is wrong in any area.

Introspection should be a part of every belief we have, political or no – after all, how else do we know what we are told is actually true? Let’s not accept things just because they come from our political party – but accept them because they are true.

Conclusion:

When I was accused of inconsistency for being liberal and conservative at the same time, I was shocked. However, the more one looks, the more one sees that this mistake is all-too-common. It may sound like I am blaming too many problems on the false view of the political spectrum, but something as simple as a diagram can have a tremendous impact on the way one views the world. The difference between a single-dimensional spectrum and multi-dimensional spectra is critical: one focuses on lining up the camps,

the other focuses on accounting for the issues. Consciously or no, this affects one’s perceptions of political opponents. Do they differ because they are in a different political ideology? Or do they differ because they believe differently on certain issues?

In closing, it is worth noting that there is nothing wrong with forming political parties or groups. After all, in our country one can only have influence for good if one has enough voters, and gaining some level of solidarity is necessary. What is problematic is the notion that all the different groups of people can be represented by a single line. A better way of looking at a political ideology would be more like a region in a multi-dimensional space.

A wrong view of politics poses many dangers – not only does it inaccurately reflect reality, but it promotes mob-politics that spurs us to attack the ideology rather than the issue, and it discourages us from considering whether our side is wrong. Let us believe what we believe for a reason, not just because it’s what our political friends say; let us not be prejudiced against others just because they hold certain beliefs; and most of all, let us engage people on the issues themselves. 

Allen Scheie is majoring in physics and philosophy, and can frequently be found in Rockwell contemplating the dimensionality of space-time.

HAROLD NOAH GRISSETT

What does Mr. Bloom have to say about
The verbiage used in 19th century aestheticism?
I don’t know, but I’m sure he’s said something.
He’s cited in more works than my works cited.
Criticizer of criticisms about critiques,
why don’t you take your critically acclaimed
Criterion collection criticizing everyone
and leave us criticules to wallow in the
Throws of or our personal criticiasis?

Noah Grissett thought Harold Bloom a rather daunting figure until Joseph Retucci placed within his mind the mental picture of Mr. Bloom drunk in outer space.

ST. NICHOLAS' DAY IN ROME

ZOË PERRIN

It went like this, smell, touch, taste. The December chill, funneling in through the gaps of my brown corduroy coat, and the wind clicking. The lights strung across the Italian piazza, shoes rubbing the patchwork of cobblestone – thick boots, tourist sneakers, leather mary janes, thin heels precariously perched in the cracks between the stones. The thrum of voices streamed through the streets with vendors calling out to the passersby – gelato! Pane fresco! Café! Café calda! We slid by families grasping arms and hands, tugged by children's eager fingers, lovers leaned in close across a round café table, babies with round glimmering eyes and soft hats strapped across their mothers, old men smoothing the streets with their slow, sweeping gait.

Each person seemed a hand's breadth, a wing's span away gliding along the narrow streets which whirled with the indistinct scent of wood-smoke, meat, coffee. Then, almost suddenly, we were enveloped by the scent of rich, nutty warmth in the biting night. We smelled it at the same time and our eyes met and grew wide and the curve of a smile edged up my mother's face. As if magic, the scent stopped us in our tracks and we stood in the chill air on the Italian corner ready to follow the aroma that had quickly captured us. We went searching the streets. Past the gelato parlor and pizzeria with white table cloths and paper lamps, the guitarist strumming on the corner, the fountain with its rhythmic trickling, lapping and gleaming in the night.

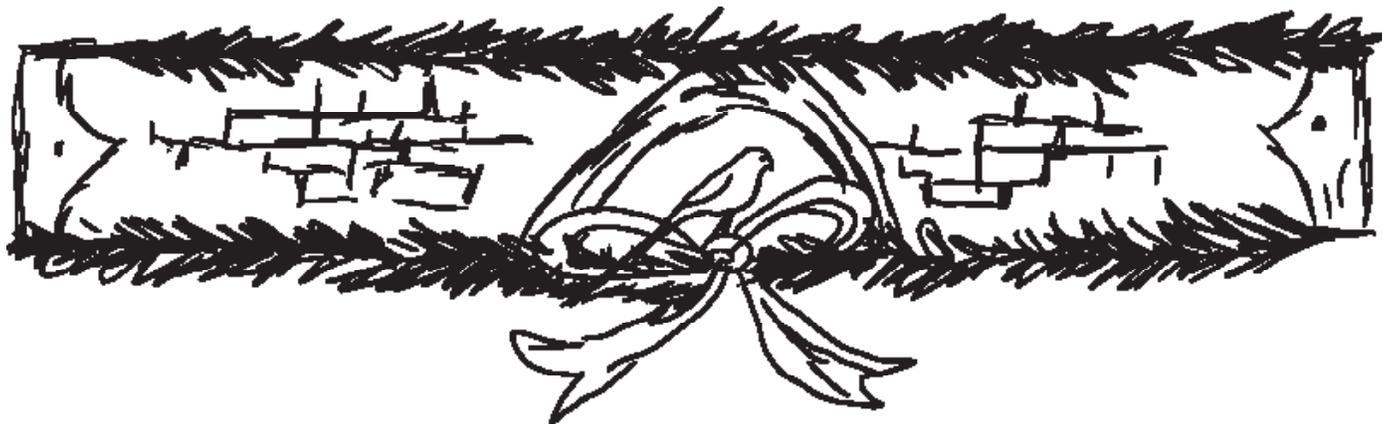
We found it on a small street corner, on top of a huge round grill over fire, wrapped in thin coils of smoke. Fresh roasted chestnuts! he told us, face shining with beads of sweat from the fire, his English thick, muddled and lilting.

To go! There was a mound of them spread across the grill smoking and popping. They were round and brown until they burst with the heat, splitting slightly to reveal a crescent of bright yellow, a small strip like a slant of sun. He had a stack of dun colored paper folded into cones to hold the hot nuts. We watched his large hands grasp the metal tongs and place them in the paper, curls of smoke painting the fierce December air. People reached out to cup the cones in wind-cracked hands and cradle the warm bundle in tight fists.

My mother counted out euros in her palm and handed them to him as he held out the steaming chestnuts. When he put the tightly wrapped parcel in my hands, I could feel the heat from each thin side. We found a wooden bench and sat down, still cupping the chestnuts. When I took the first one into my palm, I thought it would burn me, but the warmth spread evenly across the patterns of palm veins and bones. Cradled in my hand, it felt like a bulb, round and tender and burgeoning, glowing hot in my expectant hand.

As we sat eating the last of the chestnuts, we watched the last lights of dusk fade into black, children scooped up by weary parents, lovers wandering out of restaurants, the Italian piazza glowing in the strings of white lights. On that St. Nicholas Day, we drew the warm chestnuts to our mouths remembering the saint that dropped unexpected gifts for the needy – a dowry for the daughter near destitution, a thick sweater for the cold, rich food for the hungry. Q

Zoë was once stranded in an Italian train station overnight. But when she finally made it out, she was able to watch the sun rise over the Umbrian valleys, and it was all worth it.



WHAT DREAMS

JOANNA LAWSON

She had never seen her mother look so old.

“Just go in and talk to him, sweetie. You two, you understand each other. I never could keep up with his talk,” her mother said. It was the hopefulness that did it. There was something childlike about her smile, something desperate and inexperienced. It was a childlikeness that didn’t become her – its very out-of-placeness, its stark contrast to her adult features, made her look old.

Lucy told her mother that of course it was alright. She never minded. She just hoped that it wasn’t worse than last time. She went up to the study.

“Hi, Dad.” There were papers on the floor. And books. Lots of books. More than last time.

“Heavens – Lucifer! Is that you? Gracious, look at your face. You’re getting old. I see wrinkles. When are you going to bring me grandchildren? You’re not married yet, are you? You always work too much. Get married, Lucifer. Bring me grandbabies,” said Lucy’s father. Lucy smiled.

“You old coot. You’re one to talk about wrinkles. And look at your hair. You look like a mix between Einstein and Donald Trump. And your face, Dad! You can’t have shaved for a week.”

“Coot, huh? What’s a coot, anyways? Do you know? Of course you don’t. I’m looking it up.” Lucy’s father disappeared into a mound of papers. He emerged with a dictionary.

“Coot. . . coot. . . Let’s see. Coagulate. . . comfort . . . coordinate. . . ah, and at last the elusive coot!” he said.

“Dad, Mom’s worried about you,” said Lucy. “She says you haven’t been eating again.”

“An aquatic bird of the genus Fulica, well that’s not very helpful, is it? You never get to the definition you’re looking for until about the fourth definition down.”

“She says you haven’t been sleeping, either.”

“Aha! I told you. Fourth definition. ‘A foolish or crotchety person, especially one who is old.’ Well, as is usually the case, the answer just leads to more questions.

For instance, do you think I’m foolish? I know I’m old, but really, calling your poor old man foolish is bad manners, my dear. Who raised you? And, for that matter, what is a ‘crotchet’? Do you know?”

“No, I don’t know. Dad, listen, when was the last time you slept?” said Lucy. Her father shut the dictionary. He sat down. The chair crunched: he hadn’t bothered to clear the seat of papers.

“Luce,” he said, his voice quieter. “Don’t you see? There’s the rub, my girl. There’s the rub. For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come? Dreams, you see. What dreams may come?”

“Are you having nightmares, Dad?”

“No, no. Daymares, my love. It’s the daymares again. It’s the unrelenting and unforgiving onslaught of reason. You know what that tastes like. You might fool your mother into thinking that you don’t know the horror of rationality, my girl, but I see it in your eyes. You have tasted reason. You know how deep that well goes.”

“Dad, this isn’t reason. This isn’t rational. You’re not sleeping. You’re not eating. I’ve never seen Mom more worried. She wouldn’t have called if she wasn’t really upset,” said Lucy.

“Is she worried? Hm. Now isn’t that something. A person decides to stop being a hypocrite and all of the sudden his wife gets worried about him. And how about you, Lucifer? Are you worried about me?”

Lucy sat down in the chair across from her father, the only other chair in the room. Like her father, she ignored the mess of papers resting on it.

“Yes, Dad. I’m worried about you.” Her father looked at her eyebrows, her hairline, the bridge of her nose, and finally into her eyes.

“My darling girl,” he said. “Why?”

“You’re not there. You say you’re ok. You say you’re here with us. You pretend this is important. But you’re not there. You’re locked in your mind and you can’t get out.



Dad, do you remember last time?"

"Last time. . ." he said, and massaged the stubble on his chin. "Yes, I remember. I didn't finish."

"Finish what?"

"Finish the inquiry, Lucy. Heavens! Why do you think I'm here? I won't give up so easily this time. There is nothing more important than this. And that's just it, don't you see? Either there is nothing more important than this or there is something more important than this!" he said. His eyes shone. Lucy didn't answer.

"You don't understand," her father said, finally. "I'm sorry. I thought you might. I saw it in your eyes. . . but never mind. Perhaps you have yet to ask the question. It's possible. I thought you might have asked it already, if only for a moment. You'll ask. You have an honest face. You'll ask," said Lucy's father.

"Ask what, Dad?" said Lucy.

At this, Lucy's father stood up and opened the dictionary. "I'm sorry," he said. "Where was I? Oh yes, 'crotchet'. You said you didn't know what a crotchet was?"

"Stop it."

"You stop it. Pouting is unbecoming in a girl your age. You'll never get married if you keep on pouting. It emphasizes your wrinkles. Now, let's see. If a coot is crotchety, what is a crotchet? Sounds like 'crotch'. Doesn't it sound like 'crotch'? But if it comes from crotch then what does the suffix '-et' mean? I wonder if it's from the French, you know, an anglicizing of the French suffix '-ette'. But what am I thinking? That doesn't make any sense."

"Dad, let it go."

"Then again, crotchet also sounds a good deal like Cratchit, don't you think? I wonder if the word comes from the Dickens character. Or maybe the Dickens character comes from the word. But I don't think Bob Cratchit was really a coot, do you? He was a skinny, shivering, sniveling thing, but Dickens seemed to like him. And you can't really argue with the people Dickens likes. They're positively angels."

"Dad, I'm serious," said Lucy.

"So am I! An interesting phrase, don't you think, my

dear? 'So am I'. And yet, you don't say 'woe am I', you say, 'woe is me'. But that's because Shakespeare didn't know his grammar, the simpleton. Literary geniuses don't have to know their grammar, apparently. It's positively shameful."

Up to this point, Lucy's father had been pacing the room, flipping through the dictionary at random. At this point he stopped, pointed at a spot on the page, and turned to Lucy.

"Ha! Crotchet. It's a sign. The gods want me to find the meaning of 'crotchet'. Providence, I tell you! Let's just skip down to the fourth definition and save some time, shall we? Oh dear. 'A curved surgical instrument with a sharp hook.' I don't think that quite fits, do you? Well, maybe if we look at the previous option. . ."

"I don't care what 'crotchet' means!" said Lucy. "I don't care, Dad. Listen to me, for once. Get out of your stupid dictionary and listen. This is lunacy. You can't hear anything except what's going on in your own brain. Shut yourself up, will you? Nobody cares about your 'inquiry'. Nobody cares. You shouldn't care. It means nothing, nothing at all!"

Lucy's father closed the dictionary. He set it on the bookshelf. "Let's go to lunch, Luce. I'm hungry," he said after a moment.

"Uh uh. Nope. You can't fake it, Dad. You're not fooling anyone. You're still as much in your own brain as ever, and there's no way I'm going to pretend like everything's alright when you're clearly not ok."

"Lucinda," said Lucy's father. He said it quietly, with a hint of a growl.

"Dammit, Dad," said Lucy. "Fine. Whatever. I'll drive."

The two walked out of the study and down the stairs. The young woman stomped, and her father, after locking the door to the study, padded along after her.

"Lucy, sweetie? Are you done already? What did he say?" said Lucy's mother. Then she saw her husband. "Oh! Dennis. You're out of your room. I'm so glad! Look at you — you're a mess. Come here. We'll get you some food; I bet you're starving. And then you're going to go straight upstairs to shower and change. It's been days, Dennis."



“Not now, Marjorie, my pearl. I’m taking my daughter out to lunch,” said Lucy’s father.

“You’re in no condition to go out, just look at you!”

“I’m in perfect condition to go out. I’m hungry, wealthy, and in the mood for some time alone with my little girl.”

“Hungry you may be, but wealthy you most certainly are not. And as for spending time with your little girl —”

“Mom,” said Lucy. “It’s ok. We’ll be back soon.”

Lucy drove. What was she to say to her father? How to call him back from the realm of dreams in which he was so eager to stay? The sun shone. It defied early February and warmed the earth, tormenting the snow which still hid in the shadows. The birds sang in explosive bursts. Spring! Spring, they sang. The branch I sit on will explode into green life, it will melt winter, it will shake its boughs and rain flowers, and I will be here, I will be here, I will be here. I will sit here and build my nest, I will call to my lover and he will answer. I will care for my eggs and when they hatch, I will fill their open mouths, I will satisfy their hungry bellies. And when they grow, I will nudge them out of the nest that I built for them. They will fall, they will fall. But the tree will have softened the ground for them with his leaves, and they will get up. And when they fly, I will be here, I will be here, I will be here. I will be here, I will be here, I will be here!

“Lucy, the light is red.”

“Hm? Oh, shoot.” Lucy’s father smiled at her with a knowing smile. Lucy shifted her weight.

“So, where do you want to go, Dad? I’ve been assuming you wanted Mexican, but we don’t have to do that if you don’t want.”

“Let’s go to Poppy’s. I’ve had poppies on the brain recently. The poppy is an interesting flower. The Egyptians used them for burials and tombs, while the Greeks used them at the shrines of the fertility goddess. An interesting contradiction, don’t you think? And yet oddly fitting: birth and death, death and life; the contradiction within each of us wrapped up into one little flower.”

“Alright. Poppy’s, then,” said Lucy.

“Do you know what else is interesting? Poppies

represent sleep. The flower that signifies both death and life also means sleep, rest, oblivion, and imagination. But of course, it doesn’t really mean anything. Poppies are used for making opiates, so it’s all quite logical.”

They pulled up to Poppy’s Diner and Grill and asked for a table. Lucy ordered a coffee. Her father ordered a burger with fries and a milkshake. The waitress commented on how cute it was that they were having a father-daughter date and chatted for while about how she and her father always used to go ice skating. Whatever had happened to that skating rink that was down on Thirteenth? It was probably a bank now; everything interesting always turns into a bank. Or an Office Maxx or something. Why was it that everything was turning so boring these days? When the waitress saw that the pair wasn’t really interested in discussing the waning sense of fun in contemporary society, she dazzled them with a tip-winning smile and trotted off to get Lucy’s coffee.

“So talk to me,” said Lucy, after the waitress had gone.

“About what, my lovely girl? You’ve got to be more specific than that. Vagueness is just asking for disappointment.”

“About the daymares. Explain to me about the daymares.”

“It’s nothing, Lucy, really. But you really have got to let me finish the inquiry this time, or else I’ll go mad. Don’t raise your eyebrows at me, young lady. I’m not crazy yet. Weren’t you listening? It’s reason, Lucy, it’s reason that blinds me, that confounds me, that attacks me from every side. But I promise that if you don’t leave me be, if you don’t leave me to my study, if you don’t let this thing take its course, I will go insane. You’ll interrupt me like last time, and I’ll be distracted for a day, a week, a month. I’ll go about life as normal, but there will be something tugging, tugging at me from the inside, and it will be the question that tugs, that never lets go, that won’t release me until I confront it. That’s why I’ll keep coming back to the inquiry time and time again. I can’t escape it. There is no escape. You can distract me, but it will be the death of me. I have to resolve it, Lucy. If you ask me not to undertake this — the final answering of the one question — I will go mad. And



once I crack up, once I'm finally separated from any logical thought, that will be the end. Will you put me in the nuthouse? No, maybe not. Maybe not! Because the whole world is full of hypocrites, and I'll be just one more. Most of them won't be able to tell the difference between the sane version of myself and the insane version. But you, Lucy! My beautiful light, I pity you. You'll be able to tell. You'll know that the honesty, the reason, the sanity has gone out like a candle—yes, like a candle! There's no metaphor more apt."

"What do you mean? What do you mean, Dad? Why is this so important? You keep referring to the inquiry, to the one question, but what is it? You keep talking in circles, around and around, without ever saying anything. You never get anywhere. And if this is how you talk, then this is how you think, and I will not allow you to spin yourself into the ground. I will not let you to ride this merry-go-round until the world ends."

"Ha! Delightful, Lucy. A merry-go-round! That's exactly it, exactly it. A merry-go-round. Up and down, down and up, round and round and round, lots of motion and no progress. Except you've got it backwards, my dear, exactly backwards. You're the one living on the merry-go-round. I won't try to convince you to step off it, of course I won't. Not if you're still content to be there. I forget sometimes that you still haven't asked the question. Someday, you'll need to ask. The merry-go-round life won't suit you anymore. It suits lots of people just fine. Your mother, for instance. She's never needed to step off, bless her heart. She truly is a pearl. Some of us are simple and like the life of up and down and round and round and round. But I am not one of those people. I will be sick, Lucy, and I need to get off. That's why the question needs to be asked. And not only asked, but answered. Or at least, it needs to be asked as if it could be answered. I'm not sure yet. Your mother won't let me go far enough to see."

"But what's the question, Dad?" said Lucy. The arrival of the waitress prevented her father from answering.

"Alright, I've got your coffee right here, hun. And some cream and sugar, just in case. You sure you don't want anything else? Alright, well you just let me know if you

change your mind. And there's your burger, extra pickles, no lettuce. I brought out your milkshake, too. Extra thick. We looking good, here? Anything else I can grab for you?"

They assured the waitress that they were quite content and that the food looked downright edible and that Lucy was just fine with her coffee, thanks so much, but that she'd definitely let somebody know if she got peckish.

"Great! I'll leave you two alone, then. I just love father-daughter dates," said the waitress. She added a wink to her waitress-y grin and scampered off.

"A burger!" said Lucy's father. "Do you know how long it's been since I've had a burger? And fries, glorious fries. Nothing makes you want to drop everything and burst out into song like an orphan from *Oliver!* like deep-fried potatoes and a pound of greasy cow. And there's sugar, too! If there's any invention more wonderful than the deep-fryer, it's ice cream."

"Ugh," said Lucy.

"That's the face your mother makes. You want to know a secret? The inquiry isn't the reason I don't eat. It's your mother's cooking. She's trying to cook healthy. She thinks any problem can be solved by a 'balanced diet'. But lima beans? There's nothing balanced about a lima bean, and whoever eats one is completely unbalanced, if you ask me. Not that your mother is unbalanced, of course. It was just a figure of speech." Lucy swirled some sugar packets into her coffee. She looked at her father.

"You didn't answer me," she said, and then reached for the cream.

"Answer what?"

"I asked you what the question was, the basis for your inquiry. You didn't answer."

"Ah. Well, it's the only question, really. Oh, there are lots of questions; of course there are lots of questions. But at the bottom there is only one. It has many faces, many grammatical forms, but it always asks the same thing," said Lucy's father.

"What is it, Dad?"

"You really want to know, don't you, Lucifer?" he said. He set down his milkshake. "The question is: What is it



made of? The world, what's it made of? It's the most boring question, the most trivial, the most cliché. But there it is. You don't have an answer to it, do you? No, none of us do. If you don't have an answer to that, you don't have an answer to anything. Who am I? What shall I do? Which job shall I take, what shall I order for lunch, why does my tooth ache, what is the answer to two plus two? Without knowing what the world is, you can't know any of it. And I've been going round and round the merry-go-round, trying to get off, trying to gain some sort of footing on the ground, but what happens when I step off and the world is a merry-go-round? And isn't it, after all? We spin, we spin, we ride our lives up and down, pretending to get somewhere, but every year we find we've only made it back again to the very same loop. The very same! So you must get beyond the world, beneath the world, so to speak. You must find out what the world is made of, in order not to be carried around year after year on the same old loop of meaningless motion."

Lucy found that she had poured so much milk into her coffee that it had overflowed. My cup overfloweth, she thought. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever. Amen. The cream was beautiful. She decided to add more, even though it would spill over. She watched the swirling dissipation. She thought the swirls looked just like her father's words. He was still talking.

"Is there anything? Perhaps we are all just phantoms, perhaps the world is the trick of a nonexistent mind. Why not? Perhaps the all of the nothing gets together and nothings. Oh, there are those who would say that this is a misunderstanding of the nothing. That a thing cannot be a nothing because it is not a thing at all. But is that so? How can the positivistic fiends prove that we misunderstand the nothing? Perhaps the positivistic fiends misunderstand the things. Perhaps every mountain is a crevasse filled temporarily by matter, perhaps every candle is a hole in the darkness, perhaps every word is a tear in the silence. Perhaps! And it is the options, options like these, that keep me up at night. Because each is as plausible as the next. Because reason stands behind each of them, supporting them, and then

the next moment turns its back on them and tears them down. Because if there is a truth insoluble in doubt, it has yet to show its face. After all this time, do you know how many truths I've found? One. Exactly one. And it is this truth alone, this one indubitable nugget of pure gold, that keeps me going. Something is true. There must be, Lucy, there must be some way that things actually are. There must be some bottom of the chain. What's wrong with infinite regression, you ask? Nothing. Perhaps it's turtles all the way down, I don't know. But even if there is an infinite regression of non-truths, the chain of non-truths would itself be a truth. You see? The truth might not be findable. It might not. But how else am I to proceed, my girl? I must act as if the truth is findable, else how am I to live? Pretending to know the answer, riding the merry-go-round till I'm sick, till I've lost every shred of humanity left to me? No, I will not. I will not."

"I see," said Lucy, still swirling her coffee. She paused. "But what do you hope is true?"

"My beautiful Lucinda Alyssa. Hope, the thing with feathers, no longer perches in my soul. I want it to be true that you are my daughter, that your mother is my wife, that this plate of fries will clog my arteries, but I do not hope that it is so. I am infected with the sickness unto death, and it is despair."

"But why? Why continue, if there is no hope?" she asked, finally bringing the cup to her lips. It was lukewarm.

"Yes, why? Why continue the march from this day to the next? 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time. And all our yesterdays have guided fools the way to dusty death.' Dusty death. And in that sleep of death what dreams may come? I have to, Lucy. I must! The world, it throws syllables at you, consonants, vowels, and what are you to make of them? Every culture has its own interpretation of the world, it's own meaning for each obscure syllable, but which uses the correct lexicon? And how is one to act without knowing what the world is trying to say? It can't be done! There must be some motive for action before action is possible. So I postpone all action, because I



have no right to be in the world. I stay in my study, because I have no monastery to join. That's where I belong: in a cell, meditating – meditating until, by divine intervention or by a sudden clearing of the skies, I know the answer. Or until death takes me and all questions meet their origin.”

“Oh, Papa,” said Lucy. “I had no idea it was so bad.”

“Bad? No, it's not bad. Hypocrisy would be bad. This isn't bad in the least. Is it hopeless? Well, now, that's a possibility. But it's not bad.”

“Let's go home, Dad. Mom's probably worried herself sick by this point.”

“Home,” said Lucy's father. “Yes, I suppose you're right. The fries were getting cold anyways. Not nearly greasy enough.” Lucy nodded and left a twenty on the table. By some miracle, the father-daughter pair was able to escape Poppy's without getting chatted up by anyone wishing to dote on father-daughter duos.

Lucy held open the door for her father. The sky was no longer blue. The birds no longer chirped. By the time the two made it to the car, it had started to snow. February proved itself once again to be the month of hollow promises. Lucy got into the car and looked out the windshield at the clouds. The sun itself sees naught till heaven clears. And yet, it is not the sun who cannot see. Even on a cloudy day, he sees blue sky above, white clouds below. Man is blocked from the sun, but the sun is not blocked from itself. The sun can always see. Man is the sightless one.

“I'm ready when you are, Lucy,” said her father.

“Hm? Oh, yes, of course. I just. . . the clouds,” she said, gesturing at the sky through the windshield. She started the car. Lucy's father looked at her.

“Careful, my girl,” he said quietly, his brows together.

“Oh, it was just one little red light. I'm not usually so absentminded. And I stopped, didn't I? You know me, I'm a good driver. We'll make it home fine.”

“No, the daydreams. I'm talking about the daydreams. Be careful to keep the dreams during the day and the mares at night. Once things start switching around, there's no going back.”

Lucy didn't respond. The two passed the rest of the ride in silence. When they pulled up to the house, they sat in the car for a moment without looking at each other.

“Are you going to come in and say goodbye to your mother?” asked Lucy's father.

“No,” said Lucy. “I've really got to get back. I've got a thing. Tell her I said I'm sorry. I'll call her soon.”

“What are you going to tell her?”

Lucy sighed and rubbed her face. “I don't know yet.”

“It's difficult to find the right words.”

“Yeah,” said Lucy.

“Give me a hug, my daughter, my Lucinda. You look tired,” said Lucy's father. “There. Now, go. You've got that thing you've got to get to. I'll go face your mother. I'll tell her I've commissioned you to get a husband and bring us grandbabies. Don't think I've forgotten, my dear. You owe me at least twelve grandchildren after all the trials you put me through. May your children, too, call you a crotchety old coot and force you to eat French fries.”

“Thanks, Dad. I love you.”

The old man got out of the car, but motioned for Lucy to roll down the window.

“If you must ask the question, Luce, I revoke the commission. In its place I leave a command. Get thee to a nunnery. Don't put more people through the trial than you must.” Lucy's father smiled. “Now get thee gone, beautiful one. Out of my sight, Lucy, my light. Out, out brief candle!” Lucy's father laughed, and waved until his daughter's car pulled around the corner. 

Joanna Lawson is irked by people who say they have no regrets.

PERUVIAN STORYTELLER: VARGAS LLOSA

DIANE DIXON

Mario Vargas Llosa is the 2010 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Nobel committee praised this “divinely gifted storyteller” for “his cartography of the structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual’s resistance, revolt, and defeat.” Vargas Llosa told reporters that this award “is also a recognition of the importance of Latin American literature.” Some claim that he was a surprising choice because of his outspoken defense of such conservative issues as free market capitalism and limited government. He stands in contrast to other Latin American Nobel winners including Gabriel Garcia Marquez, well known for his support of Castro. Vargas Llosa’s writings embody the central contradictions of Latin America in our times. His native Peru is home to both a distinguished Hispanic history and the largest Indian population on the American continent. He is often called the “Mestizo Man” because he is the most indigenous yet cosmopolitan of Latin American writers.

Reared in Peru in an upper middle class family, Vargas Llosa was forced by his father to attend a strict military academy like other sons of privileged families. He describes this experience in his first novel, *In the Time of the Hero*. Rebellious against this tyranny, Vargas Llosa refused to enroll at the Catholic University, home to the culturally elite, and instead chose a public school, San Marcos University, where he was drawn into Marxist remedies for social injustice, leading to his support for Cuba’s revolution. During his doctoral study in Spain, he spent time with other Latin American “boom” writers including Julio Cortazar (Argentina), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Columbia), and Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala) – learning from them “the infinitely complex shades of meaning” he believes literature reflects. Although Vargas Llosa was sympathetic with the socialist causes many boom writers embraced and even wrote his dissertation on Garcia Marquez as a warm

tribute to his friend, they had a falling out when he called Garcia Marquez a “Castro courtesan” as he was breaking from the shadow of this giant of Latin American writers. Eventually the tension exploded when he gave Garcia Marquez a black eye in response to a slight to his wife. They have not spoken since. Disillusioned over time by Castro’s Cuba and the dogmas of the left, Vargas Llosa’s sympathies moved toward a more conservative agenda. In his Nobel Address, he comments on his youthful belief that Marxism was the “remedy for the exploitation and social injustices” in his Peru and throughout Latin America; his journey was difficult because so many of his peers had “succumbed to the spell” of socialism.

Vargas Llosa’s rebellion was also evident in his personal life. At nineteen he married his aunt (by marriage) 13 years his senior. He wrote about this in his comic novel *Aunt Julia* and *The Scriptwriter*. Later, he married his cousin, Patricia, who became the mother of his three children and his life companion. He has lived abroad, particularly in Madrid and London, for long stretches of self-imposed exile, but he returned to Peru for a quixotic run for President against a popular candidate in the early 90s. Although he influenced the political debate on important issues, he was too aristocratic and agnostic to be elected for public office. Fortunately, he returned to his established venue for provocative discussions – his books. He told an interviewer that he viewed literature as an instrument of change, a “process of continuous never ending insurrection.”

His writings interweave the personal and the political – charting his own private experience as well as the modern history of Peru. I first read Vargas Llosa when I was putting together a reading list of Latin American writers for a World Literature course. He made the cut with one of his short novels, *The Storyteller*. Since then, I have read several recent Llosa novels and critical studies from other writers,



but the Nobel award motivated me to read several earlier classics, including *The Green House* and *Conversation in the Cathedral*. I will briefly consider several novels that reflect his own journey while reverberating with political implications – abuse of power, exploitation of the weak, coercive socio-economic hierarchy – all endemic in Latin America.

The Green House (1966) was inspired by several journalistic trips Vargas Llosa took to the Amazon area where he observed differences between urban regions and the indigenous territory. The green house of the title refers to both the rain forest and the local brothel – the two islands of pleasure in the novel. Set in a small town grown into the modern city, Piura, and a settlement in the forest region, this novel offers readers a forty year panorama of ordinary lives and legends. Robber Baron, Don Anselmo, founds the Green House. Bonifacia, an Indian orphan raised in a convent, marries a police officer; when he is jailed, she supports her family at the brothel. Fushia, a Japanese smuggler eaten away by leprosy, runs a gang that robs local residents of resources. When Jum, a tribal chief, tries to stop this exploitation, he is brutally tortured. Vargas Llosa interweaves several narrative strands in this pastiche of stories illustrating the physical, economic, and moral corruption that abounds. But these defeated characters do not give up; they stubbornly carry on, supported by communal friendships.

Conversation in the Cathedral (1970) offers a larger vision of Peruvian society, exploring Peru blighted by an era of military rule. Most of the narrative takes place in a seedy bar called The Cathedral and explores the relationship between Santiago, a journalist, estranged son of a rich Lima capitalist, and Ambrosio, his father's former chauffeur. Having abandoned his wealthy family as a rebellious student, Santiago opens the book wondering when Peru went to hell. Set in the eight year military dictatorship of Manuel Odria, whom his father supported, Vargas Llosa portrays the consequences of the exploitive use of power – both in the lives of government and military strongmen and in domestic life. The sexual perversions of several characters reflect their moral and political corruption. Peruvian society

seems to be founded on greed and privilege as the worst prosper due to their coercion and duplicity. This overtly political novel offers an array of social classes all blighted by the corruption endemic under military rule. Santiago seems to be a thinly fictionalized Vargas Llosa voicing his youthful condemnation of his desperate country in need of complete revolution.

In a shorter novel, *The Storyteller* (1985), Vargas Llosa sets up a dialog between contrasting traditions – oral and written, visceral and cerebral, and nature oriented wisdom and western enlightenment culture. Two college friends, a Vargas Llosa-like narrator and his friend Saul argue over various perspectives on the native question as espoused by their professors. They debate whether the “primitive state would make things ripe for victimizing” and if “socialism might make coexistence between modern and primitive possible” (78). Eventually, Saul disappears into the jungle and seems to become the itinerant tribal storyteller in his effort to preserve tribal life threatened by western influences. The novel is framed by the narrator in Florence, home to former glories of western civilization. Alternating chapters take readers into the primordial Amazonian jungle of the Machiguenga tribe created in this fictionalized anthropology. These invented simulations immerse readers in an animistic hodge-podge of rambling anecdotes, legends, myths, and poems. The other chapters present the more familiar world of the narrator's university and his journalistic forays into the Machiguenga world where his seemingly secure grounding falls apart and his technology malfunctions. Mostly the role of storytelling is foregrounded and contrasted in these two worlds; stories are more than “mere entertainment,” –they are “something primordial, something that the very existence of a people may depend on” (94). Vargas Llosa wants to rekindle collective memories of Peruvians – undermining nostalgic gringo fantasies about nature oriented culture while also calling into question myths about progress. Not merely critiquing the pernicious effects of exploitation, he is ambivalent, even disenchanting by religious as well as socialist-easy solutions.

In *The Feast of the Goat* (2001), Vargas Llosa creates his



variation on the classic Latin American genre, the dictator novel. In this account of the notorious Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic (1930-61), the narrator, Urania, a thoughtful, tortured character like Santiago, finally returns after a 35 year exile to confront her elderly father, the former president of the senate under Trujillo. Haunted by the horror done to her, she has researched and processed the past, readers eventually learn that Urania had been sent to Trujillo, the old goat who devoured young women, to win favor for her father. She reconstructs both private life and the public sphere in the grip of a crisis. Although Trujillo is always seen at a distance, readers see how his dictatorship infects the whole range of life – individual, family, sex, work, religion. Her recollections of Trujillo and his associates give readers a vivid glimpse of a series of grotesqueries –the powerful are forced into cowardly servile behavior; even intellectuals go to degrading lengths

to gratify El Jefe, the Chief. Even after Trujillo's violently theatrical end, naïve hero worshipers mourn his bulleted corpse. Every element of society is infected by such political autocracy – an ongoing concern for Vargas Llosa and many Latin American writers.

In his Nobel Address, Vargas Llosa states that for him literature “became a way of resisting adversity, protesting, rebelling, escaping the intolerance, my reason for living.” When he despairs about the conditions of his world, he says his “work as a storyteller has been the light at the end of the tunnel, the plank that carries the shipwrecked man to shore.” Storytelling has enabled this restless Mestizo Man and his growing number of readers to survive and thrive in a world of contradictions. Q

Dr. Dixon is a professor of English at Grove City College

A FIRST ADAM

ETHAN KREIMEYER

*Canis timidus vehementius latrat quam mordet.**

Give me your empty, lifeless, marrow-sucked bones. For
I am the Yawning caves of
A thousand ships without slumber;
Trying to look into the soul of the god
I can hardly remember.
I am the timid spirit of a weary man forced to resurrection – only
The stains of coffee rings on the crumpled newspaper recall a past life that
Would not simplify –
Beaten, broken, bruised for forbidden fruit.
I am a first Adam that renounced eternity's dignity to earn
Death. But we all end in the same bloodied dust that will
Give a shattering Cesarean birth –
Little incisions cut across a chest to steal the heart from bondage –
Before placing us in the womb once more.
Ad maiora natus **– Remake us.

*A timid dog barks more violently than it bites

**Born for greater things

CONUNDRUMS



Harold is having a hard time organizing the speaking schedule of the upcoming “Dead Poet’s Society” meeting. The moribund participants – Edgar, William Y., Samuel, William W., Walt, Christina, and Ezra – all have given strict conditions as to how their otherworldly lectures must be conducted.

The picky demands of the authors have included Ezra refusing to speak after Christina, Walt insisting that he speak first, William Y. and William W. jointly requesting non-adjacent speaking times, Edgar demanding to speak before Ezra, and Samuel’s threat to leave his lecture unfinished if he is not allowed to talk directly after Walt. Given this cacophony, Harold is completely frazzled. Please list one possible lecture order that will leave all participants satisfied.



*If you’d like to submit an answer, please email The Quad,
at quad.submissions@gmail.com.
There will be a \$15 prize for the first correct answer.*



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I will provide the people of this city with a paper that will tell the news through co-creation and ecological sentience.

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Volume 4 ♦ Issue 4

THE QUAD
c/o Andrew Walker
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Grove City, PA 16127

