



the unreligious,
nonfamily-oriented
literary & art mag

children churches & daddies

ISSN #
1068-
5154

v143
12/22/04



the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art rag

100C

Vol. 143, 12 / 22 / 04
CHILDREN, CHOICES AND DADDIES

EDITORIAL

Presidential Problems.....2

POETRY, PROSE AND ART

Michelle Greenblatt.....6
Cheryl Townsend *art*8
Christine Sorich *art*9
David Matson *art*9
Holly Day.....10
Jean Hellemanns12
Edward Michael O'Durr
Supranowicz *art*13
Mark Graham *art*13
Allyson Whipple14
Rose E. Grier *art*.....18
Xanadu *art*18
Louis Faber *art*19
John Carr20
Stephen Mead *art*22
Nicole Aimee Macaluso *art*23
John Dorsey24

Michale Keshigian25
Jonathan Wise26
Micahel Ceraolo.....27
Nick Brazinski *art*.....28
Joel McGregor *art*.....28
Irene Ferraro *art*23
Kenneth DiMaggio.....31

PHILOSOPHY MONTHLY

Trials and Tribulations
with Morals.....35
religion quotes40

SCARS ART15, 17, 34-36

COVER ART: the Notre Dame,
Paris, France.

the boss lady's editorial

Presidential Problems

You know, I thought I got all of the election talk out of my head after the last editorial, but I keep seeing things now that remind me of the mess we might be in because of November '04.

Oh, this is the part where I'm supposed to mention in detail what I'm talking about, or mention specific details to make my case.

Okay, here goes.

I mentioned in a performance art show recently that the thing that scared me most about the Bush campaign was that he had a television advertisement that ended saying that this country relies on **F**reedom (*what this country was founded on, good sign*), **F**amily (*the stuff I suppose that is supposed to lead to healthy procreation, the furthering of our species*), **F**aith (*Yes, President Bush, you have to throw a religious connotation in there somewhere*), and **S**acrifice (*You want us to do what? That doesn't sound like the capitalist in you, you know, the stuff we're supposed to be founded on...*).

I mention this to you, while reminding you in the last editorial that when the President found out that he won reelection, he told a cabinet member or two that it was now time to start working on **his** plan (*Whatever **that** may be... I'm starting to get frightened thinking about it...*), but it reminded me of a quote I read in the *Ayn Rand Column* from the **Los Angeles Times**, in a column called *Our Alleged Competitor*, and I quote:

And whenever anyone asks a nation for sacrifice, it is not progress that he will achieve.

Okay, sorry, this might be the part where I'm supposed to keep putting these pieces together here...

Let me see what I can do.

I look around me, and I see two political parties fighting for a goal, and their platforms sound similar. I know you think they're not, and on the surface they don't seem to be. But say, for instance, you don't want troops in Iraq. Kerry might have seemed like a better choice. In debates, however, he said that although he didn't like the fact that we were there, he knew that we had to be there.

What?

Let me think about this. He has said on record that he supported the idea of using force as a threat to Saddam Hussein. Then he said on record that even though they now know that he didn't have nuclear missiles or WMDs, he still would have supported us going over there to get Hussein out of power. Then he even said in a Presidential debate that he doesn't like the idea that our troops were there (that he supported bringing to Iraq in the first place), but he couldn't just pull the troops, and couldn't give a timeline to anyone about when troops would be able to leave.

Hmmm. Sounds like Bush's plan.

Sounds like two sides to the same coin - they may be opposite sides, heads and tails, *but they are the same damn coin*.

They're the same damn coin and we're not given a real choice of anything different here in America.

In *Post-Mortem, 1962*, another **Los Angeles Times** column from Ayn Rand, she even went so far as to say

There was only one political program offered to the voters: the status quo — and only two kinds of leadership: those who wish to leap or those who wish to crawl into the same abyss.

Yeah, she wrote that in a column in 1962, but has the sentiment changed at all, forty-two years later? (*I know 42 is supposed to be the meaning of life according to the **Hitchhiker's Guide**, but we haven't solved our political problems in that many years, and it looks like our situation may only be getting worse.*)

Everything that was presented to the people by Bush and Kerry in their scripted debates were generalities that either side could take to mean whatever they chose, so both parties could think they did a wonderful job. And after every debate, and after every media moment each candidate had to spout their views or rip on their opponent, all of the media talking heads in the liberal media like MSNBC (I know it stands for Microsoft NBC, but I prefer to think of it as Multiple Sclerosis NBC...), or CNN, or Headline News, or even the slightly less liberal Fox News, they leaned toward a victory of Kerry (ah yes, liberal media, hindsight in this election has shown us how unbiased you *really* are...). But they'd have reporters at both parties always stating that their candidate won, spouting the usual rhetoric necessary to make people believe they are telling the truth.

Of course both parties would claim they won. Could we draw the

same conclusion? Probably not, because neither party really talked about differing goals or programs. If Kerry was against having troops in Iraq, he didn't mention morally why, and he didn't give Americans anything to really sink their teeth into - I mean, he didn't give us a core set of beliefs and values that we could support because it was different from President Bush's core set of beliefs.

He didn't do it.

If we knew the moral differences between our political candidates, we might have had an easier time being able to make our political choices. People say they liked Bush - but why? Because we don't feel safe anymore, and we need his guidance (I think that dictators like to keep their power by playing on fear to make them feel needed by their minions, and the past three years have been a Republican plea to remind people that the Republican cabinet will make the people safe).

Other people say they liked Kerry - but why?

Honestly, tell me why.

And don't use the "because he's not Bush" answer either. I'm looking for real moral values and differences here. (It's hard to come up with differences when your two choices were both Yale graduates, which are actually very distantly related. *Yeah, these are your two choices...*)

Okay, Kerry said he had a plan, but we never got any details about it. And you know, that makes me think about when I was little, and me and my friend Sheri would play. We didn't play house, but we played office - we had desks, and I had a control panel of switches and stuff that my sister put together into a console that could go on our desk, so it could look like we were doing important work. We'd talk on the fake phone, and we'd flip the little toggle switches on the fake console panel we had, so we could be getting work done. So we could be doing something. So we could be getting ahead.

But looking back, we were only playing. We *didn't* have a plan. We acted like we knew what we were doing, but we didn't know what those little switches and buttons on our fake console panel did, we didn't even question where those switches and buttons led to, and we pushed those buttons anyway in bliss, *getting things done*.

What things? No answer.

Kerry is a senator that wanted to jump in and start flipping the toggle switches to alter the fabric of the American life. And the thing is, I couldn't tell you if he would do a better job of pushing the right buttons to make America work well.

I couldn't tell you because I had no idea of what he'd do.

And I don't know if *he* knew, either.

MTV and pop stars and rap stars and actors were telling you to vote. Some of them were even saying to vote for the Kerry/Edwards ticket. I mean Hell, if Bruce Springsteen is for the Democratic ticket, *all* of today's youth should be a Democrat, because the guy that produced the #1 rock album *Born in the USA* 25 years ago **has** to know what is best for the country.

MTV might have been telling the youth to vote. But although the world likes to think the youth doesn't think, I think the youth (along with the adults) want a set of values they can hold on to and make sense of.

And although they had a problem with Bush (because, you know, Bush is sending their peers to go to a war people don't think we should be in, why are we liberating people on the other side of the world when there are people in our own country that need to be rescued from poverty, lack of jobs or education, or rescued from the sexism or racism that holds them back from their true potential?), because they don't like seeing President Bush making all political choices based on his idolatry of his Christian savior, they want a real alternative. Kerry said he's the one for you, but he didn't explain why or how.

He left you connecting the political pieces.

And more importantly, he left you picking up the moral pieces.

That was the problem.

Not because there's a moral problem to opposing Bush's plan, but because no moral ground was laid out for the people to understand. Bush had a ton of talk radio personalities (and yes, a few of the television personalities too) agreeing with people daily, live, for hours about how Bush is the **right** choice. He *morally makes more sense*. How we *need* him.

And people heard this political moral line, and they took it. Hook, line and sinker.

Whether or not we agreed with the moral choice people made, some people made a moral choice. I made my moral choice on Election Day at the polling booth, and my choice was based on the fact that I couldn't stand to vote for either candidate. I voted for someone else, and I voted on my conscience. I voted knowing my choice wouldn't win, but I voted knowing I could sleep comfortably with the fact that I made the *right* choice at the polls that November day.

If only everyone knew of the morals at stake in this Presidential election, maybe the candidates would have told us what we needed to hear to make an informed decision. Maybe then this election would have turned out differently.

Hurricane Jeanne

MICHELLE GREENBLATT

I am a letter I have not addressed
but I have read so many times the ink
is fading & the paper is crumpled

& I wanted you to know I am
Moving On & this is a Love Poem
written in free verse
It is written to you
or maybe to myself

I wanted you to know
you live on the beach
& today at midnight a hurricane is hitting
so you might wanna get out of your house
Her name is Jeanne not Michelle
like the hurricane of 2001
that swept the roof
off your apt

I wanted you to know
today is my eleven month anniversary
with the man that I love now
& he has not left me in an alley
with a gun under my chin

But what I don't want you to know
is that tho I am growing
I don't
give myself much of chance
anymore

Larry's House

MICHELLE GREENBLATT

I sit outside smoking a cigarette. Mom
used to work with him. They say
he doesn't have much time
to live.

Weeks, a month maybe. The cool menthol
smoke slips down my lungs. Larry is dying
of cancer.

I live with illusions, stay current with updates.

The wind bends the mango trees into
submission. In Larry's house the air is never
on because he gets too cold. In Larry's house
it never smells of death but his handshake
is getting weaker.

From behind the mango trees emerges
death, her black (faceless formless)
spreading widening raspy whisper says
tick tock tick tock
scratching open the air
and letting
it
all
fall
Through



DELBERT, ART BY CHERYL TOWNSEND



ADDED COLOR, ART BY CHERYL TOWNSEND



I, ART BY CHRISTINE SORICH



BARON TAT OCTOBER 14, 2004, ART BY DAVID MATSON

Minnesota

HOLLY DAY

my friend in San Francisco sends me pictures
of her new friends, and I realize
how trapped I am here
how I can never really leave.
All the girls in California
are as thin as I used to be
and all this Midwest living
has changed me, man, I'm lost.
Boys still smile at me at the grocery store
and I feel so pretty here
a little thinner than the average
at my worse if I was young.
My friend in San Francisco
sends me pictures of her new life
I tell her how I'm pretty here
and why I'll never leave.

Trust

HOLLY DAY

such profound
disfigurements, I wonder
were you pretty as a child? all adults
have bumps and scars
but did friendly hands
chuck you beneath the chin
look into innocent eyes and see
only a happy baby?

struggling to catch breath against
the weight of too much meat
thin bones ache
I wonder
when you were young, with this
limp, these twisted bones
did loving voices coax you along
give you hope

that someday
everything would be all right?

de martelaar en de heilige

Ze gaven hun dochter de naam
van de patroon van de televisie

en de televisie was iets
dat ze altijd haatte bij hem

of was het dat drinken dat hij nodig had
meer dan hij haar nodig had

de zaken gingen slecht
ik ben een mislukkeling ik ben geen man

hij zei haar te respecteren
dan belde hij haar

voor twintig dollar gewonnen in Vegas

en de moeder wou het kind, de heilige, de echte engel hield haar oor
in de hoop iets te kunnen opvangen

(THE MARTYR AND THE SAINT)

FINNISH TRANSLATION BY JEAN WELLEMAN



*ATTACK, AND PEACEFUL, ART BY
EDWARD MICHAEL O'DONN SUPRANOWICZ*



GARY IN HIS DAD'S RUSSIAN CELL, ART BY MARK GRABMAN

A Better Use for Babies

ALLYSON WHIPPLE

“Did that billboard say ‘Babies Were Meant to be Breakfast?’”

My father laughed, and I resented his amusement. It wasn’t my fault I couldn’t read the billboard correctly. I was concentrating on keeping up with the flow of traffic and making sure I didn’t drive into a ditch.

“No, it said ‘Babies Were Meant to be Breast-Fed.’”

“Oh.” The amazement I got from my mistaken perception was gone. There was nothing shocking or amusing anymore. Just some more propaganda designed to encourage extreme conservatism and keep women in the home, chained to their kids, I thought.

My misreading reminded me of Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” Written in 1729, it is one of the best examples of political satire. The subtitle of this essay is: “For Preventing The Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to The Public.” Swift saw the poverty around Ireland and knew something had to be done about it. Since so many children were born in a year (he estimates 120,000), it is obvious why he saw them as a solution to the problem. To make them beneficial, this essay does not advocate a conventional remedy such as education reform. Instead, Swift calls for something a bit more unconventional: reserve 20,000 children for breeding purposes, and turn the rest into commodities. “That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in the sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom . . . A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish . . .” Beyond eating infants, Swift also suggests that their skin “will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.” Swift does an excellent job of making strong arguments for his unconventional idea. He reasons: “Secondly, The poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to distress and help to pay their landlord’s rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.” When I first read this, before realizing it was a satire, I was half-convinced that raising children as commodities would actually be a practical idea. We breed all sorts of animals for food and clothing; why not our own species? It would cer-



tainly help the overpopulation problem. Even I might be more enticed to have a few kids if I could make some money off of them. Instead of them draining all my money, I could get something in exchange for all my trouble, without having to go through the hassles of toilet training.

In the animal kingdom, consuming one's offspring for nutrients is a common practice among many species. Last year, when I was in my women's studies phase, I took Psychology of Women. One of the many articles we read was "Natural-born Mothers," by Sarah Blaffer Hrdy. This article broke down the notion that motherhood is the most natural thing in the world by showing that, if faced with adverse conditions, animals will engage in fitness trade-offs. If animals conceive or bear offspring during periods of food shortages or other hardships, the mother will sacrifice her young if it means preserving her own well-being and the possibility of being able to reproduce again under better conditions. The most common example is that of the golden hamster: "In addition to building a nest, licking their pups clean, protecting and suckling them - all pleasantly conventional maternal pursuits - these hamster moms may also recoup maternal resources otherwise lost in the production of pups by eating a few." But hamsters aren't the only ones: mice, lemmings, voles, and badgers all have similar strategies to maintain their reproductive fitness if

their babies are born during food shortages, droughts, or if there are predators lurking around. Some people might argue that fitness trade-offs in animals are the equivalent of adoption in humans. The point of a fitness trade-off, however, is to restore the resources lost in pregnancy and birth. In giving a baby up for adoption, the mother loses the child, but does not have the chance to gain anything from the sacrifice.

When I first read this, I thought it seemed like such a waste. I couldn't imagine why, after all the work that went into producing offspring, a mother would want to just give it up. All that time and all those resources wasted for nothing. Even if animals recoup the losses by eating their children, it still means that all the energy they put into procreation went right back into their systems, leaving them where they were before.

However, most animals don't invest as much into a pregnancy as humans do. None of the above animals has a gestation period of more than two months. Since the maternal investment is smaller, these animals have less to lose if they decide they need to give up and try again. When fitness is based solely on fertility, any method of improving reproductive potential is acceptable. An animal's most important mission in life is to make sure its genes get passed on; the only way for it to secure a permanent spot in the world is to produce as many offspring as possible. So if a female bears children while there is a predator lurking around, it makes all the sense in the world for her to cut her losses, replenish her resources, and try again later. Maybe the babies would survive, but with all the uncertainties in life, sometimes it's better not to take a chance.

Despite the fact that it was originally intended to be satirical, "A Modest Proposal" provides some very practical ideas for dealing both with poverty and overpopulation. Although nearly 300 years have passed since this was written, these are still two common problems all over the world. Strangely enough, nobody has actually taken Swift's proposal to heart. In the centuries that have passed since Swift made this idea public, nobody has tried it, and we're still struggling, which leads me to believe it just might work. Plus, we have proof from other species. Human beings are animals just like elephants, cats, and hamsters. If other species can use their offspring for their own benefit, we can, too. Of course, we don't need to eat our own children. In a capitalist society, Swift's idea works better. With all the time involved in pregnancy, as well as all the money that goes into good prenatal care and birthing expenses, a healthy baby would be worth a large sum of money in the eyes of gourmet chefs. As more and more women caught on to this idea, the price of babies would drop, and they would be an accessible food source for every-



one. Of course, this leads to ethical questions about genetic engineering and methods of artificial reproduction such as in vitro fertilization. Some people might try to design exceptionally edible children that would be

worth more on the food market, and some might try to artificially conceive twins or even triplets to increase their earning capacity. But I doubt multiples would be as desirable, considering they tend to be smaller; people would want the plumpest, juiciest specimens available. I feel similarly about genetically engineered children; they might have excellent characteristics, but since they would just be stock animals, they would fetch only a basic price. The exceptionally rare babies would be worth more. A genetically engineered baby is like salmon reproduced in a farm setting. But a perfectly formed child conceived naturally would be the equivalent of salmon caught in the wild.

Critics of the American capitalist system maintain that it puts families at a disadvantage, particularly the ones in which one of the parents (usually the mother) stay home to raise the children. They also say it puts single parents, especially those living in poverty, in a no-win situation. They argue that the work it takes to be a full-time parent is equivalent to any paid occupation, and we need to value it in the same way. I agree that society has to place a stronger emphasis on caring for children. But we don't have to revert to a socialist system of government-controlled childcare to improve the situation. Instead, we need to recognize the economic potential of motherhood. Family life does not have to be an oppressive institution which costs one of the parents their economic mobility. Instead, being a mother could lead to a great deal of prosperity and freedom. A woman would not depend on her husband's wage due to the income she earned from her offspring. Swift's proposal creates a win-win situation for everyone in society. Family life does not need to cut mothers off from the work world; the home can become one of the most lucrative sites of labor in the world, and womanhood would finally earn the respect it deserves.



IT'S NOT A GAME ANYMORE, ART BY ROSE E. CORBER



NO ABSTRACT THOUGHT, ART BY HANAN



ART BY LOUIS FABER

Uncle Larry

JOHN CARR

Uncle Larry is cool.

I'm eight years old, and he's living with us – when I come home from
school

he's on the fuzzy couch,

the one that's sorta orange or brown with the flowers or suns (I'm not
really sure what they are),

in his Marlboro t-shirt (it's a big word but I know it).

He's skinny, like the Scarecrow in my picture book.

"Johnny, kamere, watch some MTV wit me," he says

smiling (no one else calls me Johnny),

his curly red beard makes him look like Doctor Teeth from the Muppet
Show,

but instead of big and white

his teeth look like my yellow sidewalk chalk.

I sit down next to him, "How was school?"

I tell him it was fun, we're reading Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

"Good shit," he says, smiling again, this time looking like a bug
with his big glasses.

There's a video on, and it remind me of Star Wars,
so I say so.

"It's The Cars," he says.

He's still smiling, and so am I,

but as he stretches I notice he must have fallen

or hit the stove or something

because he has boo-boos on the inside of his arms.

Then I notice there's these blackish bumpy lines

growing out from the boo-boos, they kinda look like
lightning or spider-webs or something.

I've never seen any one with lightning on their
arms before –

Uncle Larry is cool.

It's a thought that I'll recall
at thirteen, standing in Saint Frances DeSales, choking on the incense
congested air,
dying for a hit off my inhaler.

My vestments itch. I'm boiling alive as I stand before the mourning,
midnight-clad
moments of his life.

Father John whispers to me that it's okay
for me to go stand with my parents and my brother now.

I join them, together we step up, he's lying there
in a suit he never would have worn,
he's clean shaven and his face is stern.

Still the Scarecrow, though.

I reach out, touch his hand,
to find that

Uncle Larry

is

cool.



Girl, eyes as buttons, cornflower blue, hair, the tassel silk.
What you know is instilled wonderment.
What you experience will be innocence
Until it is wise.

FROM HEROINES UNLIKELY, ART BY STEPHEN MEAD



COLON 37 P.M., ART BY NICOLE RAMIREZ MACALUSO

downstairs from the magic stick

JOHN DORSEY

the music has faded but
this dirty blonde keeps
groovin' to the knack
like it's still 1979 wearing a misfits
patch on her denim jacket and a
weathered button with a smiling picture
of jimmy carter licking his
lips at mr.
peanut

it's cold and rainy and i'm
sitting there drinking a bud light
just a little too fast cuz marie's gotta split
thinking about how i'm told
the beatles never played here
but the beat goes on with or
without john lennon that's the truth
i already know my birthday's gonna
suck next year i light
a candle for
tradition

LANDLORD

MICHAEL KESHIGIAN

The tenants left him a bar of soap,
two rolls of toilet paper,
shredded paper towels,
and a ripped sponge mop with bucket.
He tried to rub the white wall clean,
discovered it impossible,
realized they tried as well.
He decided to paint it over.

Hair choked the bathroom sink,
long hairs, male and female,
they both wore ponytails,
short of acid, nothing else would work.
The hardwood floor
wore rubber scuffs and high heel turns,
no doubt they danced and laughed,
but only broom swept it clean.

He began to know who they were,
seldom did he speak to them,
the check always arrived in the mail.
They breezed through, a great wind,
leaving behind a trail of dirt,
a thank you of sorts,
the residual continuity of broken leases
and painstaking interviews.

He seized their soap,
a green veined, marbled bar,
curved like a woman,
took a bath
after he cleaned the tub,
and dried with no towel,
in the air
with the walls and floors.

Remember the Day

JONATHAN WISE

I do not bleed so easily as one might think.

I never come to a party empty handed so don't believe everything you
might hear.

I won't run for cover when the bomb is dropped I want to see it explode in
the horizon.

I will take a picture to remember the day the world was liberated.

Oh what fun oh the sweet smell of revolution.

Coffeehouse Sonnet (12)

MICHAEL CERBOLD

for Julie

She graced the place on a Saturday afternoon,
blonde hair and hazel eyes brightening drab December,
a scarf screening her sleek sexy neck,
slowly sipping her coffee chin sitting in hand,
mysteriously scribbling in a notebook
until interrupted by an equally mysterious phone call,
for which she walked past with a purposeful grace
in order to take it in the privacy of outside
Introductions, and she shakes hands with meaning
I ask if she is a writer and she laughs demurely,
saying that she was just jotting down her schedule,
that she is in fact an artist,
one who works in the medium of metal
An artist and a work of art all in one



THE BUCKINGHAM, ART BY NICK FERAZINSKI



ART BY JOEL MCGREGOR



CAT'S GARDEN, ART BY IRENE FERRARO

HARTFORD BRAIN SCAN POEM #1

KENNETH DIMAGGIO

Beef patty
mutating into a hamburger

and the fast food processed
meat is sinking into

more apocalyptic visions
from the Bible

We are still trying to find
the gang war bullet

lodged somewhere in a dying Puritan consciousness

which is why
the next middle school social
studies class trip
will be to the nursing home where

the kids who speak English
with a Caribbean patois
or a Spanglish accent

can get a valuable
hands on lesson in history

by pulling the plug
on the machinery keeping alive an old brain dead
Yankee tradition

and to ensure
that memos continue
in the sterilized cubicles
that must get wiped

here come the corps
of West Indian women

who will achieve
the American Dream

by taking courses
at the community college
to become nurses
for a culture

that has crashed into a coma

Code:
blue

of the previous generation has begun

losing shape form

code:

before settling into a mud

red and when
you get to the white

that will yield

that means the cosmic
dissolve

no footprints
or bones
that can ever be fossilized
into wasteful fuel

Frozen

is how the rest of us
will keep from rotting
in ice-cube tray
insurance offices
counting up

the numerous ways

a 21st Century American can die

counting
everything except the death

that will be our isolated anonymous own

HARTFORD BRAIN SCAN POEM #2

KENNETH DIMAGGIO

Mark Twain
once had a house here

which is now
a museum you can visit
and except
for a word
dehumanizing African Americans

most of the local
high school kids taking
the English class field
trip to the house of a famous author

can't read through
Huckleberry Finn or Tom Sawyer

beep beep beep
the machinery
still indicates

a comatose state
kept alive
through Friday night revival meetings
temporary
insurance company
work filing
metaphysical crisis claims

and just hanging out
on the bomb crater'd corners talking about
finishing your diploma
or joining the Marines

but if we cannot find out
how to resuscitate
or even where to put our mouth

on this stagnant toxic sewage
that has become our soul

someone
with an M.B.A. degree
in the actuary department
will be able to calculate

who will most likely get their first heart attack

but what about the elaborate psychological
scaffolding and why it collapsed

And what good
in finally knowing thyself

when the last structure
you were able to erect
from the shattering

was a scaffold
that hanged

what in its dangling
larva glistening
death

looked like an angel



philosophy monthly

Trials and Tribulations with Morals

After seeing the ball drop in New York January 1 1995, we stopped in the Poconos on our drive back home to Chicago. As we went into our cabin in the Poconos, another guest's cat (even wearing their owner's neon collar) walked up to our door and pretty much invited itself in. We actually played with this cat for almost an hour, knowing it was someone else's cat, and I started thinking about this cat as it played in our hotel room.

I looked at this cat and thought, 'You know, in other parts of the world you're considered a delicacy.'

I sat for a second, and then I thought, 'And in some parts of the world, the cow is sacred.'

This was probably about the time when we decided that we had to let the cat out of our hotel room so it could get back to its owners. And I





thought for a minute, and I knew that, well, I could never kill a cow or a chicken or a turkey or anything. But then I quickly reminded myself that *that* was the beauty of capitalism, that we can work on what we *want* to do, and *pay* other people do to everything else.



And after a second, I thought, well, maybe I don't want to *pay* someone else to kill the animals for me.

And that's when I decided to become a vegetarian.



Why did I tell that story? Well, because when I tell people I'm a vegetarian, people ask me, "Can you eat eggs or milk or cheese?" And I respond by saying, "Ah, I'm all for the animal's torture, just not their death." Translation: although they don't treat cows well to get milk and make cheese, and they don't treat chickens well to get eggs, I am willing to have that. I just can't tolerate letting animals die so I can have a roast beef

sandwich or a Chicken McNugget from McDonald's (which, by the way, is made with all the remnants from parts of the chicken you'd *never* eat unless it was fast-cooked and lost all of it's flavor, and then mashed back together and have spices added to it so it would taste like meat again).

So this is how I have lived, as a vegetarian, for almost ten years, by having a stir fry and adding an egg to the mix to hold flavors together there, or by enjoying a good deep-dish pizza with extra cheese (but no meat), and maybe adding a topping, like a good amount of garlic.

And yeah, just under the ten-year mark I learned of some more bad news for us vegetarians. I thought we were in the clear on this test, but the majority of cheeses that are produced (like Kraft cheese), use rennet to help process the materials that end of making cheese.

Oh, and rennet is an enzyme derived from calf's stomach lining.

Yeah, I know they could be getting the enzyme from the calf (you know, the baby cows they keep restrained so the baby cow meat will stay tender) they're killing for veal, so...

Wait, I don't want them making veal either.

The thing is, cheese can be made with vegetarian products, and it

actually costs less to make it that way. I think big name companies just use the products they're used to in making cheese, and it doesn't matter to them that a vegetarian option not only costs less, but is also more moral.

Why bother being more moral when you could spend *more* money, and help contribute to more animal deaths?

So in the last few months (well, since right before Thanksgiving 2004), I've been trying to remove most cheeses from my diet as well.

But adding a good slice of Farmer's cheese to a vegetarian sandwich makes it *taste* so much better. And I know that having some of the animal derivatives in dairy products can be helpful for the human dietary needs (if they don't eat a highly specific diet as a vegan), so I've tried to figure out if there is a way I could continue to being moral and still eat well.

My husband John took me to the store *Trader Joe's*, where they have listings of what kinds of cheese don't have rennet in them. Found some fresh mozzarella, and since John eats meat, he had no problem with eating the rennet-derived fresh mozzarella in our fridge, so we could have caprice salads. And we bought shredded rennet-free cheese, so that we could go to our favorite local pizza parlor and ask them to use our own cheese when making their pizza (which, by the way, tasted great, and our cheese when reheated melted better than their original cheese). And it was nice to know that where we went to get sliced Farmer's cheese, they didn't use rennet in the production, so *it* was safe for me too.

And I know to the meat eater it sounds like I'm whining, but... But I guess that's what you get when you have to be moral like this.

Sorry, that was blunt and rude of me. It's just hard.

It's just hard when I can't eat Cheese Doritos or Cheese Pringles, or eat nacho cheese at a bar. Or have cheese fries. Or if a place happens to serve a veggie patty hamburger, you have to make sure they don't add cheese to the burger. And don't get focaccia bread or Asiago cheese bagels because of the cheese. And remember, pesto sauce uses cheese in it. And Parmesan cheese is right out, which people add to spices and mixes. And the Brie and hard cheese my husband and I had for a romantic evening are foods I can no longer eat.

God, is this poor wench bitching. She's complaining that she can't eat the *Brie* has already has in her fridge.

Sniff sniff. Bitch moan.

I have to say that so I know how trivial this may sound to the meat eater. But when you decide to make a moral decision like this, these lit-

tle things are a big deal when most of your diet is altered in this meat-eating country.

The United States is the country where fast food restaurants have decided over the years to make it expected to have French fries go with their Whoppers or Big Macs. Where over the years fast food places have decided to expand the amount of processed meat in their menus (consider things like the Bacon Double Cheese Burger). Consider the notion that all drinks and all orders of fries have been made larger and larger over the years (Hell, a man tried to eat *only* McDonald's for one month straight, and whenever he placed an order, he had to answer "yes" whenever he was asked if he would like to "supersize" his meal).

This is the society we live in. A society that has gotten used to having an excess of everything, and when we in America don't have to worry about killing the animal to get the prime rib steak on our plates, we have a much easier time forking over the cash and diving in.

There I go, ripping on people again.

Sorry, I get on my irritating moral high ground, ~~o~~... well... I get snippy.

I mean, I have much less of a problem with meat eaters who *understand* the entire process of how this meat gets on their plate than I do for the average person. I'm married to a meat eater, but he was a hunter since he was a child, and has, after killing his animal, brought it back home, skinned it, cut it up and prepared it for food.

I've got to have some respect for that.

I understand that we have gotten to the top of the food chain, and we *can* kill animals for food if we need it. But I also remind myself that we're at the top of the *intellectual* chain too, and we don't *have* to kill others in order to eat.

So, I still have to say that if someone can understand the process of killing that animal for food, they have earned my respect.

And Hell, I wasn't looking for this in my potential meat-eating husband when I was single, but I like thinking of this story of when John was hunting deer. He used a rifle, and was able to kill the deer. Then he heard that he could use a handgun, but he might not be able to aim as well with it. So he tried it, and when he was able to hit and kill every deer with one shot, he decided he would learn archery, to use a bow and arrow to hunt deer.

Which he did, and did wonderfully.

He did this because he didn't want it to be too easy for him to just randomly kill an animal. He wanted the animal to have a chance in the struggle. So he restricted his abilities, until he could get better at his hunt.

I think of this, and then I think of my past, where I worked for a food magazine publishing company, where magazine editors would have meal tastings (with meat) from different restaurants for reviews. An associate editor (whom I won't name, you know, because I don't like picking on people without giving them a chance to respond...) said that she would never eat rabbit for a meal tasting, in her words, "because a bunny is cute."

And I thought, 'Oh, so since cows and chickens are ugly, they're *okay* to eat. Good philosophy.'

This is the mentality that kills me. This is the mentality that makes me sick of how people don't keep a cohesive set of values in their lives. This makes me think of people who are whores, contracting Herpes from sleeping with the wrong men, who then later cover their lives up to get married in the Catholic church, and have the gall to wear a white dress.

And I'm afraid this is the mentality of a *lot* of people in today's over-consumption society, where we don't have to think about what we're doing with our lives. We have become a people that thinks it's okay to purchase things on credit cards, and just pay the minimum balance every month, just so we can have that second SUV (which in my book is a Sub Urban Vehicle, or something that is *only* for the people *less* than urban, or something *lower* than urban, or something *below* urban). There is a mentality that we can over-extend ourselves now, and we'll somehow make up for it later. We won't think about the consequences (I mean Hell, there will be a credit consolidation company to help us with our debt later, or worst-case scenario, we can declare bankruptcy and *still* keep our car so we can make the payments on the house we own).

We've decided to push ourselves too far, and we wonder why American has the highest rates of heart attacks (could it be the stress in our lives and our excess meat in our diets?). And we wonder why diseases strike us like AIDS (of course it has nothing to do with sharing needles with sick people when you're taking illegal drugs, and it has nothing to do with having unprotected homosexual sex, *both* of which are habits we could change). And we wonder why people age and get osteoporosis (because we drink milk from another species, and we drink it after infancy, and we consume so much protein that it actually *pulls* the calcium from our bones, making it easier to make our bones weak as we get older).

We define our own problems with our actions. We work to solve our life-threatening diseases, when we *give* ourselves these problems with our behaviors. We accept the way things are, then work to try to solve their damaging habits, instead changing the habit that cause our downfall.

**"If God did not exist, it would
be necessary to invent him."**

VOLTAIRE

"Religion is the opium of the people."

KARL MARX

**"Two great European narcotics,
alcohol and Christianity."**

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

**"Religion is excellent stuff for
keeping common people quiet."**

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE

**"Faith is believing something
you know ain't true."**

MARK TWAIN



ISSN#1068-5154

children
churches
& daddies

children churches & daddies

children
churches
& daddies

the unreligious, non-family oriented literary and art magazine

Produced By

Scars Publications and Design

Editorial Offices

Children, Churches and Daddies; Scars Publications and Design
829 Brian Court
Gurnee, IL 60031-3155 USA

Internet

ccandd96@scars.tv
<http://scars.tv>

Publishers/Designers Of

Children, Churches and Daddies magazine; cc+d Ezines; The Burning mini poem books; God Eyes mini poem books; The Poetry Wall Calendar; The Poetry Box; The Poetry Sampler; Mom's Favorite Vase Newsletters Reverberate Music Magazine; Down In The Dirt magazine; Freedom and Strength Press forum; assorted chapbooks and books; music, poetry compact discs; live performances of songs and readings

Sponsors Of

past editions; Poetry Chapbook Contest, Poetry Book Contest; Prose Chapbook Contest, Prose Book Contest Poetry Calendar Contest; Editor's Choice Award (writing and web sites); Collection Volumes

• **Children, Churches and Daddies** (founded 1993) has been written and researched by political groups and writers from the United States, Canada, England, India, Italy, Malta, Norway and Turkey. Regular features provide coverage of environmental, political and social issues (via news and philosophy) as well as fiction and poetry, and act as an information and education source. **Children, Churches and Daddies** is the leading magazine for this combination of information, education and entertainment.

• **Children, Churches and Daddies** (ISSN 1068-5154) is published monthly by **Scars Publications and Design**, 829 Brian Court, Gurnee, IL 60031-3155 USA; attn: Janet Kuypers. Contact us via snail-mail or e-mail (ccandd96@scars.tv) for subscription rates or prices for annual collection books.

• To contributors: No racist, sexist or blatantly homophobic material. No originals; if mailed, include SASE & bio. Work sent on disks or through e-mail preferred. Previously published work accepted. Authors always retain rights to their own work. All magazine rights reserved. Reproduction of **cc&d** without publisher permission is forbidden. Copyright © 1993-2004 **Scars Publications and Design, Children, Churches and Daddies**, Janet Kuypers. All rights of pieces remain with their authors.