

CC&D

the **UN**religious,  
**NON**-family oriented  
literary & art mag



v179

December '07

# table of contents

## *poetry (the passionate stuff)*

Michael Lee Johnson .....1

## *the boss lady's editorial*

Diffusing Our Dependence.....2

## *poetry (the passionate stuff)*

Kenneth DiMaggio.....6

Edic Obame .....7

Lisa Frederiksen .....8

Renee St. Louis .....9

Adilene Aguilera .....10

Aaron Wilder *art* .....11

Shelley Little .....12

James Sackett .....12

Joshua Copeland.....13

## *prose (the meat & potatoes stuff)*

Mel Waldman.....16

Adrian Ludens .....26

A. McIntyre .....29

Robert D. Wenger .....34

## *philosophy monthly*

Christopher Douglass .....35

G.A. Scheinoha .....37

Janet Kuypers: Abortion, Eugenics,  
and the Line of Life .....38

*Scars Art* 5 (editor sitting on a policeman's  
motorcycle in New Orleans). Cover art of a nutcracker  
holding a nutcracker. Back cover art of a nutcracker at  
Laschet's Inn, in Chicago.

## *Gotham, Oil On Canvas*

Michael Lee Johnson

Chatty women at the dining table  
in 19th century garb-  
red hats & hair pins  
caked with rubies,  
ghostly faces acutely obscured,  
hue blue matted hair stretching  
down like dripping wax.

Menus open out white  
as bleached sheets  
with no black typeface.  
Wine glasses filled with white  
Clouds, no red juice-  
begging in silence to be  
lifted up, to be touched  
by the missing lips of strangers..

3 mirrors hanging from  
frozen air behind the bar  
away from the dining area-  
circular globs of white reflecting  
nothing but moon shapes.

At the dining table ladies  
pointing fingers at each other,  
ears filled with gobs of paint.

Dull lights in the corners  
depicting form, faint  
in near darkness.

Their pictured world,  
frozen in time, is slapped on canvas.

As the evening wears toward midnight  
the painting disappears, emerging  
silent characters into madness.

## the boss lady's editorial

# *Diffusing our Dependence*

Americans can't seem to give up oil for heating their homes and gasoline for powering their SUVs. Maybe science can help us use **food** instead of **fuel** to reduce our dependence on the Middle-East.

I know Chicago doesn't have the subway persona New York does (granted, you can't keep a car in New York, so you *need* the subway), but Chicago has an extensive subway system (the el goes everywhere in a star pattern away from the Loop), and we also have the Metra system for suburbanite to get a ride to work, and we have bus lines within the city as well. But what surprises me is that with rising gas prices, people still flock to their cars from the suburbs to drive to their downtown Chicago daily jobs. The traffic reports say that commutes are regularly over an hour and a half for what should be a 20 minute drive.

I see gas prices over \$3.00/gallon for unleaded now, and I hear reports not only that it's expected to get over \$4.00/gallon I remember hearing news reports a year ago, where people were saying that people wouldn't be able to tolerate it if the price of a barrel of oil got to \$60. But gas purchasing studies over the years have shown that that people are using *more* gas now.

All while oil company CEOs are making record profits.

So apparently The government's plan, and the car salesman's plan, of having more people spend more money on gas-guzzling SUVs and minivans has worked. We're dependent. And the most we hear from President Bush is that we should rely on energy from SwitchGrass. Hybrid electric and gasoline cars are hot items in the market for people who are ready to jump on that bandwagon when buying a new car (I was swearing up and down that a hybrid would be my next new car purchase). — but after I found out that the production of the electric cells for electric cars actually does so much *more* damage to the environment (see the October 2007 editorial, *A Different Light on the Global Warming Debate*, also online at <http://www.janetkuypers.com/kuypers/prose/2007/a-different-light-on-the-gobal-warming-debate.htm>), I wondered if many too many Americans are too short-sighted when trying to help the environment (that they

actually end up hurting the environment). For that reason alone, I've decided that if I ever buy a hybrid car (you know, to save money on gas), I'd buy a used car (and not a new one, to contribute to the creation of the mined Nickel needed for the battery). So okay, so I've decided to get fuel-efficient cars (even ones that aren't hybrid cars). But that doesn't account for the ka-ba-jillion people who have pick-up trucks, or minivans, or SUVs, or even gas-guzzling huge expensive sedans or race cars.

Wait... I remember seeing a television show (I think it was on the Discovery channel, I don't think it was the Science channel, but I can't remember) that talked about Brazil using ethanol (made from corn) into a kind of alcohol to power their cars, which is cheaper and cleaner. "Fifteen years ago Brazil made a commitment to burning ethanol made from sugar cane as a primary vehicle crop. And lots of energy analysts have scoffed at the idea," says professor Daniel Kammen, head of the Renewable Energy Lab at the University of California (Berkeley). Ethanol fuel is a biofuel alternative to gasoline. It can be combined with gasoline in any concentration. Anhydrous ethanol (ethanol with at most 1% water) can be blended with gasoline in varying quantities to reduce consumption of petroleum fuels and in attempts to reduce air pollution.

Hmm. Not a bad plan. But currently you'd need "flex cars" that can take ethanol. And furthermore, it's harder to find ethanol fuel at every gas station. But people have been starting to use corn for fuel — as evidenced by the higher price farmers have to pay for corn for feed for their animals. For example, Greg Boerbook is a pig farmer in Minnesota, raising about 37,000 pigs. When each pig eats on average 10 bushels of corn over their lives, the cost of bushels for this farmer almost doubling in price forces farmers like this one to (A) get rid of their pigs early (to save money on purchasing food for them), and (B) try to keep their animals warmer in the winter, so they don't eat more corn in an effort to keep warm. According to 2006 estimates, we used one fifth of our corn crop in the U.S. for ethanol. With projected increases due to plant production, we could use half of our corn crop for ethanol by 2008.

No offense, but this use of corn to save our energy costs will also mean higher prices for corn, and (more importantly to the carnivores out there) higher costs for chicken, pigs and cattle — because that corn is their feed.

Another possible set-back environmentally may be that forests are being cut — I know that farmers in Indonesia and Malaysia cleared land via fires for oil palm plantation (for biodiesel for export), and that in some cases rainforest land is destroyed to plant orange groves (you know, to make orange juice from concentrate cheaper). Although we know that

rainforest destruction sharply cuts back on one of nature's absorbers of carbon dioxide, we may not be sure of the environmental consequences of the changing of what we cultivate to the planet. S. M. Idris, chairman of the environmental group Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth), even asked of forests in Malaysia and Brazil for oil palm or sugarcane, "Why are we burning our forests to plant something that we have been told will be clean, environmentally friendly fuel?"

Effects on the environment? What about the higher costs of grains for the poorest people in the world — Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute, even said that the coming "epic competition between 800 million people with automobiles and the 2 million poorest people" will lead to starvation and rioting.

But you know, after I mentioned the possible ill effects of what we grow and destroy on the environment, I should bring up another plant — rapeseed, that's grown a lot on Germany (every time I hear rapeseed mentioned, I want to sing that instead of "Rape Me" by Nirvana). Although the demand for rapeseed for biodiesel has increased the price for rapeseed's other uses (like cooking oil and protein meal), the growing of this plant is helping Europe get closer to its 5.75% diesel fuel from plants goal.

BusinessWeek (04/06/07) noted that "corn is caught in a tug-of-war between ethanol plants and food," which is a real indication of a global economic shifting this agricultural transformation." Economics, national security, and greenhouse gases have created a perfect storm of interest," says John Pierce, U.P. for bio-based technology at DuPont. And yes, both Democrat and Republicans agree with this shift, because if Republicans refuse to believe humans have anything to do with global warming, they at least see higher gas prices due to problems with the Middle East (which we'd all like to sever ties from in some respects). Although President Bush's estimates seem mild, he has called for 35 billion gallons of renewable fuels per year within 10 years (replacing 15% of gas from cars and trucks).

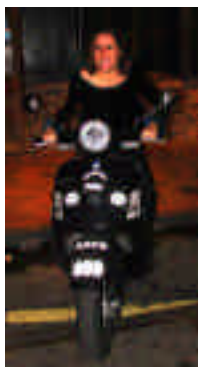
High hopes, when replacing gasoline with biofuels originating from what we grow would take at least 50 million more acres of cropland (or more) — and that is with using foods other than corn (corn land would take a lot more than these numbers). There are about 430 million acres of cropland in America now, so to eliminate the need for gasoline in this country would require more than double the cropland that exists now in America. And right now, bioenergy is having startling effects on crops for food, livestock feed or other uses, even though farmers, having to reevaluate what they are growing for, will have to seriously consider farming for biofuels as their real engine for growth.

Well, I can bad-mouth the idea of using food for fuel to my heart's content (I seem to be good at complaining about things a lot), but food prices, although they will increase sharply due to reassessing what grown food is used for in this new world food is actually at all time low costs. Americans are spending less of their disposable income on food now than they did in the 1970s. And besides, if it raises the price of food (like raising the price of corn leads to raising the price of corn syrup, which will lead to a higher price of a can of soda), it might lead to making smarter choices in food, so that we eat better things for us, and eat less (you know, to help bit the current obesity of America). And if farmers have had a harder time in the past with making ends meet, this may be a way to help one of the oldest industries stay ahead (without needing large public subsidies).

And corn isn't the only thing we can grow that could help (corn is actually only a small step to helping eliminate our dependence on gasoline). According to Georgia Tech's Roger P. Webb, pine groves in the South could supply 4 billion gallons of ethanol year and revitalize declining rural communities. BusinessWeek (02/05/07) even noted that "Stanford University biologist Chris Sommerville calculated that, with the right plants, 3.5% of the earth's surface could supply all of humanity's energy needs, compared with 13% now used for agriculture."

So you think President Bush sounded silly for sating we should look to SwitchGrass? Well, perennial prairie grasses are prima candidates for bio-fuels, because "their deep roots store carbon captured from the air, improve soils, and requite little water." Venture capitalist Vinod Khosla even projected that "only 49 million areas could supply 139 billion gallons of ethanol a year by 2030." Although the scaling up of turning the cellulose from prairie grass to ethanol may be hard, and if these things start to become successful the price of oil may drop sharply, which would bring the future growth any processing of plants for biofuel to a grinding halt, well these may all be challenges that may stop us from trying to save our dependency of

these types of fuels to further our lives. But we have dealt with dramatic changes on our lives over the years (from the industrial revolution to the technology revolution), and as we move forward, we can hopefully grow enough to learn how to counteract the mistakes that have bogged us down in the past.



*Janet Kuypers*®

Janet Kuypers  
Editor in Chief

poetry  
the passionate stuff

*Poem from the Garage Notebook (Document)*

Kenneth DiMaggio

You can finally open  
what was always  
a shuttered window

--but where  
is the rest of the building

where are the rooms  
where dreams  
could be stretched out  
like new maps of conquest  
across pearl-inlay tables

that spiraled  
into an abyss

one morning in September

for which  
you still have some  
late legal papers  
from the firm  
of Nihilstein & Nihilstein  
to deliver

And now it is a new morning  
in September

where this former messenger  
has a blackboard to write on

--a canon from which to inspire

But your students  
have already foreseen  
the collapse of their classroom

and by getting pregnant going  
to prison or joining the military

they are just pre-maturely  
fulfilling the lives  
they have to choose from  
after graduation

And if you can no longer  
pick up the chalk  
to write down the titles  
of several great books

it is because of this  
undelivered document

--papers that now need to be  
revised and readdressed

to states that were once  
united in an ideal

--but democratic vision

# Gravity

Eric Obame

I'm trapped in the womb  
Mother won't let me leave  
I jump, and I jump  
But she pulls me back here  
She gave me a warm bed  
I get regular meals  
It's a comfortable cell  
And everyone else here seems to be happy  
To be in this prison for life  
So who am I to preach freedom?  
But the scenery I want only appears when I dream  
When my eyes close, I roam  
A universe without borders  
Without time  
Without boundaries to what I am and can be  
When my eyes close, I'm free  
To go where I want to—when I want to  
To do what I want to do  
I'm free to be me  
But then I awaken in the womb  
And Mother is all I see  
I am still trapped  
I still want out  
And she won't let me leave  
I want more  
I want freedom  
But I am forced to march to her routine  
I look up, and the gate is just above  
I jump, and I jump  
She always pulls me back here



# *Out of the Mouths of Babes*

Lisa Frederiksen

She was only three years old.

It was close to the time  
when he might come home for dinner  
if there were such a time  
but it was impossible to know  
because no two days were alike;  
and most of the time it was better he didn't;  
her Daddy was a sarcastic, snarly drunk.

Tonight, she threw another of her fits. They came  
from a place deep inside; the anger so  
powerful it surged through her body in waves  
and she'd scream and wail  
and cry and methodically  
tear the things from her bookshelves and throw  
them with adult-like strength onto the floor, then move to  
her bed and tear the covers from it.

I wait outside her door until it subsides,  
as it always does;  
not because the anger is gone;  
because her body can no longer  
sustain it.  
I move inside her room and hug her close,  
almost praying for the anger; at least  
it implies life — this body, clutched in my arms, is limp; empty.

She whispers, "Sometimes people just get  
so mad they can't stop themselves and  
they want to go to a house where nobody  
lives." I whisper back, "What can someone do  
to help that person when they get so mad?"  
She murmurs, "Let them go."  
"Like go to Sandy and John's house?" I ask.  
"If there are no people in it," she answers.

# *blonde like me*

Renee St. Louis

Are you a real blonde?  
he wants to know, in tones of  
accusation and arousal.  
I wrap my strands, in notes of  
wheat, honey and chamomile,  
around my hand, trying to glimpse  
this magic so often sought  
by others.

What does that mean?  
I ask him, in tones of  
flirtation and suspicion.  
He narrows his eyes, in imitation of  
my mocking tone, trying to explain  
a stereotype so ingrained it  
seems like truth  
to him.

I mean, is it natural?  
he goes on, in tones of  
frustration and pursuit.  
I know what he means, in some of  
the ways he means it, trying to make  
me fit the ice queen, bimbo, bombshell,  
soccer mom, or femme fatale  
and failing.

What's it take to be real?  
I continue, in tones of  
provocation and skepticism.  
He stares so hard it burns, trying to size  
up my challenge, see if he can take me  
like the spoils of ideological conflict, a  
war bride.

Why do you make it so hard?  
he asks me now, in tones of  
high dudgeon and haughteur.  
I watch him leave, trying to remember  
a life before the color of my hair was  
mistaken for the content of my soul, when  
being natural and real meant  
more than simply being free  
of bleach.

# a poem by Adilene Aguilera

I am Palmer's cocoa butter  
Sitting beside my bathroom sink.  
Feeling used, because the dry and the heartless only want me for one thing  
Until I run out  
Then they don't care about me at all because they're finished  
Squeezing the life out of me.  
To the trash I go because now I'm worthless.

I am the photos  
scattered on top of my dresser.  
Full of blissfully depressing memories.  
(Like when we would spend day and night together  
And you held me tight.  
But now that's impossible, *night* took you with it)  
People who step into my room,  
Glimpse at the pictures.  
Stop and look at me.  
Stare.  
Smile  
Nod.  
Become ignorant to the *hidden emotions* I carry.  
(I really do miss you, they just don't know how big of an impact your  
failure had on me)

I am the lady across the street  
Yelling at her daughter to get her butt inside.  
I yell at her for many reasons  
because she doesn't listen.  
Because she wants it her way.  
Because she wants to be out all night.  
Because she's such a slut.  
Because she took my man!  
She'd be better off if she listened to me.  
"You shouldn't go with him, he isn't good enough for you, you're  
gonna end up lost"  
I do want her to get lost.

I can't stand her anyway.  
But...  
Am I the lost one?

I am the *Pozole*  
My mother makes for Christmas.  
I'm made once a year.  
People are in love with me,  
Only once a year.  
I feel like I'm wanted.  
Only once a year.  
He would call me, and I loved it.  
Though it seemed like it was only once a year.  
He came to see me, but it seemed like,  
Only once a year.

I am the one.  
Who will call you a loser?  
While giving you that lighthearted smack on the shoulder  
Whenever you did something stupid  
Silly.  
Goofy.  
Out of my norm  
But don't take it personal  
I still love you.  
Although you already knew that.  
Just a refresher.

I love you!  
As I told you in my dream over the phone, I am your wife,  
The one you will always count on.  
The one you can talk to.  
The one who will appreciate your every  
Action  
Word  
Thought.



*Amalgamation for God*  
painting by Aaron Wilder

## *Fish Tails*

Shelley Little

Swimming is my escape  
from the crying, the screaming  
My prison

I swim  
and become a mermaid

Shame from my kill  
I am half human, half fish

To enchant the sailor  
with my song

To imprison him  
in my underwater kingdom

He will struggle to breathe  
Just as I have

## *Play Soldier*

James Sackett

Remember, you was just a kid playing soldiers,  
And the neighborhood lay in ruins  
And the telephone wires had been cut  
And the neighborhood was behind enemy lines,  
Like you get caught, get your throat cut.  
Pretending shell shock all we want,  
The spoils and spills of war.  
We was just kids, children dream of blood,  
And chicks dig scars, scars make men.  
The sticks as daggers, became swords,  
Until we clutched them lengthwise against our shoulders,  
Aimed, and fired,  
We was all dead soldiers.

# *That Era*

Joshua Copeland

I walked out Pittsburgh Vision Services for the last time  
that Monday—

I walked into the shipping  
office, the timer punched my time card, out the  
shipping office, out the  
shipping room door, through that bright,  
Mickey Mouse hall (Muzak,  
vacuumed orange carpet), past offices—blurbs of  
conversation: “...Dave has to clean the  
toilets in the second floor women’s restroom by  
four tomorrow, or he’s...” “...Have you done anything  
except complain?...” “...Well, I’ll tell you a lie...Chris is mean  
to the kids, and he doesn’t supervise  
them too well...” “...Now if you don’t...” Past Barbara at  
the front desk, out the double doors (the fetal heat  
had made wet splotches  
of the dirty snow),

home to my studio apartment to  
call Diane Salidonia to say I was quitting. I waited  
till she had gone home. Had to leave  
three messages on her machine. Yes, my resignation  
was that long. The light flickered  
in the cave: Screams were heard like a  
train whistle in a tunnel.

Those days, from March on...I bobbed  
with the swells out past the breakers  
as the shore went up and down. My carpet  
was a lemony yellow  
slush. Every night, high on Benedryll. Champagne,  
three days corkless, three days  
out the fridge. I crawled naked  
from my computer to my bathroom. Usually woke at

four p.m., in bed at  
nine a.m. to the grunts of the buses  
chock full of nine-to-fivers. Asleep when the twin towers  
collapsed. "They are gone! You mean you didn't hear?  
They are not there!" Most days I only saw  
night.

Watched *Taxi Driver*, electrified by  
*Taxi Driver*, all day, all day. That movie  
was a manual: Stomping back  
into Pittsburgh Vision Services with a 9mm Beretta to blow the tendons  
out the back sides of Frank Pippin's and Linda Felton's  
necks. Shifting to nothingness, to a drab,  
colorless lump of flattened gum, sentience to  
statue, flesh to clay. And it was all  
meant: Society had left its  
imprints on me, claw marks from  
talons that dug, dug, and  
dug.  
Color deprivation from staying  
in my apartment too long...to go out during  
a sunny day was like an acid trip. The life of many men  
squeezes itself around your neck like a  
python...Population over three hundred million...me: white faced,  
rail thin, red eyed.

Always took at least two hours to  
jerk off to jpegs on my computer. Most  
other lives: tesseract in display windows. Every single day it was  
Curtains (Notice that capital C?). I floated like ether  
past the demarcations of the calendar, square to  
square, month fading into  
month, all clocks and dates  
subsidiary.

And it never ended. That rainwater  
shooting a tepid gurgle through the gutter recycles  
itself up to the thunderheads, and man,  
do you pay. The price of trying to  
belong: self mutilation, eyes slit like  
closed blinds (Pluto in the dark), driving drunk from  
strip club to strip club, drooling on  
those stiletto high heels. A hierarchy of angels amidst  
a herd of lepers. And that stereo from next door: A gliding  
UFO, a live rainbow undulating  
in the wind, life from another  
planet. Heaven promises  
you nothing but the absence of  
hell.

I will lay the dynamite delicately and light it  
gingerly, ready to blow all of you  
into confetti, all of you that superimpose  
yourselves over me (I do not dread as much  
as you think). Every one of you:  
dead. Your children? Dead. Your  
husbands, wives, grandparents? Dead. Pets?  
Dead. Gardens? Drowned.  
You expelled me, and you will pay and I  
will not except collateral and you will finish  
your lives in wheelchairs.  
The furnace in the eye  
of the psycho, a lit match reflected  
in the iris...biblical proportions.  
That era has not ended. Still, I love  
nothing but myself, I throttle the  
passers by on the sidewalk, my window is an angry tear  
in the fabric  
of space.



prose  
the meat and potatoes stuff

## THE EVIL AMONG US

Mel Waldman

### I

I discovered his dark secret, by word of mouth, a few months after the others had caught him in the act. I couldn't believe the bizarre tale they told me. But it was true. Even a psychologist can be duped! And my buddy Bobby, a fellow shrink, had been deceived too. For years, we had perceived Charlie in another light. We saw him as a lovable victim-someone worthy of our friendship and caring. Yet secretly, he committed heinous crimes! What was his true identity? Who was the real Charlie?

### II

Since childhood, Charlie had some bad breaks, especially being labeled *slow* and *emotionally disturbed* by the school authorities. He felt bad about himself and couldn't shake off the horrible feelings and poor self-image.

Now, he speaks and walks cautiously in an alien world that often rejects him. Over the years, he has been mocked, abused, or ignored. Yet a few of us have accepted him-until the apocalyptic moment.

Charlie moves gingerly and painfully through the interior landscape of thoughts and ideas, like a woman in labor for a very long time or an old man trekking across the deep snow in a snowstorm. (I'm 10 years older than Charlie. And I remember Brooklyn in the winter, in the fifties, covered in a pristine snow as pure as the beatific visions of a young boy blessed with absolute faith, never doubting the existence of G-d or the inherent beauty and goodness of human beings.)

Yeah, Charlie had some left curves thrown at him. But throughout his life, his folks loved him. His mother's dead now. But his father continues to watch over him, with much love. They live together, for Charlie returned home a few years ago when he could no longer cope with life on his own.

I suppose Charlie's been crumbling for years, struggling to hold it together. (He once told me he was afraid a stranger would break into Marvin's apartment and kill him. Charlie suffered panic attacks and was placed on heavy medication. His father bought a bat and kept it by his bed. He told Charlie he'd protect him if anyone broke in. Slowly, Charlie's terror vanished into a black hole of amnesia.) Still, he endeared himself to strangers like Bobby and me and his

neighbors Joe, a retired teacher, and Bernie, a postal clerk. He received a lot of love. But I guess it wasn't enough.

### III

Charlie is a short, rotund middle-aged man with a thin moustache. He's balding and wears old, baggy pants more fitting for an 80-year-old. Sometimes he forgets to bathe. But he wants to smell nice and uses *Eternity* cologne. Unfortunately, he pours it on his face and reeks of foul, smothering odors.

He lives in the past and often listens to Perry Como records. Just drop into Dunkin' Donuts and you might catch him whistling or singing an old Perry Como tune. He carries a tune well. I guess he has a good musical ear.

He's a collector too and buys hundreds of books, especially self-help books in psychology, he will never read. Some are still in unopened packages or boxes after months or years, cluttering his bedroom. It seems that Charlie can only focus for short periods of time. Perhaps, he also suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

In addition, he also collects CD's, and with Joe's help, has a cornucopia of pornographic tapes and DVD's. Joe bought soft-core and hard-core pornography for Charlie online for years. After receiving the merchandise, Charlie paid Joe. (You see, Charlie has had a rough time with the opposite sex. His heart's been broken many times, he confessed. Indeed, he's probably a middle-aged virgin.)

For years, Joe let Charlie use his computer. Often, Joe invited Charlie and his father, Marvin, to his apartment to watch old and new movies on his large movie screen. Joe was very kind to Charlie and Marvin.

Bernie was also kind to Charlie. Bernie's an old softie-hyperactive and loud but a man with a heart of gold. He lives with his widowed mother. But according to Bernie, they occupy the same space but live separate lives. Decades ago, his father was murdered. Once, he talked about his father's murder. Only once.

Berne's an amateur weight lifter who lives in the gym when he's not working at the post office. In Dunkin' Donuts, I used to watch Bernie stand up for Charlie if anyone harassed him. He treated Charlie like a younger brother.

Both Joe and Bernie and Bernie's mother were victims of Charlie's dark self!

### IV

Charlie and Marvin don't know that I know. Most of their friends have abandoned them. When they discovered the truth, Joe and Bernie complained to the landlord. They may still file police reports. In any case, they have ostracized Charlie to Hell!

"You son's a pervert!" Joe told Marvin after Charlie was caught. "He can rot in Hell!"

### V

I don't know all the gruesome details. Haven't read the letters. For the past 4 years, Charlie sent obscene, hate-letters to Joe and Bernie. Unfortunately,

Bernie's mother read the letters too.

For a long time, Joe and Bernie blamed the *crazy* Russian woman in the building. Aggressive and abusive, and sometimes shrieking like a sick bird, she seemed to be the most likely person disturbed enough to leave pornographic hate-mail under their door. But it was Charlie all along.

Who was this raging Charlie I didn't know? Who?

## VI

What shall I do? They don't know that I know. Joe and Bernie have asked me not to intervene. Yet I'd like to confront Charlie and get an explanation. Find out if he feels any guilt. Discover if he's a decent person who went astray or a closet sociopath.

Joe and Bernie won't forgive him. "It's too late for an apology," Joe told me. But is it too late to save Charlie's soul?

## VII

I like Marvin. He's always been kind to me and perhaps, he's a father-figure I'm unwilling to give up. Unfortunately, his son maliciously, with premeditation, wrote ugly letters to Joe and Bernie for 4 years until he was caught. It didn't happen once, twice, or even a few times. This evil phenomenon stretched across a Waste Land of perversion over time.

## VIII

Yet who am I to judge? I too have my dark secrets. I too am a sinner! And the evil among us is ubiquitous. It's always there-buried beneath the surface of consciousness. Each cutting moment, we must choose. If we slip...if we falter...it will possess us. By our actions or inaction, our character forms or dissolves.

We can't escape. We can only choose or do nothing. And by doing nothing, we are guilty of complicity with evil. We are guilty!

## POSTSCRIPT I

Last week, I received the first anonymous letter in the mail. It was pornographic and reeking of hate and bigotry. Of course, I suspected Charlie. But I had no proof. Then I held the white sheet of paper close to my face and inhaled its aroma. *Eternity!* And it had a foul, wicked scent as if the cologne had been mixed with inhuman debris and a rotting corpse. It reeked of evil!

Now, the letters have multiplied and there are hang-up calls in the middle of the night.

Yesterday, I received a letter in which the *anonymous* person threatened my wife's life as well as mine. What shall I do? File a police report? Beat Charlie to a pulp? I haven't had a fist fight since adolescence. I don't believe in violence. Yet I'm enraged! I don't have absolute proof! But it's Charlie! And he's threatened my wife and me.

We've been kind to him. Yet he's stalking us. Why?

## POSTSCRIPT II

We should have protected him. But we were focused on ourselves. And so it happened. I suppose it was the logical conclusion to Charlie's irrationality. But we didn't see it coming.

Charlie didn't hurt my wife or me. I suppose he wanted to scare us-shake us up. Maybe it was a warning he was out of control and needed to be stopped. It doesn't matter now. It's too late.

## POSTSCRIPT III

Joe called me this morning and told me what happened. "There was a disturbance last night. Someone called the police. The cops are still in Marvin's apartment, along with the CSI."

"The Crime Scene Investigators?"

"Yeah. He killed him! They had a fight and he killed him."

"How?"

"With the bat by Marvin's bed. Beat him to a pulp."

"Who died?"

"Don't you know? Haven't you figured it out?"

"Yes. But I have to hear you say the words. I just can't believe..."

## POSTSCRIPT IV

"They took him to Bellevue. He doesn't remember," Joe informed me.

"Thanks for letting me know," I said ironically.

Later, I kissed my wife on her forehead and went to sleep. I fell over a cliff and flew through a black abyss on my dark journey to Hell!

## POSTSCRIPT V

He called me from Bellevue and woke me up.

"Don't know why I'm here," he said.

"You're sick."

"But they won't tell me what's wrong with me."

"They probably have to take some tests first."

"I guess so. But I'm lonely. Will you do me a favor?"

"What is it?"

"Tell my father to visit me. I miss him. Don't know why he hasn't come yet."

I was numb. Perhaps, I was in shock. I couldn't believe... I was afraid I'd go insane! I didn't speak.

"Will you do that for me?"

"Yes," I muttered.

And he said goodbye.

## POSTSCRIPT VI

"Charlie killed Marvin!" I shriek across the Waste Land of my anguished soul.

## POSTSCRIPT VII

Charlie's far away in a psychiatric facility for the criminally insane. He lives on a locked ward. He still does not remember. But I do! It's too late! He broke into my private home and now, he's in my head.

Christ! He's trying to enter my soul! Even now, he stalks me!

# *The Red Noose*

Mel Waldman

I met Billy three years ago in a desert town filled with human rats hungry fer my blood. He saved my life. Just as one rat called Crazy Joe was about to blow me away, Billy suddenly appeared with a slick shiny piece aimed at Crazy Joe.

"Drop the gun!" Billy ordered Crazy Joe.

"Not your business, Kid."

"Drop it!"

"Ya wanna die with this here fool?"

"What he done?"

"Stole Sue Anne from me."

"Guess she ain't never was yers."

Somethin' real crazy musta happen inside Joe's fried brain cause he turned from me quick an' aimed his piece at Billy. Before he could pull the trigga, Billy shot him dead. Joe's buddies backed away real quick. Billy was fasta then lightning. Yet with his blond hair and blue eyes he kinda looked like an angel-not a killa. My guardian angel!

We became buddies. Hung out together. Drank ourselves silly. Partied till dawn. An' one day, he tole me 'bout Annie. Even Billy had fell in love. Real hard. Ain't that somethin'?

Back in Death Valley, Billy fell in love with Annie. Annie was a little woman with flamin' red hair. An' she was Sheriff Tom's daughta. When Billy arrived in Death Valley, Annie was still mournin' for John Murray, her fiancé, who had vanished suddenly the year before. Murray was a bounty hunta. An' Sheriff Tom hated him. Some folks think there was foul play. Maybe the sheriff murdered Murray. No one was good enuf fer his daughta. 'Specially a man like John. Then Billy arrived an' helped Annie forget her lost love.

Billy swore he was an innocent kid back then. Maybe. But the way he killed Crazy Joe, ya know he ain't no sweet kid no more.

Sheriff Tom looked at Billy with murderous eyes. 'Specially when Annie

announced her love for Billy. He warned Annie and threatened Billy. Town folks didn't get involved.

Then the night Billy and Annie was gonna run away, Annie vanished. Sheriff Tom searched fer Annie fer days. Couldn't find her.

Sheriff Tom thought real deep. Then he figured it out. Billy an' Annie musta had this real big fight. An' Billy killed his daughta. No matta there wasn't no body. Sheriff Tom knew Billy done killed his baby.

He went to Billy's place an' arrested him. But he didn't take Billy to the jail house. Sheriff Tom took Billy to his farm. An' tied him up in the barn.

"Gonna hang ya high, Billy!"

"Didn't do nothin', Sheriff!"

"Ya killed my baby!"

"I love Annie."

"My baby's dead! And so will you be come sunset."

It was a dog day afternoon so Sheriff Tom kept the barn door open. The heat was oppressive. He worked fer hours makin' the noose and settin' it up just right in the barn. He mounted his horse Silva an' checked ta see that the noose would easily slip 'round Billy's neck. Five times he tried an' still the hot noose swung too high from the roof.

"Ya dumb nose!" he cried out. "Why can't ya hang right?"

'Bout an hour 'fore sunset, the wind started howlin' real mean an' the sky turned black. Billy said he heard thunda an' maybe saw some lightnin' too. Storm was comin' fer sure.

"Billy Boy! Don't ya worry, son. You be dead 'fore the storm comes. I promise."

Sheriff Tom mounted Silva 'gain. Billy listened to the wild wind as he watched his executiona fix the noose once more. In the distance, Billy heard the storm comin'. Yet Silva looked real calm as she carried Sheriff Tom to the noose.

Sittin' nice an' easy on Silva, Sheriff Tom slipped his head into the noose. It fit just right fer the very first time. An' then it happened!

The wild wind rushed close to the barn like a roaring bull. An' Silva got scared. She kicked an' jumped real mean 'til she threw Sheriff Tom offa her. But his body didn't fall far cause his neck slipped tight into the magnificent noose he created. An' his round creation killed him fast. He hanged high at the center of the barn. An' Silva galloped off into the storm.

Billy said his azure eyes nearly popped out when he saw his executiona accidentally hang himself. Guess you could say the storm killed the sheriff. Cause the wild wind drove Silva crazy an' then Sheriff Tom fell deep into the Devil's noose he made. It happened that way. Could say it was both the storm and the sheriiff's madness that did him in.

Billy saw the sheriff die an' then he watched the corpse swing back an' forth fer hours. He was headin' fer death too. He smelled it. Soon, he'd be just like the foul thing hangin' 'bove.

The storm entered the barn, followed by a stranga. He was tall an' muscular an' had a long scar 'cross his left cheek. His eyes were dark brown.

"Just passin' by when this here crazy stallion leaped out into the storm. Nearly killed me an' my horse. Figured there was trouble inside."

The stranga looked at the corpse. "Guess his troubles are ova."

The stranga didn't ask no questions. He untied Billy. Noticed a real pretty ring on Billy's right fourth finga. Gold ring with a "B" carved in.

"Real pretty ring."

"It's yers, stranga." An' Billy gave him the ring.

"You betta leave now. 'Fore he be found. Take my horse."

"Can't leave."

"Go, kid. Whatever happened here... Hell, it can only get worse when he be found."

"What 'bout you?"

"Gonna leave in the mornin'."

"If they find you..."

"I'll take my chances."

"What's yer name, stranga?"

"Job."

"A biblical name fer a righteous man. I owe you, Job."

"An' what might yer name be, fella?"

"Billy Budd."

"Go now, Billy Budd! Into the storm an' away from Death!"

"Storm might kill me, Job."

"Maybe. But stayin here will get you the rope."

"Ain't you curious what happened? Why he be dead? Why he be tied up?"

"No."

"Goodbye, Job."

"Good luck, Billy Budd. The storm will protect you."

An' Job was right. The storm gave Billy time-time an' space 'tween him an' the posse.

An' Billy became an outlaw. In the beginnin', he was an innocent boy. Till they chased him from Death Valley all the way to New Mexico. 'Fore he arrived in New Mexico, he killed a lotta men. Then he saved my life.

We became buddies. 'Til we split. He promised to be my best man when I married Sue Anne. Then a stray bullet durin' a gun fight took her life.

Billy stayed in New Mexico an' died young. I headed north. Ended up in northern Cal. Found me a small town name of Eve. An' a real sweet saloon called The Red Noose. Went in, asked fer a Scotch on the rocks an' drifted off to a heavenly place.

"Feelin' good, stranga?"

Looked up an' there she was-one of the prettiest gals I ever set eyes upon. With flamin' red hair.

"Who might you be?"

"The owner of this saloon."

"Itza plezur ta drink in yer saloon."

"Thank you, stranga."

Almost introduced myself. But someone yelled: "Hey, Annie. Come on ova here real quick." An' Annie rushed off.

He was tall and muscular an' had a long scar 'cross his left cheek. His eyes were dark brown. He looked familiar.

"Hey, Job," I shouted.

He looked my way. "Name's John, stranga."

I walked ova to him an' Annie. "Thought you was someone else."

"Yeah."

I noticed a gold ring on his right fourth finga-with a "B" carved in. Looked into his dark brown eyes an' said: "Yer real name's John Murray. Once you went by the name of Job. Rescued an ol' buddy named Billy. Thanks, John."

They looked at me-real close and intense. Then they invited me to a private table in the back. Tole me the sheriff almost killed John. Cut him up an' left him fer dead. He returned the night Annie was to leave with Billy. John was her first love so she ran off with him. Left Billy behind. An' the sheriff too-thinkin' she was dead.

"He mighta died."

"Came back to rescue him. Seems the storm saved his life."

"Two of you killed him. Made him into an outlaw."

"We were in love," Annie said, her guilty eyes lookin' away.

"I released him," John added.

"You killed him!"

I stood up an' sauntered off. Didn't look back. Wanted to kill them both. Didn't. Wouldn't know how. Once, I loved a woman too. Almost got me killed. Billy saved my life. Back in New Mexico where he ended up.

Destiny's weird. They created an outlaw who traveled to New Mexico an' saved my life. If they hadn't set him up, I'd be dead! So in a way, they killed Billy but saved my life.

I left The Red Noose and neva returned. Years lata, I found me love 'gain. Then I found the real red noose. It ain't no place. Just a happy, yellow state of mind that eventually makes a man crazy.

Love's the noose you gotta fear. Nothin' else. But don't tell my wife. She might turn red!



# *The Fugitive*

Mel Waldman

## I

Until that hot July night, Harry Niles was a nobody man. Almost seventy, he was a retired postal clerk and a virgin. Half the time, nothing much happened to old man Niles. He liked it that way. Harry tried to live a quiet life, avoided conflict and women, and never made waves. That's the way he survived. And sometimes, his life was uneventful. But the rest of the time, trouble found him.

A little man who stood 5'4" tall, his suspicious dark brown eyes saw only a dangerous world of giants. So Harry hid in his basement apartment near Neptune and Coney Island Avenues.

Even there, in his underground cocoon, he was not safe. Nor were the others upstairs. Eventually, trouble found Harry. You see, he was a magnet.

## II

Harry's landlord, who lived upstairs with his cheating wife, was a middle-aged man named Bernie Fish. Bernie Fish looked like Kojak. But he was an inveterate coward afraid of physical pain, and known to cry at the sight of his own blood.

Bernie was married to Farrah Fish, formerly Farrah Fleming, born Francine Fremlin. From Sheepshead Bay to Brighton Beach, she was known as the blonde bimbo who never said no. Of course, she would have said no to Harry, but he didn't have the guts to ask.

Around the neighborhood, Bernie was known as the muscular, tough looking cuckold with a high-pitched voice. But the bad boys knew him as the compulsive gambler who was in trouble with the mob.

Midnight, July 4<sup>th</sup> was Bernie's High Noon. And he wasn't Gary Cooper!

At midnight, Big Daddy wanted 100 G's or Bernie would be one more firecracker exploding in the fiery night.

He'd fly real high if he couldn't deliver. And not even high-heeled wife could reach up and cut him loose from the flaming sky.

## III

On this seething night, Harry couldn't sleep. He lay in the dark and listened to the sound of firecrackers exploding outside.

The heat and noise made him edgy. So he got up and turned on the lights and TV. Maybe he'd watch the fireworks on TV.

But his "nerves" were bad. In a few minutes, he turned off the TV.

He scurried into the living room, turned on the switch, and looked out the front window through a slat in the blind.

Looking up, he saw the silhouette of the stranger. The looming figure rushed past Bernie's two-family house and disappeared. But instantly, he reappeared and stood in front of the house.

Harry's face twitched uncontrollably. For some reason, the stranger frightened him, although he only saw the man's profile. When the stranger walked downstairs and rang the side doorbell, Harry retreated to his bedroom.

The stranger was buzzed in. Slowly, he climbed the stairs. Momentarily, he glanced at his gold watch and noticed it was almost midnight. A crooked smile spread across his face as he continued his short journey to the top.

#### IV

Harry heard the sounds. The sounds seemed to come from above but maybe he was mistaken.

Outside, the firecrackers exploded intermittently. Then, he heard the footsteps.

He ran into the living room and looked out again through a slat in the blind. The stranger reappeared and instinctively, Harry's frenzied eyes rolled wildly across the man's profile.

Unexpectedly, the man turned 90 degrees and seemed to look into the basement apartment, although the blinds were drawn.

The man smiled wickedly and sauntered off.

Below, Harry stood transfixed, paralyzed by the intrusive images of the stranger, which lingered on in his anguished mind.

#### V

Harry packed a bag and left his underground apartment. He didn't go upstairs to find out what had happened. He "knew" that Bernie and Farrah Fish were dead, for he had heard the brutal sounds.

Of course, he'd never know why. No matter. He couldn't stick around to find out. Soon, the stranger would return and kill him too, unless he vanished tonight.

Harry became a fugitive, drifting from state to state. He looked for the stranger in every city. Each night, he saw the looming figure, a sinister silhouette ensconced in the postern of his mind.

Sometimes, Harry thought of calling the police and returning to Brooklyn to "identify" the killer. But the elusive thought vanished instantly.

No longer was Harry a nobody man. Now, he was The Fugitive. And

at the center of his tortured mind was the ominous profile which terrified and excited him.

He'd never go back. And maybe deep down, he knew he'd die if he stopped running.

When his savings were almost gone, he headed for Vegas. Bernie once told him that Vegas was Heaven on earth-a poor man's Paradise. Well, Harry The Fugitive was ready for Paradise!

## VI

Back in Brooklyn, Bernie and Farrah Fish were still alive but shaky. As a warning, the stranger had blasted the walls and furniture with his .45 Magnum. His last two shots missed the frightened couple by a few inches.

Then, they signed over the \$150,000 house to Big Daddy and gave Big Daddy's man \$50,000 in cash as a bonus, all the hard cash they could raise. Big Daddy had soul and let the Fish family live.

The next morning, Bernie and Farrah headed for Vegas, Loser's Paradise. They had high hopes. Yeah.

And you never know about Chance. It can change your Destiny! Real fast. In a blast!

# *Small Steps, Heavy Hearts*

Adrian Ludens

She had left the room sobbing.

Something so stereotypical couldn't possibly be happening to them and yet here they were. He sat up in bed, covers bunched around his waist. He had lashed out at her, fueled by a toxic brew of guilt and frustration.

A mistake had been made. It was the same kind of mistake that men who have it all always make. Now came the emotional fallout and the facing of consequences. She felt betrayed, hurt and angry. Had she been involved, her feelings might be different. She even admitted as much. But there was no going back now.

From the living room he could hear the sobs wracking her body as he sat there indecisively. She was undoubtedly curled up on the sofa. He slid from the bed and shrugged on a robe. He walked into the dark room

where his wife wept and tentatively spoke her name.

She made no reply so he simply sat down in a chair across the room and waited.

"I will always love you. I want to be your best friend, no matter what you decide because of this." He says it and he means it. He thinks of the old adage "You've made your bed, now lie in it". He wonders if she will ever be lying beside him again.

She weeps, then sleeps. He sits in the chair, listening to her breathing. Finally, just four minutes shy of three in the morning, he leaves the room. On his way back to the bedroom he detours to the kitchen for a drink of water. He also hides the steak knives.

The morning sun rose just like it always does. He awoke to find her gone. He knew she was already at work. He roused their kids, muddled distractedly through breakfast and drove them to school. The first thing he did when he arrived at his own work was punch his time card. The second thing he did was call her cell phone.

"Hey!" he says when she picks up, affecting cheerfulness.

"Hey," she replies flatly.

"Just wanted to let you know I sent lunch money with the kids."

"Thank you."

"How's work?"

"Fine."

"How are you?" He asks, a little softer.

"You know how I am."

"I'm so sorry babe."

"Yeah."

"I got you the dvd set of that cartoon show you like."

"Cool," she says. Her voice is just a shade more cheerful. He thinks he might have surprised her and hopes it brightens her day just a little.

"I love you."

"Yeah," she replies. She's back to flat again as she hangs up.

He sighs and lets the receiver hang limply in his hand. He sits there silently for another few moments before gently hanging up the phone.

He doesn't expect a quick fix. The road to forgiveness will be long, the journey to healing even longer. But they will make the journey together, with small steps and heavy hearts.

# *The Before-Work Ritual*

Adrian Ludens

Lodovico “Vic” Romolo approached the sculpture in the center of the plaza. It was his custom whenever a new job was delegated to him that he stop here first. Vic’s given name meant “famous warrior” in his native tongue, but sometimes his compassion got in the way of his duties. Thus the sculpture in the plaza became an integral part of Vic’s ritual.

The sculpture was simple. It was a giant head of a dour man carved out of marble. Vic did not know who the man was. He had never wanted to know, and even if he did, who would he ask? The stone subject’s eyes were closed and its mouth was drawn in a tight line. Vic particularly appreciated the attention to detail in the ears carved on each side. The entire sculpture measured twenty-five feet in diameter and a little over thirty feet high as far as Vic could judge.

He reached out a hand, brushing the marble lightly at first, then more roughly. Vic walked once around the entire voluminous sculpture, his hand never leaving its surface. Upon reaching his starting point, Vic removed his hand, now numb and unfeeling. It was symbolic. He turned and placed his other palm against the stone and retraced his steps. As he walked, Vic closed his eyes and regulated his breathing. Once again he completed his brief but meaningful stroll.

Vic stood ramrod straight, gazing intently at the sculpture. He felt focused. He was ready.

He turned and strode purposefully toward the address he had been given. It turned out to be a family owned deli, five months behind on their payments. Others who owed money to Vic’s associates were sure to notice. An example must be made.

Vic waited for the deli’s lone customer to leave and then stepped inside. Vic turned the “Closed” sign toward the street, drew the blinds and locked the door behind him. The lanky man behind the counter looked up and his face drained of all color as Vic approached.

Just four minutes later, breathing a bit rapidly, but otherwise showing no evidence of his exertions, Vic emerged from the deli. Another assignment completed.

Vic had been an immovable force. As he went about his job with lethal brutality, Vic’s heart seemed to turn to stone and the deli owner’s cries for mercy fell on deaf ears.

# Dirty War

A. McIntyre

War's been going on a long time now. How long? Sometimes I can't remember. Three years. Five years. Twenty years. No-one seems to know when it started. You ask around and everyone's got a different idea of when it began. Maybe it's been going on forever. We don't talk about it anymore. Johnny and me that is. Johnny Scotland.

We kicked them out of Kabul. That was the easy part. We had them surrounded in the end, carpet bombed them, annihilated them, there was nothing left. Then we moved into Kabul. That's it, we all thought, It's over. They're gone. For a few days there was a party. We clean the city, get a garrison going, clean uniforms, airlifts, medical supplies, the whole bureaucracy of victory. The general makes an inspection, the journalists drink their scotch in the afternoon. Then one morning, we're sitting down to breakfast and KABOOOOM KABOOOOM KABOOOOM we're cowering under the table. I thought it was exercises but it was too damn close, and then a building explodes across the street. The war had started again before it had even ended. But who's shooting?

When we find out what's going on no-one can believe it. The guys we had surrounded, the guys we annihilated, now they've got us surrounded. All the roles reversed. We besieged them now they're besieging us. Act Two. Kabul's ringed by mountains you see. Control the mountains and you control the city. Infantry 101. The high ground. Remember the song, *Take the high ground and hold it* . . . Who the hell ever decided to build the capital in such a crummy location? Ought to be put up against a wall and shot. Sarajevo the same, I was there too a while back. Fat cities stuck in a valley. Makes no sense. But the capital's the capital, and it's gotta be controlled. That's all there is to it. So here we are and here we will remain because at the moment all the roads are held by the rebels and there's no way out or in. All our supplies come from the air. We're Up the Khyber, as the Brits used to say except no-one wants to remember what happened to them back in the 1840s. Maybe we'll have to walk to Jalalabad in the middle of winter.

So it's the same old thing. We bomb them, they bomb us, they show pictures of dead children to the newspapers, we do the same, they grab some of our boys, we grab some of theirs. We torture each other trying to break through, but nothing is happening. It goes on and on, no end in sight, no solution forthcoming. I work for the STD, Special Tactics Department that is. Getting guys in, getting them out. We take prisoners and then we try to break them so they'll tell us their positions. Problem is we often wind up killing them before they tell us anything. Hard boys these fundamentalists. Mental, and no fun. There's just so much the human body can take. Usually they die. The only thing they've ever told us over and over is God is Great. You've gotta admire them. The harder we hit them the harder they fight, the harder they get, like tempered steel. We've done everything. Dental stuff, no man can take. Electrics all over the

body. I've hammered toes flat with a sledge, hung weights from their balls, used piano wire, torn out fingernails, toenails, tongues, you name it. I've shoved tubes down their dicks, tubes up their butts, poked out eyes, blown away knees with a small caliber weapon. Most of it useless. No results and it goes on for a long time. Inevitably they wind up dying, shock, loss of blood. And there's nothing we can do. There's just so much we know. I'm limited by my education, after all. Torture is open to research just like any other discipline.

So one day I'm sitting in The Room, with Johnny Scotland, having a coffee break because we've been working on one of these boys for two days and he's about to go. A big bearded thug, muscled like a Bulgar. We haven't gained an iota of information. We've tried the usual and he just spits blood at us when he gets a chance and yells incomprehensible oaths that the translator can't follow, and I've hit him so hard out of sheer frustration that my fist has started to swell. The whole fucking thing's absurd, and we're just going through the motions. Gotta write something in the log book, We did this, we did that etc. but information was not forthcoming. End of story. Tomorrow he'll be thrown into the incinerator just like the last two hundred and seventy three, although Johnny swears we've already made three hundred.

Hard case, I say. Yeah, says Johnny, What's new? We smoke our cigarettes in silence. Your fist's swelling, he adds. Looks that way, I say taking a drag. Johnny Scotland. We joined together long ago. Marines, Special Operations. We went to Granada, Panama, Lebanon, me and Johnny. We saw the end of Nam. Then they moved us up into the STD. We've had all kinds of guys go through The Room. The best were the Serbs. I like people to look the part. The motherfucking Serbs. These boys looked big and tough. They were big and tough, when they were shelling schoolgirls in Sarajevo from the comfort of the hills, or gunning down families in Kosovo. Big tough boys with shaven heads and lots of muscles. But give them to me and Johnny and we had them squealing for their mothers. Like stuck pigs. It was good to see, a job with a meaning. Seeing big muscled Serbs weeping and begging for mercy. After a couple of days in The Room they told us everything we wanted to know. Clipping off a Serb toe with wire cutters. Those big fucking fag-got rapists. I used to look forward to it.

And Johnny Scotland. Hey, he's a funny guy. I love it when someone asks his name and he replies, Scotland, John Scotland, and the stupid fuck who's asked him grins and says, Your folks from Scotland? Me too. And Johnny just stares the guy down and says, My folks are not from Scotland you stupid fuck, they're Swedish, Swedes, and he goes into this long aggravated monologue about how his name comes from the Swedish Schøttlund or Schüttlund or some such crap and how Schöttlund is a remote island off the Swedish Arctic where the Schöotts lived, and the Schöotts were a fierce tribe of proto-Vikings who invented violence, and apparently they ate the brains of their enemies. None of this is documented in conventional Swedish history, but Johnny says it's true, and he says it's just because the Swedes have turned into sappy peaceniks that they don't want this part of their history documented. And someone in the STD once

pointed out that Jeffrey Dahmer was of good Scandinavian stock and look at what he was capable of, and Johnny agreed, Yes he probably was a descendent of the Schötts, and maybe the Dharma was the way to be. And it's unwise to argue with Johnny. I once saw him bite a guy's nose off when we were on leave in Miami (the guy was bothering Johnny when he was trying to relax in a bar), and Johnny didn't spit the nose out like most guys would have done. No sir, he swallowed it without even chewing it. Johnny Scotland. I've never stopped liking the taste of boogers, he said afterwards, when we were walking out of the bar. I've often wondered what Johnny talks about at his high school reunions.

So Johnny looks at me and grins. What's bothering you? I ask. Hey, a joke, says Johnny, A joke. Let's try something new, see what happens. Something new? I say irritated. Yeah, he replies, Listen. I've been thinking. Have you ever thought? Why these guys are so fucking mad. The Israelis, the mujahadeen. Not really, I say, That's just the way they are isn't it. I mean what else are they going to do? Exactly, says Johnny, Exactly. I mean listen to this, I was thinking. The Muslims, the Jews, they're the same damn thing right, speak the same language almost, they're all Semites, they're the same fucking race for chrissake. So why the fuck are they always trying to kill each other? If they're the same I mean. I ponder this piece of logic for a couple of moments before saying, Maybe it's because they are the same that they hate each other. I mean if I had to live with me all the time I'd wind up killing myself. Johnny sprays coffee everywhere laughing, On the button my dear Watson, on the button, that's exactly it. Think about it. The whole of their life they don't get any girls, they don't even see girls. All they see, if they're lucky, is a walking blanket. That ain't a fucking girl. Unless you're into jacking off over blankets. Ever see girls knocking about the streets of Karachi when you were there? Or Jeddah? Remember? There are no fucking girls. Same for our Orthodox Jewish friends. All the women are inside. At the best of times, when they've really got their rocks off, most of these guys have just fucked boys up the butt, and that's no way to live by any stretch of the imagination. So what's your point? I ask, Where are you trying to get to with all this academic analysis? Johnny grins, taking a drag on his cigarette. That's why they're all so mad, he explains, smoke pouring out of his mouth, Why they're so pissed at one another, why they're pissed with everything and everyone. They never get any cunt. No cunt ever. And they're all circumcised to boot. What a combination. You'd be pissed. Think about it. A man who can't get any cunt is inevitably going to be seriously pissed, give him a gun, and instead of cunt he fills his head with religion, you've got a problem. These guys would do anything to get into the pants of some blonde walking the streets of LA. They see us nailing girls like that, they know they'll never be able to do the same, so no wonder they hate us, no wonder they want to take out our society. They're frustrated. A woman calms you down, calms all men down. Your aggression just leaks out of you between her legs. I remember reform school. Guys so mad they'd do anything, but they had us playing football and boxing, doing exercise twelve hours a day. That got rid of the anger. And anyway, we were so tired all the time we



didn't have the energy to get mad. Then we were out in the big bad world and the first thing we do is get laid. Some of us hitch up with a broad, and it all calms down. The rage. Imagine if that deprivation went on into our twenties. We'd be the ones grabbing an AK47 and yelling for the blood of societies which got laid regularly. These guys, these Holy Warrior types, they're like bulls who can't get at the cows. Do you go in the field and try to pet the bull when he's got a hard on? No, of course not. You're nuts, I say. But suddenly Johnny is starting to make sense here. I study his eyes for emotion but I see none. So what do you suggest? I ask. He grins, Let's try something, just for interest. I've thought about this for a while now. Don't tell the Colonel. Let's try some porn on our boy downstairs before he leaves us forever. Just for fun. We'll rest him and show him some tonight, whaddya say? A movie maybe. You crazy bastard, I say. But I'm thinking maybe Johnny's onto something here, and we never tried it before. We'll just call it R and R. Can't lose. Anyway, I wouldn't mind watching some porn. Then we'll kill the Pathan and incinerate him in the morning. Johnny m'boy, I say patting him on the shoulder, You're a fucking genius.

Back in The Room we see that our boy is in no state to watch a porn movie because he's dead. He died ten minutes ago, says Aktar the guy who tends the jail. Get rid of him and bring us another, I say. Aktar yells for a lackey down the corridor and a few minutes later they wheel the dead man away. They clean the floor and bring a new man. As is our custom he is chained naked to a wheelchair. Welcome to The Room I say, and the translator translates. The man says nothing. He looks exactly like the last, huge, muscular, bearded. His eyes are slits behind bruised puffy cheeks. Welcome to America, I say as we position him in front of the 80 inch VCR screen we use for psychological interrogation. The man stares at the blank screen. Welcome to Hollywood, says Johnny, tweaking the prisoner's cheek, slipping a video into the machine. He switches it on and we sit back to watch. We're drinking whiskey, John Jameson and Son. A young girl, blonde, sixteen, seventeen maybe, is standing in a room. She is watching herself in the mirror. She runs her hands over her white blouse, undoing the buttons, her hands slipping under her bra. She moans and lies down pulling her shirt open while her other hand slides down her leg, then up under her short red tartan skirt. She pulls the pin away from the kilt so that her legs are free. Her fingers press over the soft material of her panties, then over the elastic rim, underneath, slipping inside. She cries out, pushing the panties down. Johnny and I are so absorbed that we forget our boy in the wheelchair for a while until we hear a roar of rage. He's struggling, yelling, foam spraying over his vast beard. Will you look at that, say's Johnny, sipping his whiskey. I start to laugh hysterically. The prisoner's dick is standing upright like a guardsman, from out of a jungle of curly black hair, every blood vessel straining. I can see the tendons in his neck like ropes under the skin. His arms and legs are lined with sinews about to pop. He's grinding his teeth, struggling so hard that he's cutting himself on the chains. He tries to shut his eyes but the girl's moans make him look. Her fingers are dipping in and out of her pink hole, a hint of moisture glistening. She starts to come, her cries more urgent, like the sounds of torture. I hear the pris-

oner grunting. Johnny and I are staring in disbelief. We've both got woods but nothing like this guy. Gripped by spasms the prisoner ejaculates, big gobs of spunk leaking like ectoplasm over his legs and thighs. Enough to fill up four and twenty virgins. The spasms gradually cease, his dick begins to wilt, and he slumps against the metal sides of the wheelchair. He's given up. We've broken him. The girl is lying on her front now, two fingers in her vage, while another eases into her butt. I drain my whiskey. We switch the machine off and turn on the lights. The prisoner is weeping. I look at Johnny and he looks at me. I think we're onto something here, I say. Yeah, says Johnny, Yeah. He stands in front of the prisoner and starts to laugh. Hey Aktar, I yell, Clean this mother up and put him to bed.

We try the same routine on six or seven Holy Warriors and the results are outstanding. Each time we break them, reducing them to sticky sniveling wrecks. Project XXX is born. This is the heart of counter espionage. Johnny and I clean up. We put on our best uniforms after requesting an audience with His Highness the Colonel. We type a report. The Colonel is naturally skeptical, that's his job, but after witnessing our work in progress he becomes one of the converts. War's a dirty business, he says sipping the JJS, It's amazing what it reduces you too. This is why true warriors never discuss their work. Yes, Colonel, I say saluting. Johnny is standing rigidly to attention as only a long serving enlisted man can. The Colonel clears his throat, I'm very proud of you boys. You both realize that this could win us the war? We hope so, sir, I reply. He salutes us, I'll be recommending you both for medals. That is all gentlemen. We salute, turn, and march out of the office.

Events move fast, just in time. The rebels are massing for an attack. Intelligence reports come back of thousands of troops supported by tanks and artillery. Our bombers sally forth to engage the enemy, but this time they're not dropping bombs. Bombs have never done any good. No better than pissing on a wasps nest. Instead, the loaders stuff packages of hardcore porn into the bomb bays, *Hustler*, *Penthouse*, *Knave*, heavy duty unmarked Danish, Dutch, and Swedish magazines. Even a little child porn slipped in without the General's knowledge. He's got a political career to look forward to, and we don't want to get him into trouble. The planes take off saluted by the Senior Staff. The Air Force's finest mission since Hiroshima, every crew member a hero for the cause. We hear them receding into the distance. They unload their cargoes in front of the rebel lines and return after an hour with the loss of only one aircraft. The top brass watch the results through huge night glasses as the rebels emerge after dark to see what the white barbarians have dropped. Johnny and I are honored guests. The General offers us a flask of JJS. With bated breath we observe, hoping for the best. It's our last chance.

Within minutes, fighting breaks out. A mullah is trying to stop robed troops from looking at the material but the soldiers push him over and start to fight amongst themselves even though they stand amidst thousands of porn mags. Hundreds of mujahadeen pour out of the trenches wondering what is going on.

Could it be biological warfare? Have the white barbarians sent some drug that has made the Holy Ones go mad? Through the night glasses I see heaps of robes fighting for magazines. Shooting starts. From behind us I hear the moans and cries of a young girl. Phase Two of Project XXX. I turn round, pleasantly drunk from the whiskey. An enormous screen set up out of the rebels' artillery range. A young blonde lying on a bed, hips moving slightly, her manicured fingers slipping between her legs. Her breathing and the music of her ecstasy echo across the vast bleak plain. A halfhearted burst of rocket fire approaches the city, falling short of our lines. Then silence. For the first time in many years there is no shooting. No artillery duels, no sniper fire, no rockets. Nothing. Thousands of men on both sides are watching a young girl fingering herself. Peace has come.

In the following days, our onslaught continued. The war petered out. Night time became a vast blue movie show and the day was spent recovering. The mujahadeen began to drift away from the lines in their thousands. They camped around the city in the hope of porn. Copies of *Hustler* became a new currency. The mullahs were all put to death. Within a couple of years, Afghanistan was fast becoming the sex capital of Central Asia. A vast dusty Amsterdam visited by British tourists and Germans, run by ex-mujahadeen dressed in expensive suits, providing the best pot on earth, beautiful women, and a meritocratic hard-working society based on the dollar.

Johnny and I were decorated for our services to freedom and democracy. But the war was over, there was no-one left to torture. Life became increasingly dull. We began to drink too much. Then one day, sitting outside a cafe in Kabul, downtown ritzy Kabul, Johnny says, Hey, listen up. How about getting into the movies? Whaddya mean ya crazy fuck? I reply. No seriously, says Johnny, Seriously, S and M, snuff movies, you know. It's the next big thing here, they haven't got there yet but soon they will. We can corner the market if we're quick. I think about this for a while and then I say, Johnny m'boy you're a fucking genius, you know that? A fucking genius, Johnny Scotland.

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## *Tucked*

Robert D. Wenger

"Good evening, this is Wendy Knox your new Channel 5 news anchor."

Finally, all cameras are on me, Wendy thinks as she presents the evening report. She knows there are thousands of viewers tuned in and she can feel their eyes on her while she performs on her first night as the new evening news anchor.

She reminisces between stories, for years she's toiled as a reporter getting every crappy job her bosses could throw her way. Well, she took turns with every other

reporter but some of those reports on farm animals and howling blizzards were just too much and way below her abilities. She's tired of writing reports for other newscasters to present in front of the cameras.

"Hey Joe," the #1 cameraman whispers over his secure mike to cameraman #2.

"What," #2 cameraman, Joe, whispers back.

"How do ya think she's doin'?"

"OK, I guess. Does it really matter? All the marriages she's ruined. The execs. aren't going to dump her now."

"Yeah man, you know it."

The news runs on, finally finishing when Wendy gives her big smile to camera #1. "Goodnight everyone, have a great evening and tune in tomorrow."

"Hey Joe," camera #1 whispers.

"What now?" Joe responds as he glances at the other cameraman.

"Check out Wendy. When she went to the ladies room during the weather report, she tucked her skirt in her pantyhose."

"No way."

"Yeah, look through your lens."

Joe watches Wendy exit stage right and can see she does have her skirt tucked in. He watches her exposed rear end that all the viewers need to see.

I'm going to film the witch, Joe thinks. No one knows she dumped me to have those affairs that helped move her to the top. He starts filming just before she walks off stage. I wonder if that 10 seconds will be broadcast, he thinks.

I was wonderful, Wendy thinks. I need to get home and check the DVR to see just how wonderful I was. She hustles out of the studio, gets into her car and speeds home.

Wendy turns the key and enters her new spacious apartment. She tosses her purse and keys on the table and rushes into the living room to watch the recorded Channel 5 news.

"Just as I thought," she talks to her image on the TV. "I look and sound perfect."

She watches with a smile as she flawlessly recites her lines. Wendy eagerly waits for the newscast to end and the screen to show the Channel 5 logo and list all the newscasters names. Her's will be on top.

"What the\_\_\_\_\_?" she shouts.

There's a picture of her walking off stage with her skirt tucked into her pantyhose and her butt sticking out.

Wendy jumps up and looks behind her and\_\_\_\_\_. "Oh no," she says. There's her skirt still in her pantyhose. She thought it was a little breezy back there.

She starts to cry. "I've never been so humiliated," she sobs. Wait, she realizes that's camera #2. "That's Joe's camera. I'm going to kill that creep when I see him, if I can get up enough nerve to return to the station."

Why didn't anyone tell me? Why did they air that? Don't they like me?

# philosophy monthly

## *The Three Deaths and Re-Birth of the Philosopher*

Christopher Douglass

### *Dedication:*

This poem is dedicated to that 3 A.M. Socrates who unknowingly brain fucked me and infected me with impetus. Dedication was re-born and every-day is its birthday from now until death.

In Lodebar. The hollowest of towns. In The Echoes of Time A.D. (After Drunkenness). The philosopher, stricken with narcolepsy sleeps. He sleeps on bloated pride and hollow thoughts. He rests assured. Knowledge lives in his head. This is truth? He dreams reality through thinning ethanol scope. Playing the part of the court jester (this is nothing new). Unbeknownst. The gadfly, Socrates, had buzzed in. Landing on his third-eye shut. He had been there all along but would now make his presence felt. To prove the oracle wrong he had gone from town to town searching for one wiser but he had found none. This is truth? And now. He was here. Precisely on time for the wakes. He walked in with Aristophanes, Xenophon, and The End. Standing poised to administer death. Socrates began probing the philosopher on his knowledge of good, beauty, and virtue. As others. Resting assured. He responded in generic sleep speak. Aware. Socrates pushes the dagger. Deep. Xenophon and Aristophanes take note for the story's retelling. "Philosopher, I am sorry. You know nothing." Grimacing in sleep the Philosopher, "What!? How dare...". "The only true wisdom is knowing that you know nothing" The blade twists. "I am the wisest man alive". This is truth? At that the Philosopher dies. Transmigration occurs. He. Now a raging bull head with inherited sleep. All is red. He roars opening the finest bottled up anger shipped from the pits of dark. The neon streets have become an arena. The bull head Andabatae with visor down to cover eyes of sleep. The crowds bantering in boiling blood. "Kill him! Kill him! The gadfly a sheep primed for the slaughter. "How dare you! I am wisdom! I am knowledge! I fucked Athena! Ate out pussy until she came! Wisdom into my mouth swallowed up whole!! How Dare you! I am truth! I am Athens!! I am the

world!! So write your Apology now, dedicate it to me! Because I am the judge! I am the court! I am the hand that crams hemlock down your throat until you cease to be! Open wide!" The night stopped to stare. Some eyes averted. At what had become. He had become The Elephant Man. The drunken relative at the wedding. Like Waiting for Godot. He stood amongst them. Absurd. At this The Bull Head died. Transmigration occurs. He becomes a refugee inheriting sleep. Sleep running on anger shielding shame. Gone with the wind. The refugee, fleeing truth, ran familiar route. Through Anger. Through Shame. He broke the finish line in Despair. Sitting somewhere silhouetted. Unwilling to wake. He plays his first death on the TiVo of his mind hoping to see another truth. Death by truth. The most painful. Played a million. A billion. A trillion times. In slo-mo. Nothing changes. There is only one unchanging truth. Sullen. The winter of his discontent becomes an ice age. An eternity. The refugee still studies the moment. Excruciatingly transfixed. Becoming Giannatoni collecting all Socrates. Meditating on the words "You know nothing". Truth on a different route. Had arrived late but in time for the last wake. Even eternity has an end. At truths arrival the refugee dies. Content. The Philosopher is re-born. Awake now to the realization. Knowledge never lived in his head. It had merely inquired on the lease. But his mind was vacant. Now fertile. Re-born a virgin he birthed dedication. Dedication to knowledge. To its cultivation. Though he would never truly know anything, he would be content as Good Will Hunting for knowledge. Trapped in cellulose. Forever a student. I know nothing. This is truth.

*End Note:*

This poem is dedicated to that 3 A.M. Socrates who unknowingly brain fucked me and infected me with impetus. Dedication was re-born and every day is its birthday from now until death.

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*Aruncular*

G.A. Scheinoha

Not all that long ago an apple struck him in the head. They said he wasn't the same. "Soft as overripe fruit," came the whispers. Forgot he laid down a gravitational law. But they've been falling out of trees ever since. Claim to be his descendants. "Great gramps, don'tcha know me?"

"Missing links," he recants, the snap swivel of his own memory thin as a future bride. Though he's probably right. They wrap him more securely than an old truck tire swing to the trunk of their fervent maybes.

What's more likely is he's uncle to all your responsibilities, shoulders them like a fatherless child.

# Abortion, Eugenics, and the Line of Life

I looked up the word “eugenics” in the Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary.

**Eu•gen•ic:** relating to or fitted for the production of good offspring.

**Eu•gen•ics:** the science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human mating) of hereditary qualities of race or breed.

Okay, when I hear the word “eugenics,” I think of Hitler’s groups killing (after torturing, I forgot the torture part) what they deemed as “unfit” people. So when I find more up-to-date definitions, I red:

**Eu•gen•ics:** the study of or belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species or a human population, esp. by such means as discouraging reproduction by persons having genetic defects or presumed to have inheritable undesirable traits (**negative eugenics**) or encouraging reproduction by persons presumed to have inheritable desirable traits (**positive eugenics**).  
*From Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*

**Eu•gen•ics:** the study of hereditary improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding. ). *From the American Heritage Dictionary*

And Wikipedia will explain that “opponents argue that eugenics is immoral and is based on, or is itself, pseudoscience. Historically, eugenics has been used as a justification for coercive state-sponsored discrimination and human rights violations.” Wikipedia even goes on to explain Nazi eugenics programs working to show the purity of the German race, including sterilizing nearly half of a million people they deemed “unfit.” There are obviously many opponents to eugenics, considering it an immoral mindset and course of action to destroy some life because some people deem it not worthy of life.

When I hear the word “eugenics,” I think of people randomly making the decision that a life that is not perfect is not a life worth keeping alive. Hence the Nazi experiments that doctors claim were to understand why people have thee defects (though I’m sorry, I can’t see how any of the test they ever did helped them arrive at any positive conclusion about the status and any people who were mentally handicapped). The reason why I wanted to look all of this up was to confirm what I was thinking of when I heard the word “eugenics.”

The reason why is because of an article about British law (as well as American policy) about abortion. The article was by George F. Will, called “Eugenics By Abortion: Is perfection an entitlement?” at *the Washington Post* (Thursday, April 14, 2005; Page A27). Now in America, abortion laws do not have time restraints on when an abortion can be done (see my editorial “When Does Life Begin,” in the v149 issue of cc&d magazine on the web at <http://scars.tv/ccdissues/ccd149june05.htm> and in the sold out book Chaos Theory, on line at [---

12/07 v179 cc&d page 38](http://www.chaoticarts.org/chaos-theory2005book/chaos-theo-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

ry.htm); in Britain a woman can have an abortion after the 28<sup>th</sup> week (the time called “viability,” when it is assumed a fetus can live on its own outside the uterus) only if there is “a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.”

Okay, these are the laws in Britain. Fine. But an example was brought up, where a woman with a fetus in it's 28<sup>th</sup> week decided to have an abortion “because new techniques for detecting fetal abnormalities indicated that the child had a cleft lip and palate.”

A cleft lip and palate. That sounds like reason to abort a potential life.

In fact, a 28-year-old woman, born with a congenital defect of the jaw, wanted the court to consider a ruling against practices like this – because she leads a normal life and (in this case of the aborted fetus) should not have been aborted. In fact, her brother has Down Syndrome, and that involves varying degrees of retardation, and her brother is able to “enjoy life” as well. The courts refused to listen to this woman's complaints, and by refusing to do so (because nobody can define what is truly seriously handicapped), their refusal implies “that any abnormality can qualify as a serious handicap because seriousness is determined not by its impact on the disabled person's life chances but by the parents' reluctance to be inconvenienced by it.”

Now, while I'm all for having uber-babies, this is a scary thought. And even if a mother doesn't want to raise that child (you know, because it would be too much of a strain on the mother, I mean, the child), “there is a waiting list of families eager to adopt children with Down syndrome”.

Since this article was based on British law, they state that more fetuses diagnosed with Down Syndrome “are aborted than are allowed to be born. In America, more than 80 percent of the babies diagnosed prenatally with Down syndrome are aborted.” Granted, the American Association of People with Disabilities states that “disability is a natural part of the human experience,” but Darwin future breeders of uber-babies might not want to deal with a less-than-perfect child.

And that starts to get more and more frightening when you think about it. Not that I don't want uber-babies, but I don't know how good of an idea it is to decide that a fetus should come to term (and even be adopted by someone else to raise) because it would not be able to function perfectly in a modern society. I mean, this article explains a pregnant woman seeing videos of people with Down Syndrome were lethargic looking, saying the video “then proceeded to tell us that our child would never be able to read, write or count change.” But there *are* people with Down Syndrome that *can* function, including one boy cited in the *Washington Post* article who navigates the Washington subways to watch professional Basketball or Baseball games.

In the past, when children were born just two years after I was (people born in 1972), if they were born with Down Syndrome were born in era where there were television reports that said the children with Down Syndrome couldn't be



toilet-trained. In one case of a child born with Down Syndrome in 1972, the doctors asked the parents of this child if they intended to bring the child home.

What? A doctor asked *that* of a living child?

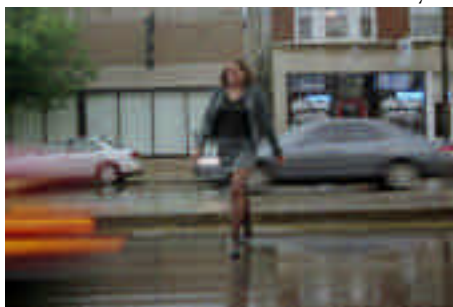
Well, things like that wouldn't happen now, but George Will called this new habit "today's "respectable" eugenics," that people actually consider as a viable option during a pregnancy. And the thing is, although science is wonderful that it can predict Spina Bifida or Down Syndrome in a fetus, science may not always have their diagnosis 100% correct. After listening to people talking on a Jerry Agar WLS radio talk show that discussed this topic (stemming from this article), people pointed out that false positives are possible in readouts like this, meaning parents could choose to abort a perfectly healthy future child that was misdiagnosed.

I don't know what your thoughts are on this subject, but one woman who talked on that same talk radio show even said something to the effect of... 'Not all people have the right to life for life's sake.'

So much for that whole notion of being endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, you know, life, liberty, blah blah blah...

I even remember seeing the movie *Gattica* from I-don't-know-how-many-years-ago (where Uma Thurman and Ethan Hawke, they were such a cute Indie couple, why did he have to go cheat on her...) where the notion was repeated throughout the movie that "some people are more equal than others" – which in this movie meant that you had the options to go to certain levels of work in life only if your genes were good enough. The movie was based in the future, in a not-real world, and when you watched the movie, you think that this kind of ideology couldn't actually exist. But when you hear a woman call into a talk radio show (I know they say insane things, but it's really good entertainment to hear what some people come up with) and say something like 'not all people have the right to life for life's sake,' you wonder if non-reality based movies like *Gattica* are really that far off from what people want or what people think is right.

Now, you can learn my take on abortion, but I also value life. And I know that from statistics, there are people that are on waiting lists to adopt children that a mother doesn't think they are capable of raising. So people have to ask themselves where a line should really be drawn on reasons for terminating a potential life.



*Janet Kuypers*®  
Janet Kuypers

*Photographed after her final feature performance at the Society of Professional Journalists convention at the Hyatt in Chicago 08/26/06, by John Yotko*



# children churches & daddies

the **UN**religious,  
**NON**family-oriented  
literary & art mag



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; Scars Internet Radio (SIR); TheBurning 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

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• **Children, Churches and Daddies** (ISSN 1068-5154) is published monthly by **Scars Publications and Design** Janet Kuypers.

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