

Issue 1, Summer 2003



"Ontology on the go!"

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Editorial

If the French Revolution had really succeeded, this month would be Thermidor, as renamed by the poet, Fabre d'Eglantine, in 1792, which then became the Year I. So let's call it August, but think of it as Thermidor.

I'm told that it's unwise to launch a new product in August, but despite that, I'm delighted to welcome you, dear readers, to Issue 1 of the Journal of the Lincoln Heights Literary Society. Our goal in launching this e-journal is to collect some of the best writing on and off the net. We hope to present poetry and essays that give readers a fresh, close look at the familiar and the new. This journal is for busy people who still have time to examine and think deeply about the world they live in. In every issue, we hope to cast a poet's eye on a wide range of subjects and bring them to you for your reading enjoyment.

We also wish you a very happy Thermidor, unless you are reading this after August 18, in which case we wish you a pleasant Fructidor. Too bad for Fabre d'Eglantine: he was guillotined, for some reason, on 16 Germinal Year II (5 April 1794). Adding insult to death, that killjoy Napoleon reintroduced the Gregorian calendar in 1806. And there you have it.

Ginger Mayerson
August 2003



Ellen Bauerle

Rowling in Dough

June, 2003: Recently the fifth book in JK Rowling's "Harry Potter" franchise was been released, after much fanfare by its publisher and much anticipation by its target market of young readers in roughly the 9-13 age group. Published in the UK by Bloomsbury and in the US by Scholastic Books, it had initial print runs on the order of 13 million copies total (according to Reuters on June 22), of which 8.5 million were in the United States. This figure excludes books in audio (tapes, CDs) and large-print format. It is not clear how many copies from those large runs were set aside for free, promotional distribution, although accounts about books being sold through online giant Amazon and delivered by Federal Express indicate that Fed Ex passed out roughly 1,000 copies free to hospitals and the like (e.g. an Associated Press article on 21 June 2003 – "Amazon Opens Floodgates for 'Harry Potter' Books"). If Bloomsbury or Scholastic distributed complimentary copies directly, no evidence of it has been made public in the last week.

The list price for *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (HP5) in the US is \$29.99, but most sales seem to have run in the range of \$17, or about a 40% discount from list price. In other words, bookstores are passing on to customers most of the discount they receive from the wholesalers or publisher. This makes it a bit harder for the bookstore to turn a profit.

Some people will buy their copies used, of course: ten days after the noisy initial release, Amazon was showing seven used copies for sale by auction, while eBay had dozens and dozens of copies of the title for sale in all formats. Such copies of course offer no royalties to the author nor revenue to the publisher or a bookseller.

The *Wall Street Journal* has reported (24 June, "Scholastic Takes No Chances with New Harry Potter Book") that Scholastic earmarked between \$3M and \$4M for publicity and marketing for the title – an unheard-of range in the publishing world.

All this expenditure is a good thing for the book industry, surely. Surely. Surely?

Let's do some arithmetic.

US print-run (8.5 million) times an estimated average discounted price (what the bookstore paid the distributor) of \$15: \$127.5M in revenue.

Estimated unit cost (based on size of book, production values, number printed, and my experience of unit costs for various kinds of books): \$0.30; so the production cost roughly equals \$0.30 x 8.5 million copies, or \$2,550,000; revenue minus estimated cost: \$124.95M. Now let's subtract that marketing budget (remember that's between three and four *million dollars*, for any of you publishing types who think you're seeing things):

\$124.95M - \$3.5M = \$121.45M in revenue.

From here out it gets really interesting.

Scholastic's chief executive, Richard Robinson, has reported (*WSJ*, 19 May, "Scholastic Takes No Chances With Harry Potter Book") that HP5 will contribute on the order of 5-6% of the company's annual income.

Online information shows that in 2001, Scholastic annual revenue was \$1,917M (<http://www.hoovers.com/annuals/3/0,2168,15533,00.html>). Five percent of this figure is \$95,850,000; six percent is \$115,020,000. (The BBC online news reports on July 1, by the way, that all the HPs together produce roughly 50% of Bloomsbury's annual revenue.)

Of that revenue adjusted for cost of goods sold, Rowling herself might get royalties on the order of 10%. Given her track record and sales clout she may well be doing quite a bit better, but a good author could reasonably expect a 10% royalty.

10% of \$121,450,000 is \$12.1M in royalties. Possibly she gets much more: US sales would of course count as foreign sales for a British author, and authors generally get quite a bit higher royalties on foreign sales – sometimes as much as 50%, depending on the tenacity of one's lawyers and the submissiveness of a press that probably does not want the Golden Goose to migrate to another pond. But let's say, for modesty's sake, that Ms. Rowling gets 20% on foreign sales. That would clock in at nearly \$25M in royalties.

And mind you, that's just her estimated take on one week's worth of US sales, on *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* alone – it doesn't include other foreign rights, or (apparently) audio and large-type editions. Further, her eponymous website lists sixty instances of foreign-rights or other rights sales, including editions in Japanese, Chinese, Bulgarian, Greek, Norwegian, Georgian, and Turkish, to name but a few. The BBC's extensive Harry Potter coverage mentions that there are forthcoming editions in 55 languages, to say nothing of the merchandising revenue. You could reasonably estimate print-runs of 100,000 per language (no doubt this is on the low side for larger countries like Spain, and probably a bit on the high side for the Icelandic and Thai editions).

Let's take a stab at revenue from these foreign sales:

100,000 copies x (let's estimate an international net price) USD\$8 x 55 countries x 20% royalties equals – a very rough \$8.8M in foreign revenue? Anyway, a barrel of money.

It's not a surprise that Ms. Rowling is doing very well out of these volumes, and clearly her publisher is doing pretty well also, but the scale of these numbers is somewhat staggering. One important question remains: how well is the rest of the book industry doing as a consequence of *Phoenix* sales?

The theory behind this question is the industry belief – the hope, really – that those who are in stores to buy *Phoenix* will buy other books, at least others in the “Harry Potter” series, and with luck some non-HP titles as well. From the booksellers' point of view, it doesn't especially matter if customers are buying other HP books or non-HP books – they're making some money either way. Plus, other HP titles likely benefit from all the HP5 hoopla, which means marketing costs for the other four titles are somewhat cheaper for booksellers.

The trickle-down sales theory is especially attractive these days because of the generally sorry state of the traditional book publishing industry. Recent years have not been good: paper and ink costs have risen, as have postage and freight; other forms of entertainment like DVDs have drawn off potential adult book buyers, and young children are curmudgeonly philistines who would rather watch *Rugrats* and *Sponge Bob Square Pants* than read the elegant likes of *A Christmas Carol* or *A Pilgrim's Progress*. Industry information sources like *Publishers Weekly* (USA) and www.thebookseller.com (UK) are consistently full of dire statistics and stories of job cuts and closings. Scholastic itself recently cut some 400 jobs from its staff, despite the likelihood of considerable revenue from HP5 (*WSJ*, 25 June, "Scholastic Looks for Spell to Steady its Share Price"). The publishing industry has been circling the iceberg for a number of years, and many have hoped that the publication of a new "Harry Potter" title would send the ship away into warmer, ice-free waters.

On the face of it, this seems a somewhat forlorn hope: kids, and kids' parents, who are swept up in the HP hype and are out book-buying at 12:01 on a Saturday morning – are these the likely market for a recent Booker Prize winner? are they likely to want a new biography of Benjamin Franklin, or the latest business-ethics tome? Well, maybe: but those titles are normally not marketed in the prominent sorts of store areas that are devoted to activities like popular HP traffic. And how about the titles that aren't new, or require a schlep to a distant aisle? Hmm, yet more doubtful.

In fact, a connection between HP and non-HP sales that is at best weakly beneficial has turned up in two ways. Soon after *Phoenix* appeared, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a very interesting series of charts that tracked sales of the previous four HP's: on their own, compared to other fiction, and compared to nonfiction (the charts apparently are in millions of copies sold). The results surprised me.

HP1 (*Sorcerer's Stone*) understandably had no effect, since it was a new title from a new author. No spike in other fiction or non-fiction sales here.

On publication of HP2 (*Chamber of Secrets*), sales of general fiction took a jump upward a week later, but only a very few HP copies were involved. Non-fiction showed a jump over the space of two weeks; the *WSJ* thought these spikes were a result of two non-HP books that were released at that time (one from newsman Tom Brokaw and one that was part of the "Hannibal Lecter" franchise). No helpful sales spike here.

When HP3 was published (*Prisoner of Azkaban*), HP1 and HP2 had sales that paralleled those of other fiction works – they rose and fell at pretty much the same time though they naturally sold in smaller quantity overall than the aggregate of all other books. But non-fiction sales actually fell on HP3's release: they rose again only when HP3 began to fall off in the third week after release. So a spike for other HP titles, but not for non-HP books.

At the release of HP4 (*Goblet of Fire*), sales for non-HP books were actually flat across the board. No spike here.

Now, on the fourth HP release, other HP sales rose quite a bit – and for bookstores, money made from Potter titles is as green as money made from *The Dummies Guide to Programming in C++*. However, other book publishers are of course not benefiting from Scholastic's good fortune. On the contrary, they're suffering – their books are losing ad and display space to Scholastic's line of titles, their sales are flat, and disproportionate review inches are being spent on wizard-related titles rather than their own.

So, out of four HP books released so far, "bounces" for other HP titles are clearly visible in only two of four cases, and for fiction titles that are non-HP in only one case. Nonfiction titles unrelated to Harry Potter seem not to have benefited at all, to date. This is not very encouraging, from an industry-wide point of view. But this is only part of the problem.

On the last day of June, in the shadow of HP5's release, the *New York Times* published an article regarding warehouse clubs and other non-traditional retail stores as a source of HP titles. Such stores – Costco, Walmart, etc. – are known for heavily discounting their merchandise, including but not limited to books. HP5 available at a standard bookstore for \$17 to \$30 might be available at a discounter for \$8 or \$10. It's hard to resist low prices and accessibility (i.e. one-stop shopping: light bulbs, eggs, and the latest best-seller), especially in the middle of a deep recession. For Harry's publisher, and for these stores, the good sales are a good thing. But enthusiastic sales at these stores do little for other publishing houses, because only a small segment of current titles are carried by outlets and so crossover sales can only be few at best. They do nothing for the chain bookstores against which the outlets are competing, and they especially hurt the independent bookstores, which generally get worse purchase terms from book publishers and distributors.

In short: the release of a new Harry Potter title benefits – the book's siblings, and its publishers and author. The visibility of other publishers is somewhat hurt, and their books are definitely hurt. But let's get back to the possibilities offered by the Potter titles' not-insubstantial revenue.

I have to confess that my biggest gripe about the HP phenomenon is not the barrels of money headed to Ms. Rowling, nor the grand slam that the Bloomsbury/Scholastic publicity machine is making in the media. What bothers me is that these books seem to be taking place largely outside of the book industry, with little benefit for it.

I don't see much mention of Ms. Rowling at the major North American book conferences. I don't see her mentioned at writers' workshops, or offering much support to new writers, either financial or inspirational. I don't see a Scholastic Press prize for best new children's author, or best new children's book. The pro bono side of the HP industry seems principally to involve readings for and visits to children (which is a very good thing), and some complimentary copies. One UK paper has said that Ms. Rowling generously donates her money anonymously – and that too would be a very good thing. I could wish that some of that huge financial clout was being put conspicuously to use inside an industry that's chronically poor and underfunded. Even the Harry Potter originating publisher could get in on it: the Bloomsbury prize for best new woman writer; the Bloomsbury prize for most imaginative children's work in English; etc.

OK, ok, it's her money – or the publishers' money – not mine, and she's written some 3000 pages to earn it. But there are other authors working hard also, who don't have these kinds of resources, as Ms. Rowling knows only too well. Wouldn't it be terrific to find another Rowling-in-the-making, in Bulgaria or Japan, in Georgia, in Greece, in Ohio, and provide him or her the funds to live on for two years while she or he learns the elements of the writing craft? Just think what other works are out there, being written in cafes while family or job duties tug at the sleeve. I'd like a chance to read those books, too.

Ellen Bauerle has worked in the publishing industry for almost 20 years, for trade, scholarly, and educational publishing houses. She is the publisher and director of Fatcat Press, www.fatcatpress.com. She is also the LHLS Business Editor.



Amy Qualls-McClure

Coffee for the Marrieds

By the time that Jessica tipped her chair back and yelled, "Rick! Make us some coffee!" we'd been sitting in our chairs for hours. Rick's snort, muffled by the wall between the dining room and the kitchen, was impossible to ignore, but in a few moments, our noses told the true end of the story. Capitulation, tonight, smelled distinctly like coffee made by one newlywed for another.

For the want of a sheep card, all – including sanity – was lost.

Our intent of playing a perfectly serious and thoughtful game of Settlers had been sidetracked by special reserve rum. We'd been scowling at the vagaries of probability in a particularly fiendish game through an increasing haze of Jamaican rum. Rick and Jessica had carefully transported the bottle back from its home island in an extra piece of honeymoon luggage specially designated for carrying alcohol.

We were making the most of it.

In a rum-fired moment of boldness, my frustration in once again not receiving the sheep card I needed caused me to answer the question "What cards do you get this time, Amy?" with the word "Nothing!", with the 'o' changed to the bleating of a sheep.

Jeff was relaxed in the loveseat in the next room, listening to the tale of the friend sitting next to him while giving me a wink. He wasn't certain of what I'd done, but the smile told me he knew that his spouse's inner prankster had just made her first appearance of the evening, if our friends' reaction could be judged.

We locked eyes for a moment across the room. I sent an answering smile and we both returned to our separate conversation circles. I dipped a finger into my rum and coke and traced the liquid around the rim of the highball glass, feeling it evaporate from slick wetness into an invisible, tacky line – and I wondered how I had gotten here, how I had managed to stumble into this life and make it my own, despite everything that perhaps shouldn't have allowed it to happen.

Marriage comes about for more reasons than love. Anyone who believes otherwise has either read too few or too many romance novels. Some marriages come about for convenience, familial linkage, wealth, protection of reputation, or the staving off of loneliness.

Sometimes they even work.

I have told a few of my friends that to my knowledge, I'm the only person in my family whose first engagement led to marriage. Both of my parents chose to call off engagements to their respective high school sweethearts because of the looming war in Vietnam. My parents chose to shield me from full knowledge of why my sister's engagement was called off a week before the

wedding date; only later did I learn that it was called off because my sister learned that her fiancé had been sleeping with her best friend's teenaged sister.

In the spring of 1996, shortly after my grandfather's stroke, I learned that there was another, entirely unexpected, generation to this story. My grandmother made a chance comment that sounded so strange that, as soon as she was out of earshot, I asked my mother and sister what she was referring to. What did my grandmother mean, I asked, when she had said that when she married my grandfather she did not love him, but that she 'later learned to love him'?

My sister looked at me in horror and said, "I thought you knew."

I admitted that I did not.

My mother replied, "When she was young, she eloped with someone." She interpreted my raised eyebrows correctly by answering, "I don't know who it was, but I have a guess. Her father – my grandfather – marched them to the courthouse and made them get an annulment."

What followed astonished me even more. Had she been pressured into marrying the man who became my grandfather? No one knew for certain, but my mother stated that most of our family believed it to be true. So why not do a little digging? "Why don't you go to the courthouse to look up the records to find out who it was?" I asked. "That sort of thing is in the public domain."

My mother gave me one of the steeliest stares I have ever seen from her. "My mother has asked me not to, but I have a guess of who it might have been. One of these days, after she's gone ... I will."

I looked at my grandmother differently after that. I had spent most of my life assuming – with reason, I might add – that there was nothing in this world that my grandmother could not make right, make bow to her will. By the time I knew her as my grandmother, she and my grandfather had raised four children, subsequently buried one, and had shown years of a united front through all his years as mayor of our town. Both of them had been supremely stubborn, with his slower-burning temper an equal to her quick-flaring one, but I had never, ever even imagined the idea that they might not have wanted to marry each other.

I had always assumed their partnership had been a happy one; had I been deceived? At the time, I was harboring suspicions that the shy blue-eyed boy from Alabama might be someone who would make me swerve from my determination to be the dotty spinster with fifty-three cats. My newfound knowledge of my grandparents, who had always been my gold standard of an excellent marriage, made me question my relationship with Jeff, as well as my own judgment. How could I know what marriage partner was right for me when I came from not one but two generations of people who never managed to get it right on the first try?

Jeff and I married two years later in what can only be described as a blazing flash of defiant innocence. Our proclamation of unity to our friends and families was accompanied by my fiercest, most stubborn, most proud smile. I had done it; I had managed what no one else in my family had managed before me.

I might not know what a storybook ending was, but I was determined to have one, even if it meant writing the entire book myself.

We spent the first year figuring each other out, learning how to slide around each other in the tiny apartment bathroom and splitting chores without killing each other. I loved my spouse as fiercely as I hated this new, unfriendly town, this redneck Alabama, where non-engineering jobs were scarce, Arkansas natives were scarcer, and the closest I'd managed to come to making a friend was the spacey New Ager in the upstairs apartment who spent the entire nine months of her pregnancy playing Peter Gabriel CDs to her unborn son.

I would rather have walked on nails than admitted defeat to my family, but the truth was that my determination to make this marriage succeed was only superseded by my complete lack of understanding of how to create a successful marriage. I asked myself how in the world I was supposed to know how to create a lasting marriage when my paternal grandparents' marriage ended in his suicide, my maternal grandparents' marriage wasn't their choice, my parents were more married to their workplaces than each other, and my sister's first marriage ended in divorce after just a few years? How dare I be so presumptuous that I would succeed where they failed?

After the first year, I gave up trying to be the model wife, because it was obvious that I was terrible at it. Out of sheer desperation, I resumed as much of my independence as I could in a city and state I barely knew. I resumed knitting; my passion for art movies, odd books, and obscure tennis players; and my penchant for solo road trips.

I began to realize I might be on to something when I made my first plans to take a solo birthday trip Washington D.C. to visit an old friend. When I told Jeff, his reaction was a smile and a request to let him know when I'd need to be picked up at the airport. When I called my mother to tell her of the trip, she was scandalized. "How could you go on a trip *by yourself*?" she asked, horrified. "Are you going off to have an ... affair?"

My denial was filled with merriment, but her reply left me confused: "But why would you want to go by yourself? You're married. You're supposed to be *together*."

"Because I need time by myself," I said.

I didn't bother to explain the idea that had been slowly gaining credence in my mind: that Jeff had come to love a woman who, despite a massive case of teenage shyness, had decided to see the world and follow her own interests even if those interests were not shared. I'd begun to suspect that my dissatisfaction with married life had more to do with my attempts to shoehorn my own restless personality into my parents' ideal of what my 'respectable' marriage should be.

She didn't approve. I made sure to send her a postcard from D.C. She got over it.

By the time the coffee finished brewing, our geekboys were firmly settled on Rick and Jessica's couch and loveseat, talking engineering shop and marveling at the speed of the mercurial chatter

coming from the dining room and kitchen. We lined up in the kitchen, Jessica, Kat, Ashley, and I, making our coffee and talking about our plans for the rest of the year. We had congregated by sex, for reasons unknown to any of us, despite the fact that our friendships crossed both marriage and gender boundaries.

I made a comment about going out West this summer to see two friends. They asked if Jeff was going with me, and I said that he probably wasn't. Those who hadn't known me long were surprised. Those who had known me longer merely nodded and asked where I was off to this time.

The next morning, I relayed to Jeff the news that a friend of ours, Will, had just made plans to put his belongings into storage to pursue a lifelong dream of competitive sailing in Australia. Jeff asked what Will planned to do once the race was over.

"Get an apartment. Travel a bit. See that part of the world. I'm not sure he knows." I shrugged.

"I don't think I could do that. It's not my nature." He looked over at me and smiled. "But it was always yours."

I nodded. It had taken me a long time to accept that Jeff had always understood me a bit better than I've ever understood myself; understood that my occasional need to take wing is always followed by the need to come home; understood that asking me to live my parents' marriage would kill the very independence that endeared me to him all those years ago.

I'll send my mother a postcard from Arizona.

More of Amy Qualls-McClure's writing can be found at www.domesticat.net



Geoff Fernald

Dual Emergence

It is late in Beethoven's Ninth.
His prelude to the finale.
The ode to joy has come and
gone in the fourth movement trapping us in
these Lieder von der erde, songs of the earth.
We, Beethoven and I, both driven, are about to emerge,
nearing the California coast on a small two lane.
Four passengers at one with the music rising
as the final notes are struck. Our driver,
hands waving the notes to fruition,
rounds the curve to seeing.
The coastline bursts upon us, sunlit at last,
resplendent in sea wave's jeweled
crescendos; water and earth,
symphonic ululation in one sound
in one chord,
one

Cambria coast
November 2002

Geoff Fernald's has been writing poetry for 40 years. He works as an engineer and lives in the Los Angeles area: He is published in a collection called "Seven on a Monday". Please contact the LHLS poetry editor for more information on that volume.



Jane Seaton

Sermitorial

The Anglican church in the UK, if not worldwide, is reportedly about to be riven by the decision of the Bishop of Oxford to appoint an avowed homosexual to be the Bishop of Reading.

Never mind that Jeffrey John is no longer a practising homosexual. He remains in a long term, celibate relationship with his partner of 27 years, and that is apparently too much for a huge majority of Anglicans worldwide to reconcile with the will of God as revealed in the Bible.

A God who interacts with his people by revelation has a big problem. Shared revelation is a historical event. Whatever form it takes, it is fixed at a moment in time, and in a particular form, by the manner in which the faithful agree that it happened, and record it for the edification of their successors.

Individual revelation can be shaped to a single person's circumstances and understanding, but it can also be dismissed by the whole body as false, or at least mistaken.

A careful God, one assumes, takes this into account when he reveals anything about himself to the masses. And indeed, the Bible reveals a God who becomes more careful in his revelations as time moves on. His actions become more radical. He appears to move from vengeful tribal totem, ten a penny in anthropological studies of earlier human societies, to vulnerable incarnation as a serving, self-sacrificing deity. Simultaneously, he becomes less didactic. Jesus does not condemn foreign occupiers, sexual deviants or abusers of public office, and is sparing in his calls for retribution against individual sinners. At most, he challenges them to 'sin no more', and on occasion, inspires them to go to extraordinary lengths in compensating their victims.

Jeffrey John is a man who has chosen to 'sin no more', sexually. No question of compensation arises, because there is no victim in this case, apart from the tender sensibilities of his co-religionists. He has addressed those sensibilities by giving more details of his sex life than most bishops choose to reveal, but on the other hand, he hasn't quite admitted that he might have 'sinned before'.

He shocked my mother when, as her protestant parish priest, not at the time avowedly homosexual, he was rumoured to be sacking the closets of the local Roman Catholic churches and offering a home to their redundant statuary. I can't help seeing this surprising behaviour (the church was respectably bare of religious imagery in my earlier memories of the building) as calling believers' attention to images of a vulnerable God. Statues of Mary, of the infant Christ, of Christ crucified, celebrate a God who is nurtured, and tortured, by men and women. This is a God who has allowed his people through his divine guard.

What is a believer to do, when past, corporate revelation declares that their God is out of step with their own moral judgements? This is the big problem faced by Christians who cannot bring themselves to reject Jeffrey John on account of his sexuality, or his openness about it.

There are compromises on offer. We can say that a homosexual who sins no more should be as eligible for a bishop's crook as anyone else. Or we can re-interpret revelation for our own age,

and protest that the way God was understood *then* cannot be applied literally *now*. . We can believe that the Bible was written by a people who couldn't conceive of the choices Jeffrey John has made, and that we must re-interpret it in the light of our current knowledge.

Alternatively, we can accept the authority of the church, as expressed through current majority opinion. Any action that implies acceptance of homosexual behaviour is a compromise with sin, and therefore an open defiance of God's will. No matter that your heart cries, 'this doesn't look like sin to me', it's really not up to the Christian in the pew (or the bishop in his palace) to quibble when God has clearly spoken.

John's own personal revelation, through prayer, through God's blessing on his pastoral work (importing second hand Roman Catholic statuary into his church didn't stop him doubling the congregation), confirms him in his belief that he should accept this promotion.

I have my own personal revelation. I do not experience of God as arbitrary and cruel even if that is way the Bible cheerfully depicts him at times. Giving a particular sexual orientation to a significant proportion of your people, along with the usual strong impulses to express that orientation, then creating a society that offers no honourable route for such expression, and allowing your church, your Body, to condemn and abhor the taint of their sexuality in all that those people do, would be judged arbitrary and cruel if, for example, God was to apply the same logic to skin colour. Or gender. In the last fifty years or so.

If we can't honestly compromise or acquiesce, we must do neither.

It's risky to challenge God, of course. Believers have been smitten with plague for simply criticising his catering arrangements. Look at Numbers chapter 11. If our God is arbitrary and cruel, if he's capable of some of the behaviours revealed in the Bible, we'd be well advised to keep condemning homosexuals.

But if our God is vulnerable, if he has chosen to let us through his guard, we can risk appealing his decisions, and asking him to renew our shared revelation. The form of that revelation may be his blessing on the work of homosexual bishops. Perhaps the Anglican church needs to be vulnerable to God's revelation through Jeffrey John.

After this was written:

On 6 July, the Dean of Southwark, Colin Slee, made the surprise announcement that Southwark Cathedral's Canon Theologian Jeffrey John had announced his intention to withdraw from his nomination as Bishop of Reading. Slee said also: "In the peace marches earlier this year the slogan 'Not in my name' was used to great effect. Let me say very clearly that this action is certainly not in my name and I am bound to say I find it very hard to see how it can conceivably be seen to be in God's name."

Jane Seaton is a 46 year old English lay preacher and Chartered Accountant. She is the Religion Editor for the Journal of the Lincoln Heights Literary Society.



Robert Dean Tribble

Haiku Reflections From a Hospital Bed

The nurse, an angel
In robe of white brings a pill
Filled with summer days.

The leg stripped of veins
Mourns loss of mobility,
Bounce of July grass

Faces filled with love
Shine down, like April showers
Nourish aching heart.

When nurse lifts blanket
For cleansing of bare torso,
November gales blow.

Song of mocking bird
Green grass on hills from windows
O joy! Home at last!



Carol Colin

What I See

In a recent interview, the Indian writer Arundhati Roy talked about the search for joy in the context of our war-torn and politically dangerous world. She said, "The notion of happiness that is sold to us is so false. For me, there will never be a world where I can't find something to smile about — just the quality of the light on a river... (They) can't take that away."

Sight has always been my most reassuring sense. Often pleased more by what I see than by what comes in via the other senses, I keep a catalog of visual memories that show where I've been and what matters.

My earliest visual memory, going back to when I was barely three, is of little round bushes lining a cement front-yard walk. It's dusk, my father carries me and, looking back over his shoulder, I have a view of the two receding rows of topiary.

I see morning sunlight slanting across the hardwood floor in our living room, the honey color of waxed boards next to the deep red hearth tiles. The fireplace is red brick with a blond wood mantel, and the wall beside it is Hunter green. I have a puzzle in the same dark colors, big red and green pieces that make a picture of an elephant. The puzzle pieces are scattered on the yellow floor.

One night at supper I start seeing double, sitting at the table seeing two of each parent, two of my dad holding up two forks in his two right hands, testing. Everything I look at twins itself like the picture on a bad TV. After a visit to the eye doctor, we go to lunch. Eye drops blur my vision so that faces are fuzzy, the waterfront view rubbed out of focus.

With glasses, I learn to read. Mom buys me a book every week, and the illustrations are what pull me in. In one, a little girl and her mother walk to the grocer's to buy ingredients for a cake. At the store, there's a pyramid of oranges, another of stacked canned goods with red and white labels. The plain chocolate cake in the last picture is perfect. Everything in those pictures seems perfect.

My father's mother collects clear glass decanters that she fills with colored water and displays on shelves in her kitchen windows. I sit on a chair and pretend to be in church. My other grandmother and I search for agates at the beach. We hold them up to the sun to find the best ones. She wears an elongated oval agate ring.

When winter sets in, the dirt freezes and shrinks away from the edges of small stones in the driveway, leaving a dark trench of shadow around each one. After rain, tiny orange mushroom cups spring up on the same stones. When we leave home there are things that I look for from the car. There is an exotic green neon parrot sign outside a restaurant, and a giant bottle of milk on a dairy building roof. On the way to town, an impressive pile of cemented rocks marks the edge of

a pasture. On another route is a chicken farm, hundreds of white chickens covering the ground in nervous bunches, outbuildings jutting up among them like islands.

There are other images. Huge round gas storage tanks stand beside the tide flats, silhouetted and partly skeletal against the sky. Their walls mysteriously change height from one sighting to the next. Nearby, floating logs bound for processing at the paper mill cover vast areas of the water's surface, looking like a floor until a swell opens treacherous cracks between them. Here's a strange one, hallucinated, but a picture just the same: Colored lines dancing in electric peaks and valleys back and forth across a black background, like the image on a hospital room vital signs monitor. I am in a hospital, but I see this behind my eyes, anesthetized so doctors can remove a salmon bone I swallowed that stuck in a tonsil.

This visual influence helps me become a painter. Favorite works of art are part of my mental catalog now: Donatello's bronze Mary Magdalene in the Baptistery in Florence; fluid portraits by Alice Neel; Max Beckmann's dark self-portrait in a tuxedo; Matisse's painted garden party called *Tea*. I think of Bonnard's women, edging in and out of his compositions. He painted them from memory, a miracle of hand-mind's-eye coordination. I occasionally paint from memory. One of those pictures is of a clock that looks like a fireplace. The clock belongs to my aunt and uncle and I focus on it when I wake up one night on their couch, where my parents left me to sleep over. The fireplace-clock glows in the dark room; the fire in it is electrically lit from behind and I watch it for a while before starting to cry.

Tonight I watch a shadow play based on a primitive creation myth. The opening images present the universe as a sphere supported by two hands. The sphere grows and grows until darkness swallows the room, and in the following instant, the space overhead is a rotating canopy of stars. The artificial stars shake a little as they turn in this hand-held universe. It's worth remembering. It makes me smile.

Carol Colin is a painter and poet. In 1992, she was a featured poet in the Los Angeles Poetry Festival, and was co-director of Los Angeles' Arroyo Arts Collective's first "Poetry In The Windows" project in 1995. In 1997, she was one of the winning poets in the same competition. In 2002, she contributed a poem for the first issue of "Square Lake", a literary journal published in Seattle, www.squarelake.com. Her work in all media can be seen at: http://www.orangessardines.com/Carol_Colin.html



Robert Dean Tribble

On First Seeing My Garden After a Month in The Hospital

Out of the house into the garden I go I stop, stunned.
The beauty implodes my breath. I had not known
How green intoxicates or how far the gaze can travel
When grass flows from lawn on to the hills beyond.

Flowers whose names would dizzy a botanist
Flash rainbows around me. Thirstily my eyes
Drink of them and I am afloat on perfume
Of jasmine and orange blossom.
The mocking bird, perched on the soaring walnut,
Pours forth his plagiarized melodies.
And a red-throated humming bird
Dares me follow him into the sky.

That I might not have lived to see this shudders me.
The very glory of living lies before me. I nod my head
To tree, bush, and flower in grateful salute.

Robert Dean Tribble lives in the Los Angeles area.



Kathleen E. Rodgers, Ph.D.

HIV IS CURED! Fact or Fiction?

An HIV primer for the curious, cautious and sexually active

While it is rumored that there are no longer any consequences to HIV infection, e.g. AIDS is "cured", this is by no means accurate. Accepting a rumor as fact because it condones behavior an individual prefers, while it is common and understandable, can be deadly in this instance. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that, once it destroys the parts of your immune system it infects, results in Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The blood test used to follow the destruction of this portion of your immune system is CD4+ T cell count. The treatments for HIV are drugs that block the ability of the virus to make new viruses. Difficulties involved with the treatment of AIDS, as with every virus, are that a virus uses your own cells to make new copies of itself and has the propensity to mutate, change its character, rapidly. The first difficulty means that most treatments have the possibility of substantial side effects. The second difficulty makes the development of a vaccine tricky and can make therapies rapidly obsolete as the virus can develop resistance to the therapy.

Obviously, the best means to prevent HIV infection/AIDS is to not contract the virus in the first instance. Maximizing this involves making choices to reduce viral exposure. It is obvious that a sexual transmission of HIV cannot occur in the context of abstinence, or of a monogamous sexual relationship between partners that are virus free. Any sexual activity outside of this context increases the risk of HIV infection. As the number of partners increases, the risk of infection increases. The use of barriers, e.g. condoms (male or female), again reduces the risk of infection, but this method is not fail safe. This is evidenced by the fact that pregnancy can occur at a measurable rate (2%) with the use of condoms alone as a method to prevent conception. This can occur either due to improper use of the prophylactic or failure of the condom material, due to aging, use in a situation it was not developed for or in the presence of incompatible lubricants (petroleum based). By far, the highest risk of transmission occurs when an individual makes a choice to have sexual contact with multiple partners in the absence of barriers to viral transmission. A meta analysis (a statistical method bringing together several studies conducted in a similar manner) of several studies of HIV transmission found that condom efficacy was 69% overall (Weller et al., 1993).

Approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year in the United States (CDC, 2001a). Approximately 70% are among men, 75% of which are infection through sexual contact (60% homosexual sex, 15% heterosexual sex) (CDC, 2001b). The infection of woman in the United States (remaining 30%), 75% are also due to sexual contact of the newly infected people, approximately half are under 25 years of age.

The sexual transmission of HIV occurs through the sharing of bodily fluids, including blood, pus, semen, vaginal secretions, human milk, and cerebral spinal fluid. Sexual intercourse, whether homosexual or heterosexual, allows transmission from an infected partner. Further, any sexual activity that stretches the anus, tears the mucosal lining and allows transmission, even in the absence of trauma (Nelson et al., 1988), and any sexual encounter that involves bleeding increases the risk. Thus anal intercourse is the most efficient means of HIV transmission

(Osmond 1998; Moss et al., 1987; Winkelstein et al., 1987; Kingsley et al., 1987). Although the receptive partner in anal and vaginal intercourse is at the highest risk, infection has been reported among men during heterosexual intercourse and persons reporting only fellatio (Lifson et al., 1990; Detels et al., 1989; Rozenbaum et al., 1988). In theory, there is risk, more to the receptive partner, of viral transmission during fellatio. HIV is present in semen and can enter the body through sores within the gastrointestinal tract (e.g. sores in the mouth, bleeding gums, etc.).

Co-infection with other sexually transmitted diseases has also been associated with an increased risk of HIV infection (Cameron et al., 1989; Greenblat et al., 1988; Plummer et al., 1991; Grosskurth et al., 1995). The increased susceptibility to viral transmission may be due to genital sores, increased viral load in the infected partner or by increasing the number of target cells in the genital tract. Therefore, control of STDs other than HIV are also important in the reduction of risk of HIV transmission.

Once HIV is contracted, drug therapies designed to control viral replication will be initiated. The treatment regimen will be determined after tests to assess your health and viral status, and your doctor may decide not to initiate treatment right away so as to avoid side effects due to the drug and the development of drug resistance by the virus. These concerns need to be balanced with the fact that earlier treatment may assist in the control of viral load. If this virus was curable by current therapies, then early treatment initiation would be of obvious benefit, but it must be emphasized that current therapies do not cure an HIV infection and have substantial toxicities associated with use.

There are three classes of drugs to treat retroviral infection (HIV is a retrovirus), including reverse transcription inhibitors (either nucleoside/nucleotide or non nucleoside based) or protease inhibitors (DHHS, 2002). Currently, the recommended therapy combines three or more drugs to achieve an optimal effect. The advent of these regimes (HAART or triple therapy) has dramatically decreased the rates of AIDS related morbidity or mortality. In fact, it can reduce the amount of virus in the blood to nearly undetectable levels. However, the virus will still be hiding in the body and can replicate again and be transmitted through unprotected sex. If fewer drugs are used, the effects on viral load are generally only short term. However, every available anti-HIV drug class has been associated with a major toxic effect that can, while prolonging survival, significantly compromise the patient's quality of life (Powderly, 2002).

There are negative side effects that can result from taking drugs to reduce viral load. As stated above, this is difficult to avoid as viruses use our own cells to make new viruses. Side effects noted most often with drugs used to treat HIV infection include liver damage, diabetes, fat maldistribution, high cholesterol, neuropathy (painful nerve damage), myopathy (muscle damage), decreased bone density, blood disorders, and skin rash (Walker et al., 2002; McComsey, 2002). Protease inhibitors can cause nausea, diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms. Once infection occurs, these drugs must be continued for life to control viral load, so the younger a person is, the more likely it is that adverse events, some life threatening and most acting to diminish quality of life, will occur. However, the longer a drug is taken, the more likely the risk of viral resistance. Once this occurs, viral load will increase until a new drug regimen is instituted, if available, to treat the virus.

Even these powerful drugs cannot suppress the virus indefinitely. Firstly, adherence to the treatment regimen is crucial to suppression of viral load and to avoid development of drug resistance by the virus. Symptoms and side effects occur in 29-36% of patients within 14-19 months after initiation of HAART. Patients on these therapies have a tendency to not adhere to therapeutic regimens when side effects occur (Ammassari et al., 2001). With non-compliance, the risk of treatment failure increases because viral replication is no longer under the control of the drug.

In summary, the advent of highly effective therapies has not "cured" AIDS. There are selected cases showing reduced viral levels in the blood, but the virus can hide in organs other than the blood and can re-express when therapy is stopped. The current drugs also have significant side effects that may replace opportunistic infections as the lead morbidity/mortality associated with HIV infection. As a result, avoidance of infection through modification of personal choices and behaviors is still important for a prolonged, high quality, HIV-free life.

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Ginger Mayerson and Laurel Sutton

An Interview with Dan Savage

"Savage Love" Columnist and Editor of "The Stranger", Dan Savage very kindly gave editors Mayerson and Sutton the interview below in late June 2003. In addition to editing and writing in a weekly paper, Savage has these books available at Amazon: "Skipping Towards Gomorrah: The Seven Deadly Sins and the Pursuit of Happiness in America", "The Kid: What Happened After My Boyfriend and I Decided to Go Get Pregnant: An Adoption Story", "Savage Love: Straight Answers from America's Most Popular Sex Columnist".

Background

Laurel Sutton: What columnists do you read?

Dan Savage: I read mostly political columnists. I like Andrew Sullivan, Katha Pollit, and Paul Krugman. Florence King's column in national review was terrific, but she has, sadly, stopped writing it. In my own field, I really think that Dear Prudence is the only (other) really good advice column out there.

Ginger Mayerson: What were you doing before you became a sex advice columnist?

DS: Working in a video store in Madison, Wisconsin, drinking too much, eating way too many Plaza Burgers.

LS: Can you tell the real letters from the fake ones? How? What percentage of your mail is fake?

DS: The fakes are pretty easy to spot, for the most part. People send me lots of letters about bizarre sex practices – mudslides, donkey-punching – that no one has ever actually engaged in. Those get trashed right away. But even if some creative person does get a fake into the column, so what? it doesn't really make any difference to the people reading the column. Only one person knows if the letter was real, and that's the person who sent it to me. Everyone else reading the column... real, fake. They just want to enjoy someone else's problem, someone else's misery, and have a laugh.

LS: What comix do you currently read?

DS: Uh... none, sad to say. The ones in *The Stranger*. I love, love, love Lloyd Dangle's *Troubletown*. That's the comic I worship, actually. And I love *Boondocks* and (believe it or not) *For Better or Worse*. Don't really read alt comics or comic books or graphic novels. Went through my *Maus* phase like everyone else, now... I like my words sans graphics, for the most part.

LS: Are there plans for any more *Savage Love* comix? (There were only two, the last one was published in 1994.) How did that project happen? Was it fun?

DS: No plans for more savlove comics. Those comics happened when Jame Sturm, *The Stranger's* first art director, asked me if I wanted to do a comic. It was fun...

LS: What TV do you watch with your kid, if any? How will (or how do) you deal with your kid's access to the Internet?

DS: We watch videos of his choosing twice a week in the evenings, and on Saturday and Sunday he gets to watch cartoons. He's only five, so there's no "access to the internet" issues to deal with – yet.

LS: Would you appear on *Crossing Over*, if they asked you?

DS: No way. The show about talking to dead people? The only dead people I really want to talk to after they're dead are people who, uh, aren't dead yet but I wish they were, if you know what I'm saying.

Culture

LS: Why does everyone have a blog?

DS: I don't have one. Not everyone has succumbed to the temptation to fly filterless through the media universe. Some are terrific – Andrew Sullivan's, Eric Alterman's – but most are about as interesting as an overheard cell-phone conversation.

GM: Do you have any insight into why straight women *Oz* fans (the ones I know say they're straight) are so into prison rape and male on male sexual and other brutality?

DS: Vicarious thrills? Seeing big, bad men – who, consciously or subconsciously, women fear on some level as all potential rapists themselves – enjoy seeing men, good looking men, live with the same constant fear of sexual violence that they have, albeit (hopefully) to much lesser degrees.

GM: Are you in favor of gay marriage, and if so or not, why are you in or not in favor of it?

DS: I'm all for it. People should be able to marry the person they've fallen in love with, period. If we can't, well, that's discriminatory, period. A gay relationship is not lesser than a straight relationship, and gay relationships should have all the same possibilities that straights ones do – which means, of course, that you're free to get married, if you so choose, or not get married, if you think marriage is a bullshit institution.

Sex – safe and otherwise

GM: You have said in the column that the conditions that fostered the AIDS crisis in the early 1980s are replicating again. If the HIV and STD numbers are going up (140% increase in syphilis in NYC gay men, I think I read in your column), then, I assume, people are not

practicing safe sex. After all the horror of the 80s and 90s why aren't they? How can this be headed off?

DS: Well, we can start telling gay men that they don't exist in an alternate moral universe, where anything that a gay man wants to do in the sack, however self- or other-destructive, is his right.

GM: In reading your column, you give much needed level headed advice to, well, everyone who writes to you. What is it in our society that causes people to ask you, instead of someone else, face to face? I mean, what did people do before they could write to *Savage Love* and how/why was it a different world before *Savage Love*? If you were growing up gay now, would it be any different?

DS: Well, not all people with problems write to *Savage Love*. Some people still ask their friends, parents, siblings, and, god help them, their clergy for advice. Some folks go to shrinks. People still do everything they did before advice columns came along – it's not like me and Abbey and Prudence have cornered the advice market.

But people ask us a question for lots of reasons. To see it in print, to get a thrill, to get the POV of a disinterested third party, because they're too embarrassed or ashamed to ask someone face-to-face...

Politics

GM: What's with this right-ward shift in American politics? I mean, what's a Neanderthal (no offense to Neanderthals) like Rick Santorum doing in the Senate? I mean, somebody actually elected that nutcase; what can they have been thinking?

DS: Well, if we had Democrats who would run against Republicans with the same vigor and venom that republicans run against democrats we wouldn't be in this fix. And the reason there's a lot of assholes like Santorum in the Senate is because there are a lot of assholes in the United States, particularly PA.

Remember: Canada got the French and the monarchy, we got the Puritans and the religious nutjobs. Hardly seems fair – and it distorts our politics to this day.

GM: You decided to be against the US/UK invasion of Iraq because GW Bush had failed to make the case for invading. No one with any real power listened to the few people who could foresee what a nightmare it would become, mainly for Iraqis, and that "our guys" still have yet to find any biological or nuclear weapons. Do you have any ideas on how this post-war situation, is going to play out here in the US?

DS: Well, I think it's criminal that the same lefties who were out carrying around huge, blown-up photos of innocent Iraqis before the war aren't out in the street carrying those pictures today. The reason they're not, of course, is because if you really cared about innocent Iraqis, as you claimed, you would be out there now demonstrating for more troops on the ground in Iraq – that's what "innocent" Iraqis need most now. Stability, security. Like everything else, Bush is

trying to do this on the cheap, and it's going to explode in our faces. It already is, frankly, costing US and Iraqi lives. And the silence of the left now only proves that the left, with all its photos of innocent Iraqis, didn't care any more for those innocent Iraqis than they accused George Bush of caring. The left is, it appears, content to watch innocent Iraqis die, if it will hurt George Bush politically.

GM: Does the fact that the peace movement brought together and mobilized millions of people worldwide and did exactly zip in terms of stopping the invasion of Iraq give you hope or despair or just annoy you?

DS: You mean those "focus groups" the President dismissed? Well, I had a problem with those focus groups too. If there's one thing the Left is these days – from the Dems in the Senate on down to the lefties in the streets – it's ineffective. Wildly so. So I wasn't surprised that it had no impact.

GM: Do you have any idea what GW Bush's appeal is?

DS: A stupid President for a stupid people.

GM: What do you feel is the biggest danger facing the people of the US right now and what can be done about it?

DS: Four more years of George W. Bush is the biggest danger we face. All we can do about it is work to defeat him, and never again allow ourselves the fatal indulgence of, say, another Ralph Nader. If anyone would like to argue now that there's no difference between the Dems and the Repubs – no difference between, say, Al Gore and George W. Bush – well, I've got some drilling rights in ANWR I'd like to sell 'em. No, wait, actually I'd like to punch 'em in the head. That's what I'd really like to do.

The next election

LS: Before the next election, what personal freedom will the Bush administration try to take away next? Is John Ashcroft really Caligula?

DS: Ashcroft is a boob. Let's not get hysterical. He's bad, but he's not going to be AG forever. If we get involved, we can undo the damage Ashcroft, Bush, et al. have done to our democracy. For a list of freedoms the bushies would like to take away, see Patriot Act II.

GM: What issues do you think will be crucial in the 2004 Presidential election? What issues do you think *should* be crucial in the 2004 Presidential election?

DS: I have no idea, frankly. It all depends on what's going down in Iraq next summer, and whether or not there's another terrorist attack on American soil before the next election, and if there is, whether the American people rally around Bush in the wake of the next attack or blame him for not preventing the next attack.

GM: Who would you like to see get the Democratic nomination and why is that?

DS: I'm for Howard Dean – because he's got balls, and he's not afraid of the right-wing attack machine. He knows that you can't play nice with the right, so you might as well go for it and play mean.

The last question

GM: Thank you, Mr. Savage. One last question: Do you still want to cum all over Ashton Kutcher's face (that's what I'd do) or is there someone new?

DS: I never said I wanted to come all over Ashton Kutcher's face. I said I wanted to watch Brad Pitt come all over Ashton Kutcher's face – with Ashton tied to a chair, gagged with Jennifer Aniston's panties, and Jennifer herself videotaping the whole thing. That would be nice, wouldn't it?

Ginger Mayerson is a Los Angeles based composer and author. Laurel Sutton is a Bay Area branding and naming entrepreneur. They are both editors for the Journal of the Lincoln Heights Literary Society.



Mick Harrigan

The Santa Anas

It is just air moving,
But this wind is insane.
It howls.
It screams.
It blows the mountains into the sea.
It pushes disorder into our ordered world.
This wind blows the leaves to confetti in the road.
This wind tips over trucks like tumbling dice.

Crossing the street into the wind is like climbing nine flights of stairs.
Crossing back is like a kid's let go balloon.
You are past where you want to be before you get there.
It flings patio furniture into the neighbor's pool.
One year the lawn was covered with hundreds of oranges.

Many are people stirred up by the Santa Anas.
A person's emotions are disturbed as a tree's branches whip and dance.
My daughter hates this wind.
It makes her very anxious.
She doesn't like to have her soul pulled from her body.

I love this wind; I need to let it blow
Through my bones and through my soul.
The harder the wind blows, the tighter
My soul clings to me.
And I am alive, invigorated, inspired.

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Mick Harrigan lives in the Los Angeles area. He is published in a collection called "Seven on a Monday". Please contact the LHLS poetry editor for more information on that volume.

