ReVisions

Best Student Essays of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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Spring 2001

Dear UNCP Community:

We are excited to introduce to you the first issue of *ReVisions: Best Student Essays*, a publication designed to celebrate the finest nonfiction work composed by undergraduate students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

The staff at *ReVisions* believe in the importance of acknowledging quality student work produced in undergraduate classes. As all writers know, writing consumes a writer's time. It frustrates and disturbs. But as the best writers know, this is how it should be. When we compose an essay, we compose ourselves into the worlds in which we live, discovering and constructing knowledge, negotiating ideas, and creating meaning. Putting pen to paper or finger to keyboard commits a writer to a difficult journey, but this journey excites, enlightens, and ultimately takes both writer and reader into the sometimes uncharted, often magical territory of ideas. *ReVisions* offers you the chance to take wonderful journeys, to step into the ideas of other people, and to learn something about yourself along the way.

We are sure that our colleagues would agree that the existence of a stimulating, productive classroom depends upon the exchange of knowledge and ideas, and the students at UNCP produce powerful pieces of writing every day as a result of these exchanges. But the classroom cannot function as an isolated entity. The ideas generated in one classroom must make their way into other classrooms, into the university at large, and, ultimately, into everyday life. These essays represent the initial departure of ideas from the classroom, and we are delighted to share them with you.

You will notice that this issue's selections are all from the Department of English, Theatre, and Languages. However, because *ReVisions* was created to represent UNCP across the disciplines, we encourage more of the university community to participate in future issues. We hope that you enjoy reading these essays and that you join us in congratulating the eight writers featured in this debut issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Cannata and Jesse Peters
Editors

ReVisions

Best Student Essays

Vol 1. No. 1, Spring 2001

This publication was copyedited, designed, and produced by the students in PRE 345—Computer-Assisted Editing and Publication Design:

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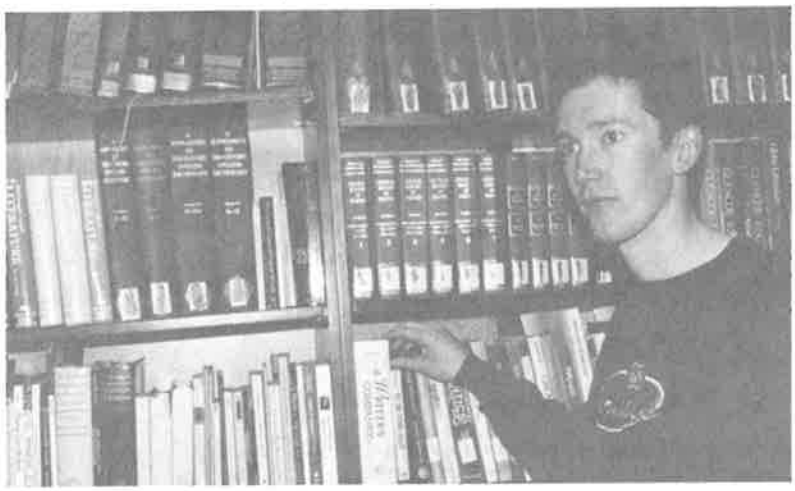
Cthulhu:

An Inverted Christian Mythos

by Robert Bean



Robert Bean is an English major and currently resides in Lumberton. His career aspirations include writing and public speaking. He also has an extensive interest in psychology, especially in the field of human consciousness. His research and writings deal primarily with how belief structures of the human mind create the "reality" each person experiences.

H.P. Lovecraft, the father of modern horror, crafted his tales in a manner that would cause readers to contemplate the hideous horrors that lurked within their own souls. Even though his tales were deemed weird fiction when first published in lowly pulp magazines, Lovecraft's tales have survived the test of time and are carving their own controversial niche in the domain of classic literature. Their success stems partly from the fact that they were not just random tales scribbled on paper to earn a quick dollar but were masterfully woven stories presenting a philosophical framework of mankind's ultimate destiny. The deep symbolism and mystical dimensions of Lovecraft's works echo his very core beliefs of the universe and the helpless plight of mankind. Lovecraft's horrific treatises present an anti-gospel that prophesies the end of mankind and the ushering in of a new age of evil that mankind cannot even fathom. The most critically acclaimed of these stories belong to a body of thirteen works deemed the Cthulhu mythos by leading critics. The most famous of these works is *The Call of Cthulhu*, a work encompassing the core dogma of Lovecraft's philosophy of mankind's dark and foreboding future. Reflecting Lovecraft's own philosophies about the universal cosmos and stemming from his bitterness towards Christianity, *The Call of Cthulhu* is a work that parallels the Christian mythos in its presentation of deity and symbolism but differs from Christianity because it prophesies the destruction of mankind rather than its redemption.

In order to understand that *The Call of Cthulhu* is a work reflecting the actual beliefs of Lovecraft, it must first be established that his works do indeed reflect such beliefs and are not just interesting tales crafted in Lovecraft's mind that are completely separate from his own philosophies about life. Lovecraft's letters as well as statements by leading scholars of his work testify that H.P. Lovecraft strongly felt an author's work should reflect the author's views and philosophies of life as well as the author's views of the universe as a whole. In a letter to Zella Brown Reed dated the 22nd of September,1927, Lovecraft states:

> No story can be truly potent unless it mirrors or suggests larger segments of entity than its mere characters....A story becomes arresting and significant only when its elements stand out as well-linked components or symbols of some larger cosmos, either by artistic treatment of the events or by a faithful and scientifically individualized depiction of the various characters. (*Letters* II 170)

Lovecraft felt a story could only be significant if its elements were symbols of something greater than the work itself. To Lovecraft, the work would fall flat if it were merely a concoction of the author's imagination in an attempt to secure monetary gain. S. T. Joshi, a leading researcher and scholar on the life and works of Lovecraft, sheds further light on Lovecraft's impetus for writing:

> Lovecraft, convinced that the production of art was a form of pure "self-expression" in which monetary considerations played no part, refused to tailor his work to the crude formulae of the pulp magazines, and was also markedly reluctant to "peddle" his work to book publishers." (xiii)

Lovecraft's refusal to conform to the conventions of the pulp magazines of his time, as it would undoubtedly force him to alter the

content of his works, further reveals Lovecraft's dogmatic assumption that a work is a reflection of the author's inner world and should not be changed to please the public at large. The fact that Lovecraft only had one true book, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, published before his death in 1937, lends further credence to his strict adherence to the belief that the original, unaltered writings of the author should stand as a testimony to his philosophical framework (Joshi xiii). James Turner, in his introduction to *At the Mountains of Madness*, a work edited by Joshi and containing a selection of Lovecraft's works, adds still more insight into Lovecraft's purpose for writing. Weaving his own analysis into the very words of Lovecraft, Turner surmises the following:

> His imaginative tales had never been an idle divertissement for Lovecraft but rather arose from an inner compulsion: "Art is not what one resolves to say, but what insists on saying itself through one," he explained in a 1934 letter. "The only elements concerned are the artist and the emotions working within him....Real literary composition is the only thing...I take seriously in life." (*Cthulhu* xiii).

Thus, Lovecraft's work was more than the penning of words on paper. It was, to Lovecraft, a cosmic expulsion of the deep "truths" of the universe manifesting themselves through his writing. It is these "truths" of the cosmos that Lovecraft felt must be expressed by any writer if they were to have any validity as true art.

Although all of Lovecraft's works were an attempt to convey his surmisings about life and the cosmos, the most complete and structured creation of Lovecraft's was that of the Cthulhu mythos. No work captured the essence of Lovecraft's panoramic view of man's past, present, and future like his Cthulhu mythos. S. T. Joshi exalts the Cthulhu mythos high above any of Lovecraft's works and explains its purpose in the following proclamation:

> In effect, the "Cthulhu mythos" is a series of plot devices utilized by Lovecraft to convey the essentials of his cosmic philosophy. These devices, including a wide array of extraterrestrials, (deemed "gods" by their human followers); an entire library of mythical books containing the "forbidden" truths about these "gods"; and a fictionalized New England landscape...lend them a kind of thematic unity not found in other work of their kind....whereas most of the religions and mythologies in human history seek to reconcile human beings with the cosmos by depicting a close, benign relationship between man and god, Lovecraft's pseudomythology brutally shows that man is *not* the center of the universe, that the "gods" care nothing for him, and that the earth and all its inhabitants are but a momentary incident in the unending cyclical chaos of the universe. (xvii)

Joshi, who spent countless years analyzing Lovecraft's letters, conversing with those who knew him, and sifting through his works with the trained eye of a scholar, recognized the belief structure of Lovecraft bleeding through his Cthulhu mythos. Joshi sees the Cthulhu mythos as a depiction of man's solitary plight in his brief existence on earth with no assistance from the realm of deity. According to Joshi, Lovecraft did not believe in the possibility of a man having an intimate relationship with the gods, as one might have with the Christian God if one is inclined to believe in the existence of such a deity. Also, Joshi points out that Lovecraft does not believe in the possibility of mankind being reconciled with the universe by his relationship with a god seen in the Christian mythos where one can be reconciled with God by having the shed blood of Jesus Christ applied to his life. Here, we are seeing the beginnings of Lovecraft's belief that mankind cannot put his trust in a Savior but must resign himself to the destruction that awaits him.

As with the Christian mythos, Lovecraft also sought to establish a core belief system of his own mythos that would give further credence to its "actual" existence. Maurice Levy, a respected author and French professor whose published doctoral dissertation *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic* was trans-

This essay is a model of clarity, organization, style, and thoroughness. Furthermore, it demonstrates a subtlety of analysis rare in student papers.
—Mark Canada

lated by S. T. Joshi and given his stamp of approval, fleshes out Joshi's general summation of Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos by identifying it specifically as an attempt by Lovecraft to create a mythos that would propagate his "anti-gospel" to others. Levy writes, "Lovecraft the agnostic felt the need to build a dogma supported, as all rational systems are, by knowledge recorded in books, treatises, and reference works" (88). Levy specifically refers to Lovecraft's need of formulating a dogma, a specific tenet or doctrine authoritatively put forth by a church. It is interesting that Levy chooses the word dogma when referring to Lovecraft, for dogmas are generally associated with beliefs of a church. It stands to reason that Lovecraft sought to establish a belief system through his works that would equal the weight and authority afforded the churches and their dogma. Levy further articulates this belief when he states, "This esoteric literature constitutes a sort of modern 'gloss' on the Old Texts, a commentary that corresponds, in the supposed authors, to an obvious desire to catechize" (90). Again, Levy uses the word catechize, also associated with churches, to illustrate how Lovecraft wishes for his works not only to be read, but also to proclaim his philosophies about the universe. It is also interesting to note that Lovecraft himself uses the word catechism in *The Call of Cthulhu* when the narrator refers to his uncle's discussion of the hidden cult of Cthulhu (*Cthulhu* 158).

Lovecraft also felt a need to link his dogma with "sacred" texts to add further validity to his mythos. Levy goes on to explain how Lovecraft referenced actual texts to add further weight to the dogma he was seeking to establish (Levy 90). There were also fictitious texts mentioned in Lovecraft's works, including the *Necromonicon*, "a veritable Bible written by the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, who lived in Yemen about A. D. 700" (Levy 88-89). However, Lovecraft was so convincing in his description of the *Necromonicon* that many people today believe it is an actual document and think that "authentic" copies of the work can be purchased in bookstores and occultic shops. Levy writes of the *Necromonicon*, "If Lovecraft is to be believed, Alhazred had brought back...hideous secrets concerning the Great Old Ones, Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu" (89). Here, Lovecraft specifically mentions Cthulhu as one of the "gods" mentioned in the *Necromonicon*, attempting to authenticate Cthulhu as an actual "god" worshipped in ancient civilization. Lovecraft took such great pains in establishing his paganistic cult of Cthulhu to proselytize his own beliefs that he not only established the ideologies of this cult but also linked them to "sacred" texts honoring the great gods who initiated their "religion."

August Derelith, a correspondent and close friend of Lovecraft's and one of the first to produce a mass publishing of his works, delves even deeper into Lovecraft's establishment of the Cthulhu mythos, comparing it directly to the Christian mythos. In his work *HPL: A Memoir*, Derelith writes:

> Lovecraft's concept of the Chtulhu mythos (which was not his name for it) is basically similar to the Christian mythos, particularly in regard to the expulsion of Satan from Eden and the power of evil. "All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race, who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again," he [Lovecraft] wrote. (70)

Lovecraft is attempting, not only in his Cthulhu mythos but also in all of his works, to establish that there is another race lurking in the shadows, seeking to reestablish themselves as the dominant force in the earth. It is a race condemned as evil by many, especially Christian churches, for Lovecraft emphasizes it is their practice of black magic that brought about their expulsion. Black has always been used to symbolize evil, for even Satan himself is known as the prince of darkness. Lovecraft believes this race will return to reign on the earth once again.

Derelith's keen observation of the parallel between Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos and Christianity, Levy's insight into Lovecraft's

desire to indoctrinate people with his beliefs, and Joshi's explanation of Lovecraft's mythos as a representation of man's alienation from the gods are not unfounded, for Lovecraft did feel this alienation from deity and sought to avenge himself and his family of this alienation. When one understands Lovecraft's rather painful experiences with Christianity and his ultimate rejection of it, one is able to see why he felt compelled to create a mythos that echoed his belief that mankind is alienated from the "gods" and is headed for an impending extinction. Expressing his disdain for the Christian God in one of his letters to Frank Belknap Long written in November of 1927, Lovecraft writes, "The Lovecraft line is fairly rotten with Reverands. It trickles Theology and radiates rural rectors. God help it.....as He didn't when poor Tom had to sell his estate and become one of the herd. I am the family's revenge against Heaven for the nawsty slap"(*Letters* II 182). Not only did Lovecraft feel as though his family were abandoned by God, seeing God did not prevent Tom from losing his estate, but this abandonment also festered feelings of resentment towards God that caused Lovecraft to seek revenge against this God for slapping his family in the face with this abandonment. Categorizing God's abandonment as a slap in the face shows how resentful Lovecraft was towards God as slapping someone is considered a degrading act.

Not only does Lovecraft express his resentment towards God by denouncing Him personally but he also expands this attack to include His ministers. He speaks of his family line being rotten because of the reverends within it. Anything rotten emits a foul stench from which most would wish to distance themselves. This animosity towards ministers is further expounded upon when Lovecraft admonishes Long, a close and personal friend of his, with the following words: "...call off your Calvinists - Pegana knows I've vicars and curates enough of my own! They're almost as bad as Celts" (*Letters* II 185). Here again, Lovecraft exhibits disdain for religious authority by divulging negative feelings about the vicars and curates in his family. This time, however, he is elevating the spiritual authority from a mere reverend to a vicar and a curate, those who hold great positions in the church and, in the past, have commanded their parishioners to conform to their doctrines or else face imprisonment and death. Lovecraft is protesting with great anger about how limited and imprisoned he feels with those who try to thrust religion down a person's throat as he instructs Long to call off his Calvinists. It appears that Lovecraft is equating the Calvinists with bloodthirsty hounds seeking to rip Lovecraft's very life away from him, that is, his freedom to live and express life the way he desires.

Not only did Lovecraft have unfortunate experiences with the Christian God and his ministers, but also felt alienated from the Christian Scriptures themselves, so much that he adopted a pagan belief system. In a letter to Maurice W. Moe dated January 1, 1915, Lovecraft writes:

> ...[I] read much in the Bible from sheer interest. The more I read the Scriptures, the more foreign they seemed to me. I was infinitely fonder of the Greco-Roman mythology, and when I was eight astounded the family by declaring myself a Roman pagan...I had really adopted a sort of Pantheism, with the Roman gods as personified attributes of deity...(*Letters* I 10)

The fact that Lovecraft read much in the Bible demonstrates he had a working knowledge of the Bible that would allow him to construct a mythos parallel to Christianity in many respects as far as character generation and basic themes yet different in the message it brings across to its readers. For it was this knowledge of the Scriptures that led Lovecraft to reject Christianity and deem himself a pagan. In this same letter, Lovecraft reveals more about the reason for his departure from Christianity when he writes:

> ...I was early placed in the Baptist Sunday school. There, however, I soon became exasperated by the literal Puritanical doctrines, and constantly shocked my preceptors by expressing scepticism of much that was taught me. It became evident that my young mind was not of a religious cast, for

> the much exhorted "simple faith" in miracles and the like came not to me." (*Letters* I 10)

Not only did Lovecraft feel alienated from the Scriptures, he also deemed the doctrines taught from them as Puritanical, a word that connotes strict adherence to the letter of the religious law and harsh punishment for those who transgress such a law. Lovecraft did not consider himself a religious person, and it has now been firmly established that Lovecraft, of his own admission, sought revenge against God for his family, despised Christian ministers, and felt as though the Christian Scriptures were just a breeding ground for insidious ministers to force their parishioners to obey its precepts therein.

Although Lovecraft scoffed at much that was taught to him from the Christian Bible, he did, as will now be discussed, retain some fundamental concepts in the Christian faith that were expressed in his monumental work, *The Call of Cthulhu*. There are so many striking similarities between Lovecraft's work *The Call of Cthulhu* and Christianity that there would be a very unlikely possibility that these parallels were not intentional, given Lovecraft's knowledge of the Scriptures, his incessant hatred for Christianity, and his desire to avenge his family of the Christian God's cruel abandonment of his family. However, Lovecraft only uses these similarities to slap God in the face by blasphemously proposing that the purpose of deity is not to redeem mankind but to abolish it. Levy gives credence to this assumption when he writes, "For truly there is in Lovecraft an obsession with infamy and sacrilege which rests on an inverted aesthetic, what one can almost call a systematization of transgression" (88). According to Levy, Lovecraft's sacrilege, or profaning of that which is sacred, is an obsession with him that drives him to voice his sacrilege in some systemized form. Real literary composition, a very systematic process, is the only thing Lovecraft took seriously in life. What better avenue for Lovecraft to exact his revenge on the Christian God than to create a mythos that parallels Christianity but makes evil the victor rather than the Christian God (Joshi xiii)? Lovecraft attacks the very foundational premise of Christianity, that is, the reconciliation of mankind to Himself through salvation, by presenting a godhead that is intent on mankind's destruction and total annihilation.

To begin with, there is an amazing similarity between the godheads expressed in both the Cthulhu and Christian mythos. The Great Ones are evil gods who existed even before the dawn of man, while Cthulhu is one of these Great Ones who visited man upon the earth (*Cthulhu* 154). Similarly, God is the omnipotent creator of the universe who predated man, and Jesus is the Son whom God sent to the earth. Neither the Great Ones nor God have ever been seen by man, but Cthulhu and Jesus were both seen by man as they were both representations of their respective godheads (*Cthulhu* 154; I John 4:12). Cthulhu came from the stars and brought his image with him, thus obtaining a shape that was visible to man as a carven idol (*Cthulhu* 154). Likewise, God's son, Jesus, was visible to man when he came down from heaven as the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). Cthulhu is referred to as the great priest and Jesus is deemed the high priest (*Cthulhu* 153, Heb 4:15). The Great Ones, by the attribution Lovecraft affords them, are the equivalent of the Christian God, while Cthulhu is equivalent to Jesus Christ. However, the purposes of these two godheads are entirely different. Cthulhu comes to earth to wipe out mankind, while Jesus comes to earth to redeem mankind (*Cthulhu* 155). Cthulhu comes to bring eternal death while Jesus comes to bring eternal life (*Cthulhu* 155). Thus, one can see how Lovecraft establishes similarities between the two myths to add more force and impact to their differences.

Lovecraft does not stop with these foundational comparisons, however. One can also see comparisons between the death and burial of Jesus and the burial of Cthulhu. Jesus was crucified on a hill in Golgotha and buried in a tomb. The cross standing on a hill is seen as a powerful symbol of the Christian faith.

Cthulhu was buried on a single mountain-top and a great monolith-crowned citadel marks the place of his burial (*Cthulhu* 165). Lovecraft is not only drawing on similarities between the burials of Jesus and Cthulhu, but he is, in fact, exalting Cthulhu above Jesus Christ. A mountain is much greater than a hill, and a monolith-crowned citadel is much more majestic and stately than an old rugged, splintered cross. It is also interesting to note that both of their tombs were sealed with a stone (*Cthulhu* 166). Lovecraft is incorporating the sacrilege which Levy refers to as a driving force in his life to blaspheme the great atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ by a very systematic form of transgression in his comparisons between his mythos and the Christian mythos. One can see Lovecraft's attempt to avenge his family of God's nasty slap by the way he attempts to slap God in the face with his carefully structured writings.

Both Jesus and Cthulhu possess the power of resurrection (*Cthulhu* 155). Both of their resurrections occur at a specified time. For Jesus, it is three days; for Cthulhu, it is when the earth and the stars reach a certain alignment (*Cthulhu* 155). An interesting twist Lovecraft places on the resurrection of Cthulhu, however, is that Cthulhu is resurrected after his secret priests take him from his tomb (*Cthulhu* 155). It would seem here that Lovecraft is taking a stab at the validity of the resurrection of Jesus and ascribing to the theory that the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole the body of Jesus from the tomb (Matt 28:13). Lovecraft's choice of the word "secret" when referring to the priests of Cthulhu seems to parallel directly with this theory of the disciples secretly securing the body of Jesus to propagate their "resurrection hoax." Again, Lovecraft appears to be taking a jab at the "truth" of the Christian scriptures.

Even geographical considerations figure into Lovecraft's comparison between the two myths by the way he ascribes a "sacred" city to Cthulhu. Jerusalem, the capital of the religious world, is the city where Jesus was buried and is the city in which Jesus will make his return (Zech 14:4). Every year, multitudes make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, revering it as a holy sight. R'lyeh is the supreme city of Cthulhu, the place where he is buried, and the place from which he shall make his return (*Cthulhu* 165). Also, it is to this city of R'lyeh that the faithful of Cthulhu "come on a pilgrimage of liberation and restoration" (*Cthulhu* 165). Just as the faithful Jews and Christians make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the faithful few of the Cthulhu cult make their journey to R'lyeh. Lovecraft uses the word pilgrimage to give the cult a religious hue so as to give it a sense of authenticity, implying that there are followers just as devoted to Cthulhu as they are toJesus Christ. However, even though there are similarities between the two cities, there are still the extreme differences Lovecraft incorporates to keep the two myths on opposite ends of the spectrum. Jerusalem, ironically, is known as the city of peace and life, while R'lyeh is "the tangible substance of earth's supreme terror—the nightmare corpse-city" (*Cthulhu* 165). Terror is contrary to peace just as death, as implied by the word corpse, is contrary to life. Here again, Lovecraft is using similarity to emphasize that which is different.

Lovecraft even goes as far as to incorporate prophecies of Cthulhu's return in his myth that correspond with Christian prophecies of the second coming of Jesus Christ. One of the signs of the second coming of Jesus is earthquakes in diverse places (Matt 24:7). An earthquake is also a sign of the return of Cthulhu for the myth states, "...another earthquake shall heave their monstrous stone city again to the sun and the air" (*Cthulhu* 164). When this city emerges, it brings about the return of Cthulhu (*Cthulhu* 167). When Jesus returns to establish his kingdom on the earth, He will raise His saints from the dead, and they shall be like Him (I John 3:2). Similarly, when Cthulhu returns, mankind will become like the Great Ones, and Cthulhu will "revive his subjects and resume His rule of earth" (*Cthulhu* 155). (Notice also how Lovecraft capitalizes the pronoun "his" in reference to Cthulhu in the

same respect that one capitalizes the pronouns "he" and "his" when referring to the Christian godhead. Even in something as trivial as grammar, Lovecraft is taking great pains to flesh out amazing similarities between the two myths.) However, Jesus will return and write His laws upon the hearts of his followers, granting them eternal life (Jer 31:33). Cthulhu, however, will throw laws and morals aside and instruct his followers to kill, bringing about the ultimate destruction of mankind and eternal death (*Cthulhu* 155).

Lovecraft parallels all of the fundamental tenets of the Christian mythos in his Cthulhu mythos. The Christian godhead, the holy city of Jerusalem, and the death, burial, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ are all tenets of the Christian faith Lovecraft chose to exploit in his Cthulhu mythos to present a devastating future for mankind that ran concurrent with his philosophy of life and the end of all things. Perhaps there can be no better summation of Lovecraft's belief system that runs through the fabric of his mythos than a statement written in a letter to Mrs. Anne Tillery Renshaw dated June 1, 1921, that reads:

> ...I may say that the obsoleteness of religion and idealism as systems of enlightened thought is impressed upon me with redoubled force. If any thing is true, it is that these beliefs are soon to be finally extinct until some cataclysm shall wipe out civilisation and inaugurate a new Dark Age of myth and ignorance. (*Letters* I 135)

Lovecraft saw the end of all things vastly coming upon human civilization as we know it. He chose the avenue of writing to express this belief, paralleling the Christian mythos with his own Cthulhu mythos, and, in so doing, found an avenue to vent his frustration and hatred towards the Christian God. Did he exact his revenge upon God? Until that cataclysmic annihilation of earth befalls us and religion is just a relic of a bygone era, the answer will have to be a resounding no.❖

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The Vision Behind *The Pioneers*

by Alissa Bishop

The Pioneers by James Fenimore Cooper is a novel of early America, Indians, power, hunting, traditions, wastefulness, change, and justice. However, this novel is not so much a depiction of American pioneer life as it is a depiction of the Bible. Some of the events and people in the Bible, especially those found in I Kings, II Chronicles, and Ecclesiastes, are paralleled or alluded to in *The Pioneers*. By portraying the settling of Templeton as representative of an aspect of the historical process recorded in the Old Testament, Cooper has expanded and universalized the meaning and significance of *The Pioneers* (Jones 68). The first Biblical analogy in Cooper's novel is found in the person whose family the town of Templeton is named after—Judge Marmaduke Temple.

As Daryl E. Jones of Texas Tech University states, Judge Temple possesses some of the same attributes as King Solomon, such as being a peaceful man (Quaker) and an astute judge. Both men are "wealthy and public-spirited entrepreneur[s] whose sense of destiny prompts [them] to build a royal dwelling...and an ornately wrought 'temple'" (Jones 69). Marmaduke Temple's royal dwelling is his "castle" (house) mentioned on page 43: "The castle, as Judge Temple's dwelling was termed in common parlance, came to be the model, in some one or another of its numerous excellencies, for every aspiring edifice within twenty miles of it." Solomon's house is mentioned in I Kings chapter seven and II Chronicles chapter two. Marmaduke's temple is the church mentioned on pages 117, 188, and 122; Solomon's temple (the Temple of Jerusalem) is mentioned in I Kings chapters five and six and in II Chronicles chapters two through four. The builders for both temples were named Hiram—Hiram, sent by the King of Tyre, built the Temple of Jerusalem, and Hiram Doolittle was the builder (along with Richard Jones) of the church.

Not only were Templeton's church and its builder reminiscent of Solomon's, but also the construction of the Academy was symbolic of Solomon's temple.

On page 100, the building of the Academy was said to be by "the ancient and honorable fraternity 'of the free and accepted masons'" (Cooper qtd. in Jones 70). This reference to Freemasonry was not alone because he also referred "to 'the abilities of Hiram at the square rule' (Cooper 100), to 'certain curious carvings' and 'masonic emblems' on the enormous sign over 'The Templetown Coffee-House, and Traveller's Hotel' (p. 146), and to Templars (pp. 37, 74)" (Jones 70). Since these passages imply Cooper's extensive understanding of Freemasonry and its traditional and symbolic connections with the erecting of Solomon's Temple, Cooper seems to have known that the Temple of Jerusalem is symbolized in the design of the Masonic Lodge hall. In the same manner as the Academy was symbolic of the Temple and Judge Temple was symbolic of King Solomon, Natty Bumppo epitomizes the part of Old Testament history that precedes Solomon's rule as king.

The era that Natty Bumppo personifies is described in Judges 21:25 by saying that "in those days there was no king in Is-

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rael: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jones 75). Bumppo naturally abhors civil laws because he believes they are needless and adverse to wise moral laws (75). Because of this, Bumppo breaks the law and is arrested. When brought to trial, his plea and life principle were reflective of the Book of Judges: "I may say not guilty with a clean conscience...for there's no guilt in doing what's right" (p. 362) (Jones 75). John J. McAleer believes that Cooper uses Bumppo, in conflict with Doolittle, to characterize what he believes are the choices confronting America—"secularized Puritan materialism," which leads to strife and decay and is personified by Doolittle, or "essential Christianity," which leads to peace and stability and is personified by Bumppo (234). "Cooper hopes that his readers...will choose to live according to the Christian creed of Bumppo...rather than by the Puritan-inspired creed of self-aggrandizement [magnification] proffered by Hiram Doolittle" (223). On the other hand, Milder believes that Cooper is attempting to "moralize" history by portraying the domination of white civilization as the domination of Christianity, with the bestowal of forgiveness found in the New Testament replacing the retributive justice found in the Old Testament (419). Ironically, Milder believes that Natty Bumppo is not a Christian and that it is because of this unwillingness or incapability to conform to Christian society that he is doomed to exile in the forest like the Indians (420). As has been shown already to a small degree, the plot alludes very strongly to events that are reported in the Bible.

In the Bible, the Israelites turned God's judgment on themselves by not remembering their pact with God, honoring false idols, and breaking God's laws. Solomon's heart was even turned from God, and as a consequence of the Israelites' actions, the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by fire (Jones 72). The settlers of Templeton, like the Israelites, became idolaters. Their false idols were their "passions" mentioned on page 144—"avarice, envy, vanity, and false pride" (72). The people, along with Judge Temple, violate nature and her laws and carelessly squander God's bounty. Because of this, "the Vision" catches on fire (72). Another Biblical event that Cooper parallels in *The Pioneers* is found in I Kings 3: 16-28 (73). Two women came to Solomon, both of them declaring themselves the rightful owner of a child. To settle the dispute, Solomon decrees that the child be divided in two and half given to each woman. One of the women objects and Solomon gives the whole child to her because he knows that she is the true mother. In the opening chapter of *The Pioneers*, a deer is killed, and Oliver, Natty Bumppo, and Marmaduke Temple all claim to have killed it. Richard Jones suggests that Judge Temple give Oliver all of it except the saddle (73), but Oliver rejects Richard's proposal and claims that he must have the whole deer. Judge Temple then charges that the "whole deer be given to Oliver" (74). Along with the indirect references to the Bible in *The Pioneers*, there are direct references given.

Richard Jones attempts to quote Ecclesiastes 3:1 on page 275 when he says that "David says, in the Psalms—no, it was Solomon, but it was all in the family—Solomon said, there was a time for all things" (Jones 76). There are some less direct references like the one by Benjamin Pump on pages 171 and 172. He says that "life is as unsartain as the wind that blows, and nothing is more variable than the wind" (76, 77). This is referring to Ecclesiastes 1:6 where the wind is "a metaphor for men's uncertain fortunes" (77). All of the Biblical references in *The Pioneers*, whether direct or indirect, are indicative of Cooper's writing.

According to Lawrence J. Oliver, Thomas R. Lounsbury labeled Cooper a "Puritan of Puritans" because of "his tendency toward self-righteous moralizing" (432). He

Alissa noticed a pattern of biblical allusion in Cooper's *The Pioneers*. Her observations were supported well, and she was able to demonstrate the thematic relevance of an obscure reference which would have gone unnoticed by a lesser student.
—Pat Valenti

likes to slowly cast his villains into symbolic pits of hell after they have been given ample time to consider their corrupt natures and proclaim their dependence on the God who has angrily withdrawn his hand of support (433, 434). In this manner, his writing is like Jonathan Edwards' speech "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (433). This proclamation of the villain is uncharacteristic because one of the big differences between Cooper's heroes and his villains is that the heroes humbly realize their dependence on God (437). Any time that his prideful characters try to stand by themselves, they always end up dangling helplessly (445). Cooper's heroes never suffer from an awful fall. For example, when John Mohegan died, he died peacefully (442). Most of the time, though, God saves the "elect," such as when Natty Bumppo leads Elizabeth and Oliver out of the burning forest to safety (442).

Through *The Pioneers*, James Fenimore Cooper charts an Old Testament view of history and uses Biblical analogies. It is interesting to go back and read these sections over because mostly they are the ones that I saw no real reason for the first time I read this novel. They take on new significance, though, when looked at from a Biblical standpoint.❖

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Eyes of Haiti

by Leslie A. Brewington

Leslie Brewington was born and raised in St. Pauls. A Biomedical major, she dreams of becoming a chiropractor and one day owning her own practice. She enjoys reading, writing, and sharing conversations with others. As her grandfather, Sherman Brewington, says, "Being able to read is one thing; however, being able to write something worth reading and sharing it with others is a completely different thing."

Sometimes out of the darkest and most forgotten place a revelation of life can be brought forth to light within the soul of an individual person. My revelation, which was quite disturbing, came in May of this year on the small island of Haiti. Not knowing my soul was about to be illuminated by the horrible truths of life hidden within Haiti, I set forth on what was supposed to be an "ordinary" volunteer trip for Missions. However, knowing what I know now, "extraordinary" is how I would have characterized the trip. Looking back on it and recreating the moments I was there in my mind still causes me a great deal of emotional pain. But it has been the "pain" that has changed my life for both good and bad.

The trip started out very normally. The plane ride was the predictable travel experience with long and crowded lines of tired people. When my group and I arrived in Port-au-Prince Haiti the expected tropical temperature greeted us, along with the smell of stale spices. The week progressed with the typical volunteer work: delivering supplies for the schools, preparing boxes of toys and candies for the children, and visiting other children's programs within the area, providing assistance as needed. Towards the end of the week I was growing accustomed to the Haitian culture and poverty inflicted lifestyles of the people. It was when I went to volunteer in the clinic at one of Haiti's most poverty stricken areas, Boo-tin, that I was exposed to the horrible and unjustifiable existence of the starvation of a little girl. Immediately I became bothered. Little did I know this little girl would shine a light on the greatest revelation of my life.

I was filling prescriptions in the pharmacy and giving medical supplies to hundreds of people when I was asked to help escort a man and his child to an examination room. I can remember passing through the never-ending line of sweaty people as I entered the waiting area to greet the man, but when I caught sight of his child I could barely breathe. Suddenly, in my mind the room became empty and silent. The extremely hot waiting room became as cold as ice and I could only focus on his child. As she lifted her head, her eyes met mine with the warmest look she had to offer. I felt the warmth of those eyes staring and penetrating me the whole time as I proceeded to the examination room.

The general appearance of the little girl was heartbreaking. Malnourished and starving at the age of two, she weighed in at 27 and 3/4lbs. The tattered off-white dress she wore swallowed her whole, it seemed. The torn lace around the collar was held in place by a single strand of black colored thread. The matching shoes she wore had holes in the soles and were at least two sizes too small for her sore-covered feet. With her leg muscles being in such poor condition she had never been able to learn to walk Her arms were the size of quarters round in width, but she clung to her father's dirty neck so tight, so strong, so proud. She hardly had the energy to cry when the examiner injected her with nutrients from an IV, but from those gleaming eyes came two lonely streams of tears.

When the father explained how he had no food to give to her my eyes filled with tears. I could not tolerate the pain of her endurance anymore so I excused myself from the room. As I walked back through the group of people in the hallway, seeing their suffering in a new light, my heart broke as I carried with me the memory of those glowing eyes.

As I continued helping in the pharmacy, I saw many more afflicted people, each somehow barely surviving an illness of some type. Some did not know where their next source of help or food was coming from. In a desperate attempt to survive they brought glass bottles and plastic containers (sometimes covered with dirt) to hold their medication in. I saw many more children suffering from starvation. I also saw a woman with a growth on the side of her neck the size of a large gourd and an old man who had been blinded by the harsh sand blowing in the hot wind. After the clinic closed and the last prescription was filled it was calculated that over 196 people came in with serious health related problems, two of which were predicted to die within a week.

After we closed the clinic, I went back to my comfortable lodgings. However, this time I found no comfort in my surroundings. I had received a revelation. I truly realized for the first time in my life that I had taken many things for granted such as my health, my personal doctor, and my education. I had never fully appreciated the blessings I obtained. As I sat down on my bed and looked at the clothes that were lying on top of my suit case, I noticed for the first time, the quality of material. As I tried to sleep in my soft bed, those warm eyes of that little girl haunted me with a darkness I had never experienced before. I tossed and turned all night, wondering about her and what was to come of her.

The trip ended and I returned to the States believing I had freed myself from all the poverty and horrors of Haiti. As I was welcomed back I placed all the bad things about Haiti in the back of my mind and focused only on the good things I had seen. However, a revelation once brought to light cannot be dimmed again. Just like the eyes of that little girl, it will only shine brighter, penetrating your soul. With each story I told about Haiti I included only bits and pieces of Boo-tin, but that didn't satisfy people's curiosity. So finally one day I told a few friends about the little girl and about her fight to stay alive. When I finished telling the graphic details, some of my friends were crying and it was then that I realized that I was not crying. Somewhere I found a piece of myself had accepted the truths of Haiti and I was capable of talking about it. In order to allow myself to share it with others, I made myself face the revelation every day by talking about what I had seen.

So now each day I face the revelation I acquired in Haiti and it forces me to appreciate my blessings. I notice now the small things in life, such as a smile, running water, and food. About three weeks later I received a message from a friend in Haiti. The little girl was placed in a health program in a local hospital. She was incrasing in size and smiling all the time, while making a speedy recovery. This helps me face my revelation, knowing she survived hers with eyes of fire and light. If by some chance or reason the revelation in my life becomes dim or forgotten, I know the eyes of Haiti will be there to remind me and brighten it again. ❖

Leslie Brewington's "Eyes of Haiti," which went through several drafts, had the tone of a writer sharing one of life's "pivotal experiences" from the beginning. I consider the images present to be among its strongest traits.
—Dennis Sigmon

The Greensboro Sit-Ins:

Effect on Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

by Trumell Fulmore

Trumell Fulmore is a senior graduating this May with a major in Computer Science and a minor in Business Administration. After graduation she plans to work for a while and then pursue a master's degree in Management Information Systems. Trumell's telephone interview with Claudette Burroughs-White was "quite an experience," one that made her "live the fear and triumph of 'The Greensboro Four.'"

How much are you willing to risk for your beliefs? Are they worth your life or reputation? In February 1960, between 3:30 and 4:30, four students from NC A&T State University, David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Jibreel Khazan (Ezell Blair, Jr.) and Joseph McNeil, later known as the "Greensboro Four," risked it all by sitting at an all-white lunch counter in F.W. Woolworth variety store. Despite the conflict in small details, the Four leave a mark on history because as recently as April 5, 1998, a newspaper headline reads, "How a sit-in changed a nation" (Thompson 23A). Yes, the Greensboro sit-ins changed the South forever.

In a personal interview with a second day participant from UNC Greensboro, then called the Woman's College, Claudette Burroughs-White, who was not involved in the time schedules, recalled that many volunteered and remained faithful throughout the cause (Interview 2). On the contrary, Franklin McCain said in a website entitled "Greensboro Sit-Ins: Launch of the Civil Rights Movement," "when the television cameras stopped rolling and we didn't have eight or 10 reporters left, the folk left." A friend of the late David Richmond, Ms. Burroughs-White added that "before dying, he paid dearly" because it was difficult for him to find a job. She continued to explain that although today many view the Four as "heros," thirty years ago some labeled them as "troublemaker[s]" (Interview 2).

After the abolition of slavery, whites developed a strategy to cut down on racial violence. A website stated from the late 1800's to early 1950's, the U.S. South implemented "Jim Crow Laws," laws separating whites from blacks ("Jim Crow Law"). For more than 150 years, blacks in the south used separate public facilities like water fountains and restrooms. Signs displaying "colored only" constantly reminded them that they were separate, unequal, and they had an inferior place in society. Despite the efforts of other civil rights leaders, many in the white society failed to listen to the blood of so many crying out for equality and refused to unlock the chains of segregation. Who or what would be their figurative Moses? The South was in desperate need of deliverance.

Many events sparked the sit-in at Woolworth. The first was caused by Ralph Johns, a white Greensboro business owner that many white neighbors viewed as a "maverick and agitator against the status quo" (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 2). In addition, Ralph Johns was a member of the NAACP (National Association for Advancement of Colored People). Eleven years prior, he encouraged one student to revolt against the Woolworth's rule that blacks could not sit and eat at the lunch counter. One writer states that he not only offered encouragement but money for "bail and legal fees" (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 3). Research revealed that many credit Ralph Johns with developing the idea, designing a plan and discussing it with Joseph McNeil, an employee at his store. All, including Joseph McNeil, insist that Johns knew about the plan the day they passed his store on the way to Woolworth ("Greensboro").

The climactic event happened in January 1960 at Union Station (a bus station) downtown. Joseph McNeil was returning from his home in Wilmington over the Christmas holiday. He went into the station's restaurant to get something to eat, yet employees did not permit him to sit and eat ("Greensboro"). Upon returning to campus, McNeil related the event to the other three (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 3). They were disgusted with watching segregation control their entire lives. According to Ezell Blair, they "wanted to find out if what was written in the Constitution and Bill of Rights was true for all Americans" ("Greensboro").

Although other businesses were displaying the same ignorance, Woolworth was selected for personal reasons. According to an Internet source, "everywhere but the South," the lunch counter in Woolworth was integrated. Also, in Greensboro, both the counter and staff were segregated with whites working with the public and blacks doing the cooking and cleaning. Blacks could spend their money and eat standing, but one area "was forbidden territory: the long L-shaped lunch counter, with stainless steel and plastic cushion stools that took up nearly two walls of the first floor" ("Greensboro"). A newspaper article entitled "Negroes in South in Store Sitdown," emphasized that the students felt since they purchased supplies at the store then they should be allowed to eat at the same lunch counter as the white people (22). Finally the Four agreed they would go to Woolworth on February 1. Thinking that they would never come back to campus because they would be hospitalized or jailed, they were unable to sleep and, at 1:00 a.m., Monday, February 1, 1960, they were making plans.

Upon arriving at Woolworth, they purchased their supplies and followed their plan to sit in teams of two at the counter. McCain and McNeil sat first, and, in about three or four minutes, Blair and Richmond sat. An incident that boosted their confidence was when an old, white lady said, "Boys, I am just so proud of you. My only regret is that you didn't do this 10 or 15 years ago." Franklin McCain added that a few white men nodded their heads in admiration. Both McCain and Blair recall that an unnamed black employee of Woolworth said, "People like you make our race look bad" ("Greensboro"). With their eyes focused on a dream, they sat and remained until the store closed ("South" 20). Claudette Burroughs-White said, "There were racial slurs, ugly comments and threats. We were always afraid because we never knew what was going to happen. We were told to remain quiet, be peaceable and not to get involved in the name calling" (Interview 1).

The sit-in movement was in motion. On the second day, newspapers and media began publicizing the event. A website states on February 2, 1960, "twenty-five men and four women" carried forward the sit-in, and on February 3, participants sat in all but two of the sixty-five unoccupied stools at the counter. The next day, three Caucasian female students from UNC Greensboro participated in the protest, and supporters staged a sit-in at another business opposite Woolworth—S.H. Kress ("Greensboro"). *Facts on File* mentioned that on February 5, both stores were closed because of bomb threats and harassment (49). However, Geneva Tisdale, a black Woolworth employee, said the store closed because black students occupied the entire lunch counter, and Woolworth was losing money ("Greensboro"). Beginning February 8, demonstrations started in Charlotte, Durham and other areas across the state (*Facts on File* 49). *Time* reports within three weeks, sit-ins extended to more than a dozen Southern cities resulting in stores shutting down lunch counters, and unscrewing or roping off stools ("South" 20). *Facts on File* also reports that peaceful sit-ins swept the South along with an out-

Trumell went far beyond any English 105 student I have taught in becoming involved in her topic, researching it, and even locating interview subjects who had taken part in the Greensboro sit-ins. She is a model of the student researcher.
—Nancy Barrineau

break of violence by both sit-in participants and white hecklers (55). The differences in the Greensboro sit-ins are "persistence and consistency"; therefore, "the sit-ins lasted off and on for five months before Woolworth and the Kress store...agreed to integrate" ("Greensboro"). Due to the publicity and dedication of the black community, whites could do nothing but listen and face the segregation issue, and integration replaced "Jim Crow." Within a few months, more than 30 cities in the South allowed blacks the same eating privileges as whites. However, within a year, that number increased with one hundred twenty-six cities doing the same (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 7). On July 25, 1960, the first blacks to sit and eat at the Woolworth's lunch counter were three employees: Geneva Tisdale, Sue Marson, and Anitha Jones. Their boss, Rachel Holt, said that she wanted "her girls" to be the first. She told them to wear dress clothes, walk about like customers, sit at the counter, order something, eat, and return to work. On July 26, 1960, "Woolworth is desegregated" ("Greensboro").

Between late 1993 and early 1994, both the lunch counter and the store closed. Two men purchased the building to save "civil rights history" ("International"). To savor the memories of the movement, "eight of the stools, including the four on which the original protestors sat" (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 14) are on display in museums like the Smithsonian Institution ("Greensboro"). Work is being done to turn the building into The International Civil Rights Center and Museum along with a rejuvenated and operating lunch counter. In the future, it will be a site where everyone regardless of color can gather to talk about "differences and discover similarities" ("International"), and where future children can "get back to their roots and see the spot where the sit-in movement started" (Burroughs-White, "Legacy" 15).

All races benefit from the bravery of the Greensboro Four. If the Four and all of the participants had not taken a stand, "Jim Crow" might still exist as it did before the 1960's. If many didn't put their lives on the line, blacks like myself wouldn't have a choice in society and whites wouldn't have the privilege of knowing such diverse people. I've learned that some things are worth dying for, and I thank all those who risked their lives that I may have one. ❖

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"I Hellborn, Child":

Nancy's Racial Dilemma in "That Evening Sun"

by Matthew Manahan

It is amazing how the color of one's skin can determine the course of that person's life. Pigmentation becomes an issue so important that its size is much greater than the size of the cells that go into regulating the many hues of human flesh. Skin color has caused the domination of one people over another and the marginalization of races in a given society. In America, the main focus of racial divisions is usually between blacks and whites. However, race is not an issue that is as simple as "black and white"; there are many gray areas involved. Even though a person's color is not really the culprit of racism (the true criminal is the stereotypical and prejudiced thinking of an individual), without differences in it, there would be no racial discrimination. This is exactly the truth that Nancy is forced to face in William Faulkner's short story "That Evening Sun." The choices she makes and the life that she lives are tragically predestined to occur as they do. Nancy is a product of society, and more specifically, of her local community, because of her mixed race.

If Nancy's race is her "downfall," what race is she? Many would simply assume that she is "black" (and in actuality, she is treated by white society as if she were black), but Faulkner wrote one small part in "That Evening Sun" that seems to hint at a more complex answer to the question. In the story, which happens to be narrated by Quentin fifteen years after the occurance of events, Quentin's brother Jason is concerned about race. After saying both Jesus and Dilsey are niggers and that he is not, Jason asks, "'Are you a nigger, Nancy?'" Nancy replies, "'I hellborn, child...I wont be nothing soon. I going back where I come from soon'" (Faulkner 2164). According to Robert M. Slabey, literary critic, this is a passage in the narrative that no one has explained. He says that this passage could be a reference to either Nancy being "a light-skinned 'Negro,' a mulatto or a modern equivalent of the exotic and legendary octoroon[,]...a person who can 'pass for White'" (Slabey). Therefore, Jason's question must be taken into account since he knows the race of Jesus and Dilsey but is unsure of what Nancy "is" (in that society, one's race did symbolically determined what a person was). This "racial ambiguity" affected how Nancy was treated by both blacks and whites.

In "That Evening Sun," the reader is first introduced to Nancy before any other character, even before the "I" of the first-person narrator. Even though the narrative is told through Quentin, the reader in a way is first shown the reality of the short story through that of "the Negro women who still take in white people's washing..." (Faulkner 2159). Nancy was one of these women. Therefore, it is established in the beginning that Quentin is talking of the hardships of Negro women, specifically Nancy. Leonard Frey says Nancy is the "central figure of the story and its victim" (qtd. in Jones 288). The title of the story, "That Evening Sun," also points readers to the African-American culture because it is taken from a song lyric coming from the "blues tradition" (qtd. in Jones 300). While there are other themes besides race and other important characters besides

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Nancy, Nancy and her struggle are the catalyst for the narrative.

One of Nancy's biggest errors is prostitution. It causes her to get pregnant which in turn causes the fear she has of Jesus. It would be easy to blame her mistakes on bad moral character, but it is her environment that causes her to prostitute herself. Black women were the lowest step on the social ladder. She has to make a living as a washerwoman and substitute servant (for the Compsons). Prostitution is a way Nancy can supplement her income. George Kent said that society tolerated black prostitutes having white customers "'so long as it did not include recognition of the black woman's personality and interfere or threaten to interfere with white Anglo-saxon domination'" (qtd. in Jones 298). Kent then says that society allows Nancy to practice what she does, and not even the Compsons try to help her (298).

Matt has done an excellent job of exploring the role of race in Falkner's short story, "That Evening Sun." It is refreshing to see student writers tackle complicated ideas in their work.
—Jesse Peters

Nancy's lack of self-respect "allows" her not only to be a prostitute, but to use alcohol and drugs. This is because she is a "nigger." She even knew it herself. Nancy says, "'I aint nothing but a nigger...It aint none of my fault'" (Faulkner 2161). Charles Peavy says the empowerment of whites could even been seen by the jailor who beats Nancy after she tries to kill herself (qtd. in Jones 298). It was the jailor's theory that Nancy must have been using cocaine and not alcohol because a black person would not kill himself unless he was using cocaine (Faulkner 2160). He stereotypes blacks even in matters of such things as suicide, showing the callousness of the racist judgments that some whites "handed down."

As mentioned before, Nancy's community does not try to help her. Even though Nancy had been working for the Compsons for a long time, Mr. Compson does very little to give his aid to a situation of which he was aware. Patrick Samway thinks that Mr. Compson "shows his utter lack of sympathy for her [Nancy's] plight'" (qtd. in Jones 297). Admittedly, he does let her spend some nights over at his house and walks her home sometimes; however, he should have done more to try to appease her fears. However, he does little in the end when Nancy's fears of Jesus are at their worst. William Toole says that when Mr. Compson says Jesus has left town, it is simply an excuse with no real foundation (qtd. in Jones 296). Mr. Compson (and the Compson family) represent the many different aspects of white society. Nancy was let down by what was to her her white community.

Even though Dilsey is probably the most stable and kind person in the Compson "family" (included in the Compson family are their servants' families), like the Compsons, she does little to help Nancy. Dilsey does give Nancy some coffee to soothe her hysteria, but she never really acknowledges any validity to the truthfulness of Nancy's claim that Jesus was going to kill her (regardless of whether Dilsey felt Nancy's fears were legitimate or not). She did not offer a place for Nancy to spend the night and even told Nancy to go home, the place that Nancy feared the most. Whether the treatment (or lack of) that Dilsey (and the whole black community) gave to help Nancy was due to Nancy's mixed-race is debatable, but it does show that the black community acted just like the white community in this situation. Neither tried to help her overcome her demons. Ray West, Jr., explains it clearly when he says "that Nancy's, 'wanton living midway between the worlds of whites and blacks has left her unprotected by the code of either'" (qtd. in Jones 289).

James Carothers explains that the codes that existed in Nancy's society (such as race) are what makes her a "doomed victim" (qtd. in Jones 289). It is society will that chose for Nancy to be a prostitute. It is society that chose for her fears to be left ignored. Dilsey asks Nancy why she did not call the police about Jesus, but Nancy knows that a protec-

tor made up of Caucasians would offer little protection for her. They would offer the same comfort that Mr. Compson offered—the comfort that comes from petty excuses. Nancy was a victim of society and of her time. Slabey says it well when he says, "Nancy is not only what she has made herself but what generations of Southern society have made her" (Slabey). Her society uses what nature intended to show beauty, skin pigmentation, to predetermine a person's future. In Nancy's case, she ended up a pregnant, fearful prostitute, with help from no one, scorned as a nigger and left to deal with "Jesus" on her own. ❖

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The Messenger:

Rebecca Harding Davis

by Laura Rosman

Laura Rosman, a transfer student working on her BSN, has been a nurse for 19 years. She is married with three children, lives in Laurinburg, and works full-time in the ICU at Scotland Memorial Hospital. She and her family relocated from a farm in Iowa about three years ago.

The flood of immigrants into America during the late 1800's was exactly what the industrial revolution needed to continue its furious growth. They would become the fuel to feed the ravenous, unrelenting scramble of companies capitalizing on natural resources and the inventions of the era. Industrialists advertised for immigrants to come to America where a job and the "good life" could be found. But the capitalistic barons had only one concern: filling the numerous manual labor positions at the lowest possible cost. The true offer of American industry was grim working conditions, long hours, minimal wages, and unfit housing. *Nation of Nations* reports that most immigrants relocated to the industrialized cities with notions of making enough money to have a decent lifestyle, or even to return home with a profit (Davidson et al. 475). The rude awakening started on Ellis Island where they were herded through immigration procedures and then directly into the exploited life of the industrial worker. Because most were unskilled and had language barriers, the industrial system gobbled them up with little regard to their humanity. This was the beginning of what was to become one of America's most important battles: capitalism vs. human rights.

These men, women, and children worked like machines, but the actual machines were taken care of far better than they were. The exploitation of industrial workers at this time in history was appallingly common. They worked 6-7 days a week enduring long shifts, unsafe conditions, and tedious repetitive tasks (Davidson et al. 488). While industry prospered, the worker suffered economically, physically and spiritually. How could the lives of workers be so completely ignored, or accepted as status quo, while the profits came rolling in? Did the capitalistic monster blind everyone? Rebecca Harding Davis, an author ahead of her time, was one of the few who saw and acted. She had the insight and courage to address this beastly social issue in a way that people might actually listen and take action.

Davis published the story "Life in the Iron Mills," notably at the beginning of the industrial revolution in America (1861). Long before the talk of unions and labor strikes, she identifies the oppressive effects of industrialism on the lower working class. *Harper American Literature* points out that Davis's use of realism to expose the horrors of industrialism was new to this literary era (McQuade et al. 1116). Davis lures the reader into the story with detailed, harsh realism and convincing metaphors. This method naturally evokes human sentiment. Skillfully Davis has the narrator call upon the reader through out the story to reflect. The narrator asks, "What do you make of a case like that, amateur psychologist? You call it an altogether serious thing to be alive: to these men it is a drunken jest, a joke, - horrible to angels perhaps, to them commonplace enough" (Davis 1118). Through the narrator she pleads for a chance to tell this story honestly, while hopefully involv-

ing the reader in the search for a solution to the economic and spiritual oppression of the industrial worker.

Davis begins the narrative with the bleak, pessimistic view of the town. She sets the tone of hopelessness and desperation with her vivid descriptions of the river and smoke. The river, even though sluggish and polluted, still has the ability to flow where life flourishes. Not so for the mill workers; their future is spiritless and grim. With no possible solution to this capitalistic mastered poverty and inhumanity, many turn to alcohol and live like rats from day to day. Davis controls the image with realism, while the narrator asks the sentimental questions: "I dare not put this secret into words...These men, going by with drunken faces and brains full of unawakened power, do not ask it of Society or of God. Their lives ask it, their deaths ask it. There is no reply"(Davis 1119). Dare one hope and actually believe there is a better life for them? And so, the "secret question" *is* asked, and Davis submits society's answers through her characters. But it is the mysterious narrator who will have the most significant impact on the reader, thus allowing Davis's theory to be visualized.

The narrator believes that by telling the life-story of Hugh Wolfe, and all its darkness, some kind of moral response will come from the reader, thus society. In Curnutt's article he discusses the "cross-gendered" narrator and the use of direct address. Davis's goal with this narrative style was to hopefully attract a large group of readers. Davis cunningly invites upper and middle class society, regardless of gender, to read this story. She is aware that most really don't was to hear an honest portrayal of the great abyss between them and the lower working class. (Curnutt 2-3). The narrative is not only the life-story of Hugh Wolfe, but also a window through which to look at the many people that make up and influence society. Davis wants the reader to see them all, and possibly even identify with them.

Through the characters' roles and the mysterious narrator Davis is devoted to revealing the many social responses that occur as the plight of the mill worker unfolds. The most influential of these is the unidentified narrator, who constantly interjects empathy for Wolfe and Deborah's situation. Curnutt describes the narrator as one who "...insists that writing should be obtruded upon by every one alike, for what is at stake is not a romanticized notion of ideal truth, but a communal vision of reality"(5). Thus, the narrator often describes a scene and then directly addresses the reader, calling for reflection upon the common human bond. When the narrator describes Deborah's feelings for Hugh s/he directly questions the reader:

> You laugh at it? Are pain and jealousy less savage realities down here in this place I am taking you to than in your own house or your own heart,-your heart, which they clutch at sometimes? The note is the same, I fancy,be the octave high or low. (Davis 1123)

Using this narrative style Davis allows the reader to identify with the humanity of the lower class. This honest realization will hopefully evoke the social response the narrator is looking for: compassion for the desperately needed social reform that will truly give these people hope.

Davis never lets the goal slip far from sight; she always comes back to the desolate lives that these people endure and how their oppression influences the choices they make. She uses the characters Dr. May, Kirby and Mitchell to portray the common responses of society. Dr. May is the "heart," Kirby is "capitalism," and Mitchell is the "intellectual." They all recognize

This essay is an insightful exploration of how Davis comments on the often-destructive nature of capitalism. Laura's essay demonstrates the high level of thinking we demand from our students at UNCP.
—Jesse Peters

Hugh Wolfe as an artist, a person with special ability and God-given talent. But none of them will actually help him to overcome the grip that poverty has on him. The korl woman statue is a symbol of the community's spiritual starvation. Davis wants this controversial topic to be explored and honestly debated. The conversation at the mill between these three men and Hugh Wolfe is crucial, as each response could be a legitimate answer for many readers of this story. Mitchell, accused of representing "taste, culture, refinement," gives the speech that only "one of *them*" can bring about reform: "...out of their bitter need will be thrown up their own light-bringer, -their Jean Paul, their Cromwell, their Messiah" (Davis1130). This sums up the general theory, that help from people outside their class would be useless, so no responsibility is taken by anyone. They can walk away from the fires of Hell, but the workers are trapped. It is no surprise that pity, kind words, and some loose change is all that will be thrown to the staving mill workers.

Davis leaves Hugh Wolfe hanging with the thought that it is "his right" to change his life and become the artist that is inside of him (Davis1129). At the same time Wolfe identifies with Mitchell, they seem to connect on a spiritual and artistic level. Wolfe knows that this is the man he has dreamed of being. But it is Dr. May that has given him the answer that will direct his destiny: money and "his right" to it. Wolfe realizes he will never have money, and thus never be more than a poor mill worker. Morrison describes Wolfe's pivotal moment of giving up hope and his dream:

> Wolfe can fantasize of a dreamlike escape from his present, but he simultaneously rejects one conventional avenue of happiness in the reality of his life, turning away from Janey's sleeping form and rejecting "some plan for the future, in which she had borne a part. He gave it up at that moment, then and forever ... somehow, the man's soul, as God and the angels looked down on it, never was the same afterwards."(3)

Morrison concludes that Wolfe is so depressed at this point that he does not care about the laws of man or God and chooses the path of a doomed man (3). Davis prepares the reader, through her narrator, for this fateful turn of events and again pleads for insight and humanity in the judgement of Wolfe.

Significant to this plea, Davis cunningly shows how traditional religion does not save Wolfe from making this horrible decision to commit theft. Thus, this is also not the answer to the community poverty of the lower class. She describes the preacher at the sermon:

> His words passed far over the furnace-tender's grasp, toned to suit another class of culture; they sounded in his ears avery pleasant song in an unknown tongue. He meant to curethis world-cancer with a steady eye that had never glared withhunger, and a hand that neither poverty nor strychnine-whiskey had taught to shake. (Davis1135)

Many critics agree that Davis wanted new answers, not the prayers and pity that were so prevalent in that era. Shurr writes: "Once again, Davis is ruling out the effectiveness and the relevance of main line religions to the problems of a newly-industrialized society" (7). Davis is interested in a solution that involves sincere action from anyone who can bestow some beauty and enrichment on these oppressed people.

The end of the story reveals Hugh's suicide and Deborah's rescue by the Quaker woman. Wolfe's death is his final escape from a hopeless life. Deborah is living in the country with the Quakers, but in con-

stant grief over Hugh's death: a tragic end appropriately suited to society's ignored nightmare. Davis, consistent with her style, lets the narrator reminisce over Wolfe's death: "Something is lost in the passage of every soul from one eternity to the other, - something pure and beautiful, which might have been and was not: a hope, a talent, a love over which the soul mourns" (Davis 1141). She wants the reader to mourn his death also, and follow the narrator for clues as to how this tragedy might somehow give an answer to the "secret question."

Judgement day has come for Hugh and Deborah, but what about the rest of society? A solution can be assembled by looking at every aspect of this well-crafted novel. Davis is consistent with religion and art themes all through this story, leading some critics to believe that the narrator is an example of her solution. Not only is Hugh Wolfe an artist, but so is the narrator. Shurr concludes that Davis gives the narrator a "religion of the heart, deeper and more transforming than religions of the head, social Christianity, civil religion." He observes that Davis intended art to be the uniting force amongst the workers. Davis had many role models for this art-based religion: Emerson, Whitman and Ruskin (8). Probably the most influential "religio-esthetic" author was Ruskin, as he was at the height of his popularity at this time in history. He could have been the "perfect model for Davis's narrator to emulate"(9). This radical and strong influence for active social reform was superbly portrayed through Davis's determined, realistic style of writing. "Life in the Iron Mills" successfully delivers the passionate message that the silent masses were unable to cry out.❖

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James Baldwin's Use of Harlem

as the Antagonist in "Sonny's Blues"

by Jessica Skewes

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The antagonist of a story works against the main character in order to create conflict. Though Harlem is the setting, a place filled with crime, drugs, and poverty, it is also the antagonist because it contains these hardships that work against the people within the city. Harlem helps define the characters of both Sonny and his brother, as well as enhances one's knowledge of heritage and culture within the city.

The story opens with the older brother reading about Sonny's arrest in a newspaper. The reader receives the first glimpse of Harlem in the opening paragraph. Sonny's brother describes: "I stared at it in the swinging lights of the subway car, and in the faces and bodies of the people, and in my own face, trapped in the darkness which roared outside" (257). This character cannot escape the darkness of Harlem; not only is it inescapable for him, but for others on the subway as well.

Harlem is vital to the story because it reflects the attitudes and behaviors of those living in the community. The older brother speaks of Sonny: "And he'd always been a good boy, he hadn't ever turned hard or evil or disrespectful, the way kids can; so quick, so quick, especially in Harlem" (258). This story suggests that Harlem is a typical place for children to become tainted and lost. Sonny's mother confirms this later in the story when she asks the brother to look after Sonny when she is gone. She insists, "It ain't a question of his being a good boy . . . nor of his having good sense. It ain't only the bad ones, nor yet the dumb ones that gets [sic] sucked under" (265). Harlem does not discriminate between children who are smart, stupid, good or bad; in one form or another Harlem will bring down the lives of all who reside there.

It is important for the reader to understand the future is glum, doesn't change, and seems to offer the youth of Harlem absolutely nothing. The older brother confirms, "These boys, now, were living as we'd been living then, they were growing up with a rush, and their heads bumped abruptly against the low ceiling of their actual possibilities" (258). The hopes and dreams of the young adults are prevented by the harsh reality of Harlem. Even the educators in Harlem offer little to the youth, teaching only what is required. They leave the school as quickly as they came. Sonny's brother observes, "A teacher passed through them every now and again, quickly, as though he or she couldn't wait to get out of the courtyard, to get those boys out of their sight and off their minds" (258). Here, not only does Harlem work against the youth; it works against those involved with the next generation. People who do manage to leave Harlem are never truly gone. The brother reveals, "Those who got out always left something of themselves behind, as some animals amputate a leg and leave it in the trap" (263). Part of them will be left in Harlem, as part of Harlem will always be part of them.

While driving through Harlem the brothers realize how little the city has

changed through time. The brother paints a powerful image when he states, "So we drove along, between the green of the park, and the stony, lifeless elegance of hotels and apartment buildings, toward the vivid, killing streets of our childhood. These streets hadn't changed . . ." (262). Even the "new" Harlem quickly fades and becomes part of the old city. When Sonny's brother describes his new home, he describes: "A few days after it was up it seemed uninhabitably new, now, of course, it's already rundown" (263).

The scenery isn't the only thing in Harlem that has remained constant; the crime in the city has been the same according to previous generations. The brothers had an uncle that was unknown, until their mother finally reveals his untimely death at the end of her own life. She declares, " I am not telling you all this . . . to make you bitter or hate nobody. I am telling you this because you got a brother. And the world ain't changed" (266). Their mother has lived through the violence; she expects Sonny to be taken care of and protected when she dies.

After their mother dies, Sonny pleads with his brother to let him leave Harlem; Sonny begs, " Look, brother. I don't want to stay in Harlem no more, I really don't" (269). Sonny would much rather join the army or navy; he doesn't care where he is as long as it isn't Harlem. The irony is the brother keeps Sonny in Harlem in order to keep him alive and safe from the war; meanwhile, the dangers and darkness of Harlem are literally killing Sonny. When Sonny returns, his brother begins to realize just how horrible the environment in Harlem is for Sonny: "I was simply bringing him back to the danger he had almost died trying to escape" (263).

James Baldwin uses light in the story in a way that previous authors have not. Typically light symbolizes security, the absence of problems, but in "Sonny's Blue's" light represents the dark; in a lit[illegible] the light lets the reader see the dark[illegible] despair, and hopelessness in Harlem. The older brother explains that "boys exactly like the boys we once had been found themselves smothering in these houses, came down into the light and air and found themselves encircled by disaster" (263). Again this symbolism occurs when Sonny's brother reminisces about his childhood; he remembers, "And when light fills the room, the child is filled with darkness. He knows that every time this happens he's moved just a little closer to the darkness outside" (265). The children fear the darkness because it is where the adults are; they are scared this darkness will also be their future. The darkness is the struggle of their heritage, a continuous struggle that has always been and always will be. According to the brother, "All they really knew were two darknesses, the darkness of their lives, which was now closing in on them, and the darkness of the movies, which had blinded them in to that other darkness . . ." (258).

Sonny tries to escape the darkness of Harlem through his music; in fact he drowns himself in the music. The family knew that "Sonny was at that piano playing for his life" (271). Playing the piano was a matter of survival for Sonny; it was his only retreat from the drugs of Harlem. He played so often that "Isabel finally confessed that it wasn't like living with a person at all, it was like living with sound" (270).

Both brothers are in constant conflict; they do not have an effective way to communicate. Sonny's brother frowns upon Sonny's way of dealing with Harlem by playing the piano. To the brother, Sonny's "music seems to be an excuse for the life he led" (271). He is blind to the fact that music is Sonny's escape from drug-infested Harlem. Because the brother is older and promises to take care of Sonny, he is always

Jessica has written an original and engaging essay about setting in "Sonny's Blues," in which she is sensitive to detail and imagery. With her fluid prose and keen observations, she demonstrates the ability to thoughtfully and intelligently analyze a complex story.
—Susan Cannata

the dictator. In one argument, Sonny says, " I hear you. But you never hear anything *I* say" (270). When it comes to his words and music, Sonny plays on deaf ears when it comes to the brother. He tells his brother, "You got to find a way to listen" (276).

The epiphany occurs when the brother is able to hear, listen, and understand Sonny's music. The arguments between the brothers occur in Harlem; it isn't until they go to the Village that the epiphany is reached. The brother realizes, "Here, I was in Sonny's World. Or rather: his kingdom" (277). It is in this nightclub where the brother can listen. The brother explains, "Freedom lurked around us and I understood, at last, that he could help us be free if we would listen, that he would never be free until we did" (279). The brother had to come out of the darkness to hear Sonny. The ending is bitter sweet; the brothers must return to Harlem after Sonny's gig in the Village. The brother says sadly, " And I was yet aware
only a moment, that the world waited outside, as a hungry tiger, and that trouble stretched above us, longer than the sky" (280). The brother's eyes have been opened to Sonny and, yes, he has finally been able to hear the music, but the dangers and darkness of their heritage lurk through Harlem like a cat in the night. From the generations of the past and for the generations to come, Harlem will still remain hopeless: a struggle that all who reside there must endure.❖

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School Violence:

Beyond the Media's Explanations

by Andrea Vukcevic

There has recently been much media attention and focus given to school massacres such as the one at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas. American society has been forced to stare at the faces of average looking boys, as young as 9, and visualize these youngsters terrorizing their peers with weapons that many of us have only seen in the movies. Home videos and photographs of these children proudly aiming and shooting guns at animals have alarmed us all and forced us to begin examining our neighbor's and children's peers for the warning signs of a child killer. Everyone from expert doctors to news reporters has searched for the environmental and genetic factors that precede murder committed by a child, especially against other children. The bottom line is, however, that no single factor or explanation can be given for such a complex problem. The underlying crisis does not lie with the children being born into this world; it lies within the society in which we raise these children and expect them to understand acceptance and love without showing them what these qualities are. Their violence is a response to the broken world, which presents consumerism, but cannot sustain significance through traditional institutions, especially the educational system.

Experts from all fields, ranging from psychologists to social workers, have proposed theories and possible explanations for the senseless attacks children have carried out against their fellow students. Author Susan Keys (2000), writing for *Professional School Counseling*, summarizes the roots of violent behavior as "poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, dysfunctional families, and discrimination" (p. 1). Through the media, society has learned that school violence can be attributed to a combination of these factors.

Opinions as to the motives behind school attacks have ranged from revenge, jealousy, and frustration to sheer thrill seeking. The perpetrators, however, aren't drug traffickers or professional hit men; they are boys of all different races and socio-economic backgrounds. The myth that it is "someone else's children" is quickly disappearing and parent are being forced to face the fact that tragedies could happen at their local school without warning. Images of Eric Harris and David Klebold, both Caucasian, neither underprivileged, disturbed the world because they were not what people wanted to see. The reason America has sat up and taken notice of the school violence epidemic, however, is because instances of school massacres are rare. According to Geoffrey Cowley, author of *Newsweek*'s "Why Children Turn Violent" (1998, April 6, p.25), statistics continue to show that there are far more inner city child-on-child murders than the atypical shootings in middle-class towns. Cowley notes, "Urban black males make up slightly more than 1 percent of the population, yet they commit 30 percent of all homicides." It may appear unfair to stereotype govern-

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ment housing projects and urban ghettos as factories that mass-produce murderers and criminals, but children often are "growing up surrounded by delinquent and criminal adults...[in settings] where self-respecting young men literally aspire to get away with murder" (Cowley, p.25).

Parental failure has always been considered the main factor in creating a dysfunctional child. What better escape from an extremely complex problem than a relatively simple explanation: children learn from their parents; therefore, bad children must have resulted from bad parents. Television programs like Jerry Springer and other talk shows continue this perception and distribute it to a mass audience on a daily basis. In many cases, a combination of child-abuse, parental neglect, and poor stimulation are to blame for creating delinquency amongst children and teens. However, not every killer has survived a traumatic childhood. Jonathan Alter (1998) refers to Jeffrey Dahmer's father, who wrote a book about being the father of one of America's most infamous killers, and illustrates how even good parenting can bear the worst products (p. 27).

Supporters of gun control blame easy access to guns as the reasons the Jonesboro and Littleton massacres occurred. According to a *Newsweek* article, "Harnessing the Hysteria," even the strictest gun-control laws could not have prevented the Jonesboro tragedy. Andrew Golden would have always been in close proximity to guns since his grandfather was a wildlife-management-area supervisor (Alter, 1998, p. 27). In addition, violent movies, television shows, and video games have been under attack by outraged parents, clamoring for answers and solutions to their fears about their children's safety at school. As research shows, "television doesn't 'cause' copycat crimes" (Klite, 2000, p.2). Access to guns, media violence, poverty, and poor parenting continue to be held responsible for delinquency amongst teens. These superficial reasons are not sustainable because they fail to address the underlying problems within adult society and within our schools: the enclosed society our children live with on a daily basis.

Whether Americans choose to admit it or not, their society is incredibly violent. There is a relatively high acceptance for violence, which is depicted and reinforced through images on television, in movies, on the Internet, and in video games. Scott Staples, writing for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (2000), introduces some very insightful hypotheses as to what it is in society that breeds violence in our schools. He argues, "The need for meaning in life is not addressed thematically in our culture or in our schools" (p.2). Staples proposes an interesting theory that he names that "broken world": a combination of consumerism, greed, boredom, and the emphasis on calculation, which leaves the young a "sense that they live facing a dead future" (Staples, p.4). This is an extremely important concept which not only can explain the powerlessness and dismay of children in today's accelerated world, but also why humans have begun a disturbing trend towards living for momentary experiences and sensations. Gambling, obesity, and drug and alcohol addiction are common examples of problems arising from our experience-oriented culture.

The "broken world" theory incorporates certain trends that have the potential to be the downfall of modern society. Consumerism creates a void within an individual in which one feels he or she must continue to acquire possessions in order to satisfy a need. That need, however, stems from greed and the feeling of inadequacy with what one already owns. Couple this with the emphasis on ranking and standardized

What impressed me most in this research essay is Andrea's depth of insight into the complex issue of school violence. She integrates well her own thoughts and ideas from reading on the subject, creating a forceful argument that this complex problem of youth violence calls for human intervention rather than harsh policies and penalties.
—Monika Brown

testing, and students are no longer invited to think and express themselves freely, and to want to go beyond the surface when studying. They fail to realize the internal transformation a true education can provide (Staples, p.4). They are left a fragmented world that offers momentary releases from boredom but cannot satisfy one's thirst for deeper meaning in their surroundings. Through this, our young are alienated, and may turn to violence as a response to "the emptiness in which they find themselves" (p.4).

Subconsciously, we are all aware that sex can sell beer, clothes, and cigarettes. Likewise, images of perceived popularity can sell toys, beverages, games, and music. It is increasingly common to purchase items not for their purpose or helpful attributes, but for the sensations, experience, or images they provide. Consider that, instead of working hard at a job and loving it for its self-actualizing qualities, success equals a large house with a Lexus parked in the driveway. Taking this theory another step further, one no longer needs to even work to obtain such luxuries; they can be stolen or bought with drug money and the illusion of success is created. Being an upstanding, contributing member of society is no longer more valuable than what lies in your bank account or in your garage. Society has become resistant to doing things the challenging and morally correct way, and has instead opted to cut corners to eliminate obstacles. In doing so, however, we miss the learning process that is involved.

Our consumerist culture operates by psychologically inducing its members to satisfy the superficial need to hoard. Greed is tightly intertwined in a cycle in which individuals are constantly searching for acceptance and pleasure, and purchasing objects and experiences to overcome the feeling that "there has to be more to life than this." One of the medieval Catholic Seven Deadly Sins, greed is an influential factor in driving our economies and pushing our limits morally. Staples says: "a consumerist culture attempts to fulfill this lack by the acquisition of objects whose value diminishes upon purchase. The result is greed—psychologically, the need to acquire more and more in order to assuage the encroaching sense that the lack still remains" (p.2).

Education, when executed correctly, should move individuals internally, even if only in one subject. Instead of the hunger for material possessions or momentary sensations, there should exist a drive to learn about the world. Through art. Through science. Through music. Staples claims that "by merely preparing students for work or college and by emphasizing the external perspective through our grading and ranking processes, we fail to invite students to discover the internal transformations possible in education" (p. 4). Frustration, boredom, and ultimately, crime, can blossom from this perception of being left behind and no longer in touch with humanity. Whether it is the curriculum, government policies, or the apathy of individual teachers, schools have lost their ability to inspire students to explore and achieve beyond the minimum. Schools mirror what transpires in general society and reflect how children view the world.

Violence provides an outlet from the boredom, greed, and realization that the world we live in can be very surreal. As Staples says, violence is a response to a broken world (p. 6). It is highly addictive because it creates an "epiphany" that momentarily relieves the perpetrator of his or her stresses and oppressions. However, violence fails as a release mechanism when one realizes the consequences of one's own actions, and gets drawn further into the spiral of chaos and confusion. For Staples, "violence

is a failed epiphany, that is, a momentary opening upon a world of potential significance that fails because it cannot sustain a meaningful world, and thus collapses back into meaninglessness" (Staples, p.6). When one commits an act of violence, the individual is taken to a level of heightened awareness. It emerges through all of the brokenness that exists and often seems like the clear, logical course of action in order to gain control of a situation. The problem with violence is that it achieves this awareness through destructive means, which return the executor to face the consequences and realize the implications of their actions. For those without reflective abilities, who understand that violence is a loss of control as opposed to a harnessing of it, there can be severe implications. The cycle of violence, in which a perceived injustice has occurred and self-esteem damaged, is dangerous because the explosive nature of the act creates the heightened awareness and can be addictive.

Seeing a gun lying on a table is not going to motivate all children or even most children to use it against one of their siblings, parents, or classmates: there are underlying factors and motives. The problem is vastly complicated and is comprised of hundreds of influences in each individual circumstance. Common themes linking school violence, from inner-city schools to middle-class ones like Columbine, can be found when society and the deterioration of the educational system are examined. Authors Mary Anne Raywind and Libby Oshiyama agree, "One of the clearest lessons of suburban Columbine High School is that violence is not confined to the inner city or to disadvantaged youngsters. Indeed, both at Columbine and at other schools in which multiple killings have occurred, the assassins have come from middle-class families" (2000, p.3). Consumerism, greed, boredom, and the failure of schools to promote learning and meaning amongst its pupils are to be blamed. There are positive ideas and trends emerging in the wake of the massacres at Littleton and Jonesboro, trends that support a more humane approach to teaching children, and nurturing them in an environment that teaches acceptance, respect, and non-violent means of dealing with situations. No one, especially children, should feel that violence is the one and only way of dealing effectively with a situation, or the only way to get your point across. Through respect and positive adult contact, children can be taught both directly and indirectly that we are all different, but differences make us unique, and that is important to society.❖

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***ReVisions: Best Student Essays*—Fall 2001**

This publication is designed to provide students with an opportunity to publish nonfiction work produced at UNCP, and the essays published by *ReVisions: Best Student Essays* will demonstrate the finest caliber of writing produced by UNCP students.

All submissions must be nominated by a UNCP faculty member. Faculty members are encouraged to nominate their students' best nonfiction work. Students who feel that they have a strong essay for submission are encouraged to ask a faculty member to sponsor that essay. Nomination forms are available in the English, Theatre, and Languages Department in Dial Humanities Building.

Papers may cover any topic within any field of study at UNCP. We accept only nonfiction submissions, but personal essays are acceptable when written to fulfill a requirement for a course offered at UNCP. We encourage submissions from all fields and majors.

All submissions must be accompanied by a nomination form. Students should fill out the nomination form completely and sign it, granting permission to the editors to edit and publish the essay if accepted. Faculty members should comment briefly on the merits of the essay and any other elements that make it an excellent example of student work. Sign the form and submit it with the manuscript.

Nomination form included on the reverse of this page. ☞

Manuscripts requirements: no more than 3500 words in length, double-spaced, and conform to the MLA style manual. Do not include any names or identifying information on the essay itself; use the nomination form as a cover sheet. All essays will be read and judged on their own merits in a blind selection process. If a submission is chosen for publication, the author will be notified and asked to submit an electronic version.

The deadline for submissions to be considered for publication in the Fall 2001 issue is September 28, 2001.

For Further Information:

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ReVisions: Best Student Essays

Sponsored by the Department of English, Theatre, and Languages
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Author's Name:

Title of Essay:

Course no. & name:

Major:

Class Year: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Address:

Phone & email:

Faculty Sponsor:

Department:

Address:

Office Phone & email:

Please note the essay's merits and any other pertinent comments about the student or his/her work. These comments may be quoted in the publication:

Faculty Sponsor's Signature: Date:

Student: I grant the University of North Carolina at Pembroke permission to publish my essay, if chosen, in *Best Student Essays*. I also give permission for my work to be edited for spelling, punctuation, usage, and grammatical errors. I understand that parts of my essay may be edited to accommodate for space limitations in the magazine.

Student Author's Signature: Date:

Please return form with attached submission (no name or identifying marks on submission please) by **September 28, 2001**, to:
Dr. Jesse Peters, 113 Dial Humanities Building, or Dr. Susan Cannata, 104B Dial Humanities Building