

**The
Writing
Anthology
2000**

THE WRITING ANTHOLOGY

Welcome to the 2000 *Writing Anthology*! As you can see, we have had our hands full this semester! We received nearly 50 excellent papers, and from these submissions we selected 15. We would like to extend a sincere congratulations to all those chosen to be part of this year's *Anthology*—your papers have not only competed in a strong pool but have also passed our difficult standards.

Since we have already praised the quality of papers we received, one could imagine the difficulty we met with when deciding the winners of the annual John Allen Award. Though every one of the papers selected for this *Anthology* was superb, we feel that three specific papers were the stronger candidates for the special recognition: "The Sky Over Our Heads" by Lorena Fernández-Quñones, "Polishing Ground Level" by Jenny Stahr, and "Militant Anabaptism" by Bryan T. Klassen.

Very important people need to be recognized as key players in this publication. Walter Cannon, Mark Johnson and Lyn Isaacson were always energetic, insightful and fair—desirable and extraordinary traits for such a task. Much gratitude and appreciation to Cyndi Atkins, who was patient, diligent and always prepared to work; and our sincerest thanks to Randa Van Dyk for helping us get started. Also, thank you to the artists who offered the brilliant work found throughout *The Writing Anthology*.

We've enjoyed co-editing *The Writing Anthology*, and we hope you will enjoy the final product as much as we do!

Betsy Loomans, Co-Editor
Gwen Vahl, Co-Editor

Polishing Ground Level

Jenny Stahr

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Polishing Ground Level

Nonfiction, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay in the tradition of Montaigne, Orwell, and Dillard

Her name was Olive, and she lived to be 103. She was my great-great-grandmother, and I got to know her. I remember sitting in the sticky orange chair beside her bed. The cracked vinyl itched my skin, and a button on the seat jabbed me if I didn't sit with my feet turned in. And in between the chair and bed, a little wicker table balanced a glass jar stuffed full of candies dressed up like strawberries. I wish I could remember Grandma's face, but I can't.

Mom doubts that I can remember our visits at all—and it is true that Olive died when I was six. But if I were to fabricate memories of her, I would piece together a recollection of her smile or the feeling of her hand on mine or the favorite story of her childhood. Her photos prove that she had a wide, sweet smile. And since they say she was a farm wife, I imagine her hands were spotted with age, but still calloused and scarred. They say she told of playing with Indian girls on the west bank of the Des Moines River, but I hear this from Grandpa, not Olive. And so it's farther and farther away from me.

I think of this now, a decade later, as I shuffle down the south wing of the Evangelical Free Nursing Home. It's my big humanitarian effort for the summer, and it's no coincidence that I called Olive's old home. Mom doesn't remember what room Olive had, so as I walk, my eyes dart left and right, searching for something familiar. Any of these rooms could have been it.

I sigh when I reach the end of the hall without a shiver of recollection. The last door is closed, winged butterflies of construction paper pinned to the wood. The blue one reads "Gen" and the yellow one reads "Marilyn." Both flap their wings when I knock and the door shakes itself open. Silence. I hesitate, bringing up the damp piece of paper in the palm of my hand. I check the names for the twelfth or maybe the twentieth time. "Marilyn? Gen? Um, I'm Jenny...a

new volunteer here. Can I come in?"

Nothing. I swallow hard and edge inside and blink away the darkness. Just before I see, I hear, and the sounds float on silence: whispers from the one leaning in the wheelchair and whimpers from the pile on the bed. The whisper grows into a murmur as if she's suddenly speaking to me, but she doesn't look up. The quilts and afghans on the bed twist a little, and I only see a tuft of pale hair poking up from the far end of the heap.

"Marilyn's her name, but she don't hear it. She don't see me neither, probably, but here I sit. Not like I've got somewhere else to be." And the woman in the wheelchair reaches out and pats the tangle of white hair. "This old thing's been my roommate for the last three months. Her sons aren't here to see her off, so that's mine to do, I guess. And, oh, it's a terrible burden, specially when I think of Tom and Reggie. If they don't show me off, that'll hurt terrible."

I stand beside her, blinking. "I don't think I'm too far from it," she goes on, her tiny voice cracking as it gets louder. "But haven't I been saying it for years. Still the good Lord let me be, and maybe to watch out for the Marilyn's of this world. Who knows, and I don't mind besides, I say. Just keep me away from that second floor."

It's my first day on the job, but I already know about the second floor. The Alzheimer's patients live up there, and they're otherwise called The Purse Ladies. No one knows how the trend got started. Men and women alike carry around their "handbags," which range from paper sacks to little purses of beads and sequins. The contents vary from person to person, of course, but there's always a wallet crammed in among runaway pairs of underwear, Christmas ornaments, and wadded up tissues. The wallet is sometimes empty and sometimes packed full of photos. The sad thing is, empty or full, it doesn't matter. Tommy who started preschool last

year and has Grandpa's dimples doesn't carry any more significance than the empty plastic pocket. But when it comes down to it, Tommy's never met his Grandpa, anyway, because the folks stay away.

Gen and Marilyn live on first floor, but somehow Marilyn's children, all four of them, keep away just the same. The Purse Ladies come down for every meal as well as for the afternoon tea, and the other residents despise them because they're afraid of joining their ranks. A narrow elevator connects their worlds for now, and that's guarded by a tree trunk of a man in white named Larry.

Gen mourns his presence. She wheels backwards to find comfort in a double frame bearing boyhood photos of Tom and Reggie. "My boys get a bad feeling from his direction just like I do," she explains. I bite my lip as I remember the manager telling me just 15 minutes before that there isn't an address to reach Marilyn's children. And Gen's Tom and Reggie live in town but haven't visited the home in four years.

"I'm sure you won't go up there," I say, nodding towards the ceiling. She lowers the pictures to her lap and bends over, scrutinizing the images. The room is too dark—the tiny window's blinds are snapped shut. My eyes wander the room, but find that shadows dull every edge and corner, and I turn my ears instead to Marilyn and notice that the whimpering is gone. I wonder if she's dead. I shudder and without a word step behind Gen and wheel her out of the room. She doesn't say a word. As we pass her bed on the way out, she quietly reaches out to leave her sons behind.

Three o'clock and time for tea. Gen hums to herself as I shuffle and she rolls. A line of The Purse Ladies marches behind us, and I walk faster to miss them, and I feel guilty and relieved when we turn the corner and the dining room spreads out bright and shining in front of us. A cup of lukewarm coffee and a graham

cracker for Gen and a gingersnap cookie for me. We sit down at a corner table.

"Sailors," she offers, and I look up, relieved to have a new topic of conversation. "If I miss one thing in the world, it's sailors. Them and a swirl cone from the Dairy Stripe. Tell me, honey, you ever stop down to the Dairy Stripe?" I shake my head. "Oh, well, honey. When I was 19 or 20, that year my brothers shipped out to fight Hitler. Know what I did one night after they was all asleep? I got up naked in front of the picture window and danced. Oh, and the sailors saw that and never again did I lack for a swirl cone."

I choke down my gingersnap. Just as I start to recover, Gen winks at me and I choke again. She cackles and her thick face crinkles into a million folds, her fuzzy gray hair falling back. Just then a Purse Lady hears the commotion and hobbles over to sit with us. We eye her—it's like junior high when the girl with the wrong pair of jeans tries to find a place at the popular table at lunch. Except that she wears flannel pajamas with an old-fashioned lace scarf tied around her neck. She smiles shyly and lifts up her cup of tea as if to offer us a toast. "I'm Lois and pleased to know you," she chirps. "And how are you named?"

Gen doesn't answer, instead raising the cup of coffee to her mouth. She points out her pinky finger as a joke. I give Gen a stern look, and she rolls her eyes but gradually softens into a smile. She smiles at Lois, too, for my sake, and I feel a tingle to know that we have a start of some sort of friendship. I turn back to Lois. "I'm Jenny. I'm just visiting."

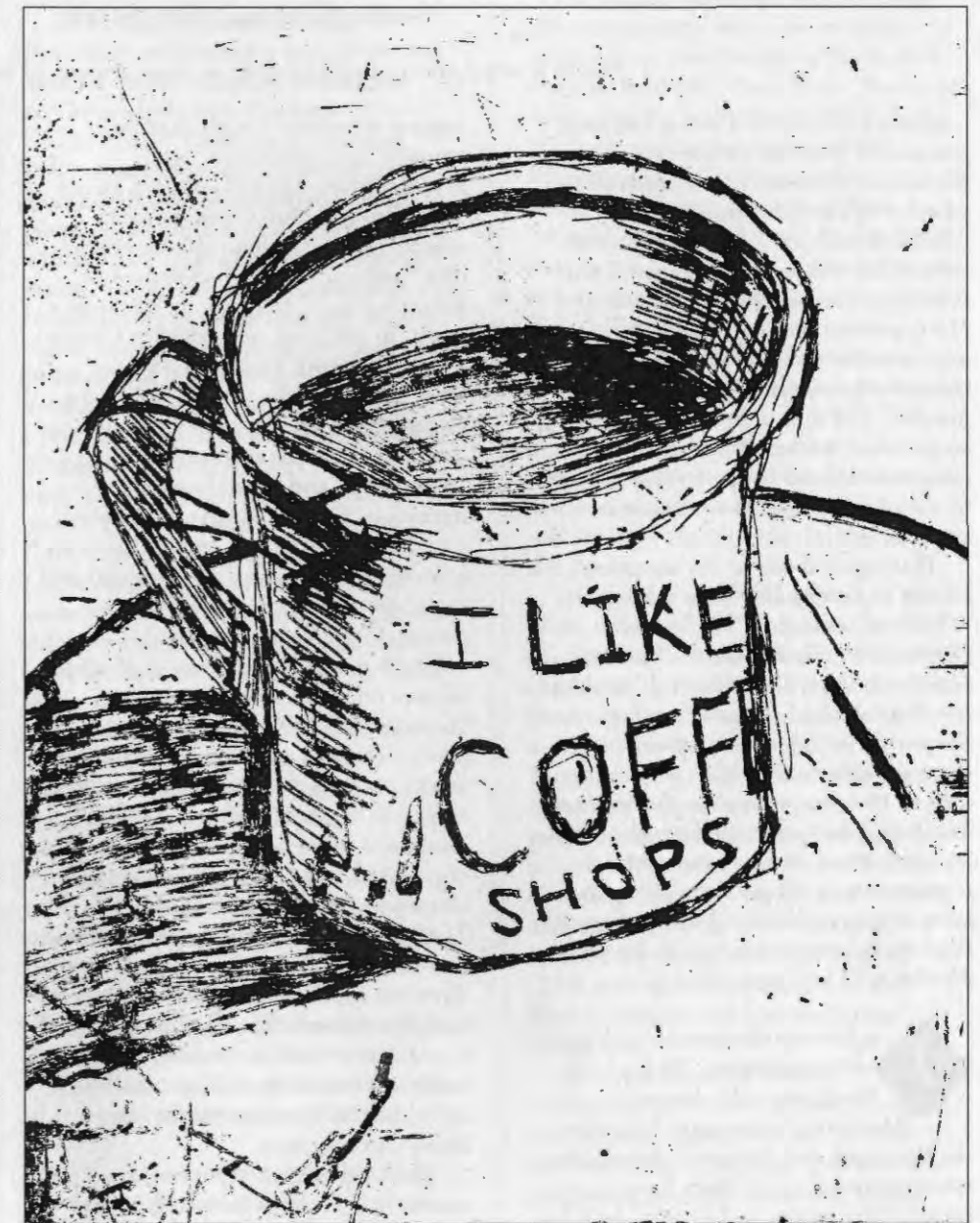
She abruptly leans in, staring at me. Just as I'm about to look away, she throws up both arms with a yell. "I know you! You used to come here visiting when you were just a wisp of a girl. Yes, I certainly do remember you."

"My Grandma Olive," I murmur. "You knew her? You remember me?" And I'm desperately trying to lodge this Purse Lady somewhere in my memory. Did she live across the hall from Olive? Was that it? In a moment, much too quickly, I promise myself that Lois didn't start out on second floor. She must be the one I remember seeing from the sticky orange chair. She would watch me from her bed and blow kisses.

"Heavens, yes," she nods. "I suppose I know most everybody who comes and goes here. I teach school just down the road, you see, and I watch them all grow up, all the little boys and girls. I remember you winning that spelling bee last October with D-A-F-F-O-D-I-L. Of course I do. In fact, I have pictorials of all my students just inside my wallet here." She brings her purse up from her lap

and slams it down on the table between us.

She fumbles with the clasp for a couple minutes, and I just watch, willing my hands to reach out and help her, but they remain clenched in a ball against my chest. Again I try to imagine the touch of Olive's hand on mine as Lois suddenly forgets the clasp. Again Lois raises her cup high in the air as if in triumph.



"Cup of Coffee"
Joe Cory

“Landscapes of the soul”: an ecocritical view of nature symbols in the poetry of Antonio Machado

Senior Seminar, Mary Stark

Shape a synthetic paper focused on some aspect of ecocriticism

Antonio Machado is one of the most prominent Spanish writers and poets of the twentieth century. Classified as a member of the Generation of '98, Machado took part in a movement to reestablish the political, cultural, and intellectual importance of his country. His appreciation for Spain is expressed, in much of his work, through descriptions of the physical landscape of Spain. In addition to simple descriptions, however, the images in Machado's poetry often refer to social and political situations in the country.

This paper looks at the images of nature in four of Machado's poems: "Fields of Soria: lyric VII," "On the Banks of the River Duero," "Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed," and "As the Snow Melts." Included in the discussion are specific symbols that appear in these and other poems, as well as their connection to the Spain of Machado. Also examined are the ways in which these images represent occurrences in the personal life of the poet, and how Machado's use of nature fits into theories explained in Joseph Meeker's, "The Comic Mode."

In the introduction to his book of translations, Michael Predmore calls Antonio Machado "a towering figure in the literature and culture of twentieth-century Spain" (5). Others have praised his "power and genius" and the "pure spirit" with which his poems are written (Cobb 173). Poet and professor Jorge Guillen calls Machado "simply the best poet of the century" (Predmore 1). While Machado wrote prose and drama, he is most known for his poetry and its symbols and themes.

Through these poems he explores his past and current relationships and political situations in Spain. Nearly all of this exploration comes through

images of nature: the speaker finds emotion and symbolism, and eventually lessons and comfort, in the world around him. Often, natural objects take on human characteristics: this "pathetic fallacy," so named by John Ruskin, is common in Machado's work. In addition, according to George Tyler Northrup, Machado does not have to say how he feels in his poems. His thoughts are developed through descriptions of his surroundings: "Landscape and mood being in harmony, Antonio Machado arrives at mood through nature" (426). From an ecocritical standpoint, the personal and social representations in Machado's poems offer a rich category of study.

Much available criticism of Machado focuses on his inclusion in the "Generation of '98." These Spanish poets, novelists, and essayists produced works at the end of the 1800's and the early 1900's, shortly after the end of Modernist influence. The time was one of political, cultural, and intellectual transformation in Spain (Cobb 17). The country was recovering from a lost war with the United States, and direction for the future divided citizens and government. Conservatives wanted to maintain Spain's character and traditions, while liberals sought change by taking on the character of other European countries.

The writers of the Generation of '98, united by common ideals, tried to reestablish the prominence of Spain's literary and intellectual works. They questioned norms in both literature and government, and often used descriptions of place, people, and culture in their writing (Hutman 6). Through their works they attempted to define "lo español": the essence of Spain, its landscape, and its people (7). These "place" pieces often included physical descriptions on which an ecocritical study could be based. The

use of nature by many Generation of '98 poets, including Machado, follows the theories of ecocritics such as Joseph Meeker, John Ruskin, and Scott Slovic.

Northrup says Machado belongs to the Generation of '98 because of his "fondness for landscape, simplicity, and sincerity" (426). As a member of the group, he personally attempts to renew pride in Spanish literature through his descriptions of Spain's landscapes. Campos de Castilla (Fields of Castilla), for example, is Machado's most well known and characteristic collection of landscape poetry. In this book, the speaker not only describes the scenery of Castilla, but also lets those landscapes represent issues in the Spanish political, historical, and cultural systems.

Northrup discusses Machado's sense of the "spirit of the landscape" in this collection of poems:

"He views it admiringly as the theater of epic exploit, sadly as the abode of present desolation in contrast with past grandeur. He sees its wastes peopled with a race of semibarbarous peasants, with limitless possibilities for good or evil..." (426).

In the physical landscape, Machado sees good and bad; when this nature represents the people of Spain, they also take on these characteristics. The process of understanding humans through nature, builds a unique use of pathetic fallacy. Machado also pays attention to the balance of power, the social class system, and the leaders of his country. Though all of these themes are present, Campos de Castilla is not simply a historical or sociological study: it is a book of descriptive, lyrical poetry, as well (426).

"Campos de Sorian" ("Fields of Sorian"), at the heart of Campos de Castilla, is a long poem divided into nine lyrical sections. Each focuses on

an aspect of nature, but also represents issues in Spanish culture or history. In Lyric VII, the speaker begins on the "rocks of reddish hue" (line 2) in the "silver-tinted hills" around Soria (1). He personifies much of nature: "Somber groves of oaks" (5) "Fierce stony ground (6), and fields where "even the rocks dream" (12). The attitude of sadness and anger that Machado's speaker gives the rocks and trees and ground suggests the area is not entirely peaceful. If nature is read as symbols of the people of the Soria, it shows discontent in their lives. Again, Machado's work echoes Ruskin's theory of the use of pathetic fallacy.

In this poem, nature also presents military images, in addition to the tension of the people. The Duero River curves like a "crossbow's arc" (4) and the afternoons in Soria are "warlike and mystical" (8). Historically, Soria was a city of fortification: soldiers there defended much of the surrounding region, so confrontation was normal (Cobb 87). Thus Machado's descriptions of the scenery play on the city's past and on the political situations of the area. This realistic/symbolistic contrast is typical in Machado's work (Hutman 113).

"A orillas del duero" ("On the Banks of the River Duero"), discusses the same river from Lyric VII, but in more detail. The speaker journeys on the hills beside the Duero and describes the scenery in what Cobb calls "a Wordsworthian sense" (80). Like the Romantics, Machado sets this poem in a specific place and the setting is a pastoral scene. It takes place at a specific moment in the afternoon, with a speaker who writes his own meditations. At the end of the piece he walks back down the hill with the sun setting, and returns to present reality and personal conclusion (81). During his observations, the speaker describes everything from the "fissures of the rock" on the path (2) to the "mountain's strong scented rosemary, sage, lavender and thyme" (12-3) to the "majestic flight" of a wide-winged vulture (13).

As in "Fields of Soria," "Banks of the Duero" uses war-like descriptions of nature to represent the contrast in Spain's past and present. The fields below are "bitter" and on them the sun "vents its rage" (13). The curved hills in the distance look like shields (16); the Duero again looks like an "archer's bow" (20); and Soria is "a fortress for

Castille's tower before neighbor Aragon's warlike door" (21-2). Later, the speaker talks more about Castilla after it has lost many battles: "Miserable Castilla, who yesterday did reign, wrapped now in rags" (43-4) and "devoid of water...decrepit cities...as rivers do they flee the dying home (38-41). Nature here is not beautiful; it reflects the region's losses from fighting, and the tension that still exists.

This contrast between nature's simplicity and society's complexity is another aspect common to writers, according to Joseph Meeker's "The Comic Mode" (Glotfelty & Fromm 168). This theory supported by Lyric VII and "Banks of the Duero." The poems were written in the early 1900's, which was a time of political strife in Spain. The country was recovering, economically and emotionally, from a war. Citizens were unhappy; numerous protests and revolts took place in cities across the country. Spain's four-year Civil War started shortly after, in 1936 (Cobb 79). The images in Lyric VII and "Banks of the Duero" show the simple beauty in nature; at the same time, however, they become symbols of the divisions within the Spanish society. Nature, people, and politics are intertwined, as the citizens and their environment are changed by the unrest in the country.

In addition to descriptions of the physical landscapes representing external difficulties, Machado uses these images to reflect his own memories and struggles. These "landscapes of the soul" deal with everything from childhood events to personal journeys to grief for the poet's deceased wife (Predmore 15). Scott Slovic says nature writing is a "literature of hope": Machado fits this definition (Glotfelty & Fromm 368). Often his natural images become means of personal encouragement for the speaker.

The symbols of nature with which Machado achieves mood are nearly as numerous as his poems. Many of the symbols themselves are not unique to Machado. By reading works such as Leaves of Grass, Walden, and North of Boston, it becomes evident that writers such as Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Frost have described their own journeys in and relationships with nature. For Machado, however, the lyrical descriptions, personal use of language, symbolism often make these

seemingly stock descriptions more individual. Emily Dickinson, for example, does not describe rivers as crossbows, or talk often about fortresses and battles. The multiple meanings that grow out of his symbols characterize Machado's work, as well. While nature always has a physical presence in his poems, it also represents emotion, temporality, and change (Hutman 106).

One of the landscape symbols that often represents that same emotion, temporality, and change in Machado's work is the river. Often, as in "Banks of the Duero," it is the Duero River, but Machado uses other rivers, as well. According to Cobb, the rivers in Machado's poems often represent "eternal change and flow" in the life of the poet (61). Rivers also parallel roads in a symbol of life's journey, complete with difficulties such as rocks and whirlpools. In "Banks of the Duero," the journey is so difficult that the rivers "flee the dying home" (line 41). The personification in pieces like this strengthens the connection between the action of nature and the actual sentiment of the citizens described in the poem.

In contrast to the movement of the rivers, a number of the poems in Machado's book *Soleadades* (Solitudes) contain sculptured stone fountains. The fountains are often associated with events in the speaker's childhood (Predmore 14). Combined with the stone that represents a type of permanence, the fountain becomes a paradox. The poet is pulled in different directions: one way by his past (stone), and another by the ever changing issues immediate to his life (water). Cobb calls this "the paradox of the double eternity of water and stone" (61).

In "La primavera besaba" ("Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed"), water, as a symbol, appears in the form of mist and rain. This piece uses water in a different paradox, however. It first seems a gentle sign of life and change: new spring growth is like "a green mist after the brown of winter (line 4). But the rain also tests that new growth, as the branches "tremble" beneath its power (7). In the end, the life-giving aspect of the rain prevails, and the trees are suddenly so full of life that they are "bowed with blossoms" (10). The "fresh April rain" helps to wash away the remnants of the past months (8). Nature has a healing power and gives

the hope that Slovic mentions in "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology" (Clotfelty & Fromm 368).

"Spring Gently Kissed" also carries a feeling of innocence, which is often associated with spring. The speaker notices the clouds above the "young field and lane," and the branches tremble much like a child would when scared or upset (6). At the end of the third stanza, this youth and innocence in nature reminds the speaker of his own youth. Though he is now "midway" in life, he stops to remember how love affected him in his past (13). The romantic image of the spring kissing the trees is reflected in this memory of the speaker's youth. He was never "kissed," however: his younger days were "devoid of love" (12). The speaker even goes so far as to remember he had once "damned" those lonely days (11).

It seems that the speaker is still alone but, through nature and the promise of spring, he finds hope. He sees that the trees can turn green and flower again after months of being cold and brown. He knows, also, that though the branches tremble they still withstand the aggression of the rain. Seemingly dead pieces of nature can be filled with new life, and these delicate things can endure the almost cruelty of other forces of nature. So too, then, can the speaker overcome his difficulties and find love. The rebirth observed in nature parallels the personal rebirth the speaker needs as he adjusts to life without his love. Nature is a teacher that proves that change is possible. The journey, both physically and emotionally, that the speaker takes to this realization is mirrored in the image of the "lane" in the second stanza.

In "As the Snow Melts," also from Campos de Castilla, Machado again looks at the connections between nature, memories, and love. The mood of this poem is affected, however, by a defining event in the poet's life. "As the Snow Melts" was written soon after the death of Machado's wife (Hutman 101). In this poem, then, spring seems to represent not only the transition from youth to a more mature wisdom, but also the cycles of life and transitions of death.

Like other Machado poems, "As the Snow Melts" also focuses on the greening that happens in the spring. By the warmth of the "April sun" (4), the snow from the mountains melts and runs down into the fields and valleys.

Machado uses the metaphor of a "green flamen" to describe how the valley changes from its winter state (5). As in "Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed," there are branches "shooting forth white buds" (12) and the aroma floats on the "sweet breeze" that touches the speaker (13). All of these changes are so easy and natural that Machado says the valley "bears life, effortlessly" (5-6).

That easy life is a contrast, however, to the "death and stone" that haunts Machado (15). He enjoys the spring and its beauty: his soul, for example, follows the flight of a butterfly, which adds another element of childlike innocence. The butterfly, which appears only briefly in the poem, may also represent the shortness of his love's life before she "flies away" to another place.

Despite the relaxation through nature, the speaker feels stifled by "bitterness" as he remembers his lost love (16). She is gone and it is difficult for him to forget that, even with the beautiful distractions of the present. He observes nature and dreams, but the speaker is still thinking of his wife and her return by "awaiting I her" (17). Her presence is so real that he writes "Her" with a capital letter: the strong emphasis on that one word makes "Her" seem almost god-like.

In spite of the difficulties he faces, the speaker is again able to find hope in nature and spring, much as he did in "Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed." He feels sadness at the loss of his wife, yet the sweet breeze of spring "conquers" that loss (15). The greening of the mountainside and the melting snows-winter to spring-seem to parallel the speaker's change from despair to hope. In the same way that spring rids the world of winter, bringing new hope, light, and life, so does it relieve the speaker's anguish at the death of his wife. It lessens his fear of his own death, since he knows there is always another spring to bring rebirth and color. According to Hutman, "Since he (the speaker) seeks life renewed rather than life preserved, the poet's hope is not extinguished by Leonor's death. Each spring bears new witness to the cyclical fulfillment of the desire for rebirth and thus vanquishes the fear of death's finality and of the unknown" (101).

Both of these poems, then, have purpose beyond the observations of nature and the changing of seasons.

Each of them describes changes in seasons and the way nature develops as the speaker watches. At the same time, both deal with attitudes toward love, but in different stages of a relationship. Nature helps ease the pain of love and loss. Slovic says Thoreau takes pleasure in the "apparent identity of his own fluctuating moods and the 'moods' of the passing seasons" (Clotfelty & Fromm 354). Similarly, as Machado's speaker watches the changes around him, he is encouraged to make his own changes.

Meeker says that through nature writing we learn that "some truth exists in the universe which is more valuable than life itself" (Clotfelty & Fromm 167). This applies to both "Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed" and "As the Snow Melts." The speaker laments loss, yet he finds comfort in that the seasons continue to change, the trees and flowers bloom again, and life goes on. He appreciates the beauty that surrounds him and can lose his worries in that beauty. Nature represents both pain and hope for the narrator.

"Spring Gently Kissed" and "As the Snow Melts" both use nature to reflect on change and personal loss. Similarly, "Banks of the Duero" and "Fields of Soria: Lyric VII" both observe the area around Soria, while lingering on deeper political meaning. Machado's mastery of words allowed him to write these poems that can be read on more than one level. Predmore's introduction explains the tensions between these "landscapes of the soul": "They are objectifications of what is deeply felt within, which offer a contrast between a potential reality so ardently desired and a present reality so empty and impoverished. These landscapes are also eloquent expressions of inner turmoil and frustration" (15). Through his poetry, Machado is able to explore his country, his culture, and his own life. Still, in all of his observations and thoughts, he finds parallels between life and nature. It is in this way that he finds understanding and comfort, both personally and for the entire country of Spain.

From an ecocritical perspective, this appreciation of nature is important. While some critics may discourage Machado's attribution of human characteristics to nature, his purpose seems to have been positive. From the poetry of Machado, the reader is able to get a sense of the culture, beauty, and people of Spain. It would have been

difficult for him to do this so effectively without using nature the way he did.

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Campos de Soria Fields of Soria VII

Silver-tinted hills,
Gray heights, and rocks of reddish hue,
Where the Duero River makes
Its curving of crossbow's arc
Around Soria. Sombre groves of oaks
Fierce stony ground, the balding mountain peaks,
White roads and river poplars,
Afternoons in Soria, warlike and mystical,
Today I feel for you
In my heart's core a sadness,
Sadness that is love, Sorian fields,
Where even the rocks dream,
You go along with me! Silvered hills,
Gray heights, and rocks of reddish hue!

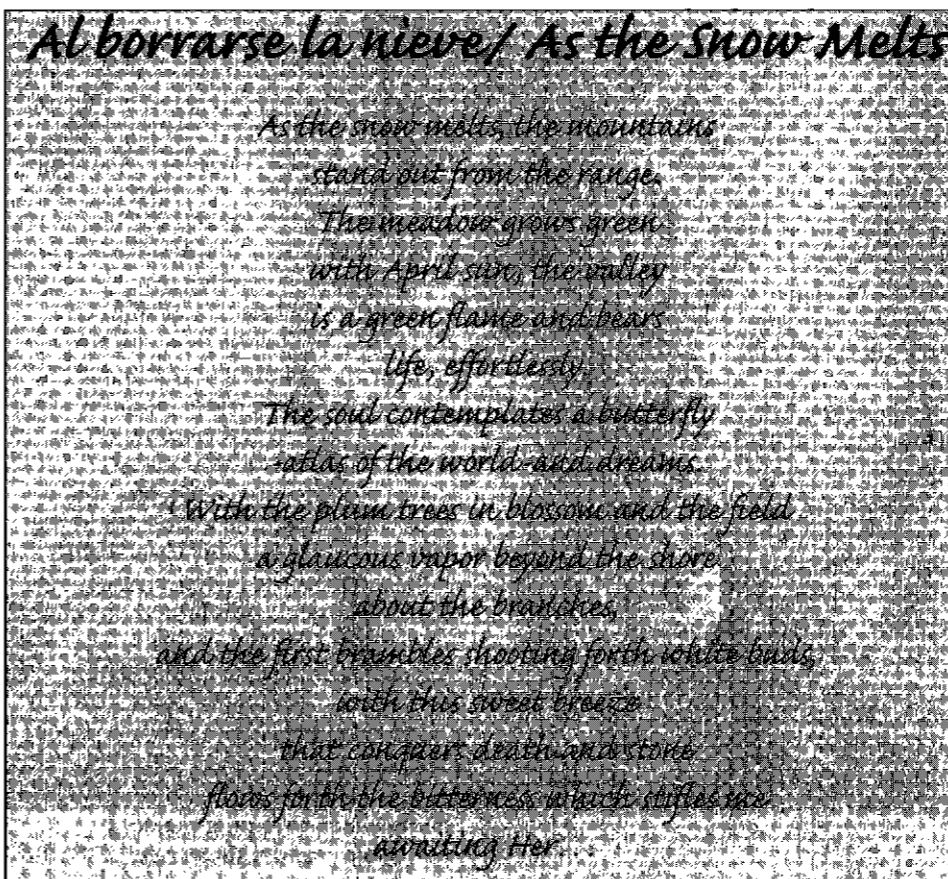
La primavera besaba Spring Gently the Tree Grove Kissed

Spring gently the
tree grove kissed
and green growth was
as a green mist.

The clouds floated o'er
the young field and lane.
I saw in trembling branches
the fresh April rain.

Beneath the flowering tree
bowed with blossoms above
I recalled that I had damned
my youth devoid of love.

Now, midway in my life
I pause to think anew:
Youth I never lived,
would I might dream again of
you!



First impressions and A car like a life

American Civilization, JoAnne Zoller Wagner

International students were to write weekly journal entries documenting their experience of American culture.

First impressions

Once you've seen the US you're prepared to die" my friend wrote to me in one of his e-mails. I'm still wondering what this is supposed to mean. But according to Forrest Gump, life is like a box of candy ... you never know what you're gonna get...

At this very moment I'm quite sure of what life has to offer. A lot of new impressions, which keep on confusing me and put me in this very nice state resembling a slight intoxication. And I'm quite sure that this intoxication is keeping me from getting soaked up by the culture shock. Since it's not the first time for me in the US the culture seems to be somewhat familiar, which doesn't keep me from walking on US territory (to use some military terms which seem to be quite apt for describing this place which all the people who love stars and stripes call their home) absolutely bamboozled over certain aspects.

The main difference from sweet old Austria for me is the college life. The idea of having a campus spaced together like Central's reminds me of a lunatic asylum. Everything is provided here, and students don't have to do anything more than read books and chew on what the teacher said the other day. Students are like cows. Not thinking on their own, just reproducing what others said.

The next astonishing difference is all this fake happiness around here. "Be happy," built the community. Thank you, I don't want marzipan, I'd rather have plain chocolate. I prefer sincerity. When I feel down, I want to have the freedom to walk on campus without my mouth forced to grin. To play the grinning cat is not my part in life. Don't get me wrong here. I like this place a lot (though / as being European / I wouldn't be so quick with my judgments to say that I simply love it, neither would I die for it...).

There is this general assumption that you think of all the world as centered around your own ethnicity, at least pretending that your own culture is the best one. In the knowledge of this theory I try to see the world. I know that I'm preoccupied and try to overcome this.

There are things I actually and truly love about this place. It's first of all the space. The picture of being on a highway going straight on for miles and miles. This seems to be the incorporation of the American dream. A dream, which might turn into a nightmare some day. A dream, which also has the power to change the world for the better.

As I'm writing this down I realize that all the impressions which I have made here have nearly been overwhelming me. I'm sure that in the course of this year I'll figure out what I truly love about this country, sincerely love and not only pretend to cherish. America claims to be the land of the uncounted opportunities. I myself want to pick out some of them.

On each and every new day you get to put your hand in the box of chocolates again. Yet I disagree with Forrest Gump on this very point. You do know in a way what you get, since you don't put your hand in the box with your eyes closed.

Concluding this piece of Austrian-American rambling I want to come up with another movie image from *Eyes Wide Shut*, the latest and last movie directed by Kubrick. This movie also connects the two worlds I'm trapped in: Austria and America. Schnitzler wrote the book and Kubrick turned it into a movie. The past four weeks here in the US were like walking round with my eyes wide shut. But I'm sure that the day will come (and this is a formal announcement) when my eyes are wide open.

A car like a life

When you are abroad, away from the place, which you call "home-home-home"... the ups and downs in your life are much more intense... This week was another example of that. I don't think that I'm a person who would be labeled as "manic-depressive"... and when I'm down I'm actually just pissed off by simply everything...

Tuesday was the ultimate point of being pissed off with the US culture. But I found a cure. A cure, which simply means human relations. I decided to take the ultimate daily car trip to either HyVee or Walmart's... I don't know how it came about but I ended up going there with an American girl to whom I hadn't talked much before. Those two things just gave me back the joy of US culture. Driving in a car, which is so big, blue and exactly my age is the fulfillment of the American dream. I have never owned a car before. And now it is this one, incorporating all my wishes: Dark blue, the color of the sea 5000 meters under the surface, as big as two European cars and therefore simply special, and a 1976 Lincoln... Driving in it, or simply riding gives me the feeling of liberty... Going on the wide streets with the radio turned on, listening to some American country songs (actually I'm just the opposite of a country-music fan, but in this car, everything changes), whistling along, chatting a little bit in English, looking out of the window and seeing this vast, slightly hilly land, the road going straight on, like in a movie... All these things may sound very simple, but this is what gets me to realize that I'm in a different country...

After returning from Walmart and delivering all the goods, which I had happily purchased (a bottle of water, Santa Claus wrapping paper, a notebook... and a shower gel) I went to

my room with this girl... and we spent a good deal of the night talking. Communicating is cleansing and renewing... you get out of your—sometimes—very narrow own little world, and dive into the depth of a new one.... It leaves you with wide open

eyes... amazed about what you hadn't seen before, what you refused to see, or simply forgot that you were able to see and enjoy it....

The United States probably isn't the best country on this planet, nor is Austria, and I strongly doubt that there

is any country, which would merrily deserve the title "best of all." After all, that is not what I am looking for... Though, if I think about it, who doesn't look for heaven on earth? After all it is fair enough to answer the question, "Is this heaven?" with "No, it is Iowa."



"Untitled"
Sarah Phillips

Sevillanas and Cruces: Preparation for a Spring Festival in Granada

Travel Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay about the time you spent in another culture other than your own

“¡Paso de Sevillanas! .. ¡pata! .. ¡cruzar!...”

Sweat dribbled down my neck as I struggled to move my body into the positions ordered by our dance instructor. I had no idea when I signed up for lessons that learning to dance the Spanish folk dance, Sevillanas, was going to be so difficult. It was only 20 minutes into our first lesson, and already I was thinking that signing my life away to the Marines would have been an easier choice. At least the drill sergeants would have been less severe than our Sevillanas instructor. To make things even more difficult, my body was responding in the usual uncooperative manner it resorts to in any situation that requires coordination. Every time I attempted to appear graceful, I caught a glimpse of myself in the full-length mirrors around the walls. My arms didn't seem to bend right, my feet never stepped in the right direction; even my build seemed wrong for this endeavor. My shoulders were too broad, my frame too big-boned: I looked nothing like those willowy Spanish girls, petite and graceful in their frilly dresses. I scowled at my reflection, gritting my teeth as I positioned myself back into the starting position.

My friends and I had signed up to take the lessons for the traditional dance to prepare us for Dia de la Cruz, a spring festival in honor of the Holy Cross as an emblem of Christianity in Spain. While the holiday was celebrated all over Spain, we had been told that Granada was the best place to be for it. Supposedly, the plazas of Granada were best suited for the dancing because not only were they spacious, but they were numerous and close-together, to allow for easy migrating around the city. Part of this holiday consisted of the erection of elaborately decorated crosses in all the plazas of the Granada. The other part consisted of

the celebration, the dancing in these plazas throughout the whole day and late into the night. We had seen demonstrations of Sevillanas performed—men and women in elaborate gypsy costumes seducing each other to the music, without even touching each other. We admired the way the women's arms rose and fell, the wrists constantly twirling gracefully. And we loved the way it seemed to create a certain poise in the men, with their more exacting arm positions and precise footwork. It was a beautiful dance in four parts, or pasos, and it was one aspect of Spanish culture that we weren't going to miss.

The music swelled throughout the hall and my comrades and I tried frantically to find a beat that was slow enough to our liking. To the untrained ear, Sevillanas music is seemingly uniform. . . without real rhythm or lyricism. However, the Spanish know (and we soon learned) that each song has its own distinct rhythm and mood. It is not always possible to find the beat simply by listening to the music--its rhythm must be felt and interpreted through the dance that accompanies it through its four verses. While one song can be sad and sensual, the next could easily be joyful and raucous; and the same dance accompanies both. At this moment however, our first lesson, we had no idea how to tell the difference. We did not have ‘feel’ for the music yet. This was a fact that did not go unnoticed by our instructor.

“STOP!” she cried, starting the music over and joining us on the floor. As the music started again she began clapping, her hands raised even with her right ear as her hips swayed rhythmically, a cigarette pursed in her brightly painted lips. She demonstrated the *paso de Sevillanas*, the foundation of the dance, and we attempted to imitate her graceful

style. That part seemed easy enough. All it really required was for each person in the pair to take a slight step toward the other, then step together with the other foot, and then step back. We completed the maneuver like pros and, satisfied with our progress on this basic movement, she told us to go ahead and add the other steps. I looked at my partner, Tammy, in alarm. I was positive I was going to do something wrong and mess us both up.

Sure enough, we weren't even halfway through the first *paso de Sevillanas* when the music stopped again and we all froze in position. “¡Tu!” she screeched, pointing at me with her newly lit cigarette. “What do you think you are doing there?”

She started to walk toward me. Oh no, I thought, what had I done? I could feel my face start to redden as she approached me, her face expressionless. The Doña was about 50 years old but moved with the energy of a 20 year old. Her sleek black hair was pulled back tightly into a ponytail that hung down her back. Her thin lips were painted a garish red which emphasized the wideness of her mouth, but not enough to overcome her huge, almond-shaped, Spanish eyes. Those eyes narrowed and glimmered as she stopped directly in front of me, taking a drag on the cigarette. I towered about a foot over her, yet she terrified me with a glance. She repeated her question, bellowing, “¿Que haces?!”

“Uh. . .” I stammered, looking desperately at my friends, trying to notice how their positions differed from mine. Suddenly it occurred to me, and I looked accusingly at my raised left arm. I knew perfectly well that she had just showed us moments before that in the *paso de Sevillanas* position, the left arm is down. I quickly lowered it, attempting a sheepish, innocent smile at the Doña.

She continued to gaze at me gravely, probably trying to decide whether or not to humiliate me any more. Then she placed the cigarette in her pursed lips and turned away, barking something that sounded like “¡Otra vez!” around the cigarette before going over and starting the music again. We were starting over yet again.

“¡Izquierda! ¡Derecha! ¡VUELTA!” she continued to scream at us for the rest of the two hour lesson as we all wildly scrambled to step with first our left, then our right foot and do the quick turns in time to the music. By the end of the lesson, we were all exhausted when she stopped the music for good. We flopped down onto the hard wood floor of the dance studio, breathless and defeated. She stood in the middle of us, her chin slightly raised, a slightly amused look in her eyes as she surveyed the damage. “¡Hasta la semana que viene!” she said in that same loud voice, waving her cigarette at us in a gesture of good-bye. I couldn't believe my ears. She didn't seriously think we would come back the next week, did she?

But we did go back, week after week, until we had all four pasos down and could do them in our sleep. Over those weeks we became accustomed to the Doña's screeching and yelling, and by the end we had even established a kind of relationship with her. We learned to read the expressions on her face and knew which ones meant she was frustrated with us, which ones meant she was really laughing at us on the inside, and which ones meant that we had pleased her.

And then May 2 finally arrived—La Día de la Cruz. Armed with our Sevillanas lessons, we danced in the streets with all the Spaniards like pros. In our minds, anyway. We had decided long ago that Spaniards were born with some kind of rhythm that we Americans just didn't possess. I was further convinced of this point when I witnessed a three year old doing Sevillanas in heels in one of the plazas. We rounded a corner and there she was, her little dress floating around her as she moved in perfect rhythm, an angelic smile on her tiny face.

Despite our small inadequacies, we danced through the afternoon and into the evening, ambling from plaza to plaza. The Spaniards welcomed us in

each plaza, pleased to dance with the students who had come to study their culture. The men who asked me to dance with them didn't make any comments when I made mistakes—they would simply smile at the end of the song, kissing my hand and thanking me, and then disappear into the crowd. As the day wore on I realized my mistakes didn't even matter—those who did notice were too drunk on wine and the magic of the day to even care.

Around two in the morning we abandoned the city plazas and stumbled on aching feet through the narrow cobbled streets of the Albaicín, an old neighborhood on the edge of Granada. We found an abandoned plaza that had a nice view of the Alhambra, the old Moorish fortress that overlooks the city, and perched ourselves on a wall to rest. I stared at the stone walls of the Alhambra, imagining how the kings and queens of the past could have sat up there listening to the same music we heard at that moment. Suddenly I could think of no better place in the entire world. Spain had become home to me. I was no longer there to study--how could I after living that wonderful day? Somebody popped open a bottle of wine and we passed it around. I listened to the folk music drifting up from the city below us grow fainter as more of the people straggled home to bed. The festival was ending, but we stayed in that plaza the rest of the night, gazing at the illuminated Alhambra and waiting for the sun to come up and announce the arrival of the new day.



“Untitled”
Rick Myer

modernization and independence have resulted in "liberal attitudes toward mate selection among the college students," according to one 1973 survey.

Surprisingly, love marriages were not common in the United States until about three hundred years ago. According to the book, *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons* by Elisabeth Bumiller, it has only come about as a result of "courtly love in the Middle Ages and also from the impact of Christianity." This Anglo-Saxon religion is thought to have "deepened the bond between husband and wife by likening it to the relationship between man and God."

Perhaps the most crucial element in understanding the difference between an arranged marriage and a love marriage is the respective society's differences in defining the concept of "love." Most Americans are familiar with the phrase "falling in love." There are those, however, who question the truth in this common term. What exactly is "love?" Can one "fall in love?" What about "love at first sight?" Does it exist? Can someone learn to love another? This final question provides the meat and truth to the surprisingly incredible success of arranged marriages. Being exposed a great deal to the culture of the United States, I have learned that romance and dating in this country is all about expectations. People are asked, "What do you look for in a boyfriend/girlfriend?" and a list of required qualities is rattled off. If someone does not fit those qualities, they are deemed unacceptable. "Well, I like him as a friend, but...."

In an arranged marriage, no expectations exist except for mutual respect. Neither the bride, nor the groom, has had a chance to really "get to know" the other. After all, what happens in most Western marriages or relationships? Initially, there is an intense admiration and respect for each other. Usually positive characteristics are emphasized and focused on. Negative traits are ignored, overlooked, or brushed aside. Then, the more time you spend with someone, the more you begin to notice little things about them that annoy you. The way they leave the cap off the toothpaste or the way they never put their dirty clothes in the hamper become irritating.

In successful love marriages, couples have to learn to look past

these imperfections and remember the reasons why they married each other in the first place. They must be able to accept the fact that neither one of them is perfect. Successful love marriages need to set aside these superior, seemingly impossible expectations and be willing to compromise, settling for some good and some bad. If you don't know anything about the person, you begin to see both his/her positives and his/her negatives at the same time, making the situation slightly more tolerable. Since I have never been in a relationship (love or arranged), I may not be the most ideal person to make such a statement. From what I have observed of others in relationships, this seems to often be the case. With fewer expectations, there are fewer disappointments.

This brings us to another reason why the Western culture often looks with disapproval upon the ancient tradition of arranged marriages. Even a general overview of the Western cultures show that they tend to emphasize independence and the sense of "leaving the nest." Parents seem to be respected in a much more visible way in most Eastern cultures, as we see a greater occurrence of extended and nuclear families living under the same roof. Perhaps this is why Eastern cultures tend to be more open to the concept of having their parents arrange their marriage. There is a greater sense of respect and reverence towards elders in the Eastern cultures.

Falling in love is often said to actually be falling in "lust" or "awe." Immediate physical attraction can blind a person to the faults of another. Many love marriages are based on this physical attraction. Note not all love marriages, but many. Physical attraction certainly doesn't play as immediate and as large a role in arranged marriages. I personally have found the phrase "beauty comes from the inside" to be true, almost literally. I have friends who some may not find attractive, that even I, upon first meeting them, did not consider to be particularly good looking. However, after knowing them, finding out more about their personalities, and the goodness of their character, I have honestly been able to see them in a new light, and they seem more beautiful to me physically as well. This seems to support the theory that arranged marriages' successes are based on: love is a growing process,

and an emotion that is acquired. Love isn't necessarily what individuals raised in the Western frame of thought assume it to be.

My personal opinion on arranged marriages has certainly changed; I feel it has matured. I once thought that love marriages were the best way to truly get to know the person you would be spending the rest of your life with. It would be extremely difficult going into a marriage, not knowing anything about the person, and expected to live together for the rest of your lives. I must admit, it was a very close-minded perspective.

Lately, however, as I have grown older, and closer to the "normal" age of marriage (in India women are usually married by the time they are 30), my opinions have broadened. The first prospect of marriage for me occurred with my grandmother when I was 14. She had mentioned that I would soon come of age (approximately 16 years for Indian girls) and that it was time to start looking for a husband for me. I remember turning to my mother in shock and disbelief. My mother only shook her head. "No, we won't be doing that for awhile." But the implications were clear. Eventually, they would. They would look for someone for me. They weren't expecting me to find someone on my own.

My parents' marriage was not an arranged marriage, although I believe that by Western standards, it is considered to be an "inbred" relationship. My parents are actually first cousins. My father had approached my mother's father (his uncle) requesting to marry my mother, and then he had gone to talk to my mother. My mother had ignored his calls and letters because she thought it would be improper of her to respond to a man's courtship without having her father's approval first (she didn't realize that my father had already spoken to her father). My parents marriage is not perfect, but then no one's really is, right?

After graduating from high school, the topic was brought up again. My parents are not in any hurry to find a suitable mate for me, but they are certainly keeping their eyes and ears peeled, as are the rest of my relatives. Most Westerners (myself included at one time) question their parents' motives. "Do they not trust me?" "How do they know what kind of

person I am looking for?" "Just because they pick someone they like doesn't mean I will like them." These doubts ran through my mind initially as well. Yet from what I've read and what I've experienced, parents only want what is best for their child. They want someone who is not only financially sound, but someone who will respect and take care of their child as well. We trusted our parents to care for us when we were infants, when we become adults, we lose an element of this trust. I think part of the reason this is so hard to do, especially in the Western world is that there is such an emphasis on independence. Young people get used to being "on their own," thinking for themselves. They do not feel secure having their future decided for them,

and therefore want the selection of their mate to be a decision they make for themselves.

The unique thing about my situation is that if I were to go with an arranged marriage, I would cling to my Western views of female independence. I know my parents understand the influence that growing up in a Western/American society has had on me. I have a free spirit and enjoy my independence. I would not be happy staying at home, playing the "traditional" female role, and my parents understand that, and are taking that into consideration when searching for a suitable groom. They are looking for someone who will be able to provide for me, but at the same time, someone who will allow me to further my career if that is what I choose to do.

This is a wonderful example of the differences in thinking and teaching styles of the Western culture, as opposed to the Eastern culture. The key to understanding both types of marriage is being able to keep an open mind and understanding the source of the difference of opinions. I feel that another key way to do that is to find a way to compromise, as my parents and I have done, compromising the best of both worlds, so to speak. We maintain the traditional respect in terms of allowing the parents to choose the mate, but also letting the son or daughter make the final decision and maintain a sense of their valued freedom.



"Separation"
Sarah Phillips

Hog Lots in Iowa: Odor Emission and Odor Control Strategies

Senior Seminar: Environmental Studies, Jim Zaffiro

Design and carry out a major research project on an aspect of our 1999 Seminar Topic: "Hog Lots in Iowa"

Over the past few years in Iowa, farming has become more than just a family owned and run business; it has become a corporate affair. These livestock intensive corporate operations have the potential for high concentrations of animal waste, which has led to more complaints about odor, greater challenges of animal odor management, and growing public concern that more environmental protections are needed to combat these problems. At present, the major source of odor concern from these intensive corporate farming operations is the swine industry. The topic of odor sources and causes and odor control is a logical subset of "Hog Lots in Iowa" because of the public apprehension that has been raised and the scientific efforts that have been employed to remedy the problem at hand. Specific areas focused upon in this paper are: what are the primary sources and causes of odor from swine operations, and how can those odors be reduced and made less offensive.

In researching the topic of odor sources and causes and odor control on hog lots in Iowa, many sources were utilized. Journal articles obtained from the Geisler Library were examined, websites were visited, and some personal contacts were made. The strategy employed first focused on background information on the topic of hog lots in Iowa. Then, determination of which subtopics were relevant to this issue led to the topic of odor sources and causes and odor control. An exhaustive search through library materials turned-up several journal articles and other print references. Searches on the Internet were used to find related information, as well as to make contacts.

"When the wind is coming from the wrong direction, the smell is just terrible," explained Blaine Nickles, a

lifelong farmer who lives in close proximity to one of Iowa's largest hog operations. Mr. Nickles continued to state that no longer are hog farms simply family operations; they have become more like factories. "Everyone is entitled to raise livestock, but when you interfere with the quality of life and the environment...that should not happen," expressed Mr. Nickles in relation to large hog farming operations ("Corporate Hogs at the Public Trough: DeCoster Farms, Iowa", 1999). One such interference to the quality of life that Mr. Nickles referred to is the subject of odors relating to hog farms. Odor, odor control in particular, has raised a lot of public controversy recently. Offensive odors stemming from hog farms and manure-handling systems pose real costs to those who are exposed to them. Numerous rural residents who are neighbors to large hog operations have complained that odor has adversely affected their lives and demanded that some precautions should be taken to reduce the amount of odor these operations produce (Palmquist 1997). Since Iowa is the United States' number one hog producer, many of the concerns about hog odor and its control have been expressed and addressed. To be better informed on the problems associated with odor and hog operations, it is important to understand the problem of swine odor, the complexities of swine odor, and the solutions and practical options used to combat the swine odor nuisance.

In 1995, hog production nationwide reached 103 million. Over the last 15 years hog farm numbers nationwide fell from 600,000 to 157,000, yet this smaller number of farms still manages to the same number of hogs ("Animal Waste Pollution in America," 1997). Iowa has a human population of

approximately 2.9 million; its hog population is almost five times that at approximately 14.1 million ("America is Wasting Away: Iowa," 1999). With these large numbers of hogs come enormous amounts of waste. Nationwide, hogs produce 116,652,300 tons of manure annually, which is 11 times that of human waste ("Animal Waste Pollution in America," 1997). Every day, a nursery pig with an average weight of 25 pounds produces 0.04 cubic feet of manure. A 150-pound finishing pig produces 0.16 cubic feet of manure a day. A 275-pound gestation sow and a 350-pound boar produce 0.15 and 0.19 cubic feet of manure a day, respectively ("Design and Management of Anaerobic Lagoons in Iowa for Animal Manure Storage and Treatment," 1995). In a single day, a 10,000-head hog operation produces as much waste as a city of 25,000 people ("What Are the Health Impacts of Livestock Factories," 1999).

Odor problems from swine operations are connected to manure handling and management techniques. Hog odors come from the release of organic compounds during the microbial fermentative (anaerobic) decomposition of protein waste material including, feces, urine, skin cells, hair, feed, and bedding. Resulting from this anaerobic decomposition is the "rotten egg" odor of hydrogen sulfide gas and the familiar odor of ammonia. The amount and type of microbial activity influences the amount and type of odor emissions. Microbes are very sensitive to environmental parameters, such as moisture content, temperature, pH, and oxygen concentration, and any change to these parameters will alter odor emissions. For example, in the winter months, temperatures decrease by significant levels; hence, microbial

activity also lessens causing few odors to be emitted.

Although the principal odorous gases generated from pig production include ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and methane, hog odor consists of over 160 identified odorous compounds (Church, 1998). Odorous compounds associated with odor are interactive, not additive, and each individual compound contributes to the overall character of the odor by either making the odor more offensive, easier to detect, or harder to measure. These odorous compounds, which include organic acids, alcohols, aldehydes, ammonia, fixed gases, carbonyls, esters, amines, sulfides, disulfides, mercaptans, phenols, ketones, indole, skatole, and nitrogen heterocycles, are a result of natural biological reactions, including the anaerobic decomposition of swine wastes (Donham and Thu, 1995). "Odorous mixtures vary with location, the size and type of swine operation, production practices, season, temperature, humidity, time of day, and wind speed and direction. With so many compounds and environmental variables, it is often difficult to determine which compound, or combination of compounds, is giving offense" (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995).

An odor episode created from a hog operation is composed of three mechanistic components: emission, transport, and detection. Emission is simply the source of the odorous gas related to the hog facilities. Transport of the odorous gas is determined by weather conditions, in particular wind speed and direction, along with the terrain of the countryside. Other weather conditions, like relative humidity and atmospheric stability, affect the concentration, frequency, and duration of odorous gases at the receptor. Detection is a subjective component that is quite variable in respect to the ability of people to smell the odorous gas and the odor threshold they possess.

To be able to successfully and effectively control odor, it is imperative to identify its source and take appropriate action in that area. Typically, odor sources from swine production systems originate and are divided into four primary sources: hog buildings and facilities, manure storage and treatment systems, land application of manure, and carcass

disposal. Odors released from swine buildings and facilities are relatively constant throughout the year, while odor production from manure storage units, the spreading of manure onto the land, and carcass disposal is seasonal to quite sporadic depending upon weather conditions, manure addition rate, and manure spreading time patterns.

Swine buildings and facilities are often overlooked as sources of odor. The ability to control gas generation and capture gases before they are emitted into the atmosphere is the most significant problem with reducing odors from buildings and facilities (Schmidt, 1998). Odorous gases are generated in and around swine buildings from the following: manure covered floors, manure covered hogs, spilled moldy feed, improper disposal of dead pigs, manure pits under buildings floors, incinerators with incomplete combustion, and dust from feeders and hog surfaces. Every part of the facility's waste-handling system produces odor if it is not kept clean. Also, many of the volatile compounds associated with odor attach themselves to dust particles. When this odor-rich dust is allowed to coat animals, walls, and ventilation systems, practically every surface releases odor; hence, reducing the amount of dust in and around the building will reduce odor levels. In a poorly ventilated building these odors can build up and may escape in concentrated levels. If the building contains an under floor manure storage unit, odor control can be as simple as removing the manure and cleaning the pit if it is shallow, or reducing pit ventilation if the pit is deep below the facility's floor (1998).

Manure storage can be the most significant source of odor creation on swine production facilities. Storage of manure is taken care of by lagoons, concrete or metal tanks, and in earthen storage and treatment basins. All of these systems generate odor without careful design and management. Usually if storage facilities are mature, large enough, and well managed, offensive odor production will be reduced. Unfortunately, mature storage units can emit odors if raw wastes are added too rapidly or if spring warming creates thermal inversion, thereby lifting material from the deepest level up towards the surface. Further, several other technologies

have been proven to reduce odors from manure storage. Covers on manure storage facilities act to reduce odors in three ways. First, a gas impermeable cover captures gases as they are released and funnels them into a biofilter, where they are treated and released with less odor content. A gas permeable cover serves as a boundary between the manure and the air, decreasing the release of gases. Lastly, an organic crust, which is a combination of a gas permeable membrane and a treatment system, increase the area between the manure and air forcing the released gases through an aerobic environment with microorganisms that oxidize the gases. Anaerobic digestion also aids in the reduction of odor. When placed in a manure storage unit, an anaerobic digester controls the microbial activity in the degradation process, resulting in the creation of biogas, which can be used to generate heat or produce electricity and a stable waste matter (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995). Another very effective means of controlling odor is via the process of aeration. Production of odorless gases results when manure is aerated appropriately. Land application of manure is considered to release the largest percentage of odor from a swine production facility, and typically it brings about the most complaints. Usually, land application is performed during warm weather when manure can be used to fertilize pastures or crop fields. This warm weather also brings heat and humidity that promote the production of odor. Therefore, if manure is treated adequately in storage units, odor should not be a problem when manure is transferred from storage facilities to the land. Also, odor produced during land application can be virtually eliminated by injection, "knifing" or immediate incorporation techniques. Often, equipment like a slurry tanker or an umbilical system is used during land application process to inject the manure into the soil. These techniques directly incorporate the manure into the soil below the actual substrate surface where odorous gases are not in contact with the air, thereby reducing the volatilization of these odorous compounds.

Another odor-causing concern related to hog production operations is

the disposal of swine carcasses. Most carcasses are disposed of by landfill, on-farm burial, rendering, or incineration. If the decaying carcasses are stored too long before disposal or pickup, they can emit offensive odors. All of the above disposal options are problematic. Landfill fees are high, and restrictions on animal disposal have increased. Incineration is quite costly in the effort to prevent air pollution and odor production. On-farm burial techniques risk the outbreak of disease and water contamination. Rendering presents the most feasible options for disposal, but new options need to be developed to meet the needs of the swine industry.

It is almost impossible and impractical to eliminate all odors from hog farming operations. This makes odor control that much more difficult because how much odor is too much? Compounding the issue of acceptable levels of odor is the fact that at present no standardized measurement protocol exists for swine odor. Further, variability of sources, causes, environmental factors, and subjective human detection makes it complicated to measure hog odors or determine some acceptable limit for odor emissions. Another problem with measuring hog odor and finding an acceptable odor level is the fact that an odor's offensiveness does not always correspond to its intensity. For example, at low intensities the agitation of manure has been judged to be very offensive in nature. On the other hand, high intensities of odors ventilated from swine facilities have been ruled less offensive.

Since odor detection is subjective, the primary indicator that odors are a problem is complaints. It is difficult to check for the validity of these complaints because odor perception varies from person to person with no clear explanation why someone feels a particular odor is worse than another person. Four conditions are thought to control the human perception of odor. First, people are more readily able to tolerate an odor if they feel they can do something about it (North Carolina Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995). But, if the source of the odor is thought to come from an uncontrollable situation, it is more likely to be conceived as offensive. Second, if the source of the odor is understood, it may be easy to cope with the problem (1995).

Thirdly, the perceived context of the odor may cause a greater reaction than the odor itself (1995). Lastly, exposure time to the odor affects the perception of the odor (1995). For example, if constant exposure to the odor occurs, awareness may become lessened, and ability to detect the odor may be lost.

At present, odor is not directly measurable; however, methods have been constructed to determine the threshold value of odor emission using dilution processes in an instrument called an olfactometer. Because the human nose is the best available odor-detector, these techniques utilize a human panel. These methods are quite expensive and time consuming, but they are the best present measurement of odor levels. Olfactometry measures odor concentration by first collecting odorous air from buildings or pits in odorless PVC bags (Lorimor, 1996). During analysis in the lab the olfactometer dilutes pungent air with odor-free air, and the odor panel evaluates the different dilutions. The panel simply states whether he or she can detect the odor, not whether the odor is strong or weak. The concentration of odorants that can be detected by observers is called the detection threshold or the dilution level at which the odor can just be detected (1996). The greater the threshold level the greater the raw odor level in the air. Olfactometry is still a subjective analysis and does not account for all of the variables affecting human response to odor. Moreover, an objective measurement technique would be useful in helping the swine industry respond to odor standards, design better facilities, and improve management practices (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995).

Is odor more than just a nuisance? The answer is, quite simply, yes; odor can cause many negative health effects for individuals who live near or work in an odorous hog facility. "Reports indicate that odors may elicit nausea, vomiting and headache, cause shallow breathing, and coughing; upset sleep, stomach, and appetite; irritate eyes, nose and throat, and disturb, annoy, and depress" (Donham and Thu, 1995). Some gases associated with hog odors, ammonia and hydrogen sulfide, can cause adverse

physiological responses when present at high enough concentrations.

Psychological and emotional responses can also be adverse in relation to swine operations. For example, a study at Duke University "shows that people living near intensive hog operations report significantly more anger, confusion, tension, depression, fatigue, and less vigor than people not living near intensive swine operations" (1995). Furthermore, these studies have also shown that people frequently exposed to intense hog odors experience more mood disturbances than those not living in close proximity to intensive swine operations (1995). Odors can also cause more than health effects. Declines in property values have been seen in areas near intensive swine operations, and the increased nuisance of insects and rodents has been experienced (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995).

At present, there is a perception that odors emitted from hog confinement facilities are inevitable and nothing can be done to avoid their escape into the surrounding community. This is simply not the case. Great progress has been achieved in technology and management techniques exist that allow for production of hogs in a confinement operation at any level of odor production. There are also many incentives to help reduce odor emissions level. Because of the health risks associated with swine odor, no operation can afford to ignore the problems at hand. Also, new regulations have been put into place, which have catalyzed the development and research of odor control techniques.

Even with regulations in place, the odor problem is one to be dealt with on a technical level rather than a regulative level (1995). Odor control techniques are implemented via an odor control strategy. Understanding the nature and sources of odors released is key to developing a sound odor control strategy (Baumgartner, 1998). Choosing a proper strategy for odor management depends on numerous factors. For example, degree of odor control required, whether odor control is desired for the long or short term, whether total odor control is desired or only selected gaseous emissions need to be

controlled, and cost considerations all play a part in the selection how an odor control strategy is chosen and employed. These strategies can be best classified into three groups: controlling odor through nutrition to change manure composition; reducing odor emissions by the direct treatment of manure or other manure management plans; and controlling odorous emissions from buildings and land application (Jacobson, 1998). The right plans, projects, construction, and management of a hog confinement facility can definitely reduce the occurrence and intensity of odors.

Since nitrogen is a key component to odorous compounds, especially ammonia, it is generally true that the higher the nitrogen content of hog manure the greater the potential odor (Donham and Thu, 1995). With this information it is easy to see that by regulating a hog's diet odor can be directly controlled. When pigs ingest more protein than they can efficiently use, they excrete excess nitrogen. Therefore, changing a pig's diet so that protein is more efficiently used will result in lower excretion of urea and uric acid, lowering ammonia emissions (Jacobson, 1998).

Presently, much research is being done on feed conversion via feed additives to reduce odor. In some diets, amino acids are not in balance with a pig's requirements; hence, studies have devoted to this problem involve the use of synthetic amino acid in the place of traditional protein source (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995). This approach is still young, and considerable research is still necessary. Studies are also addressing the topic of how protein sources can be better processed. This technique uses proteolytic enzymes as supplements to increase protein digestibility (1995). Dietary supplements such as calcium bentonite, zeolite, sagebrush, and charcoal, which all absorb odor-causing compounds, have been researched, but the levels of these compounds needed to be added to a pig's diet to reduce odor may reduce growth or the efficiency of feed conversion (1995). Plant extracts, enzymes, and direct-fed microbes are some of the most promising feed additives. All of these compounds have been shown to reduce odor and improve growth performance.

"Research indicates that sarsaponin, a natural extract from the yucca plant, can reduce ammonia and promote beneficial microbial action in pits and lagoons. In some studies, mixing sarsaponin with pig feed has also increased weight gain and improved feed conversion" (1995). At present, it is not understood exactly how sarsaponin works, but it is known that sarsaponin passes unabsorbed through the pig, providing a simple, indirect means of treating waste and the contents of lagoons. Further research is necessary in all areas of feed additives, but they show promise in improving feed conversion and reducing odor.

Odor-control additives added to manure storage tanks or lagoons, also known as pit additives, are considered a feasible, inexpensive way to reduce odor emissions. Many different pit additives exist including: masking agents, counteractants, digestive deodorants, adsorbents, and chemical deodorants (Lorimor, 1998). Masking agents, mixtures of aromatic oils, cover up objectionable odor with a more desirable one. Counteractants are aromatic oils that cancel or neutralize odor. Digestive deodorants contain bacteria or enzymes that eliminate odor through biochemical digestive processes. Adsorbents are used to adsorb the odor before it is released into the environment. Chemical deodorants fall under two classes, strong oxidizing agent or germicides. Hydrogen peroxide, potassium permanganate, and ozone are examples of oxidizing agents that oxidize odor-causing compounds. Orthodichlorobenzene chloride, formaldehyde, and paraformaldehyde are germicides that alter or eliminate bacterial action responsible for producing odor. Each of these products has their limitations, and most of them are organic compounds that are susceptible to being broken down by bacteria, losing their effectiveness in lagoons or tanks. While some of these additives are effective in the short-term, it is unlikely that any single product or procedure will solve the odor problem (Zhu, 1997).

Odor control strategies that involve manure management techniques via direct treatment or lagoon covers are numerous and quite effective. The most effective way of lessening odorous emissions from a lagoon is to reduce the organic load on the lagoon

(Miner, 1999). Pretreatment with an anaerobic digester, separating solids from waste before entry to the lagoon, and aeration of the lagoon are viable options used to reduce the organic load on a lagoon. The addition of either a permeable cover to oxidize the escaping gases or an impermeable cover to capture the gases are additional options used to reduce the organic load.

Anaerobic digestion is a proven method of controlling odors, as shown by its previous use in industries and municipalities. This technique controls odors by stabilizing waste solids and generating methane gas. In a lagoon that contains an anaerobic digestion system, anaerobic bacteria break down manure, releasing anaerobic gases such as, methane, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and carbon dioxide. The size of the digester in this system is dependant upon the amount of volatile or biodegradable waste produced by the hogs each day and the detention time of the solids. To allow the bacteria to work and the waste to be efficiently stabilized, solids must be detained in the digester for at least 10 to 15 days (Lorimor, 1998).

Iowa State University has developed a new type of anaerobic digester called the sequencing batch reactor, SBR, which separates solid and liquid detention time, whereas traditional digesters held both liquids and solids together. Designed to hold solids as long as needed, the SBR allows liquids to move through the digestion process quickly, resulting in a smaller, more efficient digester. However, an additional storage tank to hold the treated liquid until it is disposed of further must accompany each digester. Anaerobic digesters can almost eliminate odors from manure storage facilities because odors remain sealed during biodegradation in the digester. Also, very little odor is created when the stabilized solids and liquids are transferred from the digester to additional storage facilities.

Another odor-reducing technique that has been recently researched is solids separation. In this process, solids are separated and removed from the hog slurry via settling tanks. By removing solid waste from the slurry, less waste is added to the lagoon, resulting in reduced odor. Lagoons that have less surface area or are more lightly loaded have less odor production potential than overloaded lagoons or ones that have larger

surface area (Lorimor, 1998). Simply removing the solids from hog slurry can reduce odor by a fair amount because the surface area of the lagoon is reduced, but the separated solids must also be reduced so that they do not become an odor problem (1998). Methods like composting and immediate land application are recommended to prevent separated solids from becoming an odor source.

After solids separation, solids need to be further treated to prevent odorous emissions. Composting is just such a technique. A relatively new method, about ten years old, composting is an exothermic biological oxidation process of organic matter by aerobic microorganisms (1998). The first stage of composting involves the transferring and spreading the solid waste over the fermentation substrate, such as a lignocellulose litter, at the composting area, preferable a concrete surface because it provides for adequate drainage and the piles can be turned in any weather (Abbozzo, 1996). Next, the compost pile must be provided with adequate amounts of oxygen to keep it aerobic. This is done through aeration of the pile by periodic mixing and turning or by forced air from fans. Keeping the composting process aerobic is the key to effective composting and odor management. The final product of composting is low in moisture, odorless, easy to transport, and can be used as a soil conditioner (1996). Research at Iowa State University shows that well managed composting sites can be virtually odor free (Lorimor, 1998).

Like anaerobic digestion systems, aeration is a proven technique that has been used in industries and municipalities to stabilize waste odors for years. Aeration utilizes a mechanical device that forces air into the lagoon waste liquid. With this added oxygen to the manure, aerobic bacteria can be effectively used to transform the manure into chemically stable compounds with reduced odor by rapidly degrading phenol, p-cresol, volatile fatty acids, and other compounds (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995). The bacteria work in numerous ways on the waste material and do not create malodorous compounds as a byproduct of their activity. Some oxidize carbohydrates to carbon

dioxide and water; others convert nitrogen to ammonium, while still other oxidize ammonium salts into nitrites then nitrates in the process of nitrification. The main advantage of aeration and aerobic treatment of wastes is that they do not produce the volatile fatty acid or other compounds commonly associated with offensive odors. Resulting gaseous products from an aeration system include: carbon dioxide, water, and sulfates, rather than methane, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and volatile fatty acids. Thus, if the aerobic aeration system is designed and operated in a proper and effective manner, the product emissions are odor-free (Lorimor, 1998).

Odor control of swine manure storage facilities can be employed in a passive manner also instead of the active techniques of anaerobic digestion, solids separation, composting, and aeration. Pit or lagoon covers are an effective management method used to reduce odor emissions. Covers reduce the odors released at the manure storage surface. Synthetic covers are placed on the top of the waste storage unit and create a physical barrier between the manure and air, which is essential in the reduction of odor emissions. These covers must cover as much of the storage unit as possible to be an effective odor reducing method, and they must be fixed to prevent air and manure interaction (1998). Synthetic covers are also suspended above the manure surface by cables in a floating fashion to create the air-manure boundary that is so crucial for odor prevention. Synthetic and floating synthetic covers keep most of the odorous gas from being emitted into the atmosphere. Instead, it is collected and weakened by passage through a biofilter (Baumgartner, 1998). Biofilters, which contain microorganisms, absorb odors and gases from polluted air, converting odorous compounds to carbon dioxide, mineral salts, water, and other harmless products, and ammonia is oxidized to nitrite or nitrate (Jacobson, 1998). Generally, the filtering material may be peat, compost, soil, or some other low-cost, biologically active medium. Evaluations performed at Iowa State University show that a cover significantly reduces the odor liberated by the pit.

Another feasible way to cover a pit and reduce odor is with the addition of a biocover. A biocover is made of fibrous biological materials such as hay, chopped cornstalks, and wheat and barley straw. The fibrous material is generally blown on the top of the manure storage unit to provide the same physical aerobic barrier between the manure and the air as in a synthetic cover. Biocovers can greatly reduce odor production from manure storage units if they are used and managed properly. "The success of biocovers depends on season-long flotation and continuous one-hundred percent coverage of the storage structure. Getting an adequate depth of cover is important to accomplishing both of these criteria. Biocovers must be eight inches deep" (Lorimor, 1998). Biocovers tend to be most effective for slurry pits instead of anaerobic lagoons because of the larger surface that needs to be covered on the lagoons. In an evaluation performed at Iowa State University the addition of a biocover resulted in odor emissions being drastically reduced (1998).

Since swine building and facilities contribute to odor problems, various management practices have been geared toward the prevention of odor sources from these facilities. Odorous gases are generated all throughout swine facilities from the waste management system, to the floors, and even to the hogs themselves. Therefore, the best management practice for reducing these odor sources is the common sense solution of keeping these facilities clean. Adequate ventilation can control gases, dust, and vapors, the three major carriers of odors. Ventilation systems help to prevent the buildup of noxious gases formed by the decomposition of stored hog manure. By greatly affecting the movement of particles in a hog confinement building, ventilation can move large volumes of air to dilute the concentration of odor causing particles inside the building as well as the air exhausted outside the building (North Carolina Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995).

Landscaping is another way in which odors are controlled around swine building and facilities. Trees, shrubs, and other vegetation are used to form a boundary around the hog facilities affecting the airflow near and

around the site, along with visual isolation and/or aesthetic improvement. "Windbreaks are thought to reduce odor emissions in two ways. If they are upwind, they help deflect the air currents up and over the odor source so fewer odors are collected and carried offsite. If they are downwind, they promote mixing and cause the air currents to rise, resulting in increased odor dilution" (Lorimor, 1998). Vegetation used in landscaping as a barrier should include a combination of slow- and fast-growing trees and shrubs. Trees should not be planted too close to ventilated buildings to avoid interference with the building's ventilation system (1998). Since landscape options are considered a relatively new odor control technique and are in the initial phases of research, odor control effectiveness has not yet been evaluated. But, preliminary results have considered landscaping to be somewhat effective in the reduction of odor emissions (1998).

Odor from hog operations is most noticed during or after surface spreading to the land. High odor emissions are produced when manure is spread on the top of the soil via tankers or irrigation. For maximum odor control during land application manure should not be released at the soil surface, instead it should be injected into the soil (Nicolai, 1996). This management practice calls for immediate injection or incorporation of the liquid manure slurries or sludges in which soil immediately cover the manure, isolating it from the above air. All of the manure must be buried below the soil surface for maximum reduction of odor. Cultivation practices can also help to lessen odor production during land application, but it does not provide as much reduction as injection because some manure will always remain on the surface. Studies in Iowa conducted by Iowa State University illustrate a drastic reduction in odor production during land application with the use of soil injection techniques (Lorimor, 1998).

Some of the above odor control techniques are in the early stages of development and are not proven tactics. Current options employed on hog farming operations include some of the above-mentioned methods, often in combination. Cleanliness of

the hog facility is a major option used to prevent odor, and management option pay much attention to detail. Floors are kept clean to prevent the buildup and decay of urine, manure, and dust. Cleaner floors will allow for cleaner hogs, and they will emit less intense odors. Ventilation in the buildings maintained at adequate levels to prevent the factors that intensify odors, dust, gases, moisture, and heat. Some feed additives are utilized to reduce the amount of nitrogen emitted by the hog and increase the conversion from feed to weight gain. Manure collection pits are often scraped and flushed to prevent anaerobic decomposition from occurring and the release of gases that ensues. Lagoons are designed and built large enough to handle the manure load that will be placed in them. Covers are often used on lagoons to capture odorous gases and allow biofilters to stabilize them. Aeration also is utilized to take advantage of the odorless products of aerobic digestion. Land application procedures have made drastic changes to accommodate less odor production regulations. Sprayers and spreaders are adjusted so that manure is spread at low pressure with little agitation. Liquid wastes are usually spread on dry days with little or no wind and early in the morning so that the odors are not bothersome to neighbors. Most manure slurries and sludges are injected or incorporated in the soil so that the odor-causing compounds are not exposed to air.

With current knowledge of odor sources and odor behavior, many new technologies are being developed. Most importantly odor characterization and measurement systems are being developed to allow successful quantification of odor components and how to correlate these with the subjective responses of human panel (North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, North Carolina State University, 1995). Pit additives are gaining popularity and research is directed to developing a more effective and safer odor-reducing additive. Odor removal from buildings and lagoons are being improved with more sophisticated biofilters and chemical scrubbers that will deodorize the air and reduce dust. Composting practices are gaining support from research not only because of the odor-reducing potential but also because of

the useful products they convert wastes into. An option for gas disposal called biogas generation is a very promising technique at the forefront of current research. In this method biogas such as methane are harvested and used as fuel for gas-fired generators, boilers, refrigerators, turbines, space heaters, and crop dryers (1995).

With continuing urban sprawl and the importance of farming in general, it is essential for communities to find workable solutions to the odor problem. For this reason, the swine odor problem cannot be viewed in isolation; a solution requires communication from all parties involved. Also, the future growth and development of the swine industry will be dependant on how well environmental problems, like swine odor, associated with hog production facilities are resolved. Even though numerous odor control strategies exist, more research and development will be needed in this area to ensure proper odor management. Also, better odor measuring techniques will need to be developed so that a definitive odor emission level can be set and regulated. "The debate will continue on how much odor control is enough. However, one fact remains, odors from livestock production must be reduced significantly in order for livestock production to remain in harmony with the environment" (Schmidt, 1998). In summation, the best and most obvious remedy for swine odors will be a clean, efficient operation, the sort of operation the most producers are already striving to achieve.

Critical Reviews

Understanding the Impacts of Large-Scale Swine Production: Proceedings from an Interdisciplinary Workshop edited by Kelly Donham and Kendall Thu breaks down the concerns associated with intensive hog farming issue by issue. Issues, such as air quality, water quality, etc., are discussed and summarized as presented at this workshop held in Des Moines, Iowa, in June 1995. Under the issue of air quality, questions pertaining to odor sources and odor control are extensively answered. Acceptable odor levels, primary odor sources, health risks, physiological and psychological, associated with swine-related gases, and concerns

related to odor emissions are all topics included under the issue of air quality. Since this conference was held in Iowa and many of the head researchers are from Iowa State University, this source directly ties in to the topic of "Hog Lots in Iowa".

Jeffery Lorimor's publication "Iowa Odor Control: Demonstration Project" summarizes many of the current odor control technologies being researched at Iowa State University. Nine different techniques are discussed complete with an in-depth description of the technique, test results via effectiveness of method, and the costs associated with each process. What makes this source so useful for the topic of "Hog Lots in Iowa" is that all of the techniques discussed are being tested on hog operations throughout Iowa to control swine odor production. Also, relatively new methods that are still in the initial stages of development are tested and evaluated by Lorimor and Iowa State University.

North Carolina State University Agricultural Research Service's "Options for Managing Odor: A Report from the Swine Odor Task Force" dives directly into the swine odor problem facing Americans, not only Iowans, today. Odor sources, options for control, and future developmental needs for odor control are the main topic of this report. The report is quite in-depth, and each topic at hand is discussed at length. Even though this source primarily dealt with research conducted in North Carolina, the second largest hog producing state next to Iowa, most of the information contained can be applied to Iowa because odor sources and control techniques are comparable throughout the U.S. This source was also quite useful to compare research from Iowa State University from other resources to this research information from North Carolina State University. The research from both institutions is consistent for each topic.

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Jennifer KREINBRING

A Farm Girl's Perspective

Nonfiction Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay in the tradition of Montaigne, Orwell, and Dillard

Sarah and I crouched inside the old wash house, pretending that our sole purpose was patting the kittens that wandered across the cracked cement. I deliberately hid in a corner that couldn't be seen from the farmhouse and stroked the mottled kitten called Ugly. The house's door screeched open and the dull clunk of Mom's boots across the porch caused us to hold our breaths. Several seconds passed. Sarah leaned from her crouched position to peer around the door.

"Sh!" I commanded at her soundless movements. She froze once more and we both strained our ears, praying we wouldn't hear anything more than the wind. The chore of vaccinating and carrying the one hundred piglets had to be done, but I preferred delaying the despised task as long as possible.

"Gi-irls!"

I heaved my pudgy, eleven-year-old body upright and shoved my little sister onto the dirty cement while obediently following Mother's call. Sarah got up and trudged down the long, grassy hill behind me.

The crimson paint on the old hog houses had baked and stretched beneath the brutal Iowa sun for decades, and now it was slowly withering away, leaving the exposed wood to fight its own battle against the elements. The two fading buildings stood shoulder to shoulder, both roughly forty feet by fifteen, identical in appearance and purpose. The murmur of softly grunting hogs and the distinct odor of manure hung in the spring air.

My sister and I lingered outside of the nearest hog house, which currently contained only the empty steel crates that we would toss the pigs into after their shots. The wind snapped at our exposed cheeks and snatched strands of Sarah's hair from beneath the hood of her sweatshirt. Neither of us muttered a word. We weren't especially eager to begin.

We heard the roar of Dad approaching in "The Bomb" long before we actually saw the '76 Olds pull into the drive. I gave Sarah another playful shove.

"C'mon!" I ordered, and we plodded through the mud and manure towards the building containing the pigs. Blinking against the glaring sun, we stepped around the watering trough and then awkwardly hopped over a hog carcass. I glanced down at it. I wasn't sure how long it had been there. The legs were jutting out at a sixty-degree angle and the eyes were crusted over. Flies clung to the coarse hide. Some sharp-toothed animal had gnawed into the yellow and bloated belly, and now the hog's guts trailed onto the cement. Swollen and gray, its tongue was hanging sideways out of its jaw.

I opened the door of the second building and the overwhelming stench of hog excrement forced me back several steps before I could proceed into the dank building. My eyes adjusted to the darkness and took in the twelve aligned crates, each containing a monstrous sow and her piglets.

"There you are," Mom barked and shoved a wriggling piglet into my hands. It grunted and put up a mild fight to scramble back into the pen with its siblings and mother, but I fiercely gripped its ear with my small, chubby hand, just as Dad had shown me. I returned to the less offensive air of the outdoors and clutched the small pig with its black, marble eyes and rough skin while Dad jammed needles into its neck and clipped its teeth to prevent it from biting other pigs. Then Dad cut off the curly-Q tail. I didn't know if there was a reason for that, but I knew better than to bug Dad about such trivial things.

Plodding back through the muck, I carried the pig over to the empty building, tossed it into a crate, and then returned to get another pig and went through the whole routine again. By the fifth trip, I didn't even notice the decaying hog carcass.

I grabbed yet another piglet Mom pitched at me and hauled it out to Dad.

"Too small," he growled. He just stood there, looking at me.

"So...Do I put him back?"

"Naw. Bang him in the head," Dad commanded. "There's a cement post over there. Swing the runt by its hind legs and smack its head against the post." He imitated the motion. "It's just like swinging a baseball bat."

Dad never joked. He was completely serious. I looked down at the small creature kicking its legs in attempt to free itself from my grasp. As I saw the deformed backbone pushing up its rough hide, my mind flew through millions of reasons to justify my killing it. "Runts" were unhealthy, prone to disease, and usually killed by the other big hogs who harass them. Dad had informed me of that many times. And it wasn't as if I'd never seen a runt killed before. I just wasn't sure if I wanted to do it.

Many people have the misconception that farmers are more "in tune" with nature. Farming is all about the attempt to dominate nature. We try to force plants to grow according to our desires. We use animals as a source of food and money. We curse when "nature" interferes with our plans by hailing on our perfectly planted fields or causing animals to die.

I grew up on an isolated farm where the nearest house was a mile and a half away. My childhood days were spent roaming fields and playing with animals. But this did not increase my "oneness" with nature or create any environmentalist affectations in me. I still prefer to climb the tree instead of hug it.

My bottle-fed calf, Comet, was my best friend when I was seven, but I knew her inevitable fate and didn't cry when it took place. (To this day, Dad still calls hamburgers "Cometburgers.") Fields will always be cleared and animals will always be

slaughtered. My experiences have shown me that it is just a fact of life on the farm.

Dad was staring at me. I extended my arms to hand him the piglet.

"You do it," he scowled. I could tell by his voice that he was ashamed of having such a wussy daughter. I knew I should do it. A good farm girl would. But I didn't really want to.

The bulky figure of my thirteen-year-old brother emerged from the building with a squirming pig in hand. He gripped it confidently while Dad performed the necessary procedures on it.

"Switch!" I grinned as soon as his pig's curly tail fell to the ground. I threw the runt into his arms, grabbed his pig, and hurried off, not pausing

until I had tossed the healthy animal into one of the empty crates in the other building. An enormous wave of relief washed over me. I smiled and marched back toward the hog house containing the pigs to continue the task at hand. I heard the thud of the piglet's head cracking against the cement as I crossed back over the rotting hog carcass.

Dave MATHER

Fighting

Nonfiction Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay in the tradition of Montaigne, Orwell, and Dillard

I wanted to hit him, but I'm a pacifist. I think. Still, I wanted to walk up with clenched fists, and hit him with all that I had. I wanted it to feel good and clean and full of pain. I think that I wouldn't have liked to stop soon. I think that it would feel good to have him fall after I hit him squarely the first time, and continue to beat him. I imagine how good it would feel to be over him and pull tufts of his hair and be so angry that I hit his head on the pavement. It would make a hollow dull sound all the way through. His eyes would roll back in his head.

I know when you hit a man in the head that you have to hit with everything, and with control or else your hand will hurt more than his face. And when you hit his head on the ground it sounds hollow and empty and it makes you suddenly feel hollow and empty.

That's when you stop: when you feel hollow and empty and pathetic and stupid. And you feel sorry, or you decide that it isn't worth it. Of course I don't truly know. I've never been in a fight that was violent and uncontrolled and had punches thrown. I sometimes wonder what causes some people to fight for everything, and others to never have to raise a hand in anger. I wonder which is better.

Although I've never been in a fight it doesn't mean that I've never faced a fight. Fletcher Ford wanted to fight me in eighth grade. I remember his dirty red hair parted down the middle,

and his red flannel shirt. I remember his black pants and black Nike high tops I remember how he was in a gang, and that's why he had a red flannel on, but he couldn't wear his hat backwards in the school gym. I had on a red and black flannel shirt as well, and I guess that was why.

I don't know if he had bad breath, or if his teeth were crooked, and it seems impossible to explain his face. I know that he grabbed my collar and asked if I wanted to fight him. I know that I cracked up inside. I told him that I didn't. I stuttered and was scared of him, and I know he saw my fear. I felt shame after that. Mike saw on my face that I didn't know what to do. He saw the tears, but didn't say anything about it.

He told me that it didn't matter. He said the kid was worthless, and he was, but he still haunts me. Mike said that his friends didn't like him and I knew that he didn't have any friends and that he lived in the red house across from Hy-Vee with his dad, and it was torn down to put up a Burger King last year. I was glad about the Burger King because it meant that I didn't know where Fletcher lived anymore.

Everyday for the rest of the year, I felt his gaze on me. Every time it seemed like I was on the outside, and without friends, and felt that I wasn't important. I felt his eyes and his hatred. I never knew why I felt that, and I don't know why Fletcher wanted to fight me, and I'm glad that I didn't fight. I think so at least. I wonder what would have happened to me.

Fletcher still makes me feel weak, and I resent it, although it isn't important. But just when you think that it's gone, it whispers in your head and you feel bad again. A little bit less every time, and eventually it goes. It's good to think that you have something to run away from.

I was there when Bill beat Tom. It was over a girl, and Bill liked Tom, but he had to because he was our hero. It was late at night at a party. Everyone had drunk enough and was thinking about going home. We were piling ourselves into my car. I wasn't driving because I thought that I had too much to drink. There were eight of us in the car. Bill drove because even though he drank more than me he was a hero and would get us home. Tom came as Bill pulled the door closed. He punched him through the closing door. Bill climbed out, and we all piled out and stood watching. I felt my stomach turn into knots, and my palms were sweating.

Bill said something about it not being important, and asked if Tom was ready. Then they fought. It was quick and beautiful and precise. Bill knew how to fight. It wasn't pathetic with blind fists and rage, but with athletic punches and kicks. Bill let Tom swing first. Tom missed because he wasn't as good as Bill. I knew Bill would win beautifully. He kicked him in the stomach with his long legs, and came back with a right hook. He landed a straight left squarely in his face, and I could see Tom's eye swell.

Tom knew that he couldn't get in close enough with fists, so he rushed

into him. But Bill was tall, and he forced Tom to the side. It was quick, but I saw Tom's head hit my rear-view mirror, and he broke the mirror. Tom was out of position and too far forward. Bill slipped in a full nelson and started to swing him between my car and the van parked next to it.

I stood and said nothing. Everyone was silent and watching except Mike. Mike loved Bill, and wanted him to hear his shouts. He was screaming and telling him where to punch.

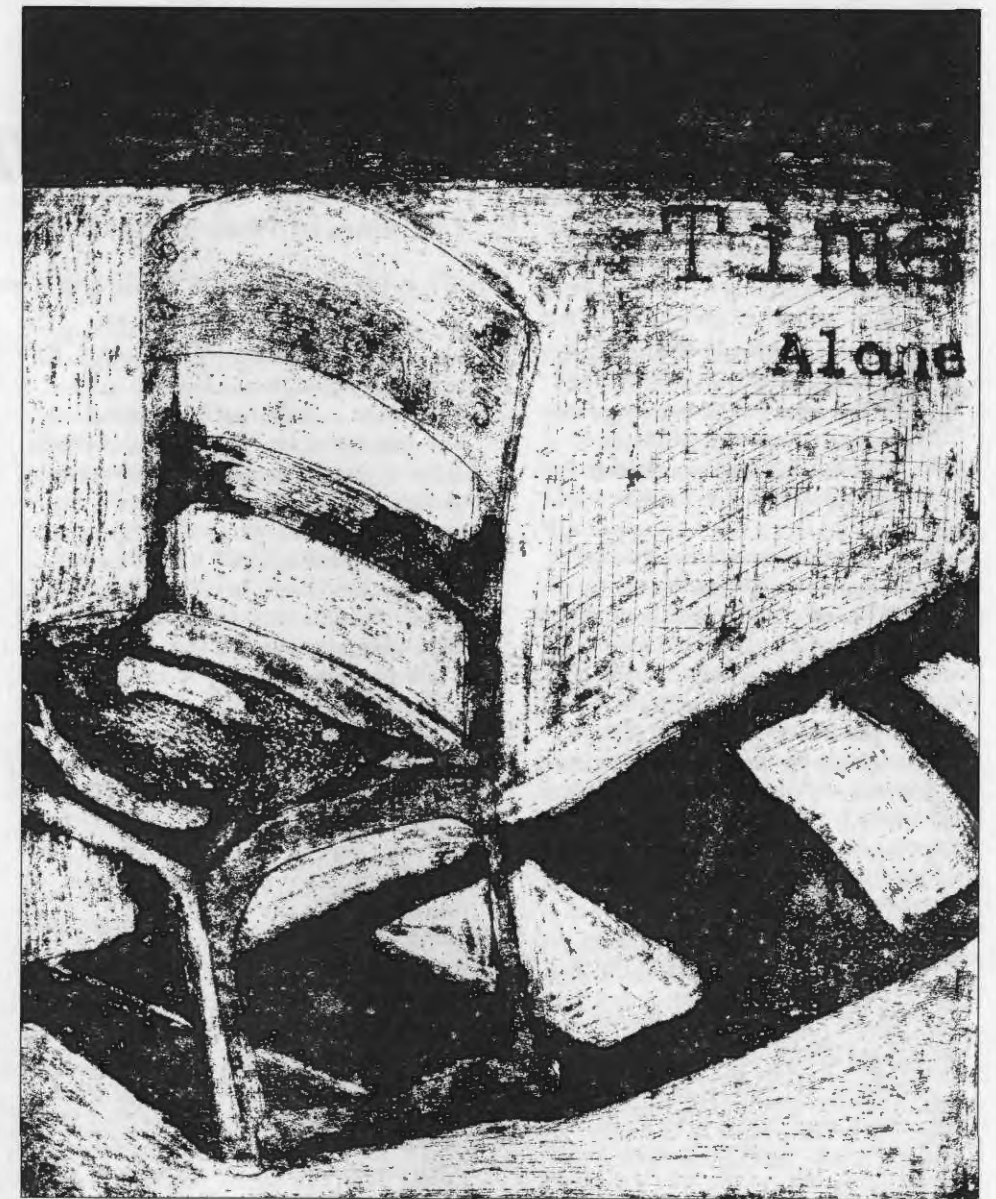
Bill had Tom beaten by then. He was too powerful and big and quick.

It ended when Bill forced Tom to the ground. He grabbed him by the back of the neck and put his face on the pavement. He rolled his head from side to side, and he put his face in a puddle, but he knew he won and was in control so he didn't bang his head but for a few taps. Bill asked if Tom had enough and Tom said he had and Bill let him go.

They stood up and eyed each other and breathed heavy. Tom's face was wet and bloody and swollen. By then we were all shouting and looking at one another and throwing fake punches. Mike ran up to Bill and told him how wonderfully he had beaten Tom. He said that he had beaten the shit out of him, and he called Tom a lousy motherfucker. Mike kept punching his open fists and walking in circles and pointing at Tom as he told Bill how well he had done. Tom had to take the insults. Mike wanted to have his own fight so he kept talking and yelling louder, and it made Tom's friends angry. I wasn't talking as loud as Mike even though I loved Bill and wanted to tell him how great he had done, but I couldn't make myself. Mike said enough for everyone. He made everyone a little sore.

Bill said he was sorry about the dents that he put in the side of my car with Tom's head, but I told him that it wasn't anything. They weren't very big, and I knew my dad wouldn't notice them. I was proud of the dents because I knew that I would never put any dents on anything.

I'm not a hero I guess. That's why I won't run up and punch this guy and hit his head on the ground. I wouldn't be a hero if I did it that way. With him not looking. Even though the guy deserves it, and I want to hit him so badly every time I see him.



"Time Alone"
Joe Cory

The Land and the Body in *A Thousand Acres*

Literature by Women, Kim Koza

Write a critical paper on *A Thousand Acres*

the opening page of her novel. In Jane Smiley quotes Meridel Le Sueur: "The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and create each other." So it is in Zebulon County, where the land is not dry as it appears, but "ready at any time to rise and cover the earth again, except for the tile lines.... The sea is still beneath our feet, and we walk on it" (16). In Zebulon, good farmers exert authority, have control. A "good farmer" is "a man who so organized his work that the drainage-well catchment basins were cleaned out every spring and the grates were painted black every two years" (47). These farmers, however, poison this water with the farming and tile building. In *A Thousand Acres*, Larry Cook, the greatest farmer in Zebulon County, controls the land and his family to the point of poisoning them.

Smiley uses water to enhance her theme of appearances vs. reality. "There was no way to tell by looking that the land... was new, created by magic lines of tile" (15). The people of Zebulon mimic the water, and do not appear as they really are. They do not look past the surface of one another's lives; they agree with Larry Cook: "less said about that, the better" (145). Ginny Cook, the narrator, describes her family as "well trained. We knew our roles... without hesitation and without consultation" (215). Her relationship with her husband Ty, who also believes "people should keep private things private" (368), demonstrates this surface life. "We had spent our life together... putting the best face on things, harboring secrets" (280). The more there is to conceal the harder the Cook family works to keep things looking good. After Pete dies, Ginny calls this phenomenon, "the marvelous engine of appearances" (317). But her family, and the other farmers are not okay, even though "in Zebulon County... a good appearance was the source and the sign of all other good things" (215).

The appearance keeping is a form of control. Just as he controls the water, Larry also controls Ginny and Rose through fear, by making them see things

from his point of view: "he shouts, 'I-I-I' roaring and glorying in his self-definition. ... And then he impresses us [his daughters] by blows with the weight of his 'I' and the feathery nonexistence of ourselves, our questions, our doubts, our differences of opinion" (331). Although it takes Ginny a long time to question her father, her sister Rose knows this all along. "You start seeing things from his point of view again and you're just paralyzed.... That was his goddamned hold over me, Ginny!" (257). Rose wants to get beyond the appearances. She asks Ginny, "Don't you just long to stand back and tell the truth about him for once?" (161).

How Larry fits in the land shows the extent of his control. "He was never dwarfed by the landscape - the fields... were as much my father as if he had grown them and shed them like a husk" (20). The water is symbolic for Ginny and Rose, but not for their younger sister Caroline. Ginny is attracted to the water grates, but Caroline "never, as far as I knew, went near the grate over a drainage well" (66). Caroline is the one daughter Larry does not control, because he didn't sexually abuse her, and because Ginny and Rose determined to give her more freedom than their mother allowed them. She is able to go to college and escape the farm. Ginny says, "I was terribly afraid of him [Larry] as a child, and Rose would stand up to him if she had to, but mostly stayed out of his way. With Caroline, it was like she didn't know there was something to be afraid of" (133). Caroline's not afraid to speak to Larry as a "woman rather than a daughter," which is all Rose and Ginny know how to do (21).

Everything Larry controls is poisoned, both literally and figuratively. Ginny says, "a farm abounds with poisons, though not many of them are fast-acting" (336). Water is the medium of the poison. When Ginny tells the prodigal neighbor Jess Clark about her five miscarriages, he gets very angry. "People have known for ten years or more that nitrates in well water causes miscarriages and death of infants. Don't you know that the fertilizer runoff

drains into the aquifer?" (177). Rose dies from cancer, which also seems to be the result of drinking the Zebulon water. When Ginny confesses her plot to kill Rose, Rose replies, "Anyway, you didn't have to bother. All that well water we drank did the trick" (383).

The poisoned water that Ginny and Rose drink symbolizes Larry's incestuous relationship with them. Ginny fears her memories of her father, saying, "I feared how I would have to store them in my brain, plastic explosives or radioactive wastes that would mutate or even wipe out everything else in there" (247). His poison doesn't just affect his daughters physically. Ginny believes her worst habit is "entertaining thoughts of disaster," (68), which, according to Marv Carson, is a sure sign of toxic overload (30). Ginny is shy, and feels uncomfortable of people outside of the family (64). She recurrently feels shame: "I couldn't look at my hands around the coffee cup or hear my own laments without feeling appalled.... More than that, I was uncomfortably conscious of my whole body" (211). She thinks of herself as a freak, "a woman with three legs" (283). She doesn't enjoy sex and she doesn't want Ty to see her body (301). She tells us, "one thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body" (302).

Anger and her hatred for her father poison Rose. She refuses to feel satisfied "until [Larry] knows what he is.... Weakened is not enough. Destroyed isn't enough. He's got to repent and feel humiliation and regret" (233). She can't seem to escape her father. "It's like he's going to smother me, just cover me over as if I were always his never my own" (258). Because of her father's nights of "seduction," she's promiscuous, trying to erase her memories, and "put him [her father] in context, or diminish him somehow" (323-24). But Rose doesn't get what she wants, because Larry goes crazy, or senile, and becomes "safe from ever knowing" (327). Rose dies a very bitter person. "All I have is the knowledge that I saw! That I saw without being afraid and without

turning away, and that I didn't forgive the unforgivable. Forgiveness is a reflex for when you can't stand what you know. I resisted that reflex. That's my sole, solitary, lonely accomplishment" (384).

In fact, Rose even turns into her father. She likes to control people. She tries to control Jess, and she smothers her sister. Ginny thinks that she contributed to the death of Pete. "Rose had been too much for me, had done me in. I didn't agree with her that Pete's last thought had been of Daddy. Surely, surely it had been of Rose herself, that she had ineluctably overwhelmed and crushed him" (329). It seems, though, that Larry played the bigger role in Pete's death, never letting Pete have any control of his own. Ginny also says, "it took me years to understand the depth of Pete's disappointment when his enthusiasms met with my father's inevitable skepticism" (32). Pete dies in the water in the quarry, and his drowning is symbolic of Larry's control overwhelming him.

It's not just Larry who poisoned the water. Rose asks Ginny, "Don't you wonder if they all [old farmers] didn't just implode? First their wives collapse under the strain, then they take it out on their children for as long as they can, then they just reach the end of their rope" (202). Jess explains it - "Oh, Ginny, they have aimed to destroy us, and I don't know why." (212). Control is very important to the farmers in the book (Larry, Harold, and Ty). Harold manipulates people, especially his sons, by pretending to be foolish. Ginny accuses Ty of playing the peacemaker to get what he wants.

The motif of water and poison in *A Thousand Acres* encompasses more than Ginny and Rose, more than Zebulon County. Ginny extends it beyond herself, making her memory of "the sound of water trickling in the blackness... the only photograph of some nameless and unknown children who may have lived and my have died, but at any rate have vanished into the black well of time" (49). A real, tangible picture of an unknown infant exists in Larry's house. It disturbs Ginny, because she doesn't know who the baby is. She refers to the picture as "interchangeable youth" (245). When she and Caroline divide up pictures, Rose asks Caroline, "why do you want these things? Pictures of strangers, dishes and cup and saucers that you don't remember? It's like you're just taking home somebody else's farm childhood. You don't know what it means!" (390).

Like Ginny and Rose, the land is literally controlled, literally poisoned, by

Larry, his ancestors, and the farmers of Zebulon County. Jane Smiley uses the unknown baby picture to relate the Cook family to all farmers, to the people of the United States, to anybody who acts selfishly, without considering the consequences. In the end of the novel Ginny explains this to Ty,

"You see this grand history, but I see blows. I see taking what you [specifically Ty, then her ancestors, then farmers, people in general] want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was. Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own? No. I think he had lessons, and those lessons were part of the package, along with the land and the lust to run things exactly the way he wanted to no matter what, poisoning the water and destroying the topsoil and buying bigger and bigger machinery, and then feeling certain that all of it was 'right,' as you say" (371).

What, then, is the solution for the poison? The cure for the poison also ties into the water. Rose senses this, but in a twisted way. "I know that his [Larry's] face is a black ocean and there's always always always the temptation to drown in that ocean, to just give yourself up and sink. You've got to stare back. We have to stand up... and say, at least to ourselves, that what he's done before is still with us, still right here in this room until there's true remorse" (233). Rose is right, but she lets her desire for revenge, and her anger, consume her. It consumes her like her cancer. She insists, "there has to be making amends to the ones you destroyed, otherwise the books are never balanced..." (254). She sees Harold's blindness as deserved. "That's farming. So, I say to Harold, gee, Harold, you should have checked the water tank. That's farming. They [the old farmers] made rules for us to live by. They've got to live by them, too" (254).

Ginny also wants to expose the water, and she keeps feeling the desire to share her secret affair with Jess. "I remembered just then how my mother used to say that... a soul was as clear to God as a rippling brook.... Wouldn't it be a relief to have everything out in the open for once? But that question was easy to answer, too. And the answer was negative. The last few weeks had shown well enough for anyone to understand that the one thing our family couldn't tolerate, that maybe no family could tolerate, was things coming into the open" (271-2).

Ginny wants to get past the appearances, which are part of the poison. The poison is so strong because "people don't want to hear the truth" (279). Ty is blind. He doesn't want the truth. Caroline is blind, and she buys into appearances. She tells Frank about her sisters, "They don't see what's there - they see beyond that to something terrible, and it's like they're finally happy when they see that! I think things generally are what they seem to be! I think that people are basically good... and ready to make amends! Look at Daddy! He knew he'd treated me unfairly.... He made amends" (390). Ginny replies, "He thought you were dead."

When Ginny becomes "new" is when she overcomes appearances, and begins to see people as they really are. "The strongest feeling was that now I knew them all. That whereas for thirty-six years they had swum around me in complicated patterns that I had at best dimly perceived through murky water, now all was clear" (330). When she drives home from dividing up stuff at Larry's house, she passes drainage wells, and she stops the truck to go stand on one (393). By acknowledging the truth, by getting beyond the tight grasp of appearances, by looking at the water and seeing the poison, she begins to gain control of her life. She surrenders to the water, and faces her secrets, the secrets of the family. It's like Jess describes eastern religion, in the beginning: "They throw themselves on the waters of the world, and they know they will be borne up. They are more secure than you or I" (40). Ginny throws herself on the water.

Jane Smiley sets *A Thousand Acres* on a farm so she can use the landscape to emphasize the themes she's trying to develop from the relationship between Ginny and Rose and their father. Her novel is a story about people who grab things, who mold land to their purposes without realizing or admitting that they might be harming or destroying it when they seek to control it. On one level, it's about "the loop of poison we [Ginny and Rose] drank from, the water running down through the soil, into the drainage wells, into the lightless mysterious underground chemical sea, then being drawn up, cold and appetizing, from the drinking well into Rose's faucet, my faucet" (398). On another level, it's about Larry's abuse, his poisoning his own family without even acknowledging what he's doing, leaving an inheritance of shame, anger, and pain that eventually leads to the destruction of a thousand acres.

Why I Write

Nonfiction Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay about why you write

When I was in first grade I told the entire lunchroom about the trip my family took to England over the weekend. My classmates' eyes grew wide with admiration as I pulled five souvenir coins from the pocket of my purple corduroy skirt. "Hey Sara, did you see Big Ben?" James Cory called from across table, his voice reaching a new octave in the excitement. "Yah." I answered casually after a slight pause. "Me and my parents sat on this bench right in front of it. When it rang I had to cover my ears up because it was so loud!" I tried to picture the post card my grandparents had sent me when they went to England the previous fall that featured Big Ben. I had the postcard, wrinkled and torn in the bottom of my back pack. My sweaty fingertips had smeared my grandmother's spidery penmanship as I traced the words again and again with the effort of practicing the newly acquired skill of reading on my own.

The teachers whispered to each other at the corner table, knowing that a weekend trip to England in the middle of a nondescript November was unlikely. The third grade teacher believed me only after I added a detailed description of the changing of the guard. My dad had helped me find a little tourist book when my grandparents had gone on their trip that contained all sorts of details about England. He had helped me read it each night, answering endless questions, until I knew the whole book by heart.

I became the star of the whole elementary school, showing my England coins at recess and using an English accent whenever I remembered. Soon in my stories, my dad became a famous author with books in the public library, and my mom had given birth to a baby, a little brother named Sammy. I began to take gymnastics and dance classes. We often did routines with exotic jungle animals, tigers pacing beneath us as we twirled and flipped on bars above

their ferocious jaws. I didn't think of it as lying at all. If I had thought about my "stories" as lies, I wouldn't have told them. I was very concerned with being good and nice, a model of a good first grade citizen. I loved the attention, my classmates gathering in a tight circle around me to hear about the newest gymnastics routine with the baby monkeys, their eyes on my face as I smiled smugly. In my imagination, Mrs. Netten had placed the most stupendous and glittering gold star in the world right on the front of my snowflake sweater proclaiming me eternally destined for greatness.

My stardom was unfortunately short-lived. My parents came for conferences with Mrs. Netten the week before Christmas break. After discussing my progress in addition and my ability to use clay effectively my teacher leaned forward and whispered, "So, how was your trip to England?!" My parents confusion showed in their flustered facial expressions as they attempted to explain my obvious lie. I sunk deeper into my little plastic chair with every word that undid the beautiful world I had created.

I lost dessert privileges for a month, but even sugar deprivation didn't take away the glow that I got from all those people listening to me, hanging on my every word. I got in trouble if I told my stories out loud, but if I wrote them down then even Mom and Dad were thrilled with my creativity. This began my writing career. I could write whatever I wanted, create new scenarios and tell everybody exactly how things looked through my eyes, how they should be, and no one would get upset. Somehow the rules of honesty didn't apply to stories written on paper. By the time I finished third grade, I was again on top of the Elementary School World, all because I made things up and then put them on wide ruled spiral notebook paper.

It takes a certain amount of vanity to think that anyone would want to

read what you have written. Writing things down makes them less and more real all at once. The writer can exaggerate more, but the words will always be imprinted on the paper, a permanent record of the ridiculous thought that one has for only a fraction of a second. Forcing others to read your writing is like having a conversation where the other person never gets to say anything. Even if the reader disagrees, the writer in all his self confident bold type has the last and final word on the topic. In order for a writer to think that they should always have the final decisive opinion, there must be faith in what will be permanent, the words.

A year ago, I was looking through a book full of photographs while in the waiting room at the dentist's office, a thick handcover book, the kind that Time-Life sells in commercials, and I flipped to a picture that seemed to explain my philosophy of writing. The black and white photograph lay heavy on the page, a picture capturing another photographer taking a picture of a broadly smiling woman who was posed in front of a painting. The painting featured the area found in the actual background as it appeared before it had been destroyed by war. The buildings in the real background were falling apart, roofs caving in, leaving gaping holes like the teeth in a Halloween jack-o'-lantern's smile. Even in full color, the true scene would have seemed gray, lifeless, flat. Instead of showing the landscape in its diminished state, the photographer had found a new reality, a painting of the exact same buildings and sloping hills that used to be there. The scene that appeared in the background of the woman's picture would not be the truth, but it would be the truth as she wanted it to be.

The set up reminded me of department store pictures of myself as a toddler. A screen featuring fields of wild flowers or a cheery holiday scene replaced the reality of Sears shoppers and a huge towel sale. In the same

way that it was somehow more desirable to see my dimpled toddler face among the flowers than in the back of Sears, the photographer in the picture would rather only show the beautiful scene featured in the painting. It would become the woman's memory instead of the real city that lay behind her.

However dangerous painting a new world may seem, no one gets hurt. My realistic brain knows the truth of any situation, but I can write the truth away. I would, obviously, make an awful reporter. I suppose I could write the truth but I would grimace the entire time. I know that the world is not as I perceive it. It does not appear to other people as it does to me, but if the world isn't your own to change and form and create in your mind, then it will never belong to you at all. Writing your own world down, somehow makes it exist a little more. Other people can make side trips to see things the way that you do even if it's only for five minutes. It's your chance to plead your case. This is how it is to me.

I still write with a little of the vanity of my first grade self. "Hey, listen to me!" squeaking through the blank space between every word. I have not been untruthful often since my lying rampage in the first grade. This is partly due to the fact that I have developed a terrible conscience. No one wants to be a liar. A liar is someone who is not to be trusted, who will always manipulate, twisting and stretching reality until it is unrecognizable. I would never want to be a liar, but writing gives a license to create any situation, moving people here and there like the iron or thimble in a game of Monopoly. It is control over the words and the audience. I haven't lost my love of the attention of any reader, for however long I can remain interesting. The reader is drawn into the chosen words and thoughts, lured with honey sweet sounds and pictures, like the gingerbread house in Hansel and Gretel. The essay is a world of your own making. As long as I keep a steady grip on the hand of reality I am free to imagine all I want. Writers are

not liars because they are not supposed to create the truth as it was. I think that it is impossible to create the real truth, it is different in the minds of each person who experienced or thought about anything. A writer writes what is true to them, and what I create is real because it lives in my mind, as corny as it may seem. And now, as the reader reads, what I think about writing is in the mind of the reader and so it comes alive all over again in them. Events in your imagination are real in a way and even more if they are recorded and become real to someone else, your reader.

So, I have sat sandwiched between my parents outside Big Ben and listened to its booming chime on a Saturday afternoon. My dad's book could be waiting on a dusty shelf of the public library, and my little brother, Sam, making sweet baby gurgles from a crib in the corner of a nursery that I have never seen, but that I know.

Jessica LEIBOLD

Redmans

Non-fiction Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay in the spirit of William Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways*

It was around 11 A.M. on a cloudy Sunday when the town square caught my eye. I had been driving for hours and decided to stop for lunch in the town of Osceola, IA. The town square was a run-down mass of buildings, grouped closely together. I looked around for a restaurant. I wanted something new -- no Hardees or McDonalds would satisfy my curious appetite today. I surveyed my surroundings -- a dental office, a post office, and straight ahead a Hallmark store. Looking to my right, a bright yellow sign caught my eye: "Redmans: Seafood and Steak." My stomach growled as I pulled into the parking lot.

I walked into the dimly lit restaurant and was greeted by thick clouds of smoke. A bell affixed to the door clanged a loud welcome. Eyes burning,

I surveyed my surroundings. The restaurant was empty except for one elderly man sitting alone in a corner booth -- evidently the source of the smoke. He took long puffs on his cigarette and nodded in my direction. I smiled at him. His expression was kind, yet complacent. Looking around for a waitress, I chose a circular booth near the window.

Time passed slowly and every sound seemed to be amplified by the intense silence. The smell of coffee wafted from behind two metal doors which I assumed separated the kitchen from the dining area of the restaurant. I shifted in my seat and the vinyl material underneath me squeaked in protest.

Ten minutes passed, according to the round Miller Genuine Droft clock on the wall, before a woman slowly emerged from the metal doors. She was

in her early fifties with gray streaks in what seemed to have once been dark brown hair. Carrying a coffee cup in her right hand, she walked over to the old man sitting in the booth.

"Refill Marv?" she asked in a hoarse voice, gesturing with her coffee pot.

"Sure thing, Phyllis. I thank ya kindly," said the old man with a smile.

"Looks like you've gotten another 'un to help," added the old man, gesturing toward me with his hand.

"Huh?" asked Phyllis, jerking around to look at me. "Oh, hey there. Be right with ya."

She returned moments later with a pad of paper in one hand and a menu in the other. Handing me the menu, she eyed me suspiciously. Her deep blue eyes burned into mine searchingly.

"I don't recognize ya. Ya new around here er just passin' through?"

"Just passing through. I'm on my way home from school and needed some lunch." I said, a bit intimidated by her inquisitive eyes. "I'm glad to see that I came early enough to beat the lunch rush."

She snorted, "Honey, ya are the lunch rush. We don't get much business around here for lunch. Just dinner on Friday and Saturday evenin'. If my husband had it his way, my husband's the cook, we'd shut 'er down except for dinner."

"Oh, so this is your restaurant?" I asked, opening my notebook.

"Yeah. Both mine 'n my husbands. Its been ours for goin' on fourteen years. I worked here even before it was ours. Back then it was called Gus and Tom's. We changed it to Redmans - bein' that's our last name'n all. How come? You a reporter 'er sumthin'?" she asked as I wrote a few notes down.

"No. Just something I'm doing for a class." I said reassuringly.

"Well, damn!" She said loudly. "This place could use some 'sposure. Know what I'm sayin' to ya? Once this guy came in to write a story for the Tribune and this place was packed for weeks to come. They put my name in it and everything. My daughter thought I was famous. I dunno." She pushed a piece of gray hair out of her eyes.

I opened the menu.

"What'll ya have?" asked Phyllis.

"Uh..." I said, surveying the contents quickly. "How about the filet steak."

She clicked her tongue in disapproval. "Nope. We're out."

"Oh, well, O.K." I said. "I guess I'll go with the chicken salad."

"Gotcha. Be right back," Phyllis said as she scribbled on her pad of paper.

"And a Sprite please." I called after her as she disappeared through the swinging metal doors.

I turned my attention to the old man in the corner booth. He was already looking in my direction and our eyes met.

"Nice day ain't it?" he asked.

"Yes. I thought it was supposed to be cooler today." I said.

"Yah. You never can tell. Those jackasses on the news don't know what is happenin'. I never did watch and still don't. Just a bunch of bad stuff ya can't do nuthin' about..." he trailed off, looking the other way.

Silence.

The low rumble of a male voice came from the kitchen area. I was tempted to go open the metal swinging

doors, just to see what it looked like in the kitchen. I also wanted to see Phyllis's husband, the cook.

"He slaps 'er around, ya know," commented the old man in the corner as if reading my thoughts.

"What?" I asked, looking alarmed. "Jon. Phyllis's husband. Ya know, the cook. He roughs 'er around sometimes."

"How awful," I said, eyes wide.

"Ah, nah. She deserves it half the time, anyways it's no matter of mine," he said unsympathetically.

"Why doesn't she get away from him?" I asked.

"Oh, she does. She leaves then comes back then leaves then comes back."

"I would have never guessed. I feel so badly," I told him.

He avoided my eyes. "Lots of people got bad stuff they gotta carry with 'em. That's ut makes 'em human."

I didn't say anything. I looked out the window instead. I didn't want to hear any more about Phyllis and her mean husband. I just wanted to eat my lunch.

"Where is my lunch anyway?" I asked myself silently.

I drummed my fingers on the wooden table, gazing at the world outside of the restaurant. Through the window, the town square looked a bit hazy. Across the street, a store with the words "Shoes and Shirts" painted on the windows sat quietly. I watched several people walk up to the door, grab the handle and pull before realizing that the store was locked up for the day. One man had a particular problem grasping the concept and pulled several times on the door handle before he finally stomped away, red faced and fuming.

After staring out the window became boring, I resorted to studying the condiments sitting on my table. Heinz ketchup, A1 sauce, salt and pepper.

The doors swung open and Phyllis sat the salad and glass of pop on the table.

"That'll be \$14.28." She held out her hand. "You can just leave your tip on the table when you leave."

I dug in my purse and pulled out my checkbook. Writing out a check, I asked her how late she had to work.

"Likely, I'll be here until ten o'clock tonight. Ya alright over there Marv?"

"Fine. Fine," mumbled the old man before erupting into a fit of coughing.

"There you go," I said kindly as I

handed Phyllis the check.

"O.K. Well eat up then. See you around." Phyllis left, going back into the kitchen.

I ate my meal in silence. It was a good salad and it didn't take me long to eat. Looking over, I realized that the old man was gone. I hadn't heard him leave. I guess I was too involved with my salad to pay attention. I was alone now in the dining area of the restaurant. I pulled out my purse and left a five dollar tip.

I lingered by the front door of the restaurant, hoping to catch a glimpse of Phyllis's husband, the angry cook. I wasn't sure why I wanted to see him so badly, but it was strangely like the feeling of wanting to look at the accident site of a car crash as you pass by in traffic. However, my morbid curiosity went unsatisfied, as the kitchen doors stayed shut and only the sound of clinking dishes and running water reached me. Swinging open the front door, the bell clanged a loud good-bye and I exited the restaurant, glancing back only once before getting into my car. I wondered if Phyllis ever looked back after leaving at night. I doubted that she ever did.

Bryan T. KLASSEN

Militant Anabaptism?:

A Look Into the Münster Tragedy

The Reformation, David Timmer

Pose a single focused question about some aspect of the Reformation and work toward an answer based on selected primary and secondary sources

For centuries, the tragedy of Münster has been the sore-spot of Anabaptism. Discrimination against the usually peaceful Anabaptists had long been justified by identifying the movement with the type of political upheaval associated with the Münster affair. What were the roots of this violent, revolutionary movement in Münster, and how closely tied was it to the Anabaptism that preceded it? The answer to this question has relevance today for those, like the Mennonites and Amish, who find their roots in the Anabaptist tradition. Münster, for centuries the scourge of Anabaptism, needs to be properly understood for Anabaptists to legitimize their roots.

How Can We Find Out?

In order to fully explore such a question, we must not only examine the Münster incident itself but also explore the nature of the Anabaptist movement which preceded the affair. To this end, both primary and secondary sources are employed. While primary sources offer the views of those with first-hand involvement in the Reformation era, secondary sources, with the perception that only hindsight can bring, can put the events into a broader perspective. Both are invaluable.

In 1527, after it became apparent that the diverse Anabaptist movement had a deep need to clarify its theology, a meeting of South German and Swiss Anabaptists was convened at Schleithem, a small town on the Swiss-German border (Schleithem 129). Out of this meeting was born a document that articulated the stance of Anabaptists on a number of issues. In our examination of the Münster affair, the Schleithem Confession will serve as a valuable primary resource that will give a first-hand account of

the beliefs that this group of Anabaptists generally agreed upon in 1527.

To explore the Münster affair itself, we will turn to various secondary sources that not only report on the events that transpired but also endeavor to explain them in the larger context of sixteenth-century Europe. The first of these sources, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, was written by C. Henry Smith, a man from an Amish background who eventually found himself on the faculty at Goshen College in Indiana. This source, then, is sympathetic to the Mennonite cause and tries to distance the Münster affair from "mainstream" Anabaptism. Hans Jurgen-Goertz, author of *The Anabaptists*, is a German scholar of the religious and social aspects of the Reformation. His work seems very balanced in its approach; no bias is obvious. Though far from being hostile to their cause, Franklin Littell, in his book *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, is less sympathetic to the Anabaptists than are the other authors. It comes as no surprise to him that the Münster affair was born from the ideas of Anabaptism.

What Happened at Münster?

Before exploring the exact relation between the Münster affair and the general Anabaptist movement, it is instructive to review the factual history of the event. This history begins with the man most responsible for bringing the ideas of Anabaptism to North Germany and the Netherlands -- Melchior Hoffman (Jurgen 28). Traveling as a lay preacher through Livonia, Sweden, and Schleswig-Holstein, Hoffman fervently recruited for Luther's cause, but he soon embraced new, apocalyptic ideas which, in time, alienated him from Luther's

movement. Hoffman moved to Strasbourg where he came into contact with Anabaptists. He adopted their view of adult baptism, but his own apocalyptic ideas were too strong to allow him to assimilate into their faith; instead, he formed his own group in the city (29). Eventually, when Hoffman was threatened with arrest in Strasbourg, he fled to Emden in East Frisia. From this position, he spent the next few years constantly traveling throughout the provinces of northern Holland and East Friesland preaching both the Anabaptism that he had embraced and the apocalyptic message that he had come to believe in. Hoffman's Anabaptism, the first widespread reform movement in the Netherlands, was immensely popular with the people and his message soon won many converts (Smith 42).

Through one of Hoffman's initial converts, Jan Matthijsz, a Haarlam baker, was himself converted to the cause. Matthijsz became an enthusiastic preacher with an even stronger apocalyptic focus than Hoffman. After extensive travel throughout the northern Netherlands, Matthijsz, in the spring of 1534, arrived in Münster, the seat of a Catholic bishopric in Westphalia. Prior to his arrival, the city had accepted the Lutheran faith under the leadership of Bernhard Rothmann and was fostering a movement of social democracy (44). When Matthijsz demanded recognition as an apocalyptic messenger, the city was receptive. They felt the kingdom of God was indeed at hand (Stayer 122).

By March of 1534, word had spread through northern Europe that Münster was the New Jerusalem at which the messianic age would soon arrive, and many set out by land or water to the city. In their attempts to gather the holy community together, the revolutionaries soon found it

necessary to expel from the city those who would not be baptized (Littell 30).

Eventually, the Catholic bishop of Münster became determined to crush all revolt against his authority. He gathered a small army and laid siege to the city. In April of 1534, Matthijsz was killed in an attempt to break through the siege lines and leadership of the revolutionaries passed to Jan van Leyden (Smith 46). As the months of the siege dragged on, Jan van Leyden laid claim to absolute authority, biblically supporting his position by identifying himself with the Old Testament King David (47).

During van Leyden's reign as supreme dictator, the "excesses" of the Münster affair reached their peak. Strict discipline was enforced, and countless Münsterites were summarily executed upon the word of Jan van Leyden alone. A "community of goods" was established and private property abolished. Even polygamy became widely practiced (47).

From winter of 1534 to spring of 1535, the revolutionaries' situation became increasingly desperate. All contact with the outside world had been severed, disease was rampant, and near the end of the siege famine was so severe that the Münsterites' daily diet was reduced to leather, leaves, and grass (Smith 48). By June of 1535, Münster could take no more; betrayed from within, it was conquered by the armies of the Bishop. Still, the city had defended itself valiantly, withstanding sixteen months of siege and two assaults (Stayer 125).

The Bishop's vengeance against the rebels was ruthless: all were slaughtered. The leaders, including Jan van Leyden, were put on a touring exhibit, severely tortured, publicly executed, and posthumously placed into iron cages suspended from the towers of St. Lambert's Church of Münster. Their bones remained for years in public view, and the cages still hang from the tower to this day (Smith 48).

A Look at the Evidence

It would seem prima facie that the peaceful movement begun by Zwingli's estranged disciples was starkly different from the violent revolution at Münster. Evidence to support this intuition comes from the Schleithem Confession. First, the church articulated by the Confession's

writers was voluntary in nature. Baptism was to be given only "to those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ . . . and to all those who with this significance request baptism of us and demand it for themselves [emphasis added]" (Schleithem 131). In contrast, the rite of baptism was made compulsory by the Münster authorities.

Further, the Confession made clear that Christians should not take to "the sword" for their cause. "They wished to make Christ king, but He fled and did not view it as the arrangement of His Father. Thus shall we do . . . He Himself forbids the employment of the force of the sword" (134). How different is this from the ideology of Matthijsz who felt that "it was now the duty of the faithful to take up the sword in behalf of the new kingdom to be established" (Smith 45)? Or from that of Jan van Leyden who aspired to be not like Christ but rather like the Old Testament King David?

However, it must also be noted that some similarity, however slight, exists between the 1527 Anabaptists who gathered at Schleithem and the Münster revolutionaries. Both stressed the importance of the separation of the believers from the unrighteous. According to the Confession, "a separation shall be made from the evil . . . which the devil planted in the world . . . for truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad . . . and none can have part with the other . . . everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun . . ." (Schleithem 133). This statement, alone among the articles of the Confession, brings to mind the attitudes of Matthijsz and Jan van Leyden. Both were determined "to gather 'the believers in a holy community separated from the unbelieving godless'" (Littell 30). Still, the separation envisioned by the early Anabaptists was the peaceful abstinence from the evils of the world while that envisioned by the Münsterites involved a militant separation maintained through the bloodshed of the infidel.

So there is little doubt that Münsterite "Anabaptism" was at odds with the more conventional form, but how did the revolutionary version arise from the peaceful one? It may seem as if a turn toward violence was

inevitable for a group so fixated on separating themselves from evil, but the evidence seems to suggest otherwise. As Hans Jurgen-Goertz argues, the reform movement in Münster developed independently of Anabaptism. Its true roots lie in the pre-Matthijsz reform of the city. This reform was closely connected to the various guilds, who represented the interests of the commoners by attempting to loosen the grip of the Bishop over their personal and professional lives (Jurgen 29). Smith would agree with Jurgen-Goertz; he points out that during Münster's initial reform (from Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism) there was a concomitant move toward social democracy. "Religious and social reform were thus closely intertwined here from the first" (Smith 45). Smith goes on to provide even more direct evidence that the movement of Matthijsz was distinct from that of Hoffman. "That he thought himself about to inaugurate an entirely new movement, is evidenced by the fact that he insisted on re-baptizing all those who had already been initiated through the rite of baptism [by the previous reformers]" (45).

Franklin Littell has a slightly different view. He believes that there are two ways in which the "creative tension" between the "church" and the "world" can be reduced. First, the dichotomy can be resolved by simply relaxing the boundary between the church and the world. This would be the way of the magisterial reformers. Alternatively, the tension can be eliminated by "a theocratic attempt of the elect to gain control of the centers of power (usually by a revolution colored by intensely apocalyptic preachment) and to govern the world as though it were the church" (Littell 28). If this hypothesis is true, than any group unwilling to blur the boundary between the church and the world should soon feel the need to assume worldly power. Because Anabaptism espoused a strict separation between the church and the world, Münster was inevitable.

It seems, though, that Littell's hypothesis can be readily disproven. The Mennonites (who arose after Münster) and their Amish offspring both uphold the notion of separating themselves from the things of the world, yet neither has attempted to assume power over the world. Littell's

two options for resolving this dichotomy are definitely valid, but there seems to be a third option that he omitted: maintaining the distinction between the church and the world through a peaceful separation from it.

The Verdict

The overarching themes of the Schleithem Confession, namely a voluntary community of believers, a refusal to yield worldly power, and a commitment to nonviolence, cannot be reconciled with the Münsterites' coercive baptismal practices, their lust for power, and their readiness to take up arms. Although both groups sought to separate themselves from the world, the natures of these separations remained fundamentally different.

The development of militant Anabaptism seems not to have

resulted from the tenets of Anabaptism itself as much as from the pre-existing social and political situation in Münster. There is much evidence that the Münster reform was headed in a politically revolutionary direction even before Matthijsz's version of Anabaptism arrived on the scene.

Such a realization should not exonerate the Anabaptists from their participation in the Münster affair, for they played their part. However, peaceful Anabaptists need not feel that the debacle was simply a logical result of their underlying theology. Rather, Münster should serve as a warning: Anabaptists, zealous about their faith, must be acutely aware of how they channel their enthusiasm because misplaced zeal can lead to tragedy.

Betsy TREMMEL

Africa

News Writing and Editing, Rob Dillard

Write a newspaper feature story about the experiences of Mike Harris and Kim Koza in Tanzania

"I miss Africa, Mom." The teary voice of eight-year-old Will Harris came as a surprise to parents Michael Harris and Kim Koza. A month after their return from the east African country of Tanzania, the two Central College professors and their three children had begun to settle into life at home when this plaintive declaration came.

Harris, one of three Fulbright scholars in Tanzania, and Koza each taught two courses in the English department at the University of Dar es Saleem. Although happy to be back in Pella to resume their lives, as they recall memories of their 10 month stay in Tanzania, it is evident they were fond of many of the cultural aspects of Dar es Saleem.

Driving was not one of them. There were no clear stop signs, only faint traces of painted lines. According to Harris, confusion and reckless driving caused many close calls, but surprisingly few accidents. Harris, the only one of the family to have

command of a stick shift, would brace himself each morning as he woke up, thinking, "this is the day." Luckily, the day of the seemingly unavoidable car accident never came. Although Harris and Koza were within walking distance of the university where they taught, the children, who attended international schools in the middle of the city, were not. Harris soon became weary of the two and a half hours of daily driving, and said, if he were to have remained much longer, he would have hired a personal driver. After returning home, he said, "I've enjoyed it here so much since we've been back . . . just walking to campus and walking home. It's so wonderful. It's only a 10 minute walk to our home."

Koza also missed the freedom of walking and gardening. The heat and humidity fatigued by day; the mosquitoes plagued by night. She became accustomed to sitting indoors and read more than 30 novels. The maid came in five or six days a week and did the chores: shopping, cooking, and cleaning for the family.

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They spent 11 days in northern Tanzania, visiting Lake Manyara, Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and Arusha National Park.

One night, as they camped out in Serengeti, Harris awoke to a loud lapping noise. "I've heard a dog lap, but this was either a humongous dog...or a lion." As he peered out the window, he could see the lion illuminated by lantern-light. Harris shined his flashlight in an attempt to scare him. But the lion was not easily intimidated. Soon Koza awoke. They decided it would be best to lie down, make no noise, and wait it out. Eventually the lion disappeared. Koza distinctly remembers hearing loud snoring during the course of the standoff. It turned out their guides had been oblivious to the tremors of fear racing through their tour group. "If he [the lion] decided 'I'm really hungry; my thirst is quenched--I think I'll go eat that guy with a flashlight,'--there'd be no stopping him," Harris said. "There's no policeman saying 'Lion, you can't do that.' I was really scared."

There were other places in Tanzania the family wanted to visit, but because of terrible road systems, they were unable. Tanzania is considered, even among African countries, an extremely poor nation. Although it is common to see businessmen with cell phones in the city, not every household is equipped with labor-saving devices such as lawn mowers, washing machines, microwaves, or vacuum cleaners. "Some people have them, I'm sure," Koza said. "But not the majority." Dar es Salaem is a sprawling city of approximately 5 million people, but it does not have the skyscrapers large cities in the United States have. Its villages are even more traditional, with homes of mud and stick walls, covered with thatched roofs.

But the people are rich in kindness and love of family and friends. They are not focused on individualism as Americans are; they are a social, interpersonal culture, according to Harris. "You see people shaking hands, and shaking for a long time," Harris said. "They don't just shake hands and then let go." "People have more time for personal relationships," Koza agreed. "It would be very rude there to say 'Hi!' and just keep walking." This is an aspect of the culture to which both Harris and Koza hope they can adhere. "If there's

anything I've consciously tried to hold on to, it's just to slow down," Harris said. "People there were stressed, too," Koza pointed out. "They had a lot of economic pressure; people had hard lives. But still, you had the sense that people maintained their joy in life."

"I felt like I was looking for Africans to be in conflict between Western influences and indigenous customs. I don't think I saw a lot of that. I saw people who seemed pretty comfortable with the balance. African customs and traditions are alive and well," Harris said. "They have taken some values from the West that they really admire, and they're trying to become educated and more technological. They want to enter the 21st century, too." Harris taught World Drama and The Development of the Novel, while Koza taught African-American Literature and Literature by Women.

Many people in Tanzania are not educated past primary and secondary school because of the tuition many find unaffordable. College is for the elite. Usually students will attend two years of college, take time off to work and support their families, and return



"Untitled"
Sarah Phillips

to complete two more years when they are able. Because of this system, the majority of students are in their late twenties to mid forties. They treat their teachers with respect. "They would speak to Kim and me like 'our distinguished professors' and not be sarcastic—they really meant it," Harris said. "They would talk to each other after a presentation like 'I would like to thank you for your very insightful presentation; we've all benefited from our colleague's great research.' I would listen to them like 'Are you kidding?'" The students had great respect for each other, knowing the dedication and hard work it took to achieve college status. Harris and Koza appreciated the experiences and observations the students brought to the classroom. Education was obviously a cherished commodity in Tanzania.

Although they have just returned from 10 months abroad, Harris and Koza are already thinking of the future. Harris had been anxious to see Africa. Koza had been a Peace Corps volunteer there before graduate school. Now they are discussing teaching in Asia, possibly Nepal, where Harris was a Peace Corps volunteer.

Lorena FERNÁNDEZ -QUIÑONES

The Sky Over Our Heads

Nonfiction Writing, Keith Ratzlaff

Write an essay in the tradition of Montaigne, Orwell, and Dillard

Tossing and turning in my bed, I try to concentrate again on the image of the moon tonight. It was so vast. I hadn't gone too far in my nightly bike ride, only half an hour of idle pedaling through the darkest streets in town. The waxing moon was so enormous, shedding the most delicate silvery light—over roofs and trees, over the pavement, over my hands on the handlebars. It was a transparent night, only limited by the dim, muted silhouettes of the white houses, the upright dark contours of the branches and the leaves. A night so immeasurable, and at the same time so present, so close. And just one star in the sky, single, separate, composed under the magnificence of the moon. A couple of weeks ago the sky had been flooded with stars, the Milky Way unrepressed and exuberant with the new moon. I rode out into the country and left far behind the town lights. In the undisturbed dark of a farm in Iowa, I pinned down the Pleiades, Venus, Arturo, but there were so many, so many unidentified stars.

In the lounge, when I came back from the beautiful night, I found a book: *King Lear*. Probably someone forgot it on the couch. I snuggled on the sofa, distractedly considering watching TV while browsing casually through the pages of the Penguin edition. "According to my bond," I read. Isn't it amazing, how Shakespeare used a fairy-tale setting for a treaty on human nature? "Once upon a time, there was a king who had three daughters...." The classical formula, with even a terrific storm when the king went mad—as if the well being of the king elicited a response from the sky.

Discovering the remote between two cushions, I flicked through the channels without paying much attention, till a familiar image dragged me back a couple of channels—I was right, it was *Titanic*. The ship was already sinking and the passengers

who managed to get into the lifeboats speechlessly witnessed the tragedy. And the night was so calm and serene, the stars glistening in the remote arctic sky.

Some five years ago, I recall, in Spain—my hometown, Palma, turned off the city lights, ready for the biggest fireworks ever seen on the bay. It was *La nit de Sant Joan*, Saint John's Eve, a bonfire in every little village and every town and every city along the Mediterranean coast. A second of awe, and then so many stars uncovered their presence. I thought, that's even better than the promised magic pyrotechnics. But a rumor stirred the crowd, and all the faces turned to the northwest end of the bay. In the distance, something else was also uncovered by the switching off of the lights: a blazing strip of flames outlining the mountains. La Trapa, the Masanella, tainted orange demarcating the profiles so well known. The summer heat had unleashed an inferno, helped by the recent drought. The fumes blurred the horizon there, but as my gaze traveled upwards the stars reappeared, composed, calm and collected. Unreceptive, unconcerned about the tragedy that was going on here on earth: the mountains were burning, and the sky was so cool.

I stand up and go to the window seat, and face the night. Sometimes I sleep with the curtains open, I like to see the sky. But I think again about the fire in La Trapa and of the unconcerned sky above. That was not a movie; maybe when the real *Titanic* sank the stars were indeed as detached as when the mountains in Majorca were burning to ashes, or maybe not. The paradox lies in the fact that it doesn't make any difference. There is no direct relation between what goes on here, to us, and what happens there, in the sky. Nature doesn't care about us. Downpours only escort human tragedies in fairy tales—poor, poor *King Lear* without a kingdom, without a crown.

I look through the window. Now it definitely seems it's going to rain. One of my housemates said so as she came into the lounge, smiling, carrying with her a gust of fresh night air as she closed the front door. She talked excitedly, ceaselessly, telling me where she had been, what she had done. Then she displayed her newly purchased tee shirt (the word "Turtle" and a drawing of the smiling animal in question). Isn't it lovely? It was a bit expensive, yes, but part of the money goes to this organization that prevents the extinction of these and other animals. There was plenty of choice of tee shirts, you see, turtles and pumas, rhinoceros. Yes, yes... Well, it's getting late. I have to go to bed, so—good night. But in my room I sat by the window, and stared again at the sky. All these "Save-the-Whales" proceedings, what for? Yes, to soothe the conscience, but how? We pay a fee, and the turtles on some islands in the Pacific get some more days before being sold for their shells or their meat or both or whatever. The human race is capable of selling everything—fair enough, then, if we try to care a little bit more about what we are selling, about what we are destroying and feel so guilty for.

But then—a long, long time ago, there were dinosaurs. That was before Kings ruled the earth, even before dragons first ran off in the skies. Yes, dinosaurs were here before the human race, and they disappeared before the human race showed any sign of waking up. We didn't play any part in the disappearance of such animals. However, we are playing an undeniable part in the tragic disappearance of turtles, lions, whales, that's true. Our great grand children will have to look in an archive to see what one of these animals looked like. And there is the tragedy: we assume, with our total and complete responsibility, that we are above nature. We are so important. There is something grand about being responsible for such a loss.

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Magnanimously, we lament it beforehand—so sure we are that it is our fault, that we will go on while they won't. And it's true, we are the ones killing rhinoceros and turtles, but if we were not here they would probably end up disappearing all the same. Though it seems impossible to really conceive our world without us, as it seems hard to conceive that the world will go on, despite the human abuse of it—we will also disappear.

Above, the sky goes on, impassive. Sometimes it's clear, sometimes it rains; sometimes there is a drought, sometimes there is an inundation. And it has nothing to do with human designs, nor with human behavior: it happens regardless of our presence on earth. Fairy tales are just fairy tales, even *King Lear*. We are unimportant to the sky over our heads. What does the sky care about a madman defying its power, be it a King or a beggar? It doesn't care. If by any chance the stars can be taking any notice of what is going on down here, they probably are not curious about watching what happens to these uninteresting, industrious creatures who build intricate structures—that lately have even managed to go outside the planet. (Sheeew, and the stars see how a space ship travels to the moon. Sheeew, and it goes back to the Earth. And then, silence).

I go back to the lounge to see if the book is still there, but it's gone. I'm trying to sleep, and the sound of the rain is not soothing tonight. There's light in Stephanie's room. She seemed so happy with her tee shirt. Maybe I too should buy one. I knock on her door and ask if she remembers seeing any tee shirt with a white elephant drawn on it. She frowns, Aren't they already extinct? Yes, I think, and twirl my hair. But, anyway, the money will help the other animals all the same...?



"Untitled"
Joe Cory