



The North Avenue Review presents...

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"The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our lives are but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness." - Vladimir



Intro to Death

Ah, the birds are singing, the flowers are blooming, and spring is in the air; it's that time of year when a young romantic's heart turns to ... DEATH. That's right, for how can we have a rebirth without some good old fashioned rot and decay? And anyway, it's always death, and not birth, that signals how much the world has changed, and which best measures the temperature of a society.

You don't believe me? Well, let's take a quick look at the world. On the birth side, we have: Dolly, the cloned sheep; all those n-tuplets created by fertility drugs; the creation of princes to continue the legacy of monarchies from centuries ago. For death: the Holocaust; AIDS; war; the new secularism (the death of religion); Dr. Kevorkian; The Bomb; coup-d'etats; assassinations; post-literacy; post-modernism; post-offices; sex; the list goes on. At this point in history, we as a people have accumulated so much crap, and have developed so many ideas, that we are destroying, culling, and killing left and right, so that we can clear our collective table, and then begin anew with another wave of crap and ideas (and crappy ideas). Our struggle today is not to create, but to prune; to judge what may stay, and what is so god-awful that it must go. And thus we live in a culture of death.

Plus, on a more personal note, as humans death affects us more than birth. We all feel the loss of death on an almost daily basis, whether it be someone close to us, a famous or noted person or organization, a cause we fought for, or one we rallied against. But rarely do we notice the beginning, the birth. Sure, if we personally have a child we notice, but how often does one see the beginning of an idea, or the birth of a great individual? More often, we only recognize influential objects after they have already become great, only after they have worked their magic behind the screen, to appear to us as overnight miracles. The cliché question is "Where were you when Kennedy was shot?", not "Where were you when Kennedy was conceived?"

And anyway, we can't obsess over our birth, since it

already happened, so why not obsess over our death? I'll leave birth to the sucker who has to manage this paper in 2001. But this is 1999 "Bob" damnit, and we want our gloom and doom! The streets shall flow with the blood of the unbelievers.

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To Death-- I wish to know you, before I meet you.

Mike Bowman

Clusters of bubbles dance on the thin surface of a scalding cup of coffee. I watch the vivacious organism interact with others, under the strict governance of the rules specific to their physical world. The occasional disturbance from a casual sip, breaks the regulated rhythm of union and disintegration, and renders the machine of creation and annihilation capable. A violent exchange of steamy gas, trapped inside each liquid dome, amplifies some and destroys others. It's 3 in the morning and it hits me. The cold lonely feeling I get when the prospect of "nothing" swallows me whole. The concept itself is paradoxical, impossible, but frightening. It's not just a word when it smothers you, paralyzes reflex, and severs all connection with reality-- a silencing epiphany. I need to go for a walk and leave the cup behind.

Death. Why do people steer clear from a rational discussion of the most real of all subjects? Are they really comfortable with their notion of death, or are they afraid? I believe that life is worth living, without having to worry about its inevitable conclusion, but don't believe the whole of life should be spent avoiding the thought of it. Death should not be feared or ignored. Although, I have to admit, the uncertainties about death are at least chilling. But cultures and religions throughout the millennia have tried to make sense of these unresolved questions. The effect of the beliefs that I am most familiar with is to pacify the people's concerns, at the expense of rational, free discussion. Free discussion implies that there's no consensus, and without consensus, there can be little hope of resolution. We should all be aware that there is conflict, will always be, and accept it.

When a family mourns the loss of a relative, there are usually beliefs in place designed to make the family feel more comfortable, and allow them to "come to terms" with what has happened. In the animal kingdom, which we are quick to distance ourselves from, higher order

mammals (whatever that's supposed to mean), mourn the death of those in their social circle (i.e. Family, friends, etc.) In our human circle, in times of crisis or grief, people are hard pressed to supplant their emotions with rational thought or belief. I can not condemn this behavior. But I question the effectiveness of the tokens of comfort a culture, or any culture, has to offer.

I don't question the validity or invalidity of people's beliefs, only their effectiveness. Why does a family mourn, when before death they are comfortable in their convictions and thoughts concerning the reality of death? I find that some ignore the thought of it until its reaping those around them or on their own heels, chasing. Others have superstitions that prevent the discussion, or mere thought of it, lest they or someone they care for succumb to its grim harvest. Some accept a pacifying doctrine so as not to worry about death while living. Pedagogues are just as vulnerable to pathos as playwrights, painters and poets. They try to assassinate their fears with the weapons of rationale, but serve only to mask the darkness with positivist ideology. Poets and the like are accustomed to expressing themselves while living, and will consequently reveal their opinions in their art, or resort to personifying or trivializing death in an unavailing attempt to control or conquer their predator. It takes a rare or battered individual to cease the influence of emotion. God knows I try, but fail as miserably as the Stoics who wailed when Socrates had died.

The door swings shut as I return from my late night stroll. I find it ironic that the most real and certain aspect of life (death) is most frequently handled with the most irrational of means. I suggest that open rational discussion, blurred with every human bias and opinion take place more regularly if we are to see life for what it is and not just a state of "not dead yet."

I return to my stationary cup and carefully observe the sterile black elixir. No more bubbles, and the coffee's cold. I could still drink it, but I'd rather pour it out.

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The Meaning of Death

There we were, gathered around a glass window looking downwards from the seventeenth floor. Cluttered tables were abandoned. Screen savers started popping up with flying toasters, and Star Wars toys stood looking out from empty cubicles. There we were, all standing at the end of the row, holding a can of Coca Cola in our left hand, and chewing stale gum.

"Wow, I've never seen anything like it in my life!"

"Yeah I know, it's amazing"

"Do you think it's a hotel or an apartment?"

"I don't know, it looks like it could be either,"

"I hope it's a hotel"

"Hey look at those people in the Sweet Tomato parking lot,"

Someone laughs: "Yeah, they're all camped out along the side"

"Hey look there's a new helicopter"

"Oh yeah! Where did it come from? I didn't see it coming,"

"I don't know. Do you suppose it's channel 5?"

"They don't have a chopper, do they?"

"I don't know. But you know what's funny? Those news guys always ask the dumbest questions,"

"Wow look at it now! It's really going!"

"And the person in the chopper really doesn't know the answer at all.. It's usually some really stupid question, and the guy would be like making stuff up to answer him."

"Yeah, like 'So Mike, tell me.. what does it mean when the smoke is black as opposed to white?'"

Someone chuckles: "Yeah, it's insane. Hey look, they're really putting some water on it now"

"Oh god! Look, something just collapsed"

Yes, I must admit that I was there too. Standing in total excitement, clenching my fist, waiting for the next turn of events as the flames slowly engulf an apartment or maybe it was a hotel. We were kind of secretly hoping it was an apartment, cause that would mean more drama. It makes for good news, at least.

To the random passerby, we would look like an average group of pencil neck geeks gathered around some new techno-gadget that is the size of a fingernail, or gawking at the previews of Star Wars on our computer screens, or maybe even gathered around cheering for our favorite team while watching a baseball game. No, no. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but this is way more exciting. This is real life drama, kids. Ah, but it's not much different than TV.

"Hey, I wonder if there is a balcony on this side of the building"

"Hmm.. no I think the only one would be in Throckmorton's office"

"Haha, yeah, let's try THAT!" someone remarked with sarcasm.

"It WOULD be pretty neat. You know, I'm wondering how loud the flames are"

"Hey look, there's another firetruck,"

We claim to be compassionate, loving human beings, here to look out for one another. But when their houses burn down, we're more than glad to watch. Entertain us, people. We're fascinated by your demise. We can't help it. It's like that bug in the A Bug's Life preview. We're drawn to the light of the fire. We love watching houses crumble. Burn, baby, burn!

They say one man's garbage is another man's treasure. I say one man's tragedy is another man's entertainment! What is it about death and destruction that makes cold sweat roll down our backs in excitement? Or maybe the right question to answer is, "What's the Meaning of Death?" with a touch of "Why to Live?".

Because when we put everything down and stop what we are doing to admire death, we are actually coming to terms with that which makes us live. As I stood with these co-workers of mine, all our problems seemed to dissipate for one quick moment. All our QE versus R&D conflicts were overlooked. We were all just stripped down to our basic human instinct.

And this instinct is the need to deal with death. We all do it. Just in different ways. In fact, maybe we do it so much that we don't even realize we're doing it. Maybe in the process of dealing with death, we trick ourselves into thinking we are actually "living". But without death, this living is meaningless. We NEED death. We need its mysterious taunting to keep us cowering in fear. To keep us from running around like wild geese in our superman underwear and flip flops. We need its mystery to keep us in check. We need its dynamic finality, like a blow delivered to a brick wall, to make our lives seem worthwhile. We need its always unpredictable timing to keep us guessing. Maybe even to make us realize the rare occurrence of joy that life brings with it before going to bed at night. And then one bright summer day, we'll go to work, fall down clutching at our hearts, and at that one instant, maybe we'll even see the faint fading image of who we really are.

So as we stand nervously laughing at stupid jokes and gawking at the beauty of the bright reds and blues against the stark black smoke that rises to the heavens, we too are coming to terms with death. We too are seeing it for the magnificence and significance it has had on our lives. We too are standing in awe, with total respect and reverence to the one and only thing that has kept us living. The meaning of death.

And what IS the meaning of death?

Ever since we were all little boys and little girls playing house, or showing each other our genitals in our parent's bedrooms, ever since we were first encountered with the idea that there is a finality, that life in all its glory is just a faint little echo in the tunnel of time, ever since we realized that life actually ENDS, we have become bitter, self-centered bastards who go on to become empowered members of society. We seem to want to leave a mark, to become immortal in a way by living on in the memories of those that are still living.

We grow up. We find new ways to deal with death. Religion is basically a philosophy centered on the idea of

dealing with death. Without death, there would be no religion. All religions promise a better "life" after death. We can't accept the fact that when we die, we turn to ashes and disintegrate into fertilizer for weeds. So we make up fairy tales to trick each other into denial. Death will not get the last laugh. We are immortal. Our bodies may die, but our souls will live on for all eternity.

But only the very faithful (and truly ignorant) will place their entire trust in religion. Because in the back of our minds, we are all thinking the same damn thing. "What happens if this is all made up? What happens if I believed in the wrong God? What happens to my soul then? What happens if we really DO just turn into fertilizer for weed?". We cannot afford to place all our trust in this one investment. So naturally, we split it up.

We place our faith in other things... like our work. We spend our entire childhood studying books and understanding calculus so that we can sit in a cubicle and be given mindless work. We like mindless work, because it keeps our mind busy. A busy mind is a good mind. A busy mind does not walk around into the dark regions of thought where we think about death. A busy mind helps us deal with the inevitable.

Then we marry and have kids. We name them after us. John Pendleton II. John Pendleton III. John Pendleton IV. Don't you think ONE of you is ENOUGH? More than enough, even. Do you think this world really needs to be constantly reminded of a wretched old man's feeble attempt to keep his name alive?

We tell our kids how to act. We brainwash them with false notions. We introduce them to the concept of death. Our kids are our future. Literally. We want them to be who we wanted to be. We want them to be who we never were. We want them to make us proud. To carry on the lineage for generations and generations and generations. It's this promise that kept Abraham happy in Genesis. The same promise keeps us happy today. Not much has changed.

With this in mind, it makes sense that we would stand in

total reverence in front of a burning building, a moment of peace between employees as a sign of respect for this... this THING that has kept us going for all these years. This thing that is our sorry excuse for "life". Maybe we shouldn't even call it "life". Maybe we should just call it "death in denial". For even as we gawk and make jokes in the face of death, even as some of us seek danger and excitement, even for those thrill seekers among us who would do the craziest things, we are still dealing and denying.

Cause when we laugh in the face of death, we challenge its power. We think we're better. We do daredevil things. We are starved for a piece of the action, cause we want to overcome it. We know we can't, but sometimes the best way to deny its power over us is to pretend we have power over it.

And in dealing with this death, always looming over our heads like an idle threat, we somehow live. Or we think we do. And if we can't see the meaning in our lives, maybe it's because we're not really living at all. What is life but a series of reactions and counter reactions? Like reflexes. Almost automatic. And within these mindless motions that we force ourselves to go through every day, we try to find a meaning. A meaning that is not there.

No wonder people keep asking "What's the meaning of life?". No wonder nobody's been able to answer it. They've been asking the wrong question. Because in order to know the meaning of life, we must first know the meaning of death. Now you know.

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Capitalization Punishment

Making A Killing Off Of Death

by Kiefer

(Author's Note: This wasn't our intention. At the end of last quarter, we decided to make this issue the Death issue. Then, with one month left on our deadline, we find Kevorkian in jail, Littleton everywhere in the media, and Kosovo escalating every day. To avoid these issues would be difficult, but we did not start out with the intent to exploit)

In Littleton, a few students decide to hold the school hostage, and a score of people lose their lives. President Clinton blames loose gun regulation. Charlton Heston blames strict gun legislation. The Conservative Right blame the culture of violence found in the media. The outcasts of society blame bullies. Raise your hand if you are surprised.

The known facts are few. We know who died. We know the identities of (some of?) the killers. We know that plans were made to do much more damage, on a scale that would make Jerry Bruckheimer notice. And that's about all we know. Everything else is pure conjecture. Which makes this situation such a prime target for anyone who wants to promote their agenda. Everyone is given a free ride, since everyone is so anxious to be able to find THE cause for this, that they'll accept any answer. Even when later facts prove these conjectures wrong (such as Mr. Heston's claim that the situation could have been prevented by the presence of an armed guard: there was a guard, but he was able to do little.) these facts are brushed aside since everyone is too busy trying to promote their own panacea for society to follow up on those presented by others.

(Okay, I'm only human, so I too feel the need to throw in my two cents. Why did this happen? Because two (or more) completely fucking crazy assholes got their hands

on some guns and were too fucked up by their own ideas than acceptable. You can't blame the culture, since everyone else at that school, and in the nation, is exposed to that same culture, and the majority of us don't go postal. And while maybe we could have done something to prevent them from obtaining the guns, there will always be ways around such restrictions. The sad fact is that there are just some sick motherfuckers out there, and we can't do much about it. But such optimism isn't going to make anyone feel better, and thus won't serve me well as a campaign platform or magazine headline.)

Of course, the flip side of this coin is something a bit sadder. While we might be used to politicians and quasi-official opinion makers using any excuse to promote their personal agenda, they aren't the only ones trying to take their turns in front of the camera. In the week following the school shooting (I'm refusing to call it a tragedy because it's hard to find 20-some lives more important than the countless numbers lost everyday throughout the world. For a few days there, the news reporters seemed to focus on Littleton to the exclusion of their previous moneymaker, Kosovo. But of course, in this case, the bodies were American, and photogenic, so 'tis expected to be.) we have seen every survivor of the incident, and everyone who knew anyone at the school line up to feed at the trough of publicity are the survivors of the incident. I think I've now seen every citizen of Littleton at least twice, and have heard all of their grieving rituals.

I'm not insensitive; I understand that many have suffered a great personal loss. But don't they trivialize this loss by feeling the need to make it public to the whole world. Did your son really die to get you 10 minutes with Larry King?

And thus the cycle continued. Psychos begat death begat media coverage begat copycats; even my old Middle School was shut down in the following weeks due to an email threat sent to several students. Of course, what triggered the "initial" incident in Littleton is not

divulged by this genealogical chart, and no remedies are made apparent. Maybe there isn't a solution, maybe there is, but blowing the same old smoke rings isn't going to reveal it. And it isn't going to end the cycle. So how about the next time terror strikes, we all just keep our mouths shut.

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Assassins

by Andy Cusack

One night fall quarter, I was waiting for the Stinger to take me home to Woodruff after a late night of studying with a friend in Brittain Rec. Something just didn't feel right. I kept looking around, to see if I was being watched, finding nothing. The world seemed too quiet. The night was growing colder, and I was growing uneasy and impatient. I set off walking toward North Avenue, heading home. The heavy feeling pervaded the atmosphere.

From behind, I heard the screech of tires. In front of me, I saw my body silhouetted against the wall of the stadium, gradually coming more into focus. I turned. Speeding around the corner from Bobby Dodd onto Techwood, tires squealing, rubber burning, the engine whining and struggling to break free from the car that held it, was a mid-80s black Lincoln. Fear gripped my heart and paralyzed me for a moment. My stomach told me I was the target. I sought cover but could find none. My next instinct took hold of me: run.

I didn't get very far. My eyes were fixed on the instrument of my death speeding toward me. My body was struggling against the earth in the opposite direction to flee. My foot caught on something, and in an instant I was changed from a man fighting for survival to a helpless mass of flesh awaiting destruction as I sprawled across the cold concrete. I flipped over. The headlights seemed so near, and closing ever so fast. I closed my eyes and prayed for a quick and painless ending.

WHAM! A large crash. The hiss of steam. The sounds of breaking glass and bending metal filled my ears. I slowly opened my eyes, perhaps to see my lifeless body splayed out on the street, maybe witness a host of angels carrying me to a heavenly afterlife, or a fiery pit swallowing me from beneath. Instead I saw the backside of a sign wavering inches before my face, and beyond that the Lincoln's headlights angled toward the center, the front of the car embracing the signpole.

All 4 doors simultaneously opened and slammed shut. I lay there in a daze, not sure what had happened or would happen. 4 figures came toward me, dressed in black slacks, black shirts, and black ties, two dark haired males, one blonde male, and a blonde female. I struggled to get away, flopping on the pavement like a dying fish. The figures came closer. I began to plead for my life with them, but my words fell on deaf, unfeeling ears. A hand grasped my left arm near the shoulder. Another on my right. A third set of arms lifted my struggling feet off the ground. "Let's go," said the female in a sharp voice. I was stuffed into the trunk of the Lincoln. A needle pierced my leg. I fell into a deep coma almost before the trunk lid shut me off totally from the light of the world forever. The car backed up and sped away.

I awoke in a groggy state an undetermined amount of time later. The room that contained me had no windows. A single shaded bulb hung from the ceiling provided the only illumination. In the halo of light I could see four pairs of feet, arranged in a semicircle around the stretcher I was fastened to. One pair of feet shuffled and began pacing toward me. As the light rose to reveal the owner of the feet, I realized that it was a woman. Locks of blonde were reminiscent of a long ago incident that hung somewhere back in my memory. The face was familiar. I struggled to bring back the lost memories.

"You're awake," she said to me.

"Where am I?"

"That is no matter now."

"What am I doing here?"

"You've been recruited. Look at yourself," she said. She pulled a mirror from her pocket. I looked, but the reflection was not me. Instead, I saw a mass of electronics and metal protruding through my skin.

"What am I? What is this?" I screamed, thrashing against my restraints.

"Quiet." The click of a few keys, and my body jolted and writhed uncontrollably. "Now then. Your body is still your own. With a few modifications, of course. But your mind is now ours. You have been recruited as an assassin for our corporation. Soon, you'll be back in your old home. You may then decide to continue your life as you knew it before, or contact us for your first assignment. You'll know how to reach us." A slight smile crossed her lips. "We look forward to working with you."

"Deanna?!?!?"

"From now on it's Findabair." A few more key clicks, and my eyes closed, my mind went blank.

Several months have passed since that fateful night. I have been forced to fight back thoughts of murder and feelings of rage. My teeth grind. My muscles flex and ache. I have violent nightmares, which have a strangely calming effect. I awake to find my hands clenched around the neck of my target, now rendered invisible my my present state of consciousness. One line has burned into my eyeballs: marvin@shaftnet.org. I see it whenever I close my eyes, and it assaults me in my dreams. I hear it whispered when I least expect it. I have come to you because I cannot fight who I am. Instruct me, for I am your pupil assassin.

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Blackness

by James McDuffie

Edith rushed out the door of her quaint suburban home towards her car. But she did not reach her car for her children yelled at her, reminding her that she was about to leave them. "Oh, yes I almost forgot the children," she thought to herself. Edith was a typical working mother, trying to balance a career, home life and her own personal goals. She had her sights set at the top. Like most people in the business world she was determined to move up the "food chain."

"Mom, you're always doing this. Rushing off and almost leaving us!" cried her daughter.

"Sorry dear, mom has alot of things on her mind today. Today is a important day for mommy, she has to give a big presentation."

"Well lets just go already! I am tired of waiting here with this little brat," said the her son Billy, the older her two children.

"Well get in the damn car and we can go. If you two would not piddle around I might not have started to forget you. Lets go already!" The children angrily got into the car, making an extra effort to let Edith know how they felt by slamming the doors and not putting on their seatbelts. This act alone caused Edith just to yell more at kids. They finally put on their seatbelts but not until they had heard again a lecture on the importance of safetybelts. The tension in the car now was common to this family. Edith's insistence on the kids wearing seatbelts was meant for the best of the children, even though the method of execution was not the best.

The ride to the school was silent. Each member keeping their mouth's shut in order to keep any more hostility. Edith thought about her presentation as she drove. She imagined the promotion that would soon ensue and the new office she would get. She did not notice that her daughter in the back seat had tears running down her

face as she stared out the window. Her brother noticed but he said nothing and kept looking out his window in the front seat. This same scene had been repeated more than once.

Edith dropped the kids off at their respective schools and then headed towards the post office in order to buy some stamps. This was a alteration to her normal routine. Normally she would head straight to the interstate after dropping off the children. After running her errand she headed towards the interstate to head into the city. Her mind was more on her presentation than the road as she neared the interstate onramps from the direction opposite of where she normally came. She moved over to turn right as normal and saw that the light was yellow so speed up to make it onto the onramp. But she did not make it onto the onramp. Because of her change in routine and her mind being focused on the presentation she did not realize she was turning into to offramp. She did not have time to react before she saw the semi-truck in front of her. Nor did she ever feel any pain from the massive truck literally running over her small sedan. She died instantly.

Edith woke up shaking in darkness on a sidewalk near a bar in the downtown area of the city. As she was awakening she thought to herself about the immense realness of the dream she thought she just had. Slowly the blackness that was unconsciousness faded into colors. She stood up and noticed her surroundings. "How the hell did I get here?" she said aloud.

"How do any of us get here?" a voice responded. "We just end in the least likely place we should be and then wait for it. That way we can not get back to see the ones we love before we leave."

"Wait for what? How did I get here? Who are you?"

"So many questions... do yourself a favor and accept it when the time comes."

"Accept what..." her voice trailed off as the man who had been talking to her disappeared into the wall of the bar. The answer to her questions were there in her subconscious but she refused to accept it. There was no way, it was just a dream, she thought to herself. She thought she must have been drugged and then placed here. The street she had awoken on was empty. There were no cars going in either direction and there were none parked along the street. The only light being emitted on the desolate street were from two dim street lamps across the street and from the neon sign hanging about the bar's door.

As Edith opened the door the sounds around her went from silence, only broken by the wind, to that of a noisy crowd. She seemed to be swallowed up by people as she entered the bar. The bar was packed, it appeared to be a very popular place. But no one noticed Edith, every person's attention was heavily invested in the people of their party. Even when she cried out for help no one noticed her, not a head turned. She screamed as hard as she could and still no one noticed. Frustrated she stood in the middle of the bar staring at the people with tears streaming down her face. She ran out of the bar not even noticing that she did not open the door but simply went through it.

Edith stopped in the middle of the street and sat on the ground holding herself and sobbing. She sat there rocking herself and feeling sorry for herself. She thought only of herself and repeatedly wondered why this was happening to her, not even considering what was happening. Then from down the street came a loud wooshing sound like a heavy wind was approaching. When she looked up she saw a light was approaching with the sound. Without thinking she ran in the opposite direction of the light. She told herself it was a car. She knew deep down what it really was but would not believe it.

As she ran reality began to blur and she lost the sensation of running but not that of movement. Then suddenly she was no longer moving. Even though she

knew her eyes were open there was nothing but blackness. The darkness faded back into reality and she found herself back at her house. She saw her family and watched them as they went about their lives without her. She knew that they would not be able to see her or hear her. She realized that she had run away for her one chance to pass on. Now she was stuck.

She stayed in the house and watched her family. No matter how much she tried she could not leave the house. Everytime she walked through a wall leading to the outside or went through an open door she ended up back in the house. There she stayed watching her children grow up. No matter how much pain it caused her as she watched their lives without her she could not look away. She watched birthday's and eventually weddings. Then the kids moved on into college and off to their own lives. The house eventually became vacant and there Edith stayed watching the house rot. Her existence was tied to the house.

Finally the decay of the house became too much. She watched as people entered the house and talked about plans for its destruction. She could do nothing but watch and feel the pain of her existence. When the day came for the demolition she wondered what would happen to her. As the wrecking balls tore through the house her reality fractured like glass. Eventually the last shard of color that tied her to Earth disappeared and fell off her vision and then there was nothing but blackness. With coming of the never ending blackness came the removal of the pain, infact she felt nothing. She simply existed looking upon nothing but blackness. All through her sentence in the house she thought over her life and finally realized the things that were important. But it was too late, or was it...

The blackness gave way to the light of a hospital room and she watched from the side of the room as she was born. She saw the doctor cut the umbilical cord and announce the arrival of a new baby girl. She saw her mother cradle her and look into her eyes. But something was different. She walked over and looked into her mother's face and saw it was a different woman. "Thank

you," she whispered as with a flash of light delivered her into her new body. I have another chance, she thought, I hope I do not screw it up this time. Her coherent consciousness of adulthood faded away into the half erased chalk board of infancy. The lessons she had learned were there, circling in her essence as a guiding force to shape her as she should be. This time it would be different.

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Information Overload 7: Generations

(I'm no longer the editor, but I've still got this column for a bit longer. Assuming that I don't fail out, you're stuck with me for a couple more issues. Sorry for the inconvenience. However, if someone wants to take over this column once I leave (Summer Quarter, 1999) please contact the North Avenue Review. I'm sure you couldn't do a worse job than me.)

I've spent my first 4+ years at Tech complaining about this school, the support structure around it, and everything else under the sun. I'm spending my last year complaining about those who complain, for it is usually done in the most ineffective ways (newsgroups, friends, this column) and is often so self-serving and simple-minded, that I have come to sympathize with those being attacked. You know, if I was the Dept. of Housing, I'd find a way to screw over as many people as possible. Y'all deserve it...On the other hand, some people do actually DO something about their anger. Which is why this writer hereby supports Matt Magnasco to fill the position of Director of Parking...Many people are complaining about the use of Mega-Mod as a waste of important computer resources. But really, aren't more computer cycles spent everyday by the downloading of pornography? Is THAT why algore invented the internet?...Is it too late to start petitioning for the commencement speaker for Summer Quarter? Although, if the best they could get for Spring (the kinda-sorta traditional time for other schools) was the Gov., maybe there ain't much point...Of course, I'm still just bitter over not having been able to meet Stephanopoulos when he was on campus a few months back, so ignore everything I say even more than usual...You know your future is not what you planned it to be when you start setting business lunches at The Varsity...Lately, we seem to be in a perpetual state of "kinda"-war, like in the Persian Gulf or Kosovo. Is it possible that this is just an extension of the '80's "kinda"-war against drugs? Neither could really be won, both are just fought to keep segments of the populace placated, and they both have been used to justify excesses in the federal budget...

Here's an idea for once we go to semesters: A week left empty in the middle of each term for plant trips. Then maybe I wouldn't have to skip every third lecture...I sense much Disneyfication in this one. Disneyfication leads to cuteness. Cuteness leads to trivialization. Trivialization leads to insufferable movie...Thank you to the WB for making sure you didn't provoke impressionable youth into slaughtering 60 foot demons during their graduation ceremonies...The day you become everything you've spent your entire life hating is the day you have entered the real world...I find myself sorely lacking opinions these days. Is it because I've got SO cynical that I can't even differentiate between the crap that we are stuck with and the crap we can fix, or am I just getting lazy?...

(The opinions expressed above are not those of the North Avenue Review, which has no opinion, nor even necessarily those of the author, who has all too many opinions. They are merely a collection of various thoughts, beliefs, and ideas collected over the previous three months. However, feel free to write to the paper at the addresses in the front on any or all of the above.)

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The Celestial Scientist (Part Two)

by Pravin Jeyaraj

(Part One published in Fall 1998 Issue)

First it was the Gulf, then Yugoslavia. The Kurds and the Kosovans. Between them, Saddam Hussein and Slobodhan Milosevic have given NATO and the UN one hell of a headache. The bombings this year scare the shit out of me. Add to that, the attacks against American and British embassies in Africa, the nuclear race between India and Pakistan, and the civil war in Rwanda, and you have the groundwork for a Third World War

Yet Nostradamus wrote about all this in 'The Centuries', his ten-volume work containing the future history of mankind, predicting "a twenty-seven year war at the end of this century" and the return of the Antichrist.

But before you all rush underground to escape any Apocalypse-type scenario at the end of the Millenium, perhaps we should consider the accuracy of Nostradamus prophecies.

It is possible, that Nostradamus could have exploited his imagination to make educated 'guesses'. At medical college, he realised the danger of bleeding, the importance of sterilisation and cleanliness, three centuries before Pasteur discovered the germ. Is this necessarily prophetic? After all, Leonardo Da Vinci visualised the aeroplane before Wilber and Wright became the first men to fly. As a doctor, his own prescriptions for the plague included such 'New Age' methods as fresh, unpolluted water and air and herbal medicines.

In particular, 'cold reading' is a skill used by tarot card readers, psychics, palm readers, iridologists, astrologers, and even salesmen to gather information about a subject. The process begins with careful observation, supplemented by knowledge of statistics and the commonalties of human nature. From these

starting points general statements are made, statements which are likely to be true about almost anybody. Visual and verbal feedback from the subject is then used to pursue accurate statements and abandon dead ends, all the time honing the initial guesses to more and more accurate conclusions. In the hands of an expert, the technique can be frighteningly successful, almost uncanny. Most of the time, the subject is one individual but there is nothing to prevent the human race being a collective being. Often probability theory enters the equation. Plus, Nostradamus was a doctor - he met all types of people and he had travelled all over Europe.

Whether or not Nostradamus had special powers of prophesy, the actual quatrains are too vague to be interpreted specifically. The irony is that one cannot know with a degree of certainty until after the event. But then, hindsight and experience is always the better teacher.

Furthermore, Nostradamus could be the very cause of the violence and suffering that he hoped to eliminate. Although apocryphal, there are stories where both Hitler and Napoleon were influenced after being introduced to the work by their respective aides. And even now, scientists are looking into the possibility of space stations, time travel and transporters following the success of TV shows such as Doctor Who and Star Trek.

The question remains, therefore, that can 'The Centuries' be believed? Whatever the answer, Nostradamus obviously had a good reason for writing it. Faced with severe violence in the future, he thought that if the people (that's us) knew about it, they (we) could change their (our) ways.

Okay, so no-one may have listened in the past but is it really too late to start now?

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She: Ink and Paper Story

by Rafael Galinanes

Despite the fact that I try to make everything work right, everything seems to break even before my hands have the chance to root themselves in hers. Common story for many who, like me, insist in bringing to life what is rightfully dead. There are times when I hold my pen and try to write her be as she was truly meant to be. That impulse, besides being rather unoriginal, has brought me to the verge of accepting my own ineptitude as a creator.

Be it that black and white isn't exactly a man or woman, yet in a tone of somber gray, I may diffuse myself in believing that I can truly bring her back as right as a starlit night. But that isn't exactly right or possible, if you think about it. She is dead and, in guilt, my fault there lies. How can I bring to life a perfect being without during the process tainting her perfection with my bitter imperfection? She should know that in my mind is the only place where she'll live as truly she is . Any attempt of creating her has led to disaster, and this which my distraught mind now proposes will surely end up in my final condemnation .

For she sprang up young and beautiful in the shelter of my mind when I was merely a child. She was playful and innocent, a butterscotch caramel in a white summer dress. I kissed her cheek and she would runaway while glancing back with a furtive smile .She would lose herself in me in soft long green grass hill. She was just a child then, but I knew that in her I would be who I truly was . Since then, she grew up to be even more perfect in maturity. Light brown hair gently gliding her shoulders, eyes like sugared almonds and her soft sun touched skin breathing over my dreams. I tried to be as keen as I could in my observance of her features for I knew that when that moment came in my hands lay her reality. But until that moment arrived, I bemused myself

in absorbing her beauty of angelic precedence, her gentleness of cloud like passiveness and her innocent sexuality.

Perfect starlit night and that moment soon came. Knowing that I was her creator, I knew that it was my time to create her in splendid detail of her simplistic perfection. I already had her perfection , but this wasn't enough. I needed that perfection to be alongside of me... a real being...my only real love. So the undertaking of her creation commenced on a Monday, and during seven years and 6 days I was creating her in a golden engraved book. When I finished that Sunday-exhausted as I was-, I slept and woke up the next Monday to find her as beautiful as she ever was just kneeling down in front of me. She looked at me with her eyes wide open and spoke with the sweetest voice:

"Forever grateful and happy with you ,my love and creator, shall I be"-she said

I laughed and marveled at the beauty of myself... the beauty of my perfection as the creator of a perfect being.

Thus was the feeling until that day when I found her naked deep asleep in scarlet sprayed sheets of white surrounded by the thin metal sheet of death. My fear was immense , my frustration even greater. Never was I the creator of perfection. Never did I realize my incompetence. Never was I an author...all I am is a failed transcriber of the perfection that I myself as an imperfect being cannot comprehend.

In creating her , I condemned her. In condemning her, so will I condemn myself by following her same fate. I hope my creator understands, and I hope that ,in turn, his creator will understand too.

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