

REVISIONS

Best Student Essays of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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ReVisions: Best Student Essays is a publication designed to celebrate the finest nonfiction work composed by undergraduate students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. This issue was copyedited, designed, and produced by the students in PRE 345: Computer-Assisted Editing and Publication Design.

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All submissions must be nominated by a UNCP faculty member. Students who believe that they have a strong essay for submission are encouraged to ask a faculty member to sponsor that essay. A nomination form is included on page xx of this issue; forms are also available in the English, Theatre, and Languages Department in Dial Humanities Building. Forms may be photocopied.

Papers may cover any topic within any field of study at UNCP. We do not publish fiction or poetry. We encourage submissions from all fields and majors.

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

Manuscript requirements: no more than 3000 words in length, double-spaced, and conform to the MLA style manual. Do not include any names or identifying information on the essay itself; use the nomination form as a cover sheet. All essays will be read and judged in a blind selection process.

Submissions to be considered for publication in the Spring 2008 issue will be accepted until December 10, 2007. For further information, contact Dr. Susan Cannata, ETL Department, 119 Dial Humanities Bldg., (910) 521-6806, cannata@uncp.edu.


See *ReVisions* online at www.uncp.edu/etl/ReVisions.

The cover photograph looks south-east from the water feature toward the bell tower and Old Main. It mirrors the photograph on the cover of Volume 3, which looked north-west from the water feature toward the women's residence halls. The photo was taken by Joel C. Beachum, a recent UNCP graduate with degrees in Physical Education and Journalism. Joel has taken photographs for *The Pine Needle*, the *Indianhead* yearbook, and the Baptist Student Union; his photograph of the newly-renovated Jones Health and Physical Education Center appeared on the cover of Volume 5.

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THE NEW GERMANY

Max Aust



Maximilian Aust, a freshman, came to UNCP from Germany last year. He is on the UNCP soccer team and is majoring in Business/Finance.

It was back in December 2005 when my best friend and I ordered some tickets, for the FIFA World Cup at home in Germany. Of course there was a big rush on tickets and the chances to get some were pretty low since eighty million Germans were trying to get some, not to mention the rest of the world. We had to wait until March 2006 to know whether we would get the tickets or not. It was quite a long time to wait and none of us really counted on the tickets, but surprisingly we got two tickets for the Germany versus Poland match in Dortmund. The *Westfalenstadion* in Dortmund is one of the best stadiums, if not the best, in Germany; 83,000 people fit into it and we were going to be part of them. Awesome. Our anticipation was great, but it was still three months until the opening match in June.

The official 2006 World Cup motto was: “A time to make friends.” But for Germany it was more than that. It was the ultimate chance to show the world what Germany is really like today. The country and the people have always had to fight against prejudices because of our history in the past century. Germany is no longer the nation that caused a world war or that killed Jews in concentration camps. We don’t deny what happened but that is the past. Germany developed and learned from the mistakes it made years ago.

Now there was going to be one big chance, not to make everything forgotten—that’s impossible—but to show that there is a new Germany, a new generation which has nothing to do with what happened 60 years ago. Before the 2006 World Cup, the country was a nation with a lack of national pride and patriotism. Germany is not the typical vacation country; people would rather go to the beach, to the south of Europe. That is one reason why people don’t get to know the country and the people living there. But at the upcoming event, the World Cup, the whole world would be forced to look at Germany. Teams from five continents would cause global coverage. Appreciating that chance, Germany didn’t want to fail. It was the biggest event since the last World Cup here in 1974 and the summer Olympics in 1972 at which 11 Israelis were killed by terrorists (“A Win Fier Deutschland” 10a). And it probably will stay the biggest event for the next 50 years. The country couldn’t afford to make another mistake. Germany had one chance to show the world that it was better now than it had been in the past; that was the reason everything had to be perfect. And, with hard work, they succeeded.

The closer the event got, the more the excitement grew. Five new stadiums were built right before the World Cup, and the rest of the stadiums were expanded. The total cost just for the stadiums was approximately \$ 1.9 billion (Yahoo Finance / converted from 1,5 milliarden Euro) (Fifa World Cup Germany 2006/ stadiums). The Allianz Arena in Munich cost about \$ 360 million (Yahoo Finance / converted from 280 millionen Euro) and has a capacity of 66,000 people (Fifa World Cup Germany 2006/page: stadiums). Some of the stadiums are the best and most modern in the world. To be sure, those are only the costs of the stadiums, not to speak of all the other costs like highways, metros, railways, etc. The Ruhr-University in Bochum, Germany, estimates the entire spending of communities, states, federation and businesses, up to about \$ 10.2 billion. (Yahoo Finance / converted from 8mrd. Euro) (Syd). Germany was one big building site at that time. As said before, everything had to be perfect.

Public locations with huge video screens sprang up like mushrooms. People slowly began to prepare by buying all the fan merchandise. There was almost nothing you couldn't buy in the German national colors of black-red-gold. Bikinis, bedclothes, masks, shoes, even spaghetti and toilet paper were available in the national colors.

Sadly some Dutch fans couldn't avoid making a bad joke. Some of them came with spiked helmets or armed forces helmets that the German armed forces wore during the Third Reich. A short time before the opening match of the tournament, a German flag hung from almost every balcony. *USA Today* reveals that "in any other country, this would be unremarkable. But Germans have long been reserved about flag-waving and other displays of nationalism" ("A Win Fuer Deutschland" 10a). But, at that time, not any more. Everywhere you were looking there was black-red-gold. Houses, people, even cars—just everywhere. Furthermore, the German Federal President Horst Köhler added: "You can see that we come out of the closet on our flag, without making it a great political affair of nationalism." (translated) ("Welt hat keine Angst mehr.")

Finally on the 9th of June the opening match took place in Munich. Germany faced Costa Rica and won 4-2. Streets were deserted. If you were interested in the World Cup (and it was hard not to be), you had three choices on a game day: Either you were lucky and you got some tickets for the match and watched it in the stadium, or you hosted a barbeque at home and invited all your friends, or the most common solution, you watched it at a public location on a huge video screen. The best known public location was probably the "Fanmeile" (*Fanmeile*) in Berlin. "For the World Cup the city transformed itself into one huge public celebration," as Robert Campbell mentions in his article "Party On! How Public Space Works When A Million People Show Up." (Campbell 28) About 900,000 people watched the semifinal between Germany and Italy there on huge video screens. (*Fanmeile*)

The German team did not have the best players, by far, but they had a combined team and a nation of 80 million people behind them. The team grew more and more together with every win

they achieved, and so did the nation. All Germans moved together as I've never seen before. If you were driving down the road and you passed another car with a German flag, you just blew the horn several times and so did the other car. If you watched a match in a public location and Germany scored, everybody hugged each other like they had known each other for 20 years. All Germans acted like they were best friends, and at least in that one month, from the 9th of June until the 9th of July, they were. They were proud of the team and proud to be part of that nation. Patriotism and euphoria came up and carried the team from win to win. A great gesture were the words from the president of the Central Council of Jews; she said, "I have rarely seen a more natural relationship between people and their country. The people wore the national colors was just lovely,". (translated) ("Welt hat keine Angst mehr vor Patriotismus in Deutschland")

The highlight for my friend and me was certainly the match Germany against Poland in the preliminary round. It was the second game after the opener against Costa Rica, and if Germany were to win, we would already reach the round of sixteen. My best friend and I were lucky and got two tickets. We drove four hours and arrived in Dortmund, where the game took place, about three hours before it started. The city was already packed. Both of us were fascinated by the incredible stadium and the magnificent atmosphere the 83,000 fans produced. In the end, it was a great game, too. Germany scored in the 91st minute and won 1-0. Even one hour after the game was over, nobody left the stadium. We kept celebrating, and finally the team showed up again on the field to thank the crowd for the great support. Afterwards we went to the inner city of Dortmund where hundreds of thousands of fans partied until the sun came up. It was a peaceful party, and here and there was a Polish fan celebrating with us, even though it meant the end of the tournament for Poland.

Germany beat Sweden in the round of sixteen, beat Argentina in a thrilling penalty shootout in the quarter final, and, sadly, lost in the semifinal against Italy. Of course the disappointment after the loss against our big soccer rival Italy was great. The long wished for dream of becoming World Champions burst within three minutes in the over-

Max Aust, a UNCP soccer player, gives an entertaining account of how Germans transformed their cities and energized their population as hosts of the 2006 World Cup competition. Max cites sources in two languages, writes English with flair, and expresses the pride of his re-united nation.

—Monika Brown

time. Italy scored twice and won 2-0. The nation and the team had to stomach that after the four prior wins. But there was still one match remaining—the “little final” against Portugal for third place.

Germany won 3-1 and reached third place. Italy beat France in the Final and became World Champions. At the end, the whole world praised Germany for being a great host. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan complimented Germany as follows: “The whole world has looked at the ball and at Germany. I have to say, from I have heard and what I have seen, it is one of the best World Cup tournaments there have ever been.” (translated) (“Welt hat keine Angst mehr vor Patriotismus in Deutschland”) An allegory for German pride and patriotism are the flags on the balconies—they are still out there and so is the pride of a entire nation. Federal President Horst Köhler said: “We should remember this even after the World Cup: we know now where we belong; we treasure our homeland. If we hang on to that, we can achieve a great deal.” (Boyes p.10) At the end it was not that important anymore that Germany didn’t win with their soccer team. As a nation they won a new form of national pride and international reputation. 🌸

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CRASH, AMERICAN HISTORY X, AND DO THE RIGHT THING

Jerrye Huber

While *Crash* (2005), *Do The Right Thing* (1989), and *American History X* (1998) deal with racial conflict, *Crash* is clearly the better movie. It has been nominated for six academy awards including Best picture, Best Director Paul Haggis, and Best Supporting Actor, Matt Dillon. The movie points out racism from many angles by using characters of varying ethnic groups, by displaying stereotypes, and by creating conflicts that throw a group of characters in and out of each others' lives within a thirty-six hour period. It is the kind of movie that stays with viewers, promotes discussions, and shows what really lies underneath skins--the inner thoughts and feelings that average persons hide.

Crash has talented actors such as Sandra Bullock, Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, William Fichtner, Brendan Frazier, Terrance Howard, Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, Thandie Newton, Ryan Phillippe, Larenze Tate, and Michael Pena. There is a full ensemble of actors who did not play the parts in which they are usually type cast. An example of the actor taking a chance and playing a rich, bitter, and mistrustful person is Sandra Bullock whose acting is the best of her career. Matt Dillon is also superb in the role of the white racist cop. Each character in the film is complex and convincing as harboring racial prejudice beneath the surface.

The movie has people from all backgrounds literally crashing into each other, some with cars and some just colliding emotionally and physically. It starts with car crashes, a homicide, and a car jacking, with racial slurs from several characters thrust into crises. The detective, Graham, played by Don Cheadle, is the common thread that weaves in and out of most of the other characters' lives. Apparently deadened by stress, he does not show much emotion while dealing with conflicting situations. His mother is a drug addict whose main concern is the younger wild brother who steals cars for a living and runs with a militant buddy looking for trouble and placing blame on others. The two young men steal a car from the L.A. District Attorney and his wife, played by Sandra Bullock, who assumes the young men are going to harm them



because the men are black and they are white. Bullock's character is a white upper class woman who lives in a sterile and privileged world but is angry at people she encounters. She demands that the locks on their house get changed and then changed again because the locksmith is Hispanic, who she assumes is in a gang because he has a shaved head and some tattoos. Her maid Maria, also Hispanic, is treated horribly but in the end is the only person that cares enough to take her to the hospital when she has fallen down a flight of stairs.

Graham is offered a job by the District Attorney's office because they need a black male on staff. Graham is given a choice of looking the other way about a white cop who has killed three black cops. As a reward, he can have his brother's record erased and acquire a new prestigious job. He is a person that has tried to do the right thing for himself and his family, and he ends up taking the job knowing that is what Mother would want him to do. He is in a car crash while in route to a homicide, which just happens to be his brother.

Another character that demonstrates complexity is the white racist cop played by Matt Dillon. He has been on the LAPD force for years and has been hardened by it. He is caring for his elderly father whose HMO is not covering the medical attention that he needs. He is on parole with a rookie

Jerrye Huber is currently a sophomore. She believes that UNCP is a wonderful school that has welcomed her as a nontraditional student and has allowed herself and others to bring to the University their experiences, their differences, and their diverse cultures.

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partner, and they pull over an SUV, like the one that had been stolen, knowing that it isn't the stolen vehicle because of the license plate. He is angry about his father and proceeds to take his frustrations out on a rich successful black couple driving home from dinner. Officer Ryan ends up molesting the woman and her husband has to watch and apologize to the cops so they will be released and allowed to go home. The couple end up in a terrible argument that night, and, the following day, the wife is involved in a horrific car crash. Officer Ryan is one of the first cops on the scene and tries to get her out of the car. The car is ready to explode from a gas leak, and he is pulled away but returns to save her life. He is the one that helped create all the spiraling events that happened to the couple.

In his review of *Crash*, the movie critic Roger Ebert sees “Matt Dillon’s performance as the strongest as the racist cop, who is in anguish over his father. He victimizes others by exercising his power, and is impotent when it comes to helping his father.” Ebert argues, “The movie shows the way we all leap to conclusions based on race--yes, all of us, of all races, and however fair minded we may try to be-- and we pay a price for that.” He gives *Crash* four stars and states at the end of his review, “I don’t expect *Crash* to work miracles, but I believe anyone seeing it is likely to be moved to have a little more sympathy for people not like themselves” (Ebert online).

“*Crash* became one of the summer’s sleeper hits grossing \$55.4 million in North America and since its December home video release, it has sold more than \$4 million worth of DVD’s. The key to its success, many agree, is that it provokes viewers to inject themselves into the movie’s racially charged situations so they examine their own prejudices and discuss them” (Mark Caro online). Clearly this movie is the best in dealing with racial conflict in its complexity.

Another popular movie with a racial theme is *American History X* that came out in 1998. A shocking movie about a family that deteriorates because of racism, this film shows how young people can spiral out of control when influenced by people with hate agendas. Edward Norton was nominated for an academy award for best actor and is believable as a neo-Nazi gang leader. The movie,

one that is not easily forgotten, could also spark discussions on racism and tolerance. It is a hard movie to watch because of the violence and brutality that evolves over the course of the film. This is another movie that is set in Los Angeles, but the drama that takes place could happen anywhere in urban America as with *Crash*.

American History X starts with a young white teenager, Danny, who has written a paper on *Mein Kampf* and explains how Hitler was really a civil rights leader. The principle has taken over because the Jewish teacher had troubled dealings with the child and wants out of the situation. The principal has also dealt with the older sibling, Derek, who is in prison and wants to save this child from the same fate, so he has him write another paper about his brother. During the period in which younger brother looks back at the dynamics that led up to Derek’s incarceration, the viewer can see how the destruction starts. First, drug addicts kill the father, a fire fighter in a poor black neighborhood. Then Cameron, who has programmed him to be the leader of a neo-Nazi gang of thugs that go on rampages of violence against others who are not white Protestants, befriends Derek. Derek speaks with so much hatred that his mother and sisters are fearful of him, but Danny, who looks up to him, is following along in his shoes.

There are parts of the movie that are in black and white to show emphasis on the recent past and color to show the 24-hour period after Derek is released from prison (Ebert online). Derek comes out of prison realizing that all the propaganda that was fed to him did not fit. He also befriended a black man that saved him after he was brutally raped. The principal visited Derek in prison and told him that he was worried about his brother and that he was going to end up in prison if something wasn’t done. Derek changed and came out of incarceration a different person. There is a flashback of Derek on his killing spree of the three black men that are trying to steal his car. This scene is horrific. Derek kills with certainty, brutality, and no remorse. He is sentenced to only three years in prison because Danny doesn’t have to testify even though he has witnessed the entire thing and knows that Derek was not just defending himself.

Danny has realized that the racial hatred

Jerrye’s comparison of three movies about race relations goes far beyond being a simple “movie review.” It is a powerful analysis that combines detailed description with social commentary in a persuasive argument of evaluation.

—Melissa Schaub

started with their father. He also sees how hard it is for Derek after Derek reviews the situations that have made him change his views and explains his new look on life. The film has an ending that the viewer realizes is inevitable. The movie critic James Berardinelli says, “The film emphasizes that actions have consequences and that attaining redemption isn’t as easy as saying ‘I’m sorry.’” The price for a change of heart can be, and often is, brutal. The final sequence in the film is shocking not because it’s expected, but because it illustrates this truth” (James Berardinella online).

Another film that is an eye opener about racism is Spike Lee’s, *Do The Right Thing*. Spike Lee wrote, directed and produced the film in 1989. It is about one day in an inner city neighborhood on the hottest day of the summer. Everyone is hot, tense with attitudes, and some are looking for a conflict of any kind; and some people are trying to just get through the day. As the heat escalates, so do the members of a white Italian American family that owns the only pizzeria in the neighborhood which is primarily black. The son of the owner is outspoken with his prejudices and wants to sell the place and move to the Italian neighborhood that they live in. He is mean and nasty to everyone including his brother.

The main character Mookie, a young black man, is just trying to deliver pizzas and make some money for his girlfriend and son. He is the only one that keeps everyone from fighting among each other during the day. The owner of the Pizzeria has a great day money wise and lets some kids in after he has already closed. Words are exchanged, tempers fly, and there is a fight with the owner busting a boom box with a baseball bat. The prejudiced police are called in, and they break up the fight but kill a black teenager. They get the teenager out of there quickly and then a riot starts with Mookie throwing a garbage can through the window of the Pizzeria first. He reacts to the killing of his friend and the insanity of the day. The neighborhood people end up destroying the Pizzeria. The movie provokes thoughts of tolerance and you realize why people do the things they do. The characters in the movie react to their environment, which is a city block in a poor black neighborhood with not much to look forward too.

According to *David Myers*, “frustration and other aversive stimuli like foul odors, hot temperatures, personal insults can evoke hostility. The increase of violent crimes such as murder, assaults and spousal abuse are higher when it is hot. When people are hot they think and feel more aggressively” (562). The next morning Mookie comes back to the owner looking for his money that is owed but walks away with his job. The ending gives you hope that friendship means more and that tolerance and understanding will win over hate and prejudices.

The racial conflict that is illustrated in the three movies is both timely and meaningful in a pluralistic society. People are living in close quarters in big cities, and they have wide diversities—in race, in ethnicity, in religion, and in culture. Whenever large groups of people that have traditions and beliefs in common live in close proximity, there will be conflicts among people because of language barriers, customs, religious beliefs, or just a different way of life. While two of these movies are filmed in Los Angeles and take place there, the situations that occur in the films can take place anywhere in the world. The film *Do The Right Thing* is filmed in New York and takes place in Brooklyn.

Ultimately, *American History X* does not deal as effectively with racial conflict as does *Crash* and *Do The Right Thing*. While *American History X* explores racism, it does so within the context of a single family and suggests that racism is brought about within specific family units. On the other hand, *Crash* and *Do The Right Thing* suggests that all social classes harbor prejudices of some sort towards other ethnic groups. *American History X* suggests that racism can be contained if families change attitudes, but *Crash* demonstrates the ubiquity of prejudice, and force viewers to confront it, however painful the process. 🌸

CRASH, AMERICAN HISTORY X, AND DO THE RIGHT THING

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LIVE UNTIL YOU DIE

Jordan Pittman

Have you ever wondered what life will be like when you're seventy? You may see yourself sitting on the front porch of your beautiful house in the afternoon, laughing with your spouse, who is equally as wrinkled as you are, or you may see yourself still working your dream job and continuing a prosperous life. Recently I accompanied my beloved, newly-engaged grandmother to one of her senior citizen get-togethers at the bowling alley. I expected to see cute old ladies and chubby old men with the gutters closed on their lanes, holding their backs while trying their best to drop the ball without falling to the floor with it. This was accurate in a few cases, but, to my surprise, most of them looked like professionals compared to me. Some of these senior citizens acted younger than their age, while some acted like the everyday grandmothers and grandfathers we are used to and expect. These people were all around the same age, but they differed in their appearance and personalities.

When I first walked into the bowling alley, I felt as if I had entered a portal that lead into a weird senior citizen high school of some sort. I saw prissy women with their bright red lipstick and low cut shirts, giggling and giving looks over to the men that were considered "heartthrobs" in their time; they had Elvis-inspired hair-dos and were wearing brown boat shoes. I couldn't believe how these people seemed to be young people in old bodies.

Yes, some of these people acted just like eighteen-year-olds, but there were also some accepted the aging process. They kept their natural gray and white hair colors that they had earned over time. These women wore little pins on their shirts that said "#1 Grandma," and they had hair that looked like it was sculpted with three cans of hairspray. Some men wore button up shirts and bifocal glasses, and they had their pants pulled up over their bellies. These were the grandmothers that baked cookies and the grandfathers that complained of back problems. The stereotype of what we think an elderly person should be. Some of these people seemed to have some sort of disability that was keeping them from bowling.

Also, the lively ones like to play around and



joke. I remember one man approached the women. While talking to him, they burst out into a roar of laughter, but, after he walked away, they looked at him with an expression of disgust. They wrinkled their noses up at him and turned away. I thought to myself, "These old men shouldn't be telling nasty jokes and flirting." This wasn't what I expected, but it was very interesting. They loved to socialize, and surprisingly, they were great bowlers. I remember looking at one woman who had two of her grandchildren with her. She was wearing a floral print dress. I thought to myself, "This is a normal old lady." She looked like a sweet grandma that would sit in a rocking chair and tell her grandchildren stories of the "good old days" and would complain about how hard of a life she had. When it was her turn to bowl, she put a glove on her right hand, which had all of the fingers cut out of it. She grabbed her 13 pound ball and walked up to the lane confidently. She bent her back and slowly lifted her leg until she was perfectly balanced. She then did some type of shuffle with her feet as she released the bowling ball with surprisingly strong force. The ball sped down the lane and to the middle pin. "STRIKE!" she screamed. The women jumped up into the air, and each gave her a high five as she walked by, strutting with her head high and a big smile on her face. I was impressed. This

A native and resident of Lumberton, NC, Jordan Pittman is a freshman at UNC Pembroke who enjoys music, art, and writing.

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woman, who had two grandchildren, and looked to be around seventy-five just threw a bowling ball about two times as hard as I could, and with perfect posture. It was amazing that these people were having the time of their lives at a time when it was supposed to be near the end of their lives. This tells a lot about their personalities and the liveliness that they all express.

Those few that seemed to be the typical old people were still talking among the group, but you could tell that they couldn't bowl or they didn't have the same kind of inner youth that the others had. This comforted me in a way. It isn't the fact that I want to be exactly like them when I grow old, but I want to be able to accept it. These people still had smiles on their faces. They had grown old together, and they all seemed to know each other. Even though they were sitting and were not as loud as the rest, they seemed to be the ones the people flocked around. These people had a look of wisdom, and seemed to have a little more dignity than the others. They cheered when the bowlers knocked the pins over, but they didn't jump, scream, and run like the others did. I was im-

pressed with this group of people also. They were comfortable with their age and had aged gracefully. They were fine with their old clothes and "grandparent" status. These people were proud, and it showed on their faces.

From this experience I realized that people age differently, and just because you're old it doesn't mean that you can't have a social life or can't still enjoy your favorite pastimes, such as bowling. People age differently physically and mentally. It's okay to still be young at heart, and it's also okay to do the things that typical old people do. They say you earn wisdom over time, and I can't help but respect elderly people for the wisdom they have learned from their life experiences. For every wrinkle there is a memory that they are willing to share, a memory that they want to tell you about so that you can learn a lesson. That is my favorite thing about talking to a senior citizen. They open their lives up to you like books; if you are willing to listen, then they will tell you. But the most important lesson that I will take from them is that "Our lives aren't over until we're dead." 🌸

Jordan's essay relates in great detail his observations of senior citizens on an outing. His delight in their behaviors and actions is infectious, and the reader can picture each person from Jordan's meticulous descriptions.

-Jan Gane

THE TREACHERY OF EVE: An Interpretation of Michelangelo's *The Fall of Man*

Brian. M. Riesbeck

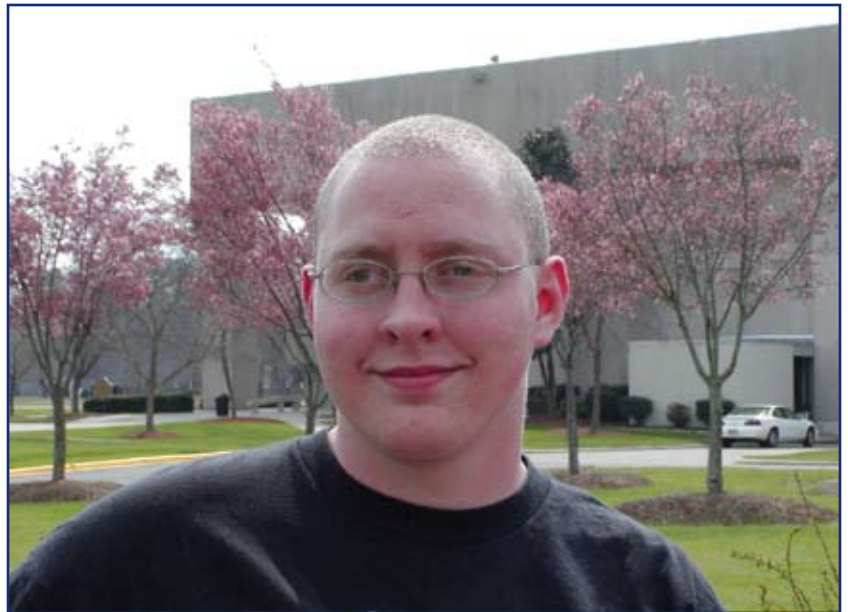
In 1508 CE Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni was commissioned by Pope Julius II to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The chapel itself is located within the Apostolic Palace of the Holy See, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church and thus the epicenter of all of Western Christendom for centuries. With this knowledge, the magnitude of Michelangelo's work here is apparent.

Of all the works done by the hand of this master within the walls of this chapel, *The Fall of Man* is among the most famous (Fig.1). It is known by many names, *The Fall of Man* being just one of them, and is one of nine such scenes on the ceiling from the first book of the Bible, Genesis, with this particular fresco emanating from Genesis 3:1-13, 22-24. But to take the fresco at face value would belittle the true depth and complexity of the work.

No artist has ever painted a tree simply for the sake of being a tree, and Michelangelo has not done that here. An attentive viewer can always find a deeper meaning, and with this in mind the work's own deeper meaning has to be considered. After extensive research, it becomes apparent that a major theme is that not only must all of humanity carry the burden of sin, but that women in particular must bare the stain placed upon them through the actions of Eve. The fresco itself elaborates on the story by portraying Eve as a cunning seductress who lures a naive Adam away from his fellowship with God and into mortal sin.

The most obvious observation is that the fresco is not a single scene, but two separate episodes that have been divided down the center by the serpent and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Fig. 2). In addition Michelangelo has inserted numerous implied diagonal lines leading to the left hand side (Fig. 3). This is no accident and is actually a method used by artists to draw the viewer's eye to a particular portion of the work.

While each side is equally important to the overall piece, placing such visual emphasis on the left side is important to my argument. Central on the left-hand side is Eve, who is seen grasping the fruit from the hand of the serpent. In this por-



tion of the compositio, Eve's left hand forms the central point of the steepest diagonal line, so it is no coincidence that this is where the viewer's eyes find themselves. One's eye then instinctively follows the line following Eve's arm, clavicle, breasts, and down to her right hand.

Next one finds a second line created by Adam's right thigh and ending at his phallus. And a third line begins at the phallus and continues on by way of Eve's ear, cheekbone, the crown of her head, and the leaves protruding from the Tree to end back at her left hand; these three lines form a triangle (Fig. 4). The insertion of geometric shapes such as this triangle is another principle used by artists to draw one's attention to a particular area. Clearly this is something Michelangelo wants the viewer to focus on, but for what purpose?

Delving into the composition deeper, it becomes obvious that Eve's body is contorted and twisted unnaturally, with the index finger of her right hand pointing to her concealed genitalia. There is also the extremely close proximity between her head and Adam's phallus, which seems to protrude out at her almost appearing erect. Why would a man, one of the most praised artists in human history, insert seemingly overt sexual allusions on the ceiling of one of the centers of the Roman Catholic Church? Perhaps because a viewer from

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Fig. 1

the 16th century would have seen Eve as the great temptress who, first tempted by the serpent into taking the fruit herself, used her own sexuality to ensnare a gullible Adam in order to bring about the fall of Man. If this is the case, then Eve's motive comes into question.

To discover Eve's motives, the accounts of her creation must be examined. In Genesis 2:21, Eve is formed from Adam's rib. The Hebrew word for rib is *tsela*, which can also be translated into "stumbling" or "misfortune."¹ This may be an indication that Eve was created for the explicit purpose of bringing about the Fall. A further understanding of this notion may be gained by evaluating Eve's relationship with the serpent. It is strange that, though it would seem obvious that the sexual tension in the piece should be shared by Adam and his partner, all of Eve's attention is directed toward the serpent. Also, the position of Eve's body and the manner in which she and the serpent are faintly touching hands mirrors in many ways the relationship between Adam and God in the *Creation of Man*, also on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, further bringing Eve's relationship with the serpent into context (Fig. 5). The similar position of their bodies suggests a similar relationship of master and servant between Eve and the serpent, representing evil, as Adam and God had shared.

However, within the book of Genesis, there is no mention of any actual relationship between Eve and the serpent. But there is a wealth of apocryphal texts that expand on the subject. In two ancient Hebrew texts, the midrash *Genesis Rabba* from the 5th century and the *Babylonian Talmud* from the 1st century, the story of Eve's creation is altered to say that Eve had not been formed from

Adam's rib, but from a tail which had once been a part of his body.² The fact that she is formed from a tail clearly illustrates a belief that she and the serpent have a much deeper connection. This idea highlights Eve's apparently insidious role in the creation story. Just as God brought Man into this world, so Satan through Eve was to bring about his downfall.

Other texts speak of an even more intimate relationship between the serpent and Eve. In the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Moses* the serpent "pours" lust onto the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and that is actually what entices Eve to sin.³ Several apocryphal texts also state that Cain who is traditionally believed to be the first son of Adam and Eve is actually the result of a union between Eve and Samael, a name for the Devil in many Hebrew texts, after he had disguised himself as Adam.⁴ Finally taking it a step further several theologians and church leaders, among them Martin Luther, have theorized that sexual intercourse was the "forbidden fruit" that the serpent, which was usually another guise of Samael in their interpretation, offered Eve and that she willfully laid with him in the Garden.⁵ Altogether these texts in many ways contradict and conflict with one another, but the overall message remains clear: that Eve is the villainous catalyst that brought original sin to humankind.

Even though any connections between these texts and the depiction of the Fall painted by Michelangelo is speculative, they should not be written off. Dr. James Beck of Columbia University suggests that Cardinal Francesco Alidosi, one of Julius II's most trusted advisors, served as Michelangelo's theological advisor for the Sistine Chapel ceiling.⁶ Alidosi was infamous in his own time, and many claimed that he adhered to various "magical arts" which Beck asserts could have been Kabbalah, astrology, and alchemy, among other illicit practices. If his observations are correct, then this would lend further credence to the notion that apocryphal, Hebrew, and other references from outside of both the Biblical canon and church dogma are present.

Other more apparent elements not found in the Biblical canon appear in the work, chief among these being that the serpent is depicted as part woman (Fig. 6). This fact is made undeni-

Woman's role in the biblical Fall of Man is a topic that has concerned theologians and artists for centuries. Brian smartly explores the sexuality of Eve in Michelangelo's Fall of Man on the Sistine Ceiling. He skillfully blends his own Christian convictions with historical attitudes on the subject. Drawing upon early church writers, he points out that many believed there was more to the Fall than forbidden fruit.
- Richard Gay

ably clear by the exposure of her left breast as well as her long, flowing hair. The only reference to the serpent's appearance in the biblical canon is a brief passage in which God chastises the serpent and says, "upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."⁷ This infers that before the Fall that the serpent stood upright, but doesn't make any reference to the serpent's gender or mention that it was some sort of hybrid. However, a tradition that the serpent appeared to Eve in a female form was held by various scholars, theologians, and artists long before Michelangelo's birth, as is explained in Peter Comestor's 12th-century work *Historia Scholastica*, "he (Satan) chose a kind of serpent...which had a face like a maiden's, since like approves of like."⁸ Since the belief that the serpent appeared to Eve in a female form is completely outside of official church doctrine and isn't alluded to in the book of Genesis and yet still appears within the Fall, it allows for a more open interpretation of the work.

Whether or not any single element of these or any other apocryphal works appear within Michelangelo's *Fall of Man* is completely debatable. But something that is much more definite is the fact that the church before and during Michelangelo's time had vilified Eve. Dr. Jean M. Higgins gives numerous citations from prominent authors and theologians dating back to the beginnings of the modern Christianity, illustrating that this belief proliferated throughout the Church by the time of the painting of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling.⁹ This belief had its own purpose, however—to subjugate women. Eve was the reason for original sin and now all women must bear the burden and shame of their predecessor. This idea is no better expressed than by a founder of the modern church, the 3rd century Church theologian Tertullian in his work *De Cultu Feminarum* (On the Apparel of Women):

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert---that

is, death---even the Son of God had to die.¹⁰

This blistering message could not be any clearer: every woman is the daughter of Eve and is stained by her predecessor's wrongdoing.

But the condemnation of womanhood is not the extent of the church's belief, but part of the much larger theology of redemption from sin. The seeds of hope were first sown by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. In Chapter Five he states, "But death reigned from Adam unto Moses...after the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is a figure of him who was to come;" Here he states that all men carry the burden created by Adam's sin and also establishes a connection between Adam and Jesus that would be delved upon in the next verse, "For if by the offence of one [Adam], many died: much more the grace of God and the gift, by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."¹¹ In this passage Paul has created the notion that Jesus is the successor to Adam. Just as through Adam all men are born and through his folly all men are made to suffer, also through Christ all men can be reborn and through his sacrifice all men can attain salvation. Saint Augustine extends this concept of redemption by making parallels between the tree of the creation story and the cross. He states that the fruit of the tree was intended to be a sacrament which, through Adam and Eve's actions, would lead mankind to the redemption made possible through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, who is the Tree of Life.¹² Finally it was extended to Eve by Jerome, who stated "But now that a virgin has conceived in the womb a child...the fetters of the old curse are broken. Death came through Eve: life has come through Mary."¹³ In this sense Mary becomes analogous to Eve in that through her giving birth to Christ she has atoned for Eve's transgressions.

Mary does not become a second mother to humankind in a physical sense as Eve was, but in a spiritual sense. She becomes a second Eve in the sense that just as Eve is both the mother of humanity and the originator of sin then Mary, through her role as the mother of Christ, is the originator of redemption and thus the spiritual mother of humanity.

This then changes the entire dynamic behind Eve's reason for being. Without her to take the



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

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Fig. 4

fruit and bring humanity into sin then there would be no reason to bring humanity out of sin, no need for redemption. The promise of redemption, of the annulment of a person's iniquity through Jesus Christ, is the focal point of Christianity. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "Christ died for us. Much more therefore, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from wrath through him."¹⁴ In this sense Eve's transgression becomes a necessary evil, being the root cause of why people need salvation, and thus need the church.

Michelangelo's depiction of Eve in the *Fall of Man* is not just pigment on plaster; it is a tiny piece of a character central to not only Roman Catholicism but to Christianity in general. Eve and her role in the creation story have played a crucial part in the Christian notion of sin and redemption, since without Eve's treachery there could not be salvation through Christ. Eve's surrender to sin has been pivotal in determining religious, social, and feminine standards for centuries. Her portrayal within the fresco did not lead to a revolution in Christian theology but, rather, was an articulation of that theology. In this context it becomes so much more than a fresco on the ceiling of a church simply to be admired, it becomes a representation of a belief. 🌿

End Notes

¹Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*. (New York: Greenwich House, 1983) 69

² Graves & Patai 66

³ Graves & Patai 85

⁴ Norris, Pamela, *Eve: A Biography*. (New York: New York UP, 1999) 101

⁵ Francis Sheed, *Genesis Regained*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969) 100

⁶ James Beck, "Cardinal Alidosi, Michelangelo, and the Sistine Ceiling." *Artibus et Historiae* 11.22. (1990) 74

⁷ *The Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims Version*. Richard Challoner, gen. ed. (Champaign, Ill.: Project Gutenberg, 1998) Gen 3:14

⁸ Norris 319

⁹ Jean Higgins, "The Myth of Eve, the Temptress." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44.4. (1976) 640

¹⁰ Tertullian, "On the Apparel of Women." Trans. S. Thelwall. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Eds. A. Robert and J. Donaldson. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869) 11:14

¹¹ *The Douay-Rheims Bible* Rom. 5:14-15

¹² Esther Dotson, "An Augustinian Interpretation of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, Part I." *The Art Bulletin* 61.2 (1979) 242

¹³ Norris 232-233

¹⁴ *The Douay-Rheims Bible* Rom. 5:9

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Fig. 5



Fig. 6

IN THE EYES OF THE CREATOR

Mara Thornton

For my entire life, my family always had a plan for me, being in a very large number of overwhelming Hispanic/Native American family members, along with twenty-two first cousins. In my immediate family I was the youngest sibling of three brothers and had a lot riding on my shoulders before this big move to college. My grandmother's plan for me was that I was going to be married by the age of eighteen and have three children by age twenty-one and also run the family tortilla and bakery shop for the rest of my life. However, my mom and I thought very differently. My mom loved watching me play softball, and she saw how I loved playing the game. I loved my family also, but the life some of my family already had didn't appeal to me. I wanted to be happy, but at the same time I wanted more out of life; the shop and taking care of little kids running around had been my job since I was seven. My mom at the time helped Grandma at the bakery while working two other jobs to help pay for all the softball equipment and tournaments she and I wanted to go to. Considering I was raised by my three brothers and uncles, having babies and working in the shop didn't mark my interest as sports did.

I played baseball for thirteen years of my life, then I started playing softball for five. Coming home full of dirt and my face always roughened up was always hard for my grandma to see because she hated that it took time out of working at the shop. But I was in love with the game, and I couldn't get enough of it. I always wanted to practice or play against other kids and my brothers. During the summer of my junior year in high school, a few college coaches started coming out to see my play and requesting information from me. It felt overwhelmingly great, yet it hurt at the same time. When I was playing softball I felt great about myself because of how much I practiced, and when it came down to the game I was excited to show off my skill in pitching. Yet it hurt to know that I could be at the shop working instead of my grandma having to work all day. In my family it was always about God, Culture, and Work. Juggling work, school, and practice, and taking care of thirteen little kids made it hard to even want to go



to college. I felt that if I went I would be leaving so many things and people behind. And it made it even harder to realize that I was the first person out of my entire family to ever go to college. There were so many reasons not to go, and yet there were so many reasons to go. I was a young woman in a large family of underachievers; it seemed like everyone settled for the life that they were given.

My mom took me aside one night and told me that the life other people had in store for me didn't have to be the path I had to choose, that I could make my own decision about what to do. My mom hated where we lived and how we didn't have things of our own or stability, barely living paycheck to paycheck. She always taught me never to settle for less in life when you can always do more.

Keeping this decision to move away from my grandma until two days before I actually left had to be the hardest thing I have ever done. As days went by, knowing that I was hiding this big move from her put a huge hole in my stomach, made me barely able to look at her when I was at home. So I decided I had enough and tried to tell her as nicely as possible. But just one look from her made me crumble, and I felt weak in my knees. I started to shake before the words came out of my mouth. I started to tell her when about ten of my cousins all

Mara Autumn Eagle Encinas Thornton is from Tucson, Arizona, but originally lived in San Diego, California. Her major is criminal justice, and she hopes to become a lawyer. She loves to play softball and received a full scholarship to play here at UNCP. Her family is one of her main priorities and her mother is her biggest influence, the one person that she has always looked up to.

IN THE EYES OF THE CREATOR

came over at the same time and decided to listen to the conversation. As if it weren't hard enough to tell my grandma what was going on, I had to tell my entire family. My face turned bright red, and I started to get a very large lump in my throat, unable to say a word. I froze and didn't know what to say; my mind had gone blank. My mom saw how I was surrounded and helped me tell everybody what was going on. Everyone's faces dropped, and everyone started to mumble many things in Spanish and Indian that I can't repeat, for they weren't very nice or motivational.

My grandma took one look at me and turned away. However, as she was walking away, I heard her say something in Indian. Translated, she said, "She is going to forget about her culture and turn her back on her family." My heart dropped, and I was speechless. I looked at my mom, and she said it was going to be okay. Unfortunately, I knew my grandma and how hardheaded she could be and assumed the worst. I figured that it was going to be the last time she spoke to me again.

Moving day came, and out of the twenty-six people who lived in my grandma's house, eight showed up to help me pack all my things into the taxi. My three brothers, my mom, and four of my baby cousins all wanted to see me before I left. Everything made me feel that I would regret my decision until my two eight- and nine-year-old cousins came up to me and told me they wanted to be just

like me and explore new things outside of where we lived. That, and being able to show my cousins that it's okay to step outside of your comfort zone and seek to do more with your life, was more motivation than I could ever need.

As soon as I turned my back to get into the car, I heard my grandma's voice. I turned, and she grabbed and held on to me for about five minutes. At the moment I knew she had faith in me and in the love I have for my family and culture, and she knew I would never forget where I came from. I knew she wanted me to do something greater for myself, to become the person I am supposed to be. She told me something of great importance, a saying that my family has known and valued for centuries in our tribe. She said, "Do not weep in the eyes of the creator; you can always do more in the name of him and your culture." I used to understand that saying to mean that you could always stand strong when you were facing a hardship, that you should look to the creator for strength. I never expected my grandma to tell me this right before I left. To me, she is saying that no matter where I go or what I do, I will always remember where I came from. I knew that the gift I was given, of family and culture, could never be taken away or forgotten. All the memories and teachings of my family and culture were in my blood and could never be taken away or forgotten; they will always be there inside of me. 🌿

Mara's personal narrative tells a great story, revealing the honor—as well as the invisible pain—of being the first in her family to do many things.

What's more, Mara's essay explores the thorny dilemma of staying true to one's roots while blazing a new trail: as she discusses, her pursuit of happiness often threatens her relationship to home and family, even as her family is deeply proud to see her succeed.

—Scott Hicks

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