
THE LOST COUNTRY

A Literary Journal of The Exiles

Fall, 2012

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The Exiles

THE LOST COUNTRY

Editor-in-Chief: *Tyler Morrison*

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A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

THE MEMBERS OF THE EXILES share the conviction that literature is one of the modes of knowledge through which truth becomes accessible to man. The contemplation of a literary work of art, far from being a momentary diversion, an escape from reality, is, rather, a vision of that deeper reality which we mean by the term Truth. Literature, then, is not simply fantasy, a make-believe (and hence untrue) world to which we retreat in brief respite from the confusion of daily life, returning—entertained, perhaps—but no wiser for time spent in its contemplation.

Rather, literature, as Louise Cowan has said, “reveals the invisible ‘by the things that are seen’”—that is, in its depiction of the world of human experience, it reveals to the reader a secret inner meaning, a deeper and transcendent reality which underlies and permeates that experience. Human experience is the province of literature, but it is, as Robert Penn Warren has said, “experience fulfilled and redeemed in knowledge;” it is experience the meaning of which has been discerned by the poet in an act of creative intuition or poetic insight. Rather than casting an illusion over reality, the poet, through the “magic” of poetic insight, penetrates the veils which conceal a deeper reality. In doing so, the poet redeems for man a vision of the realm of meaning, light, purpose, and intelligibility which is his true home and which underlies and permeates all his earthly experience.

A literary work of art—be it a poem, novel or drama—is, as Aristotle says, mimetic: it imitates an action. However, the action imitated, as Francis Fergusson has shown, is not the external face of deed and activity, but the inner action of the

heart, a “movement-of-spirit” located in the mysterious depths of the human person. Because literature depicts, not only these movements-of-spirit, but also the end which they attain, literature presents an eschatological view of human life and experience, a view as though from the end of time when the meaning of everything that has happened is seen, a view in the light of eternity which is beyond our ordinary mode of perception. By seeing human actions in relation to their end, the literary work of art reveals that all the events, the agonies and the conflicts, of human life have meaning.

We may say, then, with Jacques Maritain, that in the literary work of art there is a transformation of the ugly: a transformation of everything in our lives which seems meaningless, which is deformed, warped, agonizing, and terrible, which fails to achieve its potential and realize its true form. For it is a higher beauty, a higher truth, and a higher form, which is, in reality, being achieved through the movement of time and which literature ultimately depicts. Poetic intuition divines the mystery at the heart of time: that in a way we can scarcely comprehend or imagine, all the elements of our lives are parts of the movement toward a new unity, members of a new form which is being achieved and which will raise and transform their meaning as it incorporates them into itself. Literature reveals that, in the final reconciliation of time, each human experience and action, no matter how meaningless or ugly or deficient it may seem, will be seen to have been permeated with significance and to have been part of a larger action, a greater movement toward the realization of a higher meaning.

Dr. Judith Shank

*Fellow & Professor in Literature
Fisher More College*

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

LIKE SO MANY SPONTANEOUS AND SOBER NOTIONS, the idea for this journal began at a pub. On a warm night in June, former classmates and friends came together at *Ye Olde Bull and Bush* to discuss their attempts at fiction and poetry over drinks. Each of us had shared many classes and conversations about literature, and each at one time or another had tried his hand at writing verse or prose, but somehow we had failed to notice until now that we were not individuals alone in our endeavors but a ragtag company of kindred spirits. “The Exiles” moniker stuck, and so did the group. By the end of the night we decided not only to meet again to critique each other’s work, but that these writings actually showed some merit. They meant something, something real, and so we knew they must be shared.

The Lost Country is the natural fruition of that night, and the many nights that followed. This journal grew organically out of our common interest, education, and tradition, but more significantly, it came about because we had a common need to write authentic literature together. While fiction remains a thriving business in the United States, literature as a genuine species of art is a rare treasure not easily found today. Much of contemporary literature falls short of its aim, or it aims at the wrong end entirely. Poetry should aspire to more than mere self-expression, a novel more than cheap entertainment. Sentimentality and social commentary are no replacement for Western culture and the Western literary tradition. True literature cannot exist outside of this tradition, for each new work assimilates itself to the works of the past, and will in turn be assimilated by those still to come.

We aim to continue this tradition not just by exploring the process of making genuine works of literary art, but also by critically examining other works of authentic literature and placing them, as best we can, within the tradition. We accomplish the first through our attempt at *poesis*, and the second through our translations, essays, and book reviews.

This first issue of *The Lost Country* draws heavily from the writings and thoughts of *The Exiles*, but we hope, in the future, that we might elicit the writings and thoughts of others who share our understanding of art and also wish to examine or partake in the great Western literary tradition.

Tyler Morrison
Editor-in-Chief
The Lost Country

Behind the veil of heaven

by **Thomas A. Beyer**

Behind the veil of heaven,
Beyond our mortal sight,
The Lord moves in power and light,
And brilliant majesty.

A whirling cloud of witnesses,
The heroes of our faith,
Throng the heavenly throne, ablaze
With radiant glory.

I know that splendid host,
By reflection and diffusion,
Transmits the gladsome lumination,
Agents of grace;

But to my world-weary eyes,
Their intensity is blinding;
These dazzling mirrors fiercely shining
Overawe.

Their station seems too distant
For an inchworm such as I
To reach, had I twelve hundred lives
To live, and more.

Like the flaming swords of Eden,
They shield only those inside,

Spurning, burning those who, in pride,
The dais approach.

When Jacob strove with God,
God's envoy took His place:
Not even Israel saw His face,
The Christ-Father!

And when Moses saw His backside,
Atop the desert mountain,
The founder of God's holy nation!
Fell and wept.

Even Saul, while still in life,
And a holy man besides,
Confounded, shaken, was struck blind
Upon the road.

If these and more could bear Him not,
What hope have I that hence
I might be favored even a glimpse
of the World-Maker?

Though Teresa's wild ecstasy
And the sight of angels piercing,
I shall never find in reverie,
There's yet some hope:

In you I see the beauty of God
Expressed in fleshly sign,

Your heart aflood with love divine,
The Blood of Christ.

And from your breast, that source of life,
The font of milk and motherhood,
God's grace flows forth to feed the World,
And my own daughter.

One day I may behold Him
Face-to-face in all His grandeur,
But for now I'd well remember
My estate:

I'm not a wingèd angle,
Nor yet a white-robed saint in heaven
And God is better seen by men
Through His Creation.

A Changeable Light

by Chiara Solari

Clouds overhead
but light seeps at every corner;
aspens in the grey fog
collect it and spin
a fabric of blazing filaments.
Then sky clears
and every golden sapling
at once enkindles,
initiating its apotheosis
into the autumnal glory of the sun.

Around a turn of the hill,
the sky soars in a vasty blue
and the fallow fields
fling out their finest silken airs
to celebrate the morning coming on.
Slanted, tender rays
catch these filmy mists,
paint them snowy white,
weaving a bridal veil
for the old earth's still romantic heart.

From a mile away,
the rolling hills appear monochromatic
under a cloak of low clouds,
harvest gold and chocolate soil
blended to a single tone.

One finger of the sun
searches down through the shroud,
not to wake more color,
but to gild each dewy surface
with an appearance of self-illumination.

Smooth grey mists
ring the mountain tops,
but one valley in the midst
dreams of another world
under a blanket of light.
Vibrant as emerald,
occasional gold flares
embroider its pine-clad flanks;
it seems a tiny sample
of a tapestry too large to read.

Each vision is diaphanous,
passing in an instant
to be replaced by the next,
and both are forgotten
after an hour in the general chaos of living.
Still they and others wind themselves
into a Heraclitean river,
never the same and yet itself forever:
a changeable light,
which mirrors the face of eternity.

Dilate pupils, open wide

by **Thomas A. Beyer**

Dilate pupils, open wide,
Find the way across the threshold,
The barrier between
Man-made day and wild night.

Thrust into the black and white
World of midnight gloom,
The pool light is a beacon
To both bug and me alike.

It bursts through the chlorine
To drown the backyard in its glow,
Plunge its drab environs
In a bath of daytime hues.

The trees' soft undersides
And their striking, radiant green,
Against the inky sky stand out,
And bewitch a ready eye.

If ever the gaze of Helios' blazed,
And Nyx ne'er spread her cloak,
Always tinted would the whole world be,
And we would never see one thing, only many.

But the Chariot shall rise anew
And undo the nighttime magic
Of a chilly pool in summertime
And its brilliant light of difference.

Felix Culpa

by **Thomas A. Beyer**

Oh! happy fault
That Adam did incur
That made possible our wretchedness
And rent our bonds asunder.

That opened up our eyes
To the sight of one another,
Our fleshly difference did reveal,
And our nakedness uncover.

Though one may mourn, lament,
That regretful end of innocence,
I, for one, will glory
In our corporate dissent;

For if our Father had not sinned,
I would not see your beauty,
I would not wonder at your shape,
Nor my most solemn duty:

To have, to hold,
To love, to cherish,
Each other gently nourish,
And mend our Sin in marriage.

So I'll sing the splendid blessing
Of the loss of Paradise,
For otherwise we'd not have known
The bliss of fierce desire.

First Snow

by **Maria Stromberg**

I wonder with what amazement
the first man and woman must have gazed
at the snow
for the first time falling
gently on the withered earth
softly
coldly enveloping
the fallen dying world
in a curtain all of white
startling them out of the despair
with which they had watched
Eden's eternal summer
turn to autumn
the fruits falling from the boughs
rotting
the leaves drying
cracking
disintegrating
and the high merciless winds
stripping them from the trees
—and the two of them
shivering
in the skins of dead animals
wondering
if this was their punishment
the world dying around them
with them
the summer gone forever
which was all that they had ever known—
when into their terrified view
the first snowflake drifted

and then the second
as if the pale sky was falling
silently
they must have held out their hands
and flinched at the cold
the wet flakes melting on their palms
on their eyelashes
running down their cheeks like tears
and when they woke
huddled together for warmth
under their furs
the world was transformed
into a landscape of sheer white
which in the sun
reflecting light
sparkled
cold but marvelous
spotless
immaculate
and they wondered if this
was their ending
a death by purity
which they could no longer bear
being so stained
and fallen
and I wonder if they knew then
or if they had to wait till spring
—to see the melting drifts of snow
make rivulets
streams
rivers
soaking into the ugly earth
where the first green shoots
of the world's first spring
lifted their heads to the light—
before they understood

that the unbearable beauty
of a white winter
was indeed
God's first gift
to the fallen world.

The Fountain of Youth

by Chiara Solari

Sages on the hills of prayer,
the youth of the world sit at your feet
with wide eyes of astonishment,
because you gesticulate and ramble,
tell half-stories and misremembered events,
invent philosophies and discount
the most reverend theories of the day,
drinking wine by the bottle without compunction,
laughing heartily at your own good graces.

They wonder—shouldn't you be
more ascetic, skeptics of earthly pleasures
who preserve a rarified silence
and with closed eyes in hollow faces
scale the inward cliffs of the abyssal self.
They ask—haven't you learned every trick and turn
of the tangle which makes a man,
and so become instructors to future generations,
now hanging upon your words.

The young think old men
should preserve a certain decorum,
listening in silence while their heirs
rage upon the wild injustice of being alive,
beat hands and heads without success
against the world. Then the aged may speak,
dropping slow words to distill the chaos:

understanding and resignation
reveal the secret of life in a potent draught.

Instead, beloved sages, you
still are puzzling; it's you who rage
and conjecture, while youth is silent before you,
perhaps afraid to find that at sixty,
sixty-five, seventy, men still lack
knowledge and certainty.
You expound new opinions and hopes
with the same vigor and force,
or perhaps even more than you had thirty years ago.

Old men are men first of all,
youths and children before that, dreaming
dreams of grandeur,
flowing like a river from springs
before birth into the deep ocean of death;
each man paddles the waters,
and the current remains steady from start
to finish. The greybeard is
as much humanity as the adolescent after him.

Sages, you are young men still,
though you wear wrinkles and little hair:
some may be unsettled by your vagaries,
but you have found the fountain of youth.
You bow the head and say, 'yes, I'm a fool,
so I'll be a fool until life ends'—
that is how you climb the hills of prayer

and dwell thereon, drinking the wine of ages,
inebriating your souls with truth.

Grief

by **B.R. Mullikin**

Too cold for often what it is—
(and sensible minds still see it so)
like wasps biting on an arid day
without so much the threat of death,
but for the pain of hot cement
and the simple need to live.

What once we held has died again
and lasting hopes are soon forgot
(since nothing of them seems more felt)
when such a fate consumes a life.

We do not breathe on these lifeless days
and as we hold the air between
two weakened vessels of sacred words
we learn to think and forget again;
to turn and touch what once we held
and know we never shall again.
Because for them we've lost the will
to sit beside the waterfall
and catch the morning sun in spring
with any sense of wonder.

Nihil sub sole novum

by **Thomas A. Beyer**

A cluster of them skyward grows
Like shoots of glass and steel;
A colony of gray, dead weeds,
Upon a flattened concrete hill.
They are a testament to Mankind's skill.
And his folly.

A skirt of green attends their feet,
Redressing life and beauty,
The last untarnished remnant
Of the naked time before,
When the world and Man yet tarried.
Intermingled.

With their mirrored eastern faces
They catch the matin light,
The sun's first gleaming of the day,
His groggy effort ghostly white,
Exposing solid spires for insubstantial spectres.
Devilish wights.

Likened to Nature's splendor,
The blinding shining of the gods,
Even the loftiest edifice
Has only some small semblance
More substance than a spirit.
Reflections of existence, nothing more.

Scraping at the sky and
Charming lightning with their rods,
They seem a piddly attempt at innovation,
A sad reprise of ancient legend,
Of Towers and waxen wings.

Wise were ye old Solomon.

Ah! the sheer audacity
Of your relentless, remorseless size!
Flaunt your strength and stature!
Stab at Heaven's door!
You great temple shrines to Riches
Have naught to do with Wealth or Power!

Only Man and his pride.

No One Mourns the Loser

by **B.R. Mullikin**

No one mourns the loser
when losing he stands strong
and seeks again the victor
to sing the victor's song.

But do not praise the victor
when winning he forgets
that losing is the cushion
on which his victory sits.

Paintings in a Cave

by **Tyler Morrison**

From the petroglyphs to the cineplex,
In darkened halls, on cavern walls,
Apollo's rays
Fall strange and beautiful.
The world behind our sleeping eyes
Is brought to life through waking eyes,
The weighty world of dreams
That dreams about our world
And yet is not our world, but more.

It's captured in the camera
Or carved out on the caveman's rock,
And made to move and speak and sing
By some divine illumination,
Free from logic's elucidation,
Yet seen and heard and felt and drunk
Simply all the same.

The images on the curtain screen,
The figures on the solemn stone
Remind a man he is himself,
And not himself but someone else.
There's more to man than blood and bone.

And so we sit and watch agape
At shadows dancing mythical,
At shadows sprung not from the sun,

Nor yet an artificial one,
But the psychic light of poesy,
Reflecting always Beauty,
Beauty the goddess the Muses worship,
And trembling mortals would dare behold.

The Pearl

by B.R. Mullikin

I.

Two tales told and another sung
and nigh the third began a knell
rhythmic to such a tragic tongue
that broken hearts began to swell—

Oh! But such a lovely girl sang
and with such trampled voice;
and o'er and ever those bells rang
since time lent them no choice.

As if possessed I grabbed her hand
though I hadn't asked her name,
and pressed it tight to understand
how stories had their fame;

then turned full stride I sought the wind
that carried her tune along
with arrant youthful want to bind
my soul to that holy song.

And as I turned I caught her eye
quietly staring about my face—
her tear stained cheeks hoped to vie
for my compassion or my grace.

How could a girl so simply torn
between the eyes of fate
choose here to stand and sing forlorn
when bells should make her hate?

No! let the sweetest air turn cold
as on that peasant night:
when wintry suns had us hold
our hearts before the light.

We stood an hour before I said
in a thorough dizzy spell:
“What is it girl? and who is dead?”
I never heard to tell.

II.

When time had passed and I had gone
though ever heard her sing,
It seemed to me a witty con
to send that girl a thing.

But why or when I had no clue
nor gave it grander thought
than when I had that morning flew,
and beauty flew for naught.

The seas, they say, from all those years
that nameless people cried
have swelled and swallowed all those tears
and formed them with the tide—

Her tears, I thought, are little pearls,
and every one a jewel,
And pearls are nature's tears for girls,
though every tear is cruel.

And as I lived beside the brine
where noble oysters live,
it was, from me, the purest sign
my tearless eyes could give.

I dove that day and sought a prize
for that unhappy child;
and through the water in the skies
the sun shone bright and wild.

III.

That prize I found, though nobly done,
was not for noble searching found—
for there, when I, my dive begun,
had turned my head full tilt around

to seek that blazing sun instead—
(And there below I'm sure)
those largest oysters lay wide spread
to entice, tempt and lure

whatever hands should reach and find
what oysters most despise:
That precious nacre smeared to blind
all men from their own lies.

And that sun so white and clear
burned clarity in my mind,
so that I felt arise this fear
that screamed at me 'you lied!'

But as it burned the seashells swelled
and whispered at my feet
that life is love, and love compelled
to give of what is sweet.

And what can be more sweetly found
than tears made into jewels—
as if to say without a care
that tearless men are fools!

So as I swayed upon those waves
with no more thought to live,
I turned ashore and sought some caves
to weep what I could give.

And when I found uneven stone
to lay my heart upon
I bowed and kissed as if my groan
was penance for my con;

and there I bent into the night
while high-tide held the darkened sands,
tearless though a pitiful sight—
begging tears to fall in pearl strands.

IV.

The morning came before I won
and found that final tear,
for only with that same bright sun
could hope be bought with fear.

Yes!—it seemed to simply placed
upon a smooth flat stone:
the largest pearl that myth embraced
or ever thought was known.

I took it quickly from the rock
And pressed it to my eye;
and even still I seemed to know
The substance of my lie.

I put the pearl back on the rock
and left it where it lay.
and stepping down I turned around
to face the coming day.

For hope, I said, has in it fear
And pain has terror too;
and wise men seem to lie between
Though such a thing is cruel.

V.

I cast myself into the sea
to drown and be forgot,

for even death is less austere
than lessons cheaply bought.

Pomifer Autumnus

by **Tyler Morrison**

All is autumn; the sleepers wake.
Drunkards wake the dream of summer,
Poets are sobered by yellowed leaves,
And lovers find their love is cooled
At the merest breath of a mellow breeze.

Children are stolen from games in the garden
As if they sin against the season,
For teachers keep them locked away
Like angels bearing swords of flame.

But there is yet some paradise
Not lost to those who suffer time.
The world has withered, but is not fruitless.
Eden is past, but the harvest is here,
And apples will flourish in the Fall.

Seek not the riches

by **Tyler Morrison**

Seek not the riches under the earth,
Not silver, gold, nor black gold, oil.
For there is found a wealth of sorrow;
Of joy you'll find a beggar's dearth.
Yet if ye must, then go at once,
And sooner return to moats of dust.
Work. Labor. Toil.

Break the rock and stab the dirt,
Pierce and bleed the virgin soil.
Blast the mountains, burn the woods,
And drink whole oceans dry.
Contrive a way to leach the air
And steal at last the open sky.

Oh, Man is bent o'er the world he bends.
He warps a thing to match his thought,
Corkscrews form to fit his ends.
And Nature, like arthritic hands,
Will twist to strange, contorted shapes
'Til straight be crooked, crooked straight,
Hatred love, and love be hate.

Yet all the while the drudges trudge on,
Trod-on, wretched. Seeking spoils,
Fetching nothings, they pour out sweat
And dredge up dregs, wasting

Time and hope, their blood and breath.
Oh, Heaven weeps, oh!
Heaven weeps at the Second Death.

Sing again, Cicada

by **Tyler Morrison**

Sing again, Cicada,
Golden tones of languid summer:
Heatwave, daydream, home.
I hear in you the afternoon,
Tyrant sun and welcome shade,
Hours spent in swimming pools,
And nursing sunburns afterward.

Others ignore a droning bug,
Deaf to such a common voice,
But I have heard your melodies
And deemed them more than idle noise.

Your trembling tymbals bombilate,
Filled with life's electric power.
Charged like tungsten caged in glass,
They pour forth sound, warm and bright:
The porch-light hum of living things,
The sound of breathing, vital stirrings,
Of bodies buzzing, yet hurried
As molasses.

You serenade the memory
With thoughts at once both sweet and sharp,
Like lemonade and whiskey sours:
The piquant glimpses of vanished ages,

Childhood wonders, adolescent pains,
Whispers of untouchable hours.

Your song is sad but not unhappy;
Indulging its nostalgic theme
Awakens joy through melancholy.
For each note provokes the vestige
Of a not-so-ancient flame.

Oh, sentiments that lungs forgot,
That stomach thought digested!
Oh, days that time has washed away
Like fragile castles in the sand:
The days of splendor, days I conquered—
For all are kings in boyhood.

And how your music, when it lulls,
Reminds me of the coming change.
Nature, eldest alchemist,
Shall turn her greens to gold.
And with the leaves' transfigurement,
Life itself shall be found different.
Nothing is the same, nor can it be again.
Even baseball seasons end.

But let not silence rule the evening.
Come, Cicada, sing again:
Of ripples formed in shallow ponds,
Whirling motion, calm contentment,
Turbulence in still repose.

Or praise perhaps the simple virtues
Of an ice cream cone in mid July.
Soothing though melting, its cool reprieve
Assuages more than passing time.

Chatter on, Italianate,
Complaining of torturous luxuries,
Afflictions tempting, so exquisite,
Of cigarettes in August.

Whatever your song, Cicada, sing!
Vibrate the stagnant atmosphere.
Thicken grass and bough and sultry air
With manifold insect meanings:

*A paeon to the dog days everlasting;
A murmuring ode remembering dreams;
A lyric of magic antipodes.*

Let the winds be vessels for your hymns!
Let Summer and summers here and gone
Be sung up, played, and born again,
Borne up on the zephyr's wings!

—But now I hear another voice.
Thunder, trumpeting, prophet-like,
Breaks me from these reveries.
The rain arrives to weep off drought
With tears too hard to nurse the land.
I hear no bugs, no buzz, no life,

Only a drowning and taking away.
When autumn storms end summer spells,
Who shall sing the Winter's praise?

Subridet Sub Rosa

by Tyler Morrison

*Per grazia fa noi grazia che disvele
A lui la bocca tua, sì che discerna
La seconda bellezza che tu cele.¹*

Her lips are fixed with permanence
In a pensive non-expression,
Simply curved and pinkish plain.
She buries here her prized possession,
A secret smile that Horus keeps,
The hidden cove, a lover's trove
Untouched by the searching, yearning glance
Of strangers who would a god profane.

If verses could but part the petals,
What winsome wealth of mirth would show;
How lily-white the sudden flash
That breaks beneath the opened rose!

*Look here, my lady! I call to thee.
Oh, end thy silence! Laugh for me.*

But I have not a Dante's power
To peel away Harpocrates.

¹ *In grace do us the grace that thou unveil
Thy mouth to him, so that he may discern
The second beauty which thou dost conceal.*

Unless the young god's unseen finger
Be lifted by a flimsy rhyme,
Then her mouth shall stay a virgin flower,
And I before this moonlit balcony
Will pine lightheaded and wait her favor,
Writing odes to buy love time.

Xeno's Paradox

by **Maria Stromberg**

Strange how two places
 can be so far apart
and yet in your heart
 they are as close
as the sea to the shore
 it washes
or the mountain to the clouds
 that veil its stony head

Like twin stars in a constellation
that seem so near
 that when they twinkle
 they seem to touch—
in reality vast distance
holds them apart
and even light
 swift messenger
traverses it with difficulty
and weary time—
even so these cities
 these homes
 these hearths
so near in my thought
as if their borders touched
are in my hard experience
 so separate from one another
that I seem trapped

in Xeno's paradox
cursed to travel endlessly
and never reach the goal

Through these dense layers
of distance
my soul reaches towards yours
as a magnet to its fellow
and yet incapable of motion

What is this distance
that restrains the body so
when spirit
swift as thought
can in one moment
be transported
to any place it will?

From the train windows
I scan these empty spaces
for their meaning
and find there
not the emptiness
of wasted space
but link after link
of a woven chain
that binds us as surely
as it separates
and each link a place
as dear to someone's heart
as my heart's home to me—

Here a tree
 where once two lovers kissed
 and carved their names
Here a walled-in field
 that once gave a man
 his livelihood and life
Here a hidden stream
 that was once a child's
 stronghold and his treasure—
and as I cross these distances
 to you
between these neighbor stars
 that touch each other
 in my heart
I find a vasty space
 not of cold emptiness
but filled with starry galaxies
 too infinite to count

THE ADVENTURES OF SIR ANGST OF MOROSIA

by **Thomas Chaney**

Part I: In Which Sir Angst Finds a Hidden Treasure and Learns Nothing

In an indeterminate time there was a small kingdom known simply as Resignation, in which there lived a rather unremarkable knight known as Sir Angst. Sir Angst was known throughout the land for his long-winded rants on just how and in what way existence is completely and utterly meaningless, a trait which sometimes alienated him from the rest of the townsfolk. That was alright by him, though, for their opinions were meaningless to him. Unlike the peasant folk who lived their lives in blissful ignorance of the evils of the world, Angst had experienced true suffering in his life. How pleasant and simple their lives must be, Angst often thought to himself, contentedly oblivious of the fact that pain exists and that they and their loved ones would eventually die. The indifferent Sir Angst knew better. Life wouldn't pull any of its tricks on him, no sir.

One day Sir Angst came upon a rather un-repulsive maiden in the town square. She was apparently running

errands for her mother, executing her duty in that rather pathetic manner that is the mark of those still enslaved to affection. Angst had long ago given up on the value of most forms of social discourse; nevertheless there was something special about this girl, a sort of amplexity in certain areas of her figure that caused him to lust after her with his loins. Had the not-unattractive woman seen the not-ignoble Sir Angst staring at her she might have blushed, but through some combination of poor lighting and Sir Angst's not-unknown sullen character, she did not notice him at all. In fact when standing outside one of the shops he looked like a rather skinny broom with curly-bristles, and as anyone knows a curly-bristled broom is no good at all, so to be fair it is understandable that she overlooked him. Sir Angst struggled within the fiery smithy of his soul for some grand mark of eloquence that would distinguish him as a man of noble character, sophistication, and graceful manners. Not that he believed any of that mattered, but his loins you see were really quite insistent this time of day. No more calculation, Angst thought to himself, now is the time for valor, for action:

“Ey! 'Ave yoo done somethin' with your hair?”

At first the maiden seemed shocked, for she had never encountered a talking broom before! Then she realized that even an enchanted broom was incapable of speech (this involved some strange sort of alchemy involving black magic and something known by the Necromancers simply as *vokhalkhords*), and that therefore she was either spoken to by an extremely tall boy or a very emaciated man. Then she saw the armor which adorned his nearly two-dimensional frame, and realized that she was speaking with a member of the nobility. Part of the weight of the entire kingdom rested upon

his teeny-tiny shoulders, so sharply defined that they looked as though they might lacerate a very thin piece of paper. She greeted him, as was the Resignation custom in regard to the nobility, with a shrug of the shoulders completed with a resounding “Meh.” The not-entirely-impure mind of Sir Angst finally had a chance to really examine her, and found that overall she was really quite ample in certain key areas.

Say something you moron, Sir Angst would have said to himself if thought processes really were similar to internal monologue.

“I say, what do you, ummmmmmmmm, well, that is, you see...what is it that you do, exactly?” The maiden looked upon him with a mix of fascination, terror and regret.

“Well, sir, you see, I, well I...umm...I suppose that I well... I’m a girl you see, and there are certain imaginal limits set by the gen—”

“Fire in the hole!” a guardsman shouted, his cry punctuated by an explosion.

Poor fool, what kind of merciful God would allow such a thing to happen? I wonder if I can seize his house? Once again, these are the kinds of questions the indifferent Sir Angst would have asked himself if discursive thought was in any way similar to internal monologue.

A rather largish looking imp approached Sir Angst at a not-unhasty pace, his eyes struck by a sort of terrifying fatalism.

“You must come quickly sire! The enemy doth make assault, they have almost breached the fourth wall!”

A look of apathetic concern washed across the not-unpatriotic Sir Angst's countenance, and he realized with a

rather passionless sense of obligation that he must once again perform his duty.

“You'll have to excuse me, my dear, I have some rather pressing pants I must attend to.”

And with a not-undramatic flourish he started heading in the direction of the fourth wall, when a sudden realization appeared unpleasantly to his conscious mind, a fact which caused him to not-so-suddenly turn around.

“BUSINESS! I meant rather pressing BUSINESS to attend to! I did not mean to imply that I had to attend to anything on or around my trousers!”

The woman looked upon Sir Angst with a sort of crazy half-smile that he thought was flirtatious in nature but was in fact the result of confusion and a slowly increasing sense of terror in her soul. *What could he possibly attend to regarding his trousers that he would think that I should be so offended?* Alice thought of this to herself, being the only peasant in the land so gifted in the art of simplicity that she *only* ever thought in terms of internal monologue. She left him with a not-unaffectionate shrug and headed home to her mother's cottage. With that, Sir Angst marched toward the scene of the battle.

Sir Angst had never been in an actual battle, having served seven campaigns as the Steward of Scholarly Warfare,. Soldiers, however, had since become rather scarce due to their rather pesky tendency to die in the middle of battle. Oh, how he had cherished those days, engaging in a mortal combat of the mind in every library and lecture hall from one end of this giant island to the other. Many rulers liked to claim that wars were won through men with swords, but the not-dumb Sir Angst was a clever sort, and he knew better. Only a brute

conquers by force with the sword, a truly wise warrior wins over the spirit of his foes by persuasion using his wits alone. So far he had fought in over a hundred of these intellectual battles, or debates as the common folk preferred to call them. So far he had not gained a single visible convert to his cause, but he always came away thinking that he had clarified his positions on certain issues, making it at least a moral victory. Besides, Sir Angst would argue to anyone unfortunate enough to listen, one never knows how many people changed their minds once they got home and read the pamphlets and assorted literature which he distributed at every event. Despite the challenges that his position and authority posed to him, he found it an almost not-unpleasant experience. If he had had the capacity for joy, it would have become active during those times. But he didn't, and therefore his life proceeded as it always did, with a sort of dull serenity that most modern medical practitioners classify as a low-level vegetative state.

Battle, however, appeared to be the opposite of not-unpleasant. Indeed, the not-illiterate Sir Angst would classify it as even “*not-not-unpleasant*”, or unpleasant as the common folk say. Sir Angst had never before feared death or any mortal danger, but that was perhaps because these things seem very non-threatening from a certain distance. Here it was different. Here every cell of his mortal appendage seemed to recoil from the sight he was witnessing. He stirred up a certain courage within his soul, however, and found the strength to march forward to the front of the defenses. He had previously argued that wars were nothing more than extended metaphors for man's horror in the face of his own mortality, and he had already proven on the battlefield of the mind that no force on earth could withstand the rationality of his arguments. Five

indeterminate moments later, however, there would prove to be an exception to this rule, as it turns out that spears are really quite an effective answer to any argument, rational or otherwise. As he was carried off of the battle ramparts by a giraffe-necked squire, he taunted the enemy with his few remaining conscious breaths about equality of peoples and the sacred obligation of a kingdom to preserve the sovereign freedom of the individual. As he was blacking out, Angst thought to himself about how persuasive and eloquent he must have sounded then, although if the enemy soldiers noticed it they gave no indication as such. It's a pity that he didn't bring his pamphlets with him. It would've given those poor souls something to contemplate over when they get home. He then began to lose consciousness.

Sir Angst regained consciousness in a not-unpleasant inn a few miles from where the battle took place. He looked down and saw that his side was bandaged and for some foolish reason decided to poke at it, which caused a white-hot sensation of pain to arise in him.

"Damn, metaphors hurt," he said to no one in particular.

A rather not-tall man was seen near his room. Sir Angst realized that he must be some sort of complimentary valet. "Tell me, my good elf, where in the world am I?"

The man looked upon him with a look approaching disdain. "Oh I see, because I'm a little person and I wear small clothes you automatically assume that I'm an elf?"

"I'm so sorry...I didn't that you were a midg—"

At this point the teeny-tiny man leapt upon Sir Angst's teeny-tiny back, suddenly producing a teeny-tiny straight-razor and holding it to the teeny-tiny and rather perturbed neck of

Sir Angst whilst holding him in a teeny-tiny unbreakable headlock.

“Try and call me a midget *again* arsehole, I dare you to try again!”

Sir Angst was at a loss for words, insofar as the razor was so deep against his neck that he feared he would literally pop a vein in his attempt at protest. At this moment Alice appeared, in a state of utter shock at the events that she perceived before her.

“Get off of him Matthieu! Get off of him this instant, he’s got amnesia!”

The knight, after recovering his wits, wanted to raise a protest against the last part of that statement. He was not aware of any symptoms of amnesia, and even if he was amnesiac how could he possibly have exemplified such symptoms while he was unconscious?

“I don’t have amnesia! I am perfectly aware of who I am!”

She smiled that crazy half-smile again, and responded, “I know you know, but it’s useful to assume that you are.”

Sir Angst was a bit taken aback by this statement, insofar as he could find no obviously useful consequences of assuming that a casual stranger cannot remember who he is. “Why is it useful if it’s not true?”

“It’s got nothing to do with truth. It has everything to do with pacing!”

Sir Angst was beginning to think that the spear might have taken a bit of his brain along on its way through his side.

At this point Alice blushed a small bit, and she began looking down at the floor nervously.

“Well, you see, sir, I, well...um, I couldn’t help but notice you admiring me in the market, and, you see...I’d really like to

get know you more before I gain such, um, personal examinations from you.”

She paused a moment to view Angst’s reaction, and when it grew calmer she proceeded with her next suggestion.

“Well, sir, I would *like* to get to know you, but I don’t know any of your history. I may be a bit plain, sir, but I can’t afford to be foolish besides. I do have these flashback potions, they will allow us a brief window into the past. I do think you are a good person, sir, I really do.”

At this Sir Angst felt a teeny-tiny ounce of humanity within his smaller-than-average heart. He almost smiled, and decided to grant her reasonable request.

“I am more than willing to share anything of my past with you, but please no flashbacks.”

“Why not, sir?”

“Because flashbacks are for amateurs who wish to spoon-feed their audiences with the blatantly obvious rather than tell a compelling story filled with people who are interesting and relatable. I will instead take you to the person who raised me when I was a young boy. She will answer any and all questions you may have.”

And with a not-untender extension of his hand he led her out of the inn, on the road to the outskirts of town to meet Sir Angst’s nurse.

THE ALBINO GIRL

by **Mark Collignon**

I was wandering aimlessly across campus one afternoon. It was early fall, although I could not recall the day. Helios was beginning his descent and a brisk gust of wind carried with it the sharp caress of cold. Harsh realizations tugged at my mind as I watched others pass me by. I know the people scurrying around me, preparing for some guest arriving shortly. A man who is important enough for champagne, an expensive feast, and the students to play servant for an evening to appease him. The faculty and their families are dressed in their finest attire, with notes of both anxiety and excitement in their faces as they engage in idle chatter and groom each other to distract themselves from the growing tension.

The people seem to only increase their hurriedness as the time passes. They seem as though unaware of the frivolity of their actions. In the movement of the modern era, we have lost the ability to wonder. The mind is hurried along as the information is easier to grasp but harder to contemplate. While the biting winds encourage the quickening steps of others, it gave me pause and pulled me back to youth.

This sharp breeze not only summons common memories of family and holidays, of seeking the perfect Christmas tree and a fireplace in late winter evenings. It brought back the open

fields and dense forests where I spent many a night watching the universe drifting lazily above and engaging friends in old tales passed on from campfire to campfire and surviving the pass of their originators. The sky is not as beautiful here, the few stars visible shine dimly, as though a curtain were hung before them. In the open field, amidst the tall grass, the full moon on a fall night shines forth with such brilliance that the entire world basks in its serene glow.

The city never feels the peace given by that light, and it is not meant to. I no longer knew why I had come here in the first place. I longed to return to the place of my memories, where the beauty of the heavens was open before our eyes and it was proper to stop and wonder about the infinite before us.

My meandering thoughts were interrupted by a strange flash of white across my eyes. A wave of snow white disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, as if in the passing moments it had been carried by a wind grown stronger. I turned to seek the source of this brief distraction, but there was nothing but the continued bustle of the others. Something of that brief form drew me to seek the source of the wintery wisp. I walked briskly, ignoring the eyes following my suddenly determined pace.

I saw a woman ahead of me, her clothes were old, like those of the last century. She wore a long rust-colored dress, the skirt reaching her ankle. A waistcoat conceals her frame, although I can notice that she is short and visibly thin. Her hair is long and flowing past her shoulders and whiter than freshly fallen snow. She turned and opened the door to the dinner room. She turned back and smiled toward me, meeting my curious glance with a knowing and mischievous eye before disappearing inside. Her smooth, young skin was nearly the

same color as her hair and her eyes were of a pink hue. She was young, perhaps beginning the third decade of her life, but something about her superseded the beauty of youth and carried with her an immortal, or perhaps even divine light.

I was taken aback by her beauty; she shined with the same purifying serenity of the moonlight. I wanted to know who she was. I tried to call for her to stop, but couldn't find my voice before she disappeared again. Where had she come from? I knew everyone at the school, but I had never seen her before. Maybe she is a visiting niece of one of the faculty members, perhaps she was a new student.

I followed her inside: I had to know who she was, if nothing else. The room was warm and hospitable, the people who were previously scurrying about were now eating hors d'oeuvres and engaging in friendly conversations, waiting for dinner to begin. Talk of a bishop can be heard spontaneously slipping from the lips of guests as they talk of their plans for the future. Hope for success in their endeavors seems to be the theme of the night. I quickly maneuver through the murmuring merry-makers; none seem to notice my presence. Once again I see a brief glimpse of the snowy hair and rusty skirt slip into a dim hallway. The kitchen door opened, filling the room with the scent of slow-roasted pork and a wave of heat from the still-running oven.

The hallway has no light of its own. Only the glow of the dining hall reveals any details at all. The worn and faded wooden floor creaks with each of my steps. As I step into the darkness, I turn to see the silhouettes and voices of the guest grow reverently still. It seems the bishop has arrived and the blessing of the meal has commenced. A small creak issues forth from within the hallway, and I turn back into the darkness.

The dark corridor seems to lengthen with each step I take; my only guide my hand on the peeling wall.

A new sight hastens my steps. A sliver of light begins to bleed from beneath the door and the soft patter of footfall from within. Opening the door, I faced—a guest, it seems. The young woman that appeared before me is admittedly attractive, although actively avoiding any attempt to analyze her anxious actions. An ardent adversary of approximating adulthood, she was adorned with amethyst and clothing one could argue belonged to an adolescent. She smiled and I saw her mask.

As her shimmering lips part to reveal glittering teeth, her eyes glint like those of a panther preparing to pounce upon its prey. Everything she wears, the innocent and modest dress, the ignorant expression, the look of hope for a better day are all a masterful camouflage. She knows what the cold wind blows in tonight; she draws in the unknowing, more witnesses to the encroaching darkness. She gazes in my direction, but not at me. I am already trapped; we both knew this and thus had no reason to acknowledge each other.

A wisp of white flew by the window. I left my silent enemy and slipped back into the cold darkness. As I once again braced myself against the icy gusts, I begin to ponder my pursuit of this girl. I do not know her, nor have I seen her before. Nothing about her is that striking but her ice white hair, and yet I want nothing but her. At this moment I care for nothing else.

That hammer blow paused my gait and I stood aghast at my obsession. There's some strange beauty about her that has nothing to do with her appearance. On her own she is rather plain to view; frail figure on a tiny frame and her pallor is that of a glacier. Her eyes, however, glittered with an iridescent

glow, flickering ethereal flames behind the pink irises. She had the scent of old, well-worn books as if she had slept in an ancient library. I had never seen her before and yet I felt she belonged to this place far longer than I. I knew that I belonged to her but she did not belong to me.

A door slams shut at the opposite end of the small, poorly lit garden. The only light emanates from a pale spotlight revealing a lonely statue of Our Lady. She stands silently, mournfully overlooking the dying plants and lifeless stones. This place shows the same sadness that consumes the entirety of the school. This is no longer the place I knew, nor is it the place I loved. I've become lost in the emptiness of this place and I do not know where my life is leading me. It doesn't matter where I go in this place, each corner is as dark as the last.

I push myself onward, because this girl gives me a reason to continue. I do not know her and yet she's been in my life forever. I will not allow her to flee again; I cannot stay in this place alone. I find the door leading into the former chapel and enter silently. The door creaks open and I am greeted by that pleasant scent of the library.

I look up and see her long dress, her worn brown shoes and pale legs show as a gust of wind follows me through the door and gently lifts the edge of her skirt. I approach her, my hands trembling slightly. Before I can say a word, she steps in close to me and gently caresses my lips with her own. The dark cloud over my mind dissipates as bliss seeps into me from her.

"Who are you?" I ask, as she steps back.

She smiles gently and watches my eyes. She takes my hand in hers and continues her gently silent gaze, "You know who I am."

Her smile becomes wily as confusion draws over my countenance.

"I've never seen you before," my frown unconsciously turning to a smile, her warmth overwhelmed my cold thoughts. "How do I know you? I only have seen you tonight, but the idea of not seeing you again tears at my heart. I never want you to leave me, but I know that's not an option."

Her smile grows wider and she holds my hand tighter. "I don't belong here anymore. I will not abandon you though, as you do not belong here either."

She stands on her toes and kisses me again, deeper and more passionately than before. We're held together by an eternal second, and I finally feel that I have a place in this world. She draws back and holds both of my hands. "I'm leaving tonight, and I will never return to this place. Find me."

Just then, the door swings open and two freshmen walk in, one smiles at me, her bright blue eyes filled with curiosity, "Were you talking to someone?"

I turn to introduce the girl, and she is not there.

"No," I said, "just thinking out loud."

I look around the room one more time, nothing but the two girls who had just walked in. Sadness begins to sink in, but then I remember her last words: "Find me."

I follow the students out the door toward the party, but the albino girl remains the only thought in my head. I will not see her again while I remain here. I must seek her out. I will not rest until I find her again.

My eyes drift open as sunlight pours in through my window. It was a dream, but not merely so. This girl would forever haunt my thoughts and lead me onward. Her existence gives me a path to follow, an unknown path, but it is more than the drifting I had become accustomed to. I know that she is out there, and I will never stop seeking her, no matter where she takes me in the journey.

THREAT LEVEL RED

by **Amanda Grace Poore**

“Sir, I need your boarding pass and I.D. *And I.D.,*” said the amazonian woman.

Larry Miranda, who had called the airport on his way to check the flight schedule, who had printed two copies of his itinerary and stored them in separate bags *just in case*, who had had his shoes off as soon as he had entered the airport, and who had had all of his liquids in tidy plastic bags, fumbled for his driver’s license. After retrieving his things from the conveyer belt, Larry risked a tentative glance at the passenger behind him, a young woman in a pink sweat suit. She held out her boarding pass and I.D. while sending a loaded glance at Larry in one prompt gesture.

Larry plodded along to his gate, checking and rechecking the number and time on the ticket. The terminal seemed oddly empty after the congestion of the security line. His gate was quiet considering it had not received its last incoming flight. All of the hard, blue chairs were empty, except one facing the walkway. A tiny brown-skinned man in an oversized plaid suit coat and brown sandals, stared vacantly at the passersby.

Making sure to sit the proper three-seat minimum away, Larry picked a spot where he could see both the incoming gate

door and the strange little man. For some reason, like many middle-aged, American white men, Larry couldn't help thinking that he should keep an eye on a possibly Middle Eastern man at the airport. This thought was immediately rejected and then reassessed several times over the next ten minutes. Over this time, the strange, brown man had done nothing but people-watch. Larry eventually decided that he was being racist (or was he?) and dug out his itinerary for his trip.

Occasionally Larry glanced up from his itinerary to make sure the man was still there. After several minutes of this, Larry began to notice some concerning details. The brown man was sweating profusely. While the man's suit did seem rather warm, the airport air conditioning was on full blast. Larry also took note of the fact that the strange man did not have any carry ons. Upon close examination of the man's hands, Larry noticed they were fidgeting. One thumb over the other in a repetitive motion.

"Attention airport guests. Please report all unattended baggage and suspicious activity immediately. Thank you and have a safe flight."

Larry stared at the imaginary speaker in the ceiling for a moment and then looked back at the stranger. The tiny man was fighting with something underneath his suit coat. It was very stubborn, whatever it was, and the man looked dejected. After a long moment the man stood and walked across to the nearby restroom. Larry's inner voice was telling him a stream of possibilities for what that man could have been arranging under this jacket, but a hot, shameful dread persisted.

A red-faced man in a TSA uniform waddled down the walkway, balancing a coffee in one hand, and a bag of Cheetos

in the other. Larry's stomach clenched, and he tensed his leg muscles as if to stand. Luckily the TSA officer had barely moved in the seconds of indecision. Larry finally broke the paralysis and lurched toward the officer.

"Excuse me," Larry ventured.

"Yeah," said the TSA officer without stopping, as if the act would lose him much-needed momentum.

"I would like to report a suspicious person."

"Is that right?"

"Yes. There is a man in that restroom that may have something strapped to his chest."

"Is that right?" the man said again.

"Yes," replied Larry, who continued to follow the slowly moving officer.

They walked in silence for a few moments before Larry supplied, "He may be Middle Eastern."

The TSA officer stopped and looked at Larry for a moment, then turned to keep walking.

"I'll radio it in," he said, shifting the bag of Cheetos to the other hand and reaching for his walkie. The officer said something indecipherable into the radio and kept on trucking down the walkway. He did not seem overly concerned. Somehow this eased Larry's mind when really it should have frustrated him.

Larry sat back down and pulled out his itinerary. When the strange little man came out of the bathroom, Larry even smiled and waved. How could he have made such a rash assumption? The stranger smiled back and sat next to Larry.

“What a strange and busy world,” the man said, with a thick, mysterious accent. He didn’t even sound Middle Eastern, really.

“First time in America?” Larry asked.

The man nodded vigorously.

“I am, how you say, overwhelmed.”

Larry laughed, “Me too.”

“I was given this coat here. Nice, yes? It’s a little different,” the man said, pulling out criss-crossed suspenders from underneath the coat.

Larry let out a puff of air he didn’t know he was holding. Suspenders. Of course.

“What’s your name?” Larry asked the man.

“Jesus of Nazareth. What is yours?”

Larry heard the man say those words, but somehow came to the instant conclusion that that was a perfectly common name to have.

“My name is Larry. Nice to meet you.” The two men shook hands and watched people go by for a moment.

“Attention airport guests. The threat level has been raised to Orange. Please be cautious and watch for suspicious persons. Thank you and have a safe flight.”

Larry’s stomach turned over. This couldn’t have to do with him, could it? He looked nervously up and down the walkway, but no army of TSA officers awaited his gaze. Only a frazzled father and his sleepily trailing girl were in his view. The dad kept looking at his boarding pass and then up at the gate numbers.

“Come on, Gwen, stop looking at Knuffle Bunny and help daddy find the gate.”

Gwen pulled her stuffed bunny closer, put on her best pouty face, and stopped cold in the middle of the walk. The dad didn't notice for a few moments, but then he saw her not moving and rushed back. He grabbed for her tiny wrist, but caught Knuffle Bunny's ear instead. The stuffed animal ripped in two.

Jesus, who had been watching intently, stood and ran over to the little girl. He knelt next to her and examined the bunny like a combat medic. The dad was in the middle of a tirade about how if Gwen had just kept moving this wouldn't have happened when Jesus hovered his hand over the bunny. Larry ran over, not knowing what to think of Jesus' brash movement. The four of them stood awkwardly, the dad looking half-way confused and like he wanted to yell at Jesus. In the next moment, a light shot from Jesus's hand and Knuffle Bunny was instantly restored.

Larry, Gwen, and her father stared at the stuffed animal with their mouths hanging slightly open while three men in TSA uniforms tackled Jesus to the floor.

"Attention airport guests. The threat level is now Red. I repeat..."

"Oh," Larry said as the TSA men handcuffed Jesus, "*That* Jesus."

PROMETHEUS BOUND

Lines 1-87

by **B. R. Mullikin**

Krotos:

Now we have come to this most distant land
where solitude shrouds the Scythian strip—
and it is fated to you, Hephaestus,
that you should bind this traitor to a rock
with hard adamantine as Zeus commands,
so that this villain may always suffer!
For he stole your sacred torch of fire,
which he gave through theft to all of men:
for this alone you must seek harsh vengeance,
that he may be taught to be satisfied
in the supreme authority of Zeus—
since men do not deserve our godly gifts!

Hephaestus:

Krotos and Bia—through both of you
the commandment of Zeus has full power,
and there is nothing that can prevent it.
For it is to this purpose that I come,
ashamed, to chain a kindred god upon
a pointed mountain, strengthened by winter;
for I must have the courage to do this
else the somber will of Zeus is ignored.
You fair-minded son of righteous Themis,
against both of our wills I must fashion
these savage bonds of heavy brass to you,

that you should never hear a pleasant voice
nor see the shape of any mortal thing;
but the bright flame of Helios will rage
and your fair skin will be changed forever.

You will rejoice when the star-covered night
begins to hide you from the brutal day:
but the dawn will soon drive the hoar-frost
and this always standing grief will vex you,
for there is yet no relief from your pain.

All this you must suffer for having turned
your ambitious mind to the needs of men:
for you, a god, never feared other gods
but gave our heavenly gifts to mankind,
forgetting that they did not deserve them.

Therefore you must guard this unpleasant rock
forever standing without any sleep;
and may you utter many useless things
and groan without finding any relief,
for the hard heart of Zeus cannot be moved
like all whose power is so newly won.

Krotos:

May he be punished! Why do you restrain?
And why do you so vainly sympathize?
How can you not hate a god who is so
hated and despised by all other gods?
And more so, since it was your gift and your
Honor that he freely gave to mankind.

Hephaestus:

Friendship is powerful and so is blood.

Krotos:

Of course, but to stand alone against Zeus—
to neglect the things which he commands—
do you not fully fear this even more?

Hephaestus:

You are imprudent and fully ruthless.

Krotos:

Yet it does not help anyone to cry,
but still you labor without helping things.

Hephaestus:

Oh! how I hate this foolish work of mine!

Krotos:

How can you claim to hate your work so much?
For frankly, it is not your skill that will
cause him to suffer so much and so long.

Hephaestus:

Someone else ought to have been fated this.

Krotos:

Everything is hard work except when
one rules the Olympian gods themselves:
for no one is free except mighty Zeus.

Hephaestus:

I know this and I will not deny it.

Krotos:

Then hurry to throw this chain around him
so that the father does not see you idle!

Hephaestus:

And surely you see the chain here ready—

Krotos:

Then strike now! Bind his hands to that sharp rock,
strongly fasten those chains about him now.

Hephaestus:

This work is being done without delay.

Krotos:

Continue to strike him and bind him tight,
do not let the chain be loose anywhere
for he is clever and surely can find
an escape where there is none possible.

Hephaestus:

See!—this arm, at least, is tightly fastened.

Krotos:

Okay, now firmly bind the other one
so that here in this dark place he may learn
that even though he is very clever
he is foolish and Zeus is his better.

Hephaestus:

No one except him can rightly blame me.

Krotos:

Now firmly drive that spear right through his heart!

Hephaestus:

My poor friend, I grieve for all your pain.

Krotos:

If you continue to cry over this —
and if you fail to do your duty now—
refusing to punish a man hated
by Zeus and the other Olympians,
then you will soon learn to pity yourself
for you will be just as harshly punished.

Hephaestus:

You seem to want many unpleasant things.

Krotos:

I only want what is just and fair
and justice demands that he is punished.
So throw the leather straps around his chest.

Hephaestus:

I only do this because I am forced.
There is no reason to blatantly cheer.

Krotos:

Still I will urge you on, commanding you:
tightly bind his legs using all your strength.

Hephaestus:

And see how swiftly I do as I'm told!

Krotos:

Yes, quickly tighten his painful shackles
since Zeus is so severe and critical.

Hephaestus:

It seems that your harsh tongue has shaped your face.

Krotos:

Can't your heart be softened for me as well?
Do not berate me because I am fair,
because of my stubborn and rough feelings

Hephaestus:

We may leave since the chains tightly hold him.

Krotos:

Try now to insult us Prometheus!
Try now to seize the prizes of the gods
and to give them to poor time-bound mortals!
What mortal can lessen this endless pain?
You are falsely named, my friend, for you show
no forethought in your words or your actions,

and too bad as you would need them right now
if you were to free yourself from these bonds.

CHARITY, THE KEY TO READING THE STORY OF THE GRAIL

by **Lisa Nicholas**²

Cultural differences have often caused communication problems, but you might not expect this to be the case among highly-educated scholars and critics. Nonetheless, scholars have, at times, arrived at misreadings of great works of literature written in the Middle Ages, because of their tendency to discount the effect of a Christian outlook on “secular” literary works. They seem to overlook the fact that in the twelfth century, for example, even secular literary and reading practice was much more profoundly influenced by monastic reading of the Bible, and the theological works of St. Augustine of Hippo and other Christian writers, than it was by any other literary source or tradition. This oversight has caused no small amount of dissent and confusion in modern literary scholarship, because some scholars and critics expect “secular” medieval writers of literary fiction to share their own godless views and tendency to trivialize religion. This unconsciously anachronistic approach presumes that “secular” means “having

² Ph.D, Tutor in Literature at the Walsingham Society School of Liberal Studies

all taint of religion removed,” or even “atheistic,” which blinds such readers to many subtleties such as irony.

One medieval work which has frequently suffered such misreadings is Chrétien de Troyes’ *Story of the Grail* (*Perceval*). Although this romance is not as well known in the English-speaking world as it is in France (where Chrétien is regarded as the father of French literature, much as Chaucer is to English), it is of fundamental importance in the Western literary canon. It is, among other things, the first work in which that mysterious object called the Grail (later known as the Holy Grail) appeared, and it, along with Chrétien’s other Arthurian romances, changed the course of literature for more than four centuries. Although there are many features of this poem that make the critic’s work difficult (for one thing, the poem was never completed), much of the dissension among Chrétien scholars over how best to understand the romance springs from disagreement over how much weight should be given to religious elements in the poem (which seems, on the surface, to be a celebration of courtly chivalry). In recognizing that Chrétien wrote for a worldly audience, the court of Henry I of Champagne, some critics have assumed that the poet catered to secular tastes of the “rich and famous” of his day. Instead, however, the poet dared his readers to reassess their worldly values, by cunningly presenting a challenge to the reader in the poem’s prologue. There, he compares the romance he is about to unfold to the Gospel and warns that the poem will not “bear much fruit” if the reader is not guided by Charity. In other words, the poet hints fairly obviously that his poem is a kind of parable, whose meaning will become plain only to readers focused upon Charity.

After comparing the poem to a parable from the Gospels, the prologue goes on to introduce a contrast between the generous life motivated by charity and one ruled by vainglory, which may look like generosity but is motivated by “false hypocrisy.” The difference between these two ways of life—epitomized, respectively, by Count Philip of Flanders and Alexander the Great—is one that is hidden, known only to Him “who is called God and Charity.” The narrator announces that he “shall prove that the count is far worthier than [Alexander], for he [i.e., Alexander] has amassed in himself all the vices and all the evils of which the count is clean and free.” The narrator goes on to enumerate the count’s superior virtues:

[He] doesn’t listen to vulgar gossip or proud speech,
and if he hears ill spoken of another, whoever it may be,
it troubles him. The count loves true justice,
and loyalty and Holy Church, and hates all villainy.

.....

Is he not worthier than Alexander,
who cared not for charity nor for any good deed?

Thus, Count Philip is set before the reader as the standard against which to judge a way of life that may seem admirable but actually be selfishly motivated, and that standard is clearly the one against which the reader should judge the story that follows.

The story follows Perceval, a young man who has been raised by his mother in the wilds of the Welsh countryside to keep him away from the royal court and to protect him from being drawn into knighthood, which had caused the deaths of

his father and his elder brothers. Nonetheless, Perceval one day runs across some knights in the woods, admires their beautiful armor, and is instantly smitten with the idea of becoming like them. Although ignorant of the nature of knighthood, soon manages to acquire the accoutrements of knighthood—a charger, armor, lance, sword and shield—which he takes from a knight he killed in a fit of pique. He has no clear idea what to do with these armaments until, wandering through the forest, he seeks lodging at the castle of a nobleman named Gornemant. Perceval's host, sensing the youth's boorish ignorance, gives him a brief instruction in combat techniques and, when Perceval demonstrates a natural aptitude for armed warfare, impressed, Gornemant decides to confer knighthood formally upon the young Welshman. The next morning, as Perceval prepares to dress, Gornemant attaches his spur, gives him a sword, and tells him that he is now invested with "the highest order ordained by God," namely, chivalry, "which must be free of all villainy."

Now, before Perceval arrived at Gornemant's castle, where he is instructed in the practices of chivalry, Perceval had run up against two different villainous and dangerous knights, who sought to work their will through brute force and who seemed to follow no code of honor; therefore, the courteous brand of chivalry in which Gornemant instructs Perceval seems to be of a very different, and nobler, nature. However, close examination of the effects of Gornemant's ethical and social instruction will reveal that the chivalric code he enunciates is no more than a superficial improvement over the willful arrogance of the knights Perceval has encountered up to this point.

This is what Gornemant says to Perceval, when he gives him his spurs and sword:

Fair brother, I remind you now, if it happens
that you are forced to do combat with any knight,
I tell you and beg this of you: If you gain the upper hand
so that [the other knight] can no longer defend himself
or hold out against you, but is forced to beg for mercy,
certainly do not kill him deliberately.

And be careful not to be too talkative or gossipy;
no one can be too talkative without often saying something
that people consider rude; and the wise man says:
“He who talks too much commits a sin.”
For this reason, fair brother, I forbid you to talk too much.

And I also bid you, if you find a maiden or a woman,
be she damsel or lady, who is in need of any help,
assist her and you’ll do well, if you know how to help her
and if you have the power to do so.

Gornemant goes on to instruct Perceval to “go gladly to church” to pray for God’s mercy on his soul, and concludes by saying: “Never again say, fair sir, that it was your mother who taught you...say it was the *vavasor* who gave you your spur.”

Now, Gornemant seems to mix practical tips on social behavior indiscriminately with more formal ethical rules: in addition to sparing conquered foes, helping women in distress, and praying for God’s assistance, Perceval must refrain from idle chatter and from constant references to his mother, which make him sound foolish and childish. Perceval’s inept interpretation of this advice in his later adventures gives the impression that his ignorance prevents him from discerning the difference between mere social tips and serious principles of chivalric conduct. But if we look closely, we see that the

prohibition against gabbiness is presented as being just as binding upon a knight as the rules to show mercy and to render aid to women in distress. In fact, Gornemant's speech seems to be presented as a single rule with three parallel clauses dealing with how to behave toward others, and a second, separate rule that relates to religious observance. This two-part rule might seem to correspond to the double law of charity—love of neighbor and of God. In other words, it may seem that Gornemant is instructing Perceval in the kind of noble charity epitomized by the charitable Philip of Flanders in the prologue. But is this truly the case?

Defense of the helpless

Almost immediately, we have an opportunity to test the hypothesis. The episode that follows Perceval's departure from Gornemant's castle shows the new knight putting into practice for the first time the instruction he has received from the *vavasor*. After leaving Gornemant, Perceval soon arrives at the castle of the beautiful and helpless damsel Blancheflor, besieged by a wicked knight who wishes to take both the damsel and the castle by force. Here is a perfect opportunity for Perceval to practice what he has been taught about aiding helpless women. The mistress of the castle has only a handful of men left to defend her, all enfeebled by famine from the siege, but Perceval learns that her uncle is Gornemant, who lives comfortably less than a day's ride away, while the helpless damsel languishes in famine and peril. When he first arrives, remembering Gornemant's instruction not to be too talkative, Perceval is foolishly silent, even as the young lady and her companions try to draw him out, but

eventually his hostess coaxes a little small talk out of him. When Perceval tells her that he has just come from Gornemant, Blanchefflor says she is sure that “he showed you very happy and joyful hospitality, for he knows well how to do so, being a worthy and well-born man, powerful and comfortable and rich. But here there are no more than five crumbs .” The contrast between the pitiful state of the maiden and her dependents, and the ease and comfort of her uncle, could hardly be starker. “But,” the maiden says, “I’ve not seen him for a good long while.”

Blanchefflor, however, does not speak harshly of her rich but neglectful uncle Gornemant. (Perhaps she has learned to expect little help from knights.) She allows Perceval to go to off to bed without his having expressed any concern for her plight; meanwhile, she herself lies sleepless, tormented by her desperate situation and the knowledge that her handsome young guest may leave without offering any help. She does not blame Perceval for failing to rush to her defense—she seems to understand that she must engage his self-interest before she can hope to win his help. First she tries to lure him with sexual enticement, arriving at his bedside scantily dressed and weeping so copiously that her tears waken Perceval when they drip onto his face. Fortunately for her, Perceval is just a boy and knows nothing of sexual pleasures, so he fails to take full advantage of the situation, but neither does he make any pledge to defend her. “Unfortunately,” however, being insensible of the sexual lure she is dangling before him, he fails to rise to the bait. There is some ambivalence in her tactic, for the young lady finds herself compelled to offer as payment for his assistance help the same sexual favors that she has vowed, upon pain of death, to deny to the knight who holds her

besieged. Yet when Perceval invites her to sleep beside him, the young woman knows that she is on the point of achieving her purpose, as the narrator tells us:

Soon the knight will be able to win himself glory,
if he dares, for she never wept over his face for any other reason,
whatever she may have led him to believe,
save to encourage him to undertake the battle for her lands
and to defend her, if he dared to do so.

She lures him not only with the promise of winning fame, but also with the lure of her lands and her love, prizes that might tempt any knight to take up her cause. Perceval seems to have little interest in her property but he does agree to defend her, on one condition: "If I kill and conquer [your enemy], I demand that your love-service be mine, as recompense; I'll take no other payment."

Both parties seem to be agreeing to a transaction that benefits each side: she hires a protector and he gets paid with her love-service. There is no suggestion on either part that he is acting out of kindness, or even under obligation to the chivalric code. The maiden accepts the mercenary character of their agreement just as equitably as she does the fact that her rich uncle never troubles himself on her account (she could not, after all, pay her uncle with the same currency she offers Perceval).

Mercy to the defeated

The courtly code of chivalry, then, in its expectation that knights will assist helpless females does not demand that

the champion go unrewarded: he is entitled to both the lady's property and her person. Is there a similar element of self-interest in the rule of mercy toward conquered opponents?

Perceval's battle with Anguingueron, the knight who has besieged the castle of Blancheflor, seems to suggest that there is. The rule of mercy is tested as soon as Perceval sallies out to engage Anguingueron. When the wounded opponent, knocked from his horse, falls under Perceval's repeated blows and begs for mercy, Perceval at first refuses, until he remembers that Gornemant told him never to kill a vanquished knight who pleads for mercy; then he hesitates.

Anguingueron takes advantage of this moment of hesitation to argue the benefit of sparing his life—namely, that Perceval's victim will become a walking advertisement of his prowess:

Fair sweet friend, now don't be so haughty or foolish
that you fail to show me mercy. I concede and grant you
that you have the better of me and you are a very good knight,
but not so good that a man who hadn't seen it
and who knew us both would believe that you had killed me
single-handed in armed combat. But if I testify and bear witness
that you have bested me at arms with all my men watching,
in front of my own tent, my word will be believed
and your fame will be made known,
greater than any knight has ever had.

Anguingueron is as crafty in his manipulation of Perceval as the besieged maiden was: both appeal to Perceval's sense of self-interest by promising him fame and glory if he will agree to their terms. Both cases, also, can be read as transactions that

have benefits on both sides: here, Anguieron retains his life and Perceval advertises his own prowess.

Sins of speech

Now, I suggested earlier that Perceval acted foolishly when he took too literally Gornemant's instruction not to run off at the mouth, but perhaps he was not so foolish after all, as we shall see in a moment. After dickering over the exact arrangements for Anguieron's imprisonment, Perceval agrees to send him off into King Arthur's custody. This decision could hardly serve the cause of his fame better, for when Anguieron arrives at Arthur's court, the king immediately realizes that the "knight in red armor" who defeated Anguieron must be the same brash young Welshman who so effortlessly won that red armor by killing the Red Knight of Quinqueroi, who had been threatening Arthur's kingdom.

As Arthur becomes aware of each of Perceval's conquests, he berates Kay for having alienated such a promising young knight through his rash and imprudent speech (Kay had sarcastically told Perceval that he could have Quinqueroi's shiny red armor if he could get it off him). Misuse of his tongue seems to be Kay's besetting sin, for every mention of him in this romance includes some reference to his *felon gap* (dastardly speech), the malicious and sarcastic comments that the whole court fears:

"Kay," said the king, "For the love of God!
You are too eager to speak ill, and it doesn't matter to whom.
This is a terrible vice in a gentleman.

So, even though the lad is ignorant,
yet he may be a very well-born man,
and if this [his ignorance] comes from instruction
that he had from a vulgar teacher, he may yet
prove brave and wise. It is villainous to mock another
and to promise without giving.”

Vilenie (villainy or baseness) is mentioned twice in this passage, once with reference to Perceval’s rude behavior, and again to describe Kay’s sarcastic and spiteful words. The message is clear enough: an ill-educated boy may get away with rudeness, but in a courtly knight such behavior is downright shameful. This courtly attitude suggests that Gornemant, in his instruction of Perceval, was motivated by a measure of self-interest in his determination to tutor the boy in social skills, because Perceval’s manners from here on out would reflect upon the man who taught him.

The connection between rude speech and villainy, or baseness, was first introduced in the prologue, when Chrétien praised the virtue of his patron Philip. After stating that Alexander “had amassed in himself all the vices and all the evils” that the count shuns, Chrétien specifies one of the vices that Philip avoids: “The count...does not heed vulgar gossip or arrogant speech...he hates all *vilenie* [base behavior].” The members of Arthur’s court, however, are apparently not able to take the high road of ignoring malicious gossip; everyone at court fears Kay because of the harm his spiteful talk can do them, “for he is not wise who fails to fear maliciousness made too public, whether it be said in jest or in truth.”

This kind of villainy is feared because an insult brings public shame upon its object. On the most literal level, the

villain is the man of low birth, who lives below the social stratum of *corteisie* (nobles of the royal court); when applied to a person of noble birth and upbringing, villainy becomes a reproach against the person's behavior and can refer simply to bad manners or to outright wickedness. In its most grievous forms, villainy is a deadly offense: for instance, when Perceval first met Arthur, the king told him that the queen was literally suicidal because the Red Knight had discourteously spilled wine on her.

In light of the importance of this kind of social infraction, we should reconsider the code of chivalrous conduct that Gornemant teaches Perceval. As noted earlier, that instruction falls into two parts, the first of which refers to behavior toward others while the second deals with religious observance. Both are prefaced by the statement that the order of knighthood must be maintained *sanx vilenie* (free of baseness). If we interpret "*vilenie*" to mean "socially unacceptable behavior," it becomes clearer why Gornemant's prohibition against talking too much is wedged between the rule to show mercy to the defeated and the one to assist helpless women: all three are guidelines designed to keep the knight from committing social *faux pas*. They restrain the knight from violent excesses of force and willfulness by placing social constraints on his speech and actions. The improvement, however, is superficial, because the motivation of the courtly knight, remains essentially selfish. In fact, each of the rules of chivalry can be interpreted in terms of self-interest: advertising one's prowess by sparing defeated opponents who can attest to that prowess; protecting one's reputation by avoiding loose talk that might cause offense; increasing one's worldly goods by defending women who

reward the successful protector with their lands and their love-service. Even the injunction to attend church regularly also seems to have more to do with appearances than with genuine love of God.

It seems, then, that even courtly chivalry, which is superficially superior to the brutish behavior of rude knights like Anguingueron, falls short of the criterion of charity. Courtly practice may look like charity, but it is truly nothing more than “false hypocrisy” motivated by “vainglory.” Like Alexander the Great, courtly chivalry is superficially generous in its defense of the helpless and clemency toward the defeated, but is far removed from the charity of the noble Philip of Flanders, which is truly concerned with the good of the other.

Recognizing that the chivalry practiced by Perceval is defective, according to the standard of Charity proposed at the beginning of the poem, is crucial to understanding what the poet intended the reader to see. The rest of the poem becomes an incomprehensible nonsense if the reader lacks this key insight. Yet many modern critics have argued that the prologue served simply to flatter Chrétien’s wealthy patron, Count Philip of Flanders, and they overlook the challenge to read the poem in the light of Charity. In doing so, they fall into the trap set by the poet and fail to recognize the true meaning of the poem, as relevant today as it was in the twelfth century: that worldly success is worth nothing if it is simply self-glorification, and that the greatest hero must allow himself to be humbled if he would truly serve the good of others.

REVIEW: *From the Deep of the Dark*

Hunt, Stephen. *From the Deep of the Dark*, The Jackelian Series 6. London: Harper Voyager, 2012.
ISBN: 9780007289714

by Amanda Grace Poore

Currently on its sixth book, entitled *From the Deep of the Dark*, the Jackelian series by Stephen Hunt has become my standard of comparison for so-called “steampunk” fantasy. The series takes place in an alternate universe, or possibly very distant future, in which mankind is in a stage of advanced steam-powered technology. In this world, the Kingdom of Jackals, the main setting, very closely resembles Victorian England. In addition to Jackals there is also a rich society of steam-powered robots called the steammen knights with their very own robot gods, a race of bird-like men called Lashlites, fish creatures called Gillnecks, and many others who inhabit the world of magic and steam-powered science. A number of recurring characters work their way into your heart, such as Jethro Black, an old submarine captain with an adventurous past, and Boxiron, a steamman knight whose head has been transplanted onto a common man-made machine. Each book, however, starts its own adventure and introduces many new

players to the intrigue of Jackelian politics and foreign adventures.

The most recent book deals with the theft of an ancient scepter that belonged to the Kingdom of Jackals' nobility. In the midst of unrest and possible war, a detective, steamman knight, old submarine captain, hypnotist, and elderly nightwatchman go deep into the ocean in an attempt to discover the magical powers that drive the scepter. The series mimics the writing style of the Victorian "penny dreadfuls" that circulated in our own past. They are classic adventures of outlandish proportion, taking the reader through forbidden jungles and into the depths of the deep blue sea. The characters each have an incredible degree of emotional and psychological depth and personal history due to the masterful world-creation on the part of Hunt. All of this enables the reader to be transported into an engrossing world of clockwork mechanisms and Victorian mystery.

Each time I dive into one of Hunt's novels I become immersed in the unique language that he has created for the series. Often when I read a work of science fiction or fantasy, I am bogged down by specialized terminology the author has created for his world. Hunt's novels have plenty of jargon, and yet I feel like the terms are easily intelligible without requiring much explanation. I am also in awe of the fascinating and imaginative cultures Hunt has developed for the books. The Circlist religion that is practiced in much of the Kingdom of Jackals is an atheistic order that believes in reason and the circular nature of life. The religion of the steammen is centered around the god Loa, who rules over the souls of steam-powered beings. There appears a poignant line about

belief in *From the Deep of the Dark*. The aged sea captain Jethro Black is talking to the steamman Boxiron, who considers himself cast out of the steammen religion, and tells him, “We don’t believe in nothing, old steamer. We believe in each other, and we believe in rationality and our own power to make things better. It is always a hard thing to ask a person, to climb the mountain alone with empty hands.” This struck me as a profound statement for the old salt to tell the forsaken, blasphemous of a steamman.

When I compare other steampunk fiction, such as *The Parasol Protectorate* by Gail Carriger, to Hunt’s Jackelian series I find myself greatly disappointed. Many of the other books in the steampunk genre rely too heavily on the novelty of the concept rather than the exploration of the possibilities within this kind of world. Stephen Hunt has created not only an innovative and engaging world, but a good series, with characters that you will find yourself rooting for and crying over.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Beyer:

Thomas Beyer is a former student at the College of Saint Thomas More in Fort Worth. He is currently attending Texas Woman's University seeking the completion of his Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. In June 2012 he and several other former members of Saint Thomas More founded The Exiles in an effort to carry on some semblance of that institution's singular legacy of the love of learning and truth. He is also a new husband and father.

Thomas Chaney:

Thomas Chaney graduated from the College of St. Thomas More in 2007, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Philosophy at the University of Dallas. He currently works as a Scholar's Associate in Philosophy with the Walsingham Society School of Liberal Studies.

Mark Collignon:

Mark Collignon was educated at the College of St. Thomas More. He received the rank of Eagle Scout in the BSA at the age of 15 and has received recognition for involvement in many charitable organizations including the Knights of

Columbus and Habitat for Humanity. He is a writer seeking to publish his first novel, *Portrait of a Wolf*, in the near future.

Tyler Morrison:

In 2012, Tyler Morrison became the last graduate of the College of Saint Thomas More. In addition to his poetry, he is currently writing his first album and play.

B.R. Mullikin:

B.R. Mullikin received his B.A. from the College of Saint Thomas More. He is currently finishing his Masters of Arts in Humanities at the University of Dallas.

Dr. Lisa Nicholas:

Dr. Lisa Nicholas is a life-long lover of reading, literature, and stories well-told. She earned her doctorate in literature from the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas, after successfully defending her dissertation, *The Hermeneutic of Memory in Chrétien de Troyes' Conte del Graal*. She has taught literature, languages, humanities, and writing at a number of colleges and universities, and currently teaches literature for the Walsingham Society of Christian Culture and Western Civilization. All are invited to join an ongoing conversation about literature on her blog, *A Catholic Reader*.

Amanda Grace Poore:

Amanda Grace Poore is currently a Graduate Student at the University of North Texas, getting her Master's Degree in

Library and Information Science. She works at both the Arlington and Frisco Public Libraries developing youth literacy and providing technology training. Her undergraduate degree at The University of Texas at Arlington focused on creative writing and screenwriting. She is currently writing a fantasy novel entitled *The Coin*.

Chiara Solari:

Chiara Solari spends her days attempting to instill a love of literature and classical languages in the students of a private Catholic school in North Idaho. In her spare time she writes the occasional poem and labors over her novels: she has written four and is slowly editing them in the hopes of gaining an agent and publisher. She runs a blog, called Chiara's Balancing Act, which she updates twice a week. Currently she holds a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts, and occasionally thinks of returning to school for Library Science.

Maria Stromberg:

Maria Stromberg graduated from the College of St. Thomas More in 2004 with a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts. She has a Master's in Literature from the University of Dallas and is a Ph.D. candidate. Currently she lives in upstate New York, where she juggles her doctoral dissertation studies, musical endeavors and curious students of art, literature, languages, and piano. In her rare moments of peace and quiet she likes to sit in coffee-shops and write the occasional poem, short story, or scrap of novel.



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