

*You've been so naughty and nice, we have presents!
Gifts from Kristine Ong Muslim and Amanda Hailey,
Paul Albano and David Frederick Thomas,
a new Best In Show and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

December 2009

MAGAZINE

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Front cover "Amanda Hailey." See
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"What I've read since the bookstore closed."

Well, at least I had the presence of mind to stock up before the doors closed. Would that my purchases could have, somehow, rescued my little corner shop – the place where I spent mornings perusing and considering and choosing. And don't forget relaxing, under the protection of reading, in the womb of words, eyes occasionally closed in deepest thought. But, no. And with summer over, I'm starting to run out of those volumes I squirreled away last spring.

I miss my old bookstore. There was no place like it for offering a lazy man the opportunity of looking both busy and necessary. And the convenience! It was *right there*. Not walking distance, but just a tad beyond. Oh, sure, there are other shops. In Durham, about thirty five minutes as the crow flies. Or down south a piece. But they don't know me in those places. I'm just another MasterCard. Just another customer with a question about Ron Rash. Never underestimate the value of having a local hideout, I always say, a place that will make a cup of coffee for you, because they're brewing a pot anyhow. A place where you understand the lighting as you sit down to glance at a little bit of something-something. It was my sunny Tuesday morning hidey-hole. It was a rainy Saturday afternoon escape to somewhere where you could talk about books with people who really read, not just the book reviews and blurbs and dust jackets, but the books themselves. So it's gone, and I've been through the disbelief, the anger, the acceptance, and gotten back to reading, and already plowed through a big chunk of the pile next to my bed. Soon I'll need to go a-hunting for more things to read.

In the mean time I've opened an old copy of Ben-Hur off the book shelf next to my desk. I picked it up from a shop in Chapel Hill that closed, my God, fifteen years ago. A nice place that was, too; odiferous with books and old wood. Tobacco from back when people in North Carolina all smoked everywhere they went. A familiar pong, like mimeographed paper back in Junior High. I like places that use lamps to light rooms, and proprietors who wear cardigans in winter. The copy of Ben-Hur was hunted down for me, something old but not first edition costly. The copy I have is a nice turn-of-the-last-century imprint with a very pretty color-embossed cover illustration. There's an inscription inside that says, "Special Prize awarded to Vida Garner for Excellent Home Work" and it's dated 20/4/03. That's nineteen ought-three, ya'll. I appreciate that someone young read this book before me, hopefully with enthusiasm because it was a present, an award for hard work.

I also just like this book because it was written by Lew Wallace. Wallace was a general in the Union Army, part of Grant's western army that pushed south through Kentucky, Tennessee and points south, but the publisher of this edition chose to reference him as "Author of *The Fair God*." The film with Charlton Heston and Stephen Boyd was adapted from the novel by "General Lew Wallace," so there must have been a point between 1865 and my copy where it not a selling point to call an author by his old military title, but between 1900 and the 1959 film adaptation a military career once again was nothing to hide. I suspect this was something Eisenhower-ish, and that we go through cycles like this.

Anyhow, I'm impressed by Wallace's dual career – successful general and author of note. We often forget that the book was subtitled "A Tale of The Christ," and I like to think that perhaps Wallace was trying to atone

for some sin: hubris in his military work or the terrible ungentlemanly methods of conflict that the Civil War introduced. We so rarely get a chance to redeem ourselves, much less ask for forgiveness in a manner displaying such *gravitas* as this book.

It's not an easy read, though; not a roll out the plot and characters while weaving in the details with appropriately energetic pacing kind of novel. Wallace's style was that of the nineteenth century storyteller, someone who knew how to spin a yarn, and who knew that a story was meant to entertain in all ways; to fill a cold evening by lamplight with the heat of the desert, temporarily impart the terror of the Roman galleys and the excitement of the Circus, while deftly showing how Judah Ben-Hur's life intersects with Jesus' ministry. The pacing was leisurely. The language was...stately. It called to be read aloud to a couch full of listeners seeking a number of evenings of entertainment. Slowly and clearly, so that it is well understood.

Charles Portis, in his novel *True Grit*, carefully crafted the interactions between his characters. Dialogue was not artificially florid or oddly stilted yet *still modern in manner* in that way to which lesser authors writing about the Old West have often succumbed. Rather, I sensed when reading that book that Portis studied the tools available to him – old newspapers and magazines like *Leslies Illustrated*, to find the structure of how people thought in writing, so that he could as accurately as possible entertain us with the flavor of the time, as different from our own limited Western experience of Gunsmoke or Bonanza as a scratch-made cake is from a Betty Crocker mix. The language was the same, but used differently. But *True Grit*, to be sure, is still modern. The plot is linear, events happen for which there are ramifications, and we readers are transported with modern alacrity to completion. In *Ben-Hur*, on the other hand, Wallace didn't attempt to craft his words in such a manner, didn't try to transliterate into his novel the language of Jerusalem at the time of Christ. He did write in generous prose with seemingly careless tangential thoughts. The episodes of Judah's life are languidly presented. He's in no rush to finish, so why should you be? Reading it is time consuming, but in a way that nothing else in our lives is, except perhaps a game of baseball. It consumes time, but it is time that his 19th century readers have, and we should spare. And unlike a TV show, you come out on the other side feeling better, rather than disappointed.

But *whoops!* I didn't intend for this to be a book review. I'm all about reading, and finding a good bookshop to frequent, someone to help me fill my shelves, to replenish the pile next to the bed. Recently I fussed with a good friend of mine about Amazon, where he buys his books. On the surface, it makes sense – he has a “budget” and Amazon is the lowest price guys. He makes his shopping lists and goes online. Amazon's computed subject/author/title algorithms based on current and previous purchases give him hints and tips about what he might also want to read. For me, however, book shopping is about browsing, going into the store and letting my senses, natural balance - hell, my circadian rhythms – lead me to finding something to read. I'm always looking, and I'm hopeful.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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The Blotter Magazine, Inc.

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CAUTION

Good people worked to ensure that this periodical conforms to certain standards of excellence and if any bad words, that is bad as defined by the late Raymond Shaw, should slip through the armor plating, well...rats.

"The Canonical Vat Bubbles: A Novel"

by Paul Albano

Chapter 1

(Where a guard in a uniform of human skin, black buck jacket with carious yellow teeth buttons an elastic pullover shirt and brandishes an Indian penny)

I have confessions to make. I threw the mini boomerang that swept Mr. Simrak's tomato plants and circled halfway back into our yard. I have yet to hit puberty and my hips are just bone, my hair baby-soft. I'm afraid of walking past seagulls. I never took the time to learn the names of makeup. I believe it is easy to write a eulogy. I once smoked two pipes of peyote and spoke with God and he told me the world is ending faster than you think.

Chapter 2

(Containing itinerant short con and carny hype men who burn down the croakers of Texas, undaunted by antediluvian warnings of the Ides of March)

I feel that Swift's depiction of Gulliver's experience in Laputa is often read by critics as a satirical account of England's colonial rule of Ireland, (Swift 154). And that framing the assessment of the Laputians' colonial tactics as

methodological limits the range of Swift's critique of colonialism, because Gulliver's descriptions of the colonial subjects are badass yet rife with the features of colonial discourse, demonstrate limitations of this methodological critique of colonial discourse. I have nothing further to say about this matter.

Chapter 3

(In which a portentously inconspicuous man, grey beard and grey face and shabby brown djellaba, sings in a slight unplaceable accent without opening his lips)

I'd banned all Western imports. Including Western trance music that's designed to sound like our conception of Eastern trance music but really just sounds like shit. You'd be surprised what the Dada Formalists considered a threat. In those days – Jazz, pop, rock, neo-Nazi hardcore, Yo-Yo Ma, the theme song from the CBS Television program *Touched By An Angel* – everything, basically that might appeal to children our age – at least more than the corny paeans to mother Russia on the radio.

Chapter 4

(Concerning a horde of lust-mad American women with surgically implanted nano-technology rushing in from farm and dude ranch, factory, Forever 21 outlet, brothel, country club, penthouse and suburb, motel and yacht and cocktail bar)

It was a quiet room, windowless with blue walls, and every angle of artificial stucco, every sailboat shaped fold of cloth, transformed from what it had been before. I saw she was curled up on the four post bed, knees pressed against her chest, the edge of the comforter pulled around her. This way she lay still, as the light changed correspondent to the movement of the sun, as though time needed to be measured, needed to be experienced like an unexpected breeze on the first day of Spring. The pile of latex bustieres and alpaca sweaters fell to the floor.

"No, you made your self so," she repeats once more, "it was not my Desire but your own."

"Oh, architecture," I say. "Okay, Douglas, read to me about architecture."

She drinks ice tea and reads the newspaper, folding the page of movie times. "La!" she says. "Sir, you was not so singular in it. I was not in Despair. – I have had other Offers, and better too."

I spread a long cloth on the dirt, outside the gravel path entrance to the tree Judas hung himself on. The cannibal I tamed

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and domesticated keeps bringing bowls of yogurt and hot plates of rice. His bow-tie is knotted correctly. "There are shadows everywhere, little one," I explain, standing over the cloth. She is shaking now. "Watch out or they'll swallow you up."

She frowns like one of these places in the Old Testament that heaven hated and completes the paper work. Her body is breastless and skeletal, she's wearing a robe like a giant paper napkin. "I must tell you, Mr. Wilde, this is a very brutish Manner of treating a Woman, to whom you have such Obligations; but I know how to despise it, and to despise you too for shewing it me." She pauses and the atmosphere is as uncomfortably snug as your favorite dress shirt's top button buttoned. "Indeed I am well enough paid for the foolish Preference I gave to you. I flattered myself that I should at least have been used with good Manners. I thought I had married a Gentleman; but I find you every way contemptible, and below my Concern."

With my thumb, I push away from my chest the dog-tags I wear to ward off the cold. The cannibal takes a few pictures with the digital camera. I tell him to remove my Hitler mustache in Photoshop before he sends them out. My gaze descends to the cloth. "The oven was left on all night," I say to her, "so the cupcakes turned into twelve

blackened fists."

Chapter 5

(Wherein homosexuals are classified as deviants and flame throwers)

No story. No sense. The New Wave Gideon's Bible Appendix C is full of verses for both and for all combinations and varieties in between. But I used to fall asleep at night listening to a haunting robot text-to-speech generator read the complete works of H.P. Lovecraft. I think the future of avant-garde filth are people like Mitch Albom and Julia Child — people who get deep, deep, deep into a cherished medium (romance novels, cold/flu mediation instructions, girl-on-furniture pornography) and then destroy it from the inside-out with apeshit antics and extreme sexual deviancy. Anyway, I liked this case brief. I liked the innocuousness blandness and the aerial-focused images. And the horror.

Chapter 6

(Pertaining to the President of Lesotho prostrating himself on a molten iron-cross and experiencing perforated ulcers and screaming in self-righteous rhyming couplets)

I dream of great operatic Kansas thunderstorms and the tired girl carrying water up a hill with her

lovely hair hanging wantonly over her forehead and living under a dull calm of happiness and translucent lingerie and replacing casual Friday with Professional-Grade Chainsaw Friday and possessing perfect dexterity and learning how to make nails ridged and unfailingly trim and rising to progress in roguery without the accompanying fall at the hands of a cunning government official and attending cheerleading summer camp in Dubai and purchasing a genteel snuff-box from a frontier general store.

But in my nightmares I live in a Westminster boarding house assembled from the gray ash of Mount St. Helens and my neighbor is an avant-garde seamstress and I can't remember what the green light in *The Great Gatsby* symbolizes and my cowlick is irrepressible and I preside over a very considerable Gang composed of undone gamblers, ruined bailiffs, broken tradesmen, idle apprentices, loose and disorderly youth and I see the present tense refracted through a handheld monocle and I will never submerge my toes into a white sand beach after my last diamond heist and my only association with Paul Newman is the consumption of his non-fat Black Peppercorn Ranch dressing.



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"The Hot Air Balloon"

by David Frederick Thomas

Homer Hewitt killed himself last week; dove into the bay and filled his lungs with water. Earlier this year he dragged the balloon from his dad's storage unit, and now that he's gone I kind of suspect he had this in mind from the start. He always was kind of a tragic character.

I even went up with him a couple of times while he was learning to pilot the thing. Ann told me he was getting lonely with her down at school all the time—thought maybe I could spend some time with him. And I didn't have anything against him, not really, so I went up once in awhile. I was actually sitting in the basket with him when he named it, up over the bay in March, light wind tugging us back to shore. It was cold up there and he had his old hat on, a red mountaineering cap pulled down tight over his curls—his hands tucked in his jacket pockets.

"Whattaya reckon?" he said out of the blue and I asked him what about.

"Y'know, what should I name her?" he said, gesturing widely.

I didn't know and I said so. We sat there in silence for awhile, watching the ropes pitch slightly with the breeze. Homer mumbled something and went into his bag.

"Eh?" he said as pulled out two glass beer bottles and foisted one my way. I graciously accepted and we tossed the caps over the side, tipping bottoms up.

"I dunno, you could name it after me," I said, smiling as he took a sip.

"The Dave Mann?" He kind of laughed.

"The Spirit of Dave Mann."

"But you're not dead," he pointed out as he messed with the zipper on his jacket.

I examined the label on my bottle before I responded, turning it to read the back. "You don't have to be dead to have something named after you."

"Yeah but we're talkin' Spirit of, here. Spirits. Death." He paused and stood to check our position. He tugged on some ropes and took the manual from his back pocket, flipping to the back and briefly scanning with his finger. He folded it up. He sat back down.

"Spirit Of Saint Peter," he said, half to himself and half to me.

"Why him?"

"It's what my uncle used to call me, said I was like Saint Peter at the gates, always passing judgment."

"So it's you. It's your nickname."

He nodded.

"But you're not dead."

"Yeah..." he said, dragging the word out, half-smiling. "Exception that, y'know, proves the rule."

We split another beer and smoked a cigarette before he started bringing us down.

At dusk we landed in a park just inland. We were a couple hours from home so Ann picked us up in the station wagon; she brought their Dalmatian, Michel.

The parking lot was empty and she let the car idle for a second before cutting the engine and crossing the pavement to our bench. Homer stood and she went up on her toes to kiss his cheek. "Your hat looks stupid," she said.

"You like it," he replied as she pulled it off his head and tucked it into her back pocket. "They all like it."

She pulled her jacket closed against the wind, crossing her arms over her small breasts and turning to greet me as if she'd just noticed I was there. "Hey Dave. You guys have fun? Hit any airplanes?"

"No we had fun, it's cold up there though."

"Yeah I saw clouds out over the bay," Homer chimed in as he walked over to the car to let Michel out, "maybe rain. We should hurry up and get the balloon folded." The Dalmatian bounded across the short lawn to the basket and lifted his leg. Homer followed him and started loosening knots and packing things into the bag, but Ann lingered.

"How's he seem?" she said quietly.

"Normal, for Homer. How're you?"

"I'm okay. I got some reading done today." She looked through my eyes and stayed there for a second before glancing over her shoulder at Homer and the balloon. "He's going into the city tomorrow to look into insuring that thing." She smiled hopefully up at me, but there was sadness in her gaze.

"What time?"



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"I don't know. I'll call you."

It started raining right after we got on the highway, coming down all at once like the sky had opened up. Michel curled up in the back on top of the balloon folds and buried his head next to the spare tire. Ann and Homer talked up front. I could hear them in snippets over the rain drumming the roof.

"I named her."

"Who?"

"The balloon," he said as he rolled a cigarette on the dashboard. "The Spirit Of Saint Peter."

She was quiet for a moment as he put the tobacco back in the glove box and dug under his seat for a lighter. "Cute," she said. He sat up and lit the cigarette between his lips, taking in a long drag and tossing the lighter back to the floor.

"Huh?" he said, exhaling.

"Cute," she repeated. "The name, it's cute."

"Right," he said, taking another drag. "Want this?" he asked, offering her the cigarette.

"No. Why don't you give it to Dave?" She caught my eye in the rearview. I smoked the rest of the cigarette while Homer fell asleep against the window. Ann and I shared glances in the mirror.

I'd been seeing this woman, Chloe, for about four months when I met Ann. I was teaching a couple of night classes at the university and Ann was one of my grad students, only a few years my junior at twenty-eight, back in school after a long hiatus. She came promptly to class every night and didn't speak up much, but occasionally her voice would slip across the white classroom like a passing perfume and I would listen. I had only slept with her twice before we met in the parking lot after class one night. "I left Chloe," I said, though I'm not even sure she had known about her.

"I have a boyfriend," she said sharply, meeting my gaze for a second before darting her eyes elsewhere. There was a long pause as we

both turned our heads to watch as one of my other students did a slow turn in his Buick and pulled out of the lot.

"That's okay," I said. It'd been a cold winter and I remember blowing steam as I waited for her to say something. I said it again, "that's okay," though mostly to myself.

"I can't. I can't leave him Dave." She looked up at me then, shaking her head faintly as she crossed her arms tight. "Seven years we've been together. Seven. I can't just walk out on him."

We slept together, mostly on weekends when Homer drove up to Alexandria to visit his dad in the hospital. Always she would come to my apartment, and so it was a long time before I ever saw where she lived, a long time before I met Homer. Their front lawn was mown short the first time I saw it—there for a small Labor Day get-together, a bottle of wine in brown paper clutched nervously in my hand—and the car that I knew the inside of so well was parked neatly in the short driveway. The house was right outside of the city, a narrow two story affair nestled between two others just like it. Their front door was open and I let myself in, greeted by the sound of voices in the kitchen and the frantic clicking of nails against wood as an excited Dalmatian bounded my way.

I stood patiently as the animal prodded and sniffed, huffing a sneeze through his nose as he

allowed me to step fully into the house. I closed the door and made my way to the back, trying to act calm as I poked my head into the softly lit kitchen. Ann was seated at a square card table between one of my other students—a New England girl named Chris—and a plain looking man, Homer. A container of hummus was open between them and Chris had a bag of pita in her lap.

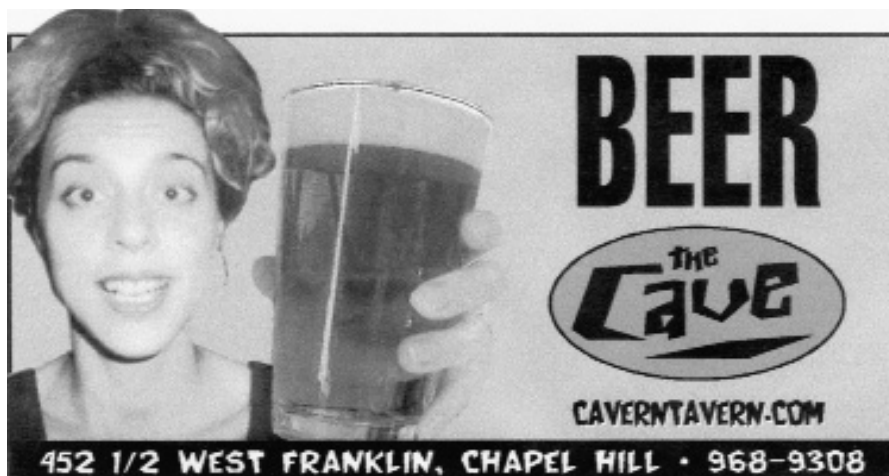
There were ineffectual hellos. Homer stood and went to the fridge while I moved some books from a chair and sat across from Ann. Her hair was piled rakishly atop her head, spilling smoothly down the back of her neck. The sleeves of her white shirt were rolled up to her elbows.

"You drink wine, right Dave?" she asked me, skirting my gaze briefly with her own. "We've got a couple bottles of white. No red though."

I realized I was still holding the paper bag and I brought it up, pulling out the heavy glass bottle and placing it before me with the affected ease of a drunk feigning sobriety. I shrugged.

"Oh." She turned to Homer, his head still buried in the fridge, "honey. Dave brought some wine."

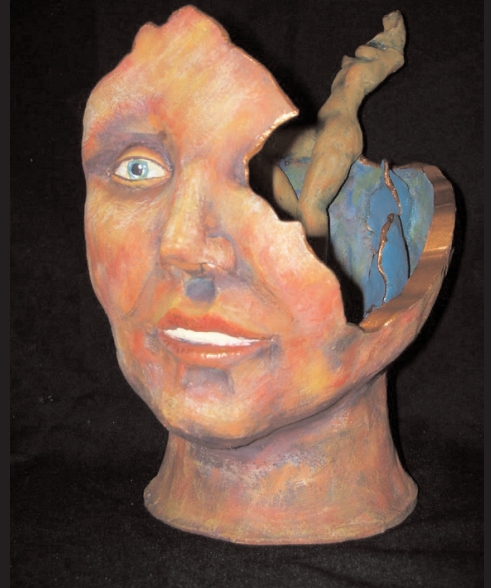
"It's white," I said to him as he straightened up, a steaming green bottle in his hand. He had his hair short back then and was cultivating a full, dark beard, which lent an air of wisdom to his unassuming way.



Amanda Hailey
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Left: Chickenhead
Above: The Metamorphosis of Venus
Right: Ideal





Left: Subversive Suspicion
 Right: Hostile Recreation
 Above: Warrior
 Above Right: Little World



The Blotter

He stood thinking for a beat before he spoke. "We'll chill that and crack one of these open," he said matter-of-factly. I passed mine to him and he labored at the counter for a minute before returning to the table with an uncorked bottle and four empty glasses.

"So," Ann said as she filled the glasses, "Homer?" He was bent down with his forehead pressed against Michel's, staring plainly into the dog's eyes. "Homer? Honey?" He sat up and took a sip of wine. "I mean"—she cleared her throat—"obviously this is Dave," she gestured across the table with a wave of her hand, "and Dave this is Homer."

We shook hands weakly and spoke in patches as Ann and Chris talked for a moment before excusing themselves to go out back.

"You find the place alright?" he asked.

The evening went. Chris knew how to talk and easily made up for my uncharacteristic silence and Homer's sullen demeanor. We ate dinner on the back porch and talked about her dissertation. Ann and Homer shared a cigarette and we opened another bottle of wine. The cicadas filled the silences that stretched longer as the night wore on.

Homer went to sleep when the wine was gone and Chris went home about an hour later. I could hear the car accelerating away as I moved to sit next to Ann on the steps. I put my hand on her knee and she rubbed my foot with hers. When I kissed her she pulled back

and sat with her head turned away. She cleared her throat.

"I'm sorry about him," she said as we sat side by side on her back porch, staring at the fence in the dark.

When he did a swan dive into the Chesapeake Bay the Spirit Of Saint Peter drifted on without him. After awhile it hit water just off Silver Beach. The kids who saw the balloon splash down said they never saw anyone with it.

I went with Ann to go pick up his stuff and we stayed with her aunt in Norfolk. Ann told her that I was a friend of Homer's, and to keep up appearances Ann slept in the guest bedroom and I took the couch. We left early in the morning and drove up the peninsula, stopping once for gas. When we got to Silver Beach she went into the police station. I waited in the car and graded papers.

She was in there for awhile and when she came back out I could tell that she'd been crying. The car door slammed with a muffled thud and she buckled her seat belt as I turned the key in the ignition.

"Pull around back," she said, her voice dull and controlled, "they've got the basket and everything in a storage warehouse."

The balloon folded up fit in one cardboard box and everything else fit in another. They were stacked inside of the salt stained basket, and she stayed up front while I wrestled the load inside.

On the drive back down we

stopped at another beach. I went into the bathroom, and when I came back out she was sitting on the rear bumper with the hatchback open, the cardboard boxes at her feet. I sat down next to her and rubbed her shoulders while she took slow, deep breaths and stared down at the brown stack, all that was left of Homer Hewitt.

After awhile we put the balloon away and took the other box down to the sand. We sat on a piece of driftwood and she watched as I opened the box for her and rummaged through its contents. As my hand touched the old red hunting cap she put her fingers to my arm and I stopped digging.

"Here," she said, reaching down, picking up the hat, holding it for a moment. She tucked my hair behind my ears and put the cap on my head.

"Your hat looks stupid," she said, nearly whispering.

We sat for awhile with the open box at our feet, and when we stood to go back to the parking lot I bent down to grab it, but she stopped me and shook her head briskly, wisps of her hair trailing away in the breeze.

Back in the car, with the smell of sea salt, she opened the glove box and pulled out the tobacco pouch. With night coming on, and a long drive to Richmond, she rolled a cigarette, flicked the lighter twice, and eventually fell asleep beside me.



"Best In Show" by Phil Juliano



The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals.. If nothing else, we'd love to read them.

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Dream 1299

A game show – isn't it so pervasive in our lives that it must leach over into our sleep like estrogen or pesticides or our fear of global warming? That's where I am, though, and in the episode where I must come up with the points to bail out my team, either actually or metaphorically. The host is a Nurse Ratched type, the announcer pulls up in a limousine and apologizes to me for stealing my voice (?) and my teammate tries to explain how I cannot lose my cool and deck someone or we'll be banned from the remaining episodes of the show. I try to cool off – I've been playing a handheld, trying to match things and connect dots and fill in the blanks. No, my teammate says, that will not earn enough points to bail out everyone. I want to ask him the pertinent question, but there's so much background noise and running around that he cannot focus on me. I finally say Nuff! and stalk past them all, and it turns out that the door to the jail-house isn't even locked. Down the sidewalk, trailed by producers and key grips and my teammate. So familiar, because it is the home town of my childhood. It's a cloudy day, the lawns are all mown, no one's out to say Hey or How've you been? In a rare bit of dream clarity, I conclude that all of my life is and has been a game. There's no ride home, though.

BH - New Jersey

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3. Transparency is very important to us, and we make every effort to eliminate any conflict of interest situation from going down in our contest. In that light, Blotter volunteers and their family members and/or employees are prohibited from entering our contest.

To enter the contest, please submit your work with a \$25 entry fee by check or money order to: The Blotter Magazine, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705.

Your entry must contain the following: no less than 10 pages, no more than 20 pages of the opening of your novel or novella, typed & double-spaced, without your name. On a separate cover page type your name, the title of your novel or novella and a one page synopsis of your novel or novella. Remember, you have to have the entire book written, so that if and when you win, you can show us the rest!

BONUS: Enter the writing contest AND get a year's subscription to The Blotter for only \$30! (Regular annual subscription donations are \$25 total and you don't even get to enter a writing contest with that price!)

Once again, first prize is \$500, plus a "library" of books selected by The Blotter (many signed by the authors). Second prize is \$125, again with a "library" of recent releases. Third prize will be just the "library." All placements, including honorable mentions, will receive an award certificate, proof positive of your success as an author, suitable for mocking your sophomore English teacher, who always wondered how you graduated at all.

Our contest will be run in line with the rules of ethics and mechanics recommended by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, as outlined in their 2006 monograph on the subject. You can't view for free, but you may purchase the monograph entitled "Publishing Contests: Ethics and Mechanics" through the CLMP at <http://www.clmp.org/about/monographs.html>. This is the document we have used in coming up with the rules and conditions of this contest.

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Five Minutes With: Amanda Hailey

Cannot tell a lie – I first saw her work on the television while watching a documentary on the discovery of equal temperament in western music. First I liked her work. Second, I liked that she lived in the Wilmington area. So I perused the internet, found her Facebook site and sent her a note. Yes, I know that's stalking. She's a sculptor (sculptress? Is a female doctor a doctress? No, I don't think so.) She's young, funny and as interesting as her work. So we were enthusiastic, and she's enthusiastic and here are our questions and her responses.

The Blotter Magazine: Tell us a little bit about yourself?

Amanda Hailey: My award-winning mother, Bambi Chappell (ceramic sculptor), has always encouraged and nurtured my passion for the arts. Even if we had little money, she always made sure there were art supplies handy and was eager to show me all she knew. My father, Lloyd Chappell, built our two-story art studio out of scrap wood from hurricane Fran and Bertha years ago, which is the perfect place to turn our imagination into reality. I live in the sleepy seaside town of Southport, NC, in a town more American than Wonder Bread, with twice the carbs and more yellow five than you can light up a Christmas tree with. There is a thriving art scene and when I say "art" I mean paintings of lighthouses and seagulls relieving themselves on beachfront properties. When referring to "thriving scene" I mean any-

one who has an AARP membership.

Blotter: Yikes! That sucks mightily. So what are you doing to survive?



AH: I work fulltime as a waitress in a shanty Greek restaurant, painting and sculpting before, and after work, including days off. For one who has only just started having art shows this year, I've managed to set them up bi-monthly...they're like unofficial birthday parties without awkward lap dances from Grandma when she has too many buttered rum candies. I broke most if not all of the rules in my short art career so far with very little schooling, no predetermined concepts or crazy social perspectives, abruptly approaching galleries and tossing my portfolio around like I'm in a game of Frisbee golf.

Blotter: Well, that's not too bad. What do you mean, very little schooling?

AH: In late 2004, I went to Barton College, formally Atlantic Christian College, with a 25 thousand dollar scholarship and left a year later with a degree in Alcoholics anonymous and a .75 GPA.

Blotter: Oh, my. Then what happened?

AH: I've been actively pursuing an art career. First, by creating a body of work in late 2007 through 2008 (around 25 pieces), then by joining several online art communities (making my name Google-able even if I was merely uploading my images on Flickr). The most rewarding website I joined was Ovation TV's online community, a cultural arts network owned by Bravo TV, which airs nationally and is based out of California.

Blotter: How did that work?

AH: Basically, artists create profiles, upload their work, have it rated and critiqued, and a list of the top favored and highest-viewed works are displayed in order (using stars!) In 2008 an internal change occurred thanks to my online artist friends and connections I began to have the courage to branch out and try free standing sculpture using slab and coil techniques verses the simple work I was creating only a few months prior. I was like a mad-man possessed, working non-stop, and before I knew it I had been hand selected to feature on Ovation TV's My Art program, showcasing my work "subversive Suspicion" on air nationally. Soon after, my sculpture was up against 50 other works from seasoned artists around the globe competing against another for Ovation TV's first "Best of My Art." Before I could sneeze my work had rallied the most votes! Shocked and amazed! By April 2009, I was awarded a year long promotional commercial on Ovation TV, news and media coverage, as well as a six-month exhibition in Independence Mall in Wilmington NC. For a 22 year-old aspiring artist who couldn't pass art class, never had an art show or an exhibition, and with no formal training and little experience, this was an astounding opportunity!

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Blotter: That is a terrific story! Don't tell me there's a downside.

AH: If I thought I was an outsider before this happened, I was even more of an outcast to most of the local young art community and art college kids in my area, plus I was shocked to read some of the comments and letters I received by people I barely knew online...some were threatening, others described my work as crap and yard-sale junk. I spent two months not wanting to create, but then after a deep depression I realized art is like air to me, like needing sunlight to thrive. Without it I can't function in society. I might as well be a cave-dwelling mute. So, I put the Bon-Bons down, wiped my tears and went back to the laboratory.

Blotter: Explain a little of the technical side of your sculpture. ?

AH: I hand build free-standing and wall mounted ceramic sculpture from cone 4 clay that is hand-painted with acrylic and adorned with findings from the jewelry I create. My art style could be classified as a "Catcher in The Rye" style atmosphere with a selfish touch true to the emotions and struggles of my age group.

My favorite piece would be my award-winning sculpture "Subversive Suspicion," (15" height, sculpture clay, coil built, acrylic finish, wire and polymer clay) though in 2008, when it was created, I was downright depressed. Sick of being sexually harassed at the workplace, I finally stood up for myself only to be fired. I felt as if I was at this awkward place in my life, too young to move out on my own, still immature, yet technically an adult, a woman-child. My childhood was no more, where did it go? Did I even have a childhood? Who have I become? The zebra idea came not only from childhood toys, but from the cartoonish and the raw nature of adolescence.

I love the flow of "The Metamorphosis of Venus." (23" height, coil-built, sculpture and paper clay attachments, acrylic finish, polymer clay). There are so many meanings I find in this piece, first being the birth of the modern woman, the female orgasm, the over-sexualization of women (thanks MTV!), and

maybe a touch of bisexuality after a few drinks. This piece probably took around 40 hours to complete. The dating scene is a frightful thing and the idealistic man I created in "Ideal" (14" height, Raku clay - the only kind I had - acrylic finish, coil built) seems to think that all women are objects, empty on the inside. Ironically enough, his head is the empty space which contains the woman. This makes me ponder my last short-lived relationship, where the man asked how I felt about a breast augmentation., to which I replied, "how do you feel about male-enhancement?"

"Chickenhead" (15" height, sculpture clay, spray paint, acrylic finish) is a slang term used in the hip-hop culture to describe a woman who is presumed to be loose. Usually a man will use her for sex, then toss her aside. I created this piece thinking of how hypocritical the rap industry and culture can be while degrading women. I imagined an alternate universe where women took pride in this, then I turned on MTV and realized it was already a reality.

While painting "Hostile Recreation" (14" height x 16" width, paper clay, mixed media, acrylic finish) I was going for a finish reminiscent of meat and the structure of a playground, fun and dangerous yet grotesquely organic. I was pondering early childhood and how actions that seem innocent are really dark reflections of deeper things going on in the adult world as we react to them.

Blotter: Where are you now?

AH: I've been showing with some amazing young talents, most of

whom I met at my favorite local art hangout, The Juggling Gypsy, located in the heart of downtown Wilmington. Usually I stop by to smoke some hookah, watch plays performed by the staff, listen to poetry, see amazing indy and avant-garde acts onstage or just watch hot chicks belly dance. I find that each venue I show at requires different types of art, and that at craft shows and winery's I am guaranteed a sell. It comes at the cost of my integrity having to sell pieces that should be entered in competitions labeled "Not For Sale," but exposure is good enough, I suppose.

Blotter: You're right, but it can sometimes make you feel empty, or like you've sold out. You seem to be bucking that trend.

AH: I've struggled with depression throughout my life. It's funny how most artists reject authority, yet wonder why they have no direction...complain of loneliness but push others away to focus on their obsession...how our work favors our being, but we know not who we are...we go against the grain, yet long to be accepted. My past has been riddled with addiction, or obsessions, sadly, all centered around the "self." I've cheated death more times than I can count and hurt the people I hold dearest to my heart... I also find it difficult knowing what the heck to say!!! Sometimes I blab too much and other times not enough. Needless to say I need help deciding how to fill in the blanks in my bio! Should I talk of my love for music and fort building? Sorry to bombard you with my craziness! I will just blame it on my youth.

‡

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"Two Thieves, One Blanket"

Lights out and rust temporarily slows
down its ascent on the bars of jail cells.
Never mind the moments during the day
when the metal rods seem to shine.
The night watchman cranks the radio dials.
Bonita slurs the song of stolen cars
and oceans of piss. The tattooed, the
ones caught with their hands inside
the cookie jars of the world sing with her.
In the next room, one of the prison guards
snores as he dreams of escape.

Five by Kristine Ong Muslim

"Enigma of Socks"

Like half a piece of July
on a girl's barrette.
Would have bent double
in the drawer when whisked
with the other outcast, the ones
who assume a certain shape
and configuration once they
are used accordingly.
A crescent moon. A miniature
sphinx. A forced smile.
A fortune told by the lines
made by their weave.

"Dissection of Painted Things"

There was a time when
he wanted to be one of them,
those little brightly painted things
on the shelf of dead objects.
They grow new colors when left
in the dark for a long time.
When nobody is looking, they twitch
their porcelain ears and open their
glass lips in preparation for speech.
Soon, he will scalpel their shiny torsos.
The usual Y-incision for the damned.
How black they are underneath
all those colors. How bloodlessly calm.

"Out of the Hat, a Red Car"

This prototype of blind dates
and to-order Russian brides
looms like a catastrophe.
A hat is brightly lit inside yet
it looks like any ordinary hat.
The magic tricks ensuing from it
are another thing. They change
according to perspective.
It is late. The wineglass tinkles
like the heat inside a sealed car
left exposed during midday.
She feigns surprise at his mention
of marriage. He pretends not to notice
the expression on her face, the slump
of her shoulders, the glint in her eyes.

"Mr. Flip as a Suicide Note"

He assumes the posture of a sheet
of lined paper. A pen nudges him,
spits the words which made his skin
crawl. His father would have been proud.
Mr. Flip will not smile, will not cry, will not
cringe. But he closes his eyes whenever
he prays. That trap called *hope* is sprung;
its jaws glint whichever way he looks at it.

CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Albano writes, "The story is essentially a multi-layered mash-up. Most, sentences in the first, fourth and final chapter revolve around either a word or fragment taken at random from (Fielding's) *Jonathan Wild*. The second chapter is an auto-summarized version of an academic paper for a Brit Lit class written by noted UIC Master's of Arts student/scholar Mary Hale, though the lone word of profanity and the last sentence are not hers. The third chapter began life as part of a single frame from a graphic short story by Kelly Clancy, then was heavily remixed/mashed-up. The fifth chapter contains sentences and fragments taken from an oddly impassioned and remorseful rejection letter for this story, of course, minus this chapter. And the chapter titles are fragments drawn at random from *Naked Lunch*, with various words and phrases then added to them. I apologize for the lengthy explanation, and feel free to just take what you need for publication." Albano was born in Milwaukee, WI. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and currently a MA student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His work has appeared in *Opium Magazine* and *Word Riot*.

David Frederick Thomas currently lives and writes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he is halfway through a bachelors degree at Temple University. His work has previously appeared in *Storyglossia*."

Kristine Ong Muslim lives in Manguindanao, Philippines and writes, "My publication credits and recent acceptances include more than seven hundred poems and stories in over three hundred publications worldwide, such as *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Fifth Wednesday*, *Grasslimb*, *Narrative Magazine*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Turnrow*, and *Weber*. I have been nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize and received several Honorable Mentions in *Year's Best in Fantasy and Horror*."

Amanda Hailey - See this issue's "Five Minutes With:"

Phil Juliano finds his muse in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina.

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Final Tid-Bits: I received a call recently asking me to remove copies of last month's Blotter from a magazine rack in an establishment in Pittsboro, NC. It was a restaurant, and apparently the new owners didn't want their guests to read anything, or risk being offended. The odd thing was that the call came from the Chatham County Tax Office - for reasons that quite escape me, "We'll get you, my pretty! And your little magazine, too. Oh, you're a 501 c3? Crap!" Well, tell your local watering holes and such that you love The Blotter. Or like-like. And visit your local independent bookstore, they have plenty of things to read - I don't want to hear any of you saying, "I'm bored." Got it? Good!

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