



***Diamonds in the Rough***  
***A Literary Magazine***

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Editor: Dr. Melissa Knox-Raab

Welcome to the first issue of Diamonds in the Rough. This issue showcases the talents of the following first-year students in the BA program: Tom Akehurst, Svenja Krautwald, David Kretschmann, Oliver Otte, and Jule Windeler. The writing of tutors Fabian Großeloser, Julia Machtenberg and Tana-Julie Drewitz also appears, plus some recipes from Melissa Knox-Raab.

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Content:

## **Essays**

Tom Akehurst:

From Novel to Screenplay: Harry Potter, Arrival and the Impossible Adaptation

Svenja Krautwald:

Juggling Between Menial Labour and University Life

David Kretschmann:

That's Not Art

Oliver Otte:

The Sad Truth – Sometimes Fish Need Bicycles

Fabian Großeloser:

“Gangsta” Rap: Songs about Quintessential American Values

Julia Machtberg:

Processing Trauma Through Art

Jule Windeler:

Bird Box - Does The Movie Deserve The Criticism?

## **Fiction**

Jule Windeler:

Watching Over You

David Kretschmann:

Exodus

## **Poetry**

Tana-Julie Drewitz:

Impact

## **Recipes**

Melissa Knox-Raab:

Easy-Peasy Recipes from the Knox-Raab Kitchen

## **From Novel to Screenplay:**

### **Harry Potter, Arrival and the Impossible Adaptation**

By Tom Akehurst

Movie viewers can often be left unsatisfied when they leave the theatre. Such dissatisfaction stems from various causes: an underwhelming performance by their favourite actor or actress, weird or too cartoonish looking special effects, corny lines in the script or an unnecessarily complex plot. But when it explicitly comes to movies based on books, I believe the following statement to be the most common criticism: “The movie was nothing like the book.” This is supposed to be an inherently negative statement about the quality of a screenplay, which through this phrasing is thoughtlessly deemed inferior to the source material it was adapted from. To many people who have read books and then watched the corresponding movie, the latter can never live up to the original. This means: if a movie based on a book is not exactly like it, it is not a good adaptation and, therefore, not a good movie. For these people, it should be the ultimate goal of any movie adaption to be just like the original or as close to it as possible. My view, however, contrary to what these people argue for, is that movies can and should not be like their source material. There are good reasons for changes, cuts and additions made to a book's story when adapting it to the big screen. Taking a look at three exemplary book-to-movie adaptations reveals why being “nothing like the book” is an unfair criticism of great movies and their screenplays.

#### ***Size Does Matter***

Let us start with a simple reason why screenplays are different to their book counterparts: they have to be shorter. A standard cinematic movie is usually about two hours long, give or take

thirty minutes. Books can be of varying length, and therefore demand different amounts of time from the reader to finish them. But with a book you can stop reading at any moment and resume later when you are in the mood. A movie does not have that option (unless of course you buy a disc copy to watch at home, but since most movies are released in cinemas first where you can not press the pause button, we can safely ignore this argument). Therefore, a movie must be of a reasonable length so the audience can watch everything in one sitting at the cinema. This is especially important when it comes to trying to turn a long book into a comparatively short screenplay: there is simply too much source material to adapt, so some things need to be left out in order to achieve an adequate length for the screenplay. And even then, sometimes, parts of the movie are left on the cutting room floor and never make it to the cinema.

Here is an example: *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is a book with 607 pages. Judging from the length of the audiobook, it takes around 19 hours to read every last page. Would anyone be willing to sit in the cinema for 19 hours, missing parts of the story each time when going to the bathroom or getting a snack? Most people would probably not, and so Steve Koves reduced the number of pages in his screenplay for the movie adaption of *Half-Blood Prince* to 162, with the final cut of the movie being 153 minutes long. This is a much better length for a movie targeting mainly children and young adults, and Koves' strategy paid off: *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* made over 900 million dollars at the box office. I do not think this number would have been that high if every single scene from the books had been adapted. Also think about the amount of time and money necessary for such a project. It would be ridiculous to even try if you don't have millions, maybe even billions, of dollars and years time for production. From a commercial point of view, adapting a book as a whole would be financial suicide for any studio.

## *The Times They Are a-Changin'*

So if it is okay to leave certain plot elements out in a movie adaptation, why would the scenes that make it into the movie get changed instead of staying true to the book? A good question without a simple answer. It largely depends on the individual movie whether changes are justified. Sometimes, there is no need to do something different. But in some cases, there is a need for changes and additions to a screenplay when it is based on a book.

One of these cases is *Arrival*, a movie by Denis Villeneuve about language and determinism, in which aliens land on earth and a team of linguists is tasked with finding out what they want. The screenplay was adapted by Eric Heisserer from the science fiction novella *Story of Your Life* by Ted Chiang and released in cinemas in 2016. Heisserer changed parts of the story to make it work in the form of a movie, the first one being the titular arrival of the alien species called heptapods. In the short story, the heptapods never actually land on earth as they do in the movie, and instead send down a number of so-called looking glasses acting as “communication devices, presumably with the ships in orbit”<sup>1</sup>. Would you watch a movie in which the protagonists merely look at screens to talk to aliens you never get to see because they are so far away, completely detached from what is happening on earth? Probably not. Such a movie would not be compelling because there is no immediate threat. So Heisserer pitched the following first major change to Ted Chiang: “they show up at our door”<sup>2</sup>. And suddenly, there are things the protagonists (and with them, the audience) wants to find out: How can we communicate with the aliens? What is their purpose on earth? Are they a threat? The tangible existence of the heptapods in the movie as opposed to their only presumed presence in the novella generates public hysteria and military acts of aggression against them, and the actual face-to-face interaction between humans and alien lifeforms inside the spaceship of the heptapods is much

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<sup>1</sup> Chiang, Ted: *Stories Of Your Life and Others*. Picador 2015, p. 116

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the Audio Podcast “The Q&A with Jeff Goldsmith” Ep. 99 “Arrival Q&A”, available here: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/arrival-q-a/id426840843?i=100037774919&mt=2> (17.01.2018)

more interesting to watch than what Heisserer called having the scientists “spend a year in a room skyping with some aliens”<sup>3</sup>.

What I am saying is that in order to sustain a movie of standard length, sometimes you need to add or change something to create a certain amount of tension and conflict so the audience does not get bored and walk out of the cinema saying ‘this was not compelling at all’. To tell an interesting story in the cinema, a screenwriter needs to look at the source material and ask whether it is interesting enough to sustain a movie of two hours. If not, he is free to make changes to it in order to achieve that important goal. After all, if the movie cannot be like the book, it should at least be entertaining.

### ***Movie to Book to Movie***

A good example for an entertaining movie with critical and commercial success that was adapted from a book is *Your Name*. The story follows Taki, a boy from Tokyo, and Mitsuha, a girl from the countryside of Japan, as their lives get intertwined through the sudden event of them switching bodies. Famous Japanese director Makoto Shinkai came up with this story and published it in 2016 – both as a movie and a novel. He finished writing the novel three months before the movie was finished, and has admitted in the afterword of the book that even to him it is unclear which one is the original. He goes on to say that both the movie and the novel can be experienced on their own just fine, but they inevitably complete each other through their media-specific characteristics. This completion happens through changes in perspective.

In the case of *Your Name*, the novel is written in first person from the perspective of Taki and Mitsuha. What they do not see or do not know cannot be told, and thus, our knowledge of the world, its inhabitants and the events happening is limited to what the two protagonists

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know about them. The movie though is told in third person, as all movies are in principle, and the audience can see and know everything the camera sees. This broadens our knowledge of things besides the main characters, but also excludes us from knowing their innermost thoughts and emotions. So in order to grasp the whole range of information about the story and everything else in it, interested parties must both watch the movie and read the novel. And yet, both forms can stand on their own, as they tell the same story only from different perspectives. So sometimes, a movie does not cut things out, but adds them in, and the story only benefits from it – even if it is not completely like the book. Ultimately, a book and a movie should be seen as two separate works of art based on the same idea instead of one being the groundwork for the other.

In my view, stories told either as movies or books, are just like people: different, and all the better for it. We should not complain about one version being different from the other, but rather enjoy both individually. We should not judge movies based on their closeness to their source material, but rather view them as a separate form of expression. And we should not limit ourselves to only one medium, but rather be open for all of them. I think we, as an audience, would be a lot better off.

## Juggling Between Menial Labour and University Life

By Svenja Krautwald

University life is often portrayed as one of the happiest times in the lives of young adults. By concentrating on leisure activities, games and parties, students often lose focus on education. But I don't. I often wish I had time to lose focus and forget my studies. Instead, a tightly packed schedule is waiting for me. On work days, my alarm goes off at 4:30 in the morning. There is no time for turning around, snuggling back into the warm sheets. Instead, I face the coldness of the bathroom tiles and jump straight into the shower. It is a daily fight to not spend too much time in the comforting warmth of the water. After painting a bit of life onto my face I leave the house – without breakfast. Usually, I settle for water because working with the same types of bread, sweets and sandwiches every day has gradually decreased my breakfast habits. Also, the awareness that I should be attending a course at university rather than working does not help to increase my appetite.

Gillian White's article "The Struggle of Work – School Balance" for *The Atlantic* points at this and further issues: While it is perfectly fine for privileged students to "intermittently study", there is a considerable number of individuals who are not only dealing with "pressing schedules of not just classes and activities, but real jobs". Basically, White re-defines the view of university life. It is not just a world of fun and games where students slither from one party to the next, but rather a harsh reality where social life can be drastically limited. I do not have one, that is for sure. When you have to leave at five am and come back at seven pm you do not want to throw yourself out in this world to party. Sleep becomes more valued, I can tell you that. The struggle of having a real job puts a strain on many students, including myself. We are forced to work in order to pay for our tuition; otherwise we could not take the opportunity to study. Aside from that, some employers will not adapt shifts to the university schedules even

though they could. Their indifference leads to problems in attending the courses. This is a paradox I am experiencing right now: students work to finance their education but are not able to make it to class because of their jobs.

Nevertheless, many people perceive having a part – time job as a good thing because nowadays work experience is needed in almost every type of business. It is crucial to “[develop] important professional and social skills that make it easier to land a job after graduation”. Essentially, students need to acquire these skills because their future employers are not looking for people straight out of college. In this case, work experience collected parallel to college benefits the students in question. But even though they gain the required skill set which is praised as an incredible advantage, “full time work may not completely cover the cost of tuition and living expenses”. I regard this as a major problem. What does it matter if students will at one point in their lives be able to function in their future work environment when they at this point cannot even pay their rent?

Though I have to admit that my job improved my punctuality, this experience is not something I need right now. I neither plan to work as an assistant in a bakery later on nor do I fancy the behaviour of some customers who question my intelligence on a day to day basis just because I work as a sales assistant. I only work because I have no other choice, not because daddy got me an internship at a respected company. What makes the matter even worse is that a few students have to drop out of university because they spent too much time away working. This should not be happening. In my mind, it seems like people who come from the lower middle class are purposefully put at a disadvantage because they do not have the same chances as the privileged part of society. My brother for example also has to work alongside university, whereas his flatmate does not. The flatmate recently applied for his first “job” (which really is only an internship with all the benefits). It was very surprising to him that he had to write an application. He seemed to have imagined that they had only one golden candidate in mind – him. I think he also got a little upset when he saw the work hours. Here you can perfectly see

the difference menial labour makes: they started studying simultaneously, but my brother has not finished his bachelor yet because of work. His flatmate, who did not have to work a single day in his life, graduated recently. I believe we are ready to agree that the privileged few are able to wholly concentrate on their studies and do not have to worry about money. But that should not force students who do not have more money waiting in their bank accounts out of university. Everyone gifted with potential and intelligence should be given the chance to further develop their abilities.

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## **That's Not Art**

By David Kretschmann

Everyone knows what art is or at least thinks they know what art is. It seems obvious when you look at a van Gogh that you are looking at art and it seems obvious that you are reading literature when you are holding one of Shakespeare's plays.

When dealing with video games however, are we viewing art? Or are we reading literature?

Conservative voices will quickly dismiss video games altogether as infantile distractions with little artistic value. The journalist Keith Stuart responded to these critics in a Games blog piece for the Guardian by comparing the critics that dismiss video games to the critics that did not consider early impressionist paintings to be art, the very category of painting to which Vincent van Gogh's paintings belong. I agree with Keith Stuart's defence of video games as art, yet I believe that his response to Jonathan Jones does not go far enough, his arguments are thoughtful and well-founded but he argues too timidly in a debate where video games have to demand to be taken seriously.

Since I have given you very esteemed examples of the aesthetic arts and of literature it is only appropriate to send one of the best examples video games have to offer into the race: "Brothers - A Tale of Two Sons" which the renowned games critic John Bain considered to be: "the best Video Game of all time". Digital art often has a hard time amongst the elitists of the art sphere, where disliking new art is often a way to appear more cultured and tasteful, yet not a single frame of "Brothers" beautiful environment design would have to be ashamed to be displayed in the world's finest galleries. The Journey of the titular character pair of two brothers takes them through a world that is beautiful and eerie in diverse settings that are linked by their consistent style. On their journey the two brothers are confronted with a world that constantly

challenges their perspective as they make their way through areas that seem to be oversized compared to them. They are often surrounded by death either through largely abandoned structures, corpses or graveyards tying into the overarching theme of death.

The writing of “Brothers - A Tale of Two Sons” is difficult to compare to literature, since its dialogue consists of a fictional language which is only sparingly used at all, yet even though there is very little dialogue, the plot's complexity should not be underestimated. Empathy is shown and relationships are established through the characters' actions and the steps on their journey have a very clear narrative direction; The lack of dialogue is not an impediment to the game's story but one of its greatest assets. The different events of the plot are clearly linked without further explanation and the direction creates an impactful plot with relatable characters. What more could you possibly ask of a writer?

The resulting video game demonstrates exactly how digital art and exceptional writing can create art that surpasses what either could achieve on their own. “Brothers – A tale of Two Sons” was universally well reviewed and received prestigious awards such as one for the best Xbox game of 2013 and the award for best game innovation at the 2014 British academy games awards. The critical acclaim of the game may be restricted to video game reviewers and consumers but if any game can prove that the combination of visual art, music, interactivity and writing in a video game have to be taken seriously, it is “Brothers – A Tale of Two Sons”.

A video game can through its interactivity create countless consumer experiences that can in some cases radically change the way a player perceives the game. Even the most narrow and linear game can be interpreted in many ways as players have their own associations. The potential for educated discussion is endless as the medium allows for completely different experiences within the same work. To Jonathan Jones this difference between individual user experiences disqualifies games from being art. Keith Stuart on the other hand argues that this potential for different experiences and interpretations is similar to the way art can be viewed and interpreted differently.

There are different genres which have countless different branching stories that change based on the player's decisions within the game. That may be the greatest asset the medium holds which writing can not adequately express. There have of course been novels that tried to emulate the readers' choice by giving them different page markers to skip to based on their choice, but to truly engage in a story as an actor removing any barriers between the reader and the protagonist, that is unique to video games. The genre that tries to push player choice above everything else is the visual novel, which was named visual novel because it is the genre which relies the most on reading. The visual novel has often been used by creators that felt that a static narrative experience was too restricting for their creative vision as in the case of Dan Salvato's "Doki Doki Literature Club" and in "Hatoful Boyfriend" which was developed by Manga artist Hato Moa, who chose this form to let players organically explore stories set in her fictional world.

Role playing games often attempt to give the player impactful choices, yet few games can afford to add too many different branches to their games. An example for a game that has impactful choices while sticking to a rather narrow plot is the game "Gothic" in which the player's goal is to escape a magical prison, which can be done by aiding one of the three factions within that prison or forcing your way out with no help from the non-player characters, providing the player with unprecedented freedom of choice, resulting in radically different stories along the way.

The possibilities for video games to tell stories is still being explored with innovative directors finding new ways for the medium to grow, as in one of this year's most innovative games "A Way Out" which was highly acclaimed for its radically different approach to player cooperation in a narrative game.

Each of these examples can disprove Jonathan Jones argument that video games are not art because they are not an artist's act of personal imagination; Dan Salvato and Hato Moa worked on their respective games with very little help to bring their creative vision to life, the

environment designs in “Brothers - A Tale of Two Sons” were made by designers who had personal imagination that shaped the game's world. But Jonathan Jones did not know these games, when he wrote that video games could never be art, I doubt that he knows any of them now, he argued about the New York Museum of Modern Art accepting video games into their collection and the Museums effort to make these games accessible in the future and preserve them as Art. His argument could not have been more short-sighted and ill-informed and I for one hope that many more games are included in collections like this.

Establishing video games as an art form is not just a matter of vocabulary, I believe that to showcase that artistic potential we should let schools use great video games similarly to literature in English classes or paintings in Art classes. The conversations we have about video games are too often centred on money and multi-million dollar companies and too seldom about the artistic significance they have. Video games may be a historically new medium but they have become a part of our culture that has had an impact on far more people than renaissance paintings had when they were painted or sonnets when they were written. I believe that many who would argue that video games are not art simply do not know how much video games have improved in recent decades, if someone argues that video games can not be art and still thinks of games like “Pong” or “Pac-Man” then they are wilfully ignorant.

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## **The Sad Truth – Sometimes Fish Need Bicycles**

By Oliver Otte

It was the American lawyer, feminist and civil rights advocate Florynce Kennedy who said, “A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle”. In other words, women do not depend on men. Anything but! What this funny quotation conveys is that women are independent and that they should feel this independence in their hearts.

I was amused when I quite accidentally saw this quotation, as I am just working on a presentation about the role of female authors in German literature during the last centuries. The focus of this presentation is on the value of literature written by female authors, which was often treated as inferior to literature written by male authors. Therefore, it is not surprising that my first thought regarding this quotation was: in the former centuries, even open-minded people might have called this a desirable but utopian remark. For instance, even during the enlightenment, a time in which the idea of self-responsibility, thinking for oneself as well as the autonomy of the individual was advanced, women were not allowed to publish literature on their own. Not to mention that there was no way for them to do so. Hence, the first German female author of a novel, Sophie von La Roche, gave her enormous successful novel “Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim” (1771) to the well-known author Christoph Martin Wieland who published it for her but initially without revealing her name.

Although La Roche’s novel was so successful that society was no longer able to ignore German women’s literary ambitions, literature written by women was for a long time judged as deficient and dilettantish and became characterized as “women’s writing” or “women’s literature”. The dependence of educated women on the good will of men during the 18<sup>th</sup> and even 19<sup>th</sup> century was so extensive that in literary lounges, places in which people met to read and talk about literature, women were often not allowed. Instead women were told to stay home,

maintain the household, look after the children and meet with as well as cater to their men's wishes. This at that time common point of view regarding the gender relation becomes extremely obvious when the famous German classical author Johann Gottfried Herder cites the Arabian saying, "Eine Henne, die krähet, und eine Frau, die gelehrt ist, sind böse Omen. Man schneide beiden den Hals ab." (A crowing hen and an educated women are bad omens. One should cut their throats.). By using this saying in a letter to his fiancee, he claims that educated women are as unnatural as a crowing hen. Obviously, Herder is afraid that something bad will occur if women's education progresses. For sure, he does not want to threaten his fiancee with violence when using this quotation. This would be overstated. Nonetheless, I am quite sure that he is not joking when using this words. Instead, he employs this saying in order to deduce that women should avoid (high) literature.

To end the trip to the past for now, I would like to focus on the role of female authors nowadays. The necessary question at this place seems to be: Has the approach to writings of German female authors changed during the last centuries? The simple answer is that an imbalance between male and female authors remains. However, especially German pupils might at this point object that this cannot be true, as they have to read poems of German poetesses like Annette von Droste-Hülshoff or Ulla Hahn during their way to pass the A level. That cannot be denied. Nonetheless, there is a difference between contents simply discussed in school and those which are obligatory to pass the A level. In other words, neither writings of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff nor of Ulla Hahn are treated as mandatory writings to pass the A level. Instead one still has to read the male authors Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Fontane, Hoffmann and so on.

Here is just a simple impression for everyone who is willing to get an idea of the subject: the list of obligatory literature needed to pass the A level in 2019/2020 in the German federal state Hessen for the languages German, English, French and Spain this year consists of a total of 21 books (provided by the ministry of education); only three of them are written by female

authors. Moreover, all but one of the mandatory German books, ten in number, are written by male authors. For NRW, the ministry of education reveals a similar picture. In this federal state only male authors are obligatory for the teaching subject German. I suppose that these figures speak for themselves.

Nonetheless, I want to use this numbers to finally take a stand. So, what can be deduced from this numbers? The answer to this question is as simple as it could be: an imbalance between male and female authors remains. Accordingly, although times change, specific atavistic mental heritages seem to be resistant and withstand the ravages of time. Now, what does this mean for us as recipients of literature? Should we aim at establishing something similar to the female quota as it is employed in the economic sector? In my assessment, this would be no solution, as this way to handle the lack of balance would inevitably go hand in hand with other negative aspects, which could be approached elsewhere. Instead, we have to be conscious of the fact that a process that endures for centuries cannot be stopped or changed in the blink of an eye.

To conclude, I am convinced that the solution could simply be to reflect about what you are confronted with, to remain open and first and foremost never dread to ask questions that might bring the norm into question. If we keep this in mind, I am sure that this will not only affect our life but also our surrounding. And in the end there might come a time when fish no longer need bicycles.

## **“Gangsta” Rap: Songs about Quintessential American Values**

By Fabian Großeloser

The persistence of mythical staples in defining the character of a people, the related narratological tropes, seem ever present in the cultural output of American civilization. Hollywood movies, folk songs and works of visual art making use of these elements are known the world over and are still being produced to this day. Contemporary story-telling basics like the underdog story and the rags-to-riches narrative have their roots in the harsh living conditions of the early days of colonialization and the consequent focus on self-reliance and hard work that so heavily defined the day to day existence of early American settlers.

One often thinks of movies and literature when considering such cultural reflection. However, another medium in which it is just as easy to find cultural and societal markers is music. While the field of music is highly diverse, it can serve as a strong indicator of its creator's values and sensibilities as well. This goes beyond the aforementioned long-lasting mythological influences and often extends to at the time current phenomena as well, be it the change of popular sensibilities in the era of romanticism, the escapism of early 20<sup>th</sup> century American melodrama or the culture of rebellion and resistance of the 60's and 70's. One particularly recent genre that serves as a good example of both types of cultural influence and reflectivity is that of “Gangsta rap”.

Gaining mainstream attention in the 1980's due to the success of artists like Ice-T and the group N.W.A (Niggaz Wit Attitude), Gangsta rap is a highly controversial music genre. Its songs usually feature lyrics endorsing violence against law enforcement, substance abuse and sexism. While such abrasiveness might seem shocking at first, when one considers the cultural circumstances surrounding the genre's origin, its emergence becomes much more understandable. Furthermore, when more closely examining some of genre's more prominent

works and artists, it becomes clear that Gangsta rap is a genre of music that is heavily influenced by and permeated with core American cultural ideals and values, some of which date back to the colonial period. Gangsta rap songs employ standard American themes such as the importance of self-reliance, a flagrantly exaggerated boasting, like that employed by folk heroes, distrust of authority, vigilante or frontier justice, and the concept first articulated by Robert Warshow of the gangster as a tragic hero.

The idea of achieving success through one's own hard work is a core aspect of the American Dream. This is a common theme of many Gangsta rap songs, in which the singer usually refers to the humble circumstances of their origin (usually the "hood") and then boasts about his self-achieved success. In his song *X Gon' Give It to Ya* (2003), rapper Earl "DMX" Simmons emphasizes the struggle associated with his success. Referring to the rap business, he claims "It's not a fucking game" near the beginning of the song, immediately implying the hard work necessary to become successful as a rapper. Later in the song he goes on to claim "Ain't never gave nothing to me / But every time I turn around / Cats got they hands out wanting / something from me", which refers to his self-made nature, claiming that nobody helped him get where he is today. Another good example of this element in a Gangsta rap song can be found in Curtis James "50 Cent" Jackson III's song *In Da Club* (2003). The song's bridge consists of the following: "My flow, my show brought me the dough / That bought me all my fancy things / My crib, my cars, my pools, my jewels / Look, nigga, I done came up and I ain't changed". This passage also encapsulates multiple facets of the idea of the self-made man. In the first three of these lines, Jackson states that he gained considerable material success due to his skill as a rapper and then continues to claim that this has not changed him, implying that he is still loyal to his roots. This is then later compounded in verse two, where he goes on to call out his detractors as merely jealous of his success: "I'm that cat by the bar toastin' to the good life / You that faggot-ass nigga tryin' to pull me back, right?". This focus on personal success achieved on one's own is typical of the from-dishwasher-to-millionaire mentality of the

American dream. Through their own talents and prowess have these two artists, according to these songs, made it in the rap business, the struggle of which is emphasized by Simmon's song, the success by Jackson's.

The use of boasting about one's ability to emphasize and rationalize success is a narratological device that has been used since early colonial times. Tall Tales, such as the stories of Davy Crockett, Mike Fink and other similar characters frequently feature their protagonists boasting about their skills and deeds. While these Tall Tales are usually exaggerated to fantastical and often comical degrees, their use of boasting is comparable to that of Gangsta rappers like Jackson. Both use it to emphasize that the only thing that helped them overcome their adversity is their own skill and wit, not any higher power. This is an essential part of the American frontier mindset, which saw unlikely heroes rising to the occasion without outside help. And while such exuberant ambition and drive are certainly prominent traits of the frontier which can be found in Gangsta rap, it is not the only one.

One of the main reasons for the considerable amount of controversy that the genre of Gangsta rap attracted in the 1980's and 1990's was its often very aggressive lyrics, endorsing violence, especially against law enforcement. Not only is law-enforcement generally mistrusted in Gangsta rap songs, it is often treated with malice and cast in the role of an antagonist. One very explicit example of this theme is the rap group N.W.A.'s appropriately titled protest song *Fuck Tha Police* (1988). Before even looking at the song's lyrics in detail, one should consider its narrative framing.

Before the song proper begins, the intro emulates the beginning of a court case, specifically "the case of N.W.A. versus the Police Department". In it, Andre Romelle "Dr. Dre" Young plays a judge who, using copious amounts of slang and cuss words, introduces all the group's rappers and orders them to speak as though they are witnesses in court. This at first humorous seeming framing device carries much symbolic significance. By staging their own musical mock trial, N.W.A. clearly states that they see conventional judicial procedures as

inadequate to enforce justice. They also make a mockery out of the very law enforcement they oppose so much.

Almost every verse of the song is filled with references to violence against police officers. While shocking on the surface, the rappers do justify their actions by painting police officers to be violent, corrupt and bloodthirsty criminals themselves, serving as the justification for their described acts of frontier justice. This aspect of the song has gained new relevance in recent years with the multiple cases, especially in regards to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. This is succinctly summarized in the following series of verses, sung by Lorenzo Jerald “MC Ren” Patterson: “Reading my rights and shit, it’s all junk / Pulling out a silly club, so you stand / With a fake-ass badge and a gun in your hand”. These lines show that the members of N.W.A. do not respect the laws that are being enforced and consider them unfair and that they do not respect the police’s conventional symbols of authority. The law as it is being enforced is inadequate to protect the group against the real criminals, who are police officers.

While this hatred of police officers is obviously a reaction to the, to this day, persisting problem of racism by white police officers in the US, distrusting authority and needing to take justice into one’s own hands is a very typical trait of American heroes. The very attainment of independence from England, which was considered an unjust higher power that did not deserve its status and was fond of abusing it, was accomplished through war, an act of violence. This helped the idea of justice through violence and rebellion enter the country’s consciousness and cultural output, which is evident even in the US’s national anthem, which is a war song that mentions the aftermath of battle and rockets as weapons of war. Frontier heroes usually solved their problems using violence and without being able to enlist the help of any form of law enforcement because doing it this way was reflective of the harsh and often unregulated frontier lifestyle. Later, heroic Wild-West outlaws gained mainstream attention to a point where their impact is still perceivable in popular culture to this day. Mainstream Hollywood is filled with action heroes who must take matters into their own hands, usually by killing their enemies

themselves. Considering that the majority of Gangsta rappers are African American, an ethnic group that has experienced heavy discrimination by law enforcement, the reason for this trope's predominance becomes clear. Because the very people who are supposed to protect their livelihood and wellbeing are those who endanger it, Gangsta rappers see themselves forced to do it themselves, using the same means their perceived oppressors do. This idea of opposition to cultural norms and standards through illicit means is another staple of the American character, which is exemplified by the character type that served as the namesake for Gangsta rappers: The gangster.

The gangster is a contemporary form of the classic outlaw, a tragic anti-hero who makes a living through illicit means, solves his problems without the help of authorities in violent ways and, while essentially a self-made man in terms of his criminal career, is tied to others by family or ethnicity. Originally, this character was stereotypically associated with the Italian Mafia, but since the 1970's, a new, modern form of usually African American Gangsta character has emerged, most notably in rap music. Although the Gangsta is a re-contextualization of the classic gangster as described by Robert Warshow, there are similarities to be found between the two, which tie them together as an essential part of the American psyche. While some of the traits of Warshow's gangster were already discussed in this essay, namely his self-reliance in his quest for success and outlaw-approach to problem solving, he is a much more complex character than a mere criminal.

Warshaw describes the gangster as a "man of the city, with the city's language and knowledge" (583). This sentiment is very applicable to the Gangsta rapper. Many of them often mention cities or city-associated locations such as the proverbial "hood" in their songs. The "City's language" in the Gangsta rapper's case could refer to the specific type of slang that is used within their usually city-based scene and finds its way into their songs. All three of the previously mentioned songs contain numerous examples of this, such as *gat* for gun, *bub* for champagne, *X* for ecstasy, *crib* for house or apartment and the almost universal use of the

derogatory term nigga when referring not just to others but to oneself. The latter can also be considered a form of continued African American emancipation, as it represents a minority group claiming a term as their own which was originally intended as a tool of abuse against them, showing an implicit sense of racial community and unity against a common enemy: The white man.

Another quintessential aspect of the gangster according to Warshow is the idea that “one must emerge from the crowd or else one is nothing” (585) because otherwise all that is left for one is death. The path of every gangster is one of trying to assert oneself in the struggle for success, which “automatically arouses hatred” (Warshow 585). In the context of the Gangsta rapper, this concept is very much relevant as murders within the scene are still tragically common, with cases occurring as recently as June 2018, when rappers Jahvante “Smoke Dawg” Smart and Jahseh Dwayne Ricardo “XXXTenacion” Onfroy were shot and killed. The dangerous and violent nature of this lifestyle is often referenced in Gangsta rap songs, one notable example being Jackson’s “Many Men (Wish Death)” (2003). The song is based on a real-life incident in which Jackson was shot nine times at close range. In this song, Jackson refers to many Gangsta rap tropes, some of which were already discussed in this essay, like distrusting authorities (“Crooked-ass crackers will give my black-ass a hundred years”), boasting about one’s achievements (“I’m the underground king and I ain’t been crowned”) and taking justice into one’s own hands (“’Til I bust a clip in your face, pussy, this beef ain’t over”). However, one of the most interesting lines of this song is the following: “I’m like Paulie in Goodfellas, you can call me the Don”. This line, a reference to the 1990 gangster film *Goodfellas*, shows that there is a clear awareness of the link between the classic gangster and the Gangsta rapper, and consequently between the Gangsta rapper and the American character.

There are many more instances of American values and ideals that can be found within Gangsta rap, including religion, equality and the embracing of innovation and technology, which will have to be excluded from this essay for the sake of brevity. However, despite having

to be restricted to a relatively narrow focus, this essay provided an overview of how contemporary genres of music reference and are influenced by sometimes centuries-old tropes and conventions. In this example, ideas from a nation's mythology and values find their way into modern music in a re-contextualized form and the persona of the Gangsta rapper as it is described in the genre's music serves as an intentional evolution of a classic American character type.

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## **Processing Trauma Through Art**

By Julia Machtenberg

Elaine Risley, the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's novel *Cat's Eye* (1988), is a professional painter whose childhood and young adult life the novel intermittently portrays. Through the description of past events we learn that when Elaine was nine, a group of girls bullied her, at one point almost letting her freeze to death. The traumatic impact of these events is hinted at when the maturing Elaine claims to not recall just how damaging her relationship to the other girls was; yet, at the same time she alludes to them in her paintings. By analyzing Elaine's approach to art, the objects she chooses to draw, as well as her interpretations of her own artworks, I will argue that painting is Elaine's method of processing the mental pain that her childhood associates have caused her.

As a painter, Elaine has a curious view of the reception and function of art. For example, when visiting a gallery in preparation for an exhibition of her own paintings, she comments on galleries in general, saying that she does not "like it that this is where paintings end up, on these neutral-toned walls with the track lighting, sterilized, rendered safe and acceptable. It's as if somebody's been around spraying the paintings with air freshener, to kill the smell. The smell of blood on the wall" (Atwood, 100). Evidently, Elaine views paintings as expressions of strong emotions that result in the metaphorical shedding of blood. Arguably, the blood might be of the painter, i.e. a reference to the hard work it took him or her to paint the picture. But then again, the allusion to blood on the wall might also be a reference to the subjects portrayed. For example, Elaine uses her paintings of Mrs. Smeath as a means to get even with the strongly disliked mother of her childhood friend. Therefore, the metaphorical blood she alludes to might be Mrs. Smeath's who Elaine repeatedly portrays in an unfavorable manner, one example being an image of Mrs. Smeath as "sit[ting] in front of the mirror with half her face peeling off, like the villain in a horror comic" (412). Paintings like these serve to demean Mrs. Smeath and to

express Elaine's self-proclaimed hatred of the woman in question (cf. 412). By repeatedly debasing Mrs. Smeath in this manner, Elaine metaphorically sheds the former's blood. Thus, it is evident that for Elaine, paintings are not mere decorations, but bear a strong emotional component.

Another interesting comment of Elaine regarding the reception of art is voiced during her Life Drawing class. When reflecting on the development of art, she concludes that “[a]ll that remains to be done with it [i.e. art] is the memory-work” (325). On first sight, this comment seems to reflect the idea that all that art could possibly achieve has already been achieved, hence there is nothing new she or her fellow students could create. Consequently, they can only go back in time and copy what other artists have done before. However, considering Elaine's personal history, it is possible to argue that the sole function of art for her is the subconscious expression and processing of her childhood. The fact that Elaine's professional career as an artist only begins when she paints images from her childhood seems to validate the point that she was not able to effectively create original paintings devoid of her past life. In other words, all that remains for her to express artistically are her memories. Thus, Elaine's attitude to art is characterized by her personal involvement with her artwork's subject and the accompanying emotional connection.

The subjects she chooses to paint most directly express the personal and emotional components in Elaine's art. For instance, she “paint[s] a wringer machine [...] The wringer itself is a disturbing fleshtone pink” (394). This painting clearly recalls the thoughts of nine year-old Elaine for when she was wringing the wash, she imagines

what would happen to her hand if it did get caught: the blood and flesh squeezing up [her] arm like a travelling bulge, the hand coming out the other side flat as a glove, white as paper. This would hurt a lot at first [...] But there's something compelling about it (145).

Bearing this incident in mind, it seems likely that the fleshy color of the wringer that Elaine painted later was inspired by her nine year-old self's imaginings on what a wringer would do to human flesh. Additionally, the fact that the adult Elaine describes the painted wringer's color as "disturbing" further reflects the distressing thoughts of her nine year-old self. By depicting her childhood fears on her own terms, Elaine is able to gain control over these fears. Elaine herself comments on this process when she explains that the objects she paints

must be memories, but they do not have the quality of memories. They are not hazy around the edges, but sharp and clear. They arrive detached from any context; they are simply there, in isolation, [...] I have no image of myself in relation to them. They are suffused with anxiety, but it's not my own anxiety. The anxiety is the things themselves (394f.).

In other words, Elaine knows that her paintings are inspired by her childhood, but she does not recall the distressing circumstances that surrounded the objects. She does, however, remember the distress she felt. This distress is ascribed to the objects in question and thus externalized. As a result, Elaine is able to express the troubling emotions she had felt as a child, but the process of coping with the distressing context surrounding these images remains suppressed. Accordingly, Elaine's subconscious works through her traumatic past by protecting Elaine's consciousness from remembering the psychological terror her childhood friends have caused her while at the same time allowing her to express and thus cope with the disturbing emotions she felt during that time. Hence, her paintings allow Elaine to work through disquieting emotions while protecting her from contextualized memories that might be too disturbing for her to handle at the present time. In this manner, Elaine produces paintings that might appear simplistic on the surface, but are characterized by their emotional link to Elaine's past.

Lastly, as Elaine grows older, her understanding of her own paintings evolves. This development serves to illustrate Elaine's ongoing process of coming to terms with her painful childhood experiences. This development is most clearly illustrated when she reexamines her

paintings of Mrs. Smeath for Elaine realizes that

these pictures are not only mockery, not only desecration. I put light into them too. Each pallid leg, each steel-rimmed eye, is there as it was, as plain as bread. I have said, *Look*. I have said, *I see*. It's the eyes I look at now, I used to think they were self-righteous eyes, piggy and smug inside their wire-frames: and they are. But they are also defeated eyes, uncertain and melancholy, heavy with unloved duty. The eyes of someone for whom God was a sadistic old man; the eyes of a small-town threadbare decency. Mrs. Smeath was a transplant to the city, from somewhere a lot smaller. A displaced person; as I was (477).

This quotation demonstrates that the older Elaine remains repelled by Mrs. Smeath's appearance and character. Nevertheless, she is finally able to see beyond the hated surface and in this manner recognizes Mrs. Smeath's own suffering and humanity. Even more, by likening Mrs. Smeath's position to her own, Elaine is able to regard Mrs. Smeath as an equal human being, and thus needs not be haunted by Mrs. Smeath's judgment of her childhood self anymore (cf. 359). Consequently, Elaine's paintings serve not only as a coping method for her traumatic childhood experiences, but eventually enable her to overcome them, too.

In conclusion it can be said that Elaine's understanding of art as closely linked to human emotions and memory foregrounds her choices of her subjects. In turn, by actually drawing the thus selected subjects Elaine is able to face traumatic memories that her consciousness suppresses. In this manner, she is able to cope with the troubling memories in a way that does not further upset her but that enables her to revise and work through said memories in a bearable way. Therefore, instead of letting her oppressed memories overshadow her life, Elaine is able to process and even come to terms with them by means of her art.

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## **Bird Box - Does The Movie Deserve The Criticism?**

By Jule Windeler

When I visit social networks at the moment - as for example Instagram - I cannot help but come across posts concerning the movie “Bird Box” that was released at the end of last year. “Bird Box,” a dystopian thriller set in the United States, depicts monsters that take over the planet and drive people to suicide. There is a huge hype about the movie. My friends recommended it to me and many people are posting pictures and scenes from the movie online. Whereas the thriller appears to be very successful based on viewer numbers and the attention it gets, there are just as many viewers that criticize it. While this is probably the case with every movie, simply because different people have different preferences and opinions, there is a strikingly high number of negative reviews on “Bird Box”. That is actually surprising, when considering the movie’s popularity. Personally, I really liked the movie and I believe that the negative reviews mainly result from people’s unrealistic expectations because the movie is so popular. It is pretty much advertised as the best movie of the year which is a statement that is bound to cause disappointment.

“Bird Box” is about a young woman named Malory, portrayed by Sandra Bullock, who tries to save herself and her children from the monsters that have caused death to most of the population. Looking at the monsters makes people kill themselves, which is why the family has to travel with blindfolds on while they try to get to a safe place. Many people criticize the fact that the movie has some plot holes, such as the ongoing access to electricity despite of the apocalypse, or the fact that the monsters seem to be unable to enter any kind of building. Since these circumstances are never explained during the movie, it is a little confusing to the viewer. I agree with this argument, even though I think that these are minor discrepancies. As soon as a movie or TV-show deals with anything supernatural, there will always be small inconsistencies.

Another aspect of the movie that is ridiculed is the names of the two children. They are both born when the monsters have already destroyed much of civilization and instead of giving them real names, Malory simply calls them “Boy” and “Girl”. It is only at the very end of the movie that she gives her children proper names. While many people seem to find the names rather ridiculous, I think that it is in fact a good way emphasize the seriousness and the dangers of the whole situation. Almost during the whole movie it is obvious that Malory does not want to get attached to her children and that her only priority is for all of them to survive. In that context the names are quite fitting because they show this lack of emotional attachment. Only when the family has reached the safe place in the end, Malory actually names her children and refers to herself as their mother.

I understand people’s criticism concerning these aspects of the movie. However, I do not think that they justify the amount of bad ratings “Bird Box” is getting. While reading through viewer’s comments on YouTube, I found another point that several people criticize, namely the similarities of “Bird Box” with other movies. Two examples that are mentioned repeatedly are “A Quiet Place” (2018) and “The Happening” (2008). “A Quiet Place” is about a family that has to live in absolute silence in order to avoid being killed by monsters that are attracted by noise and I can definitely see why people complain about the similarity between these two movies. On the other hand, “Bird Box” is based on a novel that already came out in 2014 - four years before “A Quiet Place” was released. “Bird Box” did not steal its plot from “A Quiet Place”. Concerning “The Happening”, the only parallel between the two movies is the occurrence of some spirit or higher power that leads people to commit suicide. Apart from that the two stories are very different. And to be fair: how many horror movies start out with a family moving into a new house? Nobody seems to have a problem with that.

One last thing I came across while going through reviews was a person criticizing the movie’s characters. Their complaint was that “Bird Box” has a female main character, a person of color, a homosexual man and an interracial couple who all appeared in the movie

for the sole sake of minority representation. That comment left me annoyed. My point is not that every good movie needs a gay character but I still think that this kind of diverse representation in movies is important and I do not see the point in complaining about that. We have come a long way to actually have this kind of representation in recent movies and if all characters were straight, white men, people would complain just as much.

My conclusion, then, is that “Bird Box” does not deserve the hatred and mockery it is receiving at the moment. In my opinion it is an average movie that I would recommend to people who like watching thrillers. The aspects that are criticized by viewers are all minor issues and I believe that the high expectations people had in the movie are the main reason for its negative reviews. “Bird Box” may not be the best movie ever made and I do not think that it deserves the hype it gets - but all in all it is a good movie with just as many flaws as many others.

## **Watching Over You**

by Jule Windeler

Melinda is in a hurry. She walks down the street without stopping to look into shop windows or at the people handing out flyers. She is on the way to pick up her son and she is late. Not because she forgot - Melinda would never forget about her son, Daniel. But until ten minutes ago, Melinda was on the phone with her best friend and she was too polite to hang up. But now she is late. While turning a corner, Melinda looks at her watch nervously. It isn't the first time that she is late and she is probably gonna get into an argument with Daniel's Kindergarten teacher. Mrs. Johnson can't stand it if parents are late to pick up their children.

Melinda is almost there now and she can already see Mrs. Johnson standing in the door frame with a stern look on her face. "I am so sorry!" Melinda says before she has even reached the door, "it won't happen again." Mrs. Johnson just shakes her head. "Yes, it will", she says grumpily before she turns around and yells: "Daniel, your mom is here!" A few moments later a little boy with light brown hair comes through the door. With his one hand he is carrying a bag that looks way too big for him, while his other hand is struggling with the zipper of his jacket. Melinda rushes toward him and kisses him before pulling up the zipper and reaching for the bag. Mrs. Johnson shakes her head once more and mumbles something before walking back into the house.

On their way home Daniel tells his mother about his day. He has drawn a farm with five chickens and a leopard. He has also built a castle with Legos and has beaten his friend at chess. Melinda listens carefully to his every word and smiles at the sound of his excited voice. The look on her face says it all: She loves her son more than anything in the world. Daniel is lucky to have a mom like Melinda. As they get home Melinda starts preparing lunch while Daniel is drawing in the living room. He has the picture of his farm in front of him and adds a second

leopard to it.

The living room is kept very simple; there is a small table with three chairs. On one wall are several cupboards and beneath the window that goes down on the street is a couch. A few of Daniel's drawings are hanging on the walls but apart from that there is almost no decoration. Only one photograph is standing on one of the cupboards and it is placed in a way that it can be seen from pretty much every point in the room. The photograph shows three people: a man and a woman who smile radiantly at the baby in the woman's arms.

As Melinda is done with her cooking she sits down with Daniel and they start eating in silence until Daniel's gaze wanders to his drawing. "What do you think of the farm?" he asks his mother. Melinda smiles. "It is very beautiful. But why are there leopards on your farm, Daniel?" The child looks at his mother as if this was the simplest thing in the world. "Leopards are strong", he says, "they protect the other animals - so nobody can hurt them." Suddenly there are tears sparkling in Melinda's eyes but she wipes them away quickly and Daniel doesn't seem to notice anything. "Can we visit Daddy and show him the farm?" he asks and after a short moment of hesitation, Melinda nods. "Sure, why not." She forces a smile and Daniel beams at her, not noticing his mother's discomfort.

And I can't help but feel incredibly proud. Proud of the way she is handling everything. I am proud of how hard she tries to put her own needs aside to be there for her son. Our son. And I smile as I look at Daniel who has started eating faster for he can't wait to go to his dad to show him the drawing of the strong leopards.

Taking in every detail of the so familiar room, my eyes find the photograph on the cupboard. Almost five years have passed since it was taken and I still remember it as if it was yesterday: Melinda and I and our newborn son; proud parents who were so excited about the change in their lives, oblivious to what the future would hold.

As soon as he has swallowed his last bite, Daniel gets up and runs to get his jacket. Melinda smiles as she pulls up the zipper and then fetches the drawing from the table. As they

leave the apartment, she takes her son's small hand in hers and together they walk down the street like every week. I know where they are going. It has been the same destination for the past three years and I know that it is never going to change. Just like the fact that I am watching over them, every minute of every day, making sure that they are okay - like the leopards in Daniel's drawing. I watch over them as they visit my grave and I listen to their words, unseen by them - but never forgotten.

## **Exodus**

By David Kretschmann

It had been weeks since Papa told us to gather our things. Weeks since I last saw my friends back home. It had been weeks since I last saw Mama smile. She woke me up that morning as the others were getting ready to march again. Mama was growing leaner with every day but she refused to eat before Papa and I had our fill. Papa told her every night to eat some more, but she is worried that our supplies will run low before we reach the end of our journey. He said that we were close to the end, he had been saying it for weeks now, despite all our setbacks he still put on an optimistic facade but I knew how to tell when he was lying.

The police only let some of us proceed, far more had to wait for them the bureaucrats to clear them, bureaucrats are villains, Papa told us, but we could not stop and wait for them. I wondered why the police made the others wait, even though we all came from the same place. Why were we allowed to proceed and the others not? A lot of the children had to stay behind with their parents. I was the youngest of our group now.

Walking had become more and more strenuous with every day and our rests had become shorter as well. Papa was walking far ahead of us with the other men, who were deciding where to go next. We were walking through an arid desert, whose oldest cacti did not even remember the sound of rain. The group did not stop that day even though one of the women fainted, her family stayed with her while Mama urged me to keep up with the others.

The sun was at its highest when we came to a stop because of barbed wire. Papa and the other men began to clear the barbed wire while we rested. We put up a few of the tents to escape the sun although the men were far worse off because they had to work hard to cut through the wire in the scorching sun. One of the wires had snapped when Papa cut it and ripped a large piece of skin off his chest. He continued to push the barbed wire out of the way after Mama

stopped his bleeding.

The sun was setting when we all made our way through the barbed wire. The path which the men had cleared was wide enough for me to walk by Mama's side through most of the rows of the razor wire but at towards the end we had to move through it in single file.

What happened next was too quick and confusing for me to understand. Papa and the men were kneeling on the ground while police in bulletproof vests pointed their rifles at them. These were not the dirty used rifles we had seen at home, these rifles looked scarier, all black and clean, pointing at Papa who kneeled on the ground motionless. The women behind me began to mumble and some even cried while another policeman in a bulletproof vest with a shiny rifle pointed right at Mama ordered us to move to the side with the others. We knelt there until the sun had set and the desert grew cold. We would have set our tents up long ago, if the ICE agents had not held us at gunpoint all night. I could not even see Papa any more now that the only light was coming from the flashlights that were attached to automatic rifles.

It was probably two hours past midnight when the policemen started to move us into their trucks. One of the bulletproof ICE men had started to push me to a different truck than the one my mother was being led to. It was then when she started to yell at the policemen, she yelled "Don't separate me from my daughter!" in her perfect English, which was better than mine and Papa's by far. When the policemen ordered her to enter the truck she started to push against them, in order to get to me. She did not push for long. As the policemen she pushed tried to hold his ground another moved in and swung the butt of his rifle in her face. The policeman that was pushing me now picked me up without any effort and placed me in the truck. I was alone.

I can not remember how long I sat in the truck in silence, how long I cried for before I finally fell asleep. I was too exhausted to stay awake all the way to the camp. When they woke me up it was already morning. The fences surrounding the camp welcomed me into my new home with their familiar topping of barbed wire which made me wonder about its true purpose

in this place. The same policeman that had lifted me into the truck now lifted me out of the truck before pushing me through the gates of the camp. Once inside the armed guards asked me for my name for the first time. They asked how old I was and took my ID card which proved that I was 12. Then they made me change my clothes for one of their jumpsuits and led me to a giant tent. The children in the tents were as meagre as my mother towards the end of our march, the youngest of the children got up to take a good look at me but some of them just laid on their beds and did not acknowledge the new-comer in any way.

The guards left the tent after they assigned me my bed. A girl about my age approached me from the next bed over and introduced herself: "Hey, I'm Maria. What's your name?" her voice was so soft that it was struggling to break the oppressing silence that held the tent in its grip. Maria had crossed the border two weeks ago with her parents, she told me. Maria had a look on her face that I had seen often enough back home: The look of despair, the face that my parents had had at the start of our journey. Maria did her best to get me to talk but I did not feel like talking. We sat on my bed and I could not help but cry. I had no idea what had happened to my mother or my father after we were separated. Papa had said we were close but did he have any idea that this would happen? Maria tried to comfort me while I was weeping but her voice became more faint with each word and even her occasional coughing was barely audible. I lost track of time but some time after my tears ran dry Maria turned to me and told me that she was in a lot of pain.

The guard that I convinced to follow me to Maria looked annoyed to see her on her bed crying. I had to translate what Maria said because her English was not as good as mine, not that it mattered much what I told the guard who just pulled a radio from his belt and asked for a paramedic to get some Aspirin. A paramedic who leisurely walked over to Maria's bed gave her a handful of pills and began to calmly inject something into her arm. It must have been easy to find a vein in Maria's arm since you could already see them clearly through her sickly pale skin. Both men left me alone with Maria whose whimpering had now become much quieter. Her

breathing, though still faint, slowly became more regular. I sat with her for the rest of the day. Until her breathing stopped entirely. I ran. I ran to the guard that had ordered the paramedic to her before and I yelled. I was missing the words in my panic and yelled in Spanish and English for help and soon 4 of the armed guards came with me. They took Maria with them to another tent. They did not bring her back.

# **Impact**

By Tana-Julie Drewitz

One punch

Two shots

Three hits

Done.

Bone chill

Spine tingle

Neon lights inside.

Emerald Streams

Down the mountain of Virtues

Crimson Lake

So deep you could drown

Life into air

Atoms become one

Peace at last.

## Easy-Peasy Recipes from the Knox-Raab Kitchen

- *Baked Chicken #1:* Buy a whole chicken. Remove packaging, cover with salt and pepper, and leave on a plate in the refrigerator for one day. When you are ready to bake it, insert one whole lemon you've punctured several times into the cavity. Bake at 200° in a pre-heated oven for about one hour, or until it looks crispy. A very large chicken will need more time, but if you can easily shake its leg, the bird's done.
- *Baked Chicken #2:* Same procedure as last recipe, up to the point where you've left the chicken in the fridge for one day. You can also use chicken thighs instead of a whole chicken. Pour one small container of cream and one can of mushroom soup over the chicken. Also a few mushrooms if you're feeling ambitious. Bake same way.
- *Two-minute polenta:* Put a cup of polenta in a pot. In the same cup, add the juice of one fresh lemon and a tablespoon of dried vegetable broth. Add boiling water to cup, stir, and pour over polenta. Add two more cups of boiling water. Stir with fork or whisk on low heat until the water is absorbed. Add half a cup of grated parmesan, stir, and add pepper. Enjoy! Without the parmesan, the dish is vegan. But the parmesan tastes so good.