

LAMP

SPRING 2010 ISSUE I



LAMP is a literary magazine which publishes creative pieces and critical essays written by current students and alumni of Liberty University; the views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the LAMP staff or Liberty University. LAMP aspires to stimulate readers both within and outside the University with the creativity and critical work of its contributors.



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Letter from the General Editor:

In the first Fall issue of 2009, I was pleased to announce that the LAMP staff was finally in a position to realize one of its original goals: to print two issues per semester instead of only one.

In the second Fall issue, I was pleased to announce that a new section called Off the Shelf would begin to appear in LAMP. Another review appears in this issue; this one concerns the late John Updike's posthumous *Endpoint and Other Poems*. As one who has learned a great deal about love, sexuality, death, and doubt from this magnificent writer, I'm pleased to see another who also respects this fine American man of letters. LAMP's first movie review also appears in this issue.

I'm also pleased to introduce a new genre—graphic narrative—into LAMP's pages in this issue.

So many pleasures, and I'm pleased to announce I see no curses creeping forward, lunging, or anything of that sort.



Ryan Knight

January 2010



Untitled
Cara Williams

LAMP

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FRONT COVER BY CARA WILLIAMS

LAMP LOGO BY JOHN CARL

Untitled
Chelsea Courtney

Elyse

Abigail Nusbaum

She stands on the brink
excited scared eager for flight.
A child, full of grace and innocence,
her hair whips behind.

One, two, three – she leaps.
Her body stretches against the wind,
away from the high point of hay,
down toward the ground.

Her form is mesmerizing, hypnotic in its grace.
But more so is the golden stream behind her.
It dances as she dances.

Her hair blows in the wind, unkempt and free.
It is tied to her soul. Not soft, just wild.
It belongs outdoors.
It needs light and air and space

She jumps; it jumps,
the strands leap and laugh behind her.
Her hair follows her, the epitome of her child-self—
the playful, scampering part of her.

Pouring around her like liquid sunshine,
it follows – her own Pan's shadow.
It looks like her giggle –
more of her than she is herself

The Green Lady

Kristi Taylor

the green lady, praying,
was jealous of our hands.
you laughed,
unconscious of the way
it floated around my ears,
like lightning bugs
who had come to light up the night.
nothing could stop.
nothing could start.
we were spinning
between twilight and sunrise,
the atmosphere mindful
of our every move.
the green lady, praying,
was jealous of our legs.

Sebastian's Night

Jill Johnson

According to tradition...

In the year 283 A.D. Emperor Diocletian sent Sebastian, a brave advocate for Christianity in the Roman military, to the archers of Mauritania to be shot to death. After they tied him to a tree and covered his body with arrows, they left him alone, believing he was dead. Irene of Rome, the widow of St. Castulus, sought Sebastian, in order to bury him, but found him alive. He soon recovered under her care. However, Sebastian refused to flee to safety. Instead, he confronted Emperor Diocletian on the street the next day. He rebuked him for his treatment of Christians, but the Emperor did not appreciate his remarks. He immediately sentenced Sebastian to be beaten to death with cudgels, throwing his body into the common sewer in order to ensure what happened the first time would not happen again. Thus, Sebastian is celebrated for being the only saint to be martyred twice.

Untitled
Chelsea Courtney









Giving the Mundane its Beautiful Due

John Updike, *Endpoint and Other Poems*

Alfred A. Knopf, 2009

Reviewed by Andrew Walker

On January 27 last year, readers mourned the loss of John Updike, a renowned novelist, short-story writer, and critic; yet with his passing, so too was a great poet lost. Updike's precise prose and craftsmanship was to be found not only in works such as his famous Rabbit tetralogy but also in his poetry. In *Endpoint and Other Poems*, a posthumous collection of his last poems, Updike's unique voice, his wit and his wisdom, and his vision of American life all sound in the timbre of these verses.

"Endpoint," Updike's collection of poems written on his birthday, betrays a sense of resigned awareness of his coming death, and though the tone of these poems seems rather mixed, his calm (though at times melodramatic) voice betrays the visions of a dying giant: "though aches and pains and even dreams a-crawl / with wood lice of decay give pause to praise. / Birthday, death day – which day is not both?" Yet Updike's musings are not merely philosophic; he localizes his experience to convey a central commonness of feeling. Even the rhythm of these birthday poems – they are nearly all in loose, iambic pentameter – grants a sense of orderliness, a framework to the memories of a fading picture. Updike's memories abound in his images; his gratitude resonates in some of his more nostalgic lines as he thanks his childhood friends "for providing / a sufficiency of human types" which is "all a writer needs."

Indeed, the memories of childhood are plentiful among his birthday reminiscences, creating a certain lightness in the face of what is certainly a serious work.

Even to his last publication, Updike's themes were consistent: the "everydayness" of American life, in its myriad forms – whether in his poems about Doris Day, Payne Stewart, or baseball – or even the sensuality that aroused him throughout his

Yet Updike's musings are not merely philosophic; he localizes his experience to convey a central commonness of feeling.

life. In his poem, "To My Hurting Left Hand," Updike writes of the menial, of the hindered hand's ability to accomplish everything, be it the transcendent work of prayer or the immanent task of eating; he simply asks, "In this short time / remaining to us, help me clap, and pray, / and hold fast. Pained, I still can't do without you."

Even in his "Sonnets" as well as his "Light Verse," Updike's poetry retains a sense of the beauty and preciseness which distinguishes his prose. In his "Evening Concert, Sainte-Chapelle," Updike spares no creative expense to describe the splendor of the concert, found even in the form of the poem itself:

The music surged; the glow became a milk,
a whisper to the eye, a glimmer ebbed
until our beating hearts, our violins
were cased in thin but solid sheets of lead.

Indeed it is this splendid tenor, this beautiful precision of words which fills Updike's last work, a work containing, perhaps, the most thoughtful poems of his career. And while the lightness of some of Updike's poems have, in some cases, led to a dismissal of his poetic efforts as a whole, in his final poems – even those poems "Light and Personal" – there is wonderful poetry. In an era in which critics seem to still demand, as T. S. Eliot did, that our poets "be difficult," Updike's light verse, as well as his serious, uses a language which truly grants the "mundane its beautiful due."





Untitled
Cara Williams

“This is Not a Love Story”

Review of *(500) Days of Summer*

Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2009

Reviewed by Lauren Hoessly

(500) Days of Summer is not a love story. It does not belong in the drama section of Blockbuster or on Lifetime and you should not watch it if you are looking for the “happily ever-after” ending. This indie film is a classic story of “boy meets girl” told through the eyes of a young man in his twenties. Although classified as a comedy, this 21st century view of relationships reveals truths about love and how to find yourself (think *High Fidelity* and *Garden State*), making it much more than a comedy.

Director Marc Webb’s debut feature portrays a relationship told in a nonlinear progression recalling *500 days* of memories as the basis for the film’s narrative. The film’s setting is a bustling, hipster-scene vision of Los Angeles. *(500) Days* is a quirky and unique perspective on love, break-ups and the male psyche – something that I will never comprehend. Yet, like the ingenious and frequent split screen that is used to portray the prevailing falseness of expectations, I discovered something alongside Tom; love is not a feeling – or a season.

(500) Days invites its audience to consider what males go through when they fall in love, lose love, and then begin to understand love. What makes this thematic progression especially intriguing and original is that it is from a man’s perspective. As the film progressed, I felt as if I was living each day – though perhaps not exactly 500 – with Tom Hansen, the film’s main character as portrayed by Joseph-Gordon Levitt. That’s not to say that Summer Finn (Zooey Deschanel) was unfamiliar; in fact, I found it easier to sympathize with Tom because I’ve known quite a few Summers.

The strength of the film roots itself in Tom's perspective and character development. Appropriately named for Tom's love interest, Summer, and the days he spends with her, *(500) Days* begins with the memory of Tom falling in love with Summer the moment he sees her in a Hallmarkesque card company where he writes greeting cards for a living. Summer is unique and refreshing compared to Tom's ordinary-until-now existence. Deschanel has exquisite charisma as an intriguing and intelligent woman determined not to fall in love. In one scene Summer declares that "There's no such thing as love. It's fantasy." Tom's ardent but solemn reply is, "It's love. It's not Santa Claus." Early on we are immersed in Tom's devotion to Summer's charming blue eyes and smart personality. Yet, Summer is the aloof but extremely intriguing heroine who doesn't quite make us fall in love with her – perhaps because Tom's devotion is unrequited.

One underrated feature of the film that surrounds the collapse of Summer and Tom's relationship is the filmmakers' translation of the idea that "the nuclear family is dead" from typical American society onto the big screen: an older couple gets married, a

Just like the buildings
he designs as an
aspiring architect, Tom
maps out his perfect
version of Summer.

twelve year-old sister offers mature advice, a conversation about divorce suggests that it is no big deal, and parents are seemingly absent. The effects of a new era of "family" (or its absence) influence both Tom and Summer as they place their expectations of family on their relationship, allowing misperceptions to grow on the soil of a damaged reality of love.

Just like the buildings he designs as an aspiring architect, Tom maps out his perfect version of Summer, ignoring reality to experience supposedly heightened moments of ideal fun in record stores and Ikea. Eventually, the inevitable happens: Summer breaks up with Tom. He responds by consuming his time with self-induced pity and Twinkie indulgence. Tom's younger sister, Rachel, gives much needed and perhaps the only mature perspective on the failed relationship. She tells Tom, "Look, I know you think she was the one, but I don't. Now, I think you're just remembering the good stuff. Next time you look back, I, uh, I really think you should look again." The idea of the film is not to tell a love story, not even a semi-love story; its purpose is to tell the audience that feelings can get in the way of reality.

In one particularly endearing scene, Tom's friend tells the camera, documentary style, that his girlfriend is better than the girl of his dreams because she is real. Tom must learn this, and he begins to in a later scene, sarcastically asking, "Why make something disposable like a building when you can make something last forever like a greeting card." In this moment, Tom finally recognizes that greeting cards are impersonal letter stock made for people who are too busy to express their feelings. In the midst of this realization – and despite his misery – Tom quits his job and pursues his dream to finally become an architect – he finally begins to sketch real life.

Love happens because you choose to acknowledge what Iris Murdoch identifies as "the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love . . . is the discovery of reality." Ultimately, thanks to the film's compelling and ironic ending, we are not left with a miserable protagonist. *(500) Days* proves to be an artful dose of reality. In one painfully telling scene, Tom asks Summer, "What happened? Why – why didn't they work out?" Summer responds: "What always happens. Life." *(500) Days of Summer* challenges perceptions of love and the feelings that come with misperceptions. Instead of telling the story in the typical, happy-romantic ending, the film asks its audience to realize, through its unique, non-chronological order, that relationships are messy and, thus require two committed people to maintain a healthy relationship. The film proves to be an excellent example of a new genre of film – one that redefines romantic comedy and asks the audience to perceive love in an older, less romanticized way – a way that will certainly be new for the majority of its viewers.



Untitled
Carter Jones





Untitled
Chelsea Courteny

The Basement

Tim Mattingly

We sat where spider wires hung
Like nooses, low and white,
Glistening in our dim flashlight,
Clinging to the speckled necks
Of rusted water pipes
Whose veins had long run dry,
Their cold flesh flaking
Like a thousand pale snake scales
Wilting in the dark.

And we realized in a strangling
Moment, before our batteries died,
That those silken lynching vines
Entwined a macabre timeline,
Where civilizations fall and rise
Where, marked by fattened
wing-crowned flies,
Kings dwindled in ruinous castles of old,
And down the line history continued
To unwind with those
freshly wound and bound,
Mangled along the metal pipes of time,
That stretched far beyond our site,
Like rigid corpses into afterlife
Or some other place unknown.

And it was fear that flinched our toes then.
Face-first into the saw-dusted earth,
As choking darkness overtook our sight
Like night's embrace, freezing our limbs
In that moment's stale silence
Where we waited for a sign,
Waited for the web-weaver to appear,
To sew open the gallows of our eyes.
And in there hung some truth,
Some unseen design revealed
As the walls began to crumble.

Self-Poetry

Kenneth Burrows

To me, this is poetry:

When the beat and the bass collaborate to move the feet on the floor,

When the guitarist strikes the strings, producing a rhythm with roar,

When the pen is suspenseful, the pencil skillful, tracing out a universe so well
versed that it

Pages its power, distilling a howl to a whistle.

Can you see what I see when I see?

It's when tops become drops into a freeze;
that's the point when the prophet is on his knees

And the people proclaim, "Prophecy over us please!"

It's before the sin, before the fall, before the world was with fault,
before its child was war and

Before it was bothered by the beast breathing out deceit.

Can you see what I see when I see?

It's after the report of a pistol makes the athlete's flight official,

When the runner's high makes the limitations low,

Coerced into motion with no other notion of which direction to go.

Can you see what I see when I see?



Untitled
Sara Hoffmann



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Untitled
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“ In that moment’s stale silence
Where we waited for a sign . . . ”

Tim Mattingly

from “The Basement”