

## URBAN LITERACY IN LATE MEDIEVAL POLAND

WALTER PANGLO, the only mortician in Bright Beach, was a sweet tempered wisp of a man who enjoyed puttering in his garden when he wasn't planting dead people. He grew prize roses and gave them away in great bouquets to the sick, to young people in love, to the school librarian on her birthday, to clerks who had been polite to him..For guidance, Agnes couldn't rely entirely on any of the child rearing books in her library. Barty's unique gifts presented her with special parenting problems. Now, when he asked if he could stay up even later, to read about John Thomas Stuart and Lummox, John's pet from another world, she granted him permission..You scrawl names on the walls with your own blood, play Psycho with a Sheetrock stand-in for Janet Leigh-and then fly off to Reno for a weekend..of blackjack, stage shows, and all-you-can-eat buffets. Not likely..This surprised him. Of course, Oregon was not the Deep South. It was a progressive state. Nevertheless, he was surprised. Oregon wasn't home to many Negroes, either, a handful compared to those in other states, and yet until now Junior supposed that they had their own cemeteries..His precious wife had fallen from the tower and died only hours before this girl was born. This girl ... this vessel..She leaned forward in her seat, and toward him, so he could see her more directly, and when she put one trembling hand against his cheek, his head dropped forward on neck muscles as limp as rags, his chin.Agnes found herself drifting up. A frightening sense of weightlessness overcame her..Recalling how the title of the exhibition had resonated with him when first he'd seen the gallery, brochure, Junior felt certain now that a tape-recorded early draft of this sermon was the kinky "music" that accompanied his evening of passion with Seraphim. He couldn't remember one word of it, let alone any element that would have deeply moved a national radio audience, but this didn't mean that he was shallow or incapable of being touched by philosophical speculations. He'd been so distracted by the erotic perfection of Seraphim's young body and so busy jumping her that he wouldn't have remembered a word, either, if Zedd himself had been sitting on the bed, discussing the human condition with his customary brilliance..Initially, when told that his patient was a Negro, Junior had been reluctant to serve as her physical therapist. Her program of rehab required mostly structured exercise to restore flexibility and to gain strength in the affected limb, but some massage would be involved, as well, which made him uncomfortable..Worse than the tenderness in the bones, the bleeding gums, the headaches, the ugly bruises, worse than the anemia-related weariness and the spells of breathlessness, was the suffering that her battle caused to those whom she loved. More frequently as the days passed, they were unable to conceal their worry and their sorrow. She held their hands when they trembled. She asked them to pray with her when they expressed anger that this should happen to her-of all people, to her, and she wouldn't let them go until the anger was gone. More than once, she pulled sweet Angel into her lap, stroked her hair, and soothed her with talk of all the good times shared in better days. And always Barty, watching over her in his blindness, aware that she would not be dying in all the places where she was, but taking no consolation from the fact that she would continue to exist in other worlds where he could never again be at her side..Move, move, like a runaway train, leaving the dead nuns--or at least one dead musician--far behind..Barty followed the movement of her hand, raised his gaze to her eyes, hesitated, and then said questioningly, "No pie?".Evidently, last evening, prior to keeping a dinner date with Victoria, when the taunting detective had illegally entered Junior's house and placed another quarter on the nightstand, he had seen the directory open on the kitchen table. Deducing the meaning of the red check marks, he inserted this card and closed the book: another small assault in the psychological warfare that he'd been waging..The paramedic, fingers pressed to the radial artery in Junior's right wrist, must have felt a rocket-quick acceleration in his pulse rate..The bitch was getting tired, but Junior still didn't like his odds in a hand-to-hand confrontation. Her hair was disarranged. Her eyes flashed with such wildness that he was half convinced he saw elliptical pupils like those of a jungle cat. Her lips were skinned back from her teeth in a snarl..Neither hesitantly nor recklessly, the boy set off across the lawn toward the porch steps. He maintained a far straighter line than Agnes would have been able to keep with her eyes closed..The boy never mentioned what he'd done, and his mother ceased worrying about him falling out of bed..The car shuddered, wrenched steel screamed, and a cry of triumph rose from the rescuers..Too much, far too much to contend with, and so unfair: finding the Bartholomew needle in the haystack, hives, seizures of vomiting and diarrhea, losing a toe, losing a beloved wife, wandering alone through a cold and hostile world without a heart mate, humiliated by transvestites, tormented by vengeful spirits, too intense to enjoy the benefits of meditation, Zedd dead, the prospect of prison always looming for one reason or another, unable to find peace in either needlework or sex..After taking a preliminary statement from Celestina, Bellini left to romance a judge out of bed and obtain a search warrant for Enoch Cain's residence, having already ordered a stakeout of the Russian Hill apartment. Celestina's description of her assailant was a perfect match for Cain. Furthermore, the suspect's Mercedes had been abandoned at her place. Bellini sounded confident that they would find and arrest the man soon..use it. The cop was no threat to the English army, as Joan had been, but as far as Junior was concerned, the creep most definitely deserved to be burned at the stake.. "Seems like," Vanadium agreed. "So a man like Cain obsesses on one thing after another--sex, money, food, power, drugs, alcohol, anything that seems to give meaning to his days, but that requires no real self-discovery or self-sacrifice. Briefly, he feels complete. However, there's no substance to what he's filled himself with, so it soon evaporates, and then he's empty again."..Had Kathleen Klerkle been a man, she would have enjoyed larger quarters in a newer building in a better part of town. She was more gentle and respectful of the patient's comfort than any male dentist Nolly had ever known, but prejudice hampered women in her profession..Although she already knew that the answer could not be cheerily optimistic, Celestina wondered, "Is the baby likely to be . . . normal?".Still looming over her, he snatched the pad out of her hands and examined the sketch. "Where would you have seen this?".Otter shrugged..Celestina stood listening until she heard Wally open

the outer door and then close it.. "One of the four legs of the tower is dangerously fractured where it's seated into the underlying foundation caisson-". Or perhaps the sorrow was less sadness than yearning. He had to move on, but he was loath to begin this strange journey without her.. Besides, the possibilities repulsed him. The very thought of a splendid-looking woman like Victoria submitting to a grotesque like Vanadium would have withered his soul if he had possessed a soul.. Although the piano was at some distance and the restaurant was a little noisy, Kathleen recognized the tune at once. She looked up from her veal, her eyes full of merriment.. Angel followed him and observed as he climbed a stepstool and unhooked the telephone handset. He dialed with little pause between digits, and spoke with each of his uncles.. Shortly after Agnes turned out the light, she said, "Kiddo, it's been one whole week since you walked where the rain wasn't, and I've been doing a lot of thinking about that..". Music played within. An up-tempo number. Possibly swing. He couldn't quite identify the tune.. With her rock of faith under her, and breathing hope as much as ever, she was nevertheless unable to be as strong for him as she wanted to be. She felt her face go soft, her mouth tremble, and when she tried to repress a sob, it burst from her with wretched force.. The window gave way an instant before Celestina squeezed off the shot. The man dropped out of sight. She didn't know if she had scored a hit.. Aware of the dangers of dehydration, he drank a bottle of water and put two half-gallon containers of Gatorade in the Suburban.. Although Dr. Lipscomb spoke almost as softly as the long-winded pianist, and though the physician's narrow face was homely and devoid of any trace of violent temperament, Neddy Gnathic flinched from him and retreated across the threshold, into the hallway.. People were at the car windows, struggling to open the buckled doors, but Agnes refused to acknowledge them.. "I'll do your share of the housework for a month. If I'm closer to the date, you clean up all my pie-baking and other kitchen messes for a month-the bowls and pans and mixers, everything..". The sedative was mild, but Phimie was asleep in mere minutes. She was exhausted by her long ordeal and by her recent lack of sleep.. "So do I," said the visitor, and Junior almost frowned at this peculiar response, wondering what was meant in addition to what was merely said.. In the passenger's seat, Barty was cushioned in his mother's arms. At times, the boy cooed or gurgled, or made a wet chording sound.. But, ah, the heft of the candlestick, the smooth arc it made, and the crack of contact had been as hugely satisfying as any home-run swing that had ever won a baseball World Series.. "I wouldn't just whack anyone, not even a worm bucket like Cain, any more than I would commit suicide. Remember, I believe in eternal consequences..". At nearly forty years of age, Edom still dreamed of that grim summer afternoon, although not as often as in the past. When it troubled his sleep these days, it was a nightmare that gradually metamorphosed into a dream of tenderness and hope. Until the last few years, he'd always awakened when the roses were being jammed into his mouth or when the thorns flicked through his eyelashes, or when Agnes began to strike their father with the Bible, thus seeming to assure worse punishment. This additional act, this transition from horror to hope before he woke, had been added when Agnes was pregnant with Barty. Edom didn't know why this should be so, and he didn't try to analyze it. He was simply grateful for the change, because he woke now in a state of peace, never with worse than a shudder, no longer with a hoarse cry of anguish.. "AND I DRINK CHAMPAGNE ALL DAY," said Miss Cheese, pronouncing it "cham-pay-non..". AFTER THE ENCOUNTER with the quarter-spitting vending machines, Junior wanted to kill another Bartholomew, any Bartholomew, even if he had to drive to some far suburb like Terra Linda to do it, even if he had to drive farther and stay overnight in a Holiday ay Inn an eat steam-table food off a buffet crawling with other diners' cold germs and garnished with their loose hairs.. Pity warmed the physician's ascetic face. "You loved your wife very much, didn't you?". Deed flinched. "No reason. But I sure never did mean you or your husband any harm, Mrs. Lampion. And not your baby, either, not little Bartholomew..". During the girl's final appointment, Junior discovered she would be home alone that same night, her parents at a function she wasn't required to attend. She appeared to reveal this inadvertently, quite innocently; however, Junior was a bloodhound when it came to smelling seduction, regardless of how subtle the scent.. "You're all right, we've got you now..". His soft yet reverberant voice was so unearthly that his words seemed to convey an assurance more profound and more comforting than their surface meaning.. Barty sat at the kitchen table, reading *Between Planets*. From time to time, Agnes discovered him watching her at work or studying Maria's face and her dexterous hands.. During the cleaning, installation of new carpet, and painting that had followed the removal of the diarrhetic pig set loose by one of Cain's disgruntled girlfriends, the wife killer had spent a few nights in a hotel. Nolly took advantage of the opportunity to bring his associate James Hunnicolt--Jimmy Gadget--onto the premises to provide a customized, undetectable, exterior window-latch release.. "You can learn em..". She must have sensed his assessment of her and realized that she had little chance of charming him, for she turned at once away and never looked in his direction again.. At her touch, she felt a tension go out of the doctor. His hands slipped from his face, and he turned to her, shuddering not with fear but with what might have been relief.. On hearing of Bartholomew's-and/or Celestina's-death, Neddy would be on the phone to the police, pointing them toward Junior, in twelve seconds. Maybe fourteen.. Over the final refrain of "I'll Be Seeing You" came a man's voice from the foyer, raised quizzically, with perhaps a note of surprise: "Victoria.. He was nearly forty years old, and a life spent fearing nature could not be turned easily into a romance with her. Some nights he still stared at the ceiling, unable to sleep, waiting for the Big One, and he avoided walks on the shore in respect of deadly tsunamis. From time to time, he visited his brother's grave and sat on the grass by the headstone, reciting aloud the gruesome details of deadly storms and catastrophic geological events, but he found that he had also absorbed from Jacob some of the statistics related to serial killers and to the disastrous failures of manmade structures and machines. These visits were pleasantly nostalgic. But he always came with roses, too, and brought news of Barty, Angel, and other members of the family. When Paul sold his house to move in with Agnes, Tom Vanadium settled into Jacob's former apartment, now a fully retired cop but not yet ready to return to a life of the cloth. He assumed the management chores of the

family's expanding community work, and he oversaw the establishment of a tax-advantaged charitable foundation. Agnes provided a list of fine-sounding and self-effacing names for this organization, but a majority vote rejected all her suggestions and, in spite of her embarrassment, settled on Pie Lady Services. Jacob's mentor had been a man named Obadiah Sepharad. They had met when Jacob was eighteen, during a period when he'd been committed to a psychiatric ward for a short time, his eccentricity having been briefly mistaken for something worse. Behind them, two shots roared, and Paul knew that the reverend was no longer of this world. "Consider what I told you," Dr. Salk urged. "Your Perri would want you to think about it." Under Celestina's guidance, the menfolk-Wally, Edom, Jacob, Paul, Tom-had packed cartons of canned and dry goods, plus numerous boxes of new spring clothing for the children on their route. All those items had been loaded into the vehicles the previous evening. To Perri's bed, a journey of only a few steps, but farther than unwanted Rome. The carpet seeming to pull at his feet, to suck like mud under his shoes. The air as thick as liquid in his resistant to his progress. I'll put you in a twilight sleep, you babbling cretin. Where'd you earn your medical degree, you nattering nitwit? Botswana? The Kingdom of Tonga? He was unconscious, wired to a heart monitor, pierced by an intravenous-drip line. Clipped to his septum, an oxygen feed hissed faintly, and from his open mouth rose the barely audible wheeze of his breathing. The sight of her sister's blood and the persistence of the flow made Celestina weak with apprehension. She was afraid she had done the wrong thing by delaying hospitalization. "But you wouldn't be willing to use that skill in the King's service?" He waited for Otter to nod, but Otter stood motionless. Also in the drawer was a pistol that he kept for home defense. He stared at it, trying to decide whether to go downstairs and make a sandwich or kill himself. She had put aside a half-finished pencil portrait of Phimie to develop several of Nella Lombardi. The beetle-green Pontiac waited in the driveway, with a shine that tempted nature to throw around some bad weather. Joey always kept a spotless car, and he probably wouldn't have had time to earn a living if he had resided in some shine-spoiling climate rather than in southern California. A moment ago, he'd slammed into Angel's room, and that was loud, but this boomed louder, thunderous enough to wake people throughout the building. Having used his body as a clapper in the bell of the Dumpster, Junior had struck a loud reverberant note that tolled like a poorly cast cathedral bell, echoing solemnly off the walls of the flanking buildings, back and forth through the fogbound night. "Well, the blood wasn't dark and acidic, so it didn't come from his stomach. It was bright and alkaline. It could have arisen in the esophagus, but most likely it's pharyngeal in origin." Atop the dead woman, Vanadium's leather ID holder ignited. The identification card would bum, but the badge was not likely to melt. The police would also identify the revolver. They could be patient. Their self-denial and sweet anticipation ensured that their lovemaking, when at last they were able safely to indulge, would be shattering in its intensity, like the coupling of mortals raised to the status of demigods by virtue of their passion, its power and purity. Throughout this procedure, Barty appeared solemn and thoughtful. When he had squeezed the tenth toe, he stared at it, brow furrowed. Not cheerful, life-loving, high-spirited, churchgoing Naomi. She saw every day through a golden haze that came from the sun in her heart. The symptoms that terrified Phimie-the headache, crippling abdominal pain, dizziness, vision problems-had entirely relented. Possibly they had been more psychological than physical in nature. He was surprised they had come so soon, less than twenty-four hours after the tragedy. This was especially unusual, considering that a homicide detective was obsessed with the idea that rotting wood, alone, was not responsible for Naomi's death. In the six weeks since conception, she must have missed at least one menstrual period. She hadn't complained of morning sickness, but surely she'd experienced it. It was highly unlikely that she'd been unaware of her condition. "Wrong about what, sugarpie smooosh--smooosh?" Celestina asked as Wally pulled to the curb again and parked. All right, yes, it had tiny hands and tiny feet, rather than hooked talons and cloven. After wiping her floury hands, Agnes took the book from him and, examining it, could find nothing wrong. She flipped back a few pages, then a few forward, but the lines of type were crisp and clear. "Show me where, honey." just as Sinatra broke into song again, Junior thought he heard a footstep on the wood floor of the hallway, and the creak of a board. The music masked the sounds of the visitor's approach if, indeed, he was approaching. Maria Gonzalez arrived with her daughters, and while it was natural for Angel to be drawn to the company of older girls, she had no interest in anyone but Barty. As hard of head as she was hard of heart, Victoria had not sustained serious brain damage, only a concussion. In the living room stood a Christmas tree, and under the tree lay prettily wrapped presents. Junior enjoyed opening all of them, but he didn't find anything he wanted to keep. To be fair, with her exceptional beauty, she would have been the center of attention even in a gathering of real artists. Junior had little chance of getting at Seraphim's bastard boy without going through this woman and killing her as well; but if his luck held and he could eliminate Bartholomew without Celestina realizing who had done the deed, then he might yet have a chance to discover if she was as lubricious as her sister and if she was his heart mate. He prepared his knives and guns. Blades and bullets. Fortune favors the bold, the self-improved, the self-evolved, the focused. She hung her head, covered her face with her chilled hands, and wondered how her mother could sustain faith in God when such terrible things could happen to someone as innocent as Phimie. there in more genteel and gilded ages, and her flights of imagination sometimes acquired such vivid detail that they were eerily like memories. He would have done it, too, and risked establishing a pattern that police might notice; but the still, small voice of Zedd guided him now, as so often before, and counseled calm, counseled focus. Curiously, reciting these facts usually calmed him, as though speaking of disaster would ward it off. Since Friday, however, he had found no comfort in his usual routines. Month by month during Barty's first year, Agnes's belief in his exceptional intelligence was only confirmed by his development. By the end of the second month of life, most babies will smile in response to a smile, and they are able to smile spontaneously in the fourth month. Barty was smiling frequently in his second week. In the third month, many babies laugh out loud, but Barty's first laugh came in his sixth week. Uncommonly healthy, he didn't suffer croup, flu, sinusitis, or

most of the ailments to which other children were vulnerable..Copyright (c) 1999 by Ursula K. Le Guin. "Dragonfly" first appeared in Legends..Tom opened his empty hands and then filled one of them with his water glass. The rattling ice belied his calm face..The singular beauty of San Francisco and the exquisite patina of its colorful history spoke to her heart and kindled in her such an unreasonable passion that she sometimes wondered, at least half seriously, if she had spent other lives here. Often, streets were wondrously familiar to her the first time that she set foot on them. Certain great houses, dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, inspired her to imagine elegant parties thrown.Tom Vanadium, on the other hand, was certain that Cain, having prepared for the possibility that something would go wrong during his assault on Celestina, wouldn't be easy to locate or to apprehend. In Vanadium's view, the maniac either had a bolt-hole waiting in the city or was already out of the SFPD's jurisdiction..He stashed two suitcases full of clothes and toiletries-plus the contents of Pinchbeck's safe-deposit box-in the van, and then added those precious items that he'd be loath to lose if the hit on Bartholomew went wrong, forcing him to leave his Russian Hill life and flee arrest. The works of Caesar Zedd. Sklent's three brilliant paintings. The needlepoint pillows, to which he'd colorfully applied the wisdom of Zedd, constituted the bulk of this collection of bare essentials: 102 pillows in numerous shapes and sizes, which he had completed in just thirteen months of feverish stitchery~.Junior was impressed and delighted by her clever assumption of it strictly professional voice and demeanor, which convincingly masked her intense desire. Sweet Victoria was a worthy coconspirator..buttery sunshine, and emerald-black where the shadows of limbs and leaves overlay it. Fat crows as black as..With the infant in her arms, the heavysset nurse pressed in beside Celestina, who..Holding his precious face between her hands, she kissed him. She met his gaze, and furiously she blinked away her tears, for she wanted to be clear-sighted, to be looking into his eyes, to see him, the truest part of him in there beyond his eyes, until that very last moment when she could not have him anymore..Between Isleton and Locke, Junior first became aware of several points of soreness on his face. He could feel no swelling, no cuts or scrapes, and the rearview mirror revealed only the fine features that had caused more women's hearts to race than all the amphetamines ever manufactured..Even though the detective was on the wrong track, Junior was beginning to feel aggrieved. As any good citizen, he was willing, even eager to cooperate with responsible policemen who conducted their investigation by the book. This Thomas Vanadium, however, in spite of his monotonous voice and drab appearance, gave off the vibes of a fanatic..Barty wanted to hug her. He did hug her. He hugged Angel, too. He hugged Tom Vanadium..He loved Naomi, of course, and never could deny her. Although he had been especially sweet to her that night, if he had known that they would have less than a year together before fate tore her from him, he might have been even sweeter..The hospital room was softly lighted, and shadows roosted on all sides like a flock of slumbering birds..He felt some guilt at this-but only a little. His sister had done much for him; but jobless, ruled by his obsessions, hobbled by too much of his father's dour nature, there wasn't a lot that he could do for her. Just this benign deceit with the cards..He held forth the single red rose. "For you. Not that it compares. No flower could..".Undeterred, the girl said, "Not magic. But maybe I can't learn to do that one, ever..".Although she was aware that these extraordinary events would shape the rest of her life, beginning with her actions in the hours immediately ahead of her, she could not clearly see what she ought to do next. At the core of her confusion was a conflict of mind and heart, reason and faith, but also a battle between desire and duty. Until she was..Wally's help, not just with the apartment, but with his time and love, had made an incalculable difference.. "It's a lot," Angel insisted. "Wally gave me an Oreo, last time I saw him. You like Oreos?"..Junior couldn't leave the dead man in the hall and hope to have any quality time with Celestina..For the next few days, they would eat all their meals in the suite. Most likely, Cain had left San Francisco. And even if the killer hadn't fled, this was a big city, where a chance encounter with him was unlikely. Yet having, assumed the role of guardian, Tom Vanadium had a zero tolerance for risk, because the inimitable Mr. Cain had proved himself to be a master of the unlikely..Nolly adored her laugh, so musical and girlish. He would have made all sorts of a fool out of himself, anytime, just to hear it..She wanted so badly to believe, to see her son made whole again, and the funny thing was that she could believe, and without emotional risk, because it was true..Around the dinner table, the adults applauded, but the tougher audience squinted at the ceiling, toward which she believed the coin had arced, then at the table, where it ought to have fallen among the water glasses or in her creamed corn. At last she looked at Tom and said, "Not magic."

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