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## Living in the Apocalypse

Meg Barboza

*St. John Fisher University*

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## Living in the Apocalypse

### Cover Page Footnote

"Second Prize Winner" Appeared in the issue: Volume 2, Issue 1, 2001.

# MEG BARBOZA

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## LIVING IN THE APOCALYPSE

### I.

*September 11, 2001, New York City, early morning*

*"I wonder now only when it will happen . . . "*

*--Sharon Olds, "When" from The Gold Cell*

You wonder not when, but  
where you will be-And you think only

of the ones you love-a shiver through  
the spine, the gun cocked hard

below the ear, the solar curve  
of a woman's belly-

The end of the world.

### II.

*The Manor House at Sunset*

*"(The building falling) looking like a Victorian lady sitting down with her  
great skirts."*

*--Dr. Lisa Jadwin, Professor of English*

Sometimes, we can keep  
what we aren't ready to have . . .  
still numb,  
two days after the world began  
its descent, I am told  
what I saw . . .

An English manor. Sunset.  
A room that is tight with furniture-  
cherry or oak. Great windows looking out  
towards a green lawn. A fire  
is gentled, and a book is open  
on the arm of a chair. The early evening

stars are still at their dressing  
tables, the sun is retiring,

and the earth is not  
yet ready for its end.

The lady would like to sit. A complicated  
matter of posture and gesture  
is necessary to make it safely  
to the bottom.

Her back stiff, her breasts out,  
and her great skirts

pooling at her feet  
like the smoke on the  
last august horizon.

### *III.*

#### *Rochester, Park Avenue, 7 pm*

Every day of this week feels  
like the last day. The cars roll silently down  
this stretch of architecture and trees, carrying  
the secrets of a city. Residents have been seen  
weeping in their cars on East Avenue. No one honks  
anymore, no one cuts anyone off,  
their movements are cautious like the flames  
of candles and the early bedding  
of the sun in September.

The custard shop is  
usually busy, but today a man sits  
on a counter and waits  
for no one. Patrons at a restaurant  
wear American-motif clothing,  
and the conversation is a whisper  
caught in the trees and terraces,  
gossamers of words floating  
down the block.

Every day of this week feels  
like the last.  
The world rolls quietly  
onward tonight as it did the night  
before. And the night before that.

Those are the days that are easy  
to imagine having happened. The ones  
that pass their silence on

to the next. Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday is quiet on Park Ave.  
And even the man who comes  
with the clouds must pause  
on his way to listen.

*IV.*

*The Pit (I)*  
*(for Nate)*

It's been three weeks  
since the end began  
you tell me  
that there are still

fires  
burning at the core.  
I can't think of  
anything else.

You tell me  
that thousands  
must have been burned  
alive-

that they were screaming  
all the way down  
to the bottom.  
Several circles

into the pit.  
I can't think of  
anything else

Lately,

even my dreams  
are the soft and supple  
flesh-the quick  
and impossible flame.