

Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream

In "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," the author Didion uses fiery imagery to parallel the San Bernardino Valley to hell. It is a place where the "hills blaze up spontaneously," and "every voice seems a scream." (p.3) Didions hellish descriptions of the geography reflect the culture of San Bernardino Valley. It is "where the hot wind blows and the old ways do not seem relevant, where the divorce rate is double the national average." (p.4) In this culture, the importance of the "old ways," such as a long-lasting marriage, are devalued. It is a society where the "dream [is] teaching the dreamers how to live," (p.17) and where reality doesn't hamper people's obsessions and greediness. In the essay "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," the San Bernardino Valley's self-indulgent culture devaluates society's morals and ethics such as religion, law, love, and life.

In the San Bernardino Valley, tele-evangelism, Christian gospel spread through television, is prominent. It is "the California where it is easy to Dial-A-Devotion, but hard to buy a book." (p.4) It is a society where anyone with money can buy a devotion to God with the dialing of a number. The usage of religion as a money-making business defiles the sanctity of society's most sacred and cherished belief. However, money is made so morals and ethics are ignored. Another example of this immorality is Edward Foley, Lucille Miller's attorney. He says, "We don't want to give away what we can sell," (p.27) referring to information about Lucille Miller and the death of her husband. Edward Foley, a man only looking to benefit himself, shows no respect or regard for the Lucille Miller tragedy. Two people are killed and one person is sent to an institution for life; yet, Edward Foley tries to utilize this opportunity to make money for himself.

Another example of a depreciation of society's principles is the scene for Lucille Miller's murder case trial. "College girls camped at the courthouse all night, with stores of graham crackers and No-Cal." Also, "identification disks were issued to the first forty-three spectators in line." (p.20) The trial is described not as a practice of law but as a sporting event. Just as there are hot dog vendors at a sports game, there are "stores of graham crackers and No-Cal" at the trial. Also, Didion's use of the word "spectators" suggests that the people inside the courtroom are looking upon the trial like a sports game. Didion later refers to the courtroom seats as the "spectators section." (p.25) A sporting event is not taken seriously. Therefore, Didion's comparison of the trial to a sports game undermines the seriousness of law and order in the San Bernardino society. She implies that a self-seeking and avaricious culture results in chaos.

Lucille Miller is a prime example of an individual affected by the narcissistic culture.. Lucille, "a woman motivated by love and greed" (p.22) does whatever is necessary to get what she wants. First, she has an affair with Arthwell Hayton, "a man who might have seemed to have the gift for people and money and the good life that [Lucille's husband] Cork Miller so noticeably lacked." (p.15) Second, she is convicted for murdering her husband which she presumably did to collect \$80,000 in insurance money. Lucille Miller commits vices such as adultery or murder for her own self-gratification. She has no concern about the welfare of

other people. Her uncharitable acts are the cause of chaos in society.

The people of the San Bernardino Valley are in love with material things. Their definition of "love" is the yearning for things not in their possession. The people place a "magical faith in the efficacy of the word" (p.19) for it governs how they act. For example, Lucille Miller says, "I've always kind of just lived my life the way I wanted to." Her life is governed by her "love" for sex and money. However, the self-indulgent culture is not without consequence. Every year it brings a "season of suicide and divorce." Everywhere there is "talk of unhappiness," (p.15) and trash cans "stuffed with the debris of family life." (p.27) There is no order due to the lack of morality. Yet, life in the valley blindly goes on for an "illusion veil" (p.28) hides their eyes from reality.