

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's 18th annual Master Playwright Festival

Introducing John Patrick Shanley

Lecture by Krista Jackson, Royal MTC's Associate Artistic Director

Tuesday, January 30 7:00 PM
The Good Will Social Club
625 Portage Ave.

I was first introduced to John Patrick Shanley while studying acting at Ryerson theatre school in the early 1990's. We had to choose a monologue for an audition class and I came across his 13 play anthology. I was struck by these early plays - I liked the dialogue and rhythm, the grittiness and the arguments in them. I chose to tackle Donna from *The Dreamer Examines his Pillow*. The play to me at the time, seemed wholly American.

When *Outside Mullingar* came to me to read as Associate Artistic Director at Royal MTC last year - when we were choosing a Master Playwright for this season, it was wholly Irish. I said: Wait a minute - I thought Shanley was an Italian American. I realized that although I had seen Shanley's hit films, *Moonstruck* and *Doubt* in the interim, I knew very little of the playwright who could write *Dreamer* in his mid 30's and write *Outside Mullingar* at 60.

I started this lecture with that question. How did Shanley arrive at being wholly American and Irish. He is a dreamer, a believer in the magic of the moon, a romantic and fighter.

Let's go right back to his younger years. In the American Theatre Wings' *The Play that changed my Life*, Shanley was interviewed about his early exposure to theatre....

"Until I was 22 years old, I only saw two plays. And they were both at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx. Student productions. But they were excellent productions, and they were in a facility which, at that time, was a \$1 million theatre. So the production values were kind of extraordinary and the plays were The Miracle Worker and Cyrano de Bergerac.

The Miracle Worker I saw when I was probably twelve, right before I went to that school. My brother was on the stage crew there.

And then Cyrano I saw from the wings, because I was on the stage crew the following year, and as a result I saw and heard the play repeatedly, and that had a huge effect on me. When I saw Cyrano - here was a poet who was the toughest guy in the room, and the most terrific guy and the most romantic guy and a freak at the same time. So I really

identified with him and the beauty of the language, and I would say that Cyrano was one of the biggest influences on my writing life.

I was writing poetry and little stories from the time I was ten or eleven. And I did not see Cyrano de Bergerac and think, "This is what I want to do. I thought. "This is who I want to BE." The idea of a warrior poet - THAT I found attractive."

John Patrick Shanley - The Warrior Poet.

It took him until he was 34 years old to write his breakout play *Danny In the Deep Blue Sea*. He dedicated it to:

"everyone in the Bronx who punched me or kissed me, and to everyone whom I punched or kissed."

For Shanley, writing was how he learned to make sense of a childhood in which he was always an outsider. Growing up as a son of an Irish immigrant meat packer in the east Bronx in the 50's and 60's put him in *"a very violent neighbourhood,"* he said.

"The Irish/Italian neighbourhood was extremely anti-intellectual and extremely racist and none of this fit me. I was in constant fistfights from the time I was 6. I did not particularly want to be. People would look at me and become enraged at the sight of me. I believe that the reason was they could see that I saw them. And they didn't like that."

Shanley had the soul of a poet under the tough guy persona he adopted in order to survive growing up in the Bronx.

"You know what they called me in the Bronx," he said. " They said: Your name's Shanley? We'll call you Chandelier. Then it became just 'Lier.'"

From the beginning, Shanley went to Catholic schools. The Sisters of Charity - who ran St. Anthony's Grammar School - which he attended in the Bronx were the sympathetic antithesis to the Irish Christian Brothers who ran Cardinal Spellman High School.

"The brothers beat children with their fists," Shanley said. "I saw a 220-pound brother put a boy, a little gangly boy, against a wall and hit him in the stomach as hard as he could."

Shanley's response to that environment was to become a professional problem child. In religion class, he insisted he did not believe in God. In the cafeteria, he flung mashed potatoes over his shoulder often enough to get banned from the hot-lunch program. He read science fiction books during all his classes and spent five days a week, every week for most of the two years he was there in detention before the brothers finally kicked him out.

He went instead to the Thomas Moore Preparatory School, a private school with a Catholic orientation. It afforded him a few humane teachers. It was their kindness, actually, that was among the reasons he wrote *Doubt*.

After Shanley's freshman year at New York University, he was placed on academic probation and dropped out to enlist. His hyper-developed skills of observation have afforded him a lifetime of highs and lows. The hard-knocks childhood gave way to a stateside stint in the Marines.

He returned to NYU two years later, putting himself through school on a combination of the G.I. Bill, loans and odd jobs. Back at NYU, he took all the writing classes he could until the only one left was "Introduction to playwrighting" As soon as he started writing dialogue - he knew he wanted to write plays.

In 1977 he graduated as valedictorian.

"I got out of the Marine Corps when I was 22. I knew some people who were prominent in the Irish American community, and I was introduced as an Irish American poet, and there was support for that.

And I viscerally knew that's not what I'm going to do. I don't want to be in that niche, I don't want to be limited in what I write by being Irish American. If you write too directly about your own life when you're young, you miss the boat somehow.

I grew up in an Italian and Irish neighborhood in the Bronx and spent lots of time with friends who were Italian American and was exposed to their family life. It was abundant in things we didn't have in my house. The talk was great in my house, but the food wasn't too good. Their food was better, their clothes were more interesting, they owned their sexuality more and weren't as repressed as the Irish. It was liberating to write about them."

His father, who came to New York at 24 from County Westmeath Ireland, used to admonish his youngest son to *"get a real job."* And Shanley did. Before he won his Oscar for *Moonstruck*, he worked as an elevator operator, a house painter, furniture mover, locksmith, bartender and sandwich maker. But looking and listening and telling a story was the only job that stuck.

From 22 to 34 Shanley lived in poverty and wrote small plays that were produced in New York - off, off Broadway. According to him, these plays failed.

His Mantra: *"It takes a lot of failure to succeed now and again."*

It wasn't until his 20 minute play *Welcome to the Moon* went in front of an audience that things started to shift. They loved it and Shanley felt slightly disappointed. Here he had been trying to be smart and clever in his writing, but the audience wanted the truth. In

Moon he had written about an experience growing up in the Bronx. He realized at that moment - how big the individual truth of the person is.

Taking that insight with him he wrote *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* in 1983 at 34 years old. It would change everything. "*Danny was the big one!*"

A story of two violent disaffected people who didn't fit it - He channeled his loneliness he felt in the Bronx into this encounter between two misfits who find love. He was already playing with realism as the setting note in the published version shows...

"This play is emotionally real, but does not take place in a realistic world. Only those scenic elements necessary to the action should be onstage. Only those areas that are played in should be lit."

After *Danny*, the door was open.

In 1984, he wrote *Savage in Limbo* - but no one wanted to produce it. It was first presented at the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre Centre in a staged reading then the play premiered in New York City. It got a terrible review from the NYT's.

But Shanley was finding his voice...

Shanley aptly calls his "*Savage in Limbo*" a concert play. "*It is not meant to be naturalistic, but it trades on a deceptive air of semi-naturalism. The people in it look contemporary, but they are, in fact, in limbo: the quintessential Nowheresville. The Bottom of the Heap.*"

Next was *The Dreamer Examines his Pillow* which played off Broadway in 1985 and it also got a terrible review from the New York Times. But Shanley continued to find his quirky voice. Donna's Dad in the play says "*I see all women bald,*" he tells his daughter. "*It started a long time ago. I found I was being deceived by hair. I was all the time getting the wrong impression.*"

1986 brought *Women of Manhattan*. *The New York Times* again didn't rave: It is the blindest of dates. A man and a woman meet in a cafe at midnight. He is black, she is white. He is a handsome womanizer, she has a problem relating to heterosexual men. The matchmaker, his former mistress, is also one of her best friends. The two begin by being antagonistic but are soon hitting it off romantically. The playwright, John Patrick Shanley, has written the scene succinctly with a certain off-the-wall humor. It is surrounded, however, by other scenes that are off-the-wall, but with less humour.

In 1992, *Italian American Reconciliation*, was declared a hit by the New York Times: Mr. Shanley's writing explored male bonding without calling it that and before it became fashionable - "*I love you man to man,*" Aldo says to Huey in the play - and it is flamboyant, gushy and risk taking. But don't mistake this play for one that insinuates or projects a playwright's neuroses upon a captive audience. Mr. Shanley's thematic scope

is too giving for that. Aldo and Huey's working out of their hostilities toward a woman and toward women is transformed into something genuinely lyrical and informed by a loving need. *Italian American Reconciliation* is a chorus of gallantry and coherence in a prosaic world, composed by a playwright-poet with an essential touch of lunacy."

Shanley acknowledged the praise that finally came to him from the New York press: *"The door doesn't open...you have to kick it down."*

Shanley wanted to explore writing for the screen next. He got an endowment for the arts grant to write a screenplay. After watching a lot of movies, particularly James Bond, he wrote *Five Corners* starring Jodie Foster, John Turturro and Tim Robbins. His process for his first screenplay included writing down pages and pages of images from his childhood in the Bronx. A Girl With St. Bernard, a woman falling to death through a window. Then he asked, what story can I tell to use all these images?

Hence the famous scene where Turturro throws his mother out the window was born.

Stanley's Mother, who died in 2002, worked as a telephone operator and it was his tormented relationship with her that became the template for many of his physically and emotionally damaged or maimed male characters who must face down a profusion of often indifferent, always ambivalent females.

"She was a pill, It took me many years of thinking, reading psychological tomes of various kinds, talking endlessly, writing plays, to finally say: 'You know, she was a pill. That was the problem.' And in my climactic interchange with my mother, she called me up and said: 'What was it? What was so terrible?' And I said very easily, very kindly really, 'Well, you just weren't very affectionate.' And she said, 'No, that's not how I am.' And that was the conversation. To get to that was a byzantine, tortuous road. But that was the crux of it. These things always end up being pretty simple."

In Shanley's 1991 play *"Beggars in the House of Plenty"*, Pop, a butcher, terrorizes his eldest son with a cleaver and says: *"You'll look for love to stop the starving thing in you that I put there, but nothing will stop the starving thing. I'll never approve of you."*

In the same play, Ma bemoans her recurrent headaches.

"My mother wasn't comfortable with me no matter what I did," Shanley said. "When I was a kid, she had these terrible headaches, and was always screaming, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I've got a splitting headache!' And many years later I said, 'Do you still get headaches?' And she said: 'What are you talking about? I don't get headaches.' I said, 'Wait a minute, when I was growing up you had headaches all the time.' And she thought about it and went: 'Oh, yeah. That's true.' I said, 'When did they stop?' She said, 'When you left.'"

In a recent interview for the Dramatist Guild Foundation, Shanley had this to say about his Mother.

"She saw the world as an utterly un magical place. I see it as a magical place. I wanted my mom to be happy and realized she'd never be happy."

Roger Ebert writes in his rave review of the film *Moonstruck*: What's strongest about the movie is that it does possess a philosophy, an idea about life. The idea is the same idea contained in "Moonstruck": that at night, in those corners of our minds we deny by day, magical things can happen in the moon shadows. And if they can't, a) they should, and b) we should always in any event act as if they can.

He called the movie a duet between whimsy and romance.

Shanley put the exoticism of his Italian neighbours, mixed with the love of language in his Irish home, together with a great personal longing for love and the result was *Moonstruck*.

It garnered 3 Oscars including one for him for Best Screenplay. In his acceptance speech he once again thanked - *everyone in the Bronx who punched me or kissed me, and to everyone whom I punched or kissed*.

When you see the shows in the festival, watch for the little bits of magic he infuses into everything he writes as he champions the lonely misfit in the search for love.

Watch also for the relationships between men and women in his works. Their power struggles and dynamics. The negotiation between two people who don't know the contract they are trying to forge. His characters are aware of the future and of a limited amount of time on the planet.

Shanley's meteoric rise in Hollywood with the success of *Moonstruck* led to a meteoric crash after writing and directing the *catastrophe* that was *Joe Versus the Volcano*.

Say what you will about *Joe*...I watched it recently for the first time and it is wacky, but Roger Ebert again raves:

Gradually during the opening scenes of "Joe Versus the Volcano," my heart began to quicken, until finally I realized a wondrous thing: I had not seen this movie before. Most movies, I have seen before. Most movies, you have seen before. Most movies are constructed out of bits and pieces of other movies, like little engines built from cinematic Erector sets. But not "Joe Versus the Volcano." It is not an entirely successful movie, but it is new and fresh and not shy of taking chances. And the dialogue in it is actually worth listening to, because it is written with wit and romance.

He gave it 3.5 stars and in retrospect wished he had given it 4.

Shanley talks about his time in Hollywood: *"When I was in Los Angeles, I was in the above-the-line community pretty much all the time,"*

"And it's a very small group of people who basically reassure each other that they must be doing O.K. because they're in the room with these other people. I found it, after a while, just antithetical to my nature. I like to make a good living, but there are limits to how much cash is good for a person.

It's also addictive. Money is like heroin, and I grew up in a neighborhood that was destroyed by heroin. I've watched addiction all my life. Celebrity is like heroin. And constant praise is like heroin. And, you know, no one can resist constant praise. I had to get out."

Shanley has written numerous screenplays since *Joe*; four have been produced, including *"Alive"* and *"Congo."* A script he co-wrote for HBO, *"Live From Baghdad,"* about journalists who covered the 1991 Persian Gulf war, was nominated for an Emmy Award.

"I still make an awful lot of money out of Hollywood," he said. "And once in a while they make something I write. But that's not my raison d'etre."

An impassioned dedication to the theatre has been his life's vocation.

Shanley's 23 plays, many of which he has also directed, have been translated into 15 languages, performed in 17 countries and receive about 80 productions a year in the United States and Canada.

In 1990 came *The Big Funk* which according to the NYT's was very much of a piece that combines both the well-known screenplays (*"Moonstruck," "Joe vs. the Volcano"*) with the less familiar stage works of its author's career.

The archetypal Shanley hero, as represented by Austin here and by characters acted by John Turturro in the plays *"Danny and the Deep Blue Sea"* and *"Italian-American Reconciliation,"* is the one-handed pizza baker played by Nicolas Cage in *"Moonstruck"*: a young man who has been maimed by the past and must realize an obsessive romantic fantasy to be made whole again.

The archetypal Shanley heroine - whether played by the very appealing Ms. Tripplehorn or by Cher - must get past her own damaging childhood so she can grab that big-hearted guy. "Grease is not love," Austin instructs Jill late in *"The Big Funk,"* as he helps her overcome a neurosis that traces back to her father's peculiar use of butter.

The play's governing metaphor is that of a cleansing storm that will wash away the self-defeating funk of the entire world.

Four Dogs and a Bone premiered in 1993. The dogs of Mr. Shanley's title are two actresses, a producer and a first-time screenwriter, each of whom is trying to usurp control of a woefully under budgeted movie being shot by a weak (and unseen) director

named George Lee Beach on the streets of New York. In a series of high-energy behind-the-scenes encounters... these four strip the movie of every last scrap of meat to feed their own greedy agendas."

The sexual peculiarity that sets the action of his 1997 play *Psychopathia Sexualis* in motion - is a sock fetish.

The LA Times called it... "A smart new comedy about men and their befuddlements and a shrink who may just be the personification of evil."

The play's first half is perfectly poised between daffy comedy and believable human neurosis, which Shanley combines so well that although you never know what wacky thing is coming next, you believe it when it comes.

The second half, though still funny, is much more predictable. It centers on women. As in the equally sleekly written "*Four Dogs*," the conversation has all kinds of sinister subtext swirling beneath forced-sounding avowals of friendship."

Where's My Money?" his scathing 2001 play about divorce, in which a male lawyer says: "*Women consume, and they must be directed what to consume, or they may identify you as lunch.*"

From the same play comes one of Shanley's most quoted lines: "*Monogamy is like a 40-watt bulb. It works, but it's not enough.*"

In real life, both his marriages failed, replaced by, as one theater producer put it, "a different blonde on his arm every night," Kim Cattrall among them. He treasures his two adopted sons.

In 2002, Shanley was inducted into the Bronx Walk of fame.

Finding love predominates his earlier work. And a biting humour has aligned his work with the surreal domestic comedies of John Guare and Christopher During.

According to Shanley, when he writes a play he...

Looks at what hooks the audience to the story. He asks: what information are they waiting to find out? Plays are mysteries, like people. He attempts to connect to the audience. He feels them when he writes. "*They are there with me*"

"The audience can all be idiots, together they're a genius."

"As long as you're right there with them, trying to figure it out, they'll stay with you. But you gotta fight, you gotta fight really hard to stay in the present and try to get into the future."

Shanley has since found increasingly larger canvases: in 2003's political allegory, "*Dirty Story*," he portrayed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a sadomasochistic relationship between a man and a woman.

In The New York Times, Ben Brantley called it "appallingly entertaining," going on to say that Shanley's "broadening of perspective has led him to create one of the liveliest, boldest and -- against the odds - funniest studies ever of a subject that even hard-core satirists tend to approach on tiptoe."

2004's *Sailor's Song*, is a lyrical meditation on choosing to love in the face of death, was written after Shanley's mother, father and eldest sister all died within an 18-month period.

When he writes a play, he has some question in his life that he is working out in the play.

"I am trying to understand some obstacle, barrier, aspiration that is just beyond where I am. I'm using this play to express my heartbreak that I can't yet go there. Through doing one or both of those things, the audience can say - we're there too! - It's an invitation to live together as opposed to living in separate apartments."

You will all be familiar with his most well known work *Doubt: A Parable*

It ran on Broadway from March, 2005 to July, 2006, won four 2005 Tony Awards (including Best Play), the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Shanley directed the 2008 film version, which starred Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams and Viola Davis. The screenplay was nominated for Academy Awards, and it won the Writers Guild of America Award for Best Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen.

In his introduction to *Doubt* he asks?

"What's under a play? What holds it up? You might as well ask what's under me? On what am I built? There's something silent under every person and under every play. There is something silent under any given society as well...

Let me ask you. Have you ever held a position in an argument past the point of comfort?

Have you ever defended a way of life you were on the verge of exhausting?

Have you ever given service to a creed you no longer utterly believed?

Have you ever told a girl you loved her and felt the faint nausea of eroding conviction?

I have. That's an interesting moment. For a playwright, it's the beginning of an idea. I saw a piece of real estate on which I might build a play, a play that sat on something silent in my life and in my time. I started with a title: *Doubt*."

I've set my story on 1964, when not just me, but the whole world seemed to be going through some kind of vast puberty. The old ways were still dominant in behaviour, dress, morality, world view, but what had been organic expression had become a dead mask.

I was in a Catholic church school in the Bronx, run by the Sisters of Charity. These women dressed in black, believed in Hell, obeyed their male counterparts and educated us.

The faith, which held us together, went beyond the precincts of religion. It was a shared dream we agreed to call reality. We didn't know it, but we had a deal, a social contract. We would all believe the same thing. We would all believe. ... When trust is the order of the day, predators are free to plunder. And plunder they did.

I have never forgotten the lessons of that era, nor learned them well enough. I still long for that shared certainty, an assumption of safety, the reassurance of believing that others know better than me what's for the best. But I have been led by the bitter necessities of an interesting life to value that age-old practice of the wise: *Doubt*.

Following the huge success of *Doubt*, his 2008 stage musical "*Romantic Poetry*," suffered perhaps the worst reviews a major American playwright has endured in the 21st century.

Back to his mantra: "*It takes a lot of failure to succeed now and again.*"

In 2012 came *Storefront Church*, to which the Huffington post writes:

When all six characters come together for a Sunday morning service in the humble storefront church, the outcome is not necessarily surprising, but it's very satisfying. Even a shabby room can become a community, a sanctuary for respite from what the preacher calls "mindless activity and organized greed."

Recently, in a cruel twist, he weathered a siege of glaucoma that has cost him 50 percent of his sight yet, incredibly, he has not slowed down his work pace at all. After the last surgery, the surgeon said, '*You'll take these drops, and if the pressure remains constant, then you're out of the woods.*' And he thought for a minute and said, '*Actually, you're never going to be out of the woods.*'

And I said, '*So I live in the woods now. Look, I can read, I can drive, I can direct plays. But I just, you know, live in a delicate eyeball world.*'"

His fight has become his philosophy:

"We all have dense bumps, absences that come about through the bumpy ride to be alive - they become part of the emblems of our life.

Our wounds we carry for the rest of our lives. Life is Hard. My Life is Trauma."

Shanley is one of just two artists to have won the trifecta of a Pulitzer Prize, an Oscar and a Tony Award, and the 2013 Eugene O'Neill Lifetime Achievement Award. An annual award given to an Irish American by the Irish-American body, a New York-based group.

O'Neill's father, like Shanley's, came from Ireland, but Shanley, now in his early 60s, only recently began exploring his Irish roots.

He wrote *Outside Mullingar*, which was nominated for the 2014 Tony for Best Play.

"Speaking straight up, I've avoided writing as an Irish man most of my life. Something in me hated being confined by an ethnic identity, by any family. I didn't want to be labeled an Irish-American writer.

I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to write about everybody. And for the next 30 years I did. I became a playwright and screenwriter. Italian-Americans were my particular specialty. I liked the way they talked. There was something free in it.

I always knew I'd have to come home eventually. I'm Irish as hell: Kelly on one side, Shanley on the other. My father had been born on a farm in the Irish Midlands. He and his brothers had been shepherds there, cattle and sheep, back in the early 1920s. I grew up surrounded by brogues and Irish music, but stayed away from the old country till I was over 40. I just couldn't own being Irish.

I was marinated in the Irish thing, and I always knew I would write about it. These things had to mature in me.

Then I had an amazing experience in 1993 when my father was in his late 80s and he didn't trust himself to drive, so he invited me to go and drive him around and see the family and the farm he was born on. When I sat in the kitchen with them, I realized a level of comfort and familiarity I hadn't had in my own childhood.

'This is who I am, these people are just like me.' I had experienced a recognition, and it was the first time that certain things about me made sense. Including my sense of humor, which is oblique and never goes that far away from mortality and has a certain unexpected savagery at times. These are my people.

We have just as much magic here as they have in Ireland. But what we don't have is people who talk this way, who have the gift of language.

Very often when I write plays it's hard work and feels awful, but this play was the most fun of anything I've ever done. "it spilled out quickly" They can say everything. I don't have to hold back and edit it down.

"I wanted to put on stage something I hadn't seen. Sometimes a son and a father, a mother and a daughter, just love each other, without equivocation, without apology."

Our current cultural fashion of irony holds little appeal for Shanley.

"We're afraid of sincerity. To be sincere and let it stand, without further discussion. I'm saying this is how they are, my particular family."

"We are the cosmos: balls of light, and in the case of the Irish, gas."

Prodigal Son opened in 2016. In it, he went back full circle to his childhood. It charts two years of Shanley's life as a problem child in the Bronx, who in the mid 60's receives a scholarship to attend a private Roman Catholic preparatory school.

One of the characters comments:

"He's using poetry like a ladder to climb out of some terrible place."

His newest feisty romantic comedy *Portuguese Kid*, starred Jason Alexander and was also directed by Shanley. It closed in December, 2017 at the Manhattan Theatre Club and it was slammed by the critics. But Shanley shows no sign of slowing down.

Today John Patrick Shanley embraces a new form of poetry- some have called his Tweets poetry in 140 characters:

"I write on Facebook and I write on Twitter virtually every day, sometimes twice a day. I do it to sharpen my blade. After I was writing on Facebook for maybe a year, I turned my hand to writing a script and suddenly realized,

"Oh, I'm writing better." Usually, I'd write something and then not write anything for a couple of months, then write three things and not write anything for months. Now I write every day and it sharpens the work a bit.

Here's a sample of an @JohnJPShanley Tweet:

"Beyond your hesitations, with which you would gladly dispense, lie fulfillment, ruin, and all in between. Savour the brink of things, then go"

"When I was a kid in the Bronx, and I did not know which way to go and I didn't have anybody to tell me which way to go, I did pick up a trail that had been left by others before me. It was literature. People write things and they die. And the stuff they leave

behind is the road to the future, for the next generation. It's not for them. It's for the next group, and they pick it up."

"I picked up the dialogues of Plato when I was thirteen years old and started reading it, and I said. this is what I've been looking for. These are the conversations I want to have and I haven't had."

"Or Edmond Rostand writes Cyrano and he dies and then these kids in the Bronx put on this play and I see it, and for me it's not the past...it's his past, but it is somebody else's future, along with the thousands and thousands of other strands of literature that they will come upon that helps humanity go forward."

"A poet is like a necromancer who takes over the entire world and heaven and hell – takes over everything – you're a Dante, and you get to control the elements."

"A poet the power of life and death over everybody ... you can do anything. You control the physical, the emotional, the spiritual, the psychological, and the psychophysical. You can do anything."

Thank you. I look forward to seeing you all at ShanleyFest over the next few weeks and to seeing John Patrick Shanley our master warrior poet in action.