



Lechery

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“Lechery” lends the reader insight into the gritty “urban underbelly” that Phillips encountered as she hitchhiked across the United States in the early 1970's. Several works in *Black Tickets* fall into this genre of disturbing stories in which the cruel side of life is examined, where people are denied unconditional love and beauty.

Combining an acute ear and eye for the most sordid details with her creative imagination, Phillips wrote a fully believable and horrifying narrative. She employed the first-person voice to enable the reader to identify with the wretched narrator, thus instilling the fear that this grotesque could have been the reader under similar circumstances.

In this and in similar stories, Phillips has given a voice to the inarticulate. In this narrative, told by a fourteen-year-old prostitute who molests little boys, the narrator recounts how, two years before, she was purchased by two sexually perverse drug addicts for thirty dollars. The simple, powerful prose overflows with sensually shocking images of the narrator's early life in the orphanage with her friend Natalie and of her current life as a peddler of pornography, a sexual toy for deranged adult drug addicts, and a seductress of virginal, preadolescent schoolboys. “I get them before they get pimples, I get them those first few times the eyes flutter and get strange,” the narrator tells the reader, without a hint of shame or embarrassment.

The narrator lacks any reason to feel guilt or shame because of her lifestyle. She opens with the following justification: “Though I have no money I must give myself what I need.” Because it is for her own survival that she lives as she does, one of her final comments, “I'm pure, driven snow,” is understandable, and even a relief to the reader, who has been pulled into her desperate world so quickly and has, by Phillips's design, identified with the narrator so strongly.

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