

6-2016

# The Chronicles of Autzen

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## Recommended Citation

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THE CHRONICLES OF AUTZEN

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Creative Writing:  
Fiction

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by  
Trayevion Maurice Satterwhite

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Approved by:

James Brown, First Reader

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## ABSTRACT

My statement of purpose covers the story I have been writing as well as my journey on how I got to where I am today. The beginning is an introduction to the entirety of my work. From there, it goes into my personal life, and what inspired me to write in the first place. As it is read through, the reader will get hints of harsh times in life, the elements of history, and the inspiration of the literature of video games. With all of these elements combined, it explains the purpose of my writing being closely entwined with dealing with the roughness of situations, and finding a way to bust through despite the disadvantages dealt to anyone.

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## Statement of Purpose

My term in the California State University, San Bernardino Creative Writing M.F.A. has been a huge focus on Dystopian and Fantasy Literature. I personally write a mix of short stories and novels, but I have primarily focused on my novel, *The Chronicles of Autzen*. The source of motivation of this is nature and alchemy, spiking everything from the four elements: Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. Also, video games such as *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Final Fantasy VII*, and *Chrono Trigger* have been a central influence on my work. The story follows Victor Astinos, an adolescent who is highly misunderstood in his community. Due to his understanding of the world, he has a hard time grasping the academic side of life; his mentor, Diana, decides to help him stop his troubling nature. Thanks to the skills he learned, he has been admitted to Autzen Academy, where they train to learn the powers of the elements and how to reclaim cities from monsters. And in a world of mist wolves, flare mammoths, Shinigami, and more than three hundred other elementals, Victor with his fellow trainees learn to defend their world. But their problems stretch much deeper than the elementals, as the beings called Lethalians aim to wipe humanity off the face of the earth, and it is up to Victor to stop them.

Heavy elements of this story are world building, as Nazi Germany in the east and the Soviet Union in the west have split America politically in two, as well as the elementals coming to wreak their havoc onto the world. The only elements of this though are their respective symbols. A moral element of the story is that

“Tough times don’t last, tough people do.” This is a message that I hope resonates with my readers.

### Personal Writing History

I have been thinking of stories since I was 8 years old. I used the video game *Chrono Trigger* as a springboard for developing a story. I rode by bike around imagining story lines that would play out, switching roles and imagining battle scenes. I also grew up fairly poor with fifteen people living in my house, I had a lot of time to write, but not in the literary sense. I would sit around and write comics based off the heroes I’ve watched. As I grew older, thinking of stories became more prominent as games became more advanced and I played more and more.

I was bullied a lot between middle and high school. There were many reasons, but no matter the case it always wound up with me beaten to a pulp. A majority of the times I was picked on it was because I wasn’t “Black” enough. I first heard this when I was eleven, and I didn’t quite understand what it meant. What did it mean to be Black? That I wear baggy pants? That I have a pair of fresh Jordan’s on my feet? That I listen to rap music and say the N word after every other word? No. Personally I never even looked at myself as Black. I don’t even know what I would look at myself as if I wasn’t told by my parents that I was black. I was made fun of for having white friends, for hanging out with other races more than my own, for not trying to go for a sport when I was younger, and for not running the street and causing trouble.



The label of being black sickened me to no end. Why did I have to live up to something that tore me down every chance it got for no damn reason at all? Why did I have to be something that I didn't have a choice in, and to have that very thing be the bane of my existence when I never wanted it in the first place? I wondered why my goals and aspirations were so much different from the other children of my race.

I thought about my characters first. I started with a character called Vincent Kaimaya, a World War II mercenary hired by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to keep the Nazis out of Stalingrad. I was a history buff growing up, keeping the events of World War II in mind for story potential. He was based of my favorite video gaming villain, Sephiroth. I would say he was a role model for me growing up. I had played with countless scenarios to write these stories. I had a lot of fun thinking of the story to the point where it became a hobby of mine to lock myself in my room and think about it while listening to various music. It freed me, from many things in life that had torn me down through those tormenting years. I had never even thought about utilizing my thoughts for writing. Whether or not someone had been racist toward me or chased me down the street was irrelevant once I got into my room and put my speakers on.

After getting jumped in my first week of high school, I decided I wanted to grow tougher. While music helped me cope with everything while I was at home, school was practically torturous. So I found a way to cope through wrestling. While I was bullied there too, at least this way I could defend myself while I grew

stronger. In a way, I could imagine myself in my character's shoes, and looked at wrestling like I would training in the environment I would train in. They always turned the heaters on full blast so it was always hot and humid, the music was loud so we had to always listen sharply, and they made us wear sweaters to increase mental toughness.

At the time I was going through that training, I thought I was going to die. I have fought through pains I never thought possible. I sprained my left knee my freshman year. I nearly cracked my skull sophomore year. I wrestled through pneumonia my junior year. And I cracked my sternum senior year. I couldn't fight through the pneumonia and it ended my season as a junior. All of these events were painful in their own way, but all of them teaching me different lessons about toughness and enduring the roughest of times. Those were four of the roughest times of my life, but I fought off the overheating of my body, most of the sicknesses that followed, and learned to deal with the angry wrestlers that joined me. At first, I thought I would use this opportunity with my skills to seek revenge on those who had wronged me. As I wrestled, I grew wiser, and with the wisdom my imagination only grew wilder. I went on runs thinking of my story, comparing myself to all my main characters of every story that came to mind. Another day would pass, and I would be Vincent Kaimaya. The next day I would be Zapata Perez. Most of my characters were military mercenaries with their own reasons to drive on. Working out with my fellow wrestlers made me think of my action scenes. Anything where I was working with my comrades in all sports made me

think of similar military scenarios where my characters would have to embrace the pain and grow stronger, and it fueled me. And the harder I worked, the more my imagination ran wild.

Using history and changing some of the events and geography to create my own world, I thought of this story with dystopian and fantasy elements. I used my experiences in the military to shape this world even more. I had used the thought of training, monsters, corrupt governments and not being of this world to create a society in my story. It all starts with music. Music, of any genre, helps me to write and place myself in the next scene.

### Project Contents

In *The Forlorn Hope*, we follow Victor Astinos, a misunderstood young man from the reclaimed city of Hermosa Lagoon who's trying to do his family proud by learning to fight and becoming a Reclaimer. Reclaimers fight for the cities that have been destroyed by the elementals; it is the most dangerous job in West America. Autzen Military Academy trains these soldiers to do various jobs. Victor is known in his family as the black sheep as far as prestige goes. His mother, Ashleigh Frost, is a well-known reclaimer who has more than nine cities to her name. And then there's her daughter, Terah Frost who had been a sharp academic and had been accepted to universities all around West America.

Victor has had trouble with the police, and his fellow students, most notably Lance Kensing, a Black young man from a prestigious family whose

confidence gets ahead of him at times. Then there's Ethan Black, a sneaky student who always finds his way out of trouble. Both have been chosen to go to Autzen over Victor due to superior grades and knowing the right people. As they are discussing the academy, the barrier breaks and mist comes down on Hermosa Lagoon. The coming fog pointed to mist wolves coming into the city, and Victor has to try and keep himself safe as well as his sister.

After showing his skills fighting the mist wolves, his former mentor, Diana Guevara gives him an offer to be a trainee at Autzen Military Academy under certain circumstances. After meeting some of the reclaimers who already stay there, he goes to train with his instructors, but the training isn't what was expected, and Victor has to push through the harsh environment with his fellow trainees, but he doesn't know what lies beyond just fighting elementals. His dreams lead him to deeper issues than fighting those monsters, they lead him to Lethalians, beings who can control the elementals at will. As their message of nature reclaiming earth rings through Victor's mind, he fights with his own meaning on what's right, and what his role is on this earth.

### A History of War

History has a violent beauty to it. History has been messy for as long as it has been recorded. It is full of drama, as we read it by its messy light. History is full of wonderful stories that can teach us a lot about how things were, but recorded history exists for a different reason. It's here to teach us not to repeat the mistakes of our ancestors, so we don't have violent and rough times again. We

learn to take the good from what our society used to do and keep that while rejecting the bad. But the history that I'm particularly interested in is American history. It's a surprising fact that 90% of American history, has revolved around war; The American Revolution, the War of 1812, The Mexican American war, plus the Civil War, among many others. Social issues have also taken a toll on America, especially when it has come to racial issues. The social issues combined with the wars has made America's history one full of turmoil, and it has had a huge influence on my writing. And with that influence, I decided to add a butterfly effect to history in my world.

The idea of a butterfly effect is the through that a single event, no matter how small, can change the course of history forever. I've changed some big events to shape my world how I see fit. The civil war was fought over many issues, one of the most glaring is that of slavery. For four years, America was split in half, the north not believing in letting slavery continue. The south wanted to keep slavery for the economy among other issues. Many questions came up about morality, a black man's worth. Is a black man worth the vote? Is a black man worthy to serve in the military? Is a black man more than just property? This mistreatment of blacks for years after this war was won carried into society. Where did the former slaves fit in? With segregation in place, it created limited places for blacks to go. Segregation was an ugly time in American history, and how I use it in my story was to twist the history of the entire eastern American continent.

I like to move the chess pieces of history, and write my own history. As an example of this in my story, Abe Lincoln died before the Civil War ended, so the Civil War ended in a stalemate, with the north banishing slavery and the south continuing it. Since slavery continued to exist, equality never came into question, only around the free states, where former slaves could earn their freedom and reparations after their 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. After enough of them got free, they met with congress and decided to challenge them, as their ancestors didn't ask to bring them over and they didn't have the means to go back to where they were. After winning, every free American of African descent born at the time could have 40 acres(Approximately 1,373,425 people at that time) which adds up to Both North and South Carolina. This caused a lot of strife, as the wealthier Africans bought the freedom of more African slaves and created hardship for the owners of the country, making the relationship between America and the newly formed Carolina difficult and tense. This got worse as America was split in two after the Neptunium War in 1950. This is an example of how the Civil War would have played a part in the history of the new America I have created.

Changing the events of World War II goes on a grander scale, and I thought about whether add more countries to the war. South America, in particular Argentina was sympathetic to Germany's cause, but the U.S. and the allies pressured them to break off relations. In my story, they will not break off relations and instead join the fight. With the Argentines pressurizing the U.S. from the south along with Brazil and Chile, America was pinned down from trying

to help the rest of their allies in Europe. When Pearl Harbor happened, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City were all attacked at the same time by the South American Axis. In my story's present time, the remnants of World War II are still there, devastated and collapsed skyscrapers, bullet holes in the concrete, littered bodies in Chicago's case because it was completely abandoned after the South American Assault and no one returned. It changes the scope of the entire war, because the Americans have to defend themselves at home, and worry about having to protect their own civilians from the rise of fascism. The three South American Countries will march on the U.S. through central America, and World War II wouldn't end with America using nuclear weapons on Japan(that comes after the present threat, with Tokyo and Osaka bombed instead).

Having to separate the fighting, the Allies have a much harder time taking down the axis, and it stretches the war on for four more years. It unifies America's social infrastructure in the end. Even after the war ends, fascism continues to rise and with it the elementals in my story. Post World War II history happens with the elemental's monsters while humans are just learning about them. North America was torn into three continents, the fully Confederate-Nazi assisted East(which the providence of Carolina lies on), the Soviet assisted West, And the European migrating New North. Now, while history seems to make a major turn, the story I write will keep some of the major things that happen, such as the Civil Rights Movement(the Second Civil War breaks out after this), the Vietnam War(there will be three Vietnam wars) and other sporadic wars in

the fascist South American countries fighting the Rebellious African Countries, and the unification of Australia and Asia.

The thing with history that fascinated me was the fact that anything could change with the simple tweaking of an event. The butterfly effect that may have happened due to Hitler's survival, or Rosa Parks just giving up and going to the back of the bus is scary to think about. If those things hadn't happened the way they did, all of us would possibly be living in a different world. With the alternate history timelines, it would allow me the opportunity to toy with these times and create stories accordingly. One of the most interesting things about History is that everyone has one, and a butterfly effect would take place if a specific event changed in our lives. Would I even be standing here if I didn't decide to join the army? If my grandma didn't make it to the hospital in time when the violin spider bit me, where would I be? I always think about where we could be if something had changed here or there. A put down book, another mile ran, a wrong corner turned, so many things can change. Thinking about the changes in history have a great effect on my writing, and will give me limitless ideas to write stories.

### Video Game Influences

If there are three games that have influenced my stories, they would have to be *Chrono Trigger*, *Final Fantasy VII* and *Final Fantasy VIII*. These three video games are literature in gaming, and a majority of gamers will agree that these three games are among the greatest games ever made. On the level of



popularity, they would be comparable in the gaming world to Hemingway and Shakespeare. The way the stories are told are so compelling, with excellent characterization and world building, these examples of games are perfect for my writing style to follow.

Chrono Trigger is a game of time travel. Chrono in Japanese means time, and it has triggered events throughout that effect the characters' lives. Crono is the mute protagonist of the game who just wanted to go to the fair and see his friend Lucca, with her trans-dimension portal device. Crono runs into a girl named Marle, who is the princess of Guardia posing as a commoner who wants to escape her castle life and have fun. They run into Lucca, and Marle tries to go on the portal. Something outside of the normal happens, and Marle's pendant glows and causes her to disappear through a dimensional gate. Crono follows her and winds up in the middle ages.

This is where I got the idea of the butterfly effect for real life history. The Queen of the middle ages was kidnapped during that point in the ages. The knights during the middle ages found Marle and assumed she was their queen because she looks exactly like the Queen from that time. When Crono visits the castle, he sees her and they go off to have a word. After time passes and Marle thanks Crono for coming after her, she disappears. The butterfly effect that took place there is the entire family line underneath the Queen was eradicated because she wasn't saved. So to change history, Crono and Lucca saved the queen themselves and brought Marle back into existence. More butterfly effects

take place through the story, such as saving the forest depending on how one would answer a question of whether a young wizard from the dark ages should save a sapling or burn it.

The idea for my elementals also came from this game. Chrono trigger's main characters all have an element innate that they can cast whenever they want to, so they can take on the monsters that live in their age. The four elements are Lightning, Shadow, Water and Fire. Every monster acts around these elements, and has a strength or weakness to them. An example of this are the dinosaurs of the prehistory era. They are strong against every element, but are weak against lightning. I decided to expand this idea with my elementals. In my story, there are three different kinds of flare mammoths. The orange and white mammoth is weak to water, while the red and white mammoth is weak to cold. This holds relevance in my writing because it caused me to expand on what my characters could do with their elements. The ten elements in my story are Earth, Fire, Air, Water, Lightning, Light, Shadow, Force, Time, and Dimension. A combination of air and water will create the cold that would beat the red and white flare mammoth. The alchemy of mixing elements together will create all kinds of possibilities for the humans to beat the elementals who vastly outnumber them.

*Final Fantasy VII's* materia scheme also had a hand in my ideas, but the characterization is what compelled me about this story, on the good and evil side. On the good side, they are trying to save the planet from the Shinra Corporation

using up the lifestream that keeps the planet alive. The best of these characters is an ex-SOLDIER(the group is all caps) named Cloud, who is a mercenary helping out the Avalanche group to blow up the reactors that drain the lifestream out of the planet. Each character has their own set of fears and desires as far as saving the planet. I'll use the leader of Avalanche, Barret Wallace, as an example. He is a father of a four-year-old girl named Marlene. Everything he does is for her, since he lost his wife to sickness, and he lost his city thanks to his trust to the Shinra Corporation destroying it. He trains in boxing, though he lost his arm running away from Shinra soldiers and got a gun-arm to replace it. He gets confused often as he wants to stay with his daughter always, but he has to keep the world safe for her as well. He argues with himself to the point where he gave up on explaining. The use of fears and desires makes Barret's white whale simple to understand. He's is just a father who wants to keep his daughter safe.

*Final Fantasy VIII's* world is my favorite. What they do with every character makes it an incredible military style game. The academies in the game train all their students in their own military style, so they preform services to the world whether it be fighting monsters or wars. They call their best trained soldiers SeeDs, and their purpose is to fight the sorceress who is trying to make all life cease on earth. The game is unique because they don't give everyone the same weapons, like a standard army that the real world would know. Everyone gets their own unique weapons and magic; for example, Squall Leonhart gets a gunblade, Quistis Trepe gets to wield a whip and so on. After a while, the

academy itself can fly around the world, and they complete their missions and live together as a family. That game would be a mark as something that has deeply inspired me to write my own story, characters and all.

### Concluding Thoughts

Generally, I write for fun. I write because there's nothing that brings me more joy in my life than seeing readers or listeners enjoy my work. To bring smiles, laughs and wonder to people has always been the true purpose of my writing. I would like to send the message that someone who grew up the way I grew up in my town can still have value to the world. Constant effort will get any wandering soul through anything. No amount of pain will overcome the want and desires of the heart. With every ounce of want in my heart, that's how I will write whether the topic is political, fantasy, or just a story of my life. The greatest writer's stories will leave their mark in history forever, and I dream that that's where my stories wind up. The tough times growing up made me the person I am today. I wouldn't change anything about how I grew up and the person I have become. Even the tallest mountain started as a stone. I grew as a human being, and now I'll continue to grow as a writer.

APPENDIX

THE CHRONICLES OF AUTZEN