medicide proving once again that modern axiom about the big lie being easier to sell than the small one.

And to those who argue only doctors should do it, Uncle Eddie simply asks them *Why?* If unlicensed pathologists, why not retired clergy, or victualers short on cash, or rehabilitated serial killers, or veterans of foreign wars. We're not talking, as the overworked idiom holds, brain surgery here. Most of the species knows how to kill.

Nor should this right to die and right to assistance with one's death be limited to the terminally ill. Pain is the problem, suffering. Do jilted lovers suffer less than cancer patients? Who's to say? Is heartbreak more bearable than congestive heart failure? Is perfect memory less painful than senility? And if the teen girl who gets pregnant at the prom is as entitled to an abortion as the child raped by mannish violence; so too, the teen who doesn't get a prom date is as entitled to her assisted suicide as is her grandparent with Alzheimer's.

Where life is sacred we must suffer the life. Where choice is enshrined we must suffer the choices.

Uncle Eddie's talking clinics now—*obitoria*. Because a rusting Volkswagen and Kevorkian's crazed personal style are the back alley and coat hanger of the suicide trade. And he is getting tired of house calls. I confess it has occurred to me that a tastefully unimposing annex to our current emporium here in Milford might be the obvious and proximate preference of my townspeople. Two or three thousand non-threatening square feet, say, with plenty of big pillows in earthtones and natural fabrics, new age music piped in, a staff of appropriately frumpy helping professionals trained to assist with "end of life" (the locally fashionable euphemism) decisions. And exclusively motivational wall treatments—*Love is Forever* or *Just Do It!* imposed on a watercolour landscape of the Dolomites—reminiscent in decor and

concordance of nothing so much as one's kindergarten. And maybe a two or three unit crematorium attached since, if the records in Oakland County are any predictor, the bodies will be for the most part female (Is this sexism, gender-norming or affirmative action?) and, for the most part, burnt. By a happy coincidence, our current holdings here in Milford take up most of a block on the corner of Liberty and First Streets making *The First Liberty Clinic* an aptly patriotic, almost churchy corporate name. Or maybe just *The Libertorium*?

Someone will have to be in charge of establishing federally mandated minimum standards for Meaningful Living, below which, it might prudently follow, social security checks could be discontinued. Once life is meaningless, it oughtn't to be a burden on the taxpayers. And just as our generation of policy makers has found that abortion is more cost effective than paying welfare, our children's generation, already in arrears with our national debt, will find *medicide* a better bargain than *Medicare*. This will not require anyone to take their voluntary leave of this life, but it may help to educate them as to their duties as a citizen. Surely there will be no shortage of bishops and politicians willing to serve on such a panel.

Of course, Uncle Eddie wants to call it *Serenity Social Services*, you know, Triple S. He says folks could make a day of it. A light breakfast. A chat with one of his "facilitators," prearrangement of the obsequies, a video farewell message for the survivors. He says he'll offer several methods—guns, gas stoves, gallows—you know, choices. He says he could keep the same slogan and logo—*Don't leave a mess...etc.* He's got all these memo pads and coffee mugs, key chains, and kitchen magnets. Even the same 800 number would work, puzzling over the familiar digits of which Uncle Eddie has noticed it always spelt NOTHING.

Rowlandson's *Death in the Nursery*

Fiona Haslam

"At a Christening at Beddington Surrey," said the *Gentleman's Magazine* of Sunday 4 December 1748, "the nurse was so intoxicated, that after she had undress'd the child, instead of laying it in the cradle, she put it behind a large fire, which burnt it to death in a few minutes.—She was examined before a Magistrate, and said she was quite stupid and senseless, so that she took the child for a log of wood; on which she was discharged."

Thomas Rowlandson depicts a drunken nurse in charge of a young baby in a scene entitled *Death in the Nursery*. A skeleton representing death tenderly regards his small victim as he rocks the cradle. The nurse in charge sleeps with an overturned glass in her hand. An appended verse reads:

Drown'd in ebriated sleep
No vigils can the Drunkard keep.
—Death rocks the Cradle, as you see.
And sings his mortal Lullaby.
No shrieks, no cries will now its slumbers break;
The infant sleep,—ah, never to awake!

Rowlandson produced a series of prints between 1815 and 1816 under the generic title of "Dances of Death." Ackermann published these with verses by William Combe. Rowlandson and Combe never met (Combe was in prison at the time), but their collabora-

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tion through Ackermann was a success. Rowlandson's drawings were typically robust, often overflowing the canvas in untidy profusion to indicate the chaos taking place within its compass. He depicted aspects of life from birth to death and was no respecter of any aspect of it or of any of its participants. Nurses, as in this print, received their share of his barbed attentions.

Earlier, Rowlandson had drawn a midwife going to confinement, complete with pattens on her feet and with lantern and spirit bottle, and this image was used by Dickens to represent "Sairey Gamp" in *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4). It was alleged that this good woman would attend a "laying-out" and a "lying-in" with equal zest and relish. Dickens described how "the face of Mrs Gamp—the nose in particular—was somewhat red and swollen, and it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits." Fortunately, this image improved as midwives and nurses received more training, but other problems arose with the advent of the man-midwife or accoucheur.

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