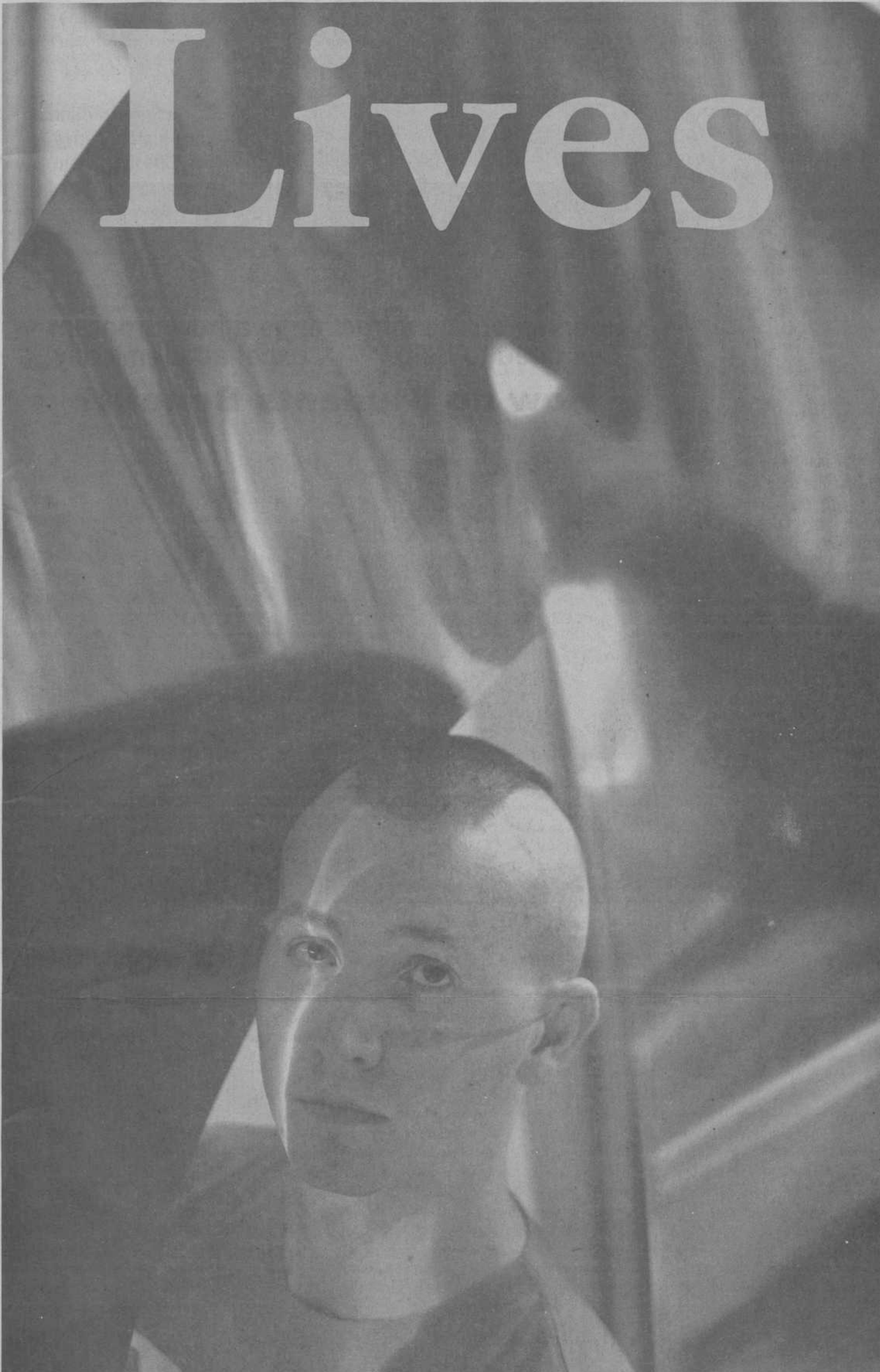


Parallel

Lives



Ryan Gattis, a professor at Champan University, authored "Kung Fu High School," an edgy novel recently optioned by filmmakers.

Young college professor straddles edgy boundary between author, instructor

Valerie Takahama
KRT CAMPUS

SANTA ANA, Calif. — The day's lesson in an English class at Chapman University is Lewis Carroll, and the serious young instructor has prepared well.

He plays scenes from Disney's version of Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland," and leads a discourse on "Jabberwocky" in a brisk, thoroughly professorial manner. Only his haircut — a shaven head with a touch of a Mohawk — hints that there might be another side to the mild-mannered teacher.

His students haven't a clue, but Ryan Gattis, 27, is a rising star in the literary world. He's that rare cultural mix-master who can both lecture on Victorian poets and write a

novel about the "gangbanger" Armageddon" that's a hot property in Hollywood.

"Kung Fu High School," his new novel, has captured the attention of a circle of edgy young filmmakers. It's been optioned by the producers of the eerie thriller "The Ring," and is set to be the much-anticipated feature-film debut of DJ Joe Hahn, of the rap-metal band Linkin Park.

The novel is dark, action-packed and ultraviolent. When it was published in England in February, it earned comparisons to Bret Easton Ellis' controversial 1991 novel, "American Psycho," and Chuck Palahniuk's notorious cult hit "Fight Club." Now, with its American debut, its author has been dubbed the "spawn of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Cormier."

Strong stuff for a novel that took root on Chapman's placid campus on a warm spring day in 1999.

Gattis, then a Chapman sophomore from Colorado Springs, was walking through the cafeteria when he noticed the television was on. He saw a shot of grass with a dead body on it.

"I can't explain this, but I had the feeling I had been there," he says. "I thought to myself, I played soccer on the field that that dead body is on." As he headed to his dorm, he spotted a couple of friends from back home swimming in the dorm pool. Just then another friend ran frantically toward them shouting something about the shootings at Columbine, where Gattis' friends had gone to school.

"I remember they jumped

out of the water and hopped the six-foot fence," Gattis says. "I followed them back to the room, and we all basically shut the blinds and turned the TV on and watched for hours and hours."

The event and its aftermath were so overwhelming that Gattis and his friends didn't talk openly about them again for several years.

Meantime, Gattis graduated from Chapman and applied at the prestigious master's program in creative writing at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, England. Former students such as Ian McEwan ("Atonement") and Kazuo Ishiguro ("The Remains of the Day") are a who's who of the British literary establishment.

One of his Chapman

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Cherie Banner, an employee at Amy's Candy Kitchen, makes one of the shops signature treats, pecan turtle apples. After The Wall Street Journal featured the shop, sales jumped \$22,000.

Shop serves up gourmet treats

Wisconsin candy shop reaps benefits from media spotlight

Guy Boulton
KRT CAMPUS

MILWAUKEE — There are candy apples, and then there are Gourmet Pecan Turtle Caramel Apples with Dark Belgian Chocolate.

Both are apples on a stick. But one sells for \$14 each.

The pricier version of the two, though, can attract national attention — and, as Amy's Candy Kitchen in Cedarburg, Wis., has shown, ring up sales from customers throughout the country.

In October, Amy's Candy Kitchen's apples were given the top rating in a weekly feature called "Catalog Critic" in The Wall Street Journal's popular Friday edition. The result: orders for about 2,000 apples, and \$22,000 in additional sales.

The small chocolate shop also has been featured on the Food Network. But from the day it opened its doors in 1996, Amy's Candy Kitchen tried to set itself apart by focusing on the high end of the market.

"You couldn't just open another candy shop and think you would thrive," says John Lillegren, the store's co-founder.

The business bought its chocolate, for example, from Belgium, which has strict purity laws for its chocolate manufacturers and is known in Europe for its chocolate.

"We knew there wasn't anything like it in the area," Lillegren said.

The shop also caught the trend in gourmet and premium food that can be seen in coffee, ice cream, bread, cheese and even potato chips.

From 2000 through 2004, U.S. retail sales of gourmet and premium foods grew from an estimated \$29.4 billion to \$41.3 billion, according to Packaged Facts, a division of MarketReserach.com Inc. Products such as a

Gourmet Dark Belgian Chocolate Dunked Caramel Apple — costing \$13 each — fall into that category.

Amy's Candy Kitchen, though, makes its own caramel from scratch, in old-fashioned kettles, with no hydrogenated oils or preservatives. The result, Lillegren said, is a caramel that is lighter and less sticky.

The apples come from New Zealand, Chile, California and Washington, depending on the season. The shop uses only Granny Smith apples, which have a tartness that offsets the sweetness of the caramel and chocolate, Lillegren said. The apples also are hardy, so their cell structure doesn't break down when dipped in hot caramel.

Caramel apples aren't the store's biggest seller.

Toffee, turtles and fudge also sell well. But the shop's apples are what impressed the critics at The Wall Street Journal. That said, the national publicity is less of a windfall than might be expected.

Although any small business would welcome more than \$20,000 in additional sales, that's only a bit more than a large corporate order will generate.

When Amy's Candy Kitchen was featured on the Food Network last year, the sales spike was bigger.

"People see that stuff on television and it makes their mouth water," Lillegren said.

Sales at the Elegant Farmer in Mukwonago, Wis., also briefly jumped this year when its apple pies were given the top rating in the same feature in The Wall Street Journal.

"We had folks calling from all over the country," said John Bauer, a store director.

He estimates that the

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