

A GATHERING OF VOICES



An Anthology of Student Writing at Whatcom Community College • 1998

A G A T H E R I N G O F V O I C E S



An Anthology of Student Writing at  
Whatcom Community College

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This anthology is the product of an Outcomes project to assess student learning and critical thinking.

Cover art:

*"The River's Path," Computer Art 10" x 7.5"*

*Jennifer Anable*

*Artist's comment: I was thinking of stained glass when I was designing this on the computer. It represents the many valleys of the Northwest, from the high snow-capped peaks to the thick, green river valleys.*

*Jennifer Anable*

*Instructor's comment: One assignment in Art 185 this year was to create an illustration for Timothy Egan's The Good Rain. The students read two sections of the book and were to depict a theme, narrative, or description presented by Egan. Here, Jennifer's illustration is reproduced in black and white. The original is in color and a wonderful interpretation of Egan's descriptions of the natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest.*

*Karen Blakley, Art 185*

## *Forward*

"How well do our students write?" "Does student writing reflect the learning outcomes the college has established?" These are the questions that *A Gathering of Voices* was meant to address. Now in its fourth year, the second under my supervision, the anthology answers "Yes," I believe, to both questions: Our students write very well and, yes, their writing reflects the learning outcomes the college has established.

This year, the anthology focuses on the outcome of Reflecting, which, like all the outcomes, is broad. But one subsection seems to be especially reflected in much of the writing that goes on at Whatcom:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of how individuals and cultures are affected by the interrelationship of events, expressions and systems of thought when they are able to: (1) analyze the relationship of individuals and cultures to the history of events and ideas; (2) identify and examine how various ethical systems and world views impact individual and cultural relationships; or (3) engage in, understand, and appreciate diverse forms of creative expression.

The essays included here certainly manifest these abilities. From Leo Hopcraft's personal essay on how a trip to a museum can spark a heightened awareness of culture and ethnicity, to the trio of essays by Melissa Marteney, Roberta Praeter, and Daniel Hammill about the "American Dream" and downward mobility, to Wendi Bentz's analysis of the role of "manga" (the large Japanese comic books) in Japanese culture—all the writings demonstrate a keen awareness of how individuals, cultures, creative expressions, and ethical systems relate and inter-relate. I think the writings truly demonstrate that our students "get it" when it comes to this outcome.

This year's *A Gathering of Voices* has a new layout and look. This reflects a narrowing of focus—fewer but more representative selections with more of a "literary journal" look. However, the content remains the same—outstanding samples of student writing from across the curriculum. I'm happy that Anthropology, Biology, Japanese, Music, Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, and Speech are all represented this year as well as courses throughout English, from Composition to Fiction Writing to Creative Nonfiction to Introduction to Poetry.

It has been my pleasure to work with Sandra Schroeder and Karen Blakley in putting together this year's anthology; I also want to thank Rosemary Sterling and her staff in copy duplicating who worked so quickly and well in putting the final product together. Also, thanks to Barb Hudson for her continuing support of this anthology as part of WCC's Outcomes Assessment project. And as always, thanks to Sherri Winans, whose idea it first was for an anthology at Whatcom, for her tireless support and enthusiasm.

Jeffrey Klausman, DA, MFA  
May 29, 1998



## *Preface*

This was my first year working on *A Gathering of Voices*, so when I embarked on this project, I didn't know what I was in for. One day as I sat amidst piles of "stuff" ~ essays, disks, letters~trying to work on at least three different aspects of the project simultaneously, two things came to mind. First, I thought of Vikki Ryan, the teacher who originated this project and did all the work on her own, and I marveled at her commitment. Second, I wondered at her willingness to take on such an enormous task, and I asked myself why I had agreed to do the same thing: I had gone through nearly fifty essays ~ titles, names, passages of essays floated across my mind throughout the course of the day, and at night they invaded my dreams.

Once the selections were determined and I had sent out letters informing instructors and students of their status, I felt relieved that I had gotten through the "job," having lost sight of what the "job" meant. As I was sitting in my office a few days after the letters were sent, a student knocked on my door. He came to tell me how thrilled he was that his submission had been accepted. He was a returning student who had been out of school for some years. He related to me his journey through English 100 and English 101. He praised his 101 teacher for assisting him in his personal epiphany, as it were. He related how he had come to understand the importance of "showing" his audience what he was trying to convey in his writing rather than just "telling" them. He also remarked on his new-found understanding of the importance of revision in good writing. What this added up to, more importantly, was that he had learned to view himself as a "real" writer, and his acceptance into the anthology had validated that view. His enthusiasm was palpable ~ something I could almost touch. As he walked out my door, he humorously proclaimed that twenty years from now we might all look back at the anthology as the stepping stone for this now-famous author. We both laughed and said good-bye, but as he left, I thought to myself, this is what I did this "job" for: to give those students who produce quality writing the recognition they deserve, the recognition that encourages them to value their ability to relate and communicate via the written word. While we may, indeed, give students a "gift" in publishing their work, the gift that they give in honing their ability to develop and grow through their writing enriches us all.

I have many people to thank for helping to make this project a success. First, I thank all the students and their instructors who took the time to submit; I only regret we were unable to include every essay submitted. Second, I thank readers who proofread quickly and conscientiously; this was an invaluable help—Sue Nelson, Robin Bailey, Tara Prince-Hughes, Margaret Bikman, and Melissa Talbot. I also thank Sherri Winans for her support, especially in hooking me up with work-study assistants Karrie Tribble and Jamie Selland, who madly typed up manuscripts to meet deadlines. Many thanks to them as well. Thanks to Juan in faculty support for getting out all the letters so beautifully done. I also must thank my office mates for their support while I fretted and stressed over deadlines and for their patience while I monopolized the office computer. I owe you one. And a special thanks to Jeff Klausman for getting me into this and for his humor and wit whenever mine began to fail me.

Sandra Schroeder, MA

## Acknowledgements

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*About the artwork in this anthology: This fourth edition of A Gathering of Voices showcases art that ranges from the traditional mediums of drawing and printmaking to the more non-traditional mediums of mixed media and computer art. It is exciting and gratifying to see such diversity of style, thought and visual literacy that is being cultivated in our art students. When our students are truly engaged in the making of art, they come to appreciate and understand visual forms of expression and communication. They become aware of the interrelationships of past and current artforms and can then develop a sense of their own link to the continuum of human expression.*

*Karen Blakley*



Taylor Erickson  
*Untitled*  
Collage, 15" x 20"



*Artist's comment: This piece depicts winter as a time of isolation and repetition. The imagery symbolizes impending doom as well as the inevitable seasonal rut.*

*Taylor Erickson  
Instructor: Caryn Friedlander*

*Student's comments: One reason I have enjoyed this class as much as I have is the fact that I am an anthropology major. Any time I have the opportunity to explore related ideas is a joy to me. Really looking at Plato and the situation of the myth became a challenge to me to clarify a particularly misused and ambiguous picture. It is extremely difficult to delve into such complex ideas and be able to substantiate one's arguments in five hundred words or less. Nevertheless, it was fun and challenging.*

Pamela Sorensen

*Instructor's comments: The Spring Quarter 1998 Honors Seminar in Physical Anthropology explored scientific knowledge and opinion regarding human races. The students wrote essays each week to explore ideas presented in the reading and demonstrate their understanding of the material. The assigned topic chosen by Pamela for this essay was "What is the philosophy of Plato that Gould says has led to the reification of intelligence? Summarize the philosophy and explore its role in the discussion of human intelligence." No other student dared to write on this topic, but Pam did a great job!*

Allan Richardson, Anthropology 295M

## **Plato: Measure or Mythology?**

Pamela Sorensen

It is said that Plato believed in the philosophy that there is an "eternal, abstract reality underlying superficial appearances" (282). As I understand this philosophy, every person is what they are born to be and no amount of education or wealth can change their destiny. In other words, if we can see it and measure it, then there must be some underlying justification for it.

Despite the idea that Plato's eternal truth is discussed in several places in the text, in actuality Plato did not believe in the story that related the idea, but actually wished to use biological selection as a way of organizing society. He was very talented in the use of rationalization to get what he wanted. In Gould's original introduction he states that Socrates created a myth in order to convince the Republic that his was the most rational way to order society. Plato adds that though it might not work in the current generation, it may be perpetuated in upcoming generations (51).

Despite the fact that Plato declared this philosophy a lie at a later time, biological determinists leapt on it as a creed (63). They decided that this predetermination was based on inherited intelligence alone and therefore they should be able to measure it and label it. Of course, included was the idea that intellectual ability was an inherited trait. This can be partially attributed to Plato's answer to Socrates about coming generations. Plato himself used the rationale to defend a family's banishment after members of three generations were convicted as criminals. The fact that Plato used inherited traits as a defense of his position was repeated by Ferri, a follower of Lombroso, creator of "the criminal man" theory. Ferri called Plato's defense "substantially just" (166).

It seems mind-boggling that what started as a rationalization for a way of ordering society, even though it was admittedly a myth, should have created a movement that has lasted

through more than 2,000 years. Did the scientists that perpetuated the myth not read the entire text, or did they simply use the myth out of context to serve their own purposes?

I have an idea that Socrates believed in the possibility of a sort of Valhalla if everyone would just fit into carefully created niches and not cause any trouble by trying to better themselves or their station. Unfortunately this idea is diametrically opposed to human nature. Life is not as simple as Plato and Socrates would have liked to see it.

#### References

Gould, Stephen Jay (1996). *The Mismeasure of Man*. (Revised and expanded) New York: Norton.





Maria Cantrell  
*Learning*  
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

*Artist's comments: "Learning" was a complete learning experience for me. I learned that drawing is fun when I know what steps to take to make a good drawing.*

*Maria Cantrell  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*



*Student's comments: The lung volume experiment was a solid demonstration of an application that could potentially be used in the clinical environment. Exercises such as this provide an opportunity to use the knowledge, concepts, and resources that we become familiar with as students of the anatomy and functioning of the human body. This experiment also highlights the complexity and great variability of the human organism.*

Tim Courchaine

*Instructor's comments: The following report is an excellent example of a complete and correctly formatted laboratory report Human Anatomy and Physiology (Biology 271). In order to facilitate the improvement of written communications skills, critical thinking abilities, and increased knowledge of the subject, the Anatomy and Physiology Instructors require two of these laboratory reports per quarter. This report was based on results gathered during an investigation of the physiology of the respiratory system. Tim did an exceptional job of covering the background information concerning lung volumes, presenting the results clearly and concisely, and interpreting the results by consulting published literature.*

Debra Lancaster, Biology 270

## Comparison of Lung Volume Capacities in College Students

Tim Courchaine

### Summary

The primary function of the respiratory system of the human body is to carry out gas exchange. The lungs are the sites of gas (carbon dioxide and oxygen) exchange. Volumetric capacities of the lungs of several subjects were measured in this experiment. Respiratory volumes varied widely among the test subjects. Differences in respiratory volume were due to age, sex, and height factors. Additional factors included smoking and exercise habits.

### Introduction

Energy is made available to the human body with the aid of a process called respiration. There are three levels of respiration: cellular, alveolar, and pulmonary (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Cellular respiration occurs at the microscopic level: glucose is broken down into ATP (energy storage unit),  $\text{CO}_2$ , and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . Oxygen is a requirement for this reaction and carbon dioxide is a byproduct. The next level of respiration (alveolar) occurs in the lungs where  $\text{O}_2$  and  $\text{CO}_2$  are exchanged via the alveoli sacs. This laboratory experiment is concerned with the third stage: the pulmonary (or ventilation) stage. Ventilation refers to an exchange of gases (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The lungs of the respiratory system carry out this ventilation. The health and proper functioning of the lungs are important to this process and to the organism. Partial assessment of lung health and functioning can be made by measuring lung capacities with an instrument called a spirometer (Cunningham and Lancaster, 1997).

Ventilation consists of inspiration (inhalation) and expiration (exhalation) (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Inspiration is achieved by the contraction of the diaphragm and external intercostal muscles of the thorax. The contraction of these muscles expands the ribcage,

which pulls on the pleural membrane (visceral and parietal membranes collectively), which then pulls on each lung from all sides. This pulling action expands the lungs, increasing their volumes. The increased volume causes a decreased pressure within the alveoli (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Boyle's Law, which states that at constant temperature, pressure and volume are inversely related, explains the pressure change. A decrease in the size of a vessel will result in increased pressure, and the increase in size of a vessel will result in decreased pressure. Air flows into the lungs because of this pressure difference. Bulk flow (in which substances move from areas of higher pressure to areas of lower pressure) is the principle that explains this action (Cunningham and Lancaster, 1997).

Exhalation (bulk flow of air out of the lungs) occurs when the contracted muscles of inspiration relax. The relaxation decreases lung volume and increases alveolar pressure (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The increased pressure results in the expulsion of air from the lungs.

Ventilation is controlled by the autonomic nervous system, but can also be consciously controlled (Myers, 1998). The average adult has a ventilation rate of about 12 breaths per minute at rest and has a total lung capacity of about 6 liters of air (Cunningham and Lancaster, 1997). Lung capacity can be quantified into six divisions called respiratory volumes: tidal volume, inspiratory reserve volume, expiratory reserve volume, vital capacity, residual volume, and total lung capacity (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Tidal volume is the amount of air in one resting breath. Inspiratory reserve volume is the amount of air that can be drawn into the lungs by a person, exclusive of tidal volume. Expiratory reserve volume is the amount of air that can be pushed out of the lungs by a person, exclusive of tidal volume. The vital capacity is the sum of the tidal, inspiratory, and expiratory reserve volumes. Residual volume is the amount of air that is constant in the lungs, maintaining alveolar inflation and fillig all the passages of the upper and lower respiratory systems. The total capacity is the sum of the tidal, inspiratory, expiratory, and residual volumes (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996).

Airway obstructions or disease can affect breathing rate and lung capacity. Fluid in the alveoli due to pneumonia is an example of an obstruction (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Measurement and comparison of respiratory volumes to normal values can aid in the diagnosis and evaluation of lung health (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Respiratory volumes vary according to height, age and sex of the organism. In general, males, taller persons and younger adults will have larger respiratory volumes (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). Measurement of respiratory volumes is performed with a device called a spirometer (or respirometer) in liters, milliliters or cubic centimeters (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The purpose of this experiment is to become familiar with the measurement of respiratory volumes, the use of the resultant data, and the use of the wet spirometer.

### Methodology

Students of the Human Anatomy and Physiology class measured their own respiratory volumes, then compared these results with established normal values. Three pulmonary-respiration volumes were measured with a wet spirometer: tidal volume, expiratory reserve, and vital capacity. A fourth volume, inspiratory reserve volume, was calculated from these measurements (Cunningham and Lancaster, 1997).

All measurements were taken while the subjects were at a state of rest (sitting or standing).

There were three repetitions for each of the measured volumes. The spirometer measurement indicator was set to zero before each measurement, when necessary. Tidal volume was measured first by having the subject exhale a single normal breath into the spirometer. Expiratory reserve volume was measured next. At the end of a normal breath, the subject forcefully exhaled as much air as possible (without taking another breath) into the spirometer. Vital capacity was measured last by having the subject inhale as deeply as possible, then exhale slowly, forcefully and as completely as possible into the spirometer.

Inspiratory reserve volume was determined using the three measured volumes. Averaged values of the three repetitions were used for the calculation (Cunningham and Lancaster, 1997). The calculation is performed by subtracting the values for the tidal volume (TV) and expiratory reserve volume (ERV) from the value for the vital capacity (VC). The equation can be written:

$$VC - TV - ERV = IRV.$$

The respiration volumes along with the subjects' age, height, weight, sex, regular fitness level as well as smoker profile were recorded. Data were shared among class members.

## Results

The vital capacity values for the subjects in this experiment varied considerably from the normal established values. The females in the class had the following volumes (normal value for the person's height and age in parentheses): Janet, VC=4170ml (4031ml), Laurie, VC=2500ml (4270ml), and Lisa, VC=3300ml (3432ml) (figure 1). The males in the class had the following values: Tim R., VC=4900ml (5206ml); Gene, VC=4830ml (5471ml); Tim C., VC=4920ml (4455ml) (figure 2).

In general, the average values of the females, (TV=420ml, IRV=1220ml, ERV=1690ml, VC=3320ml), were found to be lower than those of the males, (TV=470ml, IRV=2760ml, ERV=1650ml, VC=4880ml), with the exception of ERV which was higher in the females (figure 3).

## Discussion

The data in this investigation show that on average, males in the class had a higher vital capacity (VC) than the females (figure 3). These results are in alignment with the accepted anatomical trend in comparing respiratory volumes of the sexes (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The females exceeded the males in expiratory reserve volume (ERV), which was not expected. This could be an indication of stronger abdominal and internal intercostal muscles (the muscles that aid forced expiration) in the females. Likewise, the higher IRV values of the males may indicate greater strength in the muscles that aid inspiration (external intercostals, scalenes and sternocleidomastoids).

A comparison of the females shows some interesting trends. Lisa (age, 33 and height 64") had a vital capacity normal for her age, sex and height despite the fact that she is an ex-smoker. The expected indication would be for Lisa to have a lower than normal VC. Perhaps her lungs have recovered well. Janet (height, 67") and Laurie (height, 70") are the same age (22), yet while Laurie is taller, Janet has larger lung volumes in every category (see figure 1). This may be due to greater aerobic fitness in Janet, who is known to exercise regularly and vigorously.

Comparison of the males also shows some interesting trends. Tim R. had higher values than Gene in all categories except IRV (see figure 2). These higher values may be due to Tim R.'s



age (18). Gene is older (24) and 3 inches taller (height, 73") than Tim R. (height, 70"), which might account for his higher IRV value. Alternatively, he may have more developed inspiratory muscles than Tim R..

Tim C., who is 34 years of age and 66" in height, had higher volumes than Gene and Tim R. in all categories except ERV (figure 2). This is perhaps not so surprising, when it is revealed that Tim C. was a cigarette smoker for nearly 20 years. A higher tidal volume could indicate the need for more airflow due to less efficient lungs because of smoking. A higher vital capacity could be due to damaged alveoli sacs, resulting in more air space in the lungs. A higher IRV may be due to the loss of elasticity of the lungs, also a known result of smoking (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The lower ERV could be the result of loss of elasticity. These are all indications of lung damage similar to emphysema (Tortora and Grabowski, 1996). The lower ERV value could also be due to greater age.

Possible sources of error in this experiment include failure to adhere to the standard procedures, incorrect-reading of spirometer, and error in calculations. Failure to perform the experiment as directed, misreading or failing to calibrate the spirometer properly could all result in erroneous data. In addition, of note is the fact that some of the subjects performed the volumetric measurements when seated, while others made measurements standing. It is possible that those who stood during the experiment were able to inhale more deeply than the persons who were seated. This would distort the data and make comparisons between subjects misleading.

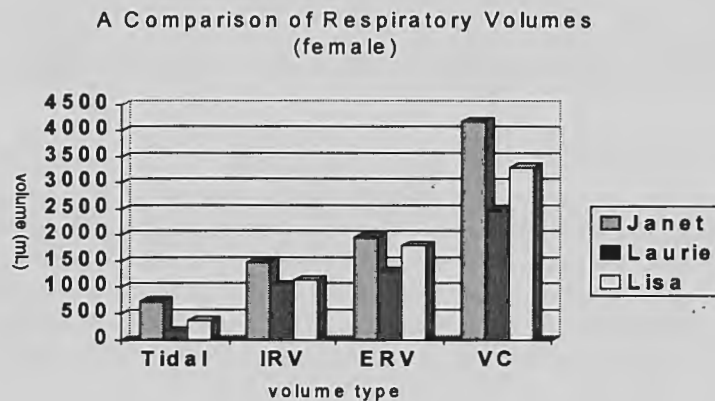


Figure 1

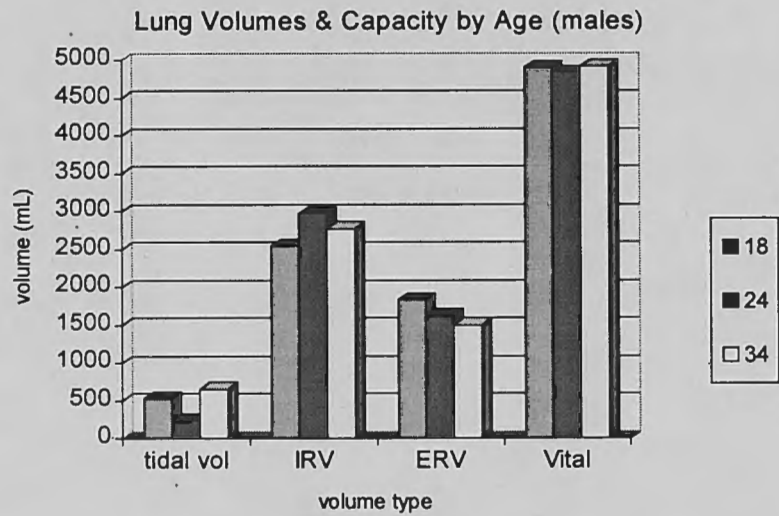


Figure 2

## Respiratory Volumes by Sex

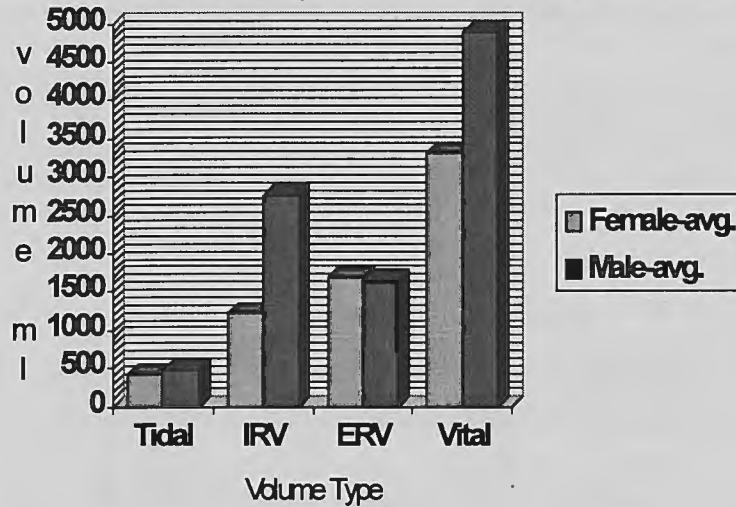
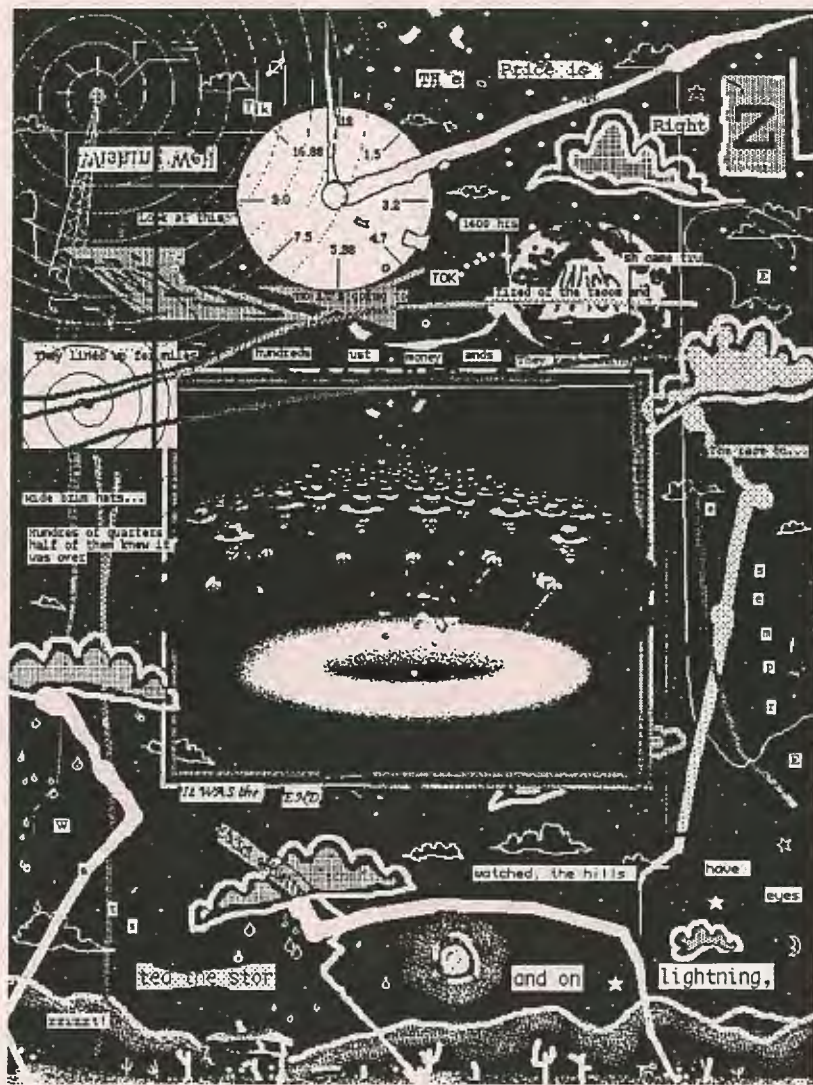


Figure 3

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- Myers, D. G. 1998. Psychology. Worth Publishers, New York, NY, USA.
- Tortora, G. J. and S. R. Grabowski. 1996. Principles of Anatomy and Physiology. Harper Collins College Publishers, New York, NY, USA.



Lucas Erickson  
Wishing Well  
Computer art, 10.75" x 8"



*Artist's comment: Since the SuperPaint program does not allow for a "super" or "painted" piece of art, I tried to take a surrealistic approach to my work. This is a style that the computer, with all its tools, is most favored for me.*

*Lucas Erickson  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*



*Student's comments: A requirement in English 100 was to choose a significant experience in our life and to write a narrative essay about it. In my essay, I decided to describe how I overcame my own lack of schooling. During the writing process, I realized the importance of education and just how far I had progressed. I hope my essay will inspire others to be pro-active in setting goals and making a plan to achieve them*

Michelle Campbell

*Instructor's comments: In this essay, Michelle explains the process by which a person teaches herself a new language. In relating her reading of other essays on the value and power of language, in particular, Malcolm X's account of discovering language while in prison, Michelle expresses cogently an experience that is uniquely her own and yet one that must also ring true for many others: tackling the problem of education single-handedly and at a later stage in life. This essay is a testament to Michelle's hard work, dedication, and courage – hallmarks of many of Whatcom's returning students.*

Jeffrey Klausman, English 100

## Teaching Myself a New Language

Michelle Campbell

My view of the world I lived in growing up was very limited. The highest education of anyone in my family was High School and I didn't even get that far. At the age fifteen, I dropped out of school and decided to get a job. Nonetheless, for many years I was uncomfortable with my lack of education. One day, tired of listening to music on the radio, I tuned into talk radio. I was hanging on every word that was being said. The words were penetrating my mind and intensified my curiosity to the point that I decided that I wanted to learn the language. I came up with a plan that I would buy some reading material and teach myself. I began implementing it right away. I was on a course to change my view of the world.

I went to a book store and purchased a book of short stories, a copy of Time magazine, a newspaper, and a dictionary. Although I was excited about my new challenge, I didn't feel confident enough to share my story with anyone. I chose to read in the privacy of my own home, in the evenings. Each night, after work, I unplugged the telephone, so I wouldn't be interrupted. Then I would curl up on the couch with my book, the dictionary, and a pencil. I would read for hours on end. Sometimes I would read until I fell asleep, only to wake up clutching my book and pencil. As I felt the need for additional reference material, I would go searching at the public library. The first adventure to the library in search of additional reading material seemed so intimidating. There were so many books where would I start? I remember asking the reference person for help, and he was gracious enough to show me around. When he asked me if I had any questions all I wanted to know was how many books could I take home. The library was and still is a great source of information for me. As I look back, I remember reading something once that said, "Anything you want to educate yourself about is at the library- you just have to find it."

Progress was slow at first. I thought I would be reading a chapter a night. The reality

was, I would struggle to read a page a night. It took a tremendous amount of patience and perseverance, but I felt driven to learn. I set out to read one short story every night. However, some of the short stories were five to six pages long with small print. I spent a lot of time stopping to look up words that were unfamiliar to me. Every night I would challenge myself to read more than I had the night before. Also I had a second opportunity. My job as a courier allowed me the opportunity to educate myself through audio tapes while driving in the car all day. After a long search, I found educational and motivational tapes by Anthony Robbins, Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale, just to name a few. I listened to Norman Vincent Peale, in his authoritarian deep voice, tell me about the power of positive thinking: "Believe and you too shall achieve!" He would give examples of how someone with all odds stacked against them would succeed. He inspired me, and for the first time in my life, I was beginning to understand that my life was a direct result of my choices, that I had the power to change.

Teaching myself was frustrating at times. For example, if I couldn't pronounce a word like "faux pas," or if I heard that word and wanted to look it up in the dictionary, I could never find it. Then I would either take a break and start fresh in the morning, or I would listen to a motivational tape, like Tony Robbins in unlimited power. When he would say, "personal power is the ability to take action in spite of it all those are the people who make their dreams their day to day reality." He would help coach me to get back on track because my motivation for obtaining more education was opportunity. I was in my early twenties and determined not to live the same life my family had lived. I grew up in poverty, and my family views themselves as victims. I dreamed of better opportunities.

Several years later, I felt confident enough to enter a new profession in the medical field. I noticed that the more educated I became, the more my attitude started to change. I was more open to new ideas and just beginning to realize my potential. The administrator of the medical facility where I was employed started to notice my progress. She felt that my communication skills and rapport with the patients were above average and offered me a position that would change my life. When I explained to her that I was not academically qualified, she taught me a lesson I will always remember. She responded, "You are the only one that knows that."

I was offered the position of head phlebotomist. I had never drawn blood before. I was very stressed and nervous but kept remembering what the Administrator had said. I remembered listening to a motivational tape that said "fake it till you make it." This was my chance, so I accepted that job and, by watching another lab technician, learned how to draw blood in less than one day's time. I had a lot of fun telling people I met what my title was. Few of them knew how to spell it, but you can bet I did.

As a result of my hard work and determination, my relationships with people were changing as I gained a better command of the language. I seemed to have nothing in common with my old friends. A new life was evolving for me. The more educated the people around me were, the more challenged I felt. I began to believe that I could do anything I wanted. So, now my view of the world I live in is unlimited. I had worked in the medical field for seven years. After accomplishing every thing I had set out to, I entered the real estate industry. Although I was very "successful" in real estate for five years, somewhere in the top 5% locally. I have decided to become a full-time student. I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in Psychology. I look forward to coaching people to make changes in their lives, like I have made in mine, because your past doesn't equal your future.

*Student's comments: Of all the essays assigned in this course, the descriptive essay was the most satisfying to write. I usually find writing to be a challenge, but when given the opportunity to convey a personal experience that I felt passionate about, I was able to easily translate into words the images and feelings that I held in my mind.*

Sharmon Hill

*Instructor's Note: I have long been interested in the way that people write about place. That is why I was especially excited when I learned that the focus of this year's "A Gathering of Voices" is based on the school wide goal that "Students who graduate from WCC will demonstrate their ability to understand and relate to the natural world and people while respecting their cultures and perspectives." I think that Sharmon's essay is an excellent example of writing by a student who has accomplished that goal. Sharmon chose to write about a places in nature that is important to her. Her use of descriptive details and colorful examples shows how she understands her significant place through a sensory lens and her reflection and analysis expose her ability to relate to the natural world in significant ways.*

Jessica Steele, English 100

## **Freil Falls**

Sharmon Hill

Before paddling into Hotham Sound for the first time last spring, I had spent many hours poring over charts of the area and reading others' accounts of what they had discovered there. I anticipated the landscape surrounding the Sound to be rugged with rocky shorelines rising steeply from sea level to 5,000 feet and riddled with stony pocket beaches. I also expected to find several waterfalls in the region. Upon arriving, the towering beauty of the area struck me as being even more impressive than I had imagined, but I was especially unprepared for the soul-stirring magnificence of Freil Falls and the impact it would have on my perception of life.

Almost one year later, I vividly recall sitting snug in my kayak, floating at the base of this natural wonder known as Freil Falls and looking up for a fish-eye view of the source. At 3,000 feet, the mountainous peak directly above me met the cloud studded sky. The rocky raggedness of this elevated terrain was softened sporadically with compacted snow. Slowly dropping my gaze, I noticed that these snowy patches of whiteness were replaced with clinging islands of trees that had been brave enough to create an existence there with minimal conditions for gaining a foothold and receiving nourishment. At about 1,500 feet, the stark foliage of scrub pine and salal was interspersed with newly leafing dogwood, alder and maple.

Within this new, green lushness, I detected a whiteness that, this time, was sharp in contrast. As I focused more closely, I realized it was the tumble of water weaving its way vertically through an otherwise unbroken canopy of spring-green foliage. A basin of water, a fresh water lake the size of Lake Samish, met the edge of the rock and immediately plunged 300 feet before-disappearing into a tangle of forest. This cascade of water continued to hide-and-seek its way down to meet the saltwater in a final rush over a bed of rock carpeted in old-growth oysters

and mussels.

I clearly remember that after two hours of paddling, the sound emanating from the falls had been the first indication of its location. From three miles away I had detected a constant rumbling. This sound would become a reliable backdrop for the next few days of my stay and was alternately nurturing and disturbing. As I drew nearer, the ceaseless thundering became louder and began to take on different tones. I picked out a melody within the continual roar that had a pulsating beat of its own. This musical complexity seemed to be the result of the falls being temporarily divided by outcroppings of rock until they were reunited with increased voracity. In other spots, portions of water collected in smaller basins for a time, deepened, and then spilled over and plunged with their own intensity of sound. The tumbling water being held and released at different intervals added to the poignant symphony I was experiencing.

The longer I was still and open to hearing this song of nature and watching the pulsation of the falls, the more it became part of me, as if the blood of my body were reaching out to connect with its origins in creation and join with this natural concert. My emotions were set rolling along with the undulation. I felt the immensity and timelessness of earth life.

At first, tears welled and spilled over onto my face from the feeling of unimportance that this grand phenomenon conjured. How petty and meaningless my own small life felt in the presence of this ancient existence of water flowing over rock continuously and forever. The security in thinking that my being had relevance felt threatened.

Over time, however, this same magnificence that at first conjured feelings of sadness and fear became comforting, even nurturing, with the realization that this insignificance could be freeing. The details and choices of my life suddenly seemed reassuringly small compared to the overall vastness of time. The sound and sight of such sacred beauty surrounded me and beckoned me to let go, just a little bit, and release myself to simply being.

Today, again immersed in daily life and faced with all the details that tend to come along with it, I sometimes take a moment to conjure up the image of Freil Falls and the lesson it brought me last spring. I call on this powerful memory to remind myself to let go of the importance of controlling all the aspects of my life. It is a place I will return to refresh my soul.

*Instructor's comments: Chris wrote this essay as a response to an English 100 assignment which asked students to write a reflective description/narration about a place that helped to form their identities. I was impressed by the orderliness and clarity of Chris' observations, as well as the range and sharpness of the descriptions. Chris has skillfully integrated reflections on the landscape, history, and culture of Skagway with a commentary on his own development while he was there. The result is a concise account of how living in a unique and diverse environment shaped a person on the path to self-sufficiency.*

Susan Lonac, English 100

## The Best Time of My Life

Christopher White

As the plane to which I had reluctantly entrusted my life began its turbulent descent into the town of Skagway, I asked myself, "What the hell am I doing here?" Being graced with a bird's eye view of the small huddle of houses and businesses, I wondered if this was really happening to me. "Is this where I am going to spend my entire summer? I don't think so," I thought. I remembered back to the conversation I had with my friend who had sold me on coming north. Specifically, I remembered him saying that spending a summer in Skagway was "the best time of his life." Well, the best time of his life looked pretty dull. The high-jagged peaks which he had so eloquently described were now covered in a blanket of white, the plants and grass were a dull brown, and there were but a handful of cars lining the street. I couldn't believe that I had just risked my life on a four-seat puddle-jumper to come work in a ghost town. Little did I know that Skagway, a desolate town located in the middle of nowhere, would open my eyes in ways that nothing else in this world had. Skagway changed my life forever.

Skagway, founded in 1896, is a town rich in history and was once known as "the gateway to the Klondike Gold Fields." Hundreds of thousands of people with dreams of becoming wealthy flocked to Skagway on their way to the gold fields of the central Yukon. The gold rush died out only a few years later, but it gave life to a town that is still living strong. A little over a million tourists migrate to Skagway each summer, so they can see where their great-great grandfathers and grandmothers had either been or dreamed of going. Just as Skagway had taught important lessons to the gold miners back in the 1890's, it taught me lessons in life which all the classrooms and conversations that I had ever participated in hadn't.

The most prominent lesson that I learned while in Skagway was always to be myself. It was quite the experience to travel to a place where I didn't know anybody. I was new to this town and didn't know a soul. I didn't know anything about anyone as they knew nothing about me. It was a fresh, clean slate. It's not that life at home was in any way bad or that I had any deep dark secrets; it's just that this was a chance to start over and be who I always was, myself. There are very few external factors in Skagway. There is no MTV, no radio, and no fashion trends; therefore, people naturally act only as themselves in the purest form. Skagway was exactly the place in which I needed to spend *a lot* of time.

The first person that I was introduced to was a familiar one. Jeff was a friend of the friend who had got me to go to Skagway. I had heard many interesting stories about the short



surfer from Maui, one describing how honest and easygoing he was. Those qualities were proved true during the first of many conversations which we had. Later that night at the local watering hole, Jeff introduced me to a number of local Skagwegians. There was something very odd about all of these new people. It was like something out of a Steven King novel, something extremely eerie. All of the people I was meeting were similar in that they all seemed very sincere and honest. There weren't any disguises, clichés or cliques in Alaska, and that was very surprising. It was a breath of fresh air. After spending an entire summer with people who were nobody but themselves, you pick up on this quality and have no choice but to retain it and carry it with you the rest of your life.

Another important lesson that I learned in Skagway was to be independent. Independence was not necessarily a new concept to me; it's just that I had never experienced true independence. I had lived away from home before, but home was always a short drive or a phone call away. I still had the phone, except that now it would only work when the weather was pleasant, and if I wanted to drive home it would take three days, non-stop. Skagway was a long way to go if all you wanted to do was screw around. (Personally, I went to Skagway to be as far away from the normal wear and tear of city life as possible, and to make a load of money). My parents had not followed me up to Skagway; thus the only person that I had to turn to was myself. It was my responsibility to make it to work, my responsibility to shop and cook for myself, and my responsibility to make sure I had a good time while in Skagway. Life in Skagway was what I, and only I, was going to make of it! That is an important concept in independence—life is what you make of it—and I learned that concept because of Skagway.

The diversity in Skagway is extraordinary, and what you get out of it is just as amazing. The hotel that I worked at, in fact all the businesses in Skagway, fill their summer positions with college students from all over the United States and Canada. I had the pleasure of working with a great variety of these people, and I can say that it is quite the learning experience. There are so many little things, little customs, that you pick up while working with people of different backgrounds. For example, by the end of my first summer I had a Western / Canadian / Wisconsin accent, which was really scary because I had talked like a Washingtonian for over 20 years, and now in just six months I was talking like a bilingual mutt. As I said before, Skagway is also a Mecca for tourists. I have seen, met or heard tourists from all over the world. So besides retaining different customs from just your coworkers and friends, you are also retaining all the customs and subtle differences from people who are from as far away as you could possibly imagine.

Skagway was the teacher in a vast and open classroom where I learned about myself and others. Skagway opened my eyes in ways that living in the city had never done. I will never forget the time spent or lessons that were learned in Skagway. Just as my friend had told me, I'm now telling you: "Skagway was the best time of my life."



Stephanie Hoffman  
*Untitled*  
Pencil & charcoal, 12" x 9"



*Artist's comment: In my spare time I relax by doing sketches of interesting faces. This face had a very sad feeling to it. I suppose I was feeling a bit sad when I drew him. He seems to have a look of desperation.*

*Stephanie Hoffman*

*Instructor: Caryn Friedlander*

*Student's comments: I chose to compare high school to a totalitarian society because I have always found high school to be quite oppressive. In writing this essay I am not trying to advance a certain political view. Although I use communist societies to exemplify many of my points I believe that it is not communism that leads to totalitarianism, but rather the abuse of power in a communist, democratic, or any type of government. I feel that high school students have almost no power to make decisions about their education, high school administrators unfortunately do abuse their almost complete power, and high school is definitely a totalitarian system. I have written this essay to prove my point.*

Jacquelyn Cole

*Instructor's comments: Jacquelyn's analysis of high school as compared to totalitarian societies is an essay which is indicative of her pointed frustration in a system she feels is inequitable. Her sardonic treatment of this extended metaphor is rebellious, yet astute. Jacquelyn's satiric voice in this essay is an element which she utilizes consistently in order to generate an exasperated perspective from which her ideas and feelings are expressed.*

Tere Pinney, English 101

## Totalitarianism in High School

Jacquelyn Cole

Where in the United States can a person be involuntarily confined for one hundred and eighty days, her face tracked on surveillance cameras, searched without probable cause - at any time - and forced into a predetermined daily routine? This happens in any average American high school.

By the definition from *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, totalitarianism is "absolute control by the state or a governing branch of a highly centralized institution". Totalitarianism is not just found in oppressive governments. In Washington, groupings of dozens, or hundreds, of schools close in proximity are organized into school systems. These school systems, or "districts", receive funds from the state government. Each school district in the state is therefore required to uphold the educational standards and regulations set by the state legislature. A high school under the umbrella of the school system, and state, could definitely be called a "highly centralized institution". It is true that the totalitarianism practiced in high school is on a far smaller scale than that practiced by national governments. But the principal, the school administration, and the school board have almost complete power. This makes high school, as an institution, very totalitarian.

Under totalitarian governments, such as those of the Eastern European countries before the Iron Curtain fell, citizens are involuntarily contained within their countries' borders. Students in most states are required to attend high school between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, or grades nine to twelve, for six hours a day, and one hundred and eighty days a year. For a citizen of an Iron Curtain country, traveling internationally was next to impossible, due to the lengthy process of being approved for, and getting, a visa. Students in high school

ace many of the same problems when trying to leave school. The "visa" comes in the form of a homework contract. This requires signatures from all six of one's teachers, a school administrator, and a representative from the attendance office. The process of trying to track these eight people down and obtain their signatures leaves students bogged down in paperwork and pressed for time. And like the citizens of East Berlin before the Wall fell, high school students are chased, and severely punished, if they try to jump the fence.

As in many countries with totalitarian regimes, students in most public high schools are under heavy surveillance. This includes the use of hidden cameras in the halls, metal detectors at the entrance of some buildings, students and school officials who act as hall monitors, and actual hired policemen in many schools who stand in the corner of student lounges. The hall monitors will question anyone who doesn't look like they have anywhere to go. It is not out of the ordinary for a person to be late to class, and to suddenly hear a hall monitor bark, "Where are you going?" "What class are you supposed to be in?" The police use more subtle intimidation techniques. They skulk in the corners or on the fringes of a crowd, glaring stonily. Unlike the Soviet secret police—known as the K.G.B.—the policemen hired to patrol the lounges and hallways of high school campuses will not yank unsuspecting students from their beds and haul them off in the middle of the night. However, people conversing in the lounge learn to keep their voices down when the policeman is near. Many casual references to smoking pot and drinking have led to impromptu searches by the police of students' backpacks and pockets, even though the police find nothing incriminating on the vast majority of people they pick out of the crowd.

The reason high school students subject themselves to such strict measures is one reason millions of people have been living under harsh totalitarian regimes for generations - they have little power to change the system. In the former Soviet Union, the people could vote for their elected officials, but usually there was only a single choice to vote for. In most public high schools, students don't even have a chance to vote. The administrators and the principal, who is the head of the school, are not elected by the students, but voted in by the school board. This school board could be likened to the group of elites that controlled the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and made most of the important legislative decisions in that country. Their names and faces little known to the majority of students, the school board chooses and approves the principal, the curriculum, plans the budget, and makes most of the important choices that affect students. Students can elect a representative to serve at Student Council, but this is only a token nod to democracy. The student council spends months debating whether to buy a new candy machine while the school board can vote for a new principal, decide to renovate the school, and close the Art Department in a single meeting. Like the Soviet Communist Party, the school board can also vote to ban books and movies from the school curriculum that they deem "inappropriate".

Under totalitarian governments, "proper" behavior on the part of youths is always strongly encouraged - or demanded. What is "proper" depends on who is defining propriety. In Nazi Germany before and during the second world war, the Nazis encouraged every adolescent to be patriotic by joining the Nazi Youth Party. During these party meetings, anyone who did not greet another person with the words, "Heil Hitler" was labeled unpatriotic, and a deviant. In communist China, students were given Chairman Mao's "Red Book" to study. This work laid down Communist philosophy and Mao's personal ideals. Students were encouraged to embrace these teachings and use the book as a guide for proper behavior. In high school, there is no single Youth



Party to join, or "Red Book" to tell students how to behave, but conformity is reinforced in other ways. There is a mandatory class seniors in high schools in Washington are required to take whose purpose is to instruct students how to be a "proper" citizen. Many other states require high school students to take a class similar to this.

A strategy long employed by totalitarian regimes is to install the fear of harsh punishments as a tool to prevent revolutions from springing up. An estimated twenty million people were killed by Stalin's regime in Russia, some of them for only uttering a single word against the Communist Party, while the majority of Russians learned to keep their dissenting opinions to themselves. Though we have learned that the hired officer in the high schools cannot rouse students from their houses at night and drag them to the gulag, high school administrators use Stalin's technique of threatening and delivering harsh punishments to convince students to follow school rules. A student can be suspended for a week for trying to defend himself against someone who started a fight with him. Being caught lighting a cigarette across the street from the school earns an equal suspension, or a fine of two hundred dollars. The entire student body at a local high school was forbidden from eating lunch in the halls when some students failed, for a few days, to pick up their trash. The threat of suspension does not bother some students, but others, who must duck into the bushes behind the school to satisfy their daily or hourly nicotine cravings, are constantly looking over their shoulder.

Students, like people living in countries under totalitarian regimes, have no real rights. As in Nazi Germany, where all radio broadcasts, newspapers, and even personal correspondence was censored, freedom of speech is specifically not guaranteed to high school students. Principals have the power to censor student newspapers, and the schoolboard can ban "inappropriate" books and movies from the curriculum. Under many strict totalitarian governments, such as the former Soviet government, a person could be jailed for publishing an underground newspaper. High school students at some schools can be denied their diploma if they distribute an "unauthorized", or underground, student newspaper on campus. In high schools, protests, peaceful or not, are virtually unknown. Like people in many countries around the world, high school students can be shaken down and searched for no reason at all. Similar to the policies of many dictatorships, students in most high schools can be "detained" without trial. Detention is a high school institution that serves as an after-school jail. Any student can be sent there, for any length of time, by a teacher or administrator. The authority figure who sent the student simply has to charge the student with breaking a rule. The authority doesn't have to even prove that the student committed the infraction.

Some high school students lose faith in the benefits of the school system when they realize that their principal, school administrators, and the school board, exercise almost complete power over the student body. Other students, however, realize that no government has proven itself to be immortal. Neither, then, should the totalitarian way high schools are run be expected to last forever.

*Student's comments: This paper underwent a tremendous metamorphosis as I wrote it, changing from a paper on the environmental drawbacks of urban sprawl, to the social drawbacks of urban sprawl, to finally become what it is now: a protest against the sprawling suburbs of post-WWII America. What inspired me to write about this seemingly obscure subject? Probably the fact that I live in suburbia, and cannot help but notice how the location of a home can play a serious role in one's well-being. As Bellingham grows, I would like to make people more aware of what makes a real neighborhood, and how proper residential areas can help improve the mind-frame of an entire city. The environmentally concerned students at WCC, as well as the grass roots curriculum offered there, have given me hope that many people besides myself are concerned with the progress and stability of Bellingham.*

Amy Kenna

*Instructor's comments: We read Tim Egan's The Good Rain in my English 101 class, and then, for the final argumentative paper, my students "took a stand" on some issue that affects us here in the Pacific Northwest. Amy had strong feelings about urban sprawl, and the first draft of this paper was probably twice as long as the final version. It was a pleasure to watch it evolve as she focused and developed her ideas. And she was serious, too. That's why she's addressed it to the "suburbanites" who may not realize what they're lifestyle is doing to our region: she wanted to change some minds.*

Brian Patterson, English 101

## A Wake-up Call to Suburbanites

Amy Kenna

*"Our real goal is peace of mind, isn't it? When Thomas Jefferson penned the phrase, 'Pursuit of happiness,' surely he didn't mean that we should chase after Ferrari's, four by four's, speedboats, ATV's and snowmobiles. I think he meant we should safeguard the right to make informed choices on our on behalf—choices that are based on something genuine, like biological and social well-being" — David Wann.*

Imagine the typical suburbanite: He or she lives comfortably on a two-acre plot of land in a quiet, crime-free neighborhood. The split-level house and dual-car garage offer all the modern conveniences one could ask for. The typical suburbanite lives in pure bliss, with one exception: Every now and then, the suburbanite hears about the negative impacts his sprawling neighborhood, and others like it, have on the rest of the world, such as the inner city and the environment. However, though these issues are somewhat disturbing, the suburbanite, (like many people) will not re-think his residential location unless he believes it negatively impacts the quality of his own daily life.

Here's something the suburbanite doesn't know: Living in suburbia *does* decrease the quality of his lifestyle, and extensively so. Complete with social, physical, economical and psychological drawbacks, the modern suburban neighborhood poses a multitude of serious risks to anyone striving for the old-time goals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

## Health Hazards

Many suburban residential areas today sprawl far beyond the inner city limits, requiring a long daily commute for their residents. In addition, most of these areas don't offer public transportation. According to a survey done by Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 47 percent of all metro households are two-vehicular, and 75 percent of their residents drive everyday (Gould 2). Gould quotes Marti Sievert, a resident of a suburban area in Delafield, Wisconsin, who says, "Even if we had buses running, we probably wouldn't use them. We're into so many different routines- the doctor here, shopping there. Everything is so scattered, you really need a car" (1).

Why is suburban automobile dependency a concern? Because daily commutes in city traffic pose serious risks to the suburbanite's health and life.

Cars produce nitrogen dioxide, which rises in the atmosphere and becomes smog. According to Lawrence Sombke, "The American Lung Association states that exposure to smog can cause eye, nose, and throat irritation, coughing, short breath, headaches, tight chest, impaired pulmonary function, altered red blood cells and asthma attacks" (22). Cars also emit a poisonous gas carbon monoxide, which "limits the body's ability to transport oxygen to the body tissues," and therefore strains the pregnant, the elderly, and people with heart conditions (22).

The suburbanite's daily commute is also threatening to his or her life. Echenbarer, in his article "America's Worst Drivers," mentions the growing aggression of American drivers, and its risks. "Statistically, you're more likely to be run down than gunned down by a stranger in New York City" (114). Car-related fatalities are tragically frequent. The World Book Encyclopedia states "Traffic accidents in the U.S. resulted in about 57,000 deaths and about 4,700,000 injuries each year in the early 1970's" (Kimes 932).

As well as the car-related risks of suburbia, studies have also proved that residential scatter areas (as opposed to the inner city) have slower urban response times for police, fire-fighters and emergency ambulances. A study by the American Farmland Trust found that in general, "residents in the scatter development areas faced dangerously long emergency response times for ambulance, police, and fire-fighters" (AFT 3).

A study by the Center for Agriculture in the Environment shows the same: "The average response times for suburban areas, 11.47 minutes, was almost twice than of urban areas" (CAF 4). "We suggest that both prospective home buyers and the government authorities responsible for siting new residential areas be aware of the safety risks" (CAF 8)

## Costs

Living on the outskirts of town can attack the suburbanite's pocketbook as well as his health. For the many urban-fringe residents who still have inner-city jobs, commuting constitutes a large monthly fee, which includes insurance, auto maintenance and a gas bill inflated by daily traffic congestion. David Wann also speaks of the hidden costs of the automobile, such as the expanding sticker price and insurance costs, highway maintenance and reconstruction, and police/paramedic services (128).

Another location-related cost to suburbanites is that of schools and sewer/water lines in scatter areas. The Center for Agriculture in the Environment states that sewer and water lines must be extended longer distances to urban areas, and therefore cost more (5). Also, "The average

new home in unincorporated areas does not generate sufficient revenues for the school district to cover the cost of busing its children... From a fiscal point of view, the suburban homes might not be a better bargain" (5).

A study by the American Farmland Trust proves the same, citing a significant shortfall from the tax revenues of homes in scatter developments for covering the cost of schools due to running buses (2). "These costs would have been avoidable or reduced if the homes had been built within or closer to existing municipalities" (3). Also, the AFT found that extending sewer and water lines can be risky and ultimately costly (4).

### **Lack of Architectural Appeal**

One thing the suburbanite's neighborhood commonly lacks is aesthetic appeal in both the architecture and layout. Such a lack of design diversity and creativity will hinder the suburbanite's ability to experience a "sense of place" toward his home. Author John Berger, describing the austerity of suburbia, says "Despite all the affluence, a subdivision's standardized model homes, fifty feet-wide streets and predictable layout can lend it a dull, impersonal character" (131). Architect Peter Calthorpe describes modern suburbs as "truly pioneer urban ecologies where little thought or time is given to the subtleties of place, shared amenities, and a sense of community or permanence" (Wann 129). This quote leads to another downside of suburban dwellings:

### **Loss of Community**

Modern suburbs lack one basic component of "home": a sense of community. Calthorpe notes that suburban areas generally have too low a density to support things people associate with community and sociability, such as corner shops and cafés (129).

Also, as various institutions spread away from inner-city areas in an attempt to follow the middle class, suburban development tends to degrade long-standing communities within the city. The impact of such losses are felt by everyone, including suburbanites, who spend a good deal of their day within the city.

One example of a deteriorating community due to the onslaught of suburban development is Saratoga Springs, New York. In an editorial, author Kunstler describes the town's loss of character since World War II, including the razing of mammoth hotels for strip malls and parking lots, and the building of a new junior high school, three miles out of town, to which students are forbidden to ride bikes or walk. "Many of the functions of everyday life were taken out of downtown and scattered out in the countryside where they are only accessible by motor vehicles" (2). He describes the town as "under assault by forces that want to turn it into another version of Paramus, New Jersey, with all the highway crud, chain store servitude and loss of community that pattern of development entails" (1).

### **Loss of Nature**

Suburbanites, like most people, feel distress when they witness their favorite natural areas being eaten up by city scattering. Whitney Gould, while measuring the costs of city sprawl, mentions quite seriously the intangible expenses: "Who can measure the loss of a wooded hillside? A glacial ridge? A cattail marsh?" (3). Gould mentions that the upland woods in Wausheka County, Wisconsin, are "being carved up for development at a rapid pace, obliterating vistas that give defi-

dition and character to the rural landscape" (2).

Another, more destitute example of land-gobbling sprawl is the chaotic urbanization of many places in California. "As the state moved from a rural to an urban culture, grape vineyards and orange groves gave way to urban sprawl, and much of the quiet grace and beauty of the past seemed to vanish" (Roll 3).

Jerome Belanger, in *A Guide to Country Living*, describes San Jose as it gained over 8,000 people in twenty years and lost 140,000 acres of land (24). "The valley, once one of the most beautiful and productive agricultural areas in the world, has become a sprawling network of cities and suburbs... The valleys and orange groves are gone forever" (25).

### A Successful Alternative

But can a community that discourages sprawl, automobile dependency, and monotonous architecture survive, or even become successful? Sure it can. Take Davis, California, a community with "twice as many bicycles as cars, restricted growth and limited building permits" (Wann 3). Shopping center sizes in Davis are limited, and homes are clustered in close proximity with small private yards and access to public areas. Streets are narrow, and design diversity is rewarded (3). Michael Corbett, designer of Village Homes in Davis, said he wanted to create "a place where residents could develop close relationships and integrate the process of earning a neighborhood with living, learning, and playing together" (Berger 76).

The result? "The community is wildly successful: less crime, higher selling price per square foot, and less residential turnover" (Wann 18).

An example of true success: a shrewdly planned, efficiently zoned neighborhood with houses clustered close enough to promote a sense of community and to support various local businesses. And people love it. Not only that, but residents know each other, talk to each other, are friends with their neighbors, and finally, they feel they belong. Residents of Davis have found their "sense of place."

Perhaps, upon reading this essay, the suburbanite feels a twinge of envy toward the people of Davis, as he thinks of them ambling to the corner grocery store on foot or on bike, chatting to their neighbors along the way. Perhaps he cocks his ear, listens for the heartbeat of his own neighborhood, and finds it strangely quiet: devoid, in fact, of any noise except the consistent whir of passing automobiles. Perhaps, upon reading this essay, the suburbanite begins to reconsider his current location, not only for the harm it causes others, but for the harm it causes the social, physical, economical, and psychological aspects of *his own* well-being.



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*Student's note: I still can recall how hard and tough the days of my culture shock here were. However, as it passed, I noticed that the culture shock would not be continued forever, and I am happy when I realize I am doing what I really wanted to do.*

*Yuko Nakadaira*

*Instructor's note: In this paper, I asked students to use to try to understand a personal experience in more universal terms; in short, to try to see a process in what otherwise might be considered only something that happened. Coming from Japan to the US, Yuko had experience adapting to a foreign culture; having lived abroad myself, I knew how difficult that can be. She was able to relate her experience to the process of adaptation known as "culture shock," thereby clearly expressing for others what foreign students everywhere commonly experience.*

*Jeffrey Klausman, English 101*

## **My Culture Shock in the U.S.**

**Yuko Nakadaira**

*Culture shock: The psychological disorientation that is experienced when a person moves for an extended period of time into a culture which is different than their own.*

*International Student Handbook*

I am from Japan. Coming to the United States was my dream. When I graduated from high school, I had already decided to come and study in the United States. Today, most young people in Japan enter four years of college without a true desire to do so. They do this to prepare for entering big enterprises and to join their friends. Even though the young people may not want to become business persons or even spend four years in college, they are required by Japanese society to have high educational backgrounds. So, they do this without thinking. Also, these students do not have dreams for their future.

Actually, I was one of them who did not have a dream; however, I did not want to become one who went to college without a desire to go and not study there. So, I was tired of my Japanese society. Also, I wanted to break some of the patterns of thought I got growing up in Japan. For example, in Japan, if your friend says to you, "Come in" when you visit him or her unexpectedly, what he or she actually means, "Don't come" or "Get away." By placing myself in the American culture, which is very different from Japanese, I did not want to be limited by this conventional thinking anymore. To realize my dream after graduating, I worked at a restaurant in Japan and went to an English class for one year. During that year, my dream expanded steadily. Therefore, my dream of coming to the United States was very intense, and I had no idea I would have to face the culture shock which was waiting for me in the United States.

Since I entered Whatcom Community College one and a half years ago, I have studied about culture shock many times in my classes. As I studied about it, I noticed that what I

experienced in the first year here was exactly like culture shock. Today, as I remember those days, I notice how tough it was, but I also know it made me strong and helped me to grow up as I went through four stages.

I arrived in Bellingham in the summer of 1996. In the first few weeks in the United States, I was full of energy at the first stage called the "honeymoon stage" (Winkelman 122). Everything was new and exciting to me; strangers smiled at me when we passed each other in this town! I was moved by everything I saw and experienced. Especially, sunsets in the sky at night were more beautiful than any I had ever seen in Japan. Every day, I sighed watching the sunset from a bus after school. Also, I was amazed that there were buses and automatic doors which were so easy to be used by disable persons; we hardly had any of these in Japan. Those differences between the United States and Japan were very interesting to me. In addition, I enjoyed them. Because of my dream coming true, I was full of hopes. I expected I would enjoy my life here. I had never dreamed that my happy days would pass in just a few weeks.

The average term of the honeymoon stage period may last from a week to a month. So it was in my case, and then, I moved on to the next stage, "culture shock" (International Student Handbook 14) little by little. At this crises phase (Winkelman 122), I was tired of everything in America. I felt like a baby; I did not know how to shop and how to take a bus. When I was lost, I could not ask anybody how to find a place. If I did ask in English, I would not be able to understand his or her English directions. Moreover, each time I had to do something alone, such as shopping, I felt tense because I was really bad at English. I did not like to go to a restaurant because I had to order in English.

Then, I was gradually becoming homesick. I showed most of the symptoms of culture shock: boredom, spending excessive amounts of time sleeping, feeling alone, avoiding Americans, eating too much, irritability, hostility towards Americans, and unexplainable fits of weeping (Material from Whatcom Community College). I wrote letters to my boyfriend every day, and every time I talked with him on the phone, I cried. I cried a lot. I cried every day. It was easy for me to cry in those days. I, of course, cried when something was hard to do or even when somebody was kind to me. Also, I hardly spoke to my host family. It was hard to have conversation with them then because of my English. Therefore, I lost my confidence. Incompatible, I got irritated when I talked to them, and they did not understand my English well. I got home late every night and went to my room immediately. Then, I slept all day on holidays and ate as much as a boy (I gained 10 pounds). I hated English, American people, American culture. . . everything. Those days were the worst that I had ever had. Almost every day, I talked to myself in my mind, "Why do I have to stand the anguish of these days?" "Can I give up?" or "Can I go back to Japan?" I did not remember how strong my desire to come to the United States at all.

Finally, I moved out to live with a new host family. I felt the need to change something in my life anyway. My new host family was very nice to me, but I was still in culture shock. I did not want to speak English, but I did not speak Japanese either. I had many Japanese friends here because there are many Japanese students in the United States today. However, I knew I did not come here to speak Japanese but English even though I got irritated by American people who did not understand my English. For that reason, I told my host family about my feeling that I did not want to speak both of English and Japanese, and I did not do anything at all for two weeks. I just stayed at home and spoke almost nothing even with my Japanese friends. However, when I look

back now, I realize that my culture shock was passing gradually then because of the fact that knew I did not come to the United States to speak Japanese and to make Japanese friends.

I came to miss my own people after all. Again, I often talked and went out with my Japanese friends because of my thought that I had to get along with them as long as there were Japanese around me. No matter how much I talked with them, watched Japanese videos, listened to Japanese music, or read Japanese books, it was still better being here than staying in Japan I thought. However, when I was with Japanese friends, I often thought, "What am I doing in America?" as I laughed with them. In truth, I did not think I was doing the right thing. Also, I tried to speak to my American friends and host family. I was at the "Adjustment stage" (Winkelman 122) then.

I still cried easily though I tried to get along with American culture. One day, my host mother told me, "This house is your second home because your first home is in Japan, isn't it?" I tried hard not to cry as long as I felt my host family's kindness at that time. Also, my American friend asked me to go out with her one day. However, I did not feel like it, so I responded, "I'm thinking." Among Japanese people, when somebody says, "I'm thinking about it" or "Let me think about it," that means his or her answer is "No." This is a Japanese custom. We often avoid saying something directly so as not to hurt someone's feelings. However, the friend said to me, "Thinking about what?! If you don't want to go, say so!" I was startled and embarrassed. I became aware that I was in America not Japan. If this happened to me when I was in culture shock, I would hate this American friend. After that, I tried not to show Japanese custom to American people meant I tried to adjust American culture.

My "Adaptation stage" (Winkelman 123), the final stage, and the spring came together. It was fine every day. Suddenly, I felt like I could accept everything about American culture because of my feelings that actually I was in America. Besides, I could consider calmly what were good points and bad points in the United States and Japan. I could feel like I was here naturally. I thought I was more suited for living in America than in Japan. In addition, about one month before going back to Japan for summer vacation, I really did not want to go back (but I did because I had already bought airplane tickets when I was homesick) because I enjoyed American life again. I had some American friends and International friends, and I was not with Japanese friends so often. I was emotionally stable, and I liked America a lot.

Just few days ago, I came back from Japan. I went back because my grand father was in a critical situation, and I spent one week there. While I was in Japan, I thought about my studying abroad in the U.S. Of course, I was glad to be in my mother country, Japan then, at the same time, I really wanted to come back to the U.S. I noticed that I missed my American friends, international friends, host family, my home, school, etc. . . . in this country. Especially, I often remembered that my host family hugged me when I left to Japan. Hugging is not a Japanese custom, and I recognize that some things in the U.S. are really suitable to me more than Japanese. When I came back from Japan, my host family met me with hugging, and I was happy to be home.

Today, I still can recall how hard those days of the culture shock were. Culture shock may be harder than you can imagine if you have never lived in another country. A cycle of culture shock can be passed more than once (Nassing 1). It keeps coming as long as I live here. Actually, it has come several times already after the first time. But, I now know what it is. I try not to forget why I am here. For example, I enjoy studying as I remember that this is what I wanted to do, and I



am doing it right now! Also, when I write or call my boyfriend, I try to tell him only happy things that are happening to me. Even though he is my boy friend, and I am a person who can tell him anything such as complaints or grumbles, what he can do for me is just listen. I have come to know that nothing good grows out of complaints and grumbles.

I know my English skill is not good enough yet, and I still need to practice and study English hard. Sometimes, it is tough. However, I am moving toward my goal which is being able to speak and hear English step by step. I feel I am doing so when I talk with my host family or American friends. Although it is still hard to talk in English, I now try to tell what my thoughts and feelings are, not only having every day's conversation. It is what I wanted to do and could not do when I came here. I will still be not good enough even when I graduate and go back to Japan, but I keep making effort and want to be satisfied with the effort when I leave. Also, I have noticed I will only live here a limited time. I have just two more years, so I try to be positive today studying "Graphic Arts" which I have found out now I want to study here.

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Signe Instanes  
*Lapland*  
Linocut, 6.5" x 9"



*Artist's comment: I have always been fascinated with how the "Samene" (the Lapps) live. I really knew what kind of image I wanted to make because of that. This image comes from pictures and movies I've seen. The Lappland is in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland. In the past, many of the Lapps lived in these "lavoos" (tents). Now some of them live in them because it is popular for tourists to see.*

*Signe Instanes  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*

*Student's comments: When my English teacher, Sandy Schroeder, advised us to write an essay about a topic we feel passionate about, I didn't have to think long. I knew right away that I wanted to write about Domestic Violence. As an advocate at a shelter for battered women and children, I witnessed and experienced a wide range of emotions on a daily basis, and I never really found an outlet for these feelings. After writing my essay, I felt tremendous relief. I also experienced a rush of excitement and pride because as a native German I was not in touch with my potential to write well in English. In Germany, writing was a big part of my life, but I gave it up when I came to the US five years ago. Now, I feel empowered to keep writing about issues that are close to my heart. I believe that writing is an effective tool to reach and touch many people, and I want to use it to raise awareness about social issues.*

Corina Schaedler

*This was the first essay that Corina wrote for my English 101 course. Although we were reading the section on Narration and Description in our text, The Riverside Reader, I didn't specifically assign a narrative. What I was impressed with in Corina's essay, besides her obvious passion and commitment to an important subject, was that she was able to incorporate various rhetorical strategies in her essay: narration, analysis, and persuasion. I was also impressed with her facility in expressing herself so well in a language that is not her primary language. Only after I recommended that she submit this to the anthology, did I realize that the theme this year is "Relating." What better submission, then, is a paper that brings up the issue of how so many of our women and children are "related" to in our society and the need for this "cycle of violence" against them to stop - not just for their sakes - but for our own as well?*

Sandra Schroeder, English 101

**The Cycle of Violence**  
or  
**"Aren't All Daddys Supposed to Hit Mommys?"**  
Corina Schaedler

I am sitting in the living room of Womencare Shelter for Battered Women and Children on a huge, orange-brown sofa that was donated to the shelter by a concerned citizen. I am trying to listen to the woman at the other end of the sofa. Her name is Linda, and she has been a resident at the shelter for three days. A black eye gives testimony to her past, which she is struggling to leave behind. Her body looks disproportionately tiny in comparison to the big piece of furniture. It makes her appear very vulnerable. The lamp on the coffee table makes the room look soft and cozy. Finally, the atmosphere in the house feels calm and safe. My thoughts keep wandering to the stressful earlier part of the day:

This morning began chaotic and set the tone for the whole day. The telephone in the small office next to the living room was ringing more often than usual for a Monday morning. It took several people to answer the three phones for the crisis help-line. Talking to victims of Domestic Violence and people who had questions regarding this issue kept me, another staff member, and a volunteer busy the whole morning. At noon, I had to take a three-year-old girl to the emer-



gency room because she fell off a table head first while wrestling with her sister. Finally, in the afternoon, I met with a woman who had called the help-line to seek shelter from her abuser. After talking with her for two hours, finding out her painful story and screening her for our intake procedures, I finally returned to the shelter with her. We were greeted by hysteric voices in the kitchen: The oil in a frying pan had caught fire, and nobody knew what to do, including me. We finally put it out with baking soda.

Now, I'm leaning back on the pillows. I take a deep breath, urging myself to forget the tiring day and to pay full attention to Linda. Her face looks drawn and pale and is surrounded by lusterless hair. For the past ten minutes, she has been squeezing her hands together nervously while we are talking. She is telling me about her life with a man who, for the past nine years, has pushed, shoved and hit her, put her down, called her names and humiliated her in front of other people, controlled her every move and step, isolated her from friends and family, prevented her from getting a job and, in her words, made her life "a living hell."

"Steve made all the big decisions," she says, staring at her fingers. "And he told me over and over again I'm a bad mother. I'm doing it wrong. Everything I did was wrong." Her eyes are big and slanted and are filling with tears now: brown, pretty eyes that are deep, seeming to contain all knowledge of pain and suffering and survival. Her tears are flowing freely now. That is good. This is the first time she has felt safe in years. I lean over and hand her a box of Kleenex, which she takes with a shaking hand. While I give her room to express her feelings, Linda silently cries out her pain. After a while, she blows her nose, wipes her cheeks and then, for the first time, smiles at me. Shyly, though, but it is a smile. She suddenly looks beautiful. I smile back at her and after a while decide to probe a little further: "What prompted you to leave the relationship?"

All of a sudden, her face gets hard again. She squeezes her left hand so hard that her knuckles turn white. She answers me with forceful determination. "I ain't let that bastard mess up my kids. I tell you that. I left him because of them. I let him beat me up all right. But Sammy sees what his Dad does to me, and one day Sammy tried to get in between us while Steve beat me up, and that bastard hit him in the face and yelled at him to get his ass out of there. That's when I knew I had to leave. And Sammy is starting to get pushy with his little sister Tina."

Linda sighs and looks at me helplessly. I nod. She told me earlier that her eight year-old son Sammy has shown signs of aggression since he was little. But it got worse, especially in the last few months. Linda says his aggression seems to have escalated since they came to the shelter.

"Yesterday, Tina played with the doll house in the playroom. She played family. I think she pretended to be us." Linda's voice is getting shaky. She continues: "She had the doll-man come in the door with the words: 'Where is my dinner, bitch?' Then he tasted it and said he didn't like it. Then she took the man and had him bounce on top of the woman with his feet and screamed: 'You are worthless, you are worthless, you are worthless!' Then....," Linda is sobbing, "I asked her why she is doing this, and she said: 'Aren't Daddys supposed to do that?' Then Sammy came in, walked straight to Tina and hit her on the head. He wanted to know where she was hiding his Game Boy. Tina started crying, I yelled at Sammy, and he screamed he hates me and wants his Dad. What shall I do now? If I had known how badly this Domestic Violence crap affects them, I would have left much sooner! How can I teach them violence is not okay? What am I supposed to do?"

Tonight, I'm driving home deep in thought. It was a long, hectic day. I cannot relax. Even at home in my bathtub, laying in the warm, comforting water, listening to my favorite Enya CD, I feel tense nevertheless. Linda's desperate question "What am I supposed to do?" rings in my ears. She looks to me for answers, in the hope that there is a magic wand that takes all the pain away, that makes the events of the past years go away, especially for the kids.

The more I am trying to relax, the worse my tension gets. What am I supposed to do? What can I do for these battered women and kids? Is there anything I can do to help, to really help? To make a difference in this cycle of violence? I am trying so hard, so damn hard, but I can't influence abusers' need for power and control, nor women's circumstances while they are in those damaging relationships. And least of all, I can't protect all the children who suffer themselves, who are confused and angry by their Dad's behavior and the fact that they still love this man although he inflicts pain. Sometimes, however, these young people have no love left for anyone, not to mention love for themselves. And that horrifies me.

A sharp pain behind my eyes is starting to develop. An article I read two weeks ago in the Sunday paper floats into my consciousness like a nightmare that hooks onto my brain and doesn't want to let go any more. It was about a 17 year-old boy who raped and killed a woman here in the area. The teenage boy was sentenced to a life-long sentence in prison and agreed to give an interview to the local newspaper. He talked about how he planned the rape and how he finally did it. I remember how terrified I was when I read this true story, especially when I got to the part where his mother was interviewed. She said she didn't give him much stability when he was young. She mentioned drugs and violence.

Violence...

I remember looking at the photo of the teenager in the paper, and my initial hate and disgust for him.

Violence...

Then I saw all the faces of the little boys I've met at the shelter throughout the years. Violence...

That Sunday, I simply broke down feeling utter helplessness, and I cried and cried, thinking of the children who are victims of Domestic Violence and their chances to repeat this vicious cycle. What will happen with Sammy? How will he cope with the violence in his childhood?

I am climbing out of the bathtub, feeling tired all of the sudden. Although I am trying to towel my face off, I cannot get it dry. Where did these tears come from? I cannot stop them. But something inside me reassures me it is okay to cry. I haven't cried for too long. Being around crisis and pain all day long, five days a week, hearing horrible stories about abuse and pain has made me somewhat hard and immune against tears. I always have to stay strong. Now, in the privacy of my bathroom, I am finally allowing my tears to flow freely.

The statistics... They prove what is true in my experience: 73% of male abusers were abused as children. At least 80% of men in prison grew up in a violent home. 3.3 million children in the US, between ages 3 and 17 years, are yearly at risk of exposure to parental violence. Of the children who witness Domestic Violence, 60% of the boys eventually become batterers, and 50% of the girls become victims. 63% of boys, ages 11-20, who commit homicide, murder the man who was abusing their mother.

One of the worst facts to me is that many parents don't realize that when children witness abuse it is as if they are being abused themselves. Many parents minimize or deny the presence

of children while the mothers are being assaulted. However, interviews with children of battered women reveal that they have seen and heard, and can describe detailed accounts of violent behavior that their mother or father never realized they had witnessed. Events can be witnessed in many ways, not just by sight. Children may hear their mother's screams and crying, the abuser's threats, sounds of fist hitting flesh, glass breaking, wood splintering, cursing and degrading language. Children also witness the consequences of the abuse after it has occurred - their mother's bruises and torn clothes, holes in walls, broken furniture, their mother's tears. They sense the tension in the house, in their mother.

I have to force myself somehow to stop thinking about these facts and numbers. By the time I am crawling into bed, it is 1:00 a.m. The last thought I have is a message to me, from me: "You don't need to have all the answers. Just be there for them and listen."

"Hey, look what I drew!" exclaims Sammy the next day, while he takes my hand and pulls me to the small table which is covered with a big sheet of paper. Curiously, I get down to my knees to inspect the picture. It is the clumsy drawing of four people. The biggest person has enormous ears. The one standing next to him is decorated with long, yellow hair, and one of the two little people is wearing a blue dress with big, purple dots in it, whereas the other one has shorts and a hat on. What they all have in common is that they hold hands and have mouths that reach from one ear to the other, signifying huge smiles.

"It is a very pretty picture, Sammy. Who are the four people?" I ask him. Eagerly, he explains: "The big guy is me when I'm grown up. Don't you recognize me? And that," he points to the yellow-haired person, "is my wife. The two children are mine. It's a boy and a girl. I think they are twins. I haven't made up my mind yet, you know."

"They all look very happy. They seem to love each other a lot," I say. I will never forget his reply. He looks at me with big, somewhat slanted eyes and comments sincerely: "Of course they are happy. I don't want to hit them or say bad things to them. Hitting is not good. It hurts people. I don't want to hit Tina any more, either. It makes me sad when people are mean to each other. You know?"

Swallowing hard, I draw him to me and embrace him in a hug. My voice is a little shaky when I say: "I know, honey. I'm glad you think so."

*Student's comments: I chose the topic of glass blowing for my narrative/descriptive essay because it is a topic that I know well and a topic that I think my audience doesn't know much about and would be interested in. I started the essay by free writing on the topic of glass blowing, and compiled a few pages of information about the history, the current state of the art, and the process of glassblowing. At this point I conferred with my instructor, Tere Pinney, about where I was headed with this essay. She informed me that the history and current state of the art stuff really didn't have a place in the rhetorical mode of a narrative/descriptive essay. She said, "What you want to do is take the reader inside the glassblowing studio and 'roll the camera'." I then realized that my goal in writing this essay was to show the reader, rather than tell the reader, about the glassblowing studio through my eyes.*

*David Stone*

*Instructor's comments: Creativity is an integral aspect of what it means to be human. Creativity—a very personal expression of self, yet reliant upon outside influences to inform the creative process as well as to establish it as a physical phenomenon—is a complex melding of those physical and ambient factors. Communicating through and/or the ability to develop an appreciation for creative media, whether it be through visual, performing, or literary arts enriches our lives and brings us together on levels not purely intellectual. The fact that David, in his essay, finds a mentor and connection of the heart in the glass shop he happens into evidences the pure joy of his experience of appreciation for the creative process. David worked diligently on this essay, reworking and recreating it so it would convey this joy and awe. As a result, the reader feels that she is in the shop, experiencing the fascination the writer finds there.*

*Tere Pinney, English 101*

## **Hot Stuff**

David Stone

Like a child fascinated by the resounding thunder and bright colorful fire in the sky on the Fourth of July, I am fascinated by the works of great artists. I love the abstract paintings by Pablo Picasso, the brilliant colors and graceful, impressionistic brush strokes of Claude Monet, and the contorted, surrealistic views of Salvador Dali. As far as creating works of art, drawing and painting has never been my strong point. I enjoy delving in to the three-dimensional art world and getting my hands dirty with projects like assembling mixed media collages and batikting fabric with hot melted wax and bright colored dyes. I have enjoyed working with wood, paper, metal, plastic, glue, crayons, paint, and above all, my favorite, my forte: the fantastic ceramic. I love the feeling of soft, moist clay in my hands, the raw, earthy smell of the clay in my nostrils, and the heat of the kiln on my face; however, for me, the most magical and gratifying aspect of ceramics is its process, from clay to cup. Taking a lump of raw earth and transforming it into a beautiful piece of art is what I love most about ceramics. My love for this transformational process led me to become captivated by the multi-faceted world of hot glass.

At the age of eighteen, much like a lump of clay needing to be molded myself, I walked into a glassblowing studio for the first time. I instantly fell in love. My senses became overwhelmed by the intense action that was taking place in this temple of art and creativity. My



ears became suddenly aware of the heartbeat of the studio, the rhythmic rumble of gas exploding into flames, heating the glass in the furnace. I could smell the heat. My nostrils were tickled by the sweet aroma of smoldering wooden blocks and newspaper, tools that the artist uses to shape the lava like hot molten glass into the shape of his desire. My eyes were entranced as I watched the artist: hot, sweaty, and intensely focused, laboring to transform the blazing, ever changing shades of molten orange glass into a shape guided by his creative mind.

The artist looked at me, his eyes piercing the dark, Lennon-style glasses protecting his eyes from the furious surge of ultraviolet light which radiated like a rocket engine from the open door of a two thousand degree furnace called the "glory hole". With a friendly grin, he bellowed over the roar, "I'm Kit!" He was beautiful. His tall, chiseled body looked analogous to this strenuous work, and his curly, long, black hair pulled into a ponytail gave him the look of a god commanding over his realm. "Have you ever seen someone blow hot glass before?"

"No," I replied, feeling a little overwhelmed by the heat, the roar, and the creativity taking place before me.

"Then have a seat, and I'll make you a water glass," he replied, making me feel welcome. The first thing he did was take a blowpipe out of a barrel containing a variety of different sized metal pipes and rods. After carefully selecting one of the five foot-long blow pipes, he walked over and inserted the end of the pipe into the glory hole. Cold, hard glass, remnants from the previous creation, began to fracture and explode off the end of the pipe, sounding like the clank of a cowbell as the glass bounced off the corrugated steel partition which barricaded the heat of the furnace and glory hole from the rest of the room. When the end of the pipe began to glow a pallid orange, he went to the furnace which housed a large crucible of two thousand degree liquid glass, and opened the door. The heat was fierce, and a multitude of bright orange hues jumped out at me and seduced every bit of my fascination.

As if he was reading my mind, Kit said, "Step up and take a look." I walked up to the furnace and looked in. I could barely make out the circular rim of the crucible and the slightly reflective surface of the glass because everything inside the furnace was a wash of various shades of vibrant orange. He dipped the end of the pipe into the crucible of hot glass, slowly turning the pipe as he gathered the thick liquid evenly onto the end of the pipe. He removed the pipe from the furnace, constantly turning the pipe slowly so that the honey-like glass remained on the pipe, and walked to the marver, a flat steel surface, where he rolled the pipe back and forth to squeeze the glass off the end of the pipe. He walked from the marver to his bench holding the pipe horizontally, always turning it to keep the glass from dripping off. He sat down at his bench behind two arms extending out parallel to the ground, so he could roll the pipe back and forth to keep the hot, liquid glass centered on the end of the pipe. He reched into a plastic five gallon bucket of water and pulled out a wooden block with a hemisphere carved out of it. He rolled the pipe back and forth on the arms of the bench and skillfully used the hollowed out wooden block to shape the hot glass into a perfect sphere.

As the glass cooled it became hard and unworkable, losing its bright orange luster, and taking on a dingy, gray shade of orange. Kit stood up and walked back to the glory hole, constantly turning the pipe, and inserted the rapidly cooling orb of glass back into the savage heat. The glass absorbed the heat until it was hot and floppy on the end of the pipe again. He went back to the bench and blew into the pipe to fill the ball of hot glass with an air bubble, like blowing up a

balloon, until the glass was hollow and the sides were thin. Then, while the glass was still hot, he rolled the pipe back and forth on the arms of his bench using a wet, wooden paddle to flatten the end of glass bubble, forming what was to become the bottom of the cup.

Again, the glass cooled and lost its orange luster until it was clear and solid. Kit stood up and took a five foot long, solid metal rod out of the pipe barrel, called a punty rod. He went to the furnace and gathered a small bit of hot glass, called a punty, on the end of the rod and went back to his bench. He gently laid the blowpipe on the arms of the bench and attached the punty to the flattened bottom of the glass bubble. He then picked up a burly bastard file and dipped it into the bucket of water. With the wet file he began to saw on the glass bubble where it met the blowpipe, causing the glass to cool rapidly where he wanted the orb to separate from the blowpipe. Then, with a determined whack, he struck the blowpipe with the file. The glass broke off the blowpipe with a resounding crack, transferring the glass from the blowpipe to the punty rod.

Now the glass bubble had a sharp, jagged opening. Kit slowly put the broken end of the glass into the glory hole to make it pliable again. Then he went back and sat down at his bench. He rolled the pipe back and forth as he used a wooden stick to open up the glass and form the lip, similar to the way a potter uses his or her fingers to open up a ceramic pot. The glass was now finished. He cooled the glass where he had attached the punty by gently tapping the area where it met with a butter knife. With a slight tap on the pipe with the knife, the glass came off into his asbestos-gloved hand. He put the glass into a nine hundred degree "annealing" oven, which cools the glass slowly, and explained, "If the glass cools too rapidly it will be shocked and crumble into pieces. Your glass will come out of the annealer tomorrow."

I left the studio amazed and excited. The heat and colors of the studio delighted me. As in ceramics, the process of glassblowing, from melted sand to cup, captivated me. I was hooked. My eyes were opened to a whole new facet of the art world, and I fell in love with hot glass that day. As I drove away, I couldn't help looking through the windshield and imagining the solid glass in its molten state, as I reflected on the glassblower transforming hot, molten glass into a beautiful work of art.

With good fortune I became an employee at that glassblowing studio. My horizons expanded to pursue the possibilities of this new, magical medium called hot glass. Like the proverbial lump of clay is transformed into a piece of art, I have been transformed into a hot, sweaty, creative glassblower, and I am tremendously grateful that life has taken me down this road.

*Student's comments: Ever since that incredible Christmas Day of 1994 when we lost a beloved family member—my grandfather—and gained a new member—my youngest cousin—my family has asked me to write a narrative/description about the events. Every break from school, I planned to write this paper, but I continually procrastinated, until my English 101 class. When the assignment was given to write a narrative/description paper, I knew immediately what I wanted to write about. Finally, after over three years, this class gave me a much needed reason to write this paper for myself, the class, and for my family.*

Melissa Stoner

*Instructor's comments: Melissa's essay is a touching story of a family's cohesiveness, of their strength and sensitivity and of the richness which occurs when a communion of hearts share loss and sorrow, joy and love. I feel grateful to Melissa for sharing this intimate portrait of her family with me, and for agreeing to add her voice to this publication. I'm glad that Melissa's essay, "Life, Death, and Christmas" was destined to be written in my English 101 class as a consequence of her long-time desire to draft her family's story. Melissa, in her years of wanting to write this essay, perhaps experienced a deeper poignancy around the events as she matured and as the story matured in her. I feel fortunate to have been involved in her writing process.*

Tere Pinney, English 101

## Life, Death, and Christmas

Melissa Stoner

Christmas, a time of traditions and celebration, a day I normally anticipate with happiness and excitement, now for the first time symbolizes sadness. The circumstances have proceeded from a doctor's diagnosis to a place of certain good-byes. I hate good-byes.

Before long the day will start. I faintly hear my mother percolating the coffee and allowing cupboard doors to loudly fall shut. I am filled with uncertainty about the events that will occur today, but one thing is definite, this Christmas day will be unlike any other. During my short sixteen years, the routine has always been predictable—wake up early, open presents at home, then pack into the family car for breakfast with my mother's joyous family, followed by the afternoon spent with my father's large family. I am blessed to have all of my aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents living in Bellingham, so I am able to visit my entire family on Christmas Day.

Now footsteps make their way down the flight of stairs toward my bedroom and my brother's. "Okay Melissa and Jamey, you can come upstairs now," my mom gently tells us. Ordinarily, my brother and I wait anxiously for those words to dash upstairs to the tree in order for the wonderful day to begin. However, this year, both wrapped up in our favorite blankets, we creep up the stairs one at a time like zombies and fall silently onto a spot in front of the tree.

On this eerie Christmas morning, surrounded by my loving parents and brother, I can momentarily attempt to forget about the troublesome day ahead. My mother sits silently in the rocking chair, wrapped in her cozy pink bathrobe. She gently rocks back and forth to the beat of the Christmas music playing daintily in the background. My father, sitting next to my

mother on a wooden kitchen chair, holds the camera in one hand and coffee in the other, putting them down only to open a gift. One at a time each of us rips wrapping paper off of a box, opening it quickly to see what treasures it holds. Inevitably, my father opens the last present. Standing up slowly, my hands grip my stomach as queasiness, like after a carnival ride, takes over my petite body, forcing me to dress tediously and rest on my bed while everyone else prepares for the day. Eventually, each of us assumes our assigned seat in our white Honda Accord, ready to travel across town to my grandparent's house.

As I peer through the car's window to the surrounding bleak landscape on this non-white Christmas, my mind is flooded with thoughts. My father's father has cancer. Bone cancer has spread gradually throughout Grandpa's stocky 5-foot, 9-inch body for many years. Stubborn and strong, Grandpa's health has remained decent far beyond the doctor's estimates. However, on December 12, 1994, my family began to realize that his fight was soon to be over because of a new, deadly tumor discovered in his brain.

Caught up in my reminiscing, I notice only for a moment the unusual silence in the car before my thoughts took me back through the events of the last couple weeks. In an extremely brief period of time I had observed my grandfather quickly transform from the vibrant man I had always known to a comatose shell. Memories entrenched my mind of the years of simply walking across the driveway to his house only 100 yards away, entering without even a knock, and of the innumerable visits filled with laughter, stories, and sweet music from his violin. I can visualize it clearly in my mind, my grandfather gently resting the smooth, wooden instrument between his neck and chin, his body flowing with the music of Mozart, Brahms, and his beloved Mendelsohn. He has taught me to laugh, to respect, to cherish my family, to love music, and above all else, to love God.

Circumstances of this Christmas season run through my mind scene by scene. Immediately following the terrible news of the tumor, my entire family spent an extra amount of time visiting with my grandparents. Early in the month he seemed no different than his usual, vibrant self. He sat in his overstuffed chair with his blue eyes fixated on the large television screen directly in front of him, cheering one sports team or another on to victory. He had the same snowy white hair, the same wrinkled face that would light up like someone blowing on hot ashes when he saw us come in. He still greeted us with a firm hug, so tight that it forced all the air out of our lungs, succeeded by repetitious firm, yet loving pats on the back. As the hug ended, he still held on to our hand, giving a squeeze of encouragement and looking directly into our eyes offering a wink of joyfulness.

Everything seemed normal until a week after the initial news. I will never forget that day. I woke up with severe throbbing and pounding in my head, and I could hardly open my eyes. I remained in bed until the terrible pain passed, and that afternoon I pulled myself out of bed and my mother and I visited my grandparents. We walked into the cozy kitchen where my grandparents were sitting at the table. My eyes froze on a strange man resting in a wheelchair, wrapped in an afghan. My heart sank as I realized this frail man was my grandfather. In less than a week his face had thinned, his cheekbones were now visible, and his eyes fixed in a blank stare. My grandmother sat next to him speechlessly sipping her steaming coffee. Bags had



formed under her eyes, her jaw set; she had to be so strong for him. My mother and I, like statues, stopped abruptly upon entering. The eerie silence was broken as my grandfather mumbled, "Sarah? Who's here?"

"No, Grandpa, it is Melissa and Kay," my grandmother corrected.

At that moment, pins pierced my heart; my grandfather didn't even recognize me. Right then, I knew he was going to die, and soon. I couldn't deny it any longer.

Yesterday, Christmas Eve, had been for me the hardest day of all. The old-fashioned living room had been rearranged. A hospital bed had been added, where my grandfather rested. I stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the living room staring at the change. Sorrow overcame my whole being; it penetrated through to the depths of my soul like water infiltrating a sponge. My grandfather laid motionless, his eyelids covering his blue eyes, as he repeatedly inhaled deeply and loudly exhaled. The room's air had an abnormal stench, like smells found in hospitals or nursing homes. Overcome with the inevitable, I turned, allowing myself to collapse into the Lazy Boy chair normally occupied by my grandfather. Tears swelled in my blue eyes and slowly dribbled down my flushed cheeks. I remember the words that continually repeated in my mind, "No, he can't die, not now." My tears continued, my breaths deepened into gasps, my hands moved up from my lap and met my face halfway, allowing my head to rest in their comfort as I sobbed.

At the same moment, I noticed the sound of crying coming from the other side of the room, which I recognized as my grandmother's. We both had broken down into tears for the first time. I turned my head over my shoulder, and through my puffy blood-shot eyes, I saw my grandmother's head slumped into her arms as she sobbed. As my father put his arms around his mother to comfort her, I jumped up and ran out the door into the crisp, cool evening air. Rain pelted me, calming me. I jogged, enjoying the soothing of the rain as it mixed with my tears, across the driveway toward my house. Abruptly I stopped. I laid back my head, and stretched out my arms, shouting loudly toward the sky, "God why? Why? Why?" Releasing all my stored-up emotions I called out, "Lord have mercy on my family. I am selfish; I want him here. Yeah, yeah, I know you have a plan, but at this moment I completely don't understand. Lord, hear my cry, I am angry, confused, and right now I hate Christmas." Somehow crying and shouting helped, and I felt God's touch as if He took hold of my body and lifted me up into His arms, and said, "I will carry you, trust me." A sense of peace calmed and reassured me. I walked serenely back up to my grandparent's house. My face and clothes drenched with rain and tears, and my hair matted, I stepped back into the kitchen of the house and wrapped my arms around my grandma's neck. Her arms tightened around me, and we held each other for a long while.

Eventually I ventured into the living room, walking slowly across the dark room, placing my body into the chair next to my grandfather's side. I trembled as I reached for his hand lying peacefully by his side. It was the same hand I had held during so many happy times. I waited for the squeeze that always came, but this time it didn't. I squeezed and still no reply. Gently, my other arm reached out and stroked his coarse white hair.

"Grandpa," I whispered.

"Augh."

"I love you." Tears once again formed in my eyes, blurring my vision.

"I luv ew," my grandfather replied half in a coma.

All of the sudden our car jerks to a stop and doors begin to open. My daydreaming daze is quickly wearing off as reality sets in. We have reached our first destination. Ready for the final normal part of my day, I reach for the handle to open the door. Pushing it open, I hop out of the car and run toward the house of my mother's mother. My grandma greets us at the door with a "Merry Christmas," a hug, and the news that this part of my day would not be as normal as I had expected. "Aunt Kristi is in the hospital. She is having her baby prematurely!"

In a state of shock from hearing the astonishing news, I enter the house. The air is full of familiar aromas of cinnamon rolls, frying eggs and sausage, but the atmosphere is unusual. As each of us sits down to eat, I look around the room. It is strange not to have the whole family together. Joy and laughter fill the room while presents are opened until we notice the ones left under the tree for the missing family members. Soon, my family says thank you to everyone and we leave earlier than usual. The time has come to go see Grandpa.

In the car, I allow my heavy eyelids to close. The drive back across town seems as though it only takes a moment. Gently I feel a hand rub my shoulder and a soft voice says, "We're here." My eyes open, and my vision focuses on my mother holding the door open for me. I step out of the car, and we walk inside the house. The kitchen table, covered with finger foods of various vegetables, chips, and Christmas cookies, is surrounded by most of my cousins, aunts and uncles. Within an hour the entire family has arrived. My grandfather, though in a coma, is still hanging on to life.

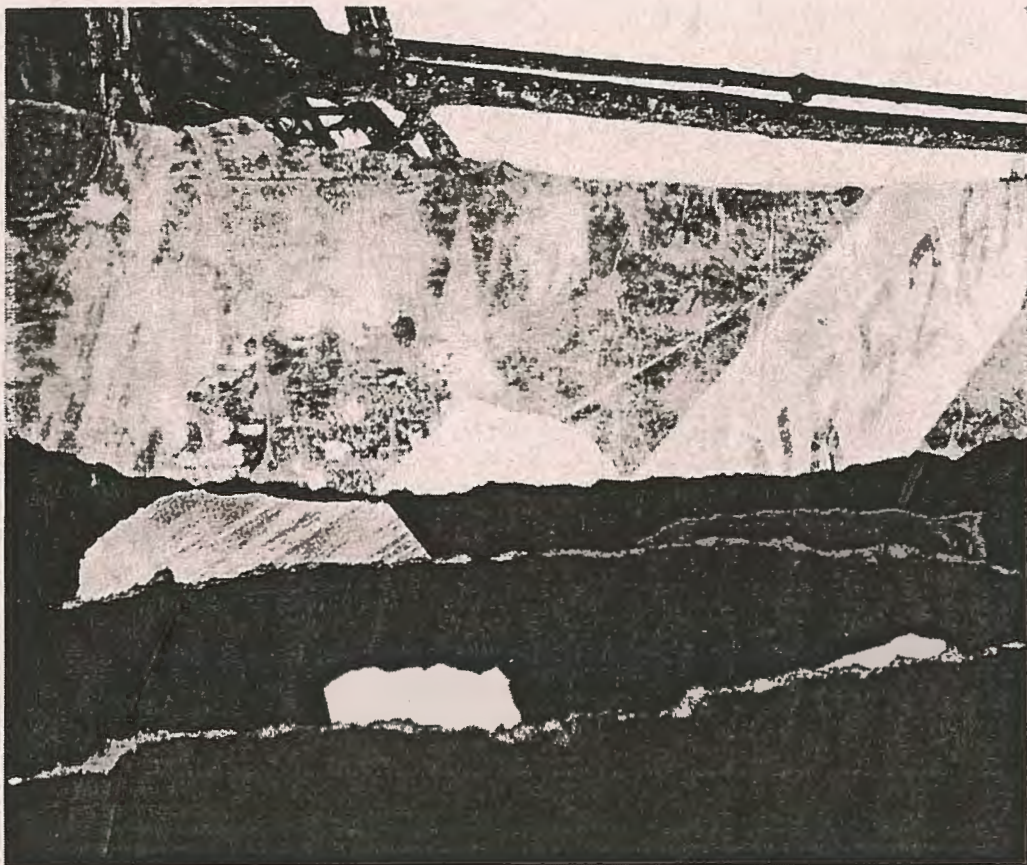
Everyone knows that together on this Christmas day we will be watching our beloved father and grandfather go home to Heaven. Each of us spends time with Grandpa that day, sitting by his side, stroking his hair, dripping water into his dry mouth, listening to him breathe, and holding his frail hand. The hours go by. We open presents, sing beautiful carols, and comfort each other with hugs and remembrances of past times until evening. Every member of my family ends up in tears. All crying together, embraced in each other's arms, we stand by grandpa's side that Christmas night. We watch the seconds tick by on the old wall clock when he stops breathing for long lengths of time. My cousin, Sarah, opens the Bible to an encouraging passage and reads John 14:1-3, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am."

Moved by God's grace, we hold hands around Grandpa's bed. The room fills with music as beautiful as the Tabernacle Choir when my family, full of musicians, sings, "Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. I can feel His awesome power and His strength. I can feel the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place." The song is coming from the depths of our hearts, with tears streaming down our faces, everybody shaking, we sing with all our strength. Finally, at 6:30 pm, my grandfather lets out his last breath in a room filled with his family sending him home. As his spirit is escorted to Heaven,

the dog howls.

After many minutes of tears and hugs, my mother calls her parents to let them know grandpa has died. As she speaks to her parents, they tell her that Aunt Kristi had her baby at almost the same time. The miracle is that as my grandfather passed into a world of golden streets and eternal happiness, where he is forever in the presence of God, my new cousin was being born, bringing new life into this world.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, the Bible tells us, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die..." Christmas Day 1994 made this verse very evident to me. On that one single day my family received a new member, my youngest cousin Hawlee, and said good-bye to another, my beloved grandfather Paul. All I know is Jesus blessed my family with a miraculous day. We were given a gift of a baby, as the world did when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and Jesus, who died so that we may have eternal life, received a very special birthday present—my grandfather.



Eli Dexter  
*Winter*  
Mixed media, 8.5" x 10"



*Artist's comment: I tried using a lot of black and white with a little color poking through. I think of winter as a lot of hard edges and I tried to use that. This work feels like winter to me.*

*Eli Dexter  
Instructor: Barbara Sternberger*

*Student's comments: Initially I was curious to explore the stories of Snow White and Cinderella from the traditional "feminist" viewpoint. Instead I was struck with the similarities in the portrayals of the heroines and the stepmothers in the two tales. These character portrayals reminded me of a trend in social psychology called the physical attractiveness stereotype. In writing this essay I am not claiming that the stereotype is negative or that the fairy tales are causing the stereotype. In exploring this topic I discovered that amazingly, not much research has been done examining folktales and their effects. This essay has increased my interest in examining fairy tales in connection with psychological concepts like the physical attractiveness stereotype.*

Tara Steinke

*Instructor's comments: This cross-disciplinary essay relates social psychology to folklore in an impressive and productive way, fulfilling all three of the Relating Outcomes in category C. In this argument synthesis for English 102, Tara makes a convincing call for further research into the effect of folk tales such as "Cinderella" and "Snow White" on the development of the physical attractiveness stereotype.*

Jennifer Bullis, English 102

## The Personification of Beauty and Evil in Two Folktales

Tara Steinke

The folktales "Snow White" and "Cinderella" have been told for generations and generations. These stories, according to folktale researcher Stith Thompson, have been "cultivated in every rank of society" (Thompson 483). There are approximately seven hundred different versions of the "Cinderella" tale alone (Behrens & Rosen 480). While variations of these tales are prevalent throughout the world, it is the versions created by Walt Disney that have had a significant effect on American culture. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the first Disney feature length cartoon. It appeared on the screens in 1937. In 1950, Disney followed up with *Cinderella*. David Thelen writes in the article, "Dissecting Disney," that in order to understand American culture, historians, anthropologists, and cultural critics need to examine the Disney story. It should not then seem surprising that these films have come under much analysis and even criticism. Feminist writers such as Madonna Kolbenschlag and Jane Yolen examine the tale and its effects on the roles of females. Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim views the stories and their impact from a psychological or Freudian perspective. By analyzing the two stories, I have come to the conclusion that they may in fact have some influence on the development of the physical attractiveness stereotype.

"Snow White" and "Cinderella" both provide prime examples of the stereotype. These stories, which are such a widespread part of American pop culture, may in fact have an effect on the physical attractiveness stereotype, in particular with young children who seem to be the ones who are exposed to the stories during crucial developmental stages.

The physical attractiveness stereotype is based on the assumption that what is beautiful is also good; people attribute socially desirable characteristics to physically attractive individuals (Dion, Berscheid, Walster qtd. in Dushenko et al 303). This stereotype was tested with a

range of subjects aging from 10 to 75 years old. Each of the subjects were given photographs of physically attractive and unattractive females. The subjects then were instructed to pick out the people that they thought fit nine personality traits (friendly, kind, exciting, sincere, outgoing, warm, poised, sophisticated, and trustworthy). Results concluded that the subjects typically picked the more attractive pictures as displaying more than two of the nine personality traits (Dushenko et al 304). The researchers also found that this stereotype was supported by both sexes, yet the women subjects tended to endorse this less as they got older.

A similar study was conducted in which preschool students were tested to see how socialization effects the development of the stereotype. Thirty-nine preschool boys and thirty-five girls participated in the study. The study consisted of two parts. The first part assessed the subjects social play preference. Each child was given four different pictures of children ranging from attractive to unattractive. The subject was told that each of the pictured children wanted to play with him or her. The subject then picked which of the four people he or she would like to play with. The second part of the test measured social attribution. The subjects were again given four pictures. They were then asked which of the individual was "the nicest person." When asked which of the two unfamiliar individuals is the nicest, preschool age children consistently chose attractive over unattractive individuals (Adams & Crane 226). The research further demonstrated that children as young as age four consistently make evaluations of older children and adults on the beauty is good stereotype (Adams & Crane 226).

Children's responses to gender roles and fairy tales were examined in another study. The goal of the research was to uncover how children view classic fairy tales. One-hundred-thirteen children, age ten and eleven, were read the traditional tales of "Snow White" and "Cinderella." They were then asked to draw a picture of their favorite character from the stories. Over 40 percent of the girls drew beautiful princesses who were uniformly lovely and beautifully dressed (Westland 3). Only one of the princesses was in rags and she had long blonde hair and blue eyes (Westland 3). Only one boy drew a picture of a prince while nearly a quarter of the boys drew ugly or angry women: wicked stepmothers, witches, and mirrors reflecting ugly hags or evil spirits (Westland 3).

Support for the existence of the physical attractiveness stereotype has been researched and uncovered, yet what cultural factors contribute to its existence in both children and adults? As the research concluded with the fairy tales and the children's drawings, fairy tales may have a role in how this stereotype gets acculturated into society. Most simply and clearly [the fairy-tale] tells the story of women in our culture, and simply states that they must be either innocent and beautiful . . . or profoundly and monstrously evil (Steedman qtd. in Westland 1). This concept is very evident in the Disney tales of *Snow White* and *Cinderella*. Each of the movies begins with the beautiful young heroines being delegated by their wicked stepmothers to wear rags and to perform such tasks as scrubbing floors. Both of the young women approach their fate in a rather lighthearted and optimistic manner. *Snow White* is first seen singing beautifully while she scrubs, surrounded by doves. *Cinderella* awakens from her sleep in the tower surrounded by birds and mice as she sings. Throughout the movie, both heroines rely on the small creatures for comfort and assistance. The creatures help the girls clean and also serve as warnings for danger. *Snow White* and *Cinderella* are the only two characters in the films that have such support of the animals. Tiny creatures such



as mice, birds, and deer are traditionally viewed as gentle and timid creatures. Since the heroines can attract such creatures, it seems to indicate that they have a gentle and kind nature themselves. In contrast, the queen in *Snow White* attracts rats and vultures. These animals are symbolic of death and evil. The flocking of these creatures to the queen unconsciously speaks of her personality.

Both of the heroines are regulated to a status beneath them because the stepmothers are jealous of their beauty. The queen strives to be "the most fairest of them all." The magic mirror continuously replies to the queen that Snow White is in fact the fairest: "Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. She is more fair than thee. . . ." Cinderella's stepmother is jealous of her beauty because she is much more beautiful than her own two daughters. The stepmother takes great effort to try to primp up her two daughters in order for them to marry a prince. As Marina Warner writes in "From Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers," "both films concentrate with exuberant glee on the towering, taloned, raven-haired wicked stepmother" (207). Cinderella's stepmother is first seen in a black shadow in her bedroom. In *Snow White*, the queen is surrounded by a dark, gloomy mist. When the queen approaches Snow White at the dwarfs' house, the animals disappear as a dark shadow then looms over the kitchen. Cinderella's stepmother's eyes take on a menacing green look as she follows Cinderella to the tower and then proceeds to lock her in.

Not only is the stepmother evil and unappealing, but the stepsisters in "Cinderella" are as well. In the Perrault version of the tale, which was adapted by Disney, Cinderella is "still fifty times as beautiful as her sisters, superbly dressed though they were" (487). In the Disney version, not only are the two stepsisters plain, but they are rude and unkind. A scene depicts the stepsisters and stepmother singing along upstairs while Cinderella is downstairs mopping the floor. The stepsisters are not only greedy and rude, but they lack any social graces and are horrible singers and flute players. Cinderella, meanwhile, sings beautifully downstairs. When the time comes for the glass slipper to be tried on, the duke winces at the stepsisters' appearance as he approaches with the glass shoe. Each of the stepsisters grabs the shoe and amid angry criticisms of the duke tries to force her huge feet into the shoe. The presence of the stepsisters in the tale only reinforces the goodness and beauty of Cinderella.

In each of the tales, there is a handsome prince that in some way manages to rescue the heroines from their plights. Each of the princes is drawn to the heroines because of their beauty. Prince charming happens to be riding by the castle and becomes overcome when he hears Snow White singing. Snow White runs and hides amid the castle curtains while the prince sings a ballad to her beauty. The prince in *Cinderella* is forced by the king to meet all the young ladies in the kingdom at the ball. He endures the task with princely grace yet it is Cinderella who enters the ball in the shadows that draws his attention. For the rest of the evening, he becomes swept away in her dazzling beauty. Both of the heroines win the prince through their beauty, but it just so happens that they are kind and good-natured as well. Whether or not the princes notice the personalities of the heroines before they become enraptured is never addressed in the films or the stories.

There are many other examples from the two tales that could lend support for the physical attractiveness stereotype. These tales are such an integral part of not only American culture but also cultures around the globe. It does seem that fairy tales may in fact be correlated to the acculturation of the physical attractiveness stereotype. This is not saying that fairy tales in fact cause the



stereotype. In the research conducted about the stories and the children's drawings, all the children who were tested were familiar with the main stories and often knew several versions (Westland 6). While both genders have frequent exposure to the tales, research has uncovered that young girls support the stereotype more than other group examined, yet as they got older they tended to endorse the stereotype less (Dushenko et al 304). The study also found that the stereotype remained stable across ages for males (Dushenko et al 304). This evidence is interesting when it gets applied to the drawings made by the young children. Most of the girls tended to draw beautiful princesses while a high percentage of the boys drew evil and ugly stepmothers or sisters. It has been proven that males tend to be more visually oriented than females. It could be that through these tales boys learn that the beautiful girls are the most worthy. More research on these phenomena would need to be investigated. Remarkably, little research has addressed the question of the actual effect of fairy tales on children (Bottigheimer qtd. in Westland 1). Since these tales are known worldwide, studies on the physical attractiveness stereotype and fairy tales would provide more conclusive evidence. "Snow White" and "Cinderella" are just two folk tales that have beautiful and nice heroines overcoming evil and ugly fates. Countless other folktales follow a similar plot. Overall, the evidence is persuasive enough, I believe, to claim that fairy tales are in some way a contributing factor in the development of the physical attractiveness stereotype. Further research on the effect of fairy tales and the physical attractiveness stereotype is needed in order to provide more conclusive information.

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*Student's Note: This assignment turned out to be an experience for me because I was constantly fighting over featuring my own personal biases with the topic at hand. When I watched the movie Quiz Show, I felt outraged with the idea of rich businessmen manipulating poor minorities. I had to watch the movie over and over and over again before I realized that poor ethics are not just found in rich societies. I learned how complex the subject of ethics is.*

Brenda Wohlford

*Instructor's Note: In its insightful analysis of the ethical dilemmas faced by characters in the film Quiz Show, this explanatory synthesis for English 102 fulfills all three of the college's Relating Outcomes under category C. In this essay, Brenda successfully analyzes the relationship of individuals and institutions to the history of ideas, examines how various ethical systems impact human relationships, and engages diverse forms of creative expression.*

Jennifer Bullis, English 102

## Ethics: In The Eye of The Beholder

Brenda Wohlford

What is ethics and what does behaving ethically mean? The movie *Quiz Show* uses the production crew and the players of the 1950 television quiz show *Twenty-One* to illustrate different types of moral reasoning. All people have different perspectives on what is ethical and what is not ethical behavior. For instance, some people viewing the game show might feel it is operated ethically because everyone involved is paid. Others might feel that some of the personal rights and individual freedoms are being sacrificed, because the focus is to produce good ratings which depend upon the manipulation of those who play the game. Finally, some might take the stance that the game show is not ethical because all of the people involved are not governed by morals that are honest, fair or impartial. While all of these viewpoints maintain validity, each person will objectively assess the information and then draw his or her own conclusion.

The two producers of *Twenty-One* are Dan Enright and Al Freedman; they manipulate players who produce better ratings. Their boss is Mr. Kintner, the president of NBC, who depends upon the sponsorship from the pharmaceutical company, Geritol. Geritol, in turn, depends upon the show producing good ratings because the quiz show's sales are directly proportional to the pharmaceutical company's sales. When the ratings go down, all of the people involved take direction from Geritol executives because Geritol is supporting the game show *Twenty-One*. In one scene, an executive from Geritol orders Freedman and Enright to get a new contestant; this meant that they were going to get rid of the existing winner, Herb Stempel. Stempel is ordered to take a "dive." From the beginning of Stemple being a contestant, he is treated like a celebrity and coached as an actor so that he can appear to be surprised when he correctly answers the questions. In the end, he is talked into losing, which means handing over his title to the new contestant, Charles Van Doren. At the same time, Van Doren is manipulated into being the new contestant with the belief that he is going to answer the questions

fairly. In a heated scene, both players realize that they are being tricked and are faced with an ethical dilemma. After Stempel is off the show he becomes enraged because Enright will not respond to his telephone calls anymore, so he gets an attorney to sue the show. The judge labels Stempel as unstable and seals the case. Meanwhile, Richard Goodwin, who works for Congress in Washington, DC, watches the quiz show, and gets intrigued when he reads the small legal notice announcing the case between Stempel and the show. He becomes suspicious because the case is sealed. He travels to New York with the intent of re-opening the case and putting NBC on trial.

Goodwin is Jewish, and during that time in the 1950's Jewish people were not allowed to attend recognized colleges. As a consequence he had to conceal his Jewish descent so that he could attend and graduate at Harvard. Goodwin does not believe in the validity of a society that allows its people to become class-dominated. He justifies lying his way through Harvard by his feeling that he should have the same rights as the rest of the people living in the United States. Goodwin's ethics are similar to the theory of justice written about in George Cavanagh's "Ethics in Business." This theory proposes that "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive liberty . . . [and] Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage and attached to positions and offices open to all" (806). Goodwin believes in equal distribution of society's benefits, and he does what he thinks is right to be true to his beliefs and secure his future.

Goodwin admires Van Doren because he represents the successful mainstream dominant culture that Goodwin is trying to succeed in. When he finds out Van Doren has been given the answers on the quiz show, he decides to protect his friendship to Van Doren by telling him to "disappear" while the show is being tried. What is happening in this scene is analogous to the co-dependent relationship between the executives at NBC and Geritol. Cavanagh writes about this peer pressure and how "organizational climate can influence the ethical judgments of individuals" (799). It is doubtful that Goodwin would have rallied to Van Doren's defense if Van Doren hadn't come from such a prominent wealthy family and hadn't attended Harvard. He protected Van Doren with hopes that the relationship would further his future in law.

The flip side of that is, Goodwin does not connect with Stempel the same way he does with Van Doren. When Stempel tells Goodwin that he was given the answers, Goodwin says, "and I thought you were the victim," to which Stempel remarks in defense, "Van Doren is also being given the answers." Goodwin looks at him in disbelief. Labeling Stempel a victim implies that Goodwin has compassion because of his connection with Jewish people, but, when he doubts Stempel's implications concerning Van Doren, it appears that he is losing sight of his own ethical beliefs.

Goodwin does not wish to prosecute Stempel for lying on the quiz show; he wants to inform the public of how and why contestants are getting the answers. Even though Goodwin and Stempel have totally different perspectives, their values have similar roots. The fact that Goodwin represents Stempel illustrates that he accepts the justice theory of ethics because he believes in "fair treatment and due process for all people living in a society" (Cavanaugh 804). Similarly, Stempel believes in a society whose ethics protects an individual's personal rights. Stempel believes that his personal rights were violated because he thought that the producer Dan Enright promised him a talk show if he took a dive. Enright, however, is not so concerned with protecting individuals as much as he is interested in ensuring utilitarian business.

Cavanagh explains that "the standards of justice [are not] in conflict with individual rights as [much as] utilitarian norms" (805). The justice theory of ethics is based on the moral rights of individuals, whereas utilitarian norms "aim at maximizing the satisfactions of the organization's constituencies" (804). Enright and Freeman, who produce the quiz show, believe that their decisions are ethical because they produce a show with popular ratings and everyone makes money. Their morals resemble what Cavanagh describes as the utilitarian perspective of ethics because the "action which results in the greatest net gain for all parties is considered moral" (800).

Freedman coerces Van Doren into compromising his values by telling him that "everyone knows the magician don't saw the lady in half," and Enright endorses Freedman's manipulative tactics further by stating that he was doing the right thing because everybody was making money. Cavanagh argues that the moral strength of utilitarianism depends entirely upon "the person performing the action" (802). In the case of the quiz show, the morality of the two producers may be in question because of their crude behavior (in one scene Freedman gestures like he is masturbating in an effort to intimate that Van Doren was wasting his time), their manipulative tactics to get contestants to play on a rigged game show, and their lies to the congressman.

The strength of Stempel and Van Doren's moral reasoning are revealed in two emotionally charged scenes. In one scene, Stempel's wife Tobi walks out on him after she overhears him telling Goodwin that he got the answers before airing live on television. He runs after Tobi when he realizes that she has walked out on him. In a desperate attempt to get his wife back, he justifies his actions by explaining to her that he didn't "know anyone who would turn down twenty-five thousand dollars." Similarly, in another scene, Van Doren defensively confesses to Goodwin: "If anyone offered you all this money on some rigged game show, would you go for it?" Goodwin just says "No" and tells him, "Don't embarrass me. Just disappear, O.K."

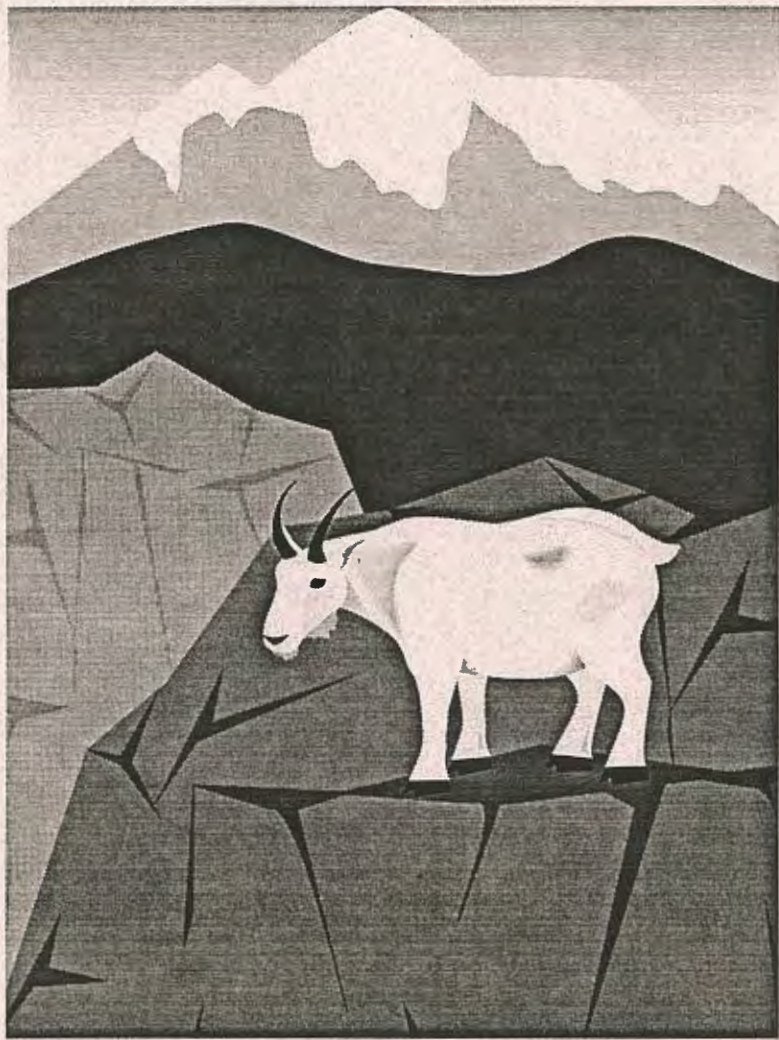
Stempel's wife's parents control the direction of his poor Jewish family. He symbolizes the unrepresented poor people of America. The viewer identifies with his struggle for autonomy and feels compassion for his lot in life. Likewise, Van Doren, who comes from a wealthy family, is longing to get from behind his father's image. Stempel and Van Doren come from different social backgrounds, and both struggle with being talked into adopting different morals than their own. Both lose their standing in society in the end. Freedman and Enright lose their jobs for a while but eventually get them back. They protect their bosses to ensure their future, just as Goodwin tries to protect Van Doren to further his.

This movie reveals a spectrum of characters coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds who exhibit a range of morals that appear to change depending upon their environment. The viewers are left with enough information to draw their own conclusions. Milton Friedman's paper argues that "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits . . . within the constraints of the law" (781), and Cavanagh argues that "decisions made at every level of the firm are influenced by ethics" and the people who direct them (797). If one delves deep enough into the reasoning that dictates what is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, one will surely be in a better position of understanding human beings, but just may end up asking more questions.



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Kim Martinson  
*Vista*  
Computer art, 10" x 7.5"



Artist's comment: "Vista" was inspired by Chapter 2 "Enchanted Valley" from *The Good Rain* by Timothy Egan. I consider mountain goats the balancing acts of nature and wanted to portray how at ease the goats are at the most precarious heights. This illustration was created on a Macintosh computer using Free Hand 3.1.

Kim Martinson  
Instructor: Karen Blakley

*Student's comment: When writing "Flying Into Joy," I wanted to incorporate, into my essay, some of the writing strategies that I discovered while reading and analyzing Possessing The Secret Of Joy. This is my effort at using the writing strategy of repetition (which I learned while studying fiction in Betty Scott's class) in a literary analysis/ memoir/ personal essay. I am grateful to Betty Scott for her encouragement and her specific feedback during the revision process. During her class, I was pleasantly surprised that I could learn so much about writing non-fiction from fictional formats—after all, every sentence has a character (subject) that acts (verb).*

Stone

*Instructor's comments: If students in English 121 (Fiction and Poetry Writing) choose a research project, they examine one work by their favorite author. Students read the work at least twice to expand their abilities to see through the story to the underlying elements at work. They may observe how the author develops dramatic tension, creates memorable characters, handles plotting, description, narration, theme etc. They keep a journal of their observations as they read. Then they collect and shape their observations into a paper. Stone studied Alice Walker's Possessing the Secret of Joy. She fashioned her paper after Walker's fictional memoir, using alternating personas as headings for the various "chapters" of her paper. These chapters reveal Stone's observations, reflections and personal connections. I admire Stone's insights into the work, as well as her clarity and grace with language. She weaves complex ideas into a thought-filled reading memoir.*

Betty Scott, English 121

## Flying Into Joy

Stone

"I did not realize for a long time that I was..." afflicted (Walker 3). There was a time, years ago, when I collected scraps of broken glass and rusting metal, which I found on the sidewalk; I covered the surface of a large table with these broken and corroded pieces; I arranged them into piles; I studied them; I wanted to understand what it was they were telling me, but it didn't become clear till years later, long after I had thrown the pieces away, when suddenly the memories of crumbling iron and steel and sharp edged colored glass came back to me, and I realized that I had been studying myself; I had been trying to piece together the puzzle of me (with at least a third of the pieces missing or forgotten)—a self portrait. Now, wrapped in blanket, sweater, hat, and gloves, I sit here typing. My body aches, sweats, shivers. I will recover, of course, but there is another quiet disorder...Even when I am well, I am ill. "And that reminds me of a story."

I have been reading *Possessing The Secret Of Joy* by Alice Walker. I have read this novel over and over again till I have lost count. Each time I find something in it that I did not see before. I think this will always happen: I think that I will never see all that there is to see because the novel's depth is produced through the collective reality of its characters, and I am only one person, one character. This book seems to grow with me; the more I am able to see—the more it shows me, so I keep looking, and I keep trying to understand.



Alice Walker presents her characters in the memoir format. I have read in Annie Dillard's introduction to *Modern American Memoirs* that:

Memoirs offer a powerfully fixed point of view...the retrospective narrator may range intimately or intellectually across a wide circle of characters and events. The memoirist may analyze ideas or present dramatic scenes; the memoirist may confess, eulogize, reflect, inform, and persuade...tones may be elegiac, confiding, scholarly, hilarious...."

But Dillard is discussing the range of the non-fiction memoir; it seems that the possibilities are greater in the genre of the fictional writer, at least through the pen of Alice Walker. The collection of memoirs in *Possessing The Secret Of Joy* are intimate and intellectual, they contain a "wide circle of characters and events," they contain analysis, "dramatic scenes," confessions, eulogies, reflections, they "inform" and "persuade" in sometimes sorrowful, sometimes "confiding" sometimes "scholarly," and sometimes insanely "hilarious" ways. Here, the fictional memoir can cover the full range that Dillard describes because it is not limited to a single point of view—Alice Walker portrays the story through the eyes of many characters.

Unlike the "powerfully fixed point of view" of the non-fiction memoir, in *Possessing The Secret Of Joy* the point of view is even more powerful as it changes with the voices of eight fictional authors, whose names are used as the titles of their individual memoirs: "Tashi" (the main character), "Olivia," "Adam," "Mzee," "Bentu Moraga (Benny)" or simply "Benny," "Lisette," "Pierre," and "M'Lissa." Even within those eight voices, the point of view is not completely "fixed." Tashi also writes under the names of "Evelyn," "Evelyn-Tashi," "Tashi-Evelyn," "Tashi-Evelyn-Mrs. Johnson," and "Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul;" the variations of her name offer insight into her varying points of view—whether she is identifying more with Africa by using her African name Tashi, or more with America and her husband by using her American name Evelyn Johnson, and the variety in the combinations of her many names also reveal the degree in which she feels either enslaved and fragmented or whole and self-possessed. It is not until the end of the book that Tashi's name is written completely and without any dashes—Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul; her name written like this implies that the character of Tashi is no longer fragmented, instead she is whole, complete, or self-possessed, even though she has said "self-possession will always be impossible for...[her] to claim."

Like the character of Tashi, the novel itself seems to be a collection of fragments—pieces of memoirs that are collected and arranged within the twenty-one parts of the book. This arrangement creates a kind of "fabric of the web of life" within the novel. As I sit here wrapped in layers of cloth, I imagine the twenty-one parts of the book as a kind of warp; the memoirs are like threads: weaving, braiding, knitting, or sewing themselves into a tapestry where it is possible for me to find in the varied repetitions of pattern, both direct and subtle, the "SECRET OF JOY!"

I have been making piles and piles of notes about *Possessing The Secret Of Joy*. I feel like the character of Benny who had some "small but vital part of his brain crushed" during birth and must write everything out in order to remember. There are so many "small but vital" details in this novel, and I want to understand exactly why they are there. I want to piece them together like the character of Pierre (the anthropologist) storing away seemingly "trivial" bits of information in order to fit them into "Tashi's puzzle".

During my many passages through the book, I have kept a journal of reoccurring words, images, and actions; now I must handle these pieces of information carefully to understand their full meaning, but how can I? Surely, I have not even found them all. I am like the character of Adam piecing together the broken pre-Columbian pot that he found in Mzee's house, with a third of the pieces missing.

In *Possessing The Secret Of Joy*, Alice Walker reveals only small pieces of information at a time. She does this by alternating the brief passages of memoirs written by her characters. One character recounts a certain scene but leaves out many details, which are later filled in by other characters recounting the same scene. For example, the scene where Tashi paints a huge rooster on the wall in order to regain her memory of a traumatic event (the murder of her sister) is told from the point of view of Tashi, and then from the point of view of her husband, Adam. Collectively, the characters provide more information than any one character alone can. This repetition of scene allows for tension and curiosity to build, and also by not revealing all of the details of a scene immediately, Walker is able to slowly ease her reader into the difficult subject matter of female genital mutilation (which was the cause of Tashi's sister's death). But Walker also uses a less direct method of supplying information to her reader than the repetition of the same scene in different points of view.

While reading Walker's novel, I began to hear images echoing in places that I would not have predicted. Simple key words like gifts, wraps, goddess, kissing, doll, and doll's house drew my attention to repeating images, and little stories that the major characters told about seemingly minor characters and minor situations held many images that echoed the larger story of the novel. These little echoing stories and key words provided clues for understanding the meaning of the characters' actions. I found that the lives of each character illuminated the lives of all the other characters. And almost as if I had become a character myself, I found my life (a life that is different in many ways from the characters in the book) illuminated within the pages of *Possessing The Secret Of Joy*. Through repetition, I saw a universality of experience demonstrated within the lives of the characters—a universality that I felt was extended to me, the accepting reader.

In this segment, Olivia recounts a brief story about Tashi's older sister, Dura (a minor character who was already dead when Olivia arrived in the African Village where Tashi lived as a child):

That she [Dura] had been very excited during the period leading up to her death. Suddenly she had become the center of everyone's attention; every day there were gifts. Decorative items mainly: beads, bracelets, a bundle of dried henna for reddening hair and palms, but the odd pencil and tablet as well. Bright remnants of cloth for a head-scarf and dress. The promise of shoes!

The "gifts" in this brief story reverberate in similar details appearing elsewhere in the novel; for example, in the period leading up to Tashi's death, women "place offerings beneath the shrubbery that is just below and around the corner from [her] view. The women bring wildflowers, herbs, seeds, beads, ears of corn." Also, a similar situation occurs for M'Lissa before her death; she too receives many gifts and is the center of attention.

Dura's "bright remnants of cloth" echo in the red dress that Olivia and Tashi sew for Tashi's execution day. And this image of cloth is repeated again, in another segment, when Tashi

first remembers the murder of Dura:

I found myself painting a design called 'crazy road,' a pattern...that the women made with mud on the cotton cloth they wove in the village when I was a child. And I suddenly knew that the foot above which I painted this pattern was a woman's, and that I was painting the lower folds of one of M'Lissa's tattered wraps.

The images of cloth resounds again in the cotton aprons that Mzee (one of Tashi's psychiatrists) wears. And like M'Lissa's "tattered wraps," Pierre is "wrapped" in his sweater, which is a gift from his mother. The image of being wrapped in cloth is repeated again when M'Lissa's mother secretly unwraps a small statuette of a goddess touching her genitals; she "looked upon it, kissed it, and replaced it, all in a single motion." This same image is repeated again when Tashi offers a similar goddess figure, which she has "carefully wrapped in...[her] most beautiful scarf" to her friend Mbat (a woman who took care of M'Lissa before she died). Like M'Lissa's mother, Mbat kisses "it's beaming face" and also upon receiving this little goddess figure, Mbat exclaims, "Your little doll!" which is reminiscent of Adam visiting his lover (and Pierre's mother) Lisette "in her tiny doll's house".

This sequence of related passages are linked together with just a few words: gifts, cloth, wraps, goddess, kissing, doll, and doll's house. This method of repeating images loops the characters together; it provides subtle explanations of action, and creates meaning that is deep and quiet and powerful.

The reoccurring images I have gathered in my notes from *Possessing The Secret Of Joy* are like black bird wings flapping inside my head; even the events in the lives of the minor characters (Torabe, Hartford, Dura) resound in my mind; all the images loop together; they create a kind of "fabric of the web of life"—a crazy quilt that is pieced together with scraps of terrible and invisible and everyday violence:

[Torabe] was thrown out of the village because he lost control of his wife, a very evil thing to do in the society because it threatened the fabric of the web of life. At least the web of life as the villagers knew it...He'd been notorious for tracking and bringing back his runaway wives ...[Hartford confesses]. We had always hunted monkeys and chimpanzees, they [the men in white coats] reminded us. What they were asking was nothing new...[Torabe] had cut her [his wife] open with a hunting knife on their wedding night...Small boys with small knives were trained to make a slit...and haul the kidneys out. It was on these kidneys the men in white coats grew their precious 'cultures'...This one drowned herself, in water that didn't even reach her knees, rather than return [to Torabe]...I was assigned the job of decapitating them...I stood knee deep in monkey heads, chimpanzee torsos...their screaming...Everything they think, everything they fear, everything they feel, is as clear as if you'd known them all your life. As if they'd slept in the same bed as you!...I [Tashi] felt as if there was a loud noise of something shattering on the hard floor, there between me and Adam and our baby and the doctor. But there was only a ringing silence. Which seemed oddly, after a

moment, like the screaming of monkeys...it was Dura being held down and tortured inside that hut. Dura who made those inhuman shrieks that rent the air and chilled my heart...[Mzee] came forward, finally, and took the tray. I had eaten everything, and this pleased him. He was wearing one of his cotton aprons, and there were signs of his soup-making from his mother's recipe all over it. A small bloodstain glowed maroon near his waist...the woman's clitoris...was excised by an invisible hand...The vaccine left the factory at the other end from where the monkeys and chimps were raised and slaughtered. It left in small clear bottles with blinding white labels and shiny metal caps...

My eyes are losing focus now. I take two white pills—painkillers—to ease the pain caused by my heart beating fast—to ease the pain of blood pushing against the walls of my veins. I try to rest. Like a restless child, I lay moaning and thrashing in my bed till I am overtaken by exhaustion.

I have been knocked over by the giant “invisible hand” of forgetfulness, of taboo, of fear that waits to strike me again; it is waiting to beat at my head; this is not new to me—I know this “invisible hand” (perhaps we all do)—Walker's story makes this “invisible hand” clear to me. I push my way up through air that has transformed itself into a river of mind choking sludge—a river that roars and batters against me. My thoughts overlap; I can not separate them enough to speak except to blurt out brief stuttering sounds that remind me of a stone-deaf person speaking.

As I type, I feel like Tashi painting to remember some lost traumatic event; a traumatic event that grips me. The character Tashi describes my experience now when she writes:

For, as I painted, perspiring, shivering, and moaning faintly, I felt that every system in my body, every connecting circuit in my brain, was making an effort to shut down. It was as if the greater half of my being were trying to murder the lesser half.

Alice Walker's novel acts on me like the film that Mzee showed Tashi which caused some deep pain in her to surface. While writing all this down, I feel like Tashi covering the wall with a huge painting of remembrance. I remember Mzee asking Tashi afterwards, “Are you better for having done it?...Do you feel better in yourself?” and her quick response, “Immeasurably.” I feel the fear inside of me dissipating now, and my mind is clearing; I can speak again. My mind flies to Mzee's words—words that bring me comfort:

They, in their indescribable suffering, are bringing me home to something in myself. I am finding myself in them...A self that is horrified at what was done to Evelyn, but recognizes it as something that is also done to me. A truly universal self. That is the essence of healing.

I have found myself in the characters and events of this novel; from this point of view, the traumatic events in my own life—the events that have often left me “speechless”—have been thrown against my head and into my mind at full force. This experience acts on my heart—it dispels a portion of that quiet despair hidden in my core, and it deepens my awareness and compassion towards the suffering of others. It is healing to finally hear of suffering that has been hidden in taboo because (spoken or unspoken) it is an affliction that perhaps we all share. Oddly enough, by sharing a story of suffering, Alice Walker dispels despair and replaces it with hope. And I can feel better in myself now—“immeasurably”.



Dear Alice,  
Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Stone

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*Student's comments: When I hear the words "personal essay," I tend to get very excited. I have always felt that the way to write is to write from our personal experiences – what we know and what we feel. Unfortunately, as students, we cannot always write what we would like to write. This essay assignment allowed me to do this and gave me an opportunity to remember.*

Jane Brown

*Instructor's comments: This writer took Advance Composition, English 201, during winter quarter. You will hear a very different "writing voice" in this piece. Note that Jane's sentences are long and her paragraphs digress. As you read Jane Brown's essay, allow yourself to relax, to enjoy the meandering trail she provides and the views she stops to consider.*

Sherri Winans, English 201

## A Good Search and Discovery

Jane Brown

My mother has a small birth-mark on her left leg; it is not something she often discusses. But her children realize, in fact, that this birthmark has been, since my mother was a small child, the mysterious shape of an unknown island. My parents experienced a life of poor, poignant poetry during the Sixties—a strong, free era of rebellion and travel. I know because part of it remains in me. My parents were vagabonds who loved music, drugs and the internal exploration of self and the natural world; they were what we call hippies; they were what I call imaginative individuals returning from an age of conformity, artists in a time of white-wash walls, blank faces and the violence of war.

I recall, and it is a dim, fragrant childhood memory, composed of light and vague textures, my parents searching through a giant atlas, surveying the shapes of tiny islands in the Caribbean. It was a silly but passionate exploration, as so many of our searches seem to be. My parents were searching while our money ran out. I recall being broke, having "no money," as my father explained, and I recall taking out pennies and counting them and telling my parents beneath the lights in the kitchen, while the wood stove hissed in its corner of the world that, "Look! We have some money!" It made them laugh.

And my life was simple and extraordinary during the years of my early childhood. My brothers and I would lock ourselves in a room without walls; it ran for miles, across oceans and years and dappled through storybooks and songs and memories. This was the era of *Star Wars*. We once ran out of E-woks, so we wrapped pieces of colored paper around Lincoln logs and gave them cute names and that was good. One day, my parents found some money. At least this is how I was to understand it. Honestly, my father's brother had married a wealthy woman and he loved my brother. My father and his family had done a great deal of traveling when they were children. That indescribable lust for sights, for sounds and music to live by, had seeped into my father's blood. He had gone to high school in Beirut, before it was demolished by war.

My father took us to Mexico when I was five, once the money arrived; he received a

teaching position in Morelia. I recall from these six months, only a few, somewhat disturbing but startlingly vivid details: I was wicked. My brother and I once jumped on the beds with such force and rambunctious energy that the bed springs snapped. My brother hit me on the finger with a purple belt and beads of blood rose from my fair, baby skin. I fell down a flight of cobblestone stairs; I was imagining, at the time, that I had entered a castle and this was the way into the dungeon. I ended up laughing and crying simultaneously, with my family members gathered around me. I remember my father's students, who were just like I am now, and I remember almost drowning in a pool surrounded by rocks. I recall being blinded by a white sun, while standing on top of a pyramid at Chitzinitza. The Howler monkeys sounded like banshees.

This was Mexico and it made a profound and strange impact on my life. But while my mother experienced Mexican culture—she was threatened once by a gorilla in a small zoo in a grove of chinaberry trees and struggled with the Spanish language—she was thinking and almost yearning for the Caribbean Islands. It wasn't a fantastic or impossible idea that there might be an island deeply rooted in the Caribbean Ocean, too small, maybe to appear on most maps. But we were broke for another age after returning from Mexico. It was years later that my parents could begin searching again for their island in the mist, somehow very clear to both of them; they read through travel literature, researched Grenada, Jamaica, Fiji and Barbados. And finally, when I was nine years old, we went to Jamaica for a short time. It was a strange childhood; my parents felt that I would receive a much more diverse and beautiful education, if they took me away from our small, but steadily growing public elementary school and used every cent of their wages to escape on silver planes to strange places. But this was good. Because even then, I wanted to write about my life and I assumed I would have much more to write about if I left my small city and my friends (assuming I had any at the time).

Jamaica was beautiful; I grew to love Reggae music, turquoise sea water and my hair in beaded dreadlocks and the air of the Caribbean. But my parents hadn't finished. Jamaica, for them, had too many people. It was too much of a tourist attraction. It had been discovered. I wondered if there were any island left, any places left, where people were not, where tourists pedaling Safari clothing and cameras were not—which of course, is not to say we were not ridiculous, obvious tourists when we traveled. There were five of us then, and six, after we adopted my sister. And we were a strange lot, I'm sure, from the Northernmost region of the United States, pale, carrying suitcases of books and cameras and toys. One of us was certainly always complaining, or hurting ourselves.

In 1991, when I was 11 years old and traveling through France with the same six members of my family, I was still prone to wickedness, falls and car sickness. We lived in Avignon, in a tiny apartment overlooking Frenchmen and dogs and black umbrellas. My father taught his students about French literature and as much knowledge as he could muster about the French culture. As far as I could tell, the French were not as snide as the Madeline stories had led me to believe, but they did seem to enjoy their poodles, their crepes and seemed often not to appreciate their history, their centuries mingling together without the separation of time. Ancient art had often become old hat—a Rodin sculpture merely a place to eat lunch or a landing for clever pigeons. I once saw a beautiful statue disfigured by French profanities. Of course, at that time in my life, I was far too busy battling my mother over math homework to fully appreciate the Louvre and the wines which my father could discuss with such eloquence. And now, as I look back on it, I see

that my mother could hardly breathe without the ocean. City life, though exciting and endlessly diverse, was too far away from the crash of waves and the crumble of sand.

It was about six years ago that my father was rooting through a travel magazine, equipped with glossy photographs of nearly nude bathing women in extraordinary sunsets, when he came across a tiny advertisement, which by any other eye, would probably have gone unnoticed. It was his first glimpse of their island, the island which, with a little bend of the imagination, was shaped very much like the birthmark on my mother's left leg. Again (I was now 14) my parents pored through the atlas and found the island, an insignificant smudge on the page, a sliver of a place, surrounded by fleets of sea water, to be reached only after miles and hours on silver planes. This sounds like a fantastic fiction work, but it was only that my parents were endlessly romantic, perhaps driven slightly mad by the chaos of the world at home and the haunting allure of the escape.

I recall my mother crying when we first landed on the shores of the island, and feeling as if she had been there all her life, recognizing various landscapes and cows from pieces of her dreams in years past. In some ways, it is a difficult place, swarming with insects in the wet season, swarming with insects and rain showers in the dry season. There are no wet and dry seasons, despite what you might think; there are only wetter and dryer. In parts it is like a fantasy land, dense with jungle-green, surrounded by cloud cover, palms, and thin, furry rodent-like animals with snub noses like the Agouti—and tribes of wild iguanas who enjoy insects and watermelon when available. I have never seen a tarantula, but I have heard stories and sometimes, at night, I fear I might turn in my sleep and feel hairy, itchy legs at my hand. They are harmless; wild tarantulas despise human beings, but the thought of them never ceases to run my blood ice-cold. There are iguanas, tortoises (both eaten by people who live there and have done so for centuries) tropical fish painted in colors intended by the gods, sunsets, and many many fishing boats in the water.

The people, many of them, besides some grandmothers who have had seven children (Claire, the baker, springs to mind) are very physically fit, with skin the color of coffee, sometimes darker, and accents so dense that, though they are speaking perfect English, I often have to strain my hearing to understand, or simply nod my head and pretend I know what they are saying. I have been laughed at many times and I feel as if I am in a Gibberish-speaking country. But it is amazing how technology has reached the seemingly unreachable corners of the world. Alexander has a fax machine; he is married to Claire. He once faxed us a Christmas card with bells on it. Young people watch 90210 and other soap operas which I thought only Americans could love. But still, the towns are small, and filled with grocery stores the size of Americans' bathrooms; people drink rum and orange juice and I have discovered certain very crunchy crackers called Crix. One can also get corn flakes there, but no milk. Music is very much a part of the culture; Mardi Gras is celebrated on the beach with live bands and sometimes erotic dancing. It is a place which embodies the spirit of the Caribbean. It is indescribable; it is like the lust for travel. There is something hidden in the air, saturated with breezes from the sea; it is the length of the days—short—night comes early there; people will sit on their porches though, well after dark, "liming" with neighbors, arguing sometimes, about politics or local soap operas or about the condition of the land.

I have noticed, visiting this island so very far away from Northernmost Washington, that there are extraordinary similarities, even within the vast differences. Many of the residents of the small island have never left the island. But the schools are very prestigious, testing a great chal-



lenge. Religion is also very much a piece of the community; they have small but beautiful churches, built from cooperation and faith. There are a network of roads for transportation, intersections which could be mistaken for small American city stops, but there is much less traffic. And what is somehow very glorious is that, when one is driving (on the left side of the yellow line) past houses, before and behind other cars, leaving one of the small island towns, the road will begin to disintegrate and will bend and eventually be cast into dirt and the pavement. The car and the driver are somehow pieces of the landscape. Sometimes traffic will stop for cows. And there is a type of extraordinary cow, involved in a symbiotic relationship with the Egret bird. It is quite simple really: the birds peck off the numerous flies and other insects who swarm constantly over the cows' backs and are able to fill themselves without having to search through the air and dirt and bark. And of course, the cows are swept clean of the biting, clinging insects. It seems almost as if, more than in any other place I have seen, nature is involved in circular contentment, with the civilization that has been built there. And still, occasionally, nature wraps its triumphant fingers over the things of human beings.

There is a sugar plantation, built by the English, who named many of the territories on the island, where slaves were employed originally. It lies in ruin, with dirt, spiders, and banana trees coiled among the remnants. The people who live on the island have both African and English blood. And there are people who, if I believed in such a thing, I would call enlightened. One is a bushman who has built his house up in the jungle, behind the tiny town that is there, among the wild animals and rows and rows and rows of bananas, grapefruit, calabash trees and flowers, some with hallucinogenic effects as he has explained. It wouldn't be accurate to say that this bushman "adores" his environment more than it would be right to say that the artist loves art. It is more that nature is nearly everything to some individuals; that it composes the world, for them; that we have stolen from it by creating such rampant running cities and technologies. He is, on one hand, the most environmentally active person I have ever met; on the other hand, he is only living and appreciating what surrounds him effortlessly and without bounds.

When I am here, on this island, it is nice only to exist, to read on the beach, or swim for hours, or walk through streams and feel as if every piece of luggage I have brought with me is not necessary, that I could live with little clothing and little food but the fruit that aches in the sunlight from the trees and the water that slip through geological beauties. It is not an easy thing to do, letting it all slip away, but once it goes, I can feel the vines from the groves yearning for me to stay there for as long as I can sleep in caves. Sometimes I forget that there is a home in another part of the world, where water is too cold and heavy to linger for hours, where there are no coconuts, where my sister does not feel free to run naked along the shorelines.

When I am here on this island, there are also, of course, ways to return to modern culture. (I would be lying to myself if I denied this). As I said, cornflakes are available and Coca-Cola appears to have a certain amount of relatively harmless control. People drink Coca-Cola on porches, discuss the far away lives of soap-fictional characters, and watch movies. One of the strangest, most profound experiences came from a trip to Scarborough, a town about the size of a parking garage in Seattle. I went with my friend Kim, who has since left the shores of the island and gone to college in LA. Kim is beautiful by every definition and could compete with Whitney Houston in a concert hall and win.

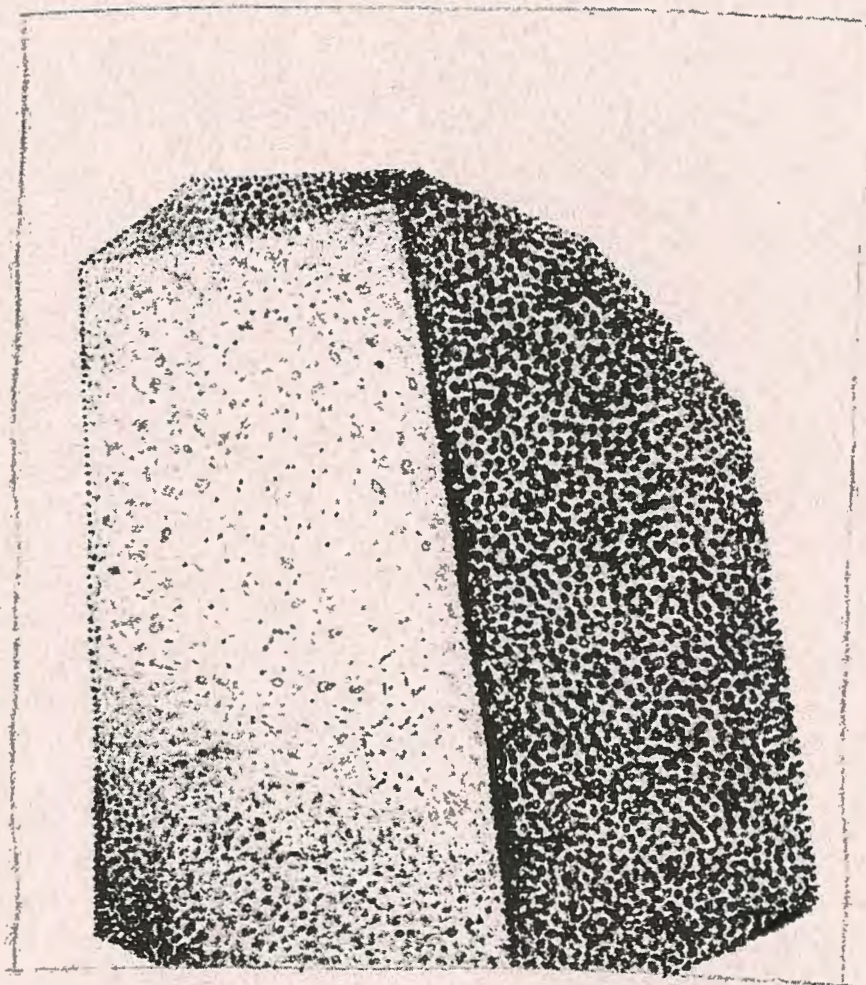
We went to see an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie in the only movie theater on the island.

We stepped through a red, wooden door into a small room, where a man in a blue shirt stood behind a desk with bags of popcorn and cokes. There were movie posters on the walls. I'd already seen most of those movies. Kim and I bought popcorn and stepped into the theater, dimly lit from above, movie projector behind, much like in any other theater I had visited, but with several missing seats, and a smaller, more silent screen. And the theater was noisy. The room came alive, not only with the action on the screen, but with whoops and hollers and loud comments, and it was all perfectly acceptable. This was a movie theater run by the people, for the people. It wasn't until we were leaving, after the movie had concluded and the floor was saturated with salty Coca-Cola, that I realized how very strange I was. I was a tourist; I had a pink purse. I was sitting, thinking how odd it was, how I could describe this theater to people I knew in my own small corner of the world, what I would record in my journal that night, when it occurred to me that I was white. I was, in fact, the only white person in that theater and had been for two hours. My skin was pale; I wasn't in perfect shape like most of these people; I have yellow hair and when I spoke, as it was with the American accent (so Patrick told me once), it sounded like I was talking with bubble gum in my mouth. But this was good. Because when at once I realized, with a sort of giddy, self-conscious sensation, that I was an alien in a wonderful world, I also discovered that I hadn't noticed. I was white, and that was fine, and that was all.

My mother, who eventually found the place she knew existed, hopes to one day build a house there, pay off the small plot of land we acquired and retire into salt water. It would be a lovely place to die, where it is warm and there is a vast collection of animal, plant and human life. My mother and father hope to one day wake up in their own house, sunlight lifting away the curtains, or rain humming at the sides of the walls; they have designed it, in fact, and the design hangs here in Washington, at the foot of our wooden staircase where I have spent much of my time sitting and playing and sometimes writing. My parents love to sing on the island which is something they very rarely do in Washington. They sing on the beach, behind firelight and the glow of familiar faces, in the hills, beyond the grove where the wild animals lurk and listen. There are qualities of light that I remember, emanating from the green and the wetness, which glisten after heavy rainfall for three minutes. But I would have to have been born in such a place to fully understand it; I would have to ask someone there, right now, to narrate it for me and I'd have to listen carefully to every word she said, and record the tale as almost another language. I wonder sometimes if the people there have trouble understanding me, if my voice is too flat and colorless to make sense. I've discovered what many do not see: that I speak a foreign tongue too.

I couldn't say exactly how much I owe to travel. I believe it has stirred a creative instinct in me and I hope sincerely that it never vanishes. It is not only that I have been a minority, or witnessed new, wild creatures. I have spent hours alone, hearing no tick of time, only the rush and hum of waves landing, and have been given a chance to think. But it is more than that. This is what has been discovered after a tremendous search. I have been there to see it happen; I've watched the research and the tracing upon the dusty maps as it happened. I think I may have been too young to fully recognize the glory in the search, the fact that my parents were like archeologists uncovering an item after digging through the years and the shards of things and finally finding what they had been looking for. There is no real explanation. But I have often thought that one day my mother or father might translate this discovery into words. I can't help but feel that I am somewhat departed from their poignant and pressing journey into the regions of the world. I

could not dream about the world during the 60's; I came years later and unfolded a page of my parents' unwritten manuscript. I began reading, and it was good. Their story is one which belongs bound between the pages of a book, as so many of these long-loved shared dreams seem to be.



Brett Straka  
*Unknown Monolith*  
Charcoal, 9.5" x 8.5"



*Artist's note: This drawing is comprised completely of dots. I was inspired to do this drawing by a sculpture I have in my kitchen. I used dots for this subject because they added shading and texture at the same time.*

*Brett Straka*

*Instructor: Lloyd Blakley*

*Student's comments: I very much enjoyed writing "Enigmatic Images: Explication of 'The Tyger.'" Upon first reading Blake's poem, I was thoroughly confused. However, Dr. Bullis explained how poetry is written and encouraged students to read carefully. After several readings, I attempted to interpret the voice I was hearing—a speaker who is isolated, discouraged, and unappreciated.*

Jan Polinkus

*Instructor's comments: Jan's explication fulfills the college's Relating outcome under category C in its highly successful efforts to engage in, understand, and appreciate Blake's poem as a form of creative expression. In addition, in its explanation of the poem's allusions to Christianity and Greek mythology, this essay is a superb analysis of the relationship of individuals and cultures to the history of events and ideas. Finally, since the poem's central concern is an ethical one—the origin of evil—this essay examines an ethical system and its implications for individuals and cultures.*

Jennifer Bullis, English 202

### **Enigmatic Images: Explication of "The Tyger"**

Jan Polinkus

William Blake, an English poet, lived in a period in which strict social customs and religious dogma fostered inequality and prejudice. Skillfully using the compressed medium of poetry, Blake created "The Tyger." His poem explores the effect of discrimination and injustice on individuals within society. Utilizing poetic techniques such as allusion, rhetorical questions, imagery, synecdoche, and apostrophe, Blake conveys the confusion, disillusionment, and pain experienced by individuals, and finally, a personal feeling of isolation.

The speaker begins by alluding to one of the most controversial and uncertain concepts in human history. Specifically, the speaker questions, "On what wings dare he aspire?" (line 7). This reference to the origin of evil and the Judeo-Christian figure of Satan is especially unsettling if one believes the notion that evil actually began in heaven when a "fallen angel" organized a revolt against the Creator. If conflict can originate in heaven, humankind seems destined to experience turmoil. The speaker then turns to mythology to demonstrate that humanity's uncertainty is not bound by time or culture. For example, the speaker asks, "What hand dare seize the fire?" (line 8). This allusion to Prometheus, a Titan in Greek mythology, illustrates that throughout history, the human race has been struggling with similar societal frailties, i.e. theft, jealousy, and betrayal. Should the reader investigate Greek mythology further, one finds that Zeus punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock and sending an eagle to eat his liver each day. Because his liver grew back each night, his torment was endless. Though this is a mythical tale, the speaker is drawing an obvious parallel, i.e. that vengeance and betrayal have been an aspect of human behavior from the beginning and continue to the present. Finally, the speaker alludes to a "hammer" and "chain" (13), "furnace" (14), and lastly an "anvil" (15). In the 1700s, the environment of a blacksmith's shop was one of fire, intense heat, sweat, and filth. This is a particularly effective allusion as it provides a glimpse into an earthly hell. Through the use of theological and mythical allusions, the speaker is able to con-

vey the notion that societies, and the individuals within them, are destined to embrace evil. The allusion to a blacksmith's shop provides a brutal image of Hades on earth. With an economy of words, the speaker has introduced uncertainty regarding the destiny of humankind.

The speaker further engages the reader by asking a plethora of rhetorical questions. From the first stanza to the sixth and last stanza, the reader is pummeled with poignant, impossible questions. For example, the speaker asks, "Did he smile his work to see?" (19). Obviously, it is impossible to know the precise reaction of the Creator when evil, i.e. the tyger, was introduced into the world. However, it is chilling to contemplate that the Creator may have "smiled." Further, because Judeo-Christian doctrine records a benign Savior in the form of Jesus Christ, the deliberate creation of evil leaves the Christian community struggling to resolve volatile issues. The speaker asks this unusually provocative question: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (20). This interrogative provides the reader with profound theological challenges. Consequently, the reader is led to ask searching questions, e.g. why would a supposedly merciful and benevolent Creator place a lamb in the world and at the same time allow a deadly predator? And, by extension, how can a supposedly benign Creator be responsible for allowing evil to prey upon humankind? If one attempts to answer the questions, still more questions are proposed. This masterful use of rhetorical questions succeeds on two levels. First, the ambiguous nature of the questions provokes unsettling notions. Second, the vast number of questions leaves the reader with a lingering sense of uncertainty and confusion.

The success of imagery is evident in the first stanza and is repeated in the last stanza. The speaker begins and concludes with "Tyger! Tyger!" (1, 21). At the time this work was written, the tyger was an accepted symbol of evil and/or danger. One recognizes that translated into 1997, a tiger no longer represents the embodiment of evil. Nevertheless, the imagery is effective. If one should meet a hungry tiger, the result is predictable and terrifying. In this context, the tiger is indeed a dangerous predator. Having established the tyger as evil and threatening, the speaker then places the fearsome beast "In the forests of the night" (2). From fairytales to current movies, the night is fraught with all manner of evil. The night is a shroud of darkness that may hide unspeakable horrors. The speaker proceeds to lead us to "the fire of thine eyes" (6). In most cultures, there is only one entity wherein fire and eyes can be thought of simultaneously. Satan stokes the fires of Hades and is an evil, vicious entity without peer. The speaker continues an unrelenting avalanche of images by combining "fearful symmetry" (4, 24). By itself, this oxymoron creates a sense of imbalance. Because symmetry can be defined as beauty that is a result of a harmonious arrangement, the pairing of fearful and symmetry subtly contributes to a sense of uncertainty. The reader realizes that appearances may be deceiving, i.e. a thing of beauty may pose a hidden threat.

To further confound the reader, the speaker provides another shocking image by combining "deadly terrors clasp" (16). As a clasp may be defined as an embrace or hug, the image of an embrace or hug becoming deadly is especially ominous. The speaker is continually urging the reader to beware of those who claim benign motives. One cannot trust the friendly gestures of others in this deceptive world. Finally, the speaker reinforces a profound sense of apprehension by again referring to the possibility of a conflict in heaven. The speaker is especially passionate when writing, "When the stars...watered heaven with their tears" (17, 18). As the battle in heaven concludes, the Devil and his followers are cast out. The Creator and a host of angels cry out in their grief and agony. This unparalleled image of anguish reflects the speaker's view for the fate of the



human race. If there is the possibility of war in heaven, what hope is there for justice and equality in the world? With the skilled hand of an artisan, the speaker weaves poignant images throughout the work to remind the reader that pain and disillusionment are constant companions.

With a stroke of the pen, the speaker has magnified both the importance of the Creator and the threat of the tyger. Each synecdoche supports the speaker's desire to illustrate the immense strength of the characters. First, the speaker refers to the Creator by naming only the "hand or eye" (3). The Creator is proven omnipotent because this entity can make, form, or create simply with the wave of a hand or blink of an eye. A second equally effective synecdoche names the tyger by only parts of its body. The speaker refers to its "dread hand[s]" and "dread feet" (12). Thus, the reader's attention is fixed on the paws of the tyger—specifically, the sharp, killing claws that will slash and kill without mercy. These metaphors are carefully chosen and succeed admirably. The speaker has again defined the world in terms that evoke feelings of anxiety and fear.

Though it isn't obvious at first, one subtle element becomes clear after several readings. The speaker is conversing with an animal—the tyger. This apostrophe neatly places the speaker, and therefore the reader, in self-imposed isolation. The tyger cannot answer nor is it expected to. Because the questions will be met with silence, the speaker appears to exist alone and afraid in a hostile world. This element is essential in providing the impenetrable sphere of isolation that surrounds this work.

Throughout this work, Blake sustains the sense that humanity is living in a world that fosters confusion, pain, and disillusionment. Blake wrote from the heart and keenly felt the pain of prejudice and isolation he has portrayed. One can easily believe that "The artistic society of the day...ignored the laborious little engraver [Blake]..." (Kazin 1). While Blake's poetry is appreciated today, he was ignored and ostracized by his peers. Though written in the 1700s, his pointed and poignant message is not confined to his generation. Today, individuals, societies, and governments tend to ignore or crush those who do not conform.

"The Tyger" is a challenging, thought provoking work that propels the reader through a marvelous labyrinth of enigmatic illusions, exciting images, and ambiguous questions. One cannot help but take the tyger by the tail and enjoy the ride.

#### Works Cited

- Blake, William. "The Tyger." *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 587.
- Kazin, Alfred. *The Portable Blake*. New York: The Viking Press, 1969.



Student's comments: "Accusations" is my attempt to produce a work that reflects my understanding of the personal essay form. Using ordinary life events, in this case a visit to a museum, I try to uncover a basic human truth. Utilizing an ever-increasing intimacy with the reader, achieved by using a confessional tone, I try to form a sympathetic connection with the reader that will hopefully cause her to consider the phenomenon of "shared guilt" from a personal perspective.

Leo Hopcroft

Instructor's comments: Throughout the quarter, students studied and wrote personal essays, attempting to relate their experiences through their evolving conceptions of the genre. In so doing, they came to appreciate the difficulty of balancing art and craft and "fact"—how a literary genre can "say something" to an experience as much as the experience is expressed through the work. Leo's effort here is a good example of how an academic understanding of a literary genre can help shape and even create a personal experience.

Jeffrey Klausman, English 295C

## Accusations

Leo Hopcroft

I like to go to galleries and invent stories to explain any particular piece of art that happens to catch my eye. I know next to nothing about art; I can't compare a work with those of the great masters, analyze brush strokes, or even classify a piece with any sense of authority, but I can make highly subjective assumptions that I sometimes find very satisfying.

The Whatcom Museum is hosting an exhibit by Robert McCauley called "When Worlds Collide" in the big open room on the second floor. I had never heard of Robert McCauley before I came to the museum. "When Worlds Collide:" For me, the title evokes the cheesy science fiction movies of the 1950's that I used to watch, cross-legged and with rapt attention, on "Sci-Fi Theater" every Sunday morning on channel 11 at 11. Aliens weekly invaded the homes of peaceful human beings raining death and reeking of mindless destruction. In this case a clever, well-chosen title effectively set the mood for my art "experience."

Stacks of old furniture and suitcases in poor repair, the jutting corners littered with broken doll parts, arrowheads, and poorly taxidermied old birds on their sides with twisted mounting wires stabbing vainly below palsied claws. Phrases enumerating the crimes of the White Man against the Native American People are painted on the side of each layer of furniture. Several of the pieces in the exhibit share these attributes. Crime piled on top of crime. The works in this collection are recent, dating from this decade, but McCauley is grinding an old ax. Before I developed my game, I would have dismissed this shabby collection out of hand. Now I look for the one piece that calls to me.

The particular piece that most captures my imagination, and seems to serve as a conceptual paradigm for the emotional content of the exhibit is "Ribcage." The indictment of the White Man is very strong in this piece as in the others, but the piece itself is strikingly different. "Ribcage" is a welded together copper box 21"x24"x3" mounted to the wall like a picture. It has a crude wooden xylophone to the right of the centerline, and an old photogravure under glass to the left. A pair of mallets for playing the xylophone hangs in a bracket under the pho-

togravure. A glance from across the room at the burnished copper with strange items fastened to its surface suggested some sort of alien control panel.

Looking closer, the details emerge. The welds of the box form lines reminiscent of Cubist paintings. The piece is balanced, the weight of the material lending it a strong sense of permanence. A close inspection of the photogravure reveals a picture taken by Edward Curtis in 1914 entitled "A Mamalelekala Chiefs Mortuary House." The picture shows a small building on a rugged hilltop with a few trees in the background. Around the building are totem poles and carvings, and the building itself is covered with Native American designs. Looking at the wooden sounding plates of the xylophone reveals words that briefly state the cultural destruction perpetrated on Native American people by whites.

English Names  
Concept of Hell  
English Clothes  
Concept of Wealth  
Boarding Schools  
English Language  
Smallpox Blankets  
Totem Prohibition  
Shaman Prohibition  
Agrarian Subsistence  
Potlatch Prohibition  
Eroded Matrilineal Decent

The same words and patterns can be found on other pieces throughout the exhibit. The white devils from another world invaded. They promised great wonders... then betrayed, murdered, and imprisoned the human beings leaving nothing, not language, not culture, not hope. The invaders carved effigies of the human beings dressed in sacred garb and placed them in front of stores. The devils turned their vision of the human being into their own cultural icon. They stamped his face on coin. They imprison him still.

The piece suggests the racist devastation of a culture. White men playing the "Ribcage" (xylophone) of the corpse of Native American culture with mallets, while hypocritically enshrining behind glass a vision of the culture that they destroyed.

I would like to dismiss McCauley's work. I would like to pretend that it deals only with history, and doesn't apply to me at all. Unfortunately, as a white man I own a share of the guilt. Many groups and individuals currently and throughout history have been oppressed by white men, and personal culpability is inescapable. The President of the United States acknowledged the power of this shared racial guilt when he acquiesced to the demand made by some blacks that he apologize to African Americans for the enslavement of their ancestors by white Americans. Perhaps their is a deeper reason why I can't dismiss my guilt.

I recognize in myself a tumor of hidden racism which my attempts to excise have only pushed deeper and caused to fester. I feel not the guilt of cultural and near-literal genocide, which took place before I was born, but the guilt of harboring the seeds that made the old crimes possible and that perpetuate newer and usually subtler crimes. I stand by mutely as Native Americans receive less than adequate service at a convenience store, or I fail to condemn a racist joke. The stab

of guilt is only felt on these rare occasions, and I know that if I just ignore it for a little while the discomfort will fade.

Some whites seem to find solace by adapting Native American culture. Groups of men go to retreats where they learn to beat drums and try a Vision Quest. Others buy Native art or read adaptations of traditional stories. For me, this shows the same hypocrisy as McCauley's photogravure under glass. Desiring to avoid this hypocrisy in myself, I evade exposure to native culture and answer McCauley's accusations with a volley of my own.

My mother's first husband was a member of the Turtle Mountain tribe in North Dakota. She married him when she was fifteen in order to escape from being told what to do by her teachers at school and her parents at home. They lived on a corner of the reservation in a small shack with no electricity or water. They were hundreds of miles from her family in Oregon. They had four little girls, each only a year apart, and the first died of crib death not long after being born.

My mother's husband was abusive. He blamed her for the death of the child and she always suspected that somehow he was right, that she must have done something wrong. Consequently, she was very fearful and protective of her other children when they were born. He used to look for ways to start arguments so he would have an excuse to leave her alone and go to bars and pick up women. He often returned home drunk and beat her severely. He swore that if she tried to leave he would take the children and she would never see them again. There was no help for her on the reservation; they were his people. She might simply disappear with no one the wiser. When she began to fear that his violence would extend to the children she decided to end it. She waited for him to return home one night knowing that he would be drunk and bloody-minded, but this time she waited with a board in her hands. When he came in shouting angrily for her she beat him with the board until he crawled away. Shortly after this incident she took the children and moved back to her family in Oregon.

I am the child of my mother's second husband. My sisters have always been my sisters, not my half-sisters, and my father was Dad to them as much as he was to me. My mother has always been interested in Native American spiritualism, and has encouraged my sisters to explore that aspect of their heritage, which two of them have done through literature and art. My mother wanted to include me in this cultural exploration, but I rebelled. "I'm a honky!" I would cry fiercely, "That stuff has nothing to do with me." My oldest sister made me a beaded amulet one year for my birthday and I wore it that day to please her while she visited, but I have never worn it since. I believe that it is right and good for my sisters to explore their heritage, but I know that it is not my heritage and it would be wrong for me to pretend it is. And yes, I resent the way my mom's first husband treated her. So while McCauley accuses me of destroying his culture, I accuse him of hurting my mother. We might both see only a difference in skin shade and tremble with shameful, secret rage.

The truly disturbing aspect of "Ribcage" is that it shows no xylophone player. The mallets wait for me to admit my culpability and take them up once again, to realize that I was the musician all along. I feel the heat of guilt for a moment, but I leave the mallets in their bracket. I have never met McCauley, only imagined his skin, and I wait for the secret humiliation of my racism to fade.

*Student's comments: In "Victory Moment," I wanted to demonstrate what I felt was the main theme of Elizabeth Bishop's poem "The Fish" by tying it into a personal experience of mine. I am grateful to Bob Winters. In his class, I learned to appreciate a much broader range of poetry. Because of his example, I am more willing to do the line by line work involved in appreciating poetry, and I have become richer for it.*

Stone

*Instructor's comments: Stone's essay "Victory Moment" represents an ideal model of student scholarship and writing. Stone brought in reliable sources and incorporated them seamlessly into her own prose. More importantly perhaps, Stone found a deep personal connection with Bishop's poem – a complex "feeling of understanding" as her own experience, her own creative work, and the poem all collided in "a kind of 'golden moment.'" Stone speaks with a voice that is both sincere and scholarly, personal and professional. The essay moves gracefully to its powerful conclusion, to a realization of both truth and paradox. I'm certain Elizabeth Bishop would have been pleased by such an elegant and perceptive appreciation of her work.*

Bob Winter, English 143B

## Victory Moment

Stone

I was riding the bus, and I was thinking (all in one thought) about Elizabeth Bishop and her poem "The Fish," and a mosaic (inspired by Bishop's poetry) that I am currently working on, too, when a kind of "golden moment" happened. It was the kind of moment that I continually seek but rarely experience—the kind of moment that I sometimes find with art or poetry (and other ways). This moment is not an understanding, but a feeling of an understanding of something that I do not know how to name, but life becomes suddenly better because of it. Looking back on that "golden moment" in the bus, I see myself cast in Bishop's poem "The Moose," riding "through late afternoon/...the windshield flashing pink" (lines 25-27); in this surreal setting, I could faintly hear beneath my thoughts the mumbblings of people talking about their lives, and everything—the ugly and the beautiful—was all there at once. Then I got off the bus and turned around, and before me there was a bright rainbow like a bridge; I could see both ends from where I was standing beneath its arch, and like the lines in "The Moose," I felt " 'Life's like that,/ We know it (also death)' " (Lines 119-120).

This paradox of everything—the ugly and the beautiful—being present all at once seems to be a recurring theme in Bishop's poetry. In her book, *Elizabeth Bishop: Questions of Mastery*, Bonnie Costello notices that in many of her poems "Bishop juxtaposes the beautiful with the awful, the morbid with the vital, aesthetic pleasure with moral indignation, in ways that challenge our conventional responses to life" (48). In her poem "The Fish," Bishop creates an icon for this "challenge" in the detailed image of a fish that she first objectifies, then personifies in a way that draws a line both between and around her world and the world of the fish. As Anne Stevenson writes in her book, *Elizabeth Bishop*, "The poem is not only a poem about a fish but about the poet looking at the fish" (54).

In the first line of "The Fish," Bishop introduces this juxtaposition of the "beautiful



with the awful" by describing the fish as "tremendous"—a word that denotes something both wonderful and/or terrible. She continues with this idea by repeatedly presenting an image, then altering it to become its opposite. In the first line she has captured the fish, but as we read on, we see the fish is not completely "caught"—in the second line we find that he is still outside the boat, and in the third we find he is still partly in the water. Melding together opposing characteristics, Bishop flips the image of the fish around in the reader's mind like a coin; the fish is described as "battered" (Line 8) then it flips to "venerable" (8) and flips again to "homely" (9). Bishop goes on to offer a resplendent image of the fish's skin when she describes it as having "shapes like full-blown roses" (14), but tarnishes this graceful image in the next line where it is revealed that this pattern is "stained and lost through age" (15). In lines sixteen and seventeen an interesting variety of pattern is applied to the fish's skin; it is a pattern that is "speckled" (16), and it has "fine rosettes" (17), but this pattern is created with parasitic "barnacles" (16) and caustic "lime" (17). Throughout the poem, Bishop continues to set contrasting detailed images side by side in an incontrovertible way that makes the paradox which she describes become a truth. The fish has flesh that is "coarse" (27), but is also "like feathers" (27); the "five big hooks/ grown firmly in his mouth" (54-55) are "weapon-like" (50) and they are "Like medals with their ribbons/ frayed and wavering" (61-62) but they are also "a five-haired beard of wisdom" (63). This "pictorial, lucid, extremely detailed" (Stevenson 54) world of "The Fish" that Bishop paints is a world filled with contradictions, but " 'Yes...'/...'Life's like that....' " It's just that sometimes one needs eyes like Elizabeth Bishop in order to see it.

Like a mosaic, Bishop pieces together visual imagery that enables her, as Stevenson suggests, "to describe two or more things at once: fish skin and wall paper; fish eyes and tinfoil under isinglass" (56), and while she creates this clear image of the fish, she also links, with figurative language, her domesticated world to the natural world of the fish. Costello affirms this idea in her assertion that the poem "presents a symbol of nature uncannily suggesting home" (61). He is a "homely" fish that is compared twice to "wall-paper" (11,13). In these lines Bishop uses the comparative form of the simile in order to directly tie the fish to the home:

his brown skin hung in strips  
like ancient wall-paper,  
and its pattern of darker brown  
was like wall-paper (10-13).

Then later on in the poem, she uses metaphors to form another specific and concrete image that bonds the fish with the home:

I looked into his eyes  
.....  
.....  
the irises backed and packed  
with tarnished tinfoil  
seen through the lenses  
of old scratched isinglass (34, 37-40).

By binding the fish to the domestic world, Elizabeth Bishop begins to identify with the fish, but since she compares him to "wall-paper" and "isinglass," he seems to be only an object in her world, and she asserts this further when she describes the movement of his eyes as "more like the tipping/

of an object toward the light" (43-44). She objectifies the fish again when she describes his lip "—if you could call it a lip—/ grim, wet, and weapon-like" (49-50); here, she seems to be asserting that the lip is not human-like at all but more like an object. With these comparisons, Elizabeth Bishop forms a connection with the fish, but at the same time keeps the fish at a distance—a mere object in her world.

Through her use of metaphor and personification, Bishop's connection with the fish broadens. Bishop creates a dichotomy: she seems to relate to the fish both like an object, and like a person. This dichotomy is clear in these two consecutive lines: "I admired his sullen face,/ the mechanism of his jaw" (45-46); in the first line she personifies the fish by describing his face as "sullen," and in the second line she objectifies him by describing his jaw as a "mechanism." Another example of her connection with the fish on a more human level is when she describes the weight of the fish as "grunting" (7)—a human sound (perhaps the sound she made while holding him). Also, perhaps she empathizes with the fish, "breathing in/ the terrible oxygen" (22-23), since she herself suffered from chronic asthma and knew what it felt like to gasp painfully for air. In another instance of personification, Bishop describes the hooks in the fish's mouth as "a five-haired beard of wisdom/ trailing from his aching jaw" (63-64); this image suggests that perhaps Bishop feels respect and empathy for the fish and the fish's suffering. Bishop expands on this idea of the fish as a martyr with several images that seem to allude to the martyrdom of Christ; "the frightening gills,/ fresh and crisp with blood" (24-25) seem to be alluding to the gash that was cut in Christ's side, and as David Craig Austin posits in his essay, "Elizabeth Bishop: 1911-1979," "the fish is an age-old symbol for Christ" (5), and the hooks are "like a misplaced crown of thorns or the five wounds of Christ" (5). The allusion seems to be there not to make the fish into a god, but to point to his suffering—a suffering that Bishop seems to identify with. Using straight forward and understated descriptions, Bishop seems to be saying that opposites exist together, and this is just the way life is; all that is left to do is to accept it as truth.

It is simply through observation that Elizabeth Bishop discovers her truth, her "golden moment" of "victory" (66) that is marked by "rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!" (75). The rainbow arrives, but the paradox continues—the ugly and the beautiful are still present at the same time. Even with "victory" everywhere, the "little rental boat" (67) has a "pool of bilge" (69), and the "engine" and the "bailer" are "rusted" (70-71), but there is a certain kind of freedom in accepting life as it is—like the fish who "hadn't fought at all" (6), in the end, must be let go.

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*Instructor's comments: The purpose of the writing assignment for Japanese 295 (Honors Class) was to integrate students' learning from the lecture, readings, discussions, and their own research regarding specific aspects of the Japanese culture. Wendi's paper which deals with Japanese Pop Culture demonstrates her grasp of the characters of Japanese comics and provides insight into the originality of Japanese comic style.*

*Setsuko Buckley, Japanese 295*

## **The Manga Phenomenon in Japanese Pop Culture**

Wendi Y. Bentz

Japanese popular culture manifests itself in many ways, and, as in all other cultures, changes with the times. Since the 1940's, when television was introduced in Japan, there have been many new facets added to the popular culture of Japan. Television, karaoke, specialized magazines, and video games have all become integrated into mainstream Japan's favorite entertainment options. None of these, however, are as inherently Japanese in nature and origin than Japanese comics or manga.

The term "manga" was invented by the well known woodblock print artist Hokusai long before manga became the phenomenon that it is today. The two Chinese characters representing manga mean "in spite of oneself" or "lax" and "picture." Hokusai used the term to describe the "silly pictures" he drew in addition to his more serious art (Thorn, 1997).

The creation of the modern manga industry can be attributed to one artist, the late Osamu Tezuka, who in Japan bears the lofty title of the "god of manga" (Economist, 1995; Thorn, 1997). Until Tezuka, manga was relegated to syndicated comic strips and the occasional comic book, and its popularity was comparable to that of the popularity of the present day comics in America, possibly even less. Tezuka saw a gap in the quality of the two-dimensional manga which had been produced in Japan up until the end of the second world war, and realized that he could basically reinvent the look of manga by drawing from models in the movie industry. In his days as a student, Tezuka had been a fan of German and French film, and decided to use aspects of the cinema such as close-ups and varying camera angles in manga compositions (Economist, 1995; Thorn, 1997). The works that resulted from this new technique were highly innovative and visually powerful, and Tezuka's first full length manga, *New Treasure Island*, transformed manga into an overnight sensation, selling an unprecedented 400,000 copies in 1947 (Thorn, 1997).

Modern manga now accounts for almost one third of the printed matter which is published in Japan (About Mangajin, 1997), and the Japanese buy about 2.3 billion manga every year (Manga Anime, 1997). These figures are quite staggering at first glance, and yet when consideration is taken for the tendency of the Japanese people to quickly jump at any new innovation, the figures make more sense.

Tezuka's innovations ushered in a new era for manga readers and illustrators alike. All manga illustrators sought (and still seek) to emulate Tezuka's unique style, which has come to be recognized by the world over as the "Japanese style" of illustra-

tion. An increasing number of diverse artists were able to supply the Japanese public with a myriad of manga, which, as the original generation of Tezuka fans matured, began to reflect a new maturity in content. As a result, modern manga comes in a variety of storyline contents and maturity levels, from romantic manga to educational manga to adventurous manga to humorous manga to pornographic manga.

There are four basic types of manga: seinen (youth), shonen (boys'), shojo (girls'), and gekiga (mature) (Thorn, 1997). Seinen manga tends to be humorous and educational in nature, and is intended for very young readers both male and female. Shonen manga runs the gamut in storyline, but usually tends to be humorous and adventurous, and the maturity level of the reader and the content of the manga spans a wide range, from pre-teen up. Shojo manga is perhaps the most interesting of the genres, because in the United States there is no comparison to the enormous following which shojo manga enjoys in Japan. A girl or woman in Japan who does not read shojo manga finds herself in the minority, and girls and women in Japan who learn that the opposite is true of their American counterparts are inevitably surprised (Thorn, 1997). Shojo manga is generally romantic and sweet, but this is only a generalization, as many shojo manga artists are always adding elements from the more mature genre into the shojo storylines. Gekiga manga is extremely diverse, but generally the issues confronted by the hero of this more mature manga are weightier than those of the previously mentioned genres. Gekiga manga can be violent, funny, sad, pornographic, or just about anything else, and the maturity level varies depending upon which type or combination of types the book is. Of course, all of the previously mentioned genres have quite a bit of spillover from one to the other, so it is impossible to find a clear dividing line between any of them.

As previously mentioned, the Japanese style of illustration is, much like many other aspects of Japanese culture, unique. Whereas comic books in the United States tend to contain only one episode per volume, manga tends to contain several episodes per volume, which results in the average manga being approximately two hundred pages per volume (Manga Anime, 1997). While the American comic book is usually printed in color, nearly all manga are black and white, with perhaps a couple of pages of color added for dramatic effect (Manga Anime, 1997). The illustrations themselves are highly stylized, the characters possessing long legs, large eyes, and blonde, brown or red hair. The only characters who do not possess these characteristics are typically short, stubby people with big, laughing mouths who are added to the storyline for comic relief.

It is interesting to note that almost no manga character is drawn in such a way as to resemble a typical Japanese person. By taking Western features and exaggerating them, the manga artist safely distances the manga reader from reality, thereby creating a different world where anything is possible (Tetsuo, 1990). Manga often focuses on science fiction or post-industrial or technological themes, which could possibly be the result of a growing discomfiture and fascination of the Japanese people with the rapid inroads technology has recently made into the country.

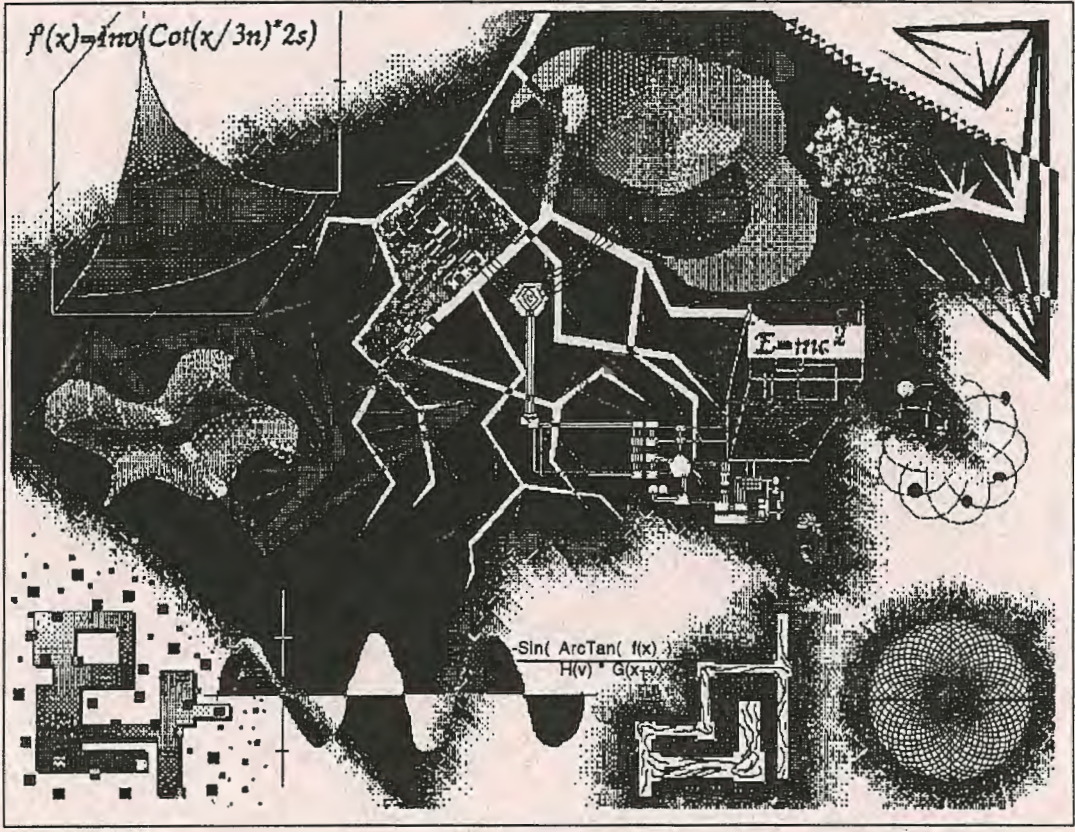
Manga has become a phenomenon that, unlike many other aspects of Japanese popular culture, remains unique to Japan. Manga is unlike any other comic books in the world in scope, vision, style, and volume. While its popularity is quickly spreading to



other countries, most notably China and the United States (Reece, 1996; Tesoro, 1996), Japan will always be recognized as the originator of manga's definitive style.

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Justin Parsons  
Technobabble  
Computer art, 8" x 10.5"



*Artist's comment: This piece started as a simple black figure, but I felt it needed to be smoothed out. I got the idea of all the math and circuit drawings from a poster I saw at the mall. All-in-all this piece just flowed out of my head.*

*Justin Parsons  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*





Allie Oliver  
Head Study: Michelangelo  
Pencil, 8.5" x 11



*Artist's comment: I've always admired the works of DaVinci, Durer, Rembrandt, and Michelangelo. For this particular assignment I chose Michelangelo. The head can be somewhat of a difficult subject to draw, but I've found that by using hatching and cross-hatching it is easier.*

*Allie Oliver  
Instructor: Caryn Friedlander*

*Instructor's Comments: Matt Johnston was a student in "Music of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods." In this course, students learn about the beginnings of Western music through examining the world views of men and women in the period from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. In an effort to gain a better understanding of the lifestyle, which is much different than our own, students compose journal entries describing a typical day in the life of a person living during the Middle Ages. Because much of the music was composed for religious reasons, Matt chose to write about a monk. In this amusing piece, Matt walks us through a "day in the life" of the monk, successfully intertwining many details about life and music of the day in a way which allows Matt's monk to express a universal humanity that transcends the different life circumstances. Through describing the contribution of an imaginary, yet typical individual, Matt was able to better relate to and appreciate the creative expression during the Middle Ages.*

*Leslie Dobrenski*

## A Day in the Life of a Monk

Matt Johnston

I woke this morning with the violent jarring of my shoulders by Brother Peter; who, standing sternly in his cassock, began lecturing me in Gaelic~ he always spoke in Gaelic when he was mad. The only Latin he knew was the Holy Prayers and Liturgy~ about how worthless and lazy I was, hinting not at all subtly that he believed I was feeling the effects of too much beer. We sprang down the dank stone corridor and slipped into the back of the chapel without Abbot Andrew seeing we were late.

It was a good service despite Brother John's dreadful singing~ Brother Paul whispered in my ear that we ought to force Brother John to take a vow of silence. We sang the Marion Antiphon for the Annunciation. Brother Simon asked Abbot Andrew if we could include the Annunciation trope he wrote, but Abbot Andrew refused, saying that as long as he was abbot there would be no singing of tropes.

After the 3 am service we went back to our quarters for private prayer and reflection. I tried to sleep but Brother Peter kept kicking me. Everyone met at the commons room and we sat down for our breakfast of wheat bread and apple sauce. Little Brother Mark, who just took the vow a few weeks ago, was complaining that if he were still at home he would not even be awake yet, and that when he ate breakfast, he would have sausage, eggs, bacon, and baked beans. Most of the former noblemen groaned as they remembered the lovely taste of such breakfasts; but Brother Peter, who was the son of peasants, called Brother Mark a glutton, and warned him that if he didn't want to spend 10,000 years in purgatory, he had better get used to the food he was served.

At the 6am service we sang Alma Redemptoris Mater with some of Brother Simon's tropes ( Abbot Andrew was attending to business somewhere else.) I do like Brother Simon's tropes, they add so much to the old chants. In this trope Mother Mary is at the throne of God interceding for Saint Ursula. Many of the brothers were brought to tears by the sweetness of Mother Mary's words.

After the service it was time to go out to the fields. I was to oversee some local peasants till the wheat fields. The sun was just rising over the hills when I got to the wheat fields.

The sight of the golden sun spreading its bright rays of light over the dark valley reminded me of Christ's light and the work of the great missionaries spreading the salvation of Christ.

The peasants were waiting; they were in a good mood and were singing a folk song about a lusty Italian monk and a young wench getting lost in the forest. It was a good song full of strong rhythm and meter. There was one refrain they kept repeating—words unfit for a monk to repeat. I asked the peasants about the song and they said the song was much better when there were women to sing the girl's part and when accompanied with a lute and bells. I knew if Brother Peter heard the words of their song he would thrash them, so I warned the peasants to sing more softly.

At the 9am service we sang the normal chant, a pleasant praise of Mary, which is mostly neumatic; although when we sang Mary's name, we broke into melismatic chanting.

I went into my chamber and sat down to copy some ancient scrolls of St. Augustine's City of God. I have been copying it for three months. I might have been able to work faster but I find the words of St. Augustine so amazing and useful—and sometimes I fall into reveries about Rome. Oh, how much I want to see St. Peter's Cathedral and to see the pope. It is hard work staying focused on copying; sometimes my hand begins to ache from the repetition.

After the 3 p.m. service some minstrels came and asked for shelter for the night. We let them stay and invited them to play after dinner. For dinner we had leek soup, potatoes, and bread. When dinner was finished we opened a cask of beer and invited the minstrels to come inside.

The first song they played was a ballad, the verses were sung by a tenor while the refrain was sung by all. The only accompaniment was a lute slowly plucking an arpeggio. The ballad was one of those new "courtly love" songs and was awful sad, what with the poor knight resigned to his lonely life while watching the beautiful princess sit with her ladies in the garden.

The second song was catchy with bells keeping a steady rhythm. The homophonic melody rang through the room and we monks, giddy with beer, quickly picked up the refrain and sang along.

Before long it was time for us to retire for the night, and we bid the minstrels good night. As we skipped into our chambers, we hummed the raucous tune and clapped our hands to the rhythm.





Kacie Kammenga  
*Back Porch Still Life*  
Charcoal, 13.5" x 16"



*Artist's comment: When working with a still life I find it important not to precisely copy the objects as observed. This allows me to create my own artistic interpretation.*

*Kacie Kammenga  
Instructor: Lloyd Blakley*

*Student's comments: As a student in the nursing profession, this assignment allowed me to immerse myself in the culture and beliefs of an ethnic group other than my own. By researching these beliefs surrounding health care and its delivery I was able to meet the first goal of the assignment, to develop a greater understanding of the health practices, beliefs and values of people from a different culture.*

*As a nurse it is my responsibility to be informed about cultural beliefs that are different from my own in order to provide sensitive quality health care. There is a great need to understand people from other cultures as more and more people immigrate to our country. This has profound implications for nurses and the care they provide. Through my work on this assignment the second goal of the paper was met: to indicate the implications this knowledge would have for nursing.*

*I believe we can no longer just teach students to accept someone from another culture. We need to go one step further and make the effort to understand who she/he is. We need to gain insight into why that person thinks and behaves as they do. It is then that we can reach Whatcom Community College's Student Ability - Relating. "Graduates will demonstrate their ability to understand and relate to the natural world, to people and to the cultures, perspectives and creative expressions of others". Relating, no longer just accepting but looking further, asking questions, being informed, going one step further to understand someone of another culture. This has been the most important way this assignment helped me reach the goals.*

Lorali Gray

*Instructor's comments: Nurses care for people from many cultures. The nurse's level of understanding about a person's cultural beliefs and values will greatly influence the quality of care the person from another culture receives. With this in mind, an academic writing assignment was created with a focus on culture. There were three nursing curricular goals for this writing assignment. First, to develop a greater understanding of the health practices, beliefs and values of people from a different culture. Second, to indicate what implications this knowledge would have for nursing. Third, to prepare an academic paper in APA style format.*

*The assignment was constructed to also address a Whatcom Community College Student Ability-Relating. This ability states that "Graduates will demonstrate their ability to understand and relate the natural world, to people and to the cultures, perspectives and creative expressions of others."*

Ronna Loerch, Nursing Instructor/Coordinator

## **Barriers to Health Care: The Plight of Hispanic Americans**

Lorali Gray

I remember the Garcias well. They were a family of five, living in a rural community working hard to make ends meet. Mr. Garcia had a full time job while his wife stayed at home to care for the children. Although the children were born in the United States, Spanish was the primary language spoken. Mr. Garcia was able to meet their basic needs but did not have medical insurance and had difficulty accessing adequate health care for his family. By today's standards, this scenario could be describing many American families near or at the poverty level. There is, however, a distinct difference between this family and their non-Hispanic white

counterparts. The difference is access to adequate medical care and health insurance. By looking at the Garcia family we can begin to see the impact of our current health care system on the Hispanic community and the implications this creates for nurses. To gain a better understanding of the impact, this paper will explore the barriers Hispanics face when trying to access basic health care services: 1) lack of English language skills; 2) low paying jobs that offer little or no health insurance; 3) a shortage of Hispanic health care professionals; and 4) a lack of knowledge about medical insurance and available services.

There are numerous barriers that prevent families like the Garcias from using the health care system. The most obvious barrier is that of language, a lack of English speaking skills. Hispanics aren't well understood, literally and figuratively, and the fact that ninety percent of them speak Spanish contributes to this misunderstanding says Delgado (1995). Communication difficulties develop when Hispanics are forced, by necessity, to seek health care from professionals that speak a different language, and have different social and cultural expectations.

"They are isolated in predominately Hispanic neighborhoods, set apart by language barriers and social class." (Reinert 1986, Friedman 1986 & Rodriguez 1995). It is in circumstances such as these that cause tremendous frustration for Hispanic people. When they do make an effort to seek out health care, communication becomes such a problem to the quality of care, or receiving care at all, that many give up. "Poor communications between patients and providers create undue barriers to high quality care. Few providers speak Spanish, and many lack sufficient cultural competency. Reliance upon children or other interpreters diminishes the trust, rapport, and understanding required for good medical care." (Valdez, Giachello, Rodriguez, Gomez & De La Rocha 1993).

Even with the use of an interpreter communication can be difficult because the interpreter translates what he or she understands to be the message. The content can be changed substantially in many cases due to the developmental level of the interpreter, the comfort level or modesty of the interpreter, or just plain misunderstanding of the explanation. Language barriers will continue to be a problem until we train more doctors, nurses and other health care professionals to speak Spanish, or members of the Hispanic community themselves pursue careers in the medical fields.

A second barrier encountered by Hispanic Americans is low paying jobs that offer little or no health insurance. "Financial barriers include the lack of health insurance coverage and low family incomes common in Latino communities." (Valdez et al. 1993). Barriers are reinforced by the increasing lack of health insurance among Hispanics. Part of the entire problem with health care for this population arises from the fact that Hispanics have the highest numbers of underinsured or uninsured of any ethnic community in the United States today. Novello & Torres (1990) found that the number of uninsured Hispanics in the past 10 years has increased by 151% while the number of uninsured Anglos only increased by 32%. Even though Hispanics are among the most active participants in the labor force, and two thirds are native citizens, they do not receive the same health insurance benefits that most Americans receive. More than one third have no health insurance, and 25 percent live in poverty. Hispanic families that do have coverage are still not ensured access to care due to few Spanish speaking providers, a lack of health care services that reflect cultural needs, and providers that are willing to accept payment schedules or deal with the ed tape of reimbursement programs. "Health insurance coverage remains a key to gaining access to



medical care. Lack of insurance or inadequate coverage significantly influences Latino health and the ability to obtain needed services." (Valdez et al. 1993). Health care professionals are beginning to see that something needs to be done to provide the Hispanic population with adequate medical insurance in order to lower mounting barriers to care.

An insufficient number of current programs and funding to facilitate Hispanic American medical professionals has created yet another barrier: a shortage of Hispanic health care professionals. Today in the United States, Hispanic Americans represent only a small percentage of the total number of health care specialists. Even though the Hispanic community constitutes one of the largest and fastest growing ethnic groups in the United State, there continues to be very few bilingual health services or providers that speak Spanish. If bilingual services are not provided, access issues become even more difficult. More Hispanic people must be represented in the health care professions, as we are facing an immediate need to bring these people into our system. Spector (1991) states that the number of Hispanic Americans both enrolled in health programs and in practice in selected health professions is low. The following tables from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services illustrates this phenomenon.

[1] Percent of Hispanic Enrollment In Selected Health Professions Schools in Comparison to Total Enrollment 1983-1986

Program	Total Enrollment	% Hispanic
Allopathic medicine	66,585	2.4
Osteopathic medicine	6,212	1.6
Dentistry	20,588	3.4
Optometry	4,460	2.6
Pharmacy	18,646	4.1
Podiatry	2,749	2.8
Registered nursing	250,553	1.5
Veterinary medicine	8,970	2.8

From: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources Administration. Health Status of the Disadvantaged Chartbook 1986. DSHS Publication No. [HRSA] HRS-P-DV86-2, 1986,p.87.



[2.] Percentage of Hispanics Practicing In Selected Health Professions Compared To Whites 1980

Profession	White [%]	% Hispanic
Physicians (M.D. & D.O.)	82.6	4.4
Dentists	92.5	1.7
Optometrists	94.7	1.7
Pharmacists	89.6	2.4
Podiatrists	94.3	0.8
Registered nurses	86.7	2.1
Veterinarians	95.8	1.1

From: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources Administration. Health Status of the Disadvantaged Chartbook 1986. DSHS Publication No. [HRSA] HRS-P-DV86-2, 1986, p. 114.

It is clear that we need to enhance our educational system for the advanced training of Hispanics and those willing to locate practices in Hispanic communities. Educational grants or subsidies need to be made available for this population to offer job training to local residents that are willing to provide their services in community based health centers.

The last barrier that families like the Garcias face is a lack of knowledge about medical insurance and available services. Many Hispanic families don't realize they need insurance because they have not been told that they needed it. They are also not aware of the programs that do exist because they are not used to a competitive health care market. "Many Hispanics are, simply put, invisible to those who market health care." (Ross, 1995). There often is not enough bilingual education available to explain what services are out there and how to access them; the bottom line is they don't have a clue.

To give an example of this we can look at the struggle the Garcias faced in finding local services for a minor illness. When their son developed extreme pain in his left ear unrelieved by Hispanic home remedies, they attempted to contact local medical agencies for assistance. Out of frustration to communicate with these agencies, they went to the emergency room for care. They experienced a long wait, impersonal care, and again, difficulty communicating their concerns. They went home after much frustration, an outrageous bill, and medication and instructions which they did not understand. According to Ross (1991), Hispanics want care from providers who speak Spanish and understand their culture. By creating economic opportunities for Hispanics to organize, plan and operate health care institutions, we could turn around the all too common scenario Hispanics are trapped in: a lack of knowledge of community health care services.

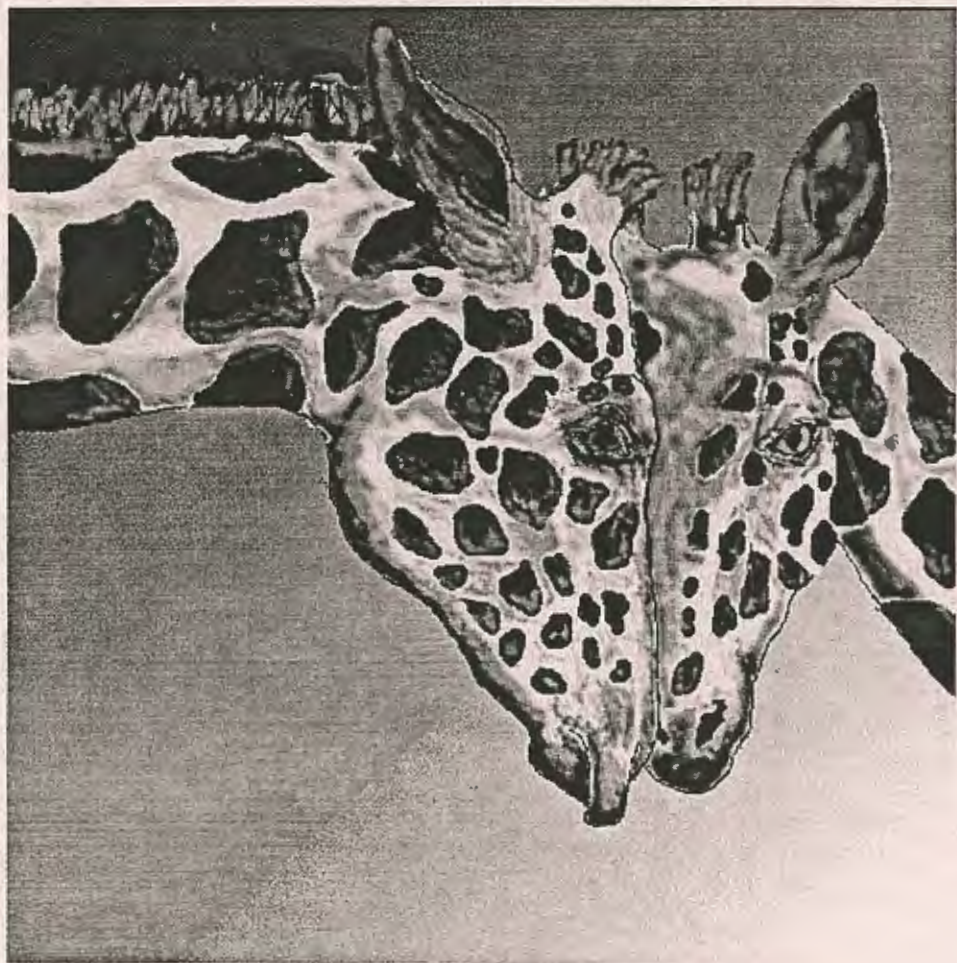
The implications of these barriers and their complexities have a tremendous impact on nurses and their current practice. It is often the nurse who is the first and last health care professional Hispanic families encounter when they step into our health care system. This creates significant opportunity for nurses to expand their role to translator, communicator, advocate and teacher. Many people feel this is an issue that solely affects the Hispanic American community.

This is where we must change our thinking, and where nurses can make a difference. With this segment of our population steadily increasing, there is currently and will continue to be, significant implications for nurses to provide more culturally sensitive services as well as high quality care. Nurses have a responsibility to increase their knowledge, and, in this case, their understanding of the Spanish language, especially if they are working with people whose culture and language is different from their own. "Demonstrating interest in the patient's culture, accepting his or her beliefs without criticism and providing culturally sensitive care will enhance understanding, promote communication, and improve compliance." (Plawecki, 1992). A starting point for providing culturally sensitive care is an attempt by nurses to understand the factors that influence behavior. Hispanic cultural beliefs and social systems play a large part in this understanding. If nurses can make a genuine attempt in this area it will most likely lead to a better rapport with clients, better working relationships, fewer conflicts, greater compliance, improved health care, and an increase in treatment efficacy. In her book *Caring for Patients from Different Cultures*, Galanti (1997) found that transcultural health care requires a holistic and culturally relativistic approach. Health care professionals should not make assumptions and should respect differences, recognizing that other people's views are just as valid as their own.

In conclusion, one can see that there is little disagreement that health care services in this country are unevenly distributed and that there are many barriers to medical care for Hispanic Americans: lack of English skills; low paying jobs that offer little or no health insurance; a shortage of Hispanic health care professionals; and lack of knowledge about medical insurance and available services. The Garcias are only part of 27 million Hispanics who currently live in the United States. They represent the larger community of Hispanics and the barriers they face in gaining access to medical care. "We must act promptly so that we can begin to bridge the language gap and overcome the barriers, creating a responsive health care system that recognizes and accepts cultural diversity. Although the government must play a significant role, the entire health care community must get involved and work together to provide an integrated continuum of health care for all Americans. It is up to each of us to make a difference" (Novello 1993).

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Kristen Dahl  
*Giraffes*  
Computer art, 8" x 8"



*Artist's comment: This was my first experience working with SuperPaint. I liked how the airbrush settings could be changed to gradually shade with different variations of gray. I got the idea of drawing giraffes from a black and white picture.*

*Kristen Dahl  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*

*Instructor comments: These two papers, by Hannah Scherer and Justin O'Neill, are exemplary of the following assignment in organization, writing style, and critical thinking demonstrated. The students created an interesting review of knowledge in topics with strong relevance to psychology. APA format is followed throughout.*

Bob Riesenber, Psychology 110

*Assignment: Conduct a literature review on a topic of the students choice related to psychology. Include primary sources from academic research journals, mass media sources from popular press publications, and a web site relating to the topic. Assess the validity and reliability of the information. To accomplish this, the student must learn to access on-line data bases, print materials in college libraries, and employ the Internet as a research tool. The student also demonstrates critical thinking skills in assessing the relevance, validity, and reliability of the information used in composing the report of the state of knowledge in this topic area. APA format is required. In the course of all this the student also learns about the way knowledge is created in a topic of personal interest.*

*Student's comments: I decided to do this paper on television because when I was growing up I did not have a television in my house. This was because my parents thought it was evil and did not want to ruin our minds with it. In writing this paper I tried to figure out what had been scientifically determined about television. I wanted to know whether it was scientifically proven to be bad for us in some way, or if its supposed vileness was a product of my parent's paranoia. Since television is such a hotly discussed topic there was plenty of articles, both academic and popular press, for me to draw from.*

Justin O'Neill

## Television and Its Effects on Cognitive Abilities and Academics

Justin O'Neill

Television. It is an integral part of American culture and one of the defining elements of the 20th century. We find its eerie glow in shopping malls, dentist waiting rooms, airports, and even in our schools. Moreover America's children have been entirely captured by television's draw. Over the course of a year, most children and adolescents spend more time watching television than they spend in school (Page et al. 1996).

The effects of television on children would seem to be great. Due to the amount of time they spend in front of it, I would think that it influences children's morals, behavior, and their image of themselves. Television is usually a passive activity. There is no thinking involved. I know that for me, I have a much harder time remembering something on television than if I read it. I would think this is because of the thought process that occurs in obtaining the information. Reading is an active activity. Our brain decodes the words on the page and relates them to each other in a complex network so that we can get the information of the page. If we can't understand something, we can go back over it and figure it out. While watching

television, our brains are usually idle. We are assailed with the images and words and don't have time to think about them. This is not to say that some educational videos and TV programs are not occasionally helpful. I think that when some TV is used with reading it can help us remember more clearly the point trying to get across (especially those of us with good visual memory). But when kids spend most of their time at home watching television I would think it would cause a problem. School is supposed to develop children's critical thinking skills and train their minds for figuring out the problems of the world. Also if they are spending all of their free time watching television they do not have a chance to experience the real world.

Time spent watching television is generally time that a young person is not physically, mentally or socially active (Page, 1996). Thus it would seem that young children growing up in front of the TV would be deficient in cognitive, physical, and social abilities. TV also displaces time spent doing homework and other activities. I know for myself that if I am watching a particularly good program, I have a very hard time pulling myself away from it and usually don't succeed. In this paper I will look at some of the research done on this topic and whether it agrees with my perceptions or not.

#### Previous research done on this topic

A study done by Hagborg (1995) looked at the effects of television on the motivation in school performance, school activities and self esteem of high school students. He starts by looking at some previous research. He found that the most common hypothesis researched was that watching TV displaces out of school academic behavior such as reading and homework. The second most researched is the hypothesis that watching TV negatively effects academic achievement. Experiments on both of these hypothesis found a significant weak inverse relationship between television viewing time and academic achievement ( Hagborg, 1996). Recent research, however, has found that this relationship could be due to other factors such as socioeconomic status and intelligence. The author also hypothesized that TV negatively affects children's images of school by portraying it in a bad light

Hagborg did his study with 152 high school students in groups defined by light viewing (less than one hour), medium viewing (one to four hours), and heavy television viewing (more than four hours). He administered a bunch of different reports and tests to the students. These included a background report which determined age, occupation and socioeconomic status; a school attitudes and motivation test; a scale of intrinsic and extrinsic orientation in the classroom; and a self perception profile for adolescents. The results were surprising. There was no significant correlational relationship between time spent in front of the TV and grades. There was a significant negative correlation between television and motivation and self esteem, however. Hagborg found, though, that this relationship was mainly due to socioeconomic status.

The author did admit there were some significant limitations to his study. The study did not determine what kind of programs the kids watched and also whether heavy viewers had been previously light and vice versa. Moreover it did not figure in intelligence which would be a big factor. The author suggested that in future studies that researchers look at the atmo-



sphere surrounding television. If television were watched in a family setting and topics were discussed, it would appear more beneficial than if watched alone. It seems that in this author's opinion the factors surrounding the correlation between television watching and academic achievement are too complex to determine. According to him, the negative correlation in previous study reflects ignorance of these factors.

A more recent study on this subject (Clarke et al., 1997) found a significant relationship between television viewing and children's readiness for school. One of the author's hypothesis was that television viewing takes up time that would be otherwise spent doing other activities such as reading and socializing from these young children. By the time they got to school, they would not be able to read and would have trouble socializing. They also realized, however, that children who come from less stimulating homes would have no other alternative activities available to them and would spend that time watching TV. Children from more stimulating homes would spend that time doing other activities. The authors administered numerous tests including school readiness and the primary scale of inelegance test. They also obtained information from the parents regarding number of books in the house, time spent watching television, and time parents spent reading to the child.

The findings showed a significant negative correlation between television viewing and school readiness. They also found that parent instruction is influential to television viewing time. These findings do not support the displacement hypothesis, however. Children would not necessarily fill up the time with learning activities.

Another studio by Cool and Yarbrugh (1994) looked at the effects of studying with a radio and TV on. They noticed that much of the previous research done found that the brain can only handle so much at one time, and studying with a television on hampered a persons studying abilities. In spite of this most students elect to do their homework with a TV on (Patton, Routh and Stinard, 1996). One hypothesis explaining this behavior is that trying to do two things at once (watching TV and studying) raises a person's level of arousal (Groff, Baron and Moore, 1983). The conflict between watching the television and studying makes the studying more interesting. With this in mind the authors conducted a study with three groups of adolescents. The control group studied math problems in a room without any noise or distractions. The two other groups studied math problems with either a radio or a television on. In another experiment the setup was exactly the same, but the participants read instead of doing math problems. The authors found that the study conditions did not seem to effect the quality of the work done, but the participants who studied in front of the television or radio took significantly longer to complete their tasks. This was the case for the only the majority however. Some people in the study were not able to complete the tasks assigned to them because they found the distracters so distracting. The television in most cases does not affect a student's academic ability.

These previous articles have mainly dealt with a small sampling of school children. In a study done by Gortmaker and others (1990), they looked at a very large sample of U.S youth and followed them for six years. The authors were interested in the hypothesis that television takes away from those who live in beneficial environments, and thus stumping their develop-



ment, but adds intellectual and social information to the lives of deprived children. The authors, however, were not satisfied with some of the recent studies done because they looked at a small sampling of youth for a short period of time. Their study followed 1,743 school children for six years. They were given parental and self reports to determine how much television they watched and socioeconomic status. The students were included in the National Health examination surveys to obtain data on all of the variables.

The initial results showed a substantial negative correlation between the amount of television watched and I.Q. When other variables such as socioeconomic status were taken into account, however, the relation became insignificant. There was also no relation between childhood television watching and future test scores. This study had some limitations in that it did not account for the programs watched. The author also noted that this was a study between individual differences, not one group having television and one not.

Koolstra and Van Der Voort (1997) did a study on the effects of television on children's reading ability. They hypothesized that television could effect children's attitudes towards books and actual deterioration of children's ability to concentrate. Some of the other hypotheses they tested include: Television takes away from the time children spend studying, and television reduces the amount of mental effort children are willing to spend on reading. The authors obtained their data by measuring the effects of the independent variable (television viewing) and the dependant variable (book reading) on 1,050 school children. They also determined what kind of shows the children watched. The results showed a reductive effect on children's reading and the frequency with which they read books. There was still a substantial negative correlation when other factors (socioeconomic status, sex, I.Q.) were introduced. Also Television did seem to displace the available time for reading and children's concentration skills.

Moore (1993) looks at the effects of video and television in the classroom. Since videos are passive, teachers have to find creative ways to make kids learn from video presentations. Using television just does not provide the same interaction you can get between teacher and student. Television does have its good sides, however. It can make instruction more interesting by presenting real events (such as a volcano erupting) that would not otherwise be observable. Thus television, when used in the right context, can be helpful.

In an article by Walker (1995) he talks about the effects of TV on violence and children, and their unreal expectations of the world. Because violence is so prevalent on the screen, kids grow immune to it, and in some cases act the violence they saw. Also TV effects children's morals. For every scene of sex between married couples, there are 14 outside of marriage. This can be very confusing to adolescents already struggling to gain control over their sexual impulses. TV also leads kids to believe that complex problems can be solved within 30 minuet. TV though, when used right can be beneficial in the classroom.

The Internet site News View Archives mainly deals with the effects of TV on violence. They state that television negatively effects children in 3 major ways: children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, children may be more fearful of the world around them, and children may be more likely to behave in aggressive ways towards others some stud-

ies have shown that kids who watch violent shows are more likely to strike playmates, argue, and disobey authority. Televised violence has also had a effect on women. Since shows depicting women in violent roles have come on the screen, women have been involved in more aggressive acts like shoving, choking, and knife fights. This site also provides a section for people to go if they have questions or need help regarding TV violence.

#### Credentials

All of the authors of the academic journals seem to be college professors of some sort or have some kind of college backing. Steven Gortmaker, for example, is senior teacher and acting chairman of the department of behavioral sciences at Harvard University of Public Health. Saltes and Walker are also faculty at Harvard. David Moore is professor of statistics at Purdue University; his work was partially supported by the National Science Foundation Grant. Dr. Robert Walker is assistant professor of elementary education at Oakwood College. I could find no information pertaining to the authors of the Internet site.

#### What this research tells us

The conclusions these authors came to seem all but unanimous. They seem to have good data backing up their statements, but there is definitely no agreement between them. The most recent research seems to suggest that television viewing does not have any influence on academic performance or cognitive capabilities. Past research has found a significant negative correlation, though. The conclusion would seem to depend somewhat on which other factors the researcher takes into account. Most of the authors stated at the end that with all of the ambiguities and multiple factors in was not possible to come to a decisive conclusion.

The popular press authors came at the topic from a more emotional standpoint. They quoted certain studies and used common sense to appeal to the reader. They talked about all of the violence and sex on TV and then point to all the instances of this happening in actual society. They see the correlation as obvious and do not give us room to question it.

#### Conclusion

There has been a tone of research on the effects of TV on academics and cognitive abilities. Since TV is so common and so controversial it has attracted the attention of many a researcher. Since researching these topic includes so many indecisive factors and methods of testing, I doubt researchers will ever come up with concrete evidence supporting any theory. Using self-reports for determining the amount of television watched, amount of books in the home and amount of time the child spends reading seems a bit risky. Parents would tend to exaggerate or bend the truth a bit to look better in the eyes of the researcher. Also none of these studies did the effects of no television compared with regular television watching. They only changed the amount watched. It seems to me that even an hour a day would greatly influence a child's behavior. I grew up without the influence of any television. My parents did not get one until I was 16. I know that if we had had a television I would never have read a billionth of the books I did end up reading. I would also not have found such mundane things

like basketball playing the violin and hiking exiting.

Television is so entrenched in our society that it would not be possible to examine what we would be like nowadays without it. All that these studies did was examine the effects of the amount of television watched. Also television affects each person differently. Some people can avoid the negative effects and benefit from the good TV has to offer, while others are captivated by its glow and waste their lives away passively observing people doing what they ought to be. Further research in this area will provide people with the information they need, but I think the final decision comes down to the individual and whether they can handle the temptation.

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Yuko Nakadaira  
*Shoes*  
Pencil, 8.5" x 11"



*Artist's comment: I had not drawn for a long time, so it took a very long time to finish the drawing. I needed to gaze at the shoes very carefully and it was exhausting. Then, I noticed that drawing was one of the ways to show myself.*

*Yuko Nakadaira  
Instructor: Caryn Friedlander*

*Student's comments: This paper on cohabitation was written for a general psychology class which I took from Bob Riesenberg. In the introduction of my paper I have given the reasons why I chose the topic of cohabitation. Although this paper started out being more like a chore than anything else, it turned into something that not only helped me understand the concepts of psychology better, but gave me some valuable information that I will know and use for the duration of my life.*

Hannah Scherer

## Literature Review on Cohabitation

Hannah Scherer

### Introduction

The topic of cohabitation interested me from the beginning because I am young and nearing the age when I will be making decisions about who I want to spend the rest of my life with. Cohabitation is becoming an increasingly popular trend in our country and in many cases has turned into a new stage in the American courtship process, sometimes even becoming a substitution for marriage. In doing this study I hope to find out if cohabitation used as a stage of courtship has any effect on the marital relationship afterwards. Namely, does it help the marriage along or does it end up destroying it? My parents cohabited for 6 months before they married, and after 16 years of marriage and nearing 17 years of living together, my parents are still together and very happy with their lives. Is it normal for the marriage to work out or are my parents part of a minority of people that make it work no matter what? Before this study I believed that cohabitation might help the marriage along because of the couples familiarity with each other, but after researching this subject I am quite convinced of the opposite. I now feel that cohabitation has a negative effect on marriages. Reading other peoples research brought to my mind many different possibilities that I hadn't previously thought about. One of the main points that convinced me is that there seems to be a positive correlation between the increase in cohabitation and the increase in the rates of divorce. In fact, cohabitation increases rather than decreases the risk of marital dissolution (Thomson & Colella, 1992). The more I thought about it the more I came to see how much sense it made.

### State of Knowledge

Cohabitation has become an increasingly common part of life in America. According to Bumpass and Sweet (qtd. Brown & Booth, 1996), the percentage of people choosing to precede marriage with cohabitation has almost doubled over the past few decades, going from 11% during the years 1965-1974 to 44% between the years 1980 and 1984. Today nearly 50% of Americans in their 20's and 30's have cohabited (Bumpass & Sweet, qtd. Brown & Booth, 1996). A study done in 1994 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census showed that there were 3.7 million cohabiting couples in the United States (qtd. Brown & Booth, 1996). According to Ressler and Waters (1995), the main reason why couples want to cohabit is so they can be sure they are "compatible" before marriage. These authors also say that many people prefer cohabit-

ing because it allows more independence than marriage and requires less commitment and faithfulness, whether sexually or personally (1995). Studies have also found that cohabitants are less sexually faithful than married couples (Jackson, 1995). The result of this independence and lack of commitment seem to be a variable in the rising rates of divorce. In fact, "marriages in which at least one spouse is an ex-cohabitor are 50% more likely to end in divorce than are marriages in which neither spouse experienced premarital cohabitation" (Bumpass & Sweet, qtd. Brown & Booth, 1996), while only 27% of "first marriages" end in separation or divorce (Kirwan, 1995). Also, Thomson and Colella's (qtd. Brown & Booth, 1996) research states that the longer the cohabitation period before marriage, the greater the perceived likelihood of divorce.

Coupled with a higher rate in divorce, there is also a correlation between cohabitation and the drastic increase in the rate of child abuse. Patrick Fagan and his colleague have found that "the risk of child abuse is 20 times higher than in traditional married families if parents are cohabiting and 33 times higher if the single mother is cohabiting with a boyfriend." (qtd. *The Futurist* 12). Although children are relatively rare in cohabiting relationships, they certainly do exist. The rate in abuse among these children (which includes emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse) makes up for a significantly high amount in the overall problem. A child is by far the safest when living with married biological parents (Fagan and Hanks, qtd. *The Futurist* 12). It is strongly suggested by the researchers who have done studies on the positive correlation between cohabitation rates and divorce rates, that the cohabitators' relationship quality will differ according to their marital intentions (Brown & Booth, 1996). In the study of the authors Brown and Booth (1996), they found that the majority of cohabitators (76%) with plans to marry are no different than married persons with respect to relationship quality. Whereas in cohabitational relationships in which there are no plans for marriage, there is significant evidence that these cohabiting couples have poorer relationship qualities than other couples that are married or even cohabiting couples that are planning marriage. The cohabitators that are not considering marriage also report more fights or violence than married couples, and they report lower levels of fairness and happiness with and in their relationships as well.

#### Validity of Sources

The statistics were all the same between the five research articles, adding to their validity. This validity was somewhat taken away because of the fact that they all got their statistics from the same resource, Bumpass and Sweet. This shows to me that there is not much valid research done upon the topic of cohabitation. It also makes me wonder whether these statistics are completely true because no one else has done studies of their own to either back up or refute these statistics. As for the popular press article and web site, their information differed a considerable amount compared to the research articles. Along with having uncertain findings, they also seem to have rather dogmatic assertions stated without scientific evidence. If I hadn't known the scientific statistics for cohabitation, I could have easily fallen in to the trap of believing anything waved in front of my face.



### Credentials of Sources

There are not any credentials for the authors of either the popular press article or the web site. At the end of each article the name is included, but nothing else. Furthermore, their methods of obtaining the evidence they did are never stated. Even though most of the evidence is supportive of the research articles, they are still hard to believe because of lack of evidence. The web site is especially weak in this area.

The credentials are presented much more clearly in the academic research articles. At the end of each article there is a paragraph stating where the author is from, what school they teach at, the department they belong to, and so forth. All of the authors are instructors at various colleges around the United States, which invariably means they have had many years in their chosen field. It also implies that they are very interested in their field to have spent the required time learning about it and then having more years behind them in teaching. This reference to their positions give them more credibility as authors. Another aspect of their writing that is helpful in convincing the reader is that they back up all of their statements with quotes from various people that have researched the subject for many years. Unlike the popular press article and web site, they back up what they say.

The methods of obtaining information were very much alike in many of the academic research articles. The most common way was a study of relationship quality measured in five dimensions: "disagreement, fairness, happiness, conflict management, and interaction" (Brown & Booth, 1996). With these five dimensions, they asked the respondent and the spouse or partner. These five dimensions were used in each article for their studies, although the number of individuals participating in the study varied from article to article. This is because the studies were performed by different people, sometimes even with different purposes. In some cases there were weaknesses in the study because of the way certain questions were phrased (Lye & Waldron, 1997). The wording may have lead participants to misunderstand what the question was trying to get at. In order to create a better study, these awkward parts of the questions would have to be rewritten and explained in more detail. An example is from the study done by Demaris and MacDonald on whether or not "the greater instability of marriages begun by premarital cohabitation can be accounted for by cohabitators' greater un-conventionality in family ideology" (1993). As the authors of this study put it, "...it is not clear from it's wording that agreement reflects the desirability of cohabiting only with the prospective marital partner. Agreement could also indicate intention to cohabit with anyone prior to getting married" (1993). In this case, all it would take to fix this weakness is being more specific about what they mean by agreement of cohabitation.

### Considerations

There has not been a considerable amount of research on the subject of cohabitation, but what there is has been conducted very well and scientifically. Apart from in the web site and popular press article, I didn't find any dogmatic statements. Personal opinions were also avoided in the academic research articles. If the authors used any opinion at all, they used



someone else's, but they also included the way in which that opinion holder came to their conclusions. The one thing I found to be a problem with these studies was that because there had not been an enormous amount of research on this subject, there were only a selected number of previous studies. These studies were then used throughout most of the articles, giving them the exact same information as the next. It is no wonder then that all of these data agreed with each other. I think this limited knowledge puts a great weakness in the entire study of cohabitation. In order to make a hypothesis more valid, many studies must be done on it. The validity of the hypothesis would come from the consistent results of each study.

#### Obstacles

The problem of too few sources of information listed above is also an obstacle to be overcome. As the problem stands, it is directly in the way of the path to more complete answers and better knowledge of the subject. Another obstacle in the way is the research method. In many of the studies the wording of the questions was confusing and prompted a considerable amount of the responses to pertain to evidence that only served to mess the study up.

#### What Needs To Be Done

To improve our knowledge in the area of cohabitation and its relationship to divorce, we need to first go about getting rid of the obstacles in our path. The first obstacle can be rectified by having more people test the hypotheses of the studies. The second by going through all of the questions in the studies and making sure they are clear and that they solicit the information crucial to the study. I think there are quite a few areas that might end up providing more knowledge on the subject of cohabitation. Some of these choices I believe are the academic research, religious groups, and even the government. Because the rates of cohabitation have risen so steadily over the past few decades, there is a considerable amount of attention being paid to the subject of cohabitation. It would not be unlikely that the government might conduct some research upon a subject that has a possibility of affecting our society very much through an increase in the rates of divorce and an increase in the rate of child abuse. Religious groups might also be prone to research on the topic also because of their strong beliefs on the subject of traditional attitudes toward marriage (Lye & Waldron, 1997). However, their research might have a tendency to be biased towards the negative aspects of cohabitation in order to convince people not to cohabit. The area most likely to produce objective studies would be academic research studies. They have already got studies out and the articles mention that there are more to come. Academic research articles also include scientific research for both sides of the argument and usually have less of a bias towards one view or another (not to say that they don't have any). In the long run, I would expect most of the valid research to come from academic research studies, but there are still other possibilities of obtaining information on the subject.

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*Instructor's comments: During the 1998 Winter quarter a number of students in Urban Sociology Honors Seminar did a combined group writing project including individual papers. An Urban Sociology topic was picked and each student chose to do a section of this group writing project. As students engaged in their research, they wrote their section as a stand-alone paper and collated all three papers into a coherent whole for the group writing project. Each student engaged in both individual research and group research in order to accomplish this goal. The process was quite dynamic as each interacted with community residents. All of them stated that it served as a strong learning tool in understanding the dynamics of applied behavior and interaction as it relates to our study of Urban Sociology. Congratulations and my heart-felt appreciation for your hard work and dedication goes to the student authors Daniel Hammill, Melissa Marteny, and Roberta Praeter. Bill Culwell, Urban Sociology 295*

## **The Disappearing Dream and Downward Mobility**

Melissa Marteny, Daniel Hammill, Roberta Praeter

### Introduction

Shifting global demographics and technology are working together to restructure the global economy and class system. In many places the changes are almost undetectable and in other places the change is so radical as to alter the entire cultural foundation of the people. One change that appears to have profoundly negative effects is the universal decline of the middle class. Many have fallen from the middle class into poverty. Those who remain have made severe adjustments in their hopes and means.

Is the middle class truly shrinking and is the phenomenon limited to America or is the constriction a global predicament? What is the meaning of the American Dream and have expectations diminished in the pursuit of the dream? Are people setting their sights lower for a more modest American Dream?

How are volunteer community organizations coping and helping to mitigate the effects of the decline and attending to the needs of financial security for graduates? Does a diploma still secure a place for the graduate in the middle class?

Our report explores these issues as we attempt to understand the dynamics of a rapidly changing global economy, and its effects on livelihoods, expectations, community, and education.

*Instructor's comments: Daniel was a student of mine in the Urban Sociology Honors Seminar during Winter quarter 1998. He is one of the hardest working students I have ever had the pleasure to be around. I would make some possible suggestions of activities with which to learn new material, and he would do all of them. He was always prepared for lectures and evaluations. He put Urban Sociology to the test by applying in the local community what he was learning in the classroom. Students such as Dan are reasons why I find joy in the field of teaching. It was a pleasure having him in a couple of my courses and also his association as a friend.*

Bill Culwell, Urban Sociology 295

## **The Ameliorative Effect of Community Organizations on Downward Mobility**

Daniel Hammill

### Introduction

The marginalization and stratification of what was once the middle-class in the United States is being mitigated by the proliferation of urban community organizations and nonprofit entities and their subsequent efforts to normalize and stabilize dynamic social stresses and issues. The in-filling of these organizations is an organic response to the reduced role of federal and state governments' responsibility to address urban issues in the areas of poverty, hunger, housing density, and crime. The decrease of governmental subsidies and entitlements to poor populations, and the growing number of former middle-class citizens that have "fallen through the cracks" to the lower socio-economic class, due to large-scale corporate downsizing, has compelled the formation of public and private non-profits, foundations, and community-based organization. The following is an exposition of the York Neighborhood Association, a Bellingham organization that deals with community sustainability, resource accessibility, and urban neighboring.

### The York Neighborhood Association

The York neighborhood provides us with a working model of a partially gentrified, heterogeneous urban borough with a mixed series of static and dynamic community actors and neighbors (Schwab, 1992). Bordered by the Samish Commercial District and the Sehome neighborhood to the south, the Central Business District to the west, Whatcom Creek to the north, and I-5 to east, the neighborhood is home to approximately 2,550 people (Bellingham Department of Planning, 1994). Two out of three homes in the neighborhood are renter-occupied and 32% of residents live below the poverty level. the neighborhood is designated a low to moderate income area by the U.S. Census Bureau.

### Neighborhood Assets

Because of some areas of internal commercial zoning, and adjacency to three business districts, York residents have walking-distance access to over two hundred goods and services providers including the local transit system, two low-cost health clinics, four grocery stores, nu-



merous restaurants, banks, and merchants of various other sundries and services. The proposed development of the Central Business District, spearheaded by the developer Doug Tolchin and steered by the Bellingham Planning Department and public involvement, may make the York neighborhood more attractive to gentrifying families (Johnson, Coyne, 1998).

#### The Beginnings of the York Neighborhood Association

The neighborhood is well-settled: virtually all of the homes were built between 1870 and 1925. Although development is rarely an issue with residents, it is this issue that instigated the formation of the York Neighborhood Association in 1977. Contention arose around two planned developments: the Holiday Inn (now Best Western Lakeway Inn) on Lakeway Drive and a proposed multi-residential four-plex on what is now Rock Hill Park. The YNA conceded to the building of the hotel on a contingent basis (York residents, to this day, have free use of the pool at the hotel and main access is off Lincoln Street versus the 22,000 car-a-day Lakeway Drive) and eventually bought the land that, through the efforts of community volunteers and approximately \$17,000 in grants, became a safe park for the residents of the York neighborhood.

#### Overview of Mitigating Effects on Social Isolation

Today, the YNA acts as a social buffer (Fainstain, 1996). It coordinates neighborhood cleanups with mobile pick-up service for seniors and the disabled. It distributes a well-read newsletter that discusses and parodies local issues (Clifton, 1997). The organization hosts six meetings per year that features speakers of relevance to the neighborhood (Mayor Mark Asmundson, Greenways Chair Seth Fleetwood, Boys and Girls Club Director Kim Yost, and City Councilwomen Barbara Ryan and Leslie Richardson). In October 1997 over two hundred participants and observers came out for the Yorktoberfest Parade that ended in the dedication of Rock Hill Park. Also in late 1997, members of the neighborhood mourned the loss of a neighbor and father of two who was lost at sea.

The YNA, in all of these cases, acts as a framework for residents of the neighborhood. It provides a way for people to become involved in meaningful activities, get acquainted with neighbors, and participated in the community in which they live.

#### Measuring the Sociability Quotient

Urban neighboring presents an integrated model of sustained social interaction without the need for deep interpersonal relationships. Remember that the existence of the "sociability" function between neighbors can be an important source of social belonging for the individual. It also serves to mitigate some of the depersonalizing influences ascribed to the urban environment. But this clearly must be separated from the exchanges between neighbors which represent friendship and also from very selective kinds of face-to-face contact based only on ready access in its most narrow sense. (Warren & Warren, 1977)

Indexing neighboring sociability is represented in the amount of face-block opportunities available to a given resident (Schwab, 1992). These are, essentially, the people one can recognize within community (but not always neighborhood) boundaries. Neighborhood sociability and face-blocks

are significant because they offer a sense of place and identity. They are used as loose geographical-ethnological borders by parents in which their children can play. This is especially important to the 287 families that live within the York neighborhood. Community solidarity, and subsequently one's tetherment to community, is effectively passed on to progeny simply by the use of sociability within spatial confines.

#### Mutual Aid in the York Neighborhood

The ability to exchange help by people living in close proximity to one another is an important function in urban neighboring. Indeed, 75% of rescue in disaster in city neighborhoods is made by neighbors (Warren & Warren, 1977). Consider the following:

I remember an autumn evening last year when it seemed as if most of the neighbors were out doing something: mowing lawns, working on cars, gardening or just talking. I was washing down my bike and watching my across-the-street neighbor John crawl underneath his Jeep. Not long after, he started screaming. A radiator hose had come undone and the hot fluid was pouring all over his face and chest. Within seconds, literally, eight neighbors had come to his assistance, some washing him down with cold water, others issuing words of assurance. I don't think I've ever seen so many people move so quickly to help somebody else. It seemed to be a rather natural reaction. Thank God he ended up being OK. (Lookabill, 1998)

Mutual aid isn't exclusive to medical emergencies. It is more prominent in day-to-day activities that include watching a neighbor's house while that person is away, borrowing tools, mowing a senior's lawn, sharing garden abundance, and bartering skills and services. It can take the place of economic exchange in many circumstance, reducing the need for money and thereby ameliorating some effects of poverty. This kind of assistance is greatly enhanced by having a sense of neighborhood and place. These spatial and psychological concepts are linked with the presence of an active neighborhood association that promotes mutual aid and neighboring.

#### The YNA as a Distributive Coalition

The York Neighborhood Association not only concerns itself with the internalities of urban neighboring, but also responds to externalities that affect its populace. The on-going development of Rock Hill Park is a clear example of this. According to economist and community development consultant Greg Winter:

The neighborhood association reimburses the neighborhood on social costs. Due to the externality of increased traffic on Lakeway Drive, the majority of children and families do not have safe access to Franklin Park (in the south quadrant of the neighborhood). The YNA recognizes this and addresses this social cost by developing the Rock Hill Park (in the north quadrant of the neighborhood). It acts as a conduit that argues for local distribution of city and community resources, thereby directly increasing the felicity of neighborhood residents. (Winter, 1998)

#### Summary

With approximately four hundred residents that live below the poverty level, the YNA recognizes that it can play a role in the quality of life for the marginalized members of the

community by interconnecting residents with one another at public meetings, clubs, neighborhood-wide yard sales, parades, and community clean-ups. This interaction and the attendant sense of neighborliness increases the quality of life for residents, so much so that the York neighborhood is viewed as a community of limited liability from those outside it (Schwab, 1992).

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Erika Edwards  
*Circle of Confusion*  
Photo montage, 17" x 17"



*Artist's comment: This piece is representative of the way I feel about the situation I am in: limited, confused, and disoriented.*

*Erika Edwards  
Instructor: Barbara Sternberger*

*Instructor's comments: Melissa was a student of mine in the Urban Honors Seminar during Winter quarter 1998. She has a wealth of real-world experience which greatly enhances her learning of facts, understanding of concepts, and ability to help others. She spends a great amount of time volunteering in the community and at WCC in many areas with the help students, staff in general, and our community at large. Melissa possesses a level of determination rarely seen in undergraduate students. Her enthusiasm about the subject of Urban Sociology was evident in her work performance. It was a pleasure having her in the course and in being associated with her as a friend.*

Bill Culwell, *Urban Sociology* 295

### **Downward Mobility: the Macro Perspective— Is the Middle Class Shrinking?**

Melissa Marteny

After WWII, Americans experienced a steady increase in average income and living standards. The middle class enjoyed more buying ability in real estate than ever before and the industrial manufacturing boom provided a higher quality of life than had ever been experienced by the middle class ( Palen, 1997). For many eras, Americans have considered a promising, hopeful future their inheritance, and for much of the interval following WWII the U.S. economy delivered. But today's global prosperity reserves its substantial benefits for the well-educated or for those working in jobs protected from foreign rivalry ( Dentzer, 1991).

A new international division of labor in global cities has emerged. Financial institutions and specialized service industries are integral elements, complementing the capitalistic movement of money and decision-making by the power elite's in the global cities, thus facilitating a global network of production and distribution (Sassen, 1991). Access to vast resources has allowed a restructuring of the urban social and economic order. Transnational elite's are now the dominant class in the world city, and the city is arranged to suit their lifestyle and occupational necessities. This restructuring has freed multi- and transnational corporations from national constraints, resulting in an urban hierarchy of influence and control (Hammett, 1994).

Striking a sharp contrast is the third or so of the population making up the permanent under-class (Hammett, 1994). Global cities continue to experience a decline in manufacturing jobs, jobs that had reinforced the middle-class. As a result of the decline, middle income earners slide into the lower classes. Today, the probability that a middle class person will enjoy the same economic successes that his parents enjoyed has diminished greatly ( Culwell, 1998). Downward mobility has become the new reality for members of the middle class. This downward mobility is not limited to the American middle class, but is evident in global cities worldwide (Sassen, 1994). This pattern of downward mobility of the middle-class is illustrated by the examples of Mexico, Great Britain and the United States.

In A report on Latino labor, economist Carlos Heredia (1996) documents the fact that México's productive capability is overwhelmed, as the nation's small and medium sized businesses cannot tolerate rigorous rivalry from large foreign establishments. Large ancillary

divisions of transnational firms dispensing to foreign markets are thriving as the path to financial dictatorship is paved by corrupt government officials. These officials now comprise Mexico's richest individuals with a combined worth of over \$25.6 billion dollars. Mexican companies that sell to domestic customers have gone under. In unfair competition, large multinational corporations, such as Wal-Mart, have set up shop in Mexico and distribute cheap Southeast Asian products, displacing local businesses (Heredia, 1996). The privileged multinationals have negatively affected over 60% of the domestic commercial businesses in Mexico.

Manufacturing wages in Mexico are now below the levels of 1981, prior to the economic liberalization drive. After two and a half years of free trade, domestic consumer debt is at an all-time high in Mexico. Over seven million Mexicans are delinquent on loans on their home or car, and/or direct credit. Banks are in virtual collapse as they cannot collect the money lent in the midst of the borrowing/spending spree begun after the passage of NAFTA, causing a severe weakness in the infrastructure of the financial system. The financial system is in a vicious cycle: it cannot lend money until it is paid on outstanding debt, and it cannot get paid for old debts without lending more money because of the financial strains of the private sector (Heredia, 1996). The middle class has been pushed downward by the growing gap between prices and salaries; the cost of the basic basket of goods deemed necessary for a family of five rose 60% while the minimum wage rose by only 31% and unemployment increased to 26.4% (Heredia, 1996).

Frederick Strobel (1995), a professor of economics, researched the problem and parallels of the disappearing middle-class in both Great Britain and the United States. Great Britain is experiencing a crisis similar to that of the United States. There has been a marked redistribution of income over the past fifteen years and the core components are equivalent (Strobel, 1995).

One component is a decrease in real wages stemming from a massive increase in labor supply and a dramatic fall in union membership. The labor supply increase has three fundamental elements. First, the competition among the "baby boomers" as they entered the labor market in the 1970's and 1980's held wage levels down. The proportion of workers receiving middle-class earnings declined. Secondly, women flooded the labor market in the 70's. Thirdly, Britain also experienced record levels of immigration during this time, which fed the flames of the low wage fire. Finally, the ready supply of cheap labor affected union membership, driving numbers and wages down (Strobel, 1995).

A second component of middle-class job loss leading to middle-class economic decline was the loss of manufacturing jobs. Today, the manufacturing employment level is 3 million below the 1979 level (Strobel, 1995).

Another component of middle-class job loss is merger and acquisition activity. Redundancies resulted within the merged companies and led to layoffs instead of job creation (Strobel, 1995).

Finally, there is an increased financial burden on the middle-class. Inflation and high fuel and heating costs take a large toll on the middle class, although in Britain the cost is three times as high as in the U.S. (Strobel, 1995).

Overall, researchers tend to agree that the shrinking middle class has its roots in several factors (Smith, 1994). One is the loss of manufacturing jobs, partly due to a shift to informational commodities and partly due to the movement of manufacturing to the areas with the cheapest, most readily available labor force. This movement of manufacturing jobs away from unioniza-



tion towards cheap labor force has heavily affected blue-collar workers and white collar middle-managers. The shifting of major manufacturing capital to low-wage countries has not been good for either the middle-class American or the working low-wage earner in other countries. Also, institutions that traditionally have protected the middle-class, such as labor unions, the Democratic party, and the economics profession, have unraveled in their support of the middle class (Smith, 1994).

Considering the wealth of America it may be difficult to see the decline of the middle-class clearly. One researcher, Susan Dentzer (1991), points out that even though prosperity seems apparent, it now takes two people working in the job market to provide the same goods and services previously provided by one working head of household (Dentzer, 1991). And researchers Frederick Strobel and Wallace Peterson present the figure of an almost 10% drop in the American middle class from 1969 to 1989 in their research on downward mobility (Strobel & Peterson, 1997). It appears that the middle class is shrinking, not only in the U.S., but worldwide.

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*Student's comments: Urban Sociology has an interesting view of the whole world - of the people and the processes we use to live within it. It looks at all the components, the interactions and relationships of those components, and the responses of our societies. The United States has been a leader in many ways, in our interactions, in our relationships, and sometimes in our abuses and crimes. Being an American, a female, and a returning adult student has lead me to appreciate something that may be possible only in America. I can dream, I can reach for my dreams, and I can achieve my dreams.*

Bobbie Prater

*Instructor's comments: Bobbie was a student of mine in the Urban Sociology Honors Seminar during Winter quarter 1998. She is pretty remarkable in the fact that she is a returning adult, a single mother, a full-time student, and volunteers with her favorite organizations and causes when she has time. Bobbie was always prepared for lectures and evaluations. Her excitement about Urban Sociology as a study was evident in the work performance. It was a pleasure have her in the course and being associated with her as a friend.*

Bill Culwell, *Urban Sociology* 295

## The Disappearing (Changing) American Dream

Roberta Prater

America has always carried the promise of opportunity. Beginning with conception and into the present day, the land of America has offered hope to the hopeless, refuge to the homeless, and reward to those willing to work hard for it. During that time, the American Dream has remained a constant, steadfast belief to those seeking a better life—the specific ideals of the dream, however, have changed with the times.

When America first began, it was seen as a land without limits. Because it had no limits, no pre-existing structure, it was perfect for shaping. Upon this template the first settlers carved their communities. The American Dream really began here. The dream was partially powered by those who wished a profit, but the people who colonized America brought their own dreams. These colonists saw opportunity in America, the opportunity for freedom of religion and the equality of the classes—and the freedom of choice (Tarshis, 1992).

Later that dream became one of independence for the newly formed country. With hard work and sacrifice, that dream was achieved. But nationality brought consequences—a need for governance and a need for a change. So, the dream became one of liberty, democracy, equality & the pursuit of happiness.

With the opening of the western portions of the United States, and the newly available large parcels of land, the dream again changed. The ideals then became that of individual land ownership in the wild environment of the west (Palen, 1997). Anyone could make their fortune out west—regardless of class or income level—needing only hard work and self-sacrifice to gain this dream.

But the openness of the west faded away, and with it those components no longer appropriate to the American Dream. With masses of immigrants (as much as 40 million over

125 years!) seeking better lives (Palen, 1997; Tarshis, 1992), and with those immigrants settling first in the central cities, urbanization began its journey toward becoming the dominant way of life in America. Yet the crowded, unsanitary living conditions earned the cities a reputation of undesirable traits and characteristics (Palen, 1997). Thus, the dream had to change to fit the desires of the population. But this change was not driven so much by the downtrodden masses as by the WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants), who felt the problems of the inner cities were the fault of the waves of immigrants (Palen, 1997).

The invention of the telephone, the electric streetcar, and particularly the automobile provided the dissatisfied WASPs with a means to move outward (Palen, 1997). New, improved modes of transportation allowed settlement further away from the central business district. As more of the United States became settled and urbanized, the urban areas became larger, encompassing more and more people (Palen, 1997). But this did not mark a permanent change for the American Dream. The Depression era and World Wars affected the population in ways to further change their ideals (Tarshis, 1992).

It was after the second World War that the federal government took an active role in attempting to improve life for its people. Federal loans, such as VA and FHA, made it easy for people to buy their own homes. By 1995 the Federal Housing Administration had insured 22 million home loans (Palen, 1997). Suburban growth exploded and home ownership reached never before seen level (Tarshis, 1992). This was the beginning of the most commonly known version of the American Dream, one based on the myth of suburbia (Palen, 1997).

As time passed, that dream was handed down to the following generation with few changes. One of those changes was the admittance of blacks and other minorities to the aspiration of the American Dream (Tarshis, 1992). Where housing practices and loan policies (even at the Federal government level) had previously kept these populations out of the suburbs, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Palen, 1997) changed this trend—thereby changing the American dream for a significant number of American citizens.

Owner occupied homes now make up over 50% of housing in the United States (Palen, 1997)—down from 65% in 1984 (Knight, 1984). Minority populations are following white settlement patterns and moving to the suburbs in pursuit of the American dream. Asians, the leading minority in suburbanization, have slightly over 50% of their population in those areas (Palen, 1997). 43% of the Hispanic population are reported to be (successfully) living in suburbia (Chavez, 1997; Palen, 1997). Black populations, while set back by discriminatory laws and practices, are now approximately 27% suburbanite (Palen, 1997). These numbers are reflective of the increasing suburban growth and the acceptance of suburban values throughout the United States.

In the 1980's and 1990's, the myth of suburbia has been displaced (Manning, 1992). The American dream, changing yet again, now focuses less on the homogeneous lifestyles of the fifties and sixties, and more on heterogeneous qualities (Palen, 1997). The values espoused in *Leave It to Beaver* have become outdated (Tarshis, 1992)—replaced with a new respect for individuality, self-achievement, and financial success (Kasser, 1993; Palen, 1997).

Yet all is not rosy and bright for the future. Despite laws against it, discrimination is still a factor for minorities who try to buy their own homes (Chavez, 1997; Knight, 1984). While lip service is given to the value of integrated neighborhoods, those willing to participate in such lifestyles are not yet in the majority (Palen, 1997). However, hope remains. As more and more

people become involved in racially mixed neighborhoods, the number of successes will increase, with the suburbs offering the most hope of truly desegregated living (Palen, 1997).

But while minorities may be experiencing more success, the ideals of the dream are becoming further out of reach for mainstreamed Americans. With increasing costs, higher interest rates, and rising inflation, buying a new home in suburbia is not an affordable option even for those families with two incomes (Knight, 1984; Manning, 1992). This has led to dissatisfaction with the suburban American dream. The population of generation X, dual wage earners with no children, persons in non-traditional living arrangements, and other types of changing households have all contributed to a downward turn for the housing market (Palen, 1997). The desire to live in a city due to lower commuting costs and availability of entertainment are also factors in this decreased market. The dream must change again.

As well as less interest in the home ownership component of the American dream, not everyone is interested in the financial aspects. The changing demographics of United States citizens reflects the increasing merit placed on individuality, and on happiness. This population may now be looking more at how to achieve contentment rather than on how to become a billionaire (Kasser, 1993). It is possible (just barely) that the majority of America is realizing that the myth of the technological fix is simply fantasy.

On the other hand, the dream of making a better life is alive. Immigrants still come to America for just that opportunity. The lower standard of living in third world countries makes even a poor life in the United States attractive. A low-wage job is better than no job at all (in-class discussion, Urban Sociology 210, March 16, 1998). And freedom is worth almost any price (Knight, 1984) But with all the fluctuations in the availability of various components of the American dream, it looks like time for a change.

There are many questions for the future of the American dream. Did the dream change to housing because housing became available or did housing become available because the dream changed? But the most basic question is, "Does the American dream drive the population or does the population drive the dream?" The argument in this paper indicates the later. When the people find an ideal unattainable, the people replace that ideal with another, more accessible goal.

In response to the question of the disappearing American dream, this author realizes the answer is yes. Of course the dream is disappearing, but that is because of changes in the wants and desires of the people. As the environment changes, the technology changes and the population changes. With all these changes, the dream, too, must change to reflect the wants and desires of the dreaming population. Despite the disappearance of the suburban American dream, the real dream—that of a better life, whatever form it may take—is alive and well! (Knight, 1984)

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*Student's comments: Upon getting this assignment, I focused on a topic which I was studying in the honors seminar coinciding with this class – gay rights in reaction to the aids virus. Because I am very interested in the film industry and movies in general, Philadelphia seemed like an obvious choice of a rhetorical text to analyze that related to this topic.*

*Justin Cano*

*Instructor's comments: Justin Cano's analysis of the film Philadelphia provides a relevant and insightful example of how a text is consequential. As a rhetorical critic, Justin explains how language and imagery are used to do things, and how these things affect the world. Justin's study of Philadelphia allows the reader to engage in a dialogue about values as well as reveals something about the film. Justin's work stands as a fine example of rhetorical criticism.*

*Martha Hagan, Speech 220*

## **The Rhetoric Of *Philadelphia***

Justin Cano

The popular film is a rhetorical article unlike any other. This difference stems from the fact that the popular film industry is primarily focused on earning a profit from the general viewing public – unlike educational/documentary films or other scholarly articles which are produced for specific scholarly audiences who are focused on the topics of these articles. Therefore, in order to earn a significant profit, popular films must be designed to not only fulfill the elements that make films popular but to also avoid alienating as much of the general public as possible. So, even though it is easy to tear down and find fault with these movies when looking at them from a strictly critical point of view, it is important to remember that these films are produced for an audience which tends to view them for entertainment and other reasons which are, for the most part, not scholarly in nature. With this in mind, it is more productive to critique these films based on their ability to influence the general audience. Also, when a popular film does address an issue that is, at the time of the films release, controversial and highly emotional, that film should not only be granted some leeway from a critical standpoint, but it should be respected, for in dealing with such a topic and stating a point of view, it is risking the alienation of a large portion of the viewing public in order to get its point across. Philadelphia is such a film, for it deals with the topic of the discrimination of those who received AIDS through homosexual practices.

At the time of Philadelphia's release in 1994 and even presently, homosexuality is something which is misunderstood and surrounded by prejudice, which has made it a rather taboo topic in popular films – though it is currently becoming much more visible and accepted. Because of its controversial nature, Philadelphia performs a function which all such popular movies perform: to not only be informative about their topics and get their points regarding them across in an effective manner but to do so in a way that does not alienate the majority of the public viewing audience but instead gains that audiences interest. Philadelphia, however, is the first film to do this on the subject of AIDS and homosexuality, and what makes it even

ore unique is that it not only avoided the alienation of the general public, but it became a very popular and respected film – receiving a few different Academy Awards.

So, how does Philadelphia go about achieving such social and rhetorical significance? There are many different strategies that can be used to rhetorically critique articles, but for this particular essay, we will use the classic method of neo-Aristotelian criticism which, though it may be old, can provide an in depth, fully functional strategy for deciphering how Philadelphia works as a rhetorical text. To format this strategy in a way that is more fitting to critiquing film, we will combine and focus on the invention, style, and delivery aspects of the film based on its use of ethos, pathos, and logos. It will be important to note, as we continue, that, because of the nature of film, these aspects will be presented in a fictitious story line with actors playing the roles of fictitious characters. Therefore, we have to remember not to take everything we view as being the truth or real while at the same time not letting this fact take away or invalidate completely the point that the writer and director are trying to make. In the case of Philadelphia, for example, we know that the court case in the film did not actually take place, but we also know that, in the real world, discrimination against homosexuals in general and associated with AIDS does exist, and trials like the one in the movie probably have taken place. With this in mind we will begin our analysis by looking at the way in which the movie uses ethos to gain the trust and support of its audience.

In looking at the ethos (believability of the makers of the film and the characters in it) of Philadelphia, we should begin by focusing on the reason that the film was made. As Jennet Conant put it in her article on Philadelphia, "For all the red ribbons on Oscar night and all the time and money some stars and studio executives have personally donated to aids causes, Hollywood has not been willing to make the same gesture artistically and turn its talent to making movies that combat the ignorance and prejudice associated with AIDS" (75). Philadelphia was produced for this purpose. In order to achieve it, however, Jonathan Demme (the director) had to choose actors and characters that would not alienate the audience but would draw believability, identification, and sympathy from the audience. The two actors who were chosen for the two lead parts were Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington who are both very well known and respected actors. The most important choice, however, was Tom Hanks for the lead role – Andrew Becket, a lawyer who contracts AIDS through homosexual practices and is then made to look incompetent by his discriminatory coworkers and is fired from his job. The one thing that the studio [was] most banking on [was] Hanks ability to bring the same winning charm to this role that he has to most of his others (76). As Tri Star president Marc Platt put it, "There is a tremendous likability about him that is very helpful in allowing the audience into his character" (76). Why is this? According to Tom Hanks himself, "I'm not threatening at all to anyone, so maybe that [made] me the most beautiful, perfect casting for this because no one has any reason to fear or loathe me" (76). So, here we see the importance of the actor in a movie to the ethos of the character he plays. If an actor who usually plays unlikable roles played the part, the audience would not be as likely to connect with him even if, in real life, he is a great guy. This may not be fair, but due to the fact that actors are usually seen in movies, playing the characters that they best portray, and not in their individual private lives, these actors' fictional personas have a rhetorical effect on the audience for better or for worse.

After the actors are chosen, it then becomes important to establish ethos within the film itself. In Philadelphia, the way this is done is to establish the two leading characters as competent,

likable, and as people we can relate to. To begin this process, the movie opens with a scene where Andrew Becket and Joe Miller (Denzel Washington) are pitted against each other as lawyers on two different sides of a lawsuit. This scene establishes both characters as competent and intelligent. As the movie progresses, other scenes indicate that both of these characters are kind, family oriented, and overall likable (e.g. Andy visits his family, and Joe becomes a loving father). Finally, about a quarter of the way through the movie, we see the differences between Andy and Joe. These differences become very important to the ethos within the film because they establish two major views with which the audience can relate.

First, Andy is shown to be a homosexual who has AIDS. Because the movie is focused on the prejudice surrounding AIDS and homosexuality, Andy's character is necessary to represent the part of the community that suffers from this discrimination. In doing so, however, it is important to note that Hanks does not play the part of a hairdresser or dancer, which tend to be what most homosexuals are portrayed as in most films. Instead, Andy is a very good lawyer who acts just like any other straight guy in the office. Andy's love life with his partner Antonio, played by Antonio Banderas, is present, but it is not focused on. As Ed Saxon, a producer, put it, "This is not a romance, but neither do we shy away from showing the real love between Toms and Antonio's characters" (75). Basically, Andy is shown to be a normal guy who happens to be a homosexual and has AIDS. He does not address the morality of homosexuality.

Joe, on the other hand, does address the issue of the morality of homosexuality to some degree. He does not like homosexuals, and the thought of them and what they do in the bedroom disgusts him and makes him uncomfortable. He is quite homophobic as is shown in the movie when he reacts somewhat violently to being hit on by a gay guy. He is, as Marc Platt put it, "a point of access for individuals not in contact with the gay community and this disease" (76). In the words of Ed Saxon, "We knew from the beginning that the studio would like there to be a straight character in the picture. In part so the picture would find a wider audience, and in part to give people the feeling that their point of view was represented, including people who don't like homosexuals" (76). However, being that Joe is also a lawyer and that the majority of the film takes place in a courtroom where Andy is suing his former employers for their discriminatory actions, he is also able to show that, no matter how much a person dislikes homosexuality, it is against the law and the constitution for him or her to discriminate against a person for being a homosexual. So, "while most of the straight audience is expected to identify with [Joe] Miller, it [is] critical that [Andrew] Becket be seen as a complex character who is many things, only one of which is gay" (77). Creating these two characters for people to relate to and believe in becomes a factor of major importance to the rest of the development of this film because, without it, both the emotional and logical appeals made by these two characters within the film would be in vain. The fact that Philadelphia establishes a very strong and positive sense of ethos, then, is what makes the pathos and logos applications in the film so effective.

In focusing on the use of pathos in Philadelphia, we can see how the identification we have with Andy and our belief in him allows us to be more greatly effected by the despair of his predicament. It is true that AIDS is a terrible thing and requires no identification to provoke sympathy, but in the case of Andy and others who contracted it as a result of their lifestyle, sympathy is not enough. The scenes that do evoke the sympathy of the audience are those that take place in the clinic, where other AIDS patients are being treated, and the scenes which deal with the progression

of Andy's illness. Probably the most paramount of the emotional scenes is the scene in which Andy listens to and translates a famous aria. In this scene, Tom Hanks is able to express such incredible emotion that the viewers cannot help but feel his despair in their hearts. But though the sympathy of the audience is provoked, the film also attempts to provoke a feeling of injustice and perhaps even shame. When we see how Andy is treated when he has aids, we realize that the true pain that Andy is going through is not the disease, but it is his alienation – the way in which he is avoided and feared – that causes him pain. For example, there is a scene which takes place in a library where Andy is indirectly asked to move into a private research room. This causes us, as the audience, to not only feel sympathy for Andy but to feel anger toward our own society and its ignorance – our own ignorance – about AIDS. Granted, the movie does this in subtle ways in order to avoid alienating the audience, for who would want to go to a movie that provokes nothing but guilty feelings. That is why it is important for movies like Philadelphia to not focus on placing blame and having too strong of an emotional appeal but instead to focus on what needs to be changed based on a balance of emotional and logical appeal.

This brings us to the use of logos in Philadelphia. The story line in Philadelphia lends itself very nicely to the use of logos, for the majority of it takes place in the courtroom. This allows the audience to see the logic which supports the fact that prejudice against homosexuals with and without AIDS does exist and is against the law. Towards the beginning of the film, Joe expresses his fear of AIDS when, after initially finding out that Andy has AIDS, he visits the doctor to make sure that he is not carrying the disease on his clothes or hands. This not only speaks of the fear and ignorance surrounding AIDS, but it allows the audience to learn the facts about AIDS transmission at the same time that Joe does. Later on in the movie, Joe runs into Andy at the library. As they discuss Andy's case, the use of logos appears yet again when they quote an actual Supreme Court decision:

The Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified handicapped persons who are able to perform the duties required by their employment. Although the ruling did not address the specific issue of HIV and AIDS discrimination, subsequent decisions have held that AIDS should be as protected as a handicap under the law not only because of the physical limitations but because the prejudice surrounding AIDS exacts a social death which proceeds the actual physical one. This is the essence of discrimination – formulating opinions of others not based on their individual merits but rather on their membership in a group with the same characteristics.

As the use of this quote suggests, the law plays an important role in this film, for one of the things that this film is trying to show is that discrimination against homosexuals with AIDS or anyone else for that matter is unconstitutional and therefore unlawful. At the beginning of the trial in the film, however, the topic of homosexuality is avoided, but Joe finally brings it to the forefront when he says, "Let's talk about what this case is really all about: the general public's hatred, our loathing, our fear of homosexuals and how that climate led to the firing of my client." Another logical statement that Joe makes within the movie is this:

I'm standing here in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, where the founding fathers authored the Declaration of Independence, and I don't recall that glorious document saying anything about all straight men are created equal. I believe it says, "all men are created equal."



So, we can begin to see that, by using the law as a foundation for the plot, *Philadelphia* was able to use logos to balance out the pathos of the film, and that balance is very effective in not only avoiding the alienation of the audience but also gaining their interest and, perhaps, heightening their understanding of AIDS/gay discrimination.

When this is combined with the ethos in *Philadelphia*, we can see that the film is, in fact, very effective. Though some might criticize it for being too mild, unemotional, unopinionated, and unaccusatory and others might criticize it for being just the opposite; the fact that the film was able to reach almost all the different factions of the public viewing audience is what not only made it successful in the box office but made it very influential as well. "The one thing Demme and Nyswaner [the writer] promised when they began work on *Philadelphia* back in 1988 was that the movie would not be preachy. 'We had to go through a couple of drafts before we could get away from that,' says Demme. 'We both had loved ones who were fighting AIDS, and we brought too much awareness and too many opinions to it. Over time, the more we backed off and respected the insensitivity of others not in our situation, the better it got'"(56). Because Demme and Nyswaner addressed the issue of the many people within the viewing audience who had no association with homosexuality and the AIDS virus, they were able to make a film that was straightforward enough to draw the members of the general audience in and gain their interest and powerful enough to touch their hearts.

#### Works Cited

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Teriann Vaughan  
*Little Turtle Girl*  
Linocut, 8" x 10"



*Artist's comment: This was my second attempt at linoleum block printing. My expectations were to create detail and a balance of black and white using different types of lines. The title of this print is taken from an inside joke.*

*Teriann Vaughan  
Instructor: Karen Blakley*



