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Gathering of Voices

2002-2003

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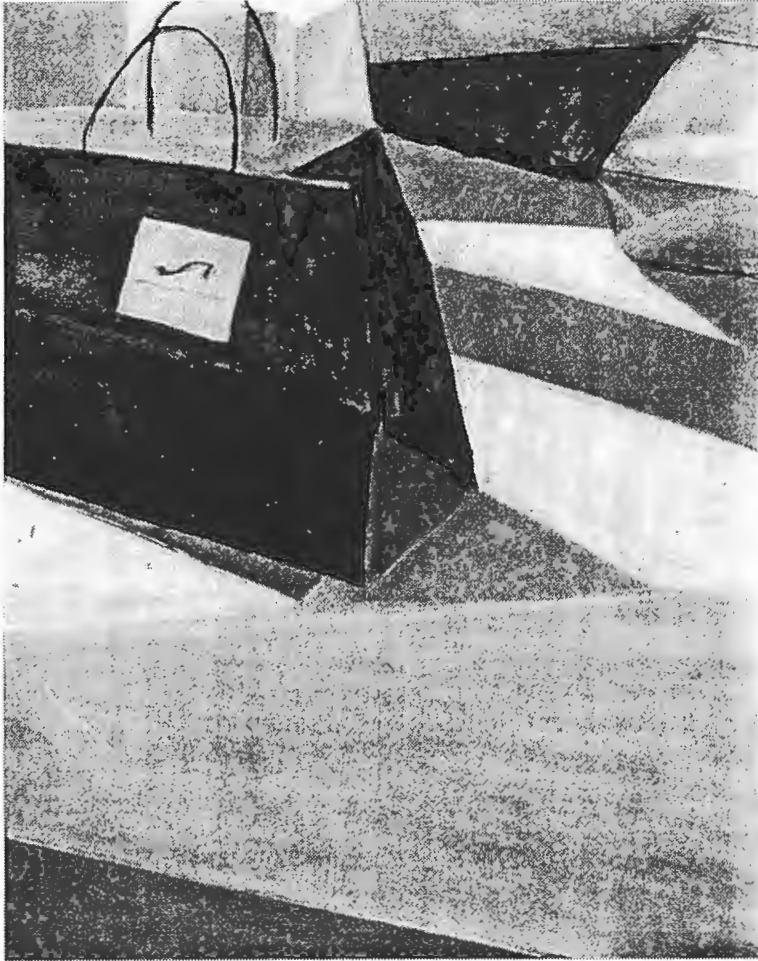
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Derick Kalt
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Writing to Change

Joanne Munroe

I assign a lot of writing in all of my courses. Sometimes that's hard. As much as I truly believe that struggling with ideas is necessary, and as much as I accept Dewey's observation that "truth is *produced* by inquiry", I know that the process of writing is hard. I know that students feel vulnerable and exposed and afraid of my judgment and it makes it hard to push them. If I were John Dewey, I'd just keep saying, "You must have the courage to try new ideas" . . . On the good days I do manage to say that or something like it. On other days I remind myself that Dewey also said that we "dread and dislike any change which seriously disturbs the habits to which we are accustomed." I know that am asking for change . . . When I write: "You have presented a good framework upon which to build a strong essay, but your answer would be strengthened through the addition of more specifics, drawn from this course context, this quarter, and offered as evidence in support of your assertions", I am asking for *change* . . . When I say: "Yes, you heard me correctly; I do expect two to three pages of writing in your Critical Reading Journal, evenly divided among the strategies of 'response, 'listing', 'annotating' and 'double-entry" , I am asking for change. . . When I respond: "No, I'm not going to *select* the topic of your paper for you; you are to develop one paper from the response section of your journal and one from the double-entry section; use the rubrics I gave you in your packet", I am telling my students that I want a change of habits . . . and that is hard.

The changes that I want are all directed toward getting students to use their own minds. They are all designed to teach them to have their own methods for seeing things for themselves, for arguing with themselves, for developing intelligence and imagination- not just for today or for this class- but for each interaction in their daily lives from this point onward. They are all good changes; but, they are still changes, and that is hard. Am I asking too much? Yes. . . and I know it. So why push it?

I push because I believe that writing offers a kind of self-discovery of what one can do well, of what one likes, of what one finds acceptable and of what one finds intolerable. We write to help us trace and retrace our intellectual steps, to

decide what to do and how to act. We write to prepare us for listening together and talking together and thinking together. We write to say: “Here are some questions that you have probably thought about yourself” or “I can’t believe that you really see it that way”. We write to create and recreate our beliefs, our hopes, our ideals and we write because it helps us to learn to consider ideas, especially those with which we disagree. We write to find our voices, to discover our social locations, to create intimacy and to restore distance. We write to get closer to problems, and we write to get away from them. We write to praise, to blame, to exhort, to revel, to denigrate, to deny, to affirm, to tease, to solve, to please, to posit, to amend and to empower. We write to remind us that we are responsible for creating our own worlds. We write because writing helps us to think freshly, to live independently and to act responsibly. We write because we *have* something . . . an image, a thought, an emotion, a solution, an invention . . . and we want to develop it into something else . . . a judgment, a comment, a consolation, a plan, a revolution . . . a change.

Joanne Munroe is an Interdisciplinary Studies and Humanities instructor at Whatcom.



Heidi Ring
Man's Attempt to Quantify Time
Mixed media, 19" x 16"

Rendezvous Island

Matthew Roberts

I will not sleep again, this night
the murmuring cry of women
and their children, laughing
At the glimmering moon,
splashing it from the river,

each
droplet
its own
dream

And I hear the men
dance a song pushed by the wind
through the hollows
of creaking cottonwoods,
to the tunnel of my ear,

This land
This water
This moon

But I cannot see their ghosts,
Just a dark silhouette of an island,
surrounded by the silver arms of the river,
saying these arms are the tears
that run

forever
Into
our
past

That this island is what's left
of our way, our star
we have found
alone

By rain
By fog
By death

Because there is no end,
I am afraid
There is no end,
I am afraid

I will break camp by the morning star.

Start It Up!

Sandra Jahr

Children have more need of models than of critics

Joseph Joubert

I'm not sure how it all came about, my ending up being the one in the garage with Dad. With four siblings - one sister and three brothers - one would surmise that the "boys" would have been the main presence amongst the oil, grease, spare parts, and the never ending row upon row of tools. Dad could fix anything that came into that garage; his hobby and passion was working on an engine, starting it up, and listening to it "hum".

When my Uncle Jerry bought his brand new 1956 Cadillac Convertible, he came by to show it off to the family; Dad was speechless, he may have even drooled. He caressed the beautiful cherry red leather interior, inhaled the "new car" fragrance deeply, and climbed in to take it for a "spin". Since I was "hanging out" in the garage as his journeyman mechanic, I also got the pleasure of going along on the maiden voyage around the neighborhood. Neighborhoods were small and we knew everyone; each person we saw waved and hollered. It was like being in a parade!

My Dad was one of five children growing up during the depression. He was the second child born to his parents, Arthur (we called him Art for short) and Francis. I too was the second born. I'm not sure what, if any, significance this has to do with the story, but worth noting. Like most men his age born in the early to mid 1920's, he served in the military in World War II, fighting to protect democracy. I remember doing a special report in school on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the atomic bomb had ended the war leaving many more casualties and horrors in the fight for freedom. However, most of my fellow students were more impressed with the authentic Japanese flag my father "smuggled" back to the United States, rather than hearing the tragic results of the A-bomb. It is this experience in my father's life that I believe shaped forever his patriotic fortitude and unrelenting support for his country and it's people.

Dad had purchased a new car just a few years before his youngest brother bought the “Caddy”. Being married with children, and another due soon, he bought a sensible vehicle, a 1953 Oldsmobile “88” Deluxe. This car had everything – even air conditioning! There were plastic tubes that ran along the edges of the rear window and blew cool air through small little vents around the interior; my mother was terribly thankful for this on road trips if the weather was warm and when three children lining the back seat were continually asking, “When are we going to be there?”

As the years passed the “Olds” became the second car for our family and was garaged along side a 1962 Cadillac Seville; the color green was soothing and classic looking while the “fins” on the rear-end looked like “torpedoes”. We came up with several nicknames for the “Olds”: The Tank, The Beast, Old Blue, and The Bomb. It seemed that giving a name to your car was a sign of love and fondness, or not in some cases if it wasn’t running so well; naming your car was an American term of endearment.

My older brother (we’re only 13 months apart) and I eagerly awaited the mid sixties; we would then be old enough to drive a car. Life as we know it would change. My father had a rule. Before you can drive you have to know how to take care of the vehicle: changing the oil, fixing a flat, and checking the battery were just a few of the minor maintenance skills we had to learn. Journeyman mechanics had already shown me how to do these tasks; my brother still needed assistance. We studied the driving book, quizzed each other, and my brother “passed” his test. I was next.

Now that my brother was “licensed and legal” he began to take a serious interest in cars and the garage. I do want to mention that he also became a little “cocky” and there was a definite space beginning to develop between us. The garage sanctuary was being invaded; I didn’t want to share it. My brother hauled home a 1953 Chevrolet Coupe, a piece of junk as far as I could tell. My eye for cars was fairly zealous and I knew a “lemon” when I saw one. The “Screamin Mochine” (that’s what he called it), was here to stay. This car made a lot of noise. It wasn’t much to look at, but it was his and he loved it.

There was a happier side to all of the recent show and interest displayed by my brother while getting his hands dirty. While puttering in the garage his friends would come over too. We had a lot of the same friends due to our closeness in age and his friends were quickly becoming more interested in me - typical teen-agers – and the feud had begun. The guys were easily impressed by my mechanical

aptitude and general overall automotive expertise. In fact, we were given some sort of aptitude testing at school that demonstrated I was possessed of a natural mechanical ability and the desire to play the trumpet! I played the violin; you know about the garage. I noticed my father occasionally sipping a cold beer, smoking a cigarette, and watching the action from the sidelines. He would often give me a wink or a nod like we still ruled the shop and were just there for moral support and mentoring the “boys”. My mother tried her best to work with me on the “domestic” duties but my interest was always outdoors; this reminds me of another time my Dad was helpful and showed me that girls could do anything boys could do.

There was another outdoor activity that my father was instrumental in gaining my “apprenticeship status” for me. This had taken place in 1958 at the Woodland Park Zoo, long before I would be driving, but we will get back to that. Even at a young age I was questioning the double standards for females and always pushing for answers and equality. One day my brother came home from the zoo and announced ceremoniously that he had a job at the zoo leading ponies for four hours a day. He would get 50 cents a day and at the end of his shift a “free” pony ride. My dream job! The next day I marched over to the zoo and applied, well actually, I just stated to the man behind the gate that leading ponies was the reason I was there. Since I was only 8 years old and certainly could not fill out an application this was the quickest way to get my “foot in the door”, I reasoned. Even today I can vividly remember my shock and bewilderment when he replied, “Only boys can lead the ponies”. I stomped home and immediately shouted the injustice that I was subjected to. My mother was inclined to have me “just get over it” but I would not be appeased by words; I wanted action.

My parents were not often known to just “give in” to us children. They tried to do what was right and set an example. My father was growing weary of listening to my whining about the ponies and could find no fault in the majority of my arguments; remember I’m only eight and quite impressionable. The outcome of this could affect me for years. As my father and I walked over to the zoo the next day I know he just wanted some peace in the house. I had become the epitome of the “pain in the butt”. He would do anything to shut me up. I petted the ponies while my father talked quietly with the man who had my future in his hands. It seemed to me that my father was getting no satisfaction with this interaction and we soon headed home. I knew enough to keep quiet and let things settle down. When we arrived home I was feeling a little better since we had

stopped for an ice cream but I had to ask, “When do I start?” “You don’t, he replied.” This was not the response I expected and he knew it. “I’ll call my friend Al and see if he can do something to help, my Dad said.”

Two days later I was leading the ponies and waiting each day to take my free ride. My Dad was my hero and many of the other young girls that started leading ponies that summer had no idea what we went through to get the opportunity! It was only years later that I found out that Al, my Dad’s friend, was actually Albert Rosellini, the governor of Washington state. The governor probably was told that if I didn’t get to lead the ponies I’d be making a trip to Olympia, courtesy of my father. I also believe that this was a politically smart move on the governor’s part. On the other hand, it may have been just two fathers wanting to do what was right for their daughters. That’s the thought that I’ll keep as we fast forward to the summer when I learned to drive.

Since my 16th birthday is in the fall, I had all summer to practice my skills at driving and trying to maneuver so I could parallel park “The Tank” in a space that always looked two sizes too small from where I sat. Sitting on two pillows with an extra cushion behind my back was the only way I could see over the front end of that huge hunk of metal. My favorite time to practice driving was on Sunday afternoon. After working all week and spending weekends around the house doing all those things husbands do for wives, I would ask my Dad to take me driving after supper. After about ten minutes of cruising his breathing would become slow and his head would begin to fall; he would be asleep shortly. As soon as I knew he was dreaming I headed for Golden Gardens so I could cruise up and down the strip where all the kids hung-out. By this time Dad would be slumped over pretty good in his seat and hardly visible beside me. Occasionally I’d see my brother there and he would wave as I motored on by. We had an understanding. I wouldn’t tell if he wouldn’t tell. About half way back home Dad would start to become restless and I’d head for the garage. As we pulled into the driveway he’d say, “You did a good job. No problems that I can see”. I’d just smile. I passed my driving test on the first try but I’ll never forget the look on my Dad’s face as I knocked down all four poles that were put up so I could try to parallel park “The Beast.”

I had a conversation with my Dad about a year ago just prior to his death. We were looking together at a book with pictures of old cars. I could tell him the make, model and the year; in some cases I even knew the engine size; it was a game we played. We laughed about my working in the garage with him, learning to drive that summer, blazing trails for ponies and young girls, and about his new set of

wheels. These new wheels aren't so glamorous and no terms of endearment have been given to them. The make is a Jennings. It comes with two large wheels on the back and two small ones in the front. This set of wheels is powered by two hands holding on and two legs walking behind (mine); the speed is subjective and the color basic black.

Alzheimer's and Parkinson's had claimed so much from my father and I try to understand the devastation of the disease. Perhaps science and nature are telling us something. Each day a little more of him was lost and each day I grieved. Nothing prepared me for the day he asked, "Who are you?" "I'm your daughter, Sandy" I replied." "I used to have a 53 Olds, he said." "Yes you did, I mumbled" wiping a tear from my eye and remembering that day years ago when we still ruled the garage. What I wouldn't give for one more "cruise" on a Sunday afternoon, one more wrong to have your help in righting, and one more time to hear you tell my sister, "If it's not General Motors don't park it in my driveway!"

Chinese and American?

Valerie Chin

I am an ABC. An American Born Chinese. My family is Chinese and I am...well, I was raised in the American society and while, everyone's morals and values certainly reflect their family lifestyles, I've been torn in between Chinese and American culture, trying to decide which most represents me in every way. Maybe both, I don't know. But, growing up, torn between cultures is confusing. For me, growing up in America with a Chinese background is difficult, not only because of the different morals and values each culture carries, but because of the way people perceive me as well. It is almost like there is no medium. It's a feeling of disconcertment. Either you are categorized as someone who is Chinese or American. Can there be someone who is *both* Chinese and American in the way they eat, breathe, think and sleep?

Though I cannot speak the Chinese language (my efforts were discouraged once, when an elder lady told me I was pretty in Chinese and asked me to repeat what she had said. I obeyed and tried hard to mimic the word and the accent to impress her and she laughed at me), I can understand some of the phrases. Regardless which language I can speak, both cultures have played important roles in shaping the person I have become; each in its own way. I sometimes find myself quietly thinking in different terms—the Chinese way and the American way. When surrounded by the two different cultures separately and faced with a situation or when I observe my current atmosphere, I compare the distinct differences in the way people talk, eat, think and interact. I feel that I should be able to embrace Chinese and American cultures, as one, because I am Chinese-American. I have been affected by both of these cultures, but I have been pushed into one culture or the other and I often think about how the people of these two cultures may perceive me.

For example, this past Thanksgiving was spent with a noisy congregation of three Chinese generations. My grandparents, their children and their children's children. As dinner was placed on the table, I sat back and watched as my family gathered around in constant chatter. We ate out of a "hotpot" (a mini stove with a rectangular pot of boiling water place on top). We were all given little mini

spoons, only the cup of the spoon was a net. There were platters of raw meat, shrimp and a variety of other Chinese vegetables. The object is to place your choice of raw food into your spoon and then into the hotpot and in about one minute it is cooked and ready to eat. As a small child, this used to be one of my favorite dinners. The problem was, I did not remember it being so difficult. I would place a piece of shrimp into my spoon and wait till a minute later, when I would lift my spoon to find that the shrimp had disappeared. As I went spooning through the hotpot to chase after my runaway shrimp, I could hear some snickers here and there. Embarrassed and feeling helpless, I gave up.

Not only did this incident embarrass me, but it made me angry. I felt like my own family was judging me, thinking “oh, this American girl, she’ll be able to go back to her hamburgers and hotdogs soon”. It is the same feeling I used to get around other fellow Chinese or Asian girls. By my appearance I sometimes felt like they would stereotype me as a “sell out”, having mostly Caucasian friends while cynically thinking to themselves, “she’s doing things the American way because she *wants* to be an American”.

On the other hand, in the American culture, I am seen differently as well. Am I a genius at math? No. Do I take my shoes off when I go into my house? Sometimes. Do I look the same as every Asian girl at school? No. Please look more closely next time. Didn’t anyone in both cultures teach their children that appearances may be deceiving? It’s what is on the inside that counts, right? By inside, I mean the way you think and the kind of person you are. And for me, I am formally announcing to the world that I am made up of American *and* Chinese cultures.

In Amy Tan’s essay called “The Language of Discretion” she talks about her experience with culture, language and thinking differences between Chinese and Americans. Being pretty much an equal part of both cultures, she mentions thinking with her “American mind” and her “Chinese mind” (295). At one point, after quoting a journalistic article, about the changes in New York’s Chinatown, Tan disagrees with their stereotype and uprising theme: “that Chinese people are discreet and modest”(292). She goes on, to make me laugh in agreement, by saying:

I do not believe that my parents—both immigrants from mainland China—are an exception to the modest-and-discreet rule. I have only to look at the number of Chinese engineering students skewing minority ratios at Berkeley, MIT and Yale. Certainly they were not raised by passive mothers and fathers who said, “It is up to

you, my daughter. Writer, welfare recipient, masseuse, or molecular engineer-you decide.” (294)

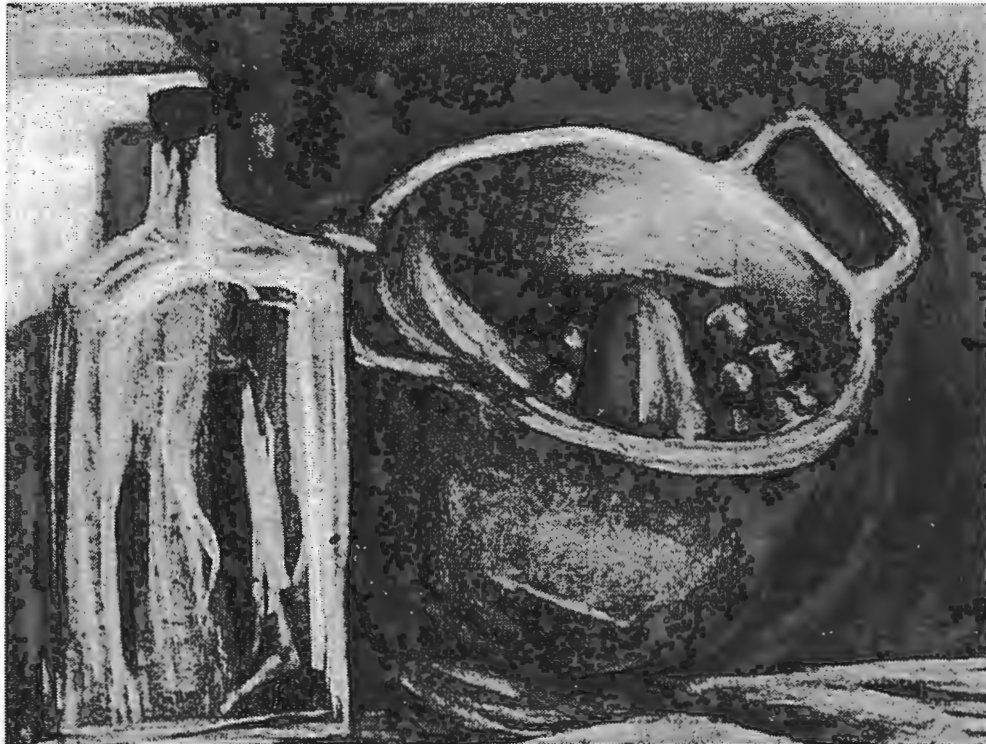
Tan also states an example of the way she thinks, which I feel is similar to mine: “And my American mind says, See, those engineering students weren’t able to say no to their parents’ demands. But then my Chinese mind remembers: Ah, but those parents all wanted their sons and daughters to be *pre-med*” (295).

In my experience with *my* American and Chinese minds, I have noticed that my Chinese way of thinking, seems more strict than my American way. My Chinese way of thinking is to be careful, to think before you speak. In contradiction, my American way of thinking seems to be more personal, more expressive of my own unique thoughts and feelings. For example, when I was served grade D beef at the Ridgeway Cafeteria at Western Washington University, my American mind said “Eww!”, as I scrunched my face in disgust. But then my Chinese mind remembered: Don’t make bad faces because one day it may get stuck that way.

However the way I think, Chinese or American, Tan has drawn my attention to another prospect of this bicultural analysis. She states, “even more dangerous to my mind is the temptation to compare both language and behavior in translation” (295). She goes on to talk about the Chinese perspective of English “a language of too many broken rules, of Mickey Mice and Donald Ducks” and the English perspective of Chinese “is extremely difficult because it relies on variations in tone barely discernible to the human ear” (295). Well, since I am not able to fully understand the Chinese language and all the proper tones, I feel I have a limited point of view on the full difference and meanings between Chinese and English as she goes on to talk about. For me, this makes me realize for example, if my grandma were to say something to me that I could understand in Chinese, I would not be able to translate it into English. So, for me Chinese is Chinese. There is no translation for it. I seem to only know the words as they are. Maybe this is because, as Tan describes “Chinese language use is more *strategic* in manner, whereas English tends to be more direct” (296).

So Chinese is more strategic and English is more direct. That seems to be the perfect way to describe the root of all this confusion. But really, after all this, has my question been answered? Well, let’s see. People will always judge. I will constantly be categorized, pushed from one culture to the other. I guess it can’t be avoided. What I did learn is that I think in both Chinese ways and American ways (though I was not conscious of it until I wrote this paper). This differentiates me

from being part of just one of the cultures. This in itself makes me Chinese-American. I am unique in the way that I am able to eat, think, breathe and sleep with two different consciences. The best part is, that each gives me a distinctive perspective on life. I *am* an ABC.



Jessica Bergmann
Untitled
Charcoal, 18" x 24"

Only recently have any apologies or compensation been forwarded to survivors and their descendants. The sheep ranchers have never been compensated for the loss of their herds. There have been several trials surrounding the downwind issue.

In closing, you may ask why I, once a proud member of the armed services, would take such a stance against nuclear weapons. One only has to look at the government's use of nuclear weapons on its own people to see that it might be eager to try out some new military toys on Americans again. I am not alone with my view. Many retired flag level officers from many branches of the military feel as I do. Sixty Generals and Admirals from around the world signed a document called "A Statement on Nuclear Weapons." The document's basic underlying theme is the creation of a nuclear-arms-free world. The current regime is insistent on reopening the test site in Nevada. I can only hang my head in wonder at an administration so bent on the destruction of its own people. I wonder what the next generation of downwinders will think.

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Working At A Minimum Wage May Be Enough: But Is It Fair?

Roza Snitko

I have often wondered how my parents supported a family of six with just my father working at a minimum wage job. After doing some readings, questioning my dad and looking at the world around me, I realized that working at a minimum wage is often enough, but it's not fair for some to have everything they need and want, and for others to make it by the bare minimum. Sometimes, our surroundings force us to make a living with the minimum that we need to work for.

My family immigrated to the United States in 1989 with eight people: six children and two parents. While still living in the Ukraine, my dad worked for approximately \$5 per day in the summer and \$3 per day in the winter. The Ukrainian tradition is that men work, while women stay home and tend to the children and household needs. So therefore, we were living off of just my father's income. After moving to the US, my mom stayed at home while my dad went to work for Whatcom Electric Company earning \$5.50 an hour. In comparison with his earning in the Ukraine, this was more than one could ask for. But this wasn't something that my parents were willing to accept and live with for the rest of their lives.

Every day was another day of struggle. My dad spoke almost no English, and was therefore forced to learn not only a new job, but also a new language. The tension in the house was unbelievable, and we children rarely if ever got to go to the grocery store with our parents; it was heartbreaking for my parents to be forced to say no to something that we asked for in the store. Sadly that is how many people in our society make it by day by day. In "Nickel and Dime", Barbara Ehrenreich talks about the struggle in finding a decent job and how hard it is to pay bills and still be able to afford luxuries in her home. She states that in order to be able to afford a good apartment to live in, she had to give up a television, fan, and air conditioning. But simple accessories as those can be missed, and their wouldn't be a difference in one's life.

Ehrenreich also talks about families that have children and have to pay for childcare above all the other expenses including rent, food, gas, etc. Many families have to make it through with just the income that they receive from holding a job. However, since my parents spoke no English and therefore couldn't go to work right away, our monthly income was below poverty level and the Department of Social Health and Services (also known as Welfare) supported us for the first few years. We received monthly food stamps of approximately \$360 and around \$700 dollars in cash. This was definitely a generous amount looking from the Ukrainian point of view. This money was used to help purchase a car and also buy the necessary things needed for survival.

Many days after coming home from a long frustrating workday, my father would go in to his room and remain there for a couple hours. This often created a tension in the house, because to us children, it seemed like he didn't want to spend any time with us. We thought that work was more important to him than his children. Something that he often said to me was, "It's not like I don't want to spend time with you kids, I do, but you need to understand that life often asks more from us than we want to give." My dad tried to make us understand that he valued us but wasn't able to spend much time with us for the moment. Lack of communication or miscommunication creates problems between family members.

In "The Overworked American" Julia Schor talks about leisure time and how it's declining because parents spend more time at work than with their children. She states that when families don't spend time together, children are being left out and forgotten and are often being raised by themselves because their parents are busy working. Schor states, "Americans are literally working themselves to death—as jobs contribute to heart disease, hypertension, gastric problems, depression, exhaustion, and a variety of other ailments" (388). Many people can't even go to the doctor for a check-up. Maybe the answer lies in cutting down on the working hours, and all the physical problems will be solved. Now as my father looks back at the hard labor that he put in, he understands why he has hypertension and gastric problems. My father jeopardized his own health by being under so much stress in the Ukraine and in the US and trying to provide everything needed for his family.

I believe that I'm one of the lucky ones that got to be with at least one parent at all times. There was never a day that I had to spend in day care or in someone else's care. However, that's not the case in many families today. Children are constantly being left alone while parents are at work and often times working

overtime. Schor states, “Nationwide, estimates of children in ‘self’—or, more accurately ‘no’—care range up to seven million. Local studies have found figures of up to one-third of children caring for themselves”(388). The reason for this is that parents aren’t making enough money to support their families. People are obligated to work overtime (if possible) or find another job that provides part time hours.

Many of the working environments have changed, and employers are expecting more productivity from their employees; however, they are reluctant to raise wages. After asking my dad what he noticed has changed in the working environment he said, “The boss expects more from me because I’ve been there for a long time, but he doesn’t want to raise my pay.” After working for the same company, he is receiving \$9.50 an hour and supports himself, my mom, and me. This is barely enough for one person to pay rent and car payments let alone a family of three.

Ehrenreich talks about how hard it is to make a living on a minimum wage and that it is mostly impossible. She says that, “The thinking behind welfare reform was that even the humblest jobs are morally uplifting and psychologically buoying” (383). As my dad looks back to where he started at \$5.50 an hour, he is thankful that he was provided the opportunity to work and prove something of himself. Starting out at minimum wage isn’t too bad even for those who don’t have any education: if one’s heart is set to do it, one will succeed. However, there is no denying to the sad feeling inside those individuals who are, to put it in one word, slaves. Many view their jobs as an unfair way to get out of being jobless. Many people end their workday hoping that one day the bright light will shine through the darkness and higher wages will come.

Finders, Keepers: Losers Want Reparation

Genelle Davis

America is deep in debt even though they received free labor from African-American slaves in the 19th century. In fact, the American government has written documents proving their involvement with injustices towards African/African-American slave labor. While it only seems fair the American government and all benefiting parties should give reparations to any and all persons and their descendants that have been enslaved on American soil. In regards to slave reparations, there are several key issues that need to be evaluated in order to come to an agreeable result: why should the government and other benefiting parties pay? Where should the money and/or funds come from? How should those parties pay the concerned groups and ultimately, offer a solution to the problem of black reparations?

The American government and soon revealed contributing parties are responsible for slavery of Africans on American soil. The previously accused parties promised the slave community their own land and it was never received, so blacks are now presently fighting for what's rightfully theirs. To be fair, the U.S. government should only be held responsible from the late 1700's when the government was established to when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, in the late 1800's. Standing from a blacks perspective, the emancipation proclamation wasn't put into action from Lincoln's signature or even soon after. In order to place fault we need to come to an agreement about which entities were benefiting from slavery. Certain documents written by US congressmen shows proof that the American government was going to take such responsibility over the injustices done to African slaves. So if the government had nothing to do with slavery, then why did they not include any other benefiting parties such as slave-owners or the cotton industry to help give slave reparations? My assumption is that the American government was solely responsible for the injustices done to slaves during that time. Lincoln established the Freedmen's Bureau Act, written in March of 1865, before the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified. The act was established "to help former slaves in the immediate transition from slavery to freedom" (Bardolph 21). This was the promise from the government in writing

implicitly stating “we were wrong and with that we want to pay for your injustices but we’re not willing enough to apologize outright”. The Freedmen’s Bureau Act stated that all slave soldiers need to stay in war for one more year and, once served, the war department would provide food, clothing and temporary shelter to accommodate the soldier and their families. In addition, the government agreed to supply former slave’s land but not to exceed 40 acres and they may choose to live there for free for three years and there after will have the option of buying such property (Bardolph 21). There has been much controversy around what happened to the bill, whether or not it was already passed before Johnson went into office, because as soon as he was elected he immediately vetoed the act, so former slaves never received their promised “forty acres”.

Even if all of the researched government papers were dismissed there are many other strong reasons why the American government should pay former African-American slaves. The American government would never let any citizen receive something for free so, why should descendants of former slaves let this one pass without a fight? Yuval Taylor, the author of I Was Born A Slave states that slaves were a big contribution to the US economy, “The cotton slaves produced [and] had become not only the United States leading export but exceeded in value [of] all other exports combined” (Robinson 206). A significant part of the argument of reparations is concerning unpaid slave labor or labor that was not paid righteously. It’s clear that if African-American slaves weren’t in the US then the cotton industry would have to hire citizens and pay a lot more than they would have ever paid blacks. With that it should be evident that the slaves deserve some of the money that they contributed involuntarily.

Another key issue arguing over paying reparations is the time factor, of when slavery was a part of the country and that descendants are trying to receive compensation. Blacks believe there are no statues of limitations on something of this capacity considering some of the same treatment of blacks back then are still being practiced today. This civil-rights fight initially started in 1915 with a lawsuit against the United States Department of Treasury by Cornelius J. Jones in an attempt to recover sixty-eight million dollars for former slaves (Robinson 206). His argument was that the federal government benefited financially from the cotton tax so the former slaves believe they deserve the money they worked for. But the lawsuit didn’t rule in Jones’s favor because the United States was at the time “exempt” from being sued by blacks. The Cotton-Tax case was thrown out. If an authoritative system mistreats you, then compensation is well deserved. Former

slaves were dehumanized and now those slaves deserve their money they worked hard for involuntarily.

One should note that, in reference to the Cotton-Tax case “the federal government never addressed Mr. Jones’s questions about the federal government’s appropriation of property-the labor of blacks who had worked the cotton fields-that had never been compensated” (Robinson 206). During times of slavery, blacks were thought of as inferior to whites, so with that, it is evident that the “white” judicial system took advantage of blacks ignorance. The judicial system dismissed the case because you can’t sue the United States, which we all know now that you can sue whomever you want; however very few blacks knew this since they were deprived of an education. In the past blacks weren’t very educated and the government used that to their advantage during the Cotton-tax case and gave a very weak answer to a valid argument. As blacks have gained better education’s, the fight for reparations has grown. Again, the government has another excuse for the black population that “it was a long time ago”. But in 1915 blacks were right on time; society wasn’t ready to face the awful truth.

The idea of paying reparations is not something new to the U.S. government. Consider the Japanese interment camp survivors who received compensation for loss of business, property, and personhood during WWII. In 1996, many survivors of the Japanese internment camps filed lawsuits against the US government for their injustices during World War II (CNN.com, “Aging Japanese...”). Why didn’t the government tell them just like they told Jones during the cotton-tax case that they can’t sue the government or why didn’t they tell them that it’s been too long to receive reparations? All of those reasons were valid when former slaves and their descendants tried to receive reparations. The difference between giving labels for Japanese internees and African slaves is simply word choice. Internee is just a fancy word for slave. If you can prove that you are a descendant of a slave then you should be entitled to reparations on behalf of that relative. There are no statues of limitations with reparations especially not of something of this capacity. Under a 1988 law, those surviving internees were given \$20,000 in compensation and a letter of apology (CNN.com, “U.S. to pay...”). After the government started to pay reparations the money went a lot faster than they expected. In a statement from Washington, all of the people who participated in the class action against the government will receive a letter of apology but not all will receive a reparation check (CNN.com, “Deal OK’d...”). The Justice Department set up a fund for slaves to help with the transition from

slavery to freedom but Johnson vetoed the act. Why would the government favor one group over another when they were both in the same boat, literally? The government never really say that any other government funded program suffered by giving reparations, so why isn't there any efforts to redress slave descendants? The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 paid out 1.68 billion dollars in reparations for over 82,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who had been excluded and/or incarcerated without due process of law during World War II (Tsuchida 1134). Ronald Regan signed into law the redress bill only concerning the Japanese internment camp survivors. Since he was in the mood of helping people out that were wronged in the past why didn't he or anyone of congress think about redressing former slaves and their descendants? Blacks are worthy of reparations too.

If one group is compensated for their troubles then any and all others should be treated with the same respect. Clinton was in office when there was a lot of talk about certain groups receiving reparations but former slaves didn't come into that conversation. In 1997, Clinton stated that "he does not favor compensating the victims of slavery, because the nation is so many generations removed from that era that reparations for blacks Americans may not be possible" (CNN.com, "Clinton Opposes..."). Since the argument from president Clinton is that "it's been so long" since slavery was a part of America, then what was Andrew Johnson's reason for taking our forty acres away from us in 1865? Blacks deserve reparations just as much as the Japanese survivors. Even if blacks throw in the towel today, at least the government could send a letter of apology to some of the descendants that have made an effort to receive reparations. Clinton was thinking about apologizing to the black community in 1997, in a radio interview he stated that "he would consider extending an apology to African Americans for their ancestors' suffering" (CNN.com, "Clinton Opposes..."). Clinton said that he would think about apologizing, why is there so much to think about? Blacks want someone to take responsibility for the injustices of their ancestors' now.

Many supporters of reparations for the black community don't want the government to give cash payments to every individual. The common idea is to give money to cultural groups, organizations, institutions, and programs that were established solely to help the black community. Paying groups verses individuals seems more realistic because the benefiting groups would use the money for "group activities, educational opportunities and research" (Bittker 72). On the other hand, if reparations were given to individuals the money would be used for "groceries, cars, lottery tickets and mutual-fund shares" (Bittker 72).

Since there is much controversy surrounding the issue of reparations we need to find a solution. To give a quick temporary solution, hand out checks, the same idea the government had for the Japanese internees. The government doesn't realize that to define reparations doesn't necessarily mean giving cash payments. The government should understand that money doesn't solve problems especially racial issues. Since the government prevented blacks in the past from receiving an education and the previously promised "forty acres", it's now time to redress.

From as early as Fredrick Douglass, his mistress wanted to teach him the alphabet but his master forbade it. Douglass' master assumed that a slave "learning would spoil the best nigger in the world" (Bennett 129). Learning wouldn't necessarily spoil a slave just enlighten him of his surroundings and use his new found knowledge and question his authorities. There were laws actually prohibiting all blacks of receiving any type of education. An act passed by the general assembly of the state of North Carolina stated if any persons free or not attempts to teach a slave to read or write they shall receive 39 lashes on his/her bare back (Fishel, Quarles 115). As a solution to the reparations issue, a free college education should be granted to the all descendants of slaves. This proposition should include a free four-year education to any college of choice of any qualified descendant of a former slave.

On the other hand, if a qualified descendant doesn't want a college education or already has a college education then, they should have the option of receiving the promised "forty acres". With our national debt, the government can't afford to give all slave descendants forty acres so, as a solution they can grant descendants a smaller version of the promised "forty acres". This time around redressing will be nothing like the Southern Homestead Act, when Johnson evicted the ex-slaves from the land and returned it to the pardoned Confederates (Slavery Reparations). The descendants choosing not to take the first option of receiving a free college education should be given a middle cost home anywhere in the country.

In closing I have given several reasons and examples why blacks are worthy of receiving reparations. Now I want to emphasize the significance of this topic. Blacks have been horribly mistreated since the beginning of time without any protection from the government and should be redressed to begin to heal the slavery-inflicted wounds. The argument isn't about whether blacks deserve reparations or not. That is evident. It is about *how* the government should redress

the black community. Free-higher education or a middle-cost home would be a good start to a long over-due compensation.

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My Dangerous Adventure

Nahla Gholam Chahine

Teenager years were those years when we needed to discover everything, go everywhere. Nothing scared us. We thought we could copy the older sister or the special aunt that we looked up to. When I turned twelve, my life changed extremely. I felt I could reach the sky. My dreams were wild. Nothing could stop me! My family lived during school days in a different city, but as soon as the school closed we rushed to my grandparent's house: my mother's hometown. Those summer days are very close to my heart and are special in my memory. Even as an adult Samo is always present in my memories: she was my friend, partner, and buddy in the summer days. Growing together in the same neighborhood, we thought that we were always safe in our adventures. We had lot of fun spending all our summer days together. We had wonderful innocent times, and we used to giggle until we cried. Like all young girls, ee thought there were no consequences to our actions.

It was the beginning of a new summer. On a hot, humid morning Samo and I were on our first mission, going to buy our daily bread from the bakery. In my old country, Lebanon, people shopped for bread, fruits, vegetables, seafood, meats, and poultry everyday. They believe fresh produce tastes better and is healthier. Samo and I always had a way to communicate without saying much. On our way to the bakery, Samo felt that I was not happy, or she saw me acting like a stranger. It was the beginning of our vacation, and I felt as a stranger in my summer town.

Trying to cheer me up, Samo asked me excitedly, "Will you go to the river? I can show you the little toads!"

"No, my mother will worry," I answered, but it was a very exciting idea.

It was my first summer as a responsible girl. I was allowed to ride my bicycle around town for grocery shopping and to do other errands for my grandmother.

Samo's answer was very convincing. "Don't worry I will say that the first bread batch was sold, and we had to wait an extra hour for the next one."

Our adventure started by switching bicycles; I left my bicycle in front of the bakery in case my father checked us on his way to work. Samo borrowed George's bike, the boy who worked at the bakery's cash register. He had a crush on her. I was riding her red bicycle; it was a racing one. I was speeding and felt I was flying in those narrow, steep passages down to the river.

We were going as fast as we could, trying to use every second and thinking we could do a twenty minute ride in just ten. We had our own fantasy about the river, the water, and the drive or walk to reach the bottom. The shade of the gigantic oak trees invited us to stop and have a rest in the shadow. The birds sang all day and the breeze of the air coming from the river was cool and fresh.

"Let's take a break!" I suggested.

"Well, I can show you the bird's nests on the tree top. Georges and I found them last week!" Samo replied, and she started to climb the big oak tree. Climbing the tree took me a longer time with many stops, asking for help when I got stuck between the branches. Samo treated me as a city girl because where we lived during the school year wasn't close to any park or any natural escape. When I arrived at the top, Samo pointed to the nests silently. One was empty; maybe the little birds started to fly and left their home. The second nest had two fragile baby birds trembling and shivering from our presence. They were hugging each other; they were wiggling, their voices sounded like a symphony. At that moment, we saw a robin, their mother, on the other side of the branch, flapping her wings and jumping from one side to the other. She was screaming at us, "Leave now, or I will...", which we translated later watching her crazy behavior.

That moment I was fascinated with their size, their naked skin, their behavior, their closeness to each other, and their beautiful music. Since that day, I have adored the majestic Nature and I am grateful to God and all his creations.

We sneaked down slowly, silently, surprised by the motherly behavior of a creature, a little robin. We didn't realize, at the moment, the damage we had done by having held the baby robins. We were young and believed that we could do whatever we wanted: discover the depth of the sea, or climb to the top of the highest mountain. Our earth was a territory only for us; we were very young but we thought we were old enough to do anything we wanted.

The time was not a problem any more; my fear of getting in trouble disappeared. We rode our bicycles and biked down the hill to the river. The water was running smoothly and the level was the lowest for that time of the year; it looked like a stream. The still water reflected the greenness of the nature and the

soft blue Mediterranean sky. We were jumping from one rock to another to find our little pond; it was sitting quietly on the other side. The water was tranquil except for those fast toads, crossing and ruining the motionless clear water. We enjoyed throwing little pebbles in those ponds and watching the frogs run from one side to the other. Samo loved chasing those little big-eyed creatures, running after them and splashing water.

Suddenly, I realized the sun was almost to the middle of the blue sky.

“We are late and my mother will be really mad at me!” I screamed to Samo, who was on the other side of the river catching a frog. My mother was strict and punctual, but deep inside her heart she used to see herself as a little girl in me.

We pushed our bikes up the hill, breathless with a panic in our hearts. I was so scared and felt my parents' fear. I heard in my imagination my mother's tone of voice, checking my absence, or sending my sister to the bakery to find me. The road to the bakery seemed longer than usual. We decided to take a short cut, hoping we would arrive earlier. It was a little shorter way, dangerous, but we thought we could arrive earlier. We were close to town when I tripped, and I fell down to the bottom of a steep hill and landed on my left side. I couldn't move for the first seconds because I was so surprised and choked.

I could only hear Samo's voice, “Are you okay? Can you walk?”

My face had a large scratch, but it was superficial. My left arm and leg were full of dirt. Every part of my body ached. I had blood mixed with dirt on my knee; it was a big injury. I started to cry as Samo ran down to help me. I was terrified, afraid, thinking about the reactions of my parents. The panic of the accident made us pick up our bicycles and hurry to town.

When we arrived home that day, my mother seemed relieved and happy. She fixed my injuries, washed my face silently, and she listened to our story. The dirt mixed with blood was all over my blue-jeans shorts and my favorite pink sleeveless tee shirt. I couldn't believe her reaction. Until today, I think her anger and madness turned to peaceful reactions the minute she saw us safe.

That night going to sleep with all the pain on my poor body, I couldn't understand the harsh punishment. I was not allowed to go anywhere for a week. I felt that my parents were unfair, rude, and they could handle my case differently.

Today, as a parent, I understand my mother's fear. She thought that I was lost or kidnapped that day. I remember our fun adventure turned to be a dangerous and scary experience for my mother. I reflect daily on the struggles I face raising my own children. As teenagers we never feel the pressure that we place

on our parents and the difficult situations that we create. It is our right to discover life, to grow through our experiences, to learn from our own mistakes, to have our own adventures, but we should consider the consequences of our actions.



Kristin Haagen
Tulip
Mixed media, 14" x 10"

Otsukare-sama

Mana Ozawa

It was the first day for Rachel to work for the Starbucks in the morning, which is the craziest time of the day when everyone wants to start a day with a cup of coffee. On that day, I worked with her as a cashier. She was surprised at people coming on and on and the scene of other efficient workers in making a hundred cups of coffee an hour. Although she worked pretty slowly, I was pleased at her faithful working attitude toward the customers. After three hours of busy work, Rachel and I were about to be off. At that moment, I really wanted to say something to show my appreciation for the work of her instead of just saying, "See you tomorrow," but I couldn't think of any suitable English words to describe.

In my native language, Japanese, we have a special word which we use for people when they have done a job. The word is "*otsukare-sama*," and its special characteristics makes difficult to translate directly into English.

"*Otsukare-sama*" is a word that is difficult to directly translate into English. In fact, if I directly translate this word, it would be "Mr. Tired." "*Otsukare-sama*" is a word that can show considerate for a tired person. However, "*otsukare-sama*" is not only used for a tired person. We use "*otsukare-sama*" for any people who had done anything although they are not tired.

"*Otsukare-sama*" is a good expression for anyone who is back from his/her work or school, or for anyone who has done something particularly. For example, I always say "*otsukare-sama*" to my father when he gets home from his work. Moreover, after my friend and I enjoy shopping, I usually say "*otsukare-sama*" to my friend who drove a car for that day. Since "*otsukare-sama*" is a very common word for Japanese speakers, we use it almost everyday as just like as a greeting.

In English, the words "good job" has some similarities to "*otsukare-sama*". Like "good job," "*otsukare-sama*" is always used for people who had done anything, such as jobs, studies, and so on. "Good job" and "*otsukare-sama*" both are positive expressions like praise for people. However, there are some differences between them. Basically, we use "*otsukare-sama*" for "*otsukare-person*" in order to show our appreciation for her/him with guessing and reading her/his tiredness from work. Culturally, Japanese believe that we should be considerable to other people. The

word “*otsukare-sama*” is a beautiful Japanese word that indicates such cultural aspects because it includes lots of people’s feelings toward others with a great conscious. In fact, “*otsukare-sama*” means not only “good job,” but it means “Thank you for your hard working,” “Aren’t you tired? You should take a rest,” or “Are you ok?” Thus, even if I don’t see the job s/he has actually done, I still can say “*otsukare-sama*” to that person since I care about that person and want to say indirectly, “Aren’t you tired? You should take a rest.”

The first time I actually used the word “*otsukare-sama*” was way after I knew the meaning of the word. When I was in the high school and had a first part-time job, I used “*otsukare-sama*” to my co-workers. At that moment, I was pretty excited about using “*otsukare-sama*” because saying “*otsukare-sama*” seemed to be cool. I felt like I became an adult by using “*otsukare-sama*.” For some reason, I was able to say “*otsukare-sama*” to my parents too as I got used to work and say “*otsukare-sama*” to my co-workers. I assume that “*otsukare-sama*” is a word that people can use when they are able to show their appreciation for others.

There are three important characteristics of “*otsukare-sama*.” One is that people always use it for someone, but never for themselves. Also, people use it after someone has done something. If s/he is in middle of her/his work, it is not right to say “*otsukare-sama*”. Finally, even though little children know the meaning of “*otsukare-sama*,” people usually start using it when they can feel concerned about other people well. If a little child says “*otsukare-sama*,” I would be very surprised at her/him.

“*Otsukare-sama*” is a magical word that can make tired-people a little happy somehow. Most people would like to be said something good by others, especially when they get tired. By saying a simple word “*otsukare-sama*,” people could even have warm relations with others. In my country, we are able to show our appreciation to others from the word “*otsukare-sama*.”



Marty Ripp
Season in Motion
Mixed media,
14" x 17"

Winemaking

Bobbie Clemons

It feels a bit like stirring a witch's brew. As you swirl the wooden spoon around in the bucket, the concoction begins to crackle, fizz, and hiss. Tiny white bubbles begin to foam and froth, threatening to flow over the top of the bucket. As if you really were a witch you declare, "Ah ha! My brew is activating just as planned. All my ingredients are doing exactly what they're supposed to do!" And this is only one small step in making a batch of homemade wine. There are many other fun facets to making wine. The best and most rewarding part being the wine bottling party, but we'll get to that later. Now, I'd like to get you started on the fine and fun art of making wine.

Making wine is quite simple really. The most essential things needed are in season fruit, sugar, wine -making equipment and supplies, and an undisturbed place for the wine to ferment and mature. To start you should gather all of your supplies and keep them at hand. You will need: a five gallon carboy², a primary fermentator³, fermentator locks and caps, a set of measuring spoons, wine yeast, nutrients to energize the wine, fruit, and of course, sugar. All of these supplies are available at your local brewing or winemaking supply store. The exact measurements, instructions, and recipes are printed in the book I always use called, "The Art of Making Wine," by Stanley F. Anderson and Raymond Hull. This book gives thorough instructions and details on the exact and correct procedures of making wine. However, in my experience, I have learned that you need not follow these instructions to the tee. The ingredients, yes, but things such as checking the wine's acidity and temperature weekly are more of a hassle, unless you are a perfectionist which I am not. As far as I'm concerned, if the wine hasn't turned to vinegar, (which is always a possibility) and it tastes pretty good then it's all right with me.

Now that we have our recipe book and our supplies, our next step is to gather the fruit. The fruit must be ripe because of course, it has to be squashed,

² Carboy: a narrow-necked glass container used as a secondary fermentator.

³ Primary fermentator: a plastic container with an open top that is used for the first stage of fermentation.

kitchen table. A heated game of Pinochle is in progress. Good spirits are in the air. It is a festive time, a time of friendship, a time to culminate the fruits of our labor. But it is time to bottle. We must now turn our festive guests into a production line.

First, we need a siphoner. This is the trickiest job, and is usually reserved for an unsuspecting, and inexperienced newcomer. There is great laughter from all when they overflow bottles and spill the wine everywhere, or if they have to take a couple of big gulps before getting the hose into the bottle. It takes a bit of practice to be a neat and tidy siphoner. But I prefer to laugh, so we just put newspaper on the floor and give this hazardous job to the newcomer.

Secondly, we need someone to hold the hose in the container of wine to make sure we're not siphoning down into the sediment. You might think that this sounds like a boring job. But if you consider the entertainment and hilarity of the inexperienced siphoner in front of you, you'll soon realize that it's really not boring at all.

Thirdly, we need a siphoner's helper, someone who will have an empty bottle in hand, ready to give to the siphoner immediately when he needs it. This is a potentially messy job as you are in such close contact with the siphoner. Don't take this job if you want to stay clean! Also, the siphoner's helper must be able to grab a full bottle of wine, and pass it to the corker, whom is our fourth member of the production line.

The corker must be ready with corks that have been pre-soaked in warm water. This makes them more pliable. Then he must put the cork into the handheld corker, squeeze it shut, and push it into the bottle's top. It takes a bit of brute, so you can pick a macho guy for this job. It makes them feel tough! Also, I failed to mention earlier that if any bottle makes it to the corker and is too full to put the cork in, than it's fair game for the corker, or anyone else, to take a sip. This ensures that the wine is at the proper level for corking. It's also taste-testing right?

Lastly in our production line is the wiper, someone with a clean, damp rag to wipe down the bottles. This keeps the surface from becoming sticky, and also cleans them for the labeling.

Well, that's our production line. Once started, the bottling process generally takes about 30-45 minutes. This, of course, depends upon the amount of laughter, spilling, drinking, and general undefined chaos that naturally occurs. Once we've finished we should take a break to gather our bearings and reclaim our sanity to a somewhat normal functioning compacity. When we feel that we're

rested, we should prepare our mental selves to delve back into depths of insanity. It's time for labeling!

Some people, (those that I call perfectionists) prefer to create fancy labels made on the computer, with highly intellectual names to impress their friends and colleagues. Well, you guessed it. I don't! I go to the party store, buy blank stick-on labels, and give all my friends a pen. Glittery pens, felt pens, ink pens, metallic pens, any kind of pen. My only stipulation is that they write the year on it. The year is very important so that you know how long the bottle has been aged. We come up with many unique names, none of which claim high status or intellect. Most of them are of our own creative license. (Some people's licenses should be taken away!) Mellow Yellow, Yellow Plum Love, Nectar of the Gods, , Plumlicious. Those are just a few examples of our creative minds at work. When we've finished we end up with about 25 bottles of wine. The witch is happy! It is recommended that you age freshly bottled wine for one year before drinking it. It is not necessary though. It just depends upon your own taste. With the labels all on each guest is encouraged to take a bottle home with them, and to drive carefully. Our evening's wine-making festivities have come to an end.

The art of making wine is a gift from Mother Nature. A gift of friendship, and a gift to share. I hope that in reading this report, anyone who feels that making wine is reserved only for well-read scholars, or witches, will realize that it is not. Anyone can do it and it can be a lot of fun!

North Fork of December

Matthew Roberts

And there he stood, surrounded by the North Fork of December
holding a Dolly Varden just below the surface—
the bright-orange fly waving in the corner of its mouth.

He examined the fish through a cold window of himself,
maybe to feel what it was like not to feel,
or to watch the way its white-tipped fins moved freely,
creating their own currents.

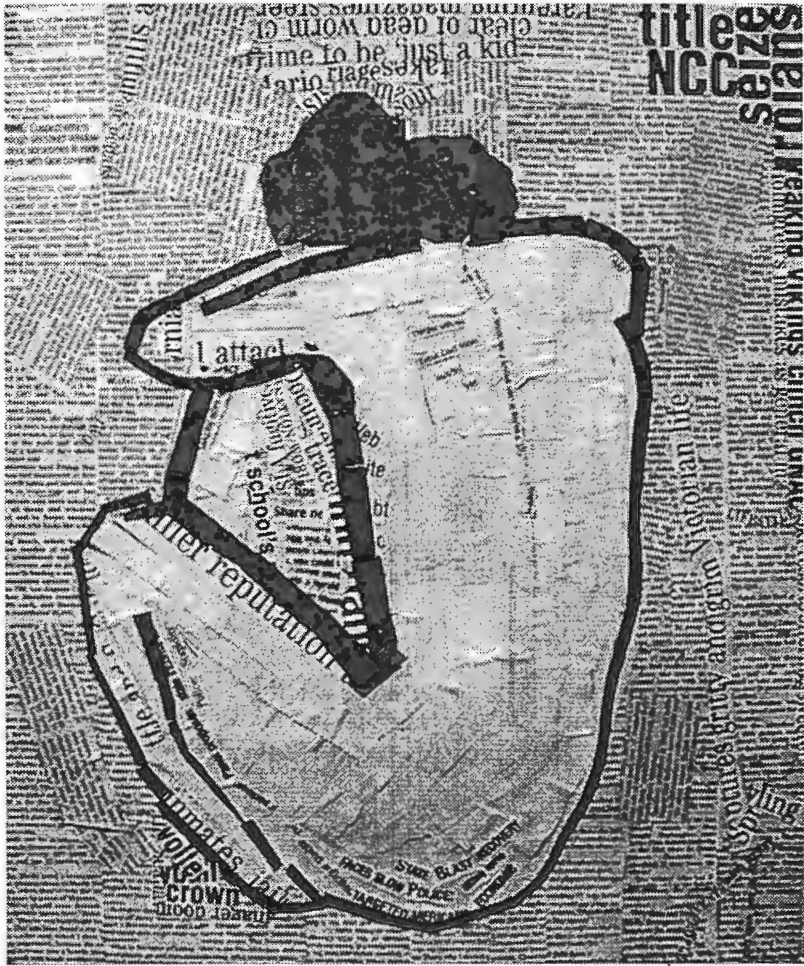
I remember him smiling back at me through the sound
of riffles turned white against rocks—as he let the char loose—
only to exist in the fir-green waters of his imagination.

I did not know then, but that day would be our last,
he drowned beneath a Montana sky so shallow
the earth couldn't remember his name.

Now, when the window-clear waters fall
from winter-run, canyon pools lapsed by boulders,
stable as time, I think of him

And how the forest turned the morning light into beams
dissolved by the canyon,
where eyes told me they were not so long for this earth—

It's getting dark now,
and the wind has blown out our light.



Marcia Ross
Study of Picasso's Blue Nude
Collage, 17" x 14"

At the Market

Joel G. Solem

The sun was shining, as it invariably does in every child's world, and with it being Saturday, my parents decided to take my brother and me to the Pike Place Market in downtown Seattle. It was not uncommon for us to spend a summer afternoon at the market, just to take in all of the sights and sounds; the exciting bustle of commerce always entertained us even if we never did find anything to buy. Despite my age of six, I revered the market, the evasive familiarity of it, the mystery of every unknown expanse and level, which could only be seen, unlocked, with the occurrence of each new visit. And, this trip was of no exception.

We arrived to a bustling thoroughfare; the market was pulsing with the usual flow of people, capitalism, and it was welcoming. My brother, who was three, and I meandered around the perimeter and watched this unusual show until we were suddenly swallowed and digested into it ourselves. We wandered with the freedom usually not given to children our ages, but for my brother and me it was more of a gift from our parents, a gift we took full advantage of.

On this particular day, we had no desire to walk the brightly-lit corridors of the upper floors, as the market possesses numerous levels, amongst the usual vegetable and jewelry vendors. Too familiar were the displays filled with crushed ice and orderly rows of foggy-eyed salmon garnished with bit and parts of other sea-life, sea-dead, and dead is the way it smelled, too. No, we had no desire for these musings for our ambitions lay deep within the bowels, the catacombs, of the Pike Place Market.

You could see, as well as feel, the transformation of our surroundings as we traversed the lonely dark stairway, which would inevitably take us lower and lower. The further along we embarked, the quieter it became. There was not the useless commotion of people poisoning the air, and the calmness it brought was soothing. The smells changed as well, becoming older, more historic; you could feel the nostalgia, and it made me think of my Grandmother's attic. Even the light was less invasive, with hardly any amount of sun being able to filter in, which left tarnished old lighting fixtures producing the dimmest of light, as well as the feeling of not wanting to bother you. As we walked further along, the noise began to

slowly fade and was replaced by the soothing acoustic vibrations of someone playing a trombone, with its sound, deep and clean, resonating off the walls like the anguished bellows of an imprisoned martyr who was celled much, much farther down than we were going to go.

The stairs led us into a magnificent looking hallway filled with grand architecture, wood, and fascinating bulkheads stained with the musings of artists, which stretched up to the ceiling. It was in this hallway that I discovered the most glorious treasure to be exhumed at the market: the 25-cent moving picture of a dancing lady. Now, to fully appreciate the significance of this find you also have to know that it was only a short while before that my parents had bought a small black and white television, so the idea and action of actually watching a motion picture was not foreign to me, but the mechanics and mystery of how television allowed for the viewing of people, whatever, was still very relevant. And, it fascinated me to no end.

As soon as I noticed the machine, I grabbed my brother and drug him over to it. We stood in front of the great metal view finder and the steps which led to the viewing platform, and reveled at its stunning marriage between wood and metal, giving homage to its physical beauty, but not for too long because the dancing lady was waiting for us. Luckily my parents had given both of us a dollar, so we could each watch the show three or four times each.

I, being older, wiser and bigger, than my brother, naturally took the first viewing. I walked slowly up the steps and stood on the platform, placed my face to the metal, and gave my brother the signal to drop the coin in. The machine burst to life, the inner mechanics began churning with this sudden animation, and the engineering of the metal on metal contained within released sounds as if it were in labor, with a single quarter being the only obstetric needed to induce the birth of what I was watching. I laughed, absolutely delighted at the sight of this robust women dancing across some arbitrary stage with the same fervor as if she were a happy young milk maiden without a care in the world except to prance amongst the wildflowers, but in this case, she seemed to have misplaced her clothes.

The moving picture ended with an abruptness similar to the way it had began, but it was what I saw after the picture had stopped, not during, that plagued my mind. As the picture slowed and finally stopped, I saw the progression of still photos slow and finally stop as well. The lady was on each picture but striking just a little different pose than the photo that preceded it. This perplexed me. This was a movie, I thought, but what I saw after it finished was an odd

alignment of pictures, how bizarre. I pondered this while my brother took his turn, and then, as in a cataclysmic burst of evolution, all of my thoughts and confusion worked themselves out, and I understood how technology allowed for movies and television to be possible. I could not believe it. What a let down. The natural, progressive thought processes of my mind had unlocked the entire mystery behind the origination of the television, the motion picture, THE MOTION PICTURE: obviously, if I had only thought of these actual words... but that didn't matter, because I felt violated.

So, on this day, my world became a little smaller, and it only cost me a quarter.

Post Script: I watched it three more times.

Shakespearean Prose and Novae Narrative: Appreciation and Apprehension Produce Insightful Interpretations

Lara Gregory

“The new wave Shakespeare experiments like Baz Luhrman's *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) or *Ten Things I Hate About You* (based on ‘*The Taming of the Shrew*’) have been charming the hell out of the new Pepsi generation and proving that the Stratford playwright is chic again” (Tung). Moreover, judging from the longevity of his popularity—an astounding four centuries and still going strong—Shakespeare, sheer genius, will not be going out of style anytime soon. Therefore, the question that plagues both the greatest academic and artistic minds of today cries how to best present Shakespeare to our postmodern world. In response to this, when aiming to explain Shakespeare prospective interpreters must engage in a twofold process: primarily, they must secure a solid understanding of Shakespeare in its purest form, and only then, out of appreciation and adequate apprehension of the original text, can they build a insightful and artistic personal interpretations.

If narrative-experimentalist forgo building a foundational understanding of Shakespeare and base their interpretations on previous interpretations, our realm of Shakespearean renditions will degenerate into weak, anemic, and distorted phantoms of the theater's ultima thule. For this reason, Trevor Nunn, director of *The Merchant of Venice*, offers a cure to this crippling affliction: “The trick is to make a completely new piece of work while preserving the original piece of work” (qut. in *The Masterpiece Theater*); and while this sounds *simple* enough, the cacophony of critics serves as a reminder that this is *not* easily accomplished (Tung). Voluminous voices clamor that by cutting Shakespeare's prose out of productions, “...audiences are robbed of the opportunity to experience the cleverness, poetry, and majesty of the language...” and to boot, “...modern adaptations don't challenge viewers and offer weaker plots and less complex characters” (*The Masterpiece Theater*).

However, if anticipating interpreters restrict their compass to *only* traditional Shakespearean text, they assuredly inhibit insight that stirs from

manifold versions; and so, assimilating adaptations (that are done well) will enhance appreciation and apprehension of Shakespeare's work. For instance, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has spawned a myriad of versions, which either keep to the traditional Elizabethan text and setting or expand Shakespeare's ideas using more liberal interpretations, consequently enlarging the boundaries of dogmatic imaginations. By its very nature, *Hamlet* should incite personal application, disclosing our own human nature; as David Walsh puts it, "The best productions take aspects or sides of the play and fold them into pressing contemporary social, psychological and aesthetic needs. We are continually discovering that it is a modern work" (Walsh). In his recent rendition of *Hamlet* (starring Ethan Hawke in 2000), director Michael Almereyda used Orson Welles' (director of the 1948 *Macbeth*) technique to delineate *Hamlet*; "Welles shot his *Macbeth* in twenty-one days, describing it as a rough charcoal sketch of the play," Almereyda explains, "I wanted to film *Hamlet* with that same spirit, roughness and energy" (qut. in Walsh). The young *Hamlet* star, Ethan Hawk, says this about origin versus originality: "I think Michael [Almereyda] and myself both felt like, 'let's just throw ourselves at this and try to learn as much as we can and just do it' because if you fall under the weight of the tradition, and don't get charged by it, you can drown" (qut. in Walsh).

After closely examining the inner-workings of Shakespeare's plays, one realizes how he eternally "charms" (Tung) every stratum of society; composed of "[i]ntrospection, passion, action, spectacle, intrigue, puns, and clowning....Shakespeare's plays and characters are so compelling, enduring, and accessible that artist and writers of all 'brows' have used his work" (Martin). From musical inspiration, classical operas, and ballets to *Seinfeld*, *Star Trek*, and *The Simpsons*, Shakespearean narrative remains an indubitable influence, lingering in our occidental world ~ not to mention the entire earth, as our world continues to shrink. While relevance transforms as society's values have shifted, Shakespearean interpretations have also stretched to accommodate the needs of each time period. One must look no further than the theories Freud pulled from *Hamlet*'s relationships (e.g. Oedipal complex) to the gargantuan impact Shakespeare still makes in our lives. "William Shakespeare lived more than 400 years ago yet his profound insights into human nature are still quoted today. This is because people don't change ~ but the language we speak does" (Saunders). Now more than ever, with the latest narrative medium ~ film, storytellers must interpret Shakespeare with a language that will speak to the people.

When tested on an internet survey, interestingly enough, participants could not identify which plots were from “Melrose Place” and which were written by the Stratford playwright (Martin). “Shakespeare wrote for the masses, much like television writers” (The Masterpiece Theater); although this should come as no surprise considering that, “...his tales of love, hate, sex, piety, passion, greed, jealousy, insanity, revenge, power, conflict, delusion, debauchery, and fun are some of the best we have. (Martin).” Because Shakespeare wrote his timeless plays with performance rather than publication in mind, it is ironic, that many well-intending scholars pall their pupils with (what can be viewed as) dry text; unenthusiastic learners complain of being force fed hardtack, and the rest, students who have been raised on narrative’s latest and greatest ~ film, hunger for something more that will wet their pallets. While academic elitist are right to expose their pupils to pure Shakespeare, novae Shakespearean narrative is the flavor that creates an appetite for Shakespeare in prospective fans. Meanwhile, scholarly hypercriticism can be summed up with the following review found on HallEducation.com: Almereyda’s interpretation of *Hamlet*, “...is simply not worth owning. At best I might recommend that one rent it, but only if one is truly interested in seeing how NOT to translate a great classic into modern context.” Unfortunately, these academic elitists suck the life-giving breath out of what *can* be insightful interpretations of transcendent characters and plots; indeed, Almereyda’s *Hamlet* gets this generation’s blood pumping ~ something every interpreter should strive for, and everyone else applaud.

Almereyda’s *Hamlet* is an example of an innovative interpretation that captures viewer’s attention with contemporary application, and equally important, it is healthy and nourished because of its roots in Shakespeare’s original. “From miles away, you can hear ‘Danger, Will Robinson!’ should you decide to reevaluate a Shakespeare play that’s been arguable the most produced and written-about work,” reviewer Tommy Tung continues, “...[it] has to go unscathed under the searing criticism of thespians and pedantic University scholars who (I know from experience) are capable of unforgiving censure” (Tung). Where past Hamlets have been “tormented and psychotic” (Tung), Almereyda shines a new light on Hamlet’s character that today’s generation can readily identify with: “...[the] alienation of youth and its replacement of soul and identity besieged by a video-media culture” (Tung). Only after understanding the original *Hamlet* did Almereyda move on to produce his own interpretation; and he accomplished this by intensifying, magnifying, diminishing or deleting scene to portray his perspective on what

Shakespeare is saying to us. “Almeryda for his part has seen the play as the tragedy of idealistic youth caught up and destroyed by official greed and corruption. This is a legitimate interpretation, although it has its limitations,” reviewer David Walsh points out; still, it is “with great discretion, Almeryda made necessary adjustments to ensure that story’s fluidity” (Walsh). Here again, if the director did not *already* have a secure grasp on what Shakespeare was actually saying, it would have been impossible to tweak and chop *Hamlet* in ways that speak to today’s generation without completely distorting Shakespeare’s intent.

Purists complain that Almeryda’s *Hamlet* is less than desirable because he chose to eliminate certain parts from the original text. “Surely any director doing *Hamlet* must face the dilemma of how to restage the speeches in innovative ways — some of the language is so well known that this task can seem impossible. But the answer is not to make the words unimportant,” critic Cynthia Fuchs argues, “The story of *Hamlet* is not original to Shakespeare. His contribution was to tell it in a way in which language was central and important — words *matter*.... ‘Please, feel free to cut and paste.’ But Almeryda’s *Hamlet* is just a superficial treatment, uncomplicated and often unfathomable.” Be that as it may, “...the real triumph of this [Almeryda’s] film version of *Hamlet* is that the characters are real people the audience either likes or dislikes....[it’s] about the frailty and failings of human character are not overwhelmed by 21st century storytelling. They are enhanced” (Prestwick House Footnotes). Truly, the beauty of interpreting a work of Shakespeare’s—that one has come to know and love—is the ability to intimately describe its every curve and shadow, as one sees it for oneself.

Above all, Almeryda and Hawke stand by the notion that Shakespeare was meant to be toyed with, and their passion about the film is palpable. Hawke says, “people who get all caught up thinking [Shakespeare] intended it a certain way are wrong because he never published the plays. The plays were published after he was dead. He just produced them, and that’s why there are all these discrepancies. He was just writing. He had like a *Hamlet* file with all the things in it. When people say, ‘you can’t move the soliloquy over here.’ It’s not for sure that the published it and said, ‘this one goes here.’” Almeryda adds, “aside from that, he was a popular entertainer. To say that these are plays that should be looked at through a glass case and they can only be done one way [is wrong]. The greatest reverence for Shakespeare is, like anything or anyone that you love, be being playful, by trying to bring yourself into an active relationship with it and not just stand off and be precious” (Anderson).

Through creative direction, Tung reminds that Almereyda, "...employs the versatility of film to construct states of mind, never before attempted in other *Hamlet* films" (Tung). This unprecedented technique Tung refers to is seen in the ominous promise of Ophelia's drowning: "It's the projection of her despair rather than the verbalization of that's astounding. She shuffles to the edge of the pool and plunges herself into the deep end. Cut. She's back at the edge, woken from her imagination" (Tung). Again, a profound interpretation like Almereyda's can only be accomplished through a deep understanding of the original story ~ without this Almereyda would not have even realized these subtle nuances of Ophelia's "victimization" (Tung). Further, updating Shakespeare with one's own novae narration makes perfect sense after one understands the tacit meanings behind the story Shakespeare is telling; "...contemporary themes and ideas are either anticipated or embodied by the stories and characters Shakespeare wrote 400 years ago, and if you treat him as an equal he speaks very directly to you," Almereyda explains, "So it never was a question to me whether it could be updated or if it should not be updated. It just made a lot of sense..." (qut. in Anderson). Expanding on new frontiers, Almereyda's interpretation is indeed worthy of recognition and remembrance; kudos to Walsh who aptly describes this progressive *Hamlet* as, "justified by contemporary life and the play itself, at times quite powerful and beautiful" (Walsh).

At last, one *should* savor with the insight others have taken from of Shakespeare's original masterpieces; nevertheless, in order to move past what others have created, and not reinterpret an interpretation, one *must* probe into the pure elements of Shakespeare to truly interpret him, carving out a personal rendition. As illustrated above, every profound Shakespearean adaptation is built on a foundational understanding of unadulterated Shakespeare; and for this reason, it is critical that this and upcoming generations become familiar with Shakespeare's original literary works, so they too may endeavor to sketch out the recondite message he left for us. Alas, a greater tragedy than *Hamlet* itself would be to water down Shakespeare until we are no longer studying his works, but the myriad of interpretive works, which may be beneficial in themselves, yet should *never* take the place of William Shakespeare's ultimate masterpieces.

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More Bang for Your Buck: *The Matrix* and Its Philosophical Implications

Travis Fagala

Just like the human spirit, the themes of *The Matrix* will not remain bound in chains of simple sensory appreciation. It has much bolder philosophical roots planted deep in the soil of teachings from The Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Karl Marx, Plato as well as Machiavelli. Throughout the course of the film, a flower blooms in this soil that to comprehend causes us to question our own reality and just how humane our existence in this world really is. It is in these facets that *The Matrix* holds deeper implications for its viewers other than simple pleasure wrought from feasting on eye candy.

The main action of the film revolves around Neo, who must undergo several tests and trials in order to mature and achieve certain goals. Through these trials, Neo undergoes some of the processes of enlightenment described by our authors. In the beginning of the film, he represents a potential enlightened individual who must be shown the path to truth. This only comes after he has produced an effort to understand how things are in the reality of the matrix—showing a desire for truth and knowledge as Plato talks about in his *Allegory of The Cave*. Neo is observant of the world around him, but doesn't trust it fully—which has led him to believe that something is just a little off. “The question that drives him” allows him a more objective view into that system—even though he has not yet escaped it. This can be equated to Plato's Allegory again, in which the characters in the cave have restrained view of their reality, heads held in place by chains—fixing their perspectives—much like those still bound in the reality of the matrix. However, one who so desires is eventually set free from those chains, allowing ascent into the light or truth. Later on this analogy is strengthened after Neo is released from the matrix into the care of the crew on the *Nebuchadnezzar*; he complains of his eyes hurting. Like Plato's character who recently exited the cave, the true light of the world hurts his eyes. The pain experienced is not only their physical maladjustment from being in the cave; it is their consciousness dealing with a completely different set of circumstances concerning their reality. Although difficult, his transition into full understanding of the “matrix” is aided

through interaction with other “Awakened” characters—much like Plato suggests enlightenment is catalyzed through sharing of knowledge from enlightened individuals with other individuals still in the darkness of “the cave.” This suggests community involvement must be integrated to potentiate the awakening of other individuals—speaking to the unification of class that Marx held to be important. Neo is a willing recipient because he has his own notions, that is to say that he responds to the world with his intellect and human intuition, rather than the programmed instruction of the matrix (society)—he desires truth.

Comprising the Machiavellian aspect of society in the matrix are the Agents. They are awakened from the scheme of the matrix in the sense that they are the policy makers/enforcers in it. They assume greater power roles in the matrix as guardians of the system they have designed. As such, an interest outside of their own is perceived as a grave threat to the balance of THEIR order and maintenance of their control. Parallels can be drawn to Marx’s bourgeoisie as well, who rather than threaten their power over us through compromise of interest, hold the citizenry in a state of forced adherence to a “safe way of life” that in the end whispers hopes of a humane existence into a vestigial dream. In both our lives and in the world of the matrix, the systems of order stand in a state not of trust and benevolence towards those whom they rule, but of constant mistrust and paranoia. This is contrary to the stance of Lao-Tzu who said that mistrust breeds distrust and that the best government is the one which governs least. However, since the agents in The Matrix have something to lose, namely maintenance of “the illusion of the matrix,” they stand to do whatever is necessary to prevent any such occurrence, effecting Machiavellian methods of rule. As such, the machines enable agents special advantages held above that of the average citizen in order to enforce their rules with absolute rigidity.

Connections to Marx’s descriptions of class struggle are abundant and closely linked to the machine’s rule in the matrix. In the matrix, a citizen is hopeless to stand up to an agent in any sort of contest. The subject of class struggle becomes a central theme in the contests between agents and the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar, the Marxian theme of oppressor/oppressed obvious. As Marx claims in his Communist Manifesto, ironically the tools with which the oppressed will overthrow the oppressor are provided by the oppressors themselves in the form of technology, namely of communication. The resistance fighters use the matrix against the machines through reentering it to free other humans. They constantly explore the rules of the matrix and learn how to bend them in hopes to

eventually overthrow it entirely. The fields that the machines have set up to house humans while they produce energy serve as an example Marx views the role of the modern worker to be. Dull, low level duties characterize Marx's proletariat worker and are echoed in the mundane nature of the cells humans exist in. In fact, the role machines use humans for now is so basic, that it necessitates the existence of "the matrix," a false world that entertains workers while the machines usurp the energy produced by the humans. This is the sensory world that the Buddha teaches to disregard, that Plato says not to trust, and which both claim to be responsible for human suffering. The few humans that exist outside the matrix in the real world are set upon overthrowing the machines via the violent revolutionary paths suggested by Marx.

The process of awakening undertaken in the film is an amalgamation of a wide range of philosophies from around the world and across the spans of time. Many connections between Plato's Allegory of the Cave can be made to the experiences of Neo in the film. In the beginning of the film Neo has uncertain bits of information about the matrix, inklings of information much like the dim shadows cast on the walls of Plato's cave. He cannot escape the matrix because he is part of it. The chains in Plato's work represent the programmed views of others, i.e. the laws of the matrix. They hold the heads of individuals in place, thus preventing any other perspective from developing. This perspective is the view of how life should be lived according to those who are in power, i.e. the machines, agents in the matrix. Presented with two choices, the red and blue pills, Neo can either go back to the dream world of the matrix, or he can wake up in the real world. Since Neo is still bound in the matrix at this point, one should note that his taking the red pill is a commitment in his mind, not a physical act. It represents his desire for truth, something which Plato, Lao-Tzu and the Buddha work towards in their disciplines. Then, Neo begins his journey for truth through sitting in front of the mirror, representing the process of self-reflection, a tool that the Buddha's teachings employ through meditative practices. The mirror is cracked at the start, but then as Neo looks at it, it is suddenly fixed, representing a move from the errors of the "real world" of the matrix into a higher plane, one of truth and how things should be. Neo touches the mirror and it takes hold of him, moving up his arm and spreading all over him. This scene speaks to The Buddha's view that self-reflection is consuming, eventually taking over one's consciousness and changing it. It ends with Neo actually waking up in the cell that has been his prison all his life.

me at the moment. I did not see the piece by reason but felt by more instinctive senses. Then, the more I studied about him and this painting, the more my feeling of the moment became descriptive as if unraveling mysteries in a detective story piece by piece

Michelangelo is an Italian artist born in 1475. When he was 13, he learned painting by studying ancient sculpture collected by the Medici Family. His talent as an artist met Medici's acceptance, and he received various categories of education: sculpture, anatomy, literature, and the reading of the Old and New Testaments. His artistic soil had been cultivated at this time. His fresh, anticlassical, pioneering style was known as Mannerism and had a great influence on the Late Renaissance. Over the past four centuries, the magnificence of his creation revives for its audience, Europe's atmosphere of the time. The Rondanini Pieta is also a masterpiece that has still influenced on art world. Known not only as a painter, he is also prized highly as a sculptor and architect. David is known as his masterpiece of carving, and San Pietro Vaticano thunder his fame as an architect to the world.

Initially, the reason why I was drawn to this particular artist and his self-portrait was probably that it connects me with a picture of myself reflected on a mirror. Not only visually, but it also reflects undisruptive sensitivities of my deep inside. Although the self-portrait is even less than three percent of the entire piece, it makes me think of how our physical entity is small compared with the mental world. To explain a specific feeling that I had at the moment of looking at the self-portrait, which is also connected to the reason of my being fascinated, please recall when you come back from a party. It might have been hot, noisy, crowded thirty minutes ago, but, in contrast, it is now probably so quiet that you could only listen to the sound of water dripping from a faucet. Many of us probably have suddenly come to ourselves when looking at a mirror after washing our faces. What we see in a mirror is only our faces with a few drops of water. There is nothing to intrude in the conversation between two people in there; there is only a person in front of the mirror and his image reflected inside. We can become honest. We can come face to face with our usually-hidden, potential emotions. The first time I saw the self-portrait in Michelangelo's masterpiece The Last Judgment, it reminded me of a time like that. The image went over my retinas and plunged into my inside senses. The gate leading to the deep senses are usually closed, and even I do not know how to open it. However, it just came in naturally as if it had been there for a long time.

The Last Judgment is depicted on the wall in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican and is known as the largest fresco painting of the 16 century. Its execution was started in 1536 by commission from the Pope Paul III and was finished in 1541. It is made up of 450 paintings, and Michelangelo plastered each by each to draw on the chapel's wall. This painting is 13.5 meters in length, 14 meters in width, with over 350 nude figures depicted around the Judgment Day in the New Testament. There are people going to heaven on the left side, and people falling down to hell are represented on the right side. Michelangelo shows his self-portrait as the flayed skin suspended from St. Bartholomew's hand, located in the middle of this piece. As a historic background, this period of time was at the end of the Renaissance. Also, it was after the Reformation, i.e., the authority of the church became weak. It was probably an indirect motivation for him to finish this spectacular piece since he was one of the faithful.

Because his self-portrait is showed as a cast-off skin, many people may associate the image with words related to negative images: fear, pain, or sin. However, what I feel is that emotional nothingness revealed in the face of the artist. The portrait, like skin stripped from the body, represents his sense of value toward his entity; mental elements such as emotion and artistic ability of representation were probably more worthy, noble than physical elements that composed his body, such as skin and bones. It tells about how emotionally invested he was in the piece and how inconsequential his physical entity was as compared with the magnitude of the art world which surrounds him. It seems that he realized or had realized that on the way of executing the Last Judgment. It represents Michelangelo's challenge to acquire an eternity and resultant enlightenment that he attained: humans' vainness toward the endeavor. No matter how he represented his greatness, or how his pieces became more spiritual, his body could not purchase an eternity. He probably keenly realized the sense of mortality with helpless pain and sorrow that he still felt in spite of earning the brilliant glory.

Incidentally, why do many people draw their faces as a self-portrait? It is related to the reason why people often visualize faces when thinking about someone. It is probably so facile that people can tell emotion and characteristics of a person from his countenance. Visualizing faces is the key to access information that we have about him like entering keywords to a search engine. In other words, portraying expressions of faces is one of the most effective ways to display visually what artists want to convey. However, getting used to gaining

information from facial expressions can sometimes represent a biased viewpoint in understanding the truth of a piece. What was the truth that Michelangelo wanted to represent through the Last Judgment? Although he portrayed himself as a self-portrait in the work, the self-portrait does not portray him.

As some of us might have realized, works created play a role of a medium of communication between artists and appreciators. It does not necessarily mean that both artists and viewers have to have the same interpretation about the piece because it could depend on the characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of each. However, there is only one truth. It is like a life full of conviction. Although anything could happen in life, the resolution is straight, unyielding. Likewise, there is one truth that should be translated by every appreciator although any interpretation of this Michelangelo's self-portrait could be meaningful and valuable. The truth represented on the self-portrait is a resurrection from death. As a result of the long voyage for reaching any desire, the answer he found was a mental immortality. His true desire was earning the immortality, and he realized everything he had done was vain in front of the eternity. "*Poor, old, beaten, I will be reduced to nothing, if death does not come swiftly to my rescue. Pains have quartered me, torn me, broken me and death is the only inn awaiting me,*" said Michelangelo. The day after the Last Judgment, what he will see is not pain and sorrow but relief from his temporality.

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On Isolation and the Separate Reality of Self

Jimie Horath

What is the most primary perception found in the human mind, antecedent to all others (excluding of course, what we receive as our five physical senses)? Is it the perception of movement or motion—as suggested by the 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes—the experience of witnessing (or feeling) the effects of a foreign body in movement with relation to one’s self, or within one’s sensual domain? This is certainly a faculty of the most primitive sort, meaning that if we were robots driven by prime directives, this ability to experience and interpret motion would definitely be one of the first rules to constitute our very existence. There arise still more rudimentary perceptions however, and they become fundamental necessities to the endeavor of human experience.

For instance what about the importance of time? Without the progression of time could there be any movement at all? Perhaps we can conceive of the perception of movement without time as possible, but the ramifications of such an odd conception, such as movement taking place outside the realm of time, rather than within, would pose a serious malfunction in human perception. We are set up so that in our experience as conscious human beings, motion takes place in a bigger realm that we perceive as time. To try and switch these two concepts is a completely nonsensical act when referring to human experience; it is virtually inconceivable to the human mind. Therefore it is a primary perception that motion takes place over (within) time. One could even argue that if time and motion were to occur in a reciprocal manner, we wouldn't be talking about human perception anymore. This order is a staple of our existence, and therefore the change would also alter the human experience into a completely different existence altogether. We could call it the “namuh” experience (Human backward, get it?).

We have seen how motion and time are two primal perceptions that help form the foundation of human existence. We have even touched upon the fact that they work together in such a manner that one would have a hard time describing the first without mention of the other. How is it then that we are able to identify two separate perceptions, one which we call motion, and another that we have chosen to call time? This question leads us to what could be considered

the initial perception, or the very foundation from which all other primary perceptions are spawned, an outer realm to time that contains time within itself, in the same manner that time contains motion. For lack of better terminology, we can call this outermost realm, the perception of isolation.

By the term isolation, we mean to describe the ability to isolate, or to single out. Without the use of this ability we couldn't have a notion of time, movement, or for that matter, perception of anything as separate. Human existence wouldn't exist as it does because there would be no separation of humankind from all the other things that we (as humans) perceive as separate entities from ourselves. There could be no perception of self, let alone a perception of "your" self or "my" self.

At first it seems a little silly to think that a basic concept such as isolation could essentially be the king in a hierarchy of human perception. Why should this perception have such precedence? It seems so basic, and in fact, it teeters on the edge of existence itself if you try and physically demonstrate the concept of isolation. You can point out things that we as humans perceive as separate, yet you cannot truly point at a physical representation of isolation. A thing can be alone, but never wholly isolated; it always has itself (particles, atoms, and whatnot), and usually an observer who is thinking of the object's isolation. Both of these examples spoil the pure singularity that isolation implies. A tree that falls in the woods is thought to be isolated if no one is there to observe it, yet it is not in true isolation due to the fact that a whole forest is surrounding it.

Particle physicists will tell you that it is common knowledge that all physical matter is made up of over 90% empty space. They will also say that there is no special difference between the particles that make up your own body and the vast amount of particles surrounding you that make up the outside world. There are reactions/relationships occurring within your body, just as there are reactions/relationships occurring between yourself and the outside world. This body is what we refer to as self isn't it? Don't we see ourselves as separate from the outside world? Isn't that a chief necessity to the concept of self? The problem here is that there is no real isolation of self from the outside world. We can physically touch our own skin and think that we are touching the outside (or end) of our own body, but as science has already proved (quantum mechanics in particular), this is an illusion.

So why go on believing in the concept of an isolated self? It is the prime necessity to human existence, that's why. Could we function as a single being

without the concept of isolation? Wouldn't we get confused as to who we were in reference to everybody else? In our present state of existence, the idea of a reality free from the concept of isolation is inconceivable. We run into the same problem as trying to say that motion contains time rather than vice versa. Those parameters are what make us human—the fact that we not only conceive of those parameters, but that we are also subject to them. A human existence free of those parameters wouldn't be human existence anymore. "Existence" would just be "the reality" and the terms would be interchangeable. There would essentially be no thing except for the thing. The one, the only, the all. This so-called everything would have very little room for us. We would be swallowed by the vastness of everything.

How is it that the closer we move towards the physical reality of isolation, the less real our pondering seems to be? Motion is apparent everywhere and is physically demonstrative. There's no problem there, though as we move further away from this physically based perception into the less physical but more encompassing perceptions such as time, we quickly begin to lose clarity. It's as if we're not supposed to know, or perhaps we are merely incapable, like a person trying to look at his/her eyes without a mirror. We know they are there and we use them every day, but we are at a loss for visual proof.

So the concept of isolation is built into the framework of the human mind. Though contradictory on certain levels to the actual reality that we are taking part in, it is surely as necessary as the perception of solidity in an object that is made up of over 90% space. It is a vital interpretation necessary to the human experience. Perhaps this existence (as we experience it) should be considered the dreamers' dream, for it appears to be a separate reality within the greater "actual" reality, which to us is the physical world. To find out within the dream that you are only in a dream is the first step to waking up. In our case, that means the first step to becoming non-human. This is why these underlying concepts that are so essential to human existence start to become so elusive as we hone in on them. To actually know them would essentially be to "un"-know ourselves, creating a destructive paradox.

As we stated earlier, motion is just fine when trying to describe it, but time, on the other hand, starts to slip through our fingers as we try and pinpoint exactly what it is. Yet it is completely necessary to the understanding of our minds. Movement could not occur unless there was a time period in which the movement occurred. What is time though? Trying to explain this is where it starts to get tricky but we're still not in the really deep water yet. We can say that one motion occurs

before or after another motion. One has preceded the other. It's a little abstract, but the idea of time is implied in this statement, and even necessary. Now comes our all-encompassing idea of isolation, and here is where we seem to lose it. Our only reference for isolation is in saying that without it, time and motion would not exist; they would be the same things. Indeed it is necessary in order to separate the two, and as humans we perceive them as two different concepts, yet the concept of isolation that we are using is a complete abstraction. We live and breathe isolation yet it really doesn't exist.

The primary perception of isolation is so close to what we are as human beings that we cannot truly "see" it. In this sense, we are stating that humankind, or the true reality of self, is virtually the same as the all-encompassing perception of isolation. It is so close to us that even though we know it's in front of our eyes, it has become blurry to our sight. It seems to be that the governing reality of self is superimposed onto (or into) the physical reality that we are participating in. Therefore, the founding laws that make up the self must be slightly different than the rules that make up the "actual" physical reality. Because this physical reality is the only tool with which we may look at ourselves, we simply run into a problem of translation.

Our only answer to this conundrum then, must be that yes, the reality of self as we know it is the dreamer's dream, and in order to participate in physical reality, we are forced to receive certain illusions as real; it's part of the rules in the game of life. Just as we receive matter that is made up almost entirely of space as solid, we must also rely on using concepts that do not truly exist, such as the concept of isolation. There is no other way around it. We cannot walk through walls; neither can we truly conceive that the wall and everything else in our existence is merely an extension of ourselves. That would be the end of self. So in order to participate in the "actual" reality as viewed by the human mind, one must inadvertently believe in the separate reality of an "isolated" self.

(Untitled)

Catherine V. Thompson

I do not consider myself to be an individual who is prone to excessive emotions or illogical outbursts, yet I found myself engaging in both such behaviors during and after a recent class dialogue. I was deeply infuriated, to an extent which astounded even me, in that I have previously encountered individuals who engage with the world in a similar manner and yet have never felt such as I did. I couldn't sleep for several nights after the interaction, as the scenario continually traversed my mind, haunting my consciousness. Eventually, as night turned to day and to night again, I slipped out into the darkness and began to run—only then finding moments of solace from the thoughts that were consuming my realm. But what was I running from? What about that interaction disturbed me so profoundly? Days later, as I was strung out on a mixture of sugar and caffeine, I finally began to process the interaction in a meaningful and beneficial way. With the assistance of several individuals I have begun upon a process of revelation, which is already altering my thought processes in ways that I cannot begin to adequately depict, yet I shall nevertheless attempt to.

Over my course of my eighteen years, I have discovered that coming to terms with one's own epistemic assumptions is a very difficult process, riddled with denial, fear, anger and the hope of eventual resolution—or at least acceptance. This quarter, more so than ever before in my lifetime, I am coming face to face with myself and everything that I am, and that I am not. My own prejudices are being exposed and I am only now realizing to what extent my experiences and interactions have shaped who I am, and will shape who I become. My self-revelations have perplexed, terrified, and horrified me—in precisely that order, as I engage in material that, quite literally, thrusts such epiphanies upon me, such that one would have to be either blind not to see the obvious social truths, and the ramifications therein.

I strive to see individuals as humans above all categorizations and classifications, hence I have a great deal of difficulty understanding, let alone accepting, “othering.” Indeed, I am simultaneously infuriated and saddened that othering is still prevalent in the world today as I consider it to be a false dichotomy

which precedes hatred and bigotry as well as ultimately perpetuating inequality. This “us” versus “them” dualism I continually bear witness to is nothing short of a reactionary approach to social inequalities that encourages division based upon social constructs and affirms one group’s dominance over another, thereby reinforcing perceived differences. More so that any other factor it is such perceived differences that divide, alienate, and ultimately other.

I am no longer ignorant enough to allege that issues such as race, social class, and gender do not exist, but I fervently believe, and advocate, that the aforementioned are nothing more than societal constructs used to justify societal inequalities by citing the differences. Never mind that such differences are typically greater amongst groups than between them—we need to maintain the delusion of such differences lest we feel forced to examine the underlying structural causes which have created and perpetuated difference and domination. Thus, by continually producing quantitative social scientific studies, which affirm the culturally dictated imperative of inborn differences, inequalities are validated through pseudoscience which claims actualized and verifiable differences thereby negating any need to strive toward elimination of social inequalities.

Yet my intellectual conceptualization of the reasons behind difference and domination does not make the reality of discrimination any less tangible, or painful. In a society of which discrimination is such an integral part of, all of us have been damaged by its legacy. In truth, discrimination is so ingrained into American society that the majority of Americans have become passive discriminators, unwittingly perpetuating discrimination through systematically assigning roles that reflect the standards of the dominant groups thereby disaffirming the identities of the sub-groups. The standards of the dominant group are thereafter displayed as the norm for all humanity as though they be tare objective principles from which all sub-groups should endeavor to become like. Clearly, this societal standard, like any socially dictated norm, is unrealistic and potentially dangerous yet it nevertheless prevails, exuding its havoc, corruption and oppression on the psyches of a nation, taxing generation after generation with the horrific legacy of discrimination.

Another such social inveteracy is the premise of fluidity of opposing roles within the US, be it gender, race or otherwise. This supposed fluidity is highly consistent with the idealization of the American meritocracy yet in reality the US is not yet a realized meritocracy nor are roles yet fluid throughout. Nonetheless, this idealization has created an extreme neurosis in American culture in which

discussing this shortcoming (being one amongst many) is simply not done. Discussing our societal ills needs to be an ongoing dialogue but instead such discussion are relegated to the compilation of distasteful topics which only the socially inept would dare to broach. Hence, Americans are continually striving to do their best and prove to everyone else that they are just as capable and competent as their peers. Yet such perfectionism can, and quite often does, lead to social isolation which further prolongs the idealization of the fluidity of roles and the silence as to this unreality. Therefore, the social, economic, and psychological legacy of discrimination that has precipitated the current social taboo against talking about race, gender, or any other issue of significance.

It is my belief that there is simply nothing that resonates more profoundly than silence which all can hear. Such a silence permeates our culture, creating a void which few dare to acknowledge, and fewer still have the courage to fill. 'Tis little wonder, either, as breaking any social taboo, especially one so ingrained, causes a great deal of discomfort, but I believe that the cost of silence is one which this nation—or any nation for that matter—cannot afford, as institutionalized discrimination “results in the loss of human potential, lowered productivity, and a rising role of fear and violence in our society...[Discrimination also] stifles our own growth and development. It clouds our vision and distorts our perceptions. It alienates us not only from other but also from ourselves and our own experiences” (Tatum, 200).

Only by breaking the silence and filling the void with expressive and productive discussions of discrimination will our collective consciousness be raised as to the issue of discrimination. And only by our heightening awareness as to the prevalence of discrimination in the United States and throughout the world can society ever restructure itself into the ideal that we so cherish. I know from personal experience that speaking up can be an excruciating ordeal which incites a torrent of emotions, but the embarrassment, anger, rage, frustration, and emotion which come forth are a far lesser price to pay than that which society is currently offering.

De facto, my reaction was greatly influenced by my own subconscious perpetuation of discrimination. My indignation resulted from my belief in the possibility of a just world founded upon a meritocracy—which the United States has oft claimed to be. I acknowledge that such a system—in which advancement would be based upon achievement and ability—does not currently exist, but need to believe that such a society is one day possible and subsequently become

infuriated when individuals seem to be attempting to impose their shattered dreams upon me. I am young and idealistic (or perhaps foolish) enough to believe that such a society will one day be actualized for the several reasons, the foremost of which being that I cannot fathom how a person could survive without hope. Hence, I am unwilling to despair, to stop caring, or to resign myself to bemoan the state of the world and become an apathetic citizen. To do so would be to compromise my integrity and devalue my very being, which I simply cannot and will not do.

I believe that each person in this world has a variety of gifts, which make us individual and unique. Our race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, political affiliation, marital status, abilities and disabilities, culture, and experiences bring a wealth of diversity to everything we do. I furthermore believe it is crucial for everyone to reflect upon and understand individual differences so as to better comprehend and empathize with each individual's feelings and situations. We all have experienced feelings of oppression, discrimination or rejection at some time in our lives, and all I can offer as a "solution" to this immense problem is the hope for a better tomorrow and the vision of a world free from inequalities. Thus, I have come to realize that my reaction was so acrimonious because discrimination contradicts my desire to believe in a just world, one that has the potential to rise above discrimination and inequality into the symbiotic relationship that I believe humankind is capable of.

For me the cost of not being myself is one that I know, from previous experiences, I cannot afford. Compromising myself, in any way, is a choice to which I already know the definite answer. Alas, as poet May Sarton aptly stated, "The price of being one's self is so high most people cannot afford it." It is a choice we all have to make individually, and I fear that the majority of individuals will choose to remain within their comfort zones and not take the risk to instill trust in their brethren thereby evading the more painful and difficult examination of the structural conditions that have caused discrimination. Yet as excruciating as such an examination may be, I believe that it is only through analyzing how we have come to be that we can empower ourselves with a vision of change. And from that vision we can begin the process toward achieving a better, more peaceful, more just society in which all individuals are treated equally regardless of differences. Or perhaps such a society will only ever be realized in the mind of a naive girl dreaming of a better tomorrow, in which dreams actually provide wings.

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Brad Lincoln
View of Kellogg Road
Charcoal, 18" x 24"

fly buzzing around my head. It could silence a whining child and its scolding mother; it was a silence that even muffled the ringing, dinging, clamoring mechanized roar of six hundred slot machines that screamed out to, and was answered by the obsessive compulsive (of which there were many), stupid enough to believe that they could get rich by shoveling thousands of dollars into the nagging machines. Furthermore, it was a silence that became a shout, when finally, I could escape the incessant noise of the semi-tractor's engine that vibrated underneath my ass over hundreds of now forgotten interstate and highway miles. It followed me, this dreadful silence, through the years, from state to state (fourteen in all), through more jobs than I could possibly remember.

It took awhile, but eventually I realized if I refused to answer the telephone, it would cease to ring. Really, if you want to know, it was Victor Hugo who laid out for me the hard, cold facts of life. In *Les Miseralbe* he wrote, "The misery of a child is interesting to its mother. The misery of a young man is interesting to a young woman. The misery of an old man is interesting to no one." I had only to replace 'old man' with 'gay man,' and this literary gold nugget was mine forever! They knew; of course they knew; I told everyone when I was seventeen. I decided keeping such a secret would prove more problematic than the repercussions incurred if I divulged it. After all, I had one and one half parents, ten brothers and sisters, fifteen aunts and uncles, and the numerous first and second cousins, and nieces and nephews that twenty five flamboyant heterosexuals could pop out, as easily as downing a six pack and falling into bed. That's not really how it happened; that's just my irreverent sense of humor.

At first, I thought the silence was because my family did not want to talk about my being gay. The truth was they did not want to talk to me; they did not want to know me. Well, I didn't want to know them, but I was fooling myself if I thought such bravado would make me so easily cast away the desires of a life time, but I was young and foolish enough to try.

I was thirty-five years old when, ten years later, the foolhardiness of my youth came crashing down all around me. I had just established a satellite operation for the Sugar Toy Company out of my apartment, which had the largest distribution of crane machines on the West Coast. For fifty cents the player could with skill, luck, and just the right amount of voltage regulated through the machines three tined-claw, extract a stuffed toy, hat, or tee shirt. I was responsible for sixty-five of these machines, which had been distributed from Port Townsend, Washington all the way down to Port Angeles; of course Bainbridge Island was

included on my route, since it was on the way. What had seemed, for me, the golden opportunity of a lifetime when I was first approached to accept the position in Bremerton, Washington, had quickly diminished in its appeal. The drive to Port Angeles and back, servicing sixty-five machines, was grueling enough, but, even when I got back to Bremerton to the apartment, my day was not yet concluded. I had collected a good amount of money from the machines on my route; so, as covertly as I could (fearful of who might be looking out their windows), I carted the heavy canvas bags that held all the money, of both the winners and the losers, from the car into the apartment. I let go the last bag, as if it was the world, and I, Atlas, finally let the burden roll from off my shoulders. The analogy was not exaggerated as I wearily surveyed the apartment, noting how successfully I had transformed it into a business. There was work still to be done, but I walked to the heavy glass doors and putting all my weight into the effort, slid them open, just enough to allow me to squeeze through and out onto the balcony.

Shaking, trembling from inside to outside, I leaned heavily on the railing and looked out on the Puget Sound Naval Base shipping yard, espying the old retired naval ship that had caught my attention, and my imagination, the first time I had walked out onto the balcony. How long ago that was, I was too tired to compute. I could feel the weight of my eyes in my skull as they looked past the old ship to a fleet of properly docked ships (still active in the service of the U.S. Navy), then back to the Old Ship which slowly and concentrically traversed it anchored tether. "I-Am-So-Fucking-Tired!" That was all; I knew it understood, and I banged my head down, nearly knocking myself out on the metal railing. I was still standing when I regained more firmly my cognitive abilities; feeling composed, I burst suddenly into tears.

I looked through my tears past the Old Ship and his mates, to the horizon, now hidden in darkness that concealed an entire city. Just across the Sound was Seattle and members of my family. My Sister, Cheri, was she not my twin growing up? Surely she would respond to my desperate cry for help; so after ten years I had suddenly, spontaneously, decided to break my own self-imposed silence, and I called Cheri. Tearfully, I explained my dilemma. I cried and I pleaded, but to no avail. She couldn't, or wouldn't help me. I don't know how I got through the next day, only to reenact the previous day's little drama. I slid once more out onto the balcony. It wasn't there! The Old Ship wasn't there! Perhaps it had bested the anchor, dragging it to some other part of the shipping yard. Frantically, my eyes darted with renewed rigor for the Old Ship; I had finally to concede the Old Ship

was gone. Having made enough concessions for two life times, something inside me snapped.

There was no rhyme or reason to the things I packed into my Ford Taurus, and the things I had abandoned, but I had barely the presence of mind to pack the ten thousand dollars belonging to the company into the front seat of my car. I can recall the events of that momentous night, and the three hellish days that followed, but not with the usual fluidity of chronology, but rather as isolated events, much like a slide show: the ride across the Sound on the ferry to Seattle, handing the company's money to my sister, Cheri, at her front door (to return to the company for me); now (this is the strange part of my odyssey) here I am at the gay bathhouse in Seattle, then another bathhouse, just down the road in Portland, Oregon; and yet another bathhouse in Denver, Colorado. It would seem I had decided to embark on a gay bathhouse tour of the United States, until, that is Indiana, when, in an isolated moment of clarity, but nonetheless a sort of lethargic introspection, I toured the grounds of a convent in Ferdinand.

On the interstate once more, I became increasingly sick and scared. I drove as fast as I could for the next major city, Frankfort, Kentucky. I had neither money or medical insurance, but as a Vietnam era veteran (please note: I said 'era,' for I have no war stories to share with you; this one will have to suffice), I had been using the Veterans Hospital since being discharged from the United States Army in 1976. "Oh God! Please, just let me make it to Frankfort," I begged with great fervor. Since leaving the convent in Ferdinand, I had readopted the habit of conversing with the almighty, as any sinner might when he believes that death is imminent, for we hope, that like the thief on the cross beside Christ, he may forgive us our sins, even at the twelfth hour.

What prophet was it who said, "that the heavens were as brass?" The heavens seemed just so as my prayers violently rebounded upon my head when I practically crawled into the emergency room in Frankfort, only to find out that the VA hospital was thirty miles away in Lexington. Thirty miles! I may just as easily drive back to Seattle as Lexington, and I was so right. I had barely gotten on the interstate when I was compelled to exit the interstate and pulled into a rest area just outside the city limits. I parked the car bringing it to a full stop, mostly by crashing into the curb. I curled into a very tight fetal position just underneath the steering wheel and waited fearfully for death to come, for I was certain it would; instead I was wracked with the worst sensation a human body could experience, the extreme sensation of needing to vomit in conjunction with the realization that

there was nothing to regurgitate. Somehow opening the door and feebly pushing it open I rolled out of the front seat of my car, and dropped heavily and thickly to the ground.

I have a hazy recollection of a disembodied voice -hovering somewhere above- enquiring if I was all right, then bright red flashing lights bathing the blacktop all around my prostrate form as I felt myself being lifted and laid unto a gurney. The ride in the ambulance consisted mostly of sporadic nausea as I floated in and out of semi-consciousness; on some level I must have known I was being transported to the VA hospital in Lexington, but there was a surreal, dreamlike quality that persisted for several hours after I had been admitted into the hospital and put into a room.

“Where am I?” I asked a hefty, healthy female nurse who had come into the room. The thought crossed my mind that she would be a great softball player. She was wearing a back brace as though she had come to pick me up and throw me out of the hospital; now that someone had discovered that besides being indigent, I was poor, but what was I thinking? What indigent had I ever met who was an indigent of means?

“You’re at the Veterans Hospital in Lexington,” she said kindly. So she didn’t intend to toss me out. She wore the brace, intending to work hard, and I recognized in her kind face and the tone of concern in her voice, one of my lesbian sisters.

“Well, the gay-dar range is working anyway,” I thought ruefully to myself, and would have smiled at my own self-deprecation as a member of the gay community had I not felt so deathly ill.

“Do you have family here in Kentucky?” she inquired, sitting down in the chair beside my bed, waiting patiently, as I gathered from some unknown source the strength to answer a few of her questions; she, on the other hand, answered none of mine. She may have been part of the gay community, but she was also part of the medical community and was typically taciturn when I asked if I was going to be all right. I understood though, it wasn’t her place, but as it turned out there wasn’t much anyone could tell me. The hospital staff thought I had hepatitis, but what strain of hepatitis was unknown; they were running tests, and for now all that could be done would have to be done by myself. I remember the doctor asking me why I had left Bremerton when I was clearly feeling so sick, but I had no answer for him because I was wondering that myself.

“Well, Mr. Courtright,” he said, not unkindly, “You’re very lucky to be alive.” I didn’t feel lucky. “Your nurse, Sue, tells me that you have no immediate family in the area. I could arrange for a social worker to come around and see what can be done for you.”

“Thank you,” I said wondering what good could be procured from my family by a social worker and what magic could be performed to quiet the silence that had returned to crush me to my bed until I died, alone and forgotten. I don’t remember ever feeling so alone, and so childishly frightened.

The social worker never did make it up to see me, but Sue placed calls for me telling my family of my predicament. One of my brothers did get a deacon from the Mormon Church to pay me a visit; he had also promised my brother that he would go to the rest area and retrieve my car for me. The deacon did keep his promise and got my car from the rest area, but he offered no further assistance, comfort, or salvation. Over the years I had been knocked about and hit over the head with the holy word of God from various peoples of God, so you see I knew more than just a little about God, and the people who purported to love him and follow his precepts. I didn’t want the farcical offer of the deacon’s salvation, but since it was part of his religious belief that Mormons were the only people with authority to offer salvation, it was a grim visit for a man who was so sick, not only in body, but in mind and soul. Nevertheless, he could not resist the innate hatred of his religion by telling me, if not for the sake of my brother and out of respect for the position he held in the Mormon Church, he would not have bothered with me at all. “Well, Deacon,” I said “You’re in good company. My family doesn’t seem to want the bother of me either.”

It was two days since the deacon’s visit, and neither my mother, or any of my siblings called; then, to add to my mounting fear of death that was ever poised to overwhelm me, I got a roommate. Sitting firmly on the chest of a decrepit old man wheeled in on a bed was the Angel of Death. I couldn’t believe that the hospital staff would put this man in my room, frightened as I was of dying myself, alone and so far from any kind of familial succor. The old man’s breathing was labored, yet somehow, inexplicably air continued to flow through bronchial passageways; passageways that surely must have lost all their elasticity. The old man’s face was gaunt, and his skin was stretched tightly and thinly over his skull; it seemed he had no business on that bed in my room, but in the grave. Then the soon to be bereaved widow came into the room.

She was a lady advanced in years, but not quite as advanced as her husband. She sat primly in the chair beside his bed; she took his paper-thin hand into her own and pleaded with him to wake up. "No-man. No-man, please waik uup." I remembered reading such books as *Where the Lilies Bloom* and *The Doll Maker*, and I wondered that a hill billy woman sat here in my room. Her desire was simplicity itself; all she wanted in the whole wide world was that her husband wake up. Soon I began to forget all about myself; I wanted very much to give this simple soul her heart's desire. I sat slowly up in my bed, mute, for now, contemplating that if I could not give the old woman her heart's desire (how could I), what would be the next best thing? Still she pleaded with her husband, all the while he was uncomprehending of how he was breaking her heart; or perhaps he knew, but it was time for him to think not of her, but himself; then I spoke.

"Mrs," I said a little timidly, then a little louder, "Mrs." She looked up perhaps wondering a little herself about the young man who spoke with the voice of the old south. "Mrs, you don't want to wake him up. He doesn't want to wake up; think Mrs what he would be waking up to; pain and unable to catch his breath. Please, Mrs, let him be."

"Yuh think it be his time, suh?" she asked me with grave respect; I was humbled at what I had undertaken and I said nothing. "S'pose jest as yuh say."

"Mrs, You have children?"

"Yes Suh, I has chilun, but theys aul gron uup naow."

"What about grand children, Mrs? You do have grand children, don't you?" She looked over at her husband as if she were looking in the past, then back at me as though she were looking to the future, and of course she was. "Mrs, has Norman ever gone ahead of you and the kids to set things up, and you were left behind to take care of the kids till you rejoined him?" It was pure intuition that was steering me on such thin ice, intuition and a newly awakened purpose to make a difference, if not to my own mother, then someone else's.

"Yes Suuh," she said with a great amount of awe in her beautiful southern voice. I tried to imagine what she looked like as a young girl; she was a petite, elderly woman, but she looked pretty enough to me. 'Duhing thu waer, thu chilin and me, we moves back to be neah No'mans folkses afore he goes to thu waer. No-man he sets uup house an den he sens his lil bruther tuh gits me an thu chilun."

"Well, Mrs, I guess Norman needs to go set up house somewhere else now, and it's up to you to take care of the children until he sends for you, just like when he went to the war, but now he goes to his peace." The silence was

profound; my heart was beating heavily against my ribs at the sheer audacity to address a pain I could not comprehend. I had not lived an entire lifetime with a man, only to address a future without him. I laid down, closed my eyes, and tried to catch my breath.

“Suh?” I opened my eyes to find the old hill billy woman standing over me. Her aged face was lined with tears, tears that followed the course of many wrinkles, like multitudinous river-lets, but her eyes shone with renewed purpose. “Young maen, yuh has a mama, don yuh?” I closed my eyes, squeezing the tears out from the slits that I had made of them. I looked at her for a full minute pondering what my answer should be; the facts did not seem to convey the truth to me.

“Mrs, I guess that would be you.”

“No, y’ung un, I’s too ole to be yuh mama! but p’raps I’s can be yuh grannie; ifn yuh likes.” Clearly, she was abashed to find herself so boldly conversing with a complete stranger with such familiarity, but there was fresh determination in her countenance.

“Mrs, in the lord’s eyes, your young enough to be my sister, so I guess your young enough to be my mama, and right now I need a mama more then I need a grannie, that is if you don’t mind.” She took my hand into her hand; it wasn’t cold from poor circulation, like many elderly people her age. It was warm and strong, stronger than mine; tears were still pouring down her face. I knew I would break down crying if something, or someone, didn’t save me soon.

“Mrs. Houghton, were going to move Norman to his room now.” Thank God, it was my sister, Sue, come just in time. Mrs leaned down and kissed me on the forehead.

“God Bless yuh son,”

“And you mama,” I whispered back. She turned and walked out the door as two attendants came into the room and wheeled Norman and the Angel of Death to another room. “Goodbye, Norman. Goodbye Mrs,” I whispered.

There were still many unresolved issues where my health was concerned, and my family still had not called, probably never would, but a peace I had never known, a peace beyond my comprehension, descended upon me. Would I live? Would I die? I no longer cared because I had for a brief time, shared a room with the Angel of Death. Would I ever touch the hearts and minds of my family? Would I ever gain their acceptance? In all probability these things would never happen, but I no longer worried that they would; I had earned the acceptance and love of Mrs, and now I knew, I could make a difference to others. After all, I had

made a difference to Norman and to Mrs, but mostly I had made a difference to myself.

Suspension Bridge

Matthew Roberts

Through suspended grains of blue light,
I found a Sign standing beneath
a corridor of cottonwood trees
holding the river to its valley.

And on the Sign was
William Stafford's "Where We Are."

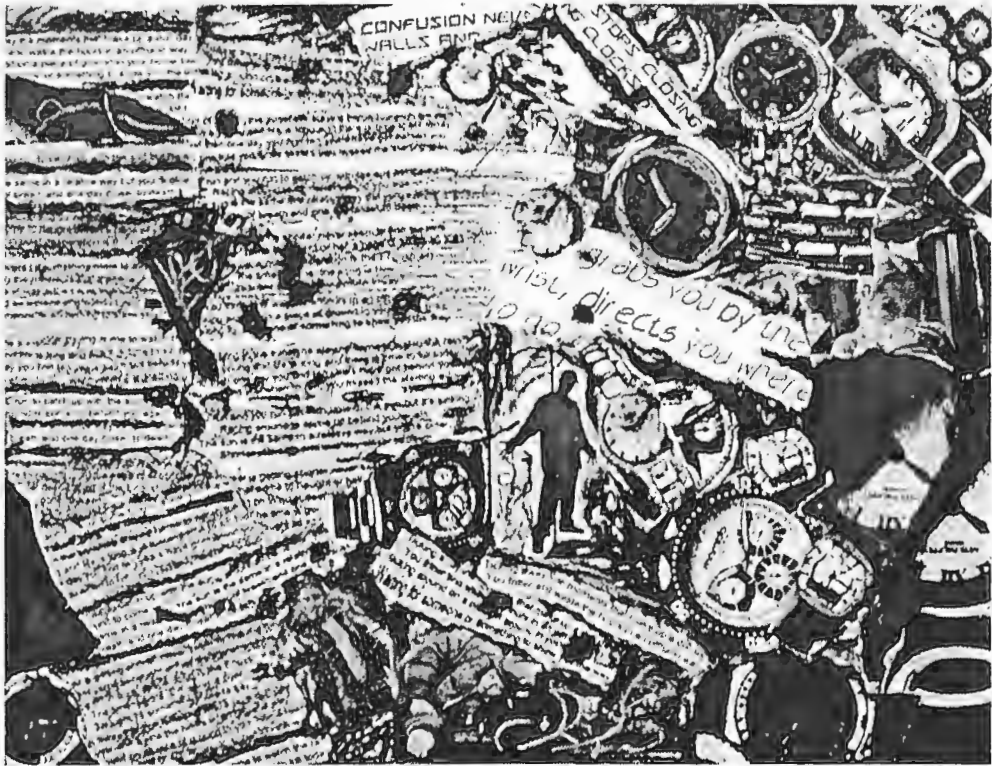
As I began to read his poem,
the lines—and the whispering currents—
merged into one, creating their own voice
from a lifetime of words

that seemed to be saying,
hold onto your roots,
this life is a chance—
then the world will ask
In the blue of it all,

Was this real, this life?
Was this real, this life?

Maybe the closing sky,
fading to a moment
lost into ourselves,
and a thought
that holds us still

will come reaching—
there are those times.



Ben Spencer
...Lost Time
Collage, 14" x 18"

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