

GATHERING OF VOICES
2004 • 2005

Acknowledgements

Editor
Brian Patterson

Art Editor and Cover Design
Karen Blakley

Outcomes Assessment
Judith Hoover

Copy Editing
Rhonda Daniels, Donna Rushing

Printing
Brenda Finkbonner,
Rosemary Sterling, and
The Copy-Duplicating Staff

With special recognition to the instructors
whose students' work appears in this anthology:

*Rebecca Blair, Karen Blakley, Wendy Borgesen, Jeanne Broussard,
Rhonda Daniels, Caryn Friedlander, David Kehe,
Jeffrey Klausman, Ene Lewis, Lori Martindale,
Joanne Munroe, Pam Richardson, Robert Winters*

Cover art: *Jason Nix, Homeland Security, Digital art, 7" x 11"*

Submissions for A Gathering of Voices are collected throughout the year from students across the disciplines at Whatcom Community College. A Gathering of Voices is funded by the Outcomes Assessment Project of the college. For information, contact the Editor at 360-676-2170 or e-mail at bpatters@whatcom.ctc.edu. Thanks to everyone who has had a hand in making this anthology a success!



Mike Vander Giessen
The only view of the cow
Collage, 10" x 15"

Writing

- 1 Introduction
Joel Nelson
- 5 Words Are Noisy and Silent
Suzanne Clothier
- 11 Language Is a Kind of Art
Masaki Ishikawa
- 17 Todd Buchholz's "G-rated Exports": An F-rated
Editorial
Candice Lankhaar
- 23 A Right to Life
Valerie Turner
- 29 The Fearless Poet
Natasha L. Ungersma
- 37 Sounds
Annalee Dunn
- 41 Blessing
Annalee Dunn
- 43 The Uncreation of Man
Ric Courtwright
- 49 The Critical Point of Life
Sergey A. Limanskiy
- 53 Until the Lights Were Dimmed (Reflections on
Mar Adentro)
Clayton Ray Randell
- 59 No One Walks in *Paris, Texas*
Sherri Ellen Reed

Artwork

Cover	Homeland Security <i>Jason Nix</i>
v	The only view of the cow <i>Mike Vander Giessen</i>
xi	Seated Man <i>Ryan Eylander</i>
3	Sun Dahlia <i>Rebecca Crompton</i>
15	Self-portrait <i>Colleen Anderson</i>
21	Seattle <i>Addie Stonack</i>
35	Spiderplant/Moth Orchid <i>Simona Hughes</i>
39	Objects of Illusion <i>Ryan Brownier</i>
47	Homage to Pauline Jones <i>Chelsea Belles</i>
51	Sky High <i>Curtis Yu</i>
57	Poster Series <i>Curtis Yu</i>
63	Images in Time <i>Jeremy Jackson</i>



Ryan Eylander
Seated Man
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

Introduction

Joel Nelson

Each generation is called to leave a legacy for the future. The triumphs and tribulations each has experienced have been the result of direct action and sacrifice. We are a generation of students during a time of war. Our rich country is most certainly in transition. Transition from what to what is relative. The important truth that we need to be aware of is that we have inherited the responsibility of progressing humankind.

I feel that one of our greatest strengths as humans is our ability to choose. Making choices has been a responsibility since the beginning of time. We must recognize that many of the choices in the past have not been made in the best interest of humankind or of Mother Earth. For what other reason would hunger, disease and violence be manifested in our culture of humanity? The point is that negative things have happened in the past and it's time for us to make a choice. The choice that we're concerned with doesn't involve chasing after the past. That would be ludicrous; we can't change the past! Our true power lies in the choice of the present.

Each of us has made the choice to be a member of our college community. Most of us even share common interests. We are a part of this community for the ultimate learning experience. We've got to make this the best education ever. By making the choice to adopt this perspective, we really can!

In making our choices, we have different feelings that influence what we do. Wouldn't you agree that the feelings that empower us surely affect the outcomes of our actions on a daily basis? Likewise the feelings that are discouraging limit what we are able to achieve. So logically we must choose the empowering, positive and inspirational feelings in order to live our wildest dreams, help lots of people, and have a meaningful experience in life.

We have the choice to create our culture so that compassion and peace are highly valued. It is our obligation to our children and their children to make this choice in the best interest of

their livelihood. In order to take this step we have got to pay attention! Having an awareness of what's going on in our community, state, government and world is absolutely critical. We cannot afford to be bystanders as more and more people die of unnatural causes, as children are frightened by prejudice, and as power is asserted with unhealthy motives that manifest into oppression.

This is a call to action: to dedicate our work to motives that are pure and healthy. One time in the lunchroom at work I overheard two women who were discussing school and future career options. One woman said that she was going to change her vocational degree plan because one job pays \$1.50 to \$2.00 more per hour. I sighed, thinking to myself, "How sad that a couple of bucks an hour could decide her destiny." What are we here for? To train for a job or to develop our passion?

In the following pages, you will experience the expressions of many brilliant members of our college community as we strive to shape the future. Each contribution is valuable and every issue counts. Notice while you're reading what inspires, influences and brings meaning to your life. How can we build on what has been laid before us so we will excel at everything we do?

The essence of our ability to express ourselves freely is something that we must not only cherish; it is something we must also choose to protect. Our interactions are like a growing snowball speeding down Alabama Hill. We each build on one another's thoughts and ideas to create the magnificent world we choose to live in. Our ultimate choice is the choice to make a difference. What will you choose?



Rebecca Crompton
Sun Dahlia
Digital illustration,
7.5" x 10"

Words Are Noisy and Silent

Suzanne Clothier

Words are noisy things and silence is something you have to listen to and when you do, it takes you by hand; it catches hold of you. It tells you how to know things

—Linda Hogan

In her novel, *Power*, Linda Hogan creates a world in which mystery is power. Hogan does this through introducing a story in which Omishto, a Taiga, "One who watches," recognizes two worlds exist: above and below, land and water, now and then. Through her creations of these worlds, I recognize the true meaning of life that remains a mystery as it brings the power into me and into other creatures paradoxically.

Linda Hogan's *Power* has the effect on the reader of creating an understanding of the connections in nature. Hogan has her characters observe the world of nature closely and silently. Her descriptions of the natural world are an emotional appeal constructed through her use of imagery. For example, the author says:

We are determined; we are that in nature. They can read us. Through that hole there is also unbroken ray of sun, but even as it shines, the rain begins to fall again, lighting on the already glutted, sodden land. A person would think that with all this water, there would be no thought or hope of solid earth, but the land absorbs it. It is thirsty land. It's also honest land. It does not lie or hide anything. (Hogan 55)

Hogan uses the story, anthropomorphizing the land, and landscaping the human body. She puts similes, metaphors, and images in juxtaposition to flow in both directions to describe her story. Hogan also weaves images of animals' boundaries and people's boundaries. Here is one example as evidence of her evocative writing:

I see this place from its beginning when it was an ocean of a world. Even sky was a kind of

water. Land not just yet created. And a breeze of air, an alive wind, swept through, searching for something to breathe its life into and all it could do was move the water in waves and tides, and water did not stand up, although it spoke.
(Hogan)

Hogan wants her readers to know and to learn that nature does communicate with the people. Nature can communicate with me or with anyone if only we listen to it attentively, see beyond what we actually see, pay attention, and stay aware of one another . . . of those who are next to us. My reaction to this aspect of her writing is really extraordinary. I feel related to Linda Hogan in her expressions of how nature communicates with us through our instincts, and I believe that we should all pay more attention to nature.

It seems that Linda Hogan is trying to tell us, her readers, that we can help nature to survive as it helps us to survive. As an example of this, the character Ama in *Power* remains to kill the panther, knowing that the panther is ending its journey of life. I believe that it is significant that Linda Hogan's unique character name, Ama, is spelled the same way whether we read it forward or backwards. Hogan seems to be saying that Ama might have a power that we neither understand nor even care to know. The spelling of Ama's name hints at a parallel to attributes of God, since He is Alpha and Omega, which implies the beginning and the end. In Hogan's example of beginning and the end, there is contained the validity of mystery in these statements:

Once it set in a death of life, a great silence spreads over the place. It is bleeding silence. Like everything in this place, the trees, the birds, the ground, they all known death has been opened here. I am afraid to breathe. So is the rest of the world. It is like I have to plead for the life that would not come to me too soon. "Please." I say to something, as if I believe God and want His help. "Please." Maybe I say this to the wind, the wind that is our life that could be our death. The death could be feeling like even flat on my stomach on the ground as I may be sleeping I could be blown off earth clear up to the black holes and burning stars in the sky. The wind is living force. It enters us all at birth and

stays with us all through life it connects us to every other creature. (Hogan, 34-35)

Hogan is a Chickasaw, a member of one type of Native American tribe; through their own Native American culture, Omishto and Ama are led to communicate successfully through their natural, intuitive instincts . . . with people and with animals. Hogan's sense of *being* incorporates people in animals' perspectives: panthers, deer, and birds. The anthropomorphic comparison of land and Taiga people is like a metaphor of innuendo and direct statement, and she uses this movement in her writing of *Power*.

Her rendering of fictional characters evokes both ancient myth and Christian allegory. When Hogan says: "I heard one of those gold-colored panthers once," I believe it could just as easily represent the Christians who serve the Lord; in my belief, this quote recalls the experiences of Biblical people, an apocalyptic cry:

The gold-colored panthers cry was so loud I thought it could bring down the world. But now the world's come down without a cry. The panther's world too, if you could call it different than ours. (Hogan, 15)

Hogan, a Chickasaw, creates her world and the world of her characters from a context of beliefs and experiences shared by a majority of Native Americans. Any incarnation of the force that created, and continues to create the world crosses boundaries of time, place, belief and culture to convey the greatest truths, which must, necessarily, be spiritual.

Omishto, one of the characters in Hogan's novel, has an inner moral struggle to fit in with a Native American tribe, the Taiga. Omishto is only sixteen years old and she has struggled to go through contradictions and into a personal and a spiritual power. Her efforts to live independently in both her mother's assimilated, Westernized world and in her aunt Ama's traditional community reach a crisis point when Omishto sees Aunt Ama kill a panther. The Taiga esteem panthers as sacred ancestors.

Unfortunately, as the justice system and the tribal courts try Ama, Omishto must testify in the courts, where she struggles dreadfully to answer questions. Though Ama's motives are never made entirely clear, there are intimations that she undertook the taboo act in the hope of sparking this generation and the next with the spirit, not only of the Taiga culture but of all Creation itself. When Ama is found guilty, she has to face an even more harrowing trial:

that of the tribal elders, who accuse her of trying to gain spiritual power by killing a sacred animal. Omishto, who must testify before the elders, finally begins to understand why her aunt acted as she did but she's sworn by Ama not to say why. Because of that, Ama is banished from the tribe.

Maintaining the difficult balance between her understanding and her sense of loss, Omishto moves into Ama's house, forsaking her own family in order to decide what path her own life should follow. While the narrative often seems an uneasy blend of the visionary and the message-driven, the result is nonetheless an evocative coming-of-age saga, and the portrait Hogan paints of nature's elemental power is distinctive and haunting. For a reader like me, it requires me to re-read the book several times because it takes me some time to think through the process of how the character and the plot connect with the descriptions of nature. After such rereading, I felt those connections and I saw the relationships of the characters to my own life. I felt a parallel development with the characters and their lives.

The young woman, Omishto, had the strength of survival to grow from her experience of the two roles of the women in *Power*, Omishto's mother and Omishto's aunt. The reader gets a rare look into Omishto's process of absorbing seemingly disparate perspectives and of her eventual discovery of the mystery of human existence. *Power* is a lament for the animals and plants that we have so heedlessly extinguished, but it is also a story hopeful for the restoration of a world in balance.

I have appreciated Hogan's style of writing. The definition of *bildungsroman* is a novel whose subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a youthful main character, and *Power* is a *bildungsroman*, lyrical and excellent. In her writing, Hogan uses parables and paradoxes to structure the narrative from Omishto's point of view. While the use of the present tense restrains at times and confuses the narrative, I acknowledge that defining and illustrating interpersonal intelligence must be challenging, and I admire Hogan's using examples that explain the importance of observing such intelligence in *nature* more clearly. While *Power* shows many facts about and aspects of Native American cultural understandings, and while Hogan uses her characters and their struggles to bring this culture to light, I feel that Omishto's realization and the integration of complex emotions, and the actions that such emotions inspire, is less evolved. Hogan's

work seems to lack the distance and the sense of perspective needed to fully convince her reader's of her wisdom and her sophistication in crossing these boundaries.

As I assess the overall usefulness and validity of Linda Hogan's work, it is her connections with nature that remain most mysteriously powerful. In her stories of Taiga community, of the animals and their natural surroundings, the author uses vivid, descriptive language as she captures and maintains the reader's interest in the natural world and its place in Native American cultures. Nature excites me because of its mystery. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible, and Hogan's style of writing draws me to make observations of nature, of the boundaries between nature and people, and of the parallel experiences that connect me with Omishto's experiences. In our lives, we are currently experiencing the strong sense of marginality toward our environment that the Taiga might have survived through Ama's actions.

My life cannot be repeated as I am writing this paper. My story cannot be rewritten as Linda Hogan could write hers with the story of Omishto, "One who watches." My universe of a tiny soul cannot explain this in any words. I have no words to express this now, at this moment, but what I want to say can be expressed with time and an intelligent mind.

Power definitely affects a reader emotionally. . .but: "Words are noisy things, and silence is something you have to listen to and when you do, it takes you by hand; it catches hold of you. It tells you how to know things (Hogan 19)."

Linda Hogan encourages her readers to think, and in a way, to "break open" beyond the world of words. When they do, her readers will find an entrance to another world and they will enter it freely and secretly. They will enter it alone. Mystery is power.

Language Is a Kind of Art

Masaki Ishikawa

My Japanese friend, Daichi, always says, “*Naluhodo*” whenever I ask him if he agrees with my opinion or not. In fact, the word, “*naluhodo*” is a Japanese word that has a lot of meanings, for example, “I agree with you” or “I gotcha!” The other day, I was spending time with Daichi playing music as usual and suggested to him, “Let’s perform our songs at a music hall in Bellingham next weekend! What do you think?” Immediately after that, he said, “*Naluhodo*,” so I thought he had agreed with me and was willing to perform. However, I was doubtful about his answer because he is always answering me with “*Naluhodo*.” I asked him again if he really agreed, and then he took just a minute to think about it and soon told me, “Sorry, I don’t agree with you. We cannot show our performance yet and need more practice.”

Wow! I was very surprised at his last answer, which was basically “No.” He exactly told me, “*Naluhodo*” before saying “No...” I really had no idea why he needed to say “*Naluhodo*” at that time, and that is why I am still wondering what the word really means. To answer that question, let’s consider its real meanings, origin, and some aspects of it.

According to one Japanese dictionary, it does not always mean “I agree,” but it can also be “I don’t agree.” It is such a common word in Japan, though it has a lot of meanings as I described above. The word, “*naluhodo*” basically means “to be sure” and in general is now largely used to mean “I agree,” “I see” or “exactly” in Japanese. On the other hand, as was obvious in Daichi’s case, it can also be used to mean “I don’t agree.” This is because there are some implications of the word. Imagine an American guy is saying something like “I see, but I don’t agree.” It is a usual conversational phrase and often heard in our daily life. Then, in the case of “*naluhodo*,” what is the convenient thing is that the word can also imply the reverse, “I don’t agree.” In other words, it can indirectly mean “I don’t agree” in some contexts.

As a matter of fact, in Japanese culture, saying “I don’t agree” directly to a conversation partner is regarded as rude behavior. Particularly, if a junior partner uses the word against a

senior in a Japanese company, he will be fired from his job soon because of his rude attitude. This basic norm comes from the past Japanese culture that had a hierarchical society. As you may know, a lot has occurred in the past between some aggressive groups in Japan, and it was important for them to stick together within each group. Saying "I don't agree" was therefore seen as a taboo phrase because the negative word was likely to break the good harmony with each other. Instead, "*naluhodo*" is widely becoming a popular phrase so that a softer nuance can be conveyed and is regarded now as a polite word in conversation.

"*Naluhodo*" can also be very easily used in conversation because of its simple pronunciation, like "Hello!" However, it is also a fact that we may have some problems with using it. For example, some Japanese people who often make use of chat rooms on the Internet are apt to be confused when getting the response, "*Naluhodo*," from their friends. One of them insists that after getting "*Naluhodo*" from his partner as a rejection of his opinion, he comes to have no idea what he ought to answer next because it seems to him that the conversation is almost finished at that point in time with "*Naluhodo*." Imagine a situation when you want to talk your partner out of smoking and tell him in chatting, "I think you should quit smoking," and then, he shortly answers, "*Naluhodo!*" You may be unable to answer back him soon because the purpose of your talk is almost finished at that time. In short, at the moment when the conversation partner accepts or rejects your persuasive idea with "*naluhodo*," your point of the conversation is almost done, and this means "*naluhodo*" can also be a conclusive word in online chatting.

I used "Wow" in the first sentence of paragraph two, but surprisingly, I can replace it with "*Naluhodo*," which means, that is to say, it can also be an understanding response. As I said, it is very easy to use and pronounce it in conversation, and when someone tells us some sort of amazing story, we can quickly have a surprised reaction by using the word, "*naluhodo*," very much like "Wow!" On top of that, a phrase which is likely to be similar to "*naluhodo*" can be "I see" in English. "I see" has almost the same meaning as "*naluhodo*" and sometimes both expressions can be an understanding response under circumstances when we use it with a funny intonation and catch our breath, like "I see~!"

In sum, "*Naluhodo*" is unique and has a lot of meanings, but sometimes it can be a dangerous word, as in my situation

described above with Daichi. We have to pay attention when we hear the word and when we also use it in order to prevent social problems. My mother often told me, "Language is a kind of art! If you paint a word, it can have changing colors, which are its meaning, so be sure to take care about that." Now, I really want to say to her at heart, "*Naluhodo*," which means "I agree" in this case!



Colleen Anderson
Self-portrait
Acrylic/collage,
17" x 14"

Todd Buchholz's "G-rated Exports": An F-rated Editorial

Candice Lankhaar

Todd G. Buchholz, in his *New York Times* editorial, "G-rated Exports," warns Hollywood that its current trend of sex-and-violence is not going to prove prosperous in the future. Buchholz, an economic advisor under the Bush administration and the author of "Bringing the Jobs Home," claims that the foreign market of "developing countries" (such as India, China and Mexico) is for more "wholesome" themes, and if America is to succeed with its film exports, it had better tame its "bad manners."

Buchholz acknowledges that "sex and violence are universal themes" and deduces that because they are easily understood, they appeal to a worldwide audience. "Filmgoers don't need a translator to understand a bedroom scene or a punch to the jaw," he says. The "grunts" of Sylvester Stallone (though unintelligible in any language, Buchholz jests), are equally as captivating to teenage boys worldwide as those of *Showgirls* (though perhaps much more accessible). But currently, according to Buchholz, the jobs of 35,000 Americans in the film industry are "threatened." It's not just because films are being shot elsewhere for less money, although that is a contributing factor. Buchholz attributes the problem primarily to the "vulgarity" of American film exports, and gives three reasons why softer themes are more apt for success. One is that English is "fast becoming the *lingua franca* of the developing world," and as foreigners are better able to understand the language and rely less on "awkward subtitles," they are likely to be more attracted to American scripts. The second justification Buchholz provides is the societal modesty of these developing countries—the "traditional mores" that had the Culture Ministry of China, for instance, censoring Britney Spears' stage outfits in her first tour there. Buchholz uses India as a case-in-point here; this country routinely recreates American films, dampening sex and adding foolish singing and dancing scenes, with much success. India's film industry "has more than doubled its exports in the last few years," Buchholz reports. Finally, he makes a feeble attempt to

connect the traditional Saturday night date—dinner and a movie—to the Chinese moviegoers' desire for substance.

Buchholz's thesis is strong, but his first paragraph is a poor lead into it. He mentions the growing Indian film industry in contrast to the failing American business, which had me anticipating a compare-and-contrast of the two trades, or perhaps some kind of bitter condemnation of India's success at American expense. But he goes on with nary a mention of India again until the end of his piece, where he portrays their films as lame: full of "schmaltz" and idiotic dance numbers. I was left wondering: if India is so intent on remaking American movies *badly*, why is their business doing so well? Buchholz does not account for India's booming success, or say whether its success lies in its original films or its foreign remakes. Though I did find Buchholz's description of the "chutney[ing]" of American films amusing, I was not plagued by fear that someday America's iconic Robin Williams as Mrs. Doubtfire would be overshadowed and undersold by a cheesy, singing, dancing Mrs. Doubtfire.

One premise that Buchholz's argument is based on is that the most successful American films in the past have been the graphic ones, and to illustrate this point he uses the statistic that three of the top ten movies in the U.S. last year were R-rated. I argue, however, that three out of ten ain't bad. If you consider that there are only four possible ratings for a top-grossing film (we won't assume any of these are *excessively* graphic)—G, PG, PG-13, and R—then you would expect that there would be about 2.5 films of each given rating in a list of ten. Three R-rated movies, then, is perfectly average for a well-balanced American population. Had Buchholz presented evidence that the top-rated films in foreign countries were all G-rated, though, I may have been slightly won to his side of the argument and concluded that America was, in fact, on a downslide to the pits of hell.

The other premise Buchholz holds is that the U.S. film industry is suffering; "many of the jobs are threatened." Well, I challenge, show me the proof. Has anyone *actually* lost a job? Are the revenues *actually* declining? Buchholz fails to back up his claim. The three reasons he presents as incentive for Hollywood to "[tone] down the vulgarity meter" also do little to strengthen his claim. Even taken individually, outside the thesis of his argument, only two of his three points are logical, and only one is clear in its logic. His first point about American films growing more popular as English

becomes more widespread is interesting, but the reasoning that he uses to conclude that these films should be less sexual and violent is lacking. Even if foreigners begin demanding American movies without subtitles, who is to say they won't be demanding the vulgar ones? I assume Buchholz means to suggest that new English-speakers will become more capable of understanding and thus more demanding of complex, emotional films which rely less upon action and more upon quality scripting, but he doesn't explicate this.

Buchholz's second rationalization for declining entertainment exports is his best. A traditional culture that discourages violence and sexuality would certainly seem to be a strong deterrent to films of these themes, and Buchholz uses powerful examples to demonstrate his point: "Confucian standards of modesty," and "conservative Hindi sensibilities." The censorship of Britney Spears in China and the regulations that Buchholz states the government of China has placed on "racy or violent content" are good indications of the levels of propriety that would hinder a vulgar American film exchange.

Buchholz uses China again to make his third point, and here exhibits a complete breakdown in all logic. He attempts to use the trend of Western fast-food consumption in China to suggest their desire for substantial films, and he does so by stating that "fast food sales are a leading indicator of movie ticket receipts [...]. Because Ronald McDonald leads the way for Julia Roberts and Brad Pitt [...] Chinese moviegoers want plot and character." Now tell me, when was the last time a nice warm meal at McD's gave you the urge to watch a good American movie? And not just any movie—a movie with substance; a Julia and Brad movie. (While it may not be totally lacking sexuality, at least no one grunts.) It's likely that if a man is going to take his date to McDonald's on a Saturday night, he's probably not likely to follow it with a nonsexual, nonviolent, philosophical American drama. So I beg Mr. Buchholz to clarify this rationale for me. Perhaps he is simply trying to say that Easterners are becoming westernized, and their entertainment choices are probable to follow their dining choices. And, following from his last argument, since China now has strict regulations on the American films they'll permit, the movie that follows the dining may well be a good wholesome Julia-and-Brad. But Buchholz makes such a leap here that I am inclined to laugh at his ineffectiveness.

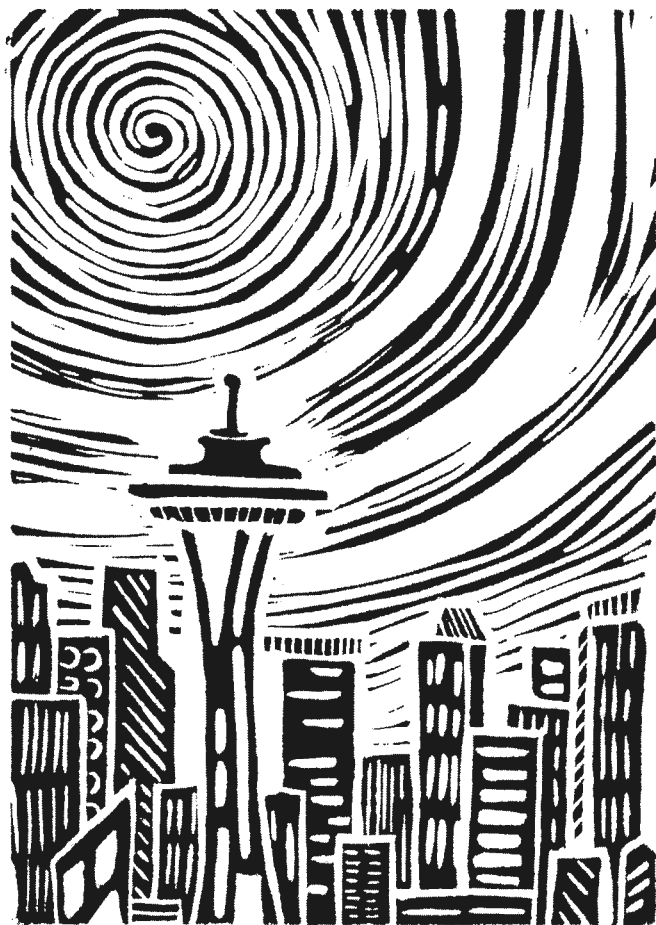
Overall, I agree: America is a vulgar, disgusting country, and it's evident in our film industry. The "Hollywood mentality [...]"

too often goes for titillation instead of inspiration," Buchholz states, and I concur wholeheartedly. Last night perusing the video store, it wasn't necessarily the sex and violence on the shelves that overwhelmed me, it was the sheer mediocrity. I was drawn to the foreign film section for something a little challenging. Perhaps the American film export industry is suffering because Hollywood lacks integrity, and our films are poorly acted, badly written, and unoriginal. Perhaps India *can* do better. Or it could be that these countries are, indeed, just "developing," and in a few decades their films will be right on par with America's vulgarity.

I tend to think Buchholz has failed to do his job. While he presents a very interesting view of American entertainment abroad, his argument is weak and, more importantly, he has neglected to show any proof whatsoever that the U.S. film industry is currently in decline, or will be in the future, unless, by chance, the world converts to Confucianism.

Works Cited

Buchholz, Todd G. "G-rated Exports." Editorial. *The New York Times* 19 October 2004: A29.



Addie Stonack
Seattle
Linocut, 10" x 8"

A Right to Life

Valerie Turner

A right to life. When born into this country, it goes without saying that all will be afforded this luxury. To live as seen fit for our individual needs, likes or dislikes, as long as it does not break a law, or put anyone else in harm's way. We learn that although there are many differences between us as individuals, we are all looking at pretty much the same picture. The American Dream: to be able to go through our journey in life being who we want to be, living the way we want to live. Joseph Epstein illustrates this notion:

All men and women are born, live suffer and die; what distinguishes us from one another is our dreams, whether they be dreams about worldly or unworldly things, and what we do to make them come about...We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents. We do not choose our historical epoch, the country of our birth, or the immediate circumstances of our upbringing. We do not, most of us, choose to die; nor do we choose the time and conditions of our death. But within this realm of choicelessness, we do choose how we live. (qtd. in Aterovis 1)

With all these choices that each American citizen has a right to, how is it that a certain group of people are not able to attain these same dreams and choices?

Gay Americans— red blooded human beings, breathing air daily to survive. The life that they want to have and hold dear to them is not allowed. Many people think that being gay is a choice, that it is not something that they are born with. Regardless of if it is a choice or not, shouldn't they be granted the right of making that decision without any one else's input?

Same-sex couples are increasingly finding themselves in situations where it is okay to be who they want to be, whether it be in a gay community or just a great circle of friends who accept them for who they are. Even institutions, such as Whatcom Community College in Bellingham, WA and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore,

MD, are recognizing homosexuals and their partners, and offering insurance benefits. It is becoming mainstream to see television shows with gay actors or people portraying gay individuals, as well as gay people holding down powerful job positions. People are not afraid to pull out their "Gay Pride" bumper stickers or t-shirts. Those props are everywhere and we hardly bat an eye at them anymore. With all this support and awareness, why is it so hard to think of these *people* as loving individuals who would like to have a family together and know how to refer to one another when it is past the "exclusively dating" stage?

Gay Americans must be allowed to marry and raise families because there has been no substantial evidence to conclude that it could be detrimental to our society; furthermore the legal bond lets each state recognize these family units and provide the same kinds of benefits as heterosexual unions, thus creating stronger homes for the children that they are so concerned with. In 1997, during an evaluation of same-sex parenting, Judge Kevin Chang of a Hawaiian Circuit Court ruled: "The most important factor for child development is the nurturing relationship between a parent and a child" (Robinson 2). In 2003, another evaluation, this time by the *Massachusetts Supreme Court*, Justice C.J. Marshall, states: "It cannot be rational under our laws...to penalize children by depriving them of State benefits because the State disapproves of their parents' sexual orientation" (Robinson 4). Sadly, our government and certain religious sects are still trying desperately to eradicate even the notion of this type of union. They are trying to hold the traditional sense of marriage together by its fraying threads. Divorce of heterosexual couples is at an all time high; not allowing homosexual couples to unite will not affect this. Allowing gay marriages to take place does not mean that all heterosexuals are going to throw in the towel and run off with the nearest gay person. Straight marriage is an issue that needs to be worked on by straight couples who need to find the flagging strength of their own relationships; gay marriage will not upset this in any way if heterosexual couples want to make what they have succeed.

Then there is always the argument that gay unions are not natural because same-sex couples cannot produce their own children. Jonathan Rauch, author of *For Better or Worse*, explores the idea of what would happen if we chose this to be the reasoning behind not allowing these marriages:

If the possibility of children is what gives

meaning to marriage, then a postmenopausal woman who applies for a marriage license should be turned away at the courthouse door. What's more, she should be hooted at and condemned for stretching the meaning of marriage beyond its natural basis and so reducing the institution to frivolity. (177)

Basically, we are grasping at straws, looking for reasons that cannot be logically justified. There are many reasons that couples cannot have children, but it is not expected that they will not love each other any less or will divorce immediately and only unite with another person whom with they will conceive. When we take our relationship to the next level, it is usually based around a foundation that we have formed with one another, not just the fact that you can procreate. Some people often are forced to take different routes to achieve their dreams of having a family. Some are lucky enough to conceive due to medical intervention, but then there are many who find themselves adopting in order to fulfill their hopes of kids. We do not chastise them for having children in a nontraditional manner. No matter how kids arrive in their homes and family lives, the most important thing is that they are taken care of and loved by the adults that care for them. We are not all lucky enough to have had the ideal childhood with Mom and Dad. Some kids grow up with Grandma and Grandpa, Aunt and Uncle, just Mom or only Dad. Everyone has a story of how they were raised and new stories continually unfold for kids today.

Some find themselves wondering what kind of effect it will have on the children who grow up with same-sex parents. According to the majority of children interviewed on the C.O.L.A.G.E. (Children of Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) website, there have been no adverse effects growing up this way. One person being interviewed says:

Having homosexual parents is really like having heterosexual parents, with the possible exception that many homosexual parents seem to be more likely to be open-minded about a wider variety of things. It's an otherwise standard home—laughter, tears, arguments, support, board games and family dinners and fighting over what TV show we get to watch... As far as other people's reactions, and

how they affect our development...I'm tempted to say it's no different from the straight kids who live in trailer parks, or never quite manage to wear what's in style... and all the kids at school are making fun of them because of it. Most people get negative reactions about one thing or many while they're growing up, gay parents or not.

It has been seen time and time again that children are extremely resilient. If that is the way that they are brought up and it is a nurturing environment, they will accept it for what it is worth. They are taught the same things that children from a straight family are taught—right from wrong, please and thank you, etcetera. Just because a parent's sexual preference may be for the same sex, it does not make them any less reasonable or responsible in raising their children. It is possible that they may have to explain someday why their family is different from their peers, but parents often find themselves in this position whether they are gay or not.

People opposing same-sex marriage have such a hard time understanding these unions because of the sexual aspect of it. They cannot see past the actual act of sex and have a tendency to define these people because of what goes on behind the bedroom door. If we question these types of unions and the effects that they have on our children, then we will need to begin questioning all living arrangements. There will always be different circumstances and arrangements that are in homes across the country and many of them are beneficial to children if it allows them to grow and be unconditionally loved.

The television show *Two and a Half Men* has a young boy living with his father and uncle. His uncle is a bachelor who constantly has a different woman around the home. Why isn't this type of situation scrutinized? An impressionable twelve-year-old boy is seeing first hand the promiscuity of his uncle as well as a blatant disrespect for women. In the eighties, there was a sitcom called, *My Two Dads*. The mother of a little girl does not know which one of two friends she was impregnated by and what's more, she does not want to keep the baby she then has. She drops the baby off on the doorstep of their apartment and they are left to raise her, not knowing which one of them is the true father. Both shows are accepted by the public, because it does not depict any of the men in a romantic relationship with the other, but nonetheless, the children

are being raised by people of the same sex. It is a very thin line that some are not willing to cross, the same situations that many people are faced with daily with one subtle difference, but all the difference in the world to some people.

Ultimately, it comes down to a few simple questions that we are faced with as a divided nation. Should we pretend to not see the ever growing face of diversity among us, continue to not allow what we are not comfortable with, continue to disbelieve that there is great potential in our youth no matter how they are brought up, or should we open our eyes and accept what we cannot change? Whether it is something that is genetic or a choice that people make, gay women and men all around the globe are here and want to be treated equally, even if someone has a hard time accepting them. Throughout the many struggles of this nation, there has always been a time for compromise. Not agreeing with another person's way of life is okay, as long as we do not expect them to change because of our own beliefs. Everyone has a right to life, to do with it as they see fit. If this nation truly is free, we will find it in ourselves to live and let live, no matter who we are.

The Fearless Poet

Natasha L. Ungersma

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.
—Emily Dickinson

Thus opens one of the many famous poems by Emily Dickinson. In this first verse, Dickinson's two most common subjects are mentioned: death and immortality. Because these two permeate her work, many people, when first introduced to Dickinson's poetry, think of her as a depressing writer. What could be so fascinating about death? Why such an interest in immortality? For although the prospect of dying does not appeal to many, neither have I met anyone who truly desires to live forever. Perhaps a better question for them to ask would be: what experiences in Dickinson's own life would give her a great understanding of death and an interest in immortality? Her understanding of, and interest in, these subjects was largely intertwined with her understanding of and interest in life.

As a girl, Dickinson developed a love of botany. Much of what she knew about life she learned through this love. A favorite pastime of hers, as stated in Richard B. Sewall's *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, was pressing numerous flowers and plants and arranging them in books, labeling them with their Latin names. These books were called "herbariums" (Bloom 14). Her captivation with nature continued throughout her life and many of her poems are about it, or refer to it, in some way. Within the annually repeated seasons, a sense of hope springs forward. In poem 4, written at the age of about 24, Dickinson expresses this hope (Franklin 20). She begins, "I have a Bird in spring/Which for myself doth sing-/The spring decoys./And as the summer nears-/And as the Rose appears,/Robin is gone." The poem continues with Dickinson first doubting at the departure of her bird, but concluding that there is no reason for doubt or fear, saying, "Then I will not repine,/Knowing that Bird of mine/Though flown/Shall in a distant tree/Bright melody for me/Return." Though for the present she seems alone, the seasons continue faithfully in their constant march and the life-giving spring

will return once again, bringing with it her uplifting and melodious friend, the Robin.

Just as the spring brings life, so does love. In poem 841, "Struck, was I, nor yet by Lightning", Dickinson claims that, "Most-I love the Cause that slew Me-/Often as I die/It's beloved Recognition/Holds a Sun on Me-/Best-at Setting-as is Nature's-/Neither witnessed Rise/Till the infinite Aurora/In the Other's Eyes" (369). While falling in love slew the person she knew herself as previously, she was never truly living till she loved. Standing in the gaze of her lover's eyes, Dickinson was made like the sun, rising at last. Dickinson never married, but she loved a few men passionately. One of these was Otis Phillips Lord, to whom she wrote many bold love letters. He proposed in late 1882, only months after the death of his first wife. Dickinson declined, for reasons not known, but they continued to write each other weekly for some time.

Another example of the completion that love brings is found in poem 757, which begins, "I think To Live-may be a Bliss/To those who dare to try-" (338). Throughout the poem, Dickinson wonders what could have been, believing that nothing done on her own was done as best as could be done; she ends, "How bountiful the Dream-/What Plenty-it would be/Had all my Life but been Mistake/Just rectified-in Thee". The life lived out alone could not be lived right: it was but a mistake. She says that only by loving and being loved would life be lived successfully.

Closely connected with love is immortality. Dickinson wrote numerous poems on this subject, pondering the complexity of it and admiring its power.

Unable are the loved to die
For Love is Immortality,
Nay, it is Deity-
Unable they that love-to die
For Love reforms Vitality
Into Divinity. (403)

The one loved is revered, a god in the eyes of the one who loves. While the person loved does not actually live forever, one who is truly loved is kept alive and made immortal by memory.

The pen also is immortal. To paraphrase poem 764, "My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun"(341), Dickinson was like a gun, which, though it may be loaded, is unable to fire itself when it wills.

She remained unable to conquer until inspiration came, along with a pen, and gave her the power to kill or let live whomever and whatever she wished. In the act of writing, she made herself immortal, for the written word can be recorded and read by generation upon generation of people who are born later. The written word is much more powerful than the spoken word in that it cannot change. A message passed along by speech is most often not repeated word for word, and so the meaning changes as the message is passed from person to person. The written word, however, can be copied, saving the words carefully chosen by the author and saving what the writer intended to be understood.

Dickinson's interest in immortality was perhaps spurred on by the death that confronted her. The sense of loss created by the death of a loved one was something Dickinson experienced early in life. When she was but 14, her dear friend Sophia Holland died after a lengthy battle with illness. Dickinson was intensely distressed at this and her mother feared so greatly for her that she sent her to stay with an aunt for a time, hoping that the change in surroundings would be able to brighten her spirit. Grief to this extent did not remain with Dickinson forever, but the loss of Sophia had a profound impact on her. As is obvious, death and immortality became the center of many of her poems. As realized in poem 749 (352), death is eternal:

All but Death, Can be adjusted
Dynasties repaired—
Systems-settled in their Sockets—
Citadels-dissolved—
Wastes of Lives—resown with Colors
By Succeeding Springs—
Death-unto itself-Exception—
Is exempt from Change—

Dickinson knows that everything on this earth can be altered and that when buildings are torn down, they can be rebuilt. Death, however, we cannot change. Try as we might, what death takes from us, we cannot restore.

A less harsh picture of death is found in poem 744 (332).

She Dwelleth in the Ground-
Where Daffodils-abide-

Her Maker-Her Metropolis-
The Universe-Her Maid-
to fetch Her Grace-and Hue-
And Fairness-and Renown-
The Firmament's-to pluck Her-
And fetch Her Thee-be mine-

Here, the one who dies is laid to rest with flowers. All that surrounds her is made a servant to her, even securing a name for her. Death, for this girl, is not the end, but another beginning, for in it she receives things she did not have before: grace, hue, fairness and renown. Also, the attention and servitude of the universe. If such could be said of all who die, death would not be the frightening thought that it is for many.

Another death that impacted Dickinson's life and work was the death of her lifelong friendship with Susan Gilbert, whom Dickinson's brother, Austin, married. The exact reasons for the end of their friendship are not fully understood. It began around the same time as the death of Dickinson's mother and the affair between Austin and a woman by the name of Mabel Loomis Todd. It may have been that Dickinson did not want to abandon her brother, that she wished to remain loyal to him, for she and Austin were close.

In October of 1883, Gilbert, the eight-year old son of Susan and Austin, died. It is believed that this death, more than even the deaths of her parents, struck Dickinson as the most painful. Little Gilbert was a favorite visitor of hers, and he visited her often. Even through this mutual loss, though, Dickinson and Susan remained estranged.

For all the loss and death that Dickinson experienced, she did not despair, nor did she abandon love. Tones of hope were still expressed in the poems she wrote during and after that time. Poem 1678 (605) celebrates nature.

Some one prepared this mighty show
To without a Ticket go
The nations and the Days-
Displayed before the simplest Door
That all may examine them-and more.

The whole earth is a show for all the nations and time to see and enjoy. There is no cost to enjoy its beauty when we wish. The 'simplest door', our own eyes, is all that we need to view it.

As for love, she and Lord continued their exchange of love letters until Lord's death in 1884. Poem 1650 (599) was not dedicated or written to Lord, but it very well could have been.

The Pedigree of Honey
Does not concern the Bee-
A Clover, anytime, to him
Is Aristocracy

Love is always a thing to enjoy when it gives what it can. Just as a bee will not turn down the few clovers he finds for the want of higher quality honey, so does true love accept the feeble but whole-hearted offerings that the loved one gives.

To the very end of her life, Dickinson remained bold and fearless. She understood that death is a part of life, and her poetry beautifully displays that. She knew how closely the seasons, life, love, death and immortality were connected. In her poems, these topics are blended with ease by her sharp mind. An excellent example of her comfortableness with the topic of death and her fearlessness of whatever circumstances might come her way is found in poem 727 (325).

Life-is what we make it-
Death-We do not know-
Christ's acquaintance with Him
Justify Him-though

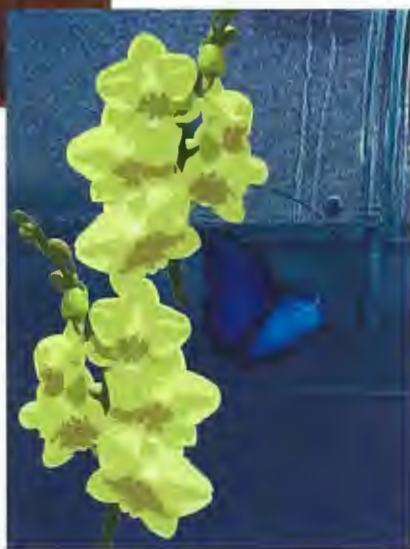
He would trust no stranger-
Other-could betray-
Just His own endorsement-
That-sufficeth Me-

. All the other Distance
He hath traversed first-
No new mile remaineth-
Far as Paradise-

His sure foot preceding-

Tender Pioneer-
Base must be the Coward
Dare not venture-now-

Dickinson feared nothing, because she was convinced that there was nothing that could happen that hadn't happened already and been conquered by another before her. For these reasons, her poetry will be read and respected by many people for many generations to come.



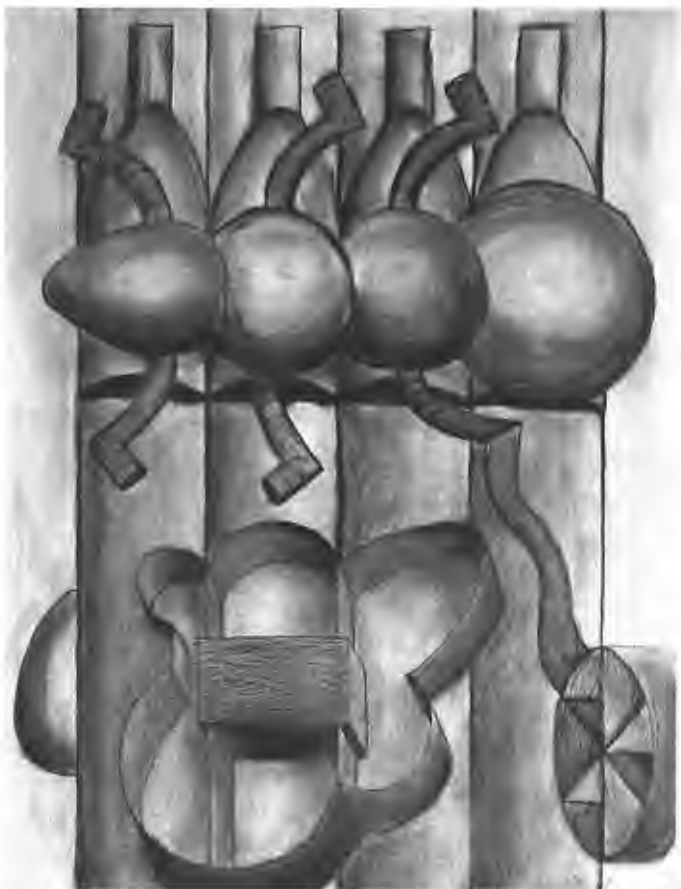
Simona Hughes
Spiderplant /Moth Orchid
Digital art, 9.5" x 7"

Sounds

Annalee Dunn

“I was on the outer rings of Saturn,
I shit you not, way, way out there.”

She was talking about music,
science recordings
of space sounds and star static
that had been mixed up and moved
with the computerized
sounds of electronic techno.
Making her believe,
as she listened to the seismic
sounds of space,
she had been transported
to Saturn,
out there, way, way,
on a ring of a sound wave
of another world.



Ryan Brownier
Objects of Illusion
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

Blessings

Annalee Dunn

Miles waited at the bus stop as the woman behind him explained over and over why the voices in her head were really those of angels come to bless her. He thought of his own voices: those of his father telling him what a mistake he was making, his mother telling him to be careful and good luck and make sure you eat well, keep taking the medicines. He felt the weight of their worry lifting as the bus materialized out of desert heat waves and made its way, coughing diesel, towards him.

"Yes, blessed. They've blessed me today and tomorrow. Bless you too if you let them, if you listen, son." She gathered her bags around her and stepped up next to him. "Where's this bus taking you today?" The bus was loud now and pressing brakes to stop for the two of them.

"I'm headed for the big city to win a fortune"

"Well good luck to ya'. I'll tell those angels to look out. Okay, here we are." She lifted her bags with a grunt and as the bus door opened she grabbed the railing and lifted herself up.

The driver yelled to the back as Miles took his seat. "This bus next stops in Las Vegas. If you're headed anywhere else, now's the time to mention it." There were no takers and suddenly Miles felt his throat go dry. He thought he might be sick when the bus lurched forward, spitting fumes, and the air-conditioning kicked on inside. He closed his eyes and remembered the doctor's face, the same sick feeling rising in his gut. "I'd say two months now, son. There's not much to be done. I say go home. Be with your family and try to take the pills to ease the pain."

And that was that. All he could go by. Two months and he would be gone. There was a sense of relief the day he decided to go to the city. His mother had cried. He knew she wanted every minute. He felt selfish and said he would be dead soon anyways so what's the point? When you're given that news at seventeen, you want to experience some life. She had held him so tight it seemed it would last forever, and then she let him go and told him she understood.

"I'll miss you," Lil had said after kissing him on her porch. He told her he was going to win a fortune and would come back and marry her. He couldn't explain why he had lied. He thought maybe it would be nice to marry Lil someday and, since he never would, he didn't see the hurt in pretending, just for now. She said good luck and good bye and told him to save her a poker chip as a memento.

The old woman at the stop sat a seat ahead of him and he heard her sigh and drift off into sleep. Her even breath reminded him of his father. He wondered if the angels were still blessing her. His father had been angry. He left that morning before the sun rose. Miles heard him in the barn, cursing at the handsaws when breakfast was ready. He managed to come inside and eat in silence. Miles had tried to hug him.

The woman stirred and the seat moved so he had to unfold his legs and stretch into the aisle. He thought of the advice Kurt had shouted at him when he drove away from the bus stop: "You win big, brother! We want a party when you get back! I'll buy the beer." Kurt didn't know either. But he was the best friend Miles ever had. He would keep drinking, keep breaking the same hearts over again, and tell the same stories of their mistakes together to his grandkids. Miles laughed aloud and the woman in the seat across the aisle hugged her daughter tighter.

"You sure you want to be in that city boy?" The woman who heard angels was awake now and offered him a bit of her sandwich. "It's beautiful, but *hard* where you're going. You have to be ready you know." He took the sandwich and smiled. He felt good. Felt so good he almost didn't believe the doctor.

"I guess we'll have to see what I find there. I think I can be just about ready for anywhere this bus takes me."

"Well that's the attitude you got to have. Right there. The angels will bless you too and you'll be just fine." She patted his knee and turned back around in her seat.

He thought of Lil in the sun, telling him she would marry him for sure. He wanted to win big. He wanted to be lost in the lights and the sound and the flash of the strip. He wanted to imagine he was someone else, just for a while.

The bus was gliding down the highway when the sunset sky went from fire red to a soft sea of purple. He felt the rumble of the engine taking him to where he might hear the angels bless him.

The Uncreation of Man

Ric Courtwright

1 Having placed His blessing on the seventh day as a day of rest, 2 and in obedience to His own law, God induced upon Himself a deep slumber. 3 While He slept He dreamt that the Earth and all He had just created was spinning quickly forward through time. 4 Throughout His dream God heard the voice of His creation— 5 the mountains high and the valleys low, the oceans relentlessly pounding their sandy boundaries and rocky shores, the voices of the rivers and lakes and the tributaries in between, the deserts and plains, the waters above and the waters below, and the plants and animals inhabiting water and earth—6 both visible and invisible rising in one continuous song of praise to God for all that He had wrought. 7 The song was surpassingly beautiful, rivaling the songs of the Angels, and God was mesmerized by the song and attended to naught in the dream but the song. 8 The song, like His creation, was beautiful beyond all but Godly imagination; and so at first God did not heed the gradual note of lamentable petition to God for deliverance from the loathsome hand of man. 9 A prayer to make right the injustices perpetrated against creation by the man and the man's off-spring. 10 The spirit of God groaned when the dream revealed the future impact of man's stewardship over all that God had entrusted to man's care. 11 Missing were entire species of plant and animals because man had exceeded his allotted resources and ceased to respect his charge—the Earth. 12 The song ceased to be a song. 13 It evolved into a keening lament, where all of creation labored under the weight of an un-natural pall that choked the heavens and gutted the earth, 14 a wailing siren of grief and loss that so unsettled the spirit of God on this, His day of rest, that He woke suddenly from His dream repenting that day in which He spoke man into existence. 15 When God awoke from His dream it was the eighth Day.

2 As the spirit of God drew near the Earth, the song of His creation, as He remembered it from His dream, rose up in recognition and jubilant adulation of its creator. 2 But God did not heed the song. 3 He meditated, instead, on how best to gather into one place the

blessings from the past six days—and God’s acknowledgements, “It is good.” 4 Now the Lord God knew that foreknowledge alone was not sufficient cause to pass judgment on what had not yet transpired, that first the blessings must be apprehended and separated from His creative living word. 5 And God said, “let the earth’s rotation cease for one cycle and let the heavens and the heavenly bodies retrace the steps of their celestial dance the space of two cycles;” and it was just as he commanded. 6 Then God said “let the Earth resume its axial rotation, but let the Earth and all other celestial bodies remain fixed in the heavens, standing still and awaiting my will”; and it was just as He commanded. 7 Now these words God spoke into His Hand and placed the words into a bottle, which He stoppered and held in a protective fist against His heart. 8 It was in this manner the Lord God prevented the dance of the heavens and the linear movement of time. 9 It was now the sixth day, the day in which God had created man and there all His words, 10 His creative words and His blessings hung like a mist suspended in frigid air. 11 Then the Lord, holding the bottle containing time in the one hand, gathered with the other hand His blessings from the six days of creation and placed them into the bottle with time where all would be released into that void which was before the first day. 12 Then, opening His mouth, God inhaled those words which brought into being man and all manner of beasts and creatures that crawled and walked upon the earth, and the breath of life, that animated both man and beasts, withdrew each from their respective hosts and they settled back to their former state of dust. 13 And still God inhaled as if He were sustaining an interminable note, but a note from which no sound but the sounds of growing silence was heard, 14 as the creatures which inhabited the waters below and the waters above were likewise disembodied—15 as the life giving word returned to the author of all creation.

3 Now it so happened that the relationship between those creatures which crawled and walked upon the Earth, and those which inhabited the waters above and the waters below were by design symbiotic one with the other; 2 and all of them with their environment so that the Earth grew mute with astonishment. 3 Still God inhaled until the greater light which ruled the day and the lesser light which ruled the night, as well the stars by which the seasons, the days, the months, and the years were measured all returned to

their maker. 4 All that now remained was a dull light, that light which He had created in the first day when first it entered the mind and heart of God to bring life to his imaginations. 5 The Lord, God had now inhaled the sixth, fifth, and fourth days of his former labors—and still He inhaled. 6 The silence of creation continued as the vegetation, trees, and flora withdrew petals and leaves into stems, stems to branches, branches into stalks and boles, and stalks and boles into roots, 7 roots into their respective seeds and the seeds their respective galaxies of cells until they too finally returned to the former owner of their creation. 8 And still God inhaled loosening the boundaries that once constrained the seas which separated the earth and the water. 9 Gone now was the third day and all that remained were those words comprising the first and second day of the Lord God's creation. 10 All that remained was the firmament which divided the waters above from the waters below and the light which divided the darkness; 11 then, without exhaling, God ceased to inhale, and beheld the work accomplished thus far in the uncreation of man.

4 Like a chimera, the spirit of God hovered and haunted the luminescent, lifeless waters from which all but two days of His creative force had been exhumed. 2 There was naught now but God with the power to distinguish between chimeras, reality, and dreams; 3 and it was these material matters which now weighed heavily upon the spirit of God's chimeras, reality, and dreams, and His gift of Free Will giving rise to beings that were not a mimicry of marionettes—no, nor even of God Himself beyond the creative force which, like Himself, had the power of life and death. 4 As the Lord mediated upon these things, the heavenly host, the remnant of His creation, and the celestial bodies waited as the Lord balanced and weighed in His mind and heart the future crimes of mankind against Free Will and His acknowledgement, "It is good." 5 The Lord knew if He did not exhale, restoring all His labors and time to their rightful places, choosing instead to inhale the remaining two days of His creation, it would be to inhale Himself; 6 because the true miracle was that in creating man the Lord established a symbiosis between Himself, man, and all of creation. 7 God knew for better or worse, whatever decisions man made that worked against the sustainability of his environment, 8 however those decisions did not account properly respective of all other species of plants and

animals, whenever his decisions enabled the strong to prey upon the weaker of his own species, 9 It was good, all of It was good, and time must spin forward. 10 He exhaled and unstoppered the bottle releasing time and the blessing contained therein.

5 These are the chronicles detailing the lost day in which man was uncreated, the singular event in the history of creation in which its creator slumbered—never to slumber again—and the day the Earth stood still.



Chelsea Belles
Homage to Pauline Jones
Mixed media/collage,
16" x 12"

The Critical Point of Life

Sergey A. Limanskiy

Here was the town that he left eight months ago. To avoid the sunburns, he hid under a tree while waiting for a bus. In order to pass the waiting time, he read a local newspaper. Suddenly he heard a familiar voice that drowned his attention; he stopped reading and looked toward the voice. The thing that he saw changed his life forever. Although she wore a sunbonnet, he recognized her right away. She was his darling, kissing and locked in the arms of another man. Heart-struck, he put his glasses on and disappeared silently. Later in the evening, when he arrived back on his navy ship, his friends were whispering that he would never be the same.

The situation that this man lived through was hard to imagine. To have an understanding of his feelings in the time of his true realization of the tragedy, has a special word in my native Russian language: "*razbityi*." This word does not have a direct translation into English. In order to understand this word, we should look on some examples and details, which clarify its meaning from the different perspectives.

The first time I paid attention to this word, I was in my early teen years. The object of a discussion was a man described as "*razbityi*." Naturally, I looked at him right away to see if he had anything wrong with his appearance. Because of a lack of experience, I could not understand the different meanings of the word. At the time, I had a lively fancy of a man's severely damaged body. Although the word "*razbityi*" can represent different situations that describe things or people, it has a special meaning when it touches the inner man's condition.

The word "*razbityi*" in some way is similar to "*broken-hearted*" but different in other ways. It portrays a person whose heart is rent by grief. Nevertheless, there is another word in the Russian language, which has the exact meaning of "*broken*." That word describes something defective or not working which interprets as "*breakage*." However, it does not apply to human feelings because it is not as dramatic as "*razbityi*".

A person cannot come to the "*razbityi*" condition without falling from the apogee of gratification. In other words, a man who turned out to be lying down at a bottom of a slope with a broken ski had earlier started out from the top of the hill. In order to feel a deep sorrow of the "*razbityi*" condition, a person needs to be on the direct opposite side of it prior to this situation. Suffering is inevitable when a person enters a "*razbityi*" condition. Many events through human life may carry imprints of suffering on people's hearts. Nevertheless, one of the worst of all evils that can happen to people is probably a rupture of love. A great number of writers of all time wrote precisely hereof. For example, Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian wrote, "Love's pleasure lasts but a moment; Love's sorrow lasts all through life." The process continues when the "darkest shadows" of unwanted situations fill "the sky." A pressure rises to a subhuman condition against a person, "wraps" him with a deep sorrow, and "crashes" him with a tremendous force against "the ground." A disastrous effect of this tragedy is similar in some way to a crystal vase that has dropped from the sky against a concrete surface, and thousands of crystal fragments cover the ground. This situation is the picture of the word "*razbityi*," in which one can never return to one's previous position.

Later in my life, I met closely with the word "*razbityi*". My uncle, who lived in Russia, dearly loved his wife, but because of some circumstances, his wife left him. This situation drove him to heavy drinking. He lost his job and stopped taking care of his appearance. Life lost its meaning for him. Unfortunately, the tragedy went beyond that point. One evening he was alone and fell asleep drunk at his cabin. A fire started by a fireplace spread all over the cabin and burned down everything, including him. The facts are not concealed that many people end their life tragically because they were unable to resist the sorrows. As Shakespeare wrote, "When sorrows come, they come not in single spies, but in battalions."

Each language has its regular words that can apply to situations in other languages and cultures. Nevertheless, for many other words an explanation is essential. With these special words, each language becomes more colorful. As a result, the word "*razbityi*" in my native language has its special meaning when it comes to an explanation of one of the critical points in someone's life.



Curtis Yu
Sky High
Ink, 11" x 8.5"

Until the Lights Were Dimmed (Reflections on *Mar Adentro*)

Clayton Ray Randell

I entered the Pickford Theatre on Monday at 4:00 pm, and sat in the small crimson room with only two other viewers. Both women were in their late forties, one large and blonde, the other small and dark haired. I turned to them as the doors were closed and said, "Well, it won't be hard to tell who is talking during the movie." They laughed and we made small talk, until the lights were dimmed.

I entered the Pickford Theatre on Monday at 4:00 pm, and sat in the small crimson room with my two views. Both are heartfelt, one is secular and personal, the other is Christian and dutiful. I turned to them as the doors were closed and said, "Well, it won't be hard to tell what my heart is saying after the movie." I laughed to myself and changed the subject, until the lights were dimmed.

I entered the Pickford Theatre on Monday at 4:00 pm, and sat in the small crimson room with two expectations. Both were selfish, one was scholarly and extra credit worthy, the other was emotional and painful. I turned to them as the doors closed and said, "Well, I hope I get a good grade and some closure." I laughed uncomfortably to myself, and tried to focus on what I wanted to say in my paper, until the lights were dimmed.

I never entered the room that my grandfather was in, a small sterile room in a home up in Blaine, for two reasons. Both were difficult to express, one I couldn't think about and the other I couldn't forget. I turned to them as the doors closed and said, "Well, what did I miss and did I do something wrong." I never laughed about what happened, and I tried not to focus on the subject, until the lights were dimmed.

My grandfather on my father's side was a "gruff" individual. He never spoke to me when I was a child, and the earliest memory I have of him was walking into the bathroom on him when I was about six. When my cousins and I got to be in high school, we seemed to be old enough for him to start taking an interest in us. I, of course, was far too busy chasing skirts, drinking, and getting

stoned to go visit, that "ornery old man", so I never had any real relationship with him.

At my wedding, I was pretty busy. We had a small ceremony at my father's house. All told we had about fifty guests. My grandfather was there and out of the blue decided to start talking to me. I was on my way to start the music, so that my fiancé and I could walk down the aisle and start our new life together. Not exactly an opportune time to chat it up with that "ornery old man", so I never had any chance to have a relationship with him before we moved to Hawai'i.

On our honeymoon, we were pretty liberated. We had sold almost everything we owned and flew to Hawai'i. What we still owned was under our arms or sitting on the sidewalk. We got a rental car and drove to a hotel that my grandfather told us about. Our room was so small I couldn't get the door open without hitting the twin bed in the far corner. We had to crawl over our duffel bags to get into bed. There was a screen eighteen inches tall and as wide as the door, open to the hallway where some woman was screaming on the payphone about how her babies daddy "won't pay no child support". The neon sign attached to the front of the hotel was ten feet high and 18 inches from our window. Even with the blinds closed it was bright enough to read the directions on a bottle of aspirin. We tried to get some sleep. I woke up during the night with a two-inch cockroach walking across my chest. I swatted and heard it hit the wall and fall onto the floor. It flipped over and ran out under the hallway door. I thought, "I should have known better than to listen to that 'ornery old man', he is the cheapest man on the planet." Not exactly how my wife and I wanted to spend our first night in paradise.

My dad called a few weeks later to tell me that my grandfather had been in an accident. He and my grandmother were on their way back from Mount Vernon and traffic was backed up. The fast lane cleared and my grandfather pulled into it, unaware that a State Trooper was screaming down that lane with his siren off and no flashing lights. His head hit the column between the front and rear driver's side windows. The swelling caused damage in parts of his brain and he went into a coma. When he awoke he was only my grandfather for a few moments a week, the rest of the time he spoke German or thought he was in a different time, and talking to different people.

We moved back to the states after two and a half months in Hawai'i. My grandfather lived for four more years and I never visited him. He was put in a home and visited by my father and my brother, but I couldn't overcome my guilt. I couldn't overcome my discomfort. I couldn't overcome my fear of death. I couldn't relate to that "ornery old man". Until the lights dimmed.

Now that he is gone I can never know him, or what it was like to be as sharp as a tack one day and then unable to control my own thoughts the next. To be independent one day, and then convalescing the next. I got a sense however watching Javier Bardem. He is transformed from a solid Adonis in his twenties to a fifty year old quadriplegic, felled by an accident rather than Artemis. I could not get my grandfather out of my head during the film. Would he have wanted to continue that way? Would I? You hope that a cure can be found, that someone will get better. Sadly, that is not the movie we get a ticket to when shuffling onto this mortal coil. Nor is it the one that awaits us at the end of our journey. The minute you're born you begin the inevitable path to your own end.

That is definitely not the movie I got a ticket to on Monday at 4:00 pm. The life unfulfilled, the life in torturous stillness. Unable to feel the world, trapped in a body that is dead with a mind that still lives. I have felt in the past that whether or not someone wanted to live or not was up to them. If you will help a quadriplegic get drunk and smoke because he can't do it himself why not help him with his decision to go the distance with unhealthy behavior. Still, as a Christian I am faced with the knowledge that we all serve a purpose on this earth. That God has a plan for us even in our misery, because we do not exist for ourselves alone, but to serve others.

So did Ramon Sampedro selfishly give up the ghost because he was too weak to persevere? The New International Version Bible 2nd Corinthians verse 16 states, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17: For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18: So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Or was Ramon Sampedro fulfilling his destiny. He brought his poetry and his voice to people and sacrificed himself for the belief that someone with no control over their physical lives should be allowed to make the ultimate decisions about their lives.

I went to that movie hoping to have an answer given to me. I thought that Rosa might talk him into living or that Julia's strength in her degenerative disease would inspire him. Would Javier's youth guide Ramon in seeking to guide Javier? Would Ramon's father have sage advice for him and all of us? Would his brother's own sacrifices convince him, or me? Would the wheelchair bound priest, show him the light? Maybe, I would sympathize with Ramon and concede totally that his friends had a responsibility to help him with his request. None of these things happened.

I laughed when Ramon and the priest traded jabs, I laughed when Ramon told Julia that he wanted her to come scratch an itch on his leg. But, I also sat in that theatre for two hours barely able to keep from sobbing out loud for those two ladies in the theatre to witness.

Ramon Sampedro said, that when others must take care of you that you learn to smile while you cry. I cried during the courtroom scene as he was denied a voice and he wore that same smile.

Ultimately, I was left staring at Julia's blank face. Both of us saying who is Ramon? Julia gave no answer. Gené herself pleaded with Ramon to stay. He left anyway. My grandfather left anyway.

To me Mar Adentro was the epilogue to Ramon's book of poetry. A new verse to be read, to evoke our emotions, and illustrate a sample of someone's life—Not give us answers. That is what art is after all. Even those who think they express some message through their art are still left at the mercy of what others perceive. So like Ramon. Few could understand really how he felt and what his life was like. Yet people tried to force their opinions and feelings onto Ramon. You can experience the art, however understanding cannot be given.

Like Ramon Sampedro, we must decide whether to drink of the nectar of life or sip 200 mg. of Cyanide Phosphate. Whether or not we should help someone to choose the latter is something I think that the individual must decide, and the courts and others can only interfere with.

Manuela captures the heart of it. She loved Ramon, and respected his wishes. She wanted him to be happy, and in the end, staring out at the sea within, I believe he was.



Mark Thinner
Poster series
Digital art, 7"x 5"

No One Walks in *Paris, Texas*

Sherri Ellen Reed

Art, like life, is a journey where the most indelible impressions are made by shaking off the metaphorical dust and getting out there. Some films traverse physical borders, while others bridge internal adventures of the heart and mind. The best do both, tenaciously searching for that most elusive country: the human self.

—David Geffner

The arts reflect, embody, and reinforce cultural ideas and ideals. They convey their message not by saying it to us, but by leading us to say it ourselves. In this way we own the message on some level—it resonates not only with us, but from us. This is the power of art. It asks questions, rather than answering them. In *Paris, Texas*, a powerful film written by Sam Shepard and directed by Wim Wenders, we are told the story of Travis Clay Henderson and his journey to discover himself and his past, connect with his son and brother, and find his wife, Jane. But it is masterful use of the medium of film that leads us to ask not what becomes of Travis, but what is lost and found in the vastness of America on the endless roads of the human journey. The answer is, as Melville wrote and which Wenders makes clear, “not down in any map; true places never are” (Geffner).

We know this film is not only about Travis, Hunter and Jane, but is equally about each of us, as it is clear these few weeks outlined in the script really represent a whole life. Travis, like most babies, is delivered by a doctor on a medical table. He is without speech or memories (a past), and he does not eat. When he finally does utter his first word, “Paris”, it is reminiscent of “mommy”, his place of origin. As he and Walt drive west, he and his language slowly develop—and when they reach Los Angeles, Travis greets his son like a shy playmate. After seeing home movies Walt had taken five years earlier, Travis tries defining himself in relation to (linguistically in opposition to) Jane and Hunter, that is to say, husband to Jane, father to Hunter. We see him try on this persona in front of the mirror by mimicking an idea of father (“any father”)—changing clothes, practicing a dignified walk—and by showing Hunter photos of his own father and mother. Like the mirror, photographs are reflections of a static moment in time and in

that way, they, too, are fantasy. We are watching Travis and Hunter feel out their relationship, and the camera and direction hint at the depth of effort it takes to bridge the gap between them. It is these small gestures and movements that speak so loudly to us in film. When Hunter notes of Travis' father, "his name is yours", he is saying his fate is yours, his burden is yours. When Jane says to him "every man has your voice", she is saying that all men, all Americans, live your story and your struggle. It is in this way the artists lead us to reflect on the human condition. Travis becomes every viewer battling to atone the sins of the father, to find connection with real people. His story is recognizable to us on the deepest level: the story is about Travis Henderson; the story is about me.

We also know that *Paris, Texas* is the story of America—two Americas really—the city, and the desert. They are contrasted landscapes and yet similar in their loneliness, especially for one who still travels the old way, the father's way, as Travis does. Images from the definitive American film movement—the Western—such as papers flowing down the street like tumbleweeds, hotel names like Ranchman and Rancho, the Ranchero they are driving, Travis' wardrobe, and his demeanor as a loner, all speak to the desert. Mirrored high-rises, billboards, freeway interchanges, empty sidewalks and drive through banks without tellers illustrate the city. Neither place is populated by visible life outside of one's own reflection. Wenders chose Los Angeles and Houston for good reason. Both are flush with fantasy—the film capital of America on one hand, and the space capital on the other. Hunter's jacket, bought for the trip, is a NASA jacket—silver metallic with a space shuttle on the back and an American flag patch on the arm. Travis, on the other hand, continues to be dressed like a ranch hand in boots, blue jeans, and western shirts. This contrast plays to the different cities, the different generations, and the meeting of and conflict between the old world and new world.

Looking through binoculars while waiting to find Jane at the bank, Travis sees an American flag waving from a crane building another skyscraper. The use of binoculars is important, as they remove the viewer from the viewed—expressing an inherent disconnect between the place and the person—an eliminating of context. Travis can view the flag in great detail, but he cannot see that he himself is underneath it. America as a land of distances, and separation is also represented by the mural of the statue of liberty

on the Keyhole Club where Travis both finds and gives up Jane. Here, intimacy has been replaced by fantasy. Men go into numbered booths with themes like beach or hotel or diner, and engage in contrived sexual conversations with women they've not met and will never meet. Travis finds Jane here and "sees" her for the first time in four years. Throughout the film, there is always glass or a one-way mirror between him and Jane—he never sees her without fantasy, either through reflection of his own face upon hers, or standing a quarter mile away looking through a high-rise hotel window. When he says to her, "I can't see you Jane", he means it quite literally—he cannot see who Jane really is but instead sees his own face superimposed upon her image. What we see of America we see of ourselves and vice versa, as though the land itself were a mirror, having no identity separate from us.

It is interesting, too, that Wenders shows Hunter in the parking lot looking at another mural, that of an American Indian. We've been led again to the question of what has been gained and what has been lost in America's quest for identity, and for filling the empty spaces with an idea, an image of herself. It is Travis' quest that has brought us here to the Keyhole Club. His definition of father and husband requires Jane, wife and mother—and now he is confronted with the ways we fill our emptiness with each other and with fantasy, and the question of how we can find intimacy while traveling in this place of little context and contact.

Paris, Texas, then, is the mapping of every man's journey; it is the saga of America's quest to define herself in a vast terrain of few boundaries. But it is also the story about *how* we travel through this realm, this American and human landscape of seemingly endless open space and distance. It is about the American obsession with cars. Highways like neural pathways cut through the countryside, changing the land. Three million miles of road have superimposed a structure that draws us to the named places full of unnamed people and empty sidewalks. These ruts in the earth draw pictures of travels where in a very real sense, we have never actually been—never smelled rain coming or heard a river just beyond the guardrail or seen a hawk tracking a kill in a cornfield. Like armor, our cars are another layer of distance and protection between us and the other—human/animal, man/woman, father/son, steel/wind. Hunter, not yet old enough to drive, knows that "no one walks", and when discomforted by Travis' attempts at closeness, he sits in the car in the garage, hands on the wheel, fantasizing himself

driving. Walking in the desert before he was 'born', Travis had no need of this vehicular armor, but when he starts for Houston, he finds a vehicle much like himself—a Ranchero—that belongs to an older world and has a crisis of identity (doesn't know if it is a car or a truck). In a beautifully crafted shot of Travis and Hunter eating in the newly bought "hunk of junk", they talk over the noise from the freeway cloverleaf above them.

Wenders shows that in America, cars are not in the landscape or on it, they *are* the landscape. Even in the home movies of their vacation, every shot has a car or camper in it, on the beach, as though they are shells or driftwood or sunbathers; naturally, they are there. They have changed our world; they have become our world—making our lands both easily accessible yet farther away from our senses. Wenders so loves landscape that he named his film company Road Pictures, yet he still conveys a sense of loss, a loss of land, a loss of unnamed places, and a loss of comfort when confronted with the one-lane dirt road that leads both to our origin and to our eventual demise.

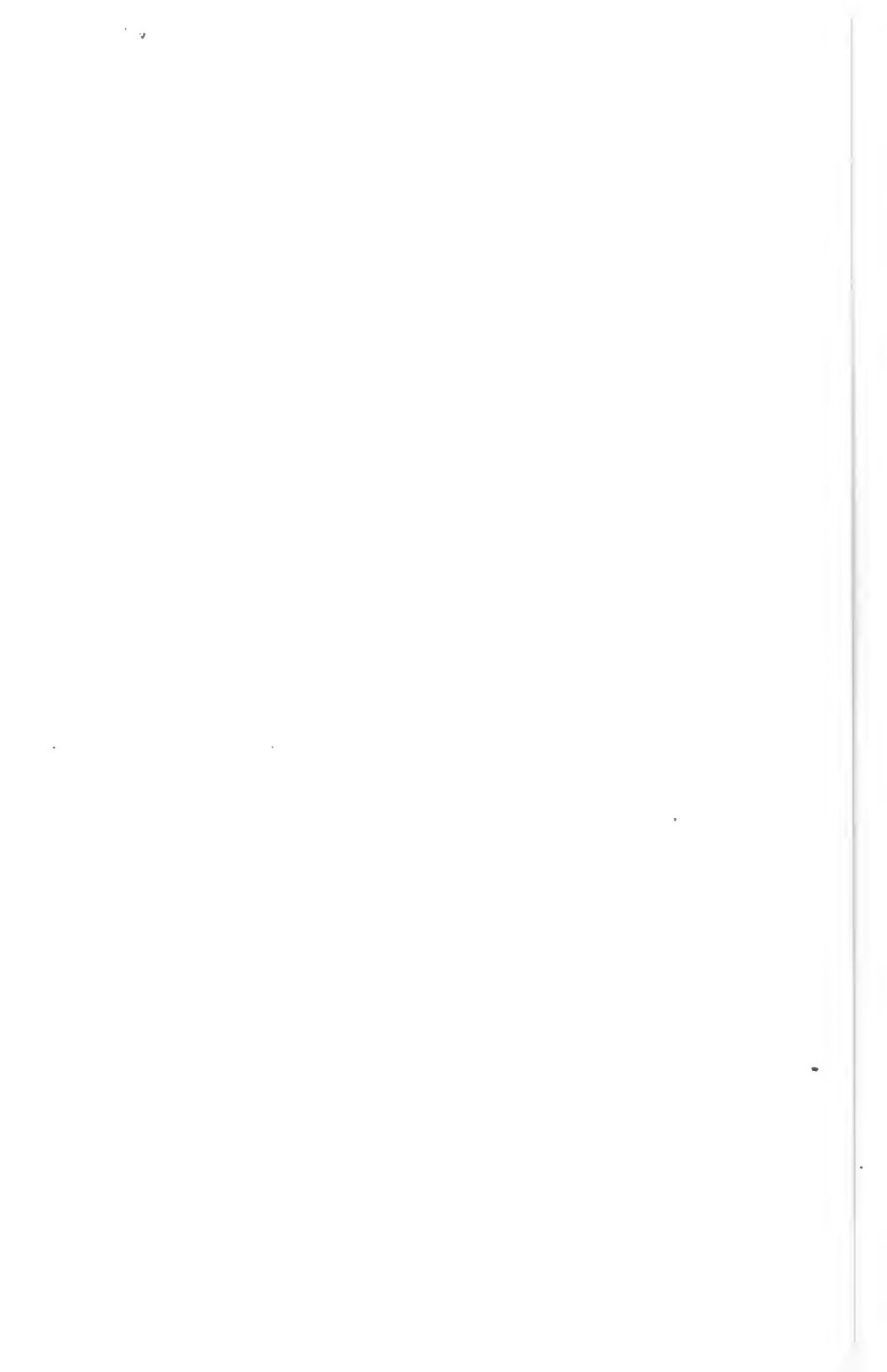
So *Paris, Texas* is an external place — America; it is an internal place—the human psyche, the American ethos. How we travel through this landscape is how we move within our own minds and lives, how we search for truth and beauty while at the same time distancing ourselves from them, how we define ourselves through defining and fantasizing others, and how we are driven to fill both the literal and metaphorical spaces of this topos called America. Ultimately, too, Wenders is reflexively asking these questions about art: "American films tend to make up for their lack of place with ever shinier surfaces, with more spectacular special effects, with greater, more outrageous budgets, more luscious sets. They fill the hole they have created with glorious material. But did you ever have the sneaking suspicion that it was 'filler' for the real thing?" (Willis). The arts embody, reflect, and reinforce cultural ideas and ideals—but they also challenge them. They lead us to ask ourselves what we might find if we walk in *Paris, Texas*.

Works Cited

- Geffner, David. "Hit the Road: 2004's Best Road Movies". RES Magazine, Vol. 7 No. 3. July 2004: 44.
- Willis, Holly. "Wim Wenders: Taking Place". RES Magazine, Vol. 7 No. 3. July 2004: 65.



Jeremy Jackson
Images in Time
Mixed media/collage,
14" x 11"



CONTRIBUTORS

Colleen Anderson
Chelsea Belles
Ryan Brownyer
Suzanne Clothier
Ric Courtwright
Rebecca Crompton
Annalee Dunn
Ryan Eylander
Simona Hughes
Masaki Ishikawa
Jeremy Jackson
Candice Lankhaar
Sergey Limanskiy
Joel Nelson
Jason Nix
Sherri Ellen Reed
Addie Stonack
Mark Thinner
Valerie Turner
Natasha L. Ungersma
Mike Vander Giessen
Curtis Yu