

The Muse



***A Literary and Art Journal of
Seminole State College
Students, Faculty, & Staff***

***Volume 1
2007 Edition***

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**Publication Statement for *The Muse*
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Seminole State College's Upsilon Alpha Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Community Colleges, annually publishes *The Muse* literary and art anthology under the direction of faculty sponsors Kelli McBride and Rayshell Palmer. The purpose of the anthology is to not only encourage expression in the literary and fine arts, but to also encourage students, faculty, and staff to publish their works.

Upsilon Alpha reserves the right to edit submitted material for spelling and style. The chapter considers all submitted material, but submission does not ensure publication. We do not accept anonymous material. All views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Seminole State College or Sigma Kappa Delta. *The Muse* is distributed on the SSC campus and the surrounding area.

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Now Accepting Submissions for the 2008-09 edition of *The Muse*. Contact Kelli McBride (k.mcbride@sscok.edu, 382-9274) or Rayshell Palmer (r.palmer@sscok.edu, 382-9563) for rules and entry forms. Deadline for submission to the 2008 anthology is 25 August 2008. All submissions must be in electronic form and accompanied by a signed entry form.

***The Muse* Literary and Fine Arts Contest**

Sigma Kappa Delta, Upsilon Alpha Chapter, sponsors a contest for authors and artists submitting their works to the anthology. We send all submissions to qualified judges in the specific areas (poetry, prose, and art). Cash prizes go to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each category. Judges may also award Honorable Mentions (certificate only). Only students of Seminole State College are eligible for prize money. Should a judge award 1st, 2nd, or 3rd to work by faculty or staff, Sigma Kappa Delta acknowledges their achievement with a certificate, and the next ranked student will take the cash prize.

The winners for the 2007 edition of *The Muse* are listed below by category. We thank our judges and all contestants for their hard work.

Poetry:

- 1st: Brian Mitchell, "Ignorant Minds"**
- 2nd: Virginia Little, "Growing Up"**
- 3rd: Natasha Gibbs, "An Apology"**
- HM: Aaron Buchanan, "Waiting at the End of Time"**
Tytiana Tobin, "Penny for Your Thoughts"

Prose:

- 1st: Tucker Martindale, "The Darker Side of the Line"**
- 2nd: Ray Lackey, "Graphic Novels are Books, Too"**
- 3rd: Stewart McCoin, "Ambivalent Wishes"**
- HM: Scott Cave, "Revelations in Sirens"**
Thea Dean, "Plato's Allegory of the Cave is Relevant to Today's Society"
Jeff Harrison, "Don't Dance on Company Time"

Fine Art:

- 1st: Natasha Gibbs, Katie by the Lake**
- 2nd: Candace Sweatt, C'est Moi**
- 3rd: Kevin Green, The Wagon**
- HM: Meredith Marrs, Meeting of the Waters**
Natasha Gibbs, At Papa's House
Kevin Green, Silent Majesty



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*1st Place in Prose***The Darker Side of the Line****by Tucker Martindale**

The world crashed in around me like a tsunami cresting over a continent. Time slowly halted as I watched the events unfurl in front of me. How could I be this abomination? How could something this gigantic happen to me? Growing up we all believe we're normal, something average. We think we are to live our lives without opposition, nothing to throw our steady pace off track. BOOM! Life pushes us forward like a superhighway traffic jam. BOOM! A gigantic semi slammed into my slow-moving car, and I went spinning: for two years everything was a blur. However, my tilt-a-whirl began with him.

Back then, even the thought about two guys being intimate was literally disgusting. How could something so sick to everyone be so comforting to me? When I saw a gay relationship on TV, it didn't have the same nauseating effect as it did on my friends. "Oh! That's sick!" one would scream with the others following shortly behind with their comments on the whole situation.

I remember being the last kid in computer class to leave. Gay web sites would flood my page, tons of information from kids, even my own age, that had come out. Testimonies that scared me, tales of beatings and death threats. I thought to myself, how could someone be gay? It's so unnatural, so gross... I grew up being labeled as something everyone hated, why? I had never even been with a guy; it never crossed my mind. I just thought about the approval I yearned for; I needed it like water or food. I constantly found myself striving to be something I wasn't: a stud or a jock. But deep inside of me something brooded, something was bleeding in pain.

Depression was swift and agonizing. There would be nights where only crying seemed to put me to sleep. What plagued me? What haunted my every movement? Suddenly, a terrible rage that had built up over my entire lifetime erupted, unleashing like a nuclear explosion. I started talking out the pain on everyone around me. I had literally turned my friendly demeanor into a warrior of words. I would constantly degrade and hurt people for spite. I had become a person fueled by hate, a hate that I felt towards myself. My external crusade against everything I should be was first and foremost stopped, not by action, but by a sentence that will forever loom over my soul. "Tucker, you're so fake. You pretend to be something you're not, and when you hurt other people you let your true self shine through."

And everything changed. My external crusade had become an internal battle with myself. The brooding something that had dug itself into my unconsciousness finally awoke. Could I possibly be? Why would this happen to someone like me? These questions would be left

unanswered throughout a gapping period in my life, in which I had no direction. Since this private affair was secret, no one would learn of these hidden truths, the codex of my life would be stowed away deep inside the coldest vestiges of my dying heart. After the darkness settled in and made its' home, the only light that I would come to know was internet.

As the days went by, I continually searched through the millions of web sites about homosexuality, various religious sites that ultimately bashed the thought of being gay and stated I would go to "hell", and finally I came across the site I would call my savior. XY, coincidentally the male chromosome, would be my lantern through the darkness.

Weeks and months passed by slowly, and I found myself absorbed by the content XY had to offer. One day I stumbled upon personal profiles that some of the XY users had made, and that's when "he" came into the picture. After the simple exchange of e-mails, the question came up to exchange our digits. I agreed reluctantly. My body rejected this feeling, though, like a white blood cell to poison or infection, I had never experienced this – a deeper affection towards someone of the same sex, this was alien to me. But slowly, my questions were beginning to be answered. He and I talked for hours on end. We learned the ins and outs of one another. Infatuation, not love, is what I felt for him though. He filled the wound left in my heart from the constant war I was waging inside myself. He was my escape to nothing, my retreat in barren wastelands. When we finally met one another, face to face, the realization of the whole situation hit me. I was gay. I had spent my whole life running from the monster dragging in the distance. The monster, however, wasn't a monster to begin with. It was me.

Soon after, I told my parents about being gay. Lovingly, they committed themselves to helping me become completely proud and happy with me, who I was as a person. Yet, an even bigger monster screeched terrible wails in the miles closer to home.

When lies build up, they continually push, like gravity, onto the liar's shoulders. An extreme pressure weighed on my heart, something was wrong. More questions surfaced to the top of the pile. Were people catching on? Could someone have unearthed the long buried propaganda that my heart held? I could feel the constant burning of eyes into the back of my head; it was unbearable. Rumors killed my self-confidence – rumors of me being gay. I denied the accusations as forcibly as I could, yet the cold frigid touch of fear grabbed at my heart. I could yet again, feel the unending war that I had tried so hard to avoid fire upon my soul.

Life to me seemed bittersweet. It was an unripe lemon too sour to taste. The hate I could feel etching itself onto my being, tearing me apart. Suicide. It seemed like the only fire exit in the building. When people you don't know talk about you, in front of you, and friends that you think are your friends talking about you, in front of you, who do you turn to? God even hated me, or so that's what I was lead to believe. Death seemed to greet me with open arms. He seemed to be the only one that cared about me and looked at me truthfully. My emotions were awry, crying was a minute stepping stone to total break-down.

And after two grueling years, I finally opened my eyes to the rising sun. The ride was over. I got up slowly, brushed off the thoughts of killing myself and smiled. I came to myself, the victor of my unending war. The blazing fires of hate died down and rising from amongst the charred remains was a phoenix. He was reborn from the ashes of the old that day, renewed.

I found myself in this conflict with both life and reality. I was reincarnated, not as you but myself. I started off confused, alone and bitter. I traversed a multitude of feelings, I looked Death in the eye and prevailed. I was reborn as a person, loving every minute of life. I fear no longer, for under the heavenly wings of God, I soared through my adversity. I no longer see imperfections and faults, I see beauty in even the smallest freckle and I know that's how it was suppose to be. Harmony.

Beowulf by Nan Goforth

The epic is a long narrative poem recounting actions, travels, adventures, and episodes of a protagonist or main character that is heroically larger than life. The action, often in battle, is composed of courageous and heroic deeds that frequently reveal the superhuman strength of the heroes. Long, formal speeches by the main characters and a journey to the underworld are common conventions found in epics ("Epic"). The main character is a hero, typically possessing extraordinary abilities or attributes, who is charged with a quest. The adventures of the hero take him to a supernatural world whose entrance is barricaded to normal human beings ("Elements"). The narrative introduces the deeds of the hero impartially by revealing his strengths and weaknesses ("Epic"). Epic poems have endured over time and exist today due to oral tradition handed down from generation to generation ("Elements"). *Beowulf* functions as an epic because the protagonist is charged with a quest, possesses superhuman abilities, travels to the underworld, and the narrative presents the deeds of the protagonist objectively.

The adventures of the epic hero take him to unfamiliar territory, yet he is willing and able to accept the challenge

of the unknown. Grendel had terrorized Heorot for "twelve winters" before "the news was known over the whole world" (lines 147-50). After hearing of Grendel's attacks, Beowulf accepts the quest to eradicate the problem and bring the peace back to Heorot (194-229). Upon initially meeting Hrothgar, Beowulf states the reason for his visit, presents a résumé of his heroic deeds, and offers to fight Grendel weaponless (407-440). Beowulf's self-confidence and willingness to give his all is evident when he boasts that he "had a fixed purpose" when he set forth on this journey and that he would "perform to the uttermost . . . or perish in the attempt" (632-35). Being the cautious and shrewd warrior he is, Beowulf is waiting and watching for Grendel to make the first move (735-37). The two engage in hand-to-hand combat with Beowulf being the victor after he rips Grendel's arm completely from its socket (814-18). Beowulf proudly displays his gory trophy from the rafters of Heorot, victory is celebrated, and Beowulf's fame spreads (832-73). The struggle between Beowulf and Grendel is the consummate struggle between good and evil. Although Beowulf rids Heorot of one evil, another lurks nearby drooling at the thought of revenge (1276-78). After Grendel's mother kills Aeschere, Hrothgar entreats Beowulf to help and offers him a reward of gold (1376-82). Beowulf accepts the second challenge and "indifferent to death" departs on a quest to destroy the other menace terrorizing the Danes (1442-45). After swimming for most of the day, Beowulf finds the "swamp-thing from hell" and fights her in hand-to-hand combat after his sword fails (1495-1542). Seeing and seizing a gigantic sword, Beowulf strikes the fatal blow by wielding the sword to gracefully slice off the head of Grendel's mother (1557-1569). After his victory Beowulf returns to Heorot, presents Hrothgar with Grendel's head and the sword hilt, and ensures Hrothgar that the Danes are secure (1647-86). Beowulf's prowess as a mighty warrior, literally and figuratively, won him the gold. Once again goodness triumphs over evil and the Danes are swaddled in a blanket of peace.

Beowulf was an imposing figure in many respects. The introduction to *Beowulf* states that Beowulf is fierce in battle (*Beowulf*, 1627). "In his day, he was the mightiest man on earth, highborn and powerful" (197-98). The watchman knew that Beowulf was no ordinary man simply by looking at him (247-51). The description of Beowulf as "the man whose name was known for courage" is a testament to his worthiness as a warrior (340). Hrothgar's seamen brought tales that Beowulf has the "strength of thirty in the grip of each hand" (377-81). Beowulf's swimming match with Breca exemplifies his superhuman strength. They each carried a sword while swimming to defend themselves against sea creatures. After struggling for five days and nights in icy waters, Beowulf was pulled under by a "sea-beast". He defeated that creature as well as eight others making it safe for all sailors (530-68). Further

evidence of Beowulf's incredible strength is demonstrated when he rips Grendel's arm from its socket during their struggle at Heorot (815-17). Likewise, superhuman strength was required to hoist and employ the gigantic sword found in the lair of Grendel's mother (1558-62). Beowulf has a monopoly on the commodity of extraordinary strength. In addition to physical strength, Beowulf possesses great oratorical ability. Beowulf "unlocked his word-choard" upon meeting the watchman (258). Although lengthy and somewhat prideful, Beowulf's oratories are quite eloquent. His speeches have a spellbinding quality about them. The audiences, ancient and modern, wait with bated breath for him to continue.

All epic heroes must leave behind the comfort of their own world and face the unknown. Beowulf does exactly this when he ventures into the unfamiliar territory of Grendel's mother where many species of eerie sea creatures inhabit the bloodshot, boiling water of the lake and the surrounding shoreline (1416-30). Although he possesses great swimming ability, it takes Beowulf the better part of a day to reach the bottom of the dark abyss inhabited by Grendel's mother (1495-96). Beowulf must fight not only Grendel's mother and other sea monsters, but he must fight from becoming disoriented in this dark, frightening underworld. Grendel's mother drags Beowulf to her house of horror to gain the upper hand by preventing him from using his weapons against her (1506-09). After Beowulf's sword fails, he realizes that "he would have to rely on the might of his arm" (1533-34). This presents no problem for the mighty warrior. The writing is on the wall—the sea-hag is going down. Beowulf and Grendel's mother grapple back and forth like wrestlers trying to pin each other to the mat. Beowulf's armor saves him after Grendel's mother attacks him with a knife (1537-53). Beowulf swings the huge sword that fate allowed him to find and swiftly decapitates Grendel's mother (1564-68). The underworld is no longer in darkness; it has been illuminated (1570). The evil spirit has been exorcised, thereby purifying the waters.

Beowulf returns home and takes his rightful place as the ruler of the Geats. He progresses from a brave warrior to a wise leader who rules for fifty years before the tranquility is shattered (2208-11). Rage is kindled in the dragon after an intruder unwittingly invades his treasure trove and steals a goblet (2214-20). In retaliation the dragon becomes an arsonist; the Geats become his targets (2270-2322). When Beowulf's own home is "burned to a cinder," he is mentally tormented and plots his own vengeance by commissioning the ironsmith to fashion a sword for battle (2324-41). Beowulf is too proud to assemble a large army, reminisces about defeating Grendel and his mother, and seems to have no fear (2345-54). Beowulf's recollection of his past triumphs and the bravado he displays suggest that he is bolstering himself up for the coming challenge. In his eyes, Beowulf still sees himself as

the invulnerable and fearless warrior of his youth. This self-confidence is evident when he decides to fight the dragon weaponless, reminiscent of his decision to fight Grendel unarmed (2515-21). However, this time Beowulf senses his coming death; fate will not allow him to be victorious (2420-24). Shouting at his opponent, Beowulf valiantly charges ahead to meet his destiny (2550). Surrounded by fire, Beowulf and the dragon battle (2569). Ultimately Beowulf realizes that his strength is not that of his youth (2575-80). Beowulf lunges at the dragon with his sword only to have the sword fail him. Smoldering with rage, the dragon sees his chance and goes for the jugular (2679-92). Beowulf takes a deep breath, gathers his courage, and fatally stabs the dragon with his knife (2702-06). However, Beowulf's victory is short-lived as he realizes he is dying from the poisonous bite inflicted earlier by the dragon (2706-15). Being the dutiful leader, Beowulf sends Wiglaf to retrieve the dragon's treasure to give as gifts to the Geats (2743-51). Ironically, much of the treasure is rusty and corroded (2762-63). Just like the treasure, Beowulf's days of brilliance have faded. As a result, the Geats no longer have a protector and war is on the horizon (2910-13). In hindsight, Beowulf's decision to fight the dragon unarmed seems selfish and reckless because he has left his trusted subjects without a leader and vulnerable to attack. His overconfidence in his own invulnerability and indestructibility led to his downfall. Beowulf's actions guarantee inevitable destruction for his people.

Epics are long narrative poems celebrating the trials and deeds of legendary or historical heroes. The epic hero ungrudgingly accepts his quest with anticipation and boldness. Destiny is calling and he must answer the call. Eloquent oratorical masterpieces by the main characters are typically found in epics. Equally important, the epic hero acknowledges his responsibility to be a great warrior and devotes his life to maintaining his reputation. Without hesitation or trepidation, he bravely journeys the paths to a completely foreign and frightening world to fulfill his mission in life. The superhuman strength of the hero is revealed during his numerous battles. His great physical strength is showcased by the spectacular choreography found in the action during the battles. A victory for the epic hero is the accustomed outcome of his incredible strength. Not only must the hero battle assorted demons during his adventures, oftentimes he must battle his own mortality. Furthermore, the epic hero may be required to pay the ultimate price to fulfill his destiny—his life. *Beowulf* incorporates all of these characteristics of the classical epic.

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Living Life in Darkness by Casandra C. Garren

Imagine sitting down to visit with your mother one day, and with a blank stare in her eyes, she looks at you and asks, “Who are you?” This is an example of how some of my days go when I visit with my mother. Many people have parents who were pretty young when they were born. My mother was thirty-five years old when I was born, and I was the only child she ever had. I remember as I was growing up my friends’ parents seemed so young and many times I felt like I was living with my grandma. Looking back now at the age I am, I realize she is awfully young to be going through what she is.

Two years ago I noticed that she would forget what we all think of as simple things to know. For instance, remembering the day of the week, where the bedroom is, where the bathroom is, and even how to use the cook stove are all problems she faces daily. These things that seem so simple to remember are a big challenge for her. I feel the hardest part came when she asked me what my two children’s names are. Many times I would catch myself wondering if she was just pretending that she cannot remember. The day came when I had to help my dad get her in for an evaluation and further testing due to her condition. She became very angry with me and said a lot of cruel things to me. She told me as far as she was concerned, she never wanted to see me again. I was so torn up on the inside, yet angry that my own mother had told me she could not trust me. I cried like a baby that day in the hospital, for I knew this was not my mother’s normal behavior.

She was diagnosed with Alzheimers, which is a degenerative brain disease characterized by progressive mental deterioration and memory loss. When the doctor explained this to me, I was just kind of dumbfounded by it. I had heard of this disease, but thought, “not my mom, she is too young.” Alzheimers should be seen in people that are in their mid 80’s or 90’s.

There are three stages of this disease, and she moved rather rapidly into the second stage. We had been taking

care of her at home with the help of Heartland Hospice daily, but the day came when the nurses and her doctor told us we needed to be thinking of where we wanted her final days to be. They told us that the emotional and physical strain it was putting on my dad and myself would only get worse because the third and final stage is bedfast. I remember we sat at the table that day and as they were going over our options and discussing going ahead and getting her moved to the nursing home in Seminole, the emotions I had been trying to hold back just began to explode. I was an emotional wreck and even though I knew deep down inside we had done the best we could for her at home, it was time to let her go somewhere there was more people to oversee her. On September 18, 2006 with many people supporting us, we got her moved to her new home.

I visit with her quite often. I go by and see her everyday after school. There are days she does not know where she is. I will remind her, and she will ask me how far she is from our home in Maud, and whether or not we still live there. Confusion always seems to be part of her daily routine. There are times now when I go to visit her that we will be talking and she will just take off in her electric wheelchair. I realize that her mind is reverting back to childhood. She will sit and be talking to her parents, her sister, and even others who have been dead for quite a while. The first few times I witnessed this behavior, I was quick to remind her they were not there. Anymore, I just let her talk to them cause who am I to say she does not see them.

The past weeks have really taken a toll on us as a family. Many times now when I go to visit I never know what is going to come out of her mouth. Mother, in her younger days, was always mellow, and I never really heard her complain. I have personally seen the other side of her and unfortunately it is rather ugly at times. She has caused me to be very embarrassed with the way she has acted. It reminds me often of how a child who is not getting their way will act. I have, many times, tried to reason with her and explain things to her, but time and time again she does not comprehend. Lately the combativeness has began and that is so not like her.

Though this has been a tough road for one to travel and understand, I feel there is a reason for me to talk about my experience. I have a greater understanding about the patients whom are suffering from the disease and how distraught family members can become. I have learned to appreciate the simplest things in life and enjoy life to the fullest while I am still young. I tell my children all the time how much they are loved by their grandmother, even though at times she does not remember them. As time passes, I realize I cannot bring her back to what I think normal should be. I just keep a positive outlook on one thing she may be in her own little world, but she is not in any pain.

Cruel and Unusual Punishment: A Right Open to Interpretation by Thea Dean

The American justice system has failed to uphold the Eighth Amendment. Because of a recent execution, in which it took much longer than usual for the inmate to die, as of February 2007, eleven states have halted lethal injections, citing *cruel and unusual punishment*. Although, the death penalty most often comes to mind, there are many facets to the concept of *cruel and unusual*. 1991 in *Harmelin v. Michigan*, the Supreme Court "rejected as *cruel and unusual* a mandatory term of life in prison without possibility of parole for possessing more than 650 grams of cocaine" (United States). California's three-strikes law is also being called into question on grounds of overly excessive sentences being cruel. And in New Mexico charges have been filed against a jail guard for sexual abuse and cruel and unusual punishment against two female inmates. At the dawn of the 21st Century, crimes and tools of punishment have altered considerably, yet what constitutes *cruel and unusual* is still open to interpretation and debate today.

Many people say today's penalties are not cruel and unusual compared to the humiliating and tortuous punishments the Framers were seeking to change. But, can contemporary corrections be legitimately compared with those of 231 years ago? Prison, being the main form of today's punishment, impresses many as being relatively mild compared to the devices the colonist's used. Humiliation being a large part of the punishment, the sentences were carried out in public. According to the [Colonial Williamsburg Journal](#):

Each village had their own devices, early on they used bilboes, imported from England, long iron bars with shackles and padlocks. When these began to wear out the colonist's began making wooden stocks themselves to replace them. Similar to stocks but suspended upon a post was the pillory, a hinged board with holes for the head and hands from which the offender hang. Sometimes the ears were nailed to the wood as well. (Cox)

Devices such as the bilboes, stocks and pillory held the culprits open to public mockery and abuse. These were perhaps the mildest forms, but others in contrast were quite vicious. "The ducking stool, a chair on a plank, capable of holding one or two, swung out over, and dunked into the water. Extremely sadistic was the gossip's bridle, an iron cage made to fit over the head, with an iron tongue that had a spike in it sometimes." Can the deprivation of personal freedom, however extensive, be compared to physical torture and public humiliation? Also among the favorites were whipping posts, ear cropping, and branding. These are a sample of the *cruel and unusual punishments*

the Founding Father's were seeking to abolish. To Edmund Pendleton, 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

It is only the sanguinary hue of our penal laws which I meant to object to. Punishments I know are necessary, & I would provide them, strict & inflexible, but proportioned to the crime. Death might be inflicted for murder & perhaps for treason if you would take out of the description of treason all crimes which are not such in their nature. Rape, buggery &c -- punish by castration. All other crimes by working on high roads, rivers, galleys &c. a certain time proportioned to the offence. But as this would be no punishment or change of condition to slaves (me miserum!) let them be sent to other countries. By these means we should be freed from the wickedness of the latter, & the former would be living monuments of public vengeance. Laws thus proportionate & mild should never be dispensed with. Let mercy be the character of the lawgiver, but let the judge be a mere machine.

Unfortunately 231 years of experience and evolution have not eliminated the need for the Eighth Amendment. There are issues today the Framers could never have thought of, technology, drugs, mass murder on the scale of September 11, 2001, and women's struggle for equality, which have led to new realms of interpretation.

The American Civil Liberties Union, considered the watchdog of the American citizen's civil rights and liberties, has taken on a case in Albuquerque, New Mexico, claiming *cruel and unusual punishment*. Two female inmates alleged, in 2003, a detention officer sexually assaulted and took photographs of them in the nude. The lawsuit filed on behalf of the two women claims severe physical injury as well as emotional and psychological distress. Executive Director of the ACLU of New Mexico, Peter Simonson stated,

If proper safeguards had been in place, these assaults might never have occurred. Jails aren't supposed to be pleasant places. However, prisoners are entitled to basic rights, and protection against predatory guards certainly is one of them." (American Civil Liberties Union)

Although the *cruel and unusual* in this case refers to abuse inflicted by a correctional officer upon the inmates, instead of the penal sentence, makes it no less subjugated to the Eighth Amendment. The goal of the modern penal system being reform, not correction, cannot be achieved without humane treatment of prisoners. Disproportionate sentences are also being called into question by many, for example, is shoplifting a life sentence offense?

The United States Supreme Court has contended for nearly a century that excessive sentences comprise *cruel and unusual* punishment as denoted in the Eighth Amendment. Nevertheless, twenty-six states have implemented the "three strikes and you're out" law. Of

these, California is the toughest. The felony does not need to be violent or serious, so simply shoplifting can result in a life sentence. In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled no constitutional error in sentencing twenty-five years to life in *Ewing v. California*, (123 S.Ct 1179). The defendant was convicted for stealing three golf clubs valued at \$1200; however, this was his third felony (Bowman). Criminals must suffer the consequences of their crimes, but is sentencing them to twenty-five years to life for shoplifting any less barbaric than a public whipping? Although the penal system has switched from public humiliation and torture to incarceration, one facet of the pre-revolution colonial times continues to draw opposition and debate, capital punishment.

Almost two hundred years after the ratification of the Constitution, in 1972 the Supreme Court ruled :

Furman v. Georgia (408 U.S. 238), Georgia's death penalty statutes, which gave the jury complete sentencing discretion, could result in arbitrary sentencing. The Court held this *cruel and unusual*. On 29 June , 1972 the Supreme Court voided forty death penalty statutes, this commuted 629 death sentences across the country. This ruling effectively suspended the death penalty by rendering these statutes invalid. New statutes were written and in 1977 the Court approved them in *Gregg v. Georgia*, (428 U.S. 153), ruling the death penalty constitutional under the Eighth Amendment. (Death Penalty Information Center)

In 1977 after a ten year interim the death penalty was reinstated. Gary Gilmore, after spending the greatest portion of his life since adolescences, sentenced to death in Utah, for killing two men while committing armed robberies, was the first person to be executed. Gilmore refused all appeals and fought to be executed, by his own choice, he was executed by firing squad. Currently lethal injection, thought to be more humane, is the method of choice. However, some states are questioning this method. Since December 2006 eleven states have halted their executions, due to an incident in Florida. Inmate Angel Diaz required two injections and lived for thirty-four minutes after the first injection (Tisch and Krueger). Not only the method of injection is being questioned, but capital punishment itself. Can this debate be resolved? Some, including convicts, say life in prison is preferable to death, while others would rather die than be locked up the rest of their lives. *Cruel and unusual*, as beauty, lies with the beholder.

It is a new century, crime has become more complex, and the implements of torture have given way to incarceration and lethal injection; however, the concept of *cruel and unusual* still has no definitive interpretation. During congressional deliberation of the Bill of Rights,

Founding Father and U.S. Senator from New Hampshire, Samuel Livermore observed:

No *cruel and unusual punishment* is to be inflicted; it is sometimes necessary to hang a man, villains often deserve whipping, and perhaps having their ears cut off; but are we in the future to be prevented from inflicting these punishments because they are cruel? If a more lenient mode of correcting vice and deterring others from the commission of it could be invented, it would be very prudent in the Legislature to adopt it; but until we have some security that this will be done, we ought not to be restrained from making necessary laws by any declaration of this kind. (The Founders Constitution)

As long as mankind continues to exist, it is most likely crime will exist. And where there is crime, there must be punishment. Perhaps one day society can achieve the right and humane balance between punishment and reformation. Until then, we must continue to question and contest any perceived injustice we may happen upon in our criminal justice system.

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Freemasonry by Natasha Gibbs

Freemasonry is an organization that has affected many lives with its mysterious history, questionable reputation, and fascinating rituals. The Freemasons impact many people today with their lodges, contributions, and myths, as one can see their emblems on buildings and hear intriguing murmurings about their secrets. Most people have grown up as curious outsiders, eagerly peering out of car windows and asking anyone who might know about the brotherhood.

At Little Axe Middle School in 2002, two students from each grade won a prestigious award for exhibiting good conduct and academic achievement. One boy and one girl from each grade were awarded at a Masonic Lodge, directed to front row seats at the ceremony, and offered punch and cookies. The Students' pictures were taken for the local newspaper that day, and their parents were extremely proud. During that ceremony they were given plaques as a tangible reminder of their achievement.

Although that day of glory has long passed for those students, a general curiosity about Masonic Lodges and the men behind them has hardly subsided. Many students were probably asking their parents in the car on their way to the ceremony about what the lodge was for. Most people couldn't have provided them with information then, and there still isn't an abundance of such information today. Although there are some substantial facts to give out, they require a considerable amount of digging. Many such interested researchers erroneously assume that there have been many before them that were enticed for Masonic information and have satiated that appetite with adequate, legitimate facts.

While the Freemasons (also known as the Sons of Light or members of the Craft) have sparked much curiosity, their history is elusive and their secrets are simply impenetrable. According to many sources, their beginning is mysterious, and to some, it is simply unknown or ignored. Clawson states that the roots of Freemasonry can be followed as far back as the seventeenth century, at which point people of English and Scottish descent were practicing stone masonry (3). They invited their fellow stone masons to keep lodge, creating a system of conduct and what slowly evolved into a

brotherhood. Over the years, the fraternity made money through selling "the product of lodge membership" (Clawson 4). According to Zanelli, the true birth of official Freemasonry began at the premier Grand Lodge in 1717, in London, where the meetings consisted of "little more than an annual get-together for a feast or festival" (1). Tolson characterizes Freemasonry at that time as generally striving for "honorable civic-mindedness, a high regard for learning and progress, and what might be called a broad and tolerant religiosity" (30). They gradually moved away from meeting in taverns and inns, becoming more exclusive and religious.

Although no sources can claim to know exactly how the group spent their time, aside from discussing historical, intellectual, and theological ideas, many names have been noted as the fraternity blended in with American society. Of these American Masonic members, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were two, and thirteen signed our Constitution (Tolson 30). Emphasizing the popularity of the Masons during the eighteenth century, Robert states that "thirty-three of the generals serving under Washington were members of the Craft" (1). Clawson explains that as the fraternity grew in the nineteenth century, it served as the model for "unions...societies...political movements...as well as for literally hundreds of social organizations" (5). By the twentieth century, the Freemasons were a brotherhood of over one million members. In 1960, their membership peaked at four million (Tolson 30). During this time, the Masons were participating in creating foundations for government buildings and churches, as well as attending public ceremonies and parades. Yet, Clawson explains that the brotherhood would evolve greatly as it expanded, being characterized by its tendency to reinvent, alter, and rebuild itself over the years (80).

Because it was widely recognized as being intimate with the foundation of America and its leaders, Freemasonry was subject to abundant suspicion as well as conspiracy theories. Tolson delineates this suspicion when he states that "people saw the influence of Freemasonry even where it didn't exist" (30). While many members were greatly involved with the beginning and growth of the United States, outrageous myths were formed with implications or direct proclamations of Masonic political and social corruption. Three of the most popular conspiracies regard The Illuminati, Jack the Ripper, and the suspicious claims on the emblems and Masonic influence on our federal system.

The Illuminati refers to a set of people who believed they would control the New World Order, secretly controlling world politics and affairs (Fagan 1). The movement known as Illuminism, which occurred around 1776, involved many Masons in a very radical form of The Enlightenment. The Illuminati was split into three classes, one of which was known as Masonry. Masons at the time

did actually set up relations between lodges with the Illuminati, although it was eventually viewed as more of an infiltration of the Illuminati to use Masonry and other secret societies to gain power than an open agreement (Fagan 1). However, the legend extends to the belief that the Masons themselves were the Illuminati and secretly controlled government affairs, as well as the world at large, although this is clearly hyperbolic suspicion.

The second conspiracy theory began in 1888, in London, England. Jack the Ripper is a pseudonym used in reference to the man who murdered at least five of eleven Whitechapel murder victims. It was during this time that mysterious white chalk graffiti was discovered on a wall in the city next to a bloody apron (Bessel 1). There are a couple of ways that Masons were said to have been linked to the serial killing. First, Queen Victoria's grandson was said to be in a secret entanglement with a low class woman and their illegitimate child (Besel 1). The theory goes on to suggest that Masonic brethren were involved to cover up for the prince by murdering the woman and the female friends she told of the illegitimacy. Secondly, although the chalk writing seemed obscure and even incoherent, the apron next to the writing is a common characteristic of Freemasonry, as they ritually wore work aprons, establishing a form of Masonic identification. People further speculated that because the police erased the message off of the wall before photographing or documenting it, they were somehow covering up for the Masons. Aside from these speculations, however, there is no substantial evidence to justify involve Freemasonry in the serial killings.

On a much lighter note, the third theory proposed against Freemasonry occurred as early as the late eighteenth century. During this time, the symbols and emblems of the Masons were being "emblazoned everywhere, even on jewelry, furniture, and table settings belonging to Masons and many non-Masons as well" (Tolson 30). Non-Masons saw the fraternity's symbols on everything and were extremely intimidated by Masonic popularity with authoritative public figures. Such fears led to suspicion when it was proposed that the Great Seal contained Masonic symbols. This was partially due to the fact that the symbols in the Great Seal were somewhat obscure in their meaning and representation. However, Benjamin Franklin was the only Masonic member on the Seals Committee, and his ideas for the project were reportedly unused.

All conspiracy theories aside, the concept of Freemasonry and its rituals are often thought intriguing on their own. Even today, the fraternity is made up of symbols, hierarchies, and ceremonies, while continually making contributions to society. Freemasonry is a complex brotherhood, rich with ancient meaning and a dramatic air. From symbolic work aprons to academic honors, the attributes of the society are rich with significance.

The apron, originally leather, is used to symbolize the laborer of society, thus receiving the achievement of being a servant or hard worker, and a man of great skill (Clawson 78). The apron expresses the identity of a servant or student of science and industry. The aprons were eventually worn turned upside down to distinguish themselves from other everyday laborers, although this was viewed by some as "clear snobbery and a betrayal" (Clawson 79). Some lodges began wearing armor and carrying swords to symbolize the idea of the Knights Templar, with whom they were largely associated (Clawson 80).

The rituals of each lodge varied greatly. Some were more inclusive toward lower income members, with initiations that were light-hearted and even humorous. Others depended much more heavily upon the hierarchy of their system and the financial position of its members. In one ritual in particular, during the initiation of the Master Mason, the initiate pretends to be Hiram Abif, reenacting the legendary Mason's torture and murder for not giving away Masonic secrets (Clawson 81). At the end of the role play, the initiate is symbolically raised from the grave, so that he rises in the new life of a Master Mason. This physical enactment of loyalty is a rite of the Third Degree and is one of the more dramatic rituals, though certainly not the only one.

While Freemasonry is often tied closely to the darkness of secrets, suspicions, and conspiracies, it may also be viewed in a much more noble perspective. Students of numerous schools have been privileged with a seat in a Masonic Lodge and presented with an honor of achievement. The Masons have built up a reputation for academic support and community service, often having a large part in nurturing the education system and many other central aspects of our society. To simply write the fraternity off as corrupt or occult would be to give in to the potency of rumor and ignorance. The Freemasons may justly be viewed as a brotherhood that is ancient, yet ever-changing, obscure, yet prestigious, and feared, yet magnanimous. Perhaps beneath the surface of our society there lies a world of ancient secrets, or perhaps as Benjamin Franklin said, there biggest secret "is that they have no secret at all" (Tolson 30).

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The Forest of the Damned by Aaron Buchanan

The year is 1881. There is a man walking in a field just outside of his house. Upon the edge of that field comes he to the entrance of a forest that no memory can recall. For even though he had walked this field once a day for the last fifteen years never had he come across this deep, dark forest. Curious as he is, tentatively does he enter. From first footfall he knew that different this journey would be. For the moment he crossed the barrier and turned back; the world behind him vanished. The light of the bright midday sun replaced by what little moonlight could fight its way through the vast canopy of trees above. The sound of birds chirping replaced by the calls of beasts unknown and the mournful woes of what one could only assume to be lost souls left to linger.

Panic grips the man as he stands trembling and wandering where he is and how to escape. The sound of a beast startles him. His palms become sweaty. Suddenly, as if lead by something unseen, he takes a step forward; his foot falling on the soft ground below. Squinting to see what lies ahead of him, what he sees is only forest. Suddenly pair of eyes appear, as two fireflies floating in the air do they glow moving ever closer towards him. As they draw nigh the mangled hairy form of a large beast becomes visible. But it attacks not. Instead it veers to its right, and from some distance off does it wait. Cautiously does he take his next step aware that in the distance stalk him this beast does. Aware that with every step it follows.

On he walks through the forest. His way does he make, pushing past branches that impede him. He stops as if whispered words had told him to do so. Slowly he descends, sliding down a ledge that only moments ago he would have fallen down had he continued. He looks to the left hearing claws scraping as slowly those ominous eyes ascend what he can only guess is a tree. A long, loud, and eerie howl fills the night air. From the beast that stalks him did it come. And from somewhere off in the distant forest

was that call returned. The terror in him rises as the fear of there possibly being more of those foul creatures becomes real.

Pressing on, trying to calm the fear inside, he comes upon a hollow black cave wherein he hears crying. Hopeful that another resides within the forest, slowly he enters. Inside on a rock sits a young woman with a strange glow emanating from her, sobbing into her hands. This strange glow is what illuminates the cave making it possible for him to see. Slowly she looks up, and although surprised to see another, with a sure voice she spoke unto him: "Who are you that you enter without permission? And by what means did you enter this forest?"

And he said unto her: "Forgive me this intrusion, for I knew not that my entry would cause offense. And by what means did I enter the forest, I know not either. For one moment I was standing in a field a thousand times before had I roamed when suddenly I was here. But if you will, please thy name give unto me so that I may ask forgiveness for my intrusion."

She wiped at the tears on her face, and slowly she arose and finally said: "Isabelle. And it is I who must seek your forgiveness. For you see it's been almost a century and a half since last I had a visitor." The mans mouth fell open.

Then regaining his composure he asked her: "I'm sorry, but did you just say that you've been here fore a century and a half? By what means is that possible?"

A smile appeared on her face and she replied: "No. I've been here for over a thousand years. Which is as far back as I can recall. But I haven't had a visitor in the last century and a half. And it is possible for I am neither alive, nor am I dead. But still I linger here."

The man, so shocked was he that he had to take a seat on a rock opposite the one Isabelle had only moments ago risen from. Placing his head in his hands, and resting his elbows on his knees, he spoke though his words were muffled. "Do you know the way out of this forest?"

She drew closer to the man, and looking down upon him said: "If thou dost wish it. Then I will guide you." She headed towards the entrance of the cave, and turned back to beckon him that he should follow. He arose from his place on the rock and followed her back out into the immense forest engulfed by the night.

After traveling on for hours she turned to speak to the man. "You must beware the creatures of the forest for they are among the foulest known to man." And he said in reply to her: "Yes, I know. Upon my arrival I'm afraid I had an encounter with a rather gangly, yet never the less still terrifying beast with the most menacing, glowing eyes." Off in the night they could hear the beast still following.

On they continued, through the forest when suddenly Isabelle stopped. "Stay close unto me." She said to the man. Standing directly next to her, frightened unto death

the man waited as slowly the silence turned into a low chant. As the chant became louder, only then did the man realize that this can't possibly be a human language. Suddenly Isabelle was snatched up by the throat. But there was nothing holding her. Only darkness.

Slowly emerged the figure of a giant of a man holding tight Isabelle in his right hand. He turned to the man who is standing still, for in fear he is frozen. He had the legs of a goat, and the body of a man. The face hideous, his mouth open revealing razor like teeth. Its eyes glowed the color of red with two horns protruding from his skull. The skin of his face having long ago been burned away. It turned back to the figure of Isabelle, who to the man appears helpless in the grasp of this evil looking creature. The thing leaned in close to Isabelle's ear and in that strange language he spoke to her. Releasing her, the creature turned on the man. Just before it reached him there is a bright, blinding light accompanied by the voice of Isabelle, who in that strange language she speaks. With eyes burning from the brightness the man fell unconscious to the ground.

He awakened to see the figure of the neither dead, nor alive Isabelle above him. Stunned by what he had just witnessed he spoke unto her. "What manner of creature was that?"

She smiled at the man before she replied: "Azriel. He comes here often from the third section of the seventh circle. I've sent him back."

"Back where?" asked the man. And she replied: "To the seventh circle."

"Of what?" he asked.

"Hell." She replied. "Come. We must continue on."

So on they press again through the forest. And so it was that for two hours they continued on; the forest growing thicker with every step. Then appeared to them a light, so small was it that scarcely he would have noticed it, had it not been flying round his head non-stop. Swat at it thrice he did before speaking about it unto Isabelle. "What is this light that round my head it doth fly being ever bothersome?"

And she turned to him saying: "Ah let it bother you no more fore it is only the fairy spirit Loki. And I am sure that he is only curious."

The man looked at Isabelle and said unto her. "A fairy? What is this fairy, called Loki, who did only moments ago trouble me? Where is he? For I would very much like his fellowship." And then the man did unto the darkness beckon, calling out to the fairy spirit Loki.

And then to the mans left, from some feet above, a voice did speak unto them saying: "Why calleth unto me, using mine own name, a man who never before in this forest have I seen?"

And the man turned round to face the spirit proper saying: "So you are the fairy spirit Loki? It is a pleasure for never have I met such a magical creature as thee."

The fairy dropped his chin unto his chest and with bitterness in his voice he said: "Magic have I not! For my clan has banished and taken from me my magical powers. For my adventurous spirit did they punish me, saying '*Loki. You know the laws set forth by the elders. No one spirit shall the colony he leave, lest he forfeit his magic, and misery shall become him, for never again shall he reunite with his spirit brethren.*' And leave them I did. I wanted to explore the forest. See other creatures, species, and all the life of the forest. For in a '*Good*' fairies life he would be lucky just to meet a fairy chief from another colony. Well, pooh on that says I! Well I must be on my way. More exploring have I to do." And as quickly as all of this happened, even quicker still was it over. And again Isabelle said to the man, "Come. There is more to see."

Not long had they been continuing on when Isabelle stopped as if listening to something. She turned to the man and said: "I must ask you to remain where you are. Fear not. For I will return." After having spoken these words to him, right before his eyes she vanished. To the mans own horror he realized that he was now standing in the forest, just as he had arrived. Alone. But the horror of it all didn't have much time to sink in, for the next thing the man heard was not the silence of the forest, but the sound of a twig snapping behind him, followed by a low growling sound that made his heart sink. He quickly spun round only to see the large, hairy, and terrifying beast that had stalked him since his first moment in this strange forest.

The beast rose, standing on its hind legs to almost twice the full size of the man. The dog-like beast used its front paws with long sharp claws to swipe at the man in attack. Ripping the material of his shirt and the flesh of his chest. The man fell to the ground. Then all of the sudden, appearing from out of thin air, Isabelle stood between the wolf and the man. Turning round the beast quickly fled and disappeared into the woods. Isabelle turned as the man painfully got to his feet. She placed her hands where the beast's claws had torn the flesh, and soon after the wounds were healed. "I must apologize for my absence. And to answer any questions, let me say only that that was Wolfsbaine. He arrived not long ago, a man as did you. But the light of this full moon hath changed him." And slowly the word "Werewolf" escaped the mans lips.

"Yes," began Isabelle "and forever since hath he remained so. For never does the sun rise here. The moon and the night dominate this land."

And the man speaking unto her said: "Curious. Now if you will; please tell me where did thou go?"

Looking down on him she smiled before she answered saying: "To meet with my master, for he beckoned me to come to him." The man looked at her puzzled.

"Master? Who is thy master?"

And Isabelle said to him: "The one who created me."

Not just me, but everything. All worlds, planets, and every form of life are made possible by my master."

And the man said: "You mean God?" She nodded in reply. "And what did he say to you?"

She paused before answering, "'Well done my child. Enter in.' But after this I did ask but one thing of my master. That I be able to return to bid ye farewell. And this wish my master did grant unto me."

The man then asked: "Farewell? But the way out you still have yet to show me." And for the first time in all that she could remember, Isabelle felt pity. She felt sorry for the man. For she knew what he would ask her next. As his head fell forth, swallowing a great gulp of air, he asked: "There is no way out. Is there?"

Isabelle waited, quietly letting silence be his answer. And as she waited, when she blinked a tear trailed down her cheek. And as the man stood staring, slowly the figure of Isabelle began to fade. And just as the field by which he entered had vanished, leaving him alone in a dark and dangerous forest. So too did Isabelle.

Failure to Prepare by Thea Dean

School officials have made great strides beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic since I graduated almost thirty years ago. There is better understanding today of how there is more to education than just the basic 3R's than there were in 1978. Having attended a small town public high school left me totally unprepared for college not only academically but financially and psychologically as well. I must admit that I could have put more effort into preparing myself but unfortunately we were lacking many advantages that are common place to the educational system today such as counselors, financial advisors, and a more accepting attitude that higher education is for everyone not just the privileged.

Any public school is defined by the community that funds it, the town my high school was located in continued year after year voting no to all school bond requests even though our buildings were falling in and the auditorium was condemned. Shortage of funds affected all aspects and quality of my school, not only buildings but all manner of supplies and staff. This lack of caring and support by the community plants seeds of doubt and unworthiness in an already fragile mind.

Teens need all the understanding, support and guidance you can give them. Perhaps a counselor could have seen that I was just a young girl confused by issues at home, crippled with shyness and in great need of guidance. Simple instruction in how to organize, research and study could have helped tremendously. Instead without any effort on their part to try to refute the notion I was written off as

a ne'er-do-well not worth taking the time and trouble to help.

Sadly my school and even worse the entire community could have been used as text book examples in class discrimination. Unfortunately if you were not from a rich or prominent family, involved in athletics, a cheerleader, or blessed with popularity, some teachers ignore you and just pass you on through instead of trying to find out what is going on with you so they can help you or direct you to someone who could - this practice could not be blamed on over crowding as most classes rarely if ever went over twenty-five students. One teachers blatant preferential treatment was shown with a term paper assignment. My mother spent somewhere between \$30 and \$50, money she could ill afford, to rent a typewriter for me to do this paper on, I worked very hard doing the best job I could and getting it turned in on time. At the end of the semester me and a few others who all knew we were not favorites of this teacher found out he had not even bothered to look at our papers much less grade them. This was extremely upsetting as well as discouraging, without feedback from him how was I to know if I had done the assignment right in the future when faced with a similar project?

The feelings of doubt and unworthiness continue to fuel insecurities and shyness. Some teachers interpret these as slow-witted and/or laziness. Once they have labeled you as dumb and/or lazy then they see no reason in having to help prepare you for college. When I was in school either people did not realize or chose to ignore that the more a person hears derogatory things about themselves the more they will believe it themselves and will live up to the expectations set by others for them.

Due to not learning some basic steps in math in early elementary school I was behind and could never catch up again through my entire elementary and high school years. I had one good teacher in the seventh and eighth grades who tried very hard to help me, but just did not understand that what I needed was to go all the way back to the beginning and learn the basics so I could advance my math skills. Due to this lack of understanding the problem and inability to overcome it I developed the excuse that I had a mental block that prevented me from being able to do math. And of course the old standby, "what do I need to know this for, I'll never use it". However I was able to scrape by with D's and get passed through and graduate, but while doing so the constant stress of not knowing how to do the work, fear of being called on in class, the humiliation of bad grades and dealing with my mother over the bad grades lead to a deep depression. Along with this depression came apathy; why should I care when no one else does; I'm just too dumb to learn; why bother; feelings of worthlessness that have at times overwhelmed and threatened to destroy me. But thanks to my husband and daughters love and support I have been able to overcome them.

Now almost thirty years later and a lifetime of struggles, bad jobs and self-examination I have the opportunity to return to school with a new attitude and greater determination to succeed. Fortunately for me I got a basic math instructor who understood why I was having problems learning math, with his skillful guidance I was at last able to conquer my life long fear, loathing and inability to do math. Currently I am making a B in Elementary Algebra - a feat I never dreamed was possible before and encourages me in my ability to succeed in college.

Although there are more opportunities today than thirty years ago - we have counselors, the internet, telephone hotlines, and more - the heaviest burden of responsibility of seeing that the student receives help lies with school officials. Students who receive the help and guidance they need in high school and can continue on to college benefits not just the student but society at large. But there must be changes made to our educational system to better prepare students who know they will not be going to college for a trade with more extensive technical training. Whether a student is aiming for college or a trade every aspect must be seen to, to ensure each and every child regardless of race, religion, athletic ability, financial or class distinction receives the best education possible.

Family Life In The Military by Linda Qualls

Today, people in America join the military for many different reasons, such as patriotism, the results of 9/11, a steady paycheck, or the hope to pay for a college degree. But, if a family is involved one must think of how it will affect them. With frequent moves and separation from dad or mom, will a parent be there to help get through it? How will you and your spouse handle things? One needs to examine before taking that big step toward joining the military. Dad joined the military because he needed a job and there were not many opportunities open to him in civilian life. In the military he knew he would have a steady paycheck, be able to put food on the table, and pay the bills, so his choice was to join the Navy. Dad's decision to join the military had many different effects on our family life. So, at the ripe old age of two years old, I was off for the adventures of my life as a military kid.

Military life can be easy and fun, or it can be arduous and not so fun; it all depends on how your parents present it to you. Our parents made sure there would always be a parent at home, and wherever my dad would be stationed he made sure we went with him. Separation for the family was hard, but it was probably harder on Dad because he would be gone for months at sea without his family. Communication was not as advanced as it is today. There were no phones or e-mail, just snail mail, and it was snail mail. We would not hear from Dad for months and then we

would get 6-10 letters at a time would put them in order and read them to us. My Dad experienced the same lag time in mail delivery. Sometimes months would pass by before receiving any letters.

When Dad would come home from a deployment, we always celebrated. We would make banners and signs that said "WELCOME HOME"! This part was always fun, plus we would experience an early Christmas. We would receive gifts from everywhere my dad's ship would dock, like Turkey and Spain. I know my Dad missed out on a lot of growing-up moments, but my brother and I knew it was his job. His absence at birthdays, school function, never bothered or hurt us, because we knew he loved us. He always wrote to us, and made sure where he was stationed the family could go and be near him. This act of love meant more to us than words could say.

One of the things that made this military family work was Mother's decision to stay at home with the kids. Mom carried a lot on her shoulders, such as making out the budget, paying the bills, taking care of all repairs for the house and the car, and acting as both mother and father. She was always strong for us. In fact, I do not believe I ever saw her cry when things got tough, not to say she did not let her true emotions show when we were not around. Her job was to keep the family together and emotionally stable.

When it was time for us to move, Mom would take care of all the details. When we went to the Philippines; she was in charge of the packing, the passports, making sure everyone had their immunization shots and the responsibility of traveling across the Pacific with two children. I would call this woman courageous.

Of course, not all aspects of a military life are rosy. Making friends is difficult since you move a lot, and you are always being uprooted. I was luckier than some since we mostly stayed in Southern California stateside or spent time over seas. I spent two years in school in California, three years in the Philippines, six years back in California, two years in Italy, and one year in Oklahoma where my Dad retired. Some kids had to move more than once in a year, which was really difficult. Because of the stability that my parents gave us, moving was much easier for my brother and me.

The better moments were the places I got to see and live. How many kids can say they lived in a house next to a jungle and had boa constrictors and wild pigs come into their yard, or to be sixteen and seventeen and live in Italy? I know of people who save for a life time just to travel to Rome once. I had opportunities most kids have not had. I have been to Rome five times; seen the works of Michelangelo, visited the Parthenon in Greece, and lived by the ocean in California. I have met wonderful and unique people. Military life for this family has been a grand adventure that we will always keep in our hearts and in our memories.

This life is not for everyone, and if this is the road you wish to take it might be wise to weigh all your options. Do you want to be married? How will it affect your kids? Will they benefit from it? Military life is just like any job you take. Go into it with a positive attitude, a flexible plan, and you may just like the adventures that lay ahead.

Pablo by Jessica Isaacs

Pablo stood apart from the other children with his head down, cautiously glancing from child to child through his heavy, crow-black bangs draping his forehead like a mourning veil. The playground was a storm of lightning fast, tennis-shoe-clad boys and girls, all Pablo's age, but all several shades lighter than he. The children zipped past Pablo without a single glance – all part of the electricity of the playground, a self-regenerative electricity fed by the screams and laughter of privileged children. These were strong children who would go home to after school strawberry cupcakes with sprinkles, eat dinners of chicken nuggets with ketchup, green beans, and macaroni and cheese, maybe drink root beer, too, and lick ice cream cones, and then take bubble baths with cotton candy scented bubbles, listen to soft mother voices read stories about baby birds and big red tractors, and then fall into untroubled sleep in comfortable, clean smelling beds, tucked in by their fathers and protected by their teddy bear sentries and guardian angels beckoned by their nighttime prayers.

Pablo stuck his hand into his shorts pocket to make sure the hot roll he saved from his lunch hadn't crumbled into a million pieces. Today was his first day of school. He hadn't wanted to come, but Grandmother said he had to.

"Anyway," she said over the cigarette in her lips, "you'll get a free lunch. Breakfast too."

So, Pablo met the bus on the corner at 6:30 this morning. He had been cold, standing outside in the chill, damp morning air, the wet grass soaking his worn out canvas shoes. He'd wished he had a jacket, but Grandmother said when the social worker dropped him off last week that she didn't drop any clothes with him except the shirt on his back.

"Damn that woman!" Grandmother rasped, her coughing fits worsened by her rage. "How am I supposed to buy you clothes?"

Grandmother had coughed a few more times, and then she drug Pablo down to the local church and rummaged through the charity closet until she found three pairs of shorts, one with bleach stains and one missing a button, and two t-shirts without too many holes in them.

"This'll do till winter gets here," Grandmother puffed as she pulled the shirts over Pablo's head one on top of the other to make sure they fit well enough.

Pablo didn't like those clothes, but they would have to do. They were all he had. He certainly had no jacket or superman shirt like the kids on the playground playing kickball. He didn't even have a change of underwear or fresh socks.

"People don't see those, no how," Grandmother had said.

So, Pablo had gone without. Most days, Pablo wore no underwear – but today was his first day of school and Grandmother had rinsed his underwear out in the kitchen sink and hung them on the bathroom doorknob to dry just so he could wear them today.

"Better wear'em," she hacked, "or that damn social worker will take you away from *me*, and then who knows who the hell will want you."

Grandmother had been too asleep this morning to help Pablo get dressed for school, but Pablo put the underwear on, too ashamed not to, and too afraid of his grandmother's hell. He couldn't risk landing in another white woman's house and getting in her way again. "Pablo wasn't clean enough," his last foster mother had said to the social worker, "he just has too many cultural differences."

Pablo was six. He didn't even know what "cultural differences" were – but he knew that he was different from that white woman's children. They always had nice new clothes, and he always had to wear the ones they didn't want anymore, the ones with the stains and holes. They always got nice new toys, and Pablo got their old broken ones that were missing parts. They always started the fights, and Pablo always got the punishment. His last punishment had been the call to the social worker that kicked him out of the house altogether.

After he had endured three months at the group home with mean boys twice his age trying to corner him in the bathroom, Grandmother finally agreed to take him. Grandmother had never wanted him before.

"Don't have the money," she'd always grumble when one of Pablo's foster mothers would let him call Grandmother on the telephone, "you're my grandson, though."

That was the closest thing Grandmother ever said to I love you – "you're my grandson, though," and Pablo clung to those words. They were all he had. Yes, Pablo was her grandson.

So, when the social worker notified Grandmother that Pablo had been kicked out of another foster home, and suggested that Grandmother was Pablo's last hope because she at least would understand his "cultural differences," Grandmother said, "Well, how old is he now?"

And when the social worker said that Pablo was old enough for school and Grandmother wouldn't have to watch him or feed him during the day, Grandmother figured the least she could do was give the boy a place to sleep. That was the least she could do, and that was about all she

did, except to remind Pablo that he was her grandson and that she was his last chance.

Pablo figured he'd make the best of it he could. He'd never been a troublemaker, usually just kept to himself, but kids always seemed to want to pick on him, anyway.

This time, Pablo thought, I'll just stay where they can't see me. I'll make myself invisible, and Pablo tried to hide his different skin tone, his hunger, his urge to run and play and belong, in the shadows of the schoolhouse, praying the electric children would not notice him or the hot roll in his pocket.

Yet, just as Pablo flattened his back against the cold, shadowed brick of the school building, the kickball the electric children had been playing with flew over to Pablo and landed at his feet. Pablo tried to resist picking it up, but he was only six, and six-year-old boys are drawn to balls like metal to magnets. Pablo bent to pick up the ball, and the hot roll in his pocket fell out onto the dusty ground. Pablo reached for the hot roll, but a child's foot stomped his hand. Pablo stood, dazed, shoving his injured hand into his pocket and holding the kickball with his other arm.

"Yuck! What do you want that old thing for?" a well-dressed boy sneered at Pablo, and ground the hot roll into the dirt. "Give me back my ball!" the boy shouted. He kicked Pablo, snatched the ball, and ran away, absorbed effortlessly by the playground's hum.

Pablo stood there, shocked, burned by the electricity of the playground. His hand throbbed, his leg ached, his head stung – he could not even cry. Pablo stood in the shadow of the school building for the rest of the day staring at his ruined hot roll. No teacher ever noticed him.

When the buses came to take the children home, Pablo stood silently, invisibly, in line to board the bus, walked silently, invisibly to the back of the bus, and rode silently, invisibly to Grandmother's house.

Pablo half wished Grandmother would be home when he got off the bus, but she wasn't. He'd known she wouldn't be. She spent her days at the casino and never came home until Pablo was asleep. He'd tried to wait up for her once; he'd been hungry and hoped she would cook dinner when she got home, but when she arrived and he asked for dinner, she just slapped him and sent him to bed. So, Pablo didn't wait up for her anymore. Pablo was too scared to tell her he was hungry.

If only he still had that hot roll –

But he didn't. He didn't have anything except the burn from the playground.

The next morning, Pablo stayed in bed, cold without pajamas and only a thin, worn-out sheet for covering. The bus stopped at Grandmother's house, but since Pablo wasn't waiting in the wet grass, the bus drove on. Grandmother woke at noon and went straight to the casino, never noticing Pablo was still in his bed. Pablo's teacher never noticed Pablo wasn't in school. The electric children

peacefully hummed their playground vibrations, completely unaware Pablo had been shocked out of existence. No one had ever wanted Pablo, and little Pablo, all alone in the empty house, finally cried until he couldn't.

I'm invisible, sobbed Pablo, and no one even noticed.

So, he simply stayed in his sparse bed, fading further away by the hour, desperately wishing someone would see him.

Female Sex Offenders: Penalty Increases Imperative by Thea Dean

Society sanctions the molestation of adolescent males. In the last few decades child molestation has at last been brought out into the open. As a result, extensive research has made great strides in the treatment of victims, as well as a larger number of molesters being not only brought to trial, but convicted as well. However, society has been slower in acknowledging the harm done to adolescent boys by older women. Only recently due to high profile cases like Mary Kay Letourneau, Sarah Bench-Salorio, and closer to home, Elisa Nielson, has public opinion begun to accept that women having sex with adolescent boys is molestation, just as damaging as men with adolescent girls. The disparity in sentencing between male and female offenders is evidence that not only the public but the judicial system as well has continued to deny this is molestation, not a rite of passage. Penal sentences for female sexual offenders must be increased to a comparable level with men's.

The sentences women offenders are receiving are just not comparable to men's. For example; Phillip Padilla of Van Meter, Iowa, was sentenced to twelve years for third degree sexual abuse and sexual exploitation by a counselor, therapist or school employee. Padilla confessed sexual involvement with a fourteen year old student (Lett). Another case in Concord, New Hampshire, involved Kevin Marquis, who admitted having sexual contact with two girls, one fifteen and the other fourteen. He was sentenced to ten years with two years added unless he completes the prisoner sex offender program (Teacher Sentenced). These sentences reflect the consensus: sex with adolescents is wrong and must be punished accordingly. However, when the abuser is female and the victim is male, the penalty is rarely more than a slap on the wrist.

Elisa Dawn Nielson appealed her first sentence in Grady County, Oklahoma. Associate District Judge John E. Herndon sentenced her to twenty years, ten to serve and ten on probation for sexually molesting an adolescent on her YMCA basketball team. Although she had admitted guilt, at retrial Commanche County District Judge C. Allen McCall sentenced her to time served, 459 days, plus twelve years suspended with two years supervised and registering as a sex offender only through probation plus ten years.

This sentence allowed her to freely leave the court house (Clarke). Is this woman's victim any less deserving of reparation than Padilla's or Marquis'? No matter what part of the country, the attitude is the same, a woman can abuse young boys all she wants and face hardly any repercussions.

In Los Angeles, Sarah Bench-Salorio, plead guilty to lewd acts with three boys aged twelve to fourteen. She had sex with two of them according to testimony during the preliminary hearing. She was sentenced to six years and must register as a sex offender for life. Allan Stokke, her lawyer said she could have been sentenced for up to sixty-four years if they had gone to trial (Lopez). Bench-Salorio had sex with two adolescent boys and received six years while Marquis, having had sex with two adolescent girls, was sentenced to ten to twelve years. More evidence of the denial of the harm these female molesters inflict upon their young victims. However, perhaps concepts and attitudes will change now more victims are coming forward due to an infamous case that has been playing out over the last ten years.

Seattle, May 1997: Mary Kay Letourneau gave birth to a daughter fathered by her "soul mate", Vili Fualaau, one of her twelve year old students. After pleading guilty to child rape, she confessed her actions were wrong and she needed help. She was sentenced to seven years, to serve three months under conditions. One condition was to never have contact with Fualaau again. Letourneau was released in January 1998, but by February 3, police caught her in a compromising situation in a car with Fualaau. She was returned to prison for seven and one half years for child rape. Back in prison Letourneau found she was pregnant again, and continued trying to contact Fualaau. One attempt to sneak letters out to him earned her six months in solitary confinement. Mary Kay Letourneau was released from prison on August 4, 2004, at age forty-two. Within two days Fualaau had the "no-contact" order removed, and they could legally visit at last (Montaldo). Less than one year later, with their daughters acting as flower girls, on May 20, 2005, Mary Kay Letourneau and her "soul mate" Vili Fualaau were married (Intimate View). Would the outcome be the same if Letourneau had been incarcerated longer, and had no contact with him? Would he still have wanted to marry her if he had the opportunity to grow, mature, and decide for himself how he felt, without her influence? Only time will tell how this marriage will play out, or the affects this affair will have on Fualaau, and their children as well. The repercussions of this woman's actions will continue to be felt for generations to come. And as long as there is no fear of personal punishment or deprivation, these women will continue molesting.

Female sexual offender's punishment must be equal to that of their male counterparts. Male or female, the damage inflicted is the same; adolescent children are not

physically, psychologically, or emotionally mature enough to have sexual relations. Nor do they themselves come to understand this until years later when they have grown to adulthood. It is the job of all adults, be they in authority positions such as parent, guardian, teacher, police, or just a member of the community, to guard and protect all children and adolescents from harm. Author and sex counselor, Douglas Weiss, executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Centers in Colorado Springs, told The Washington Times, the feelings garnered from sexual molestation are guilt, shame, and feelings of being alone, even more so than before. (Wetzstein) On December 22, 2005, Vili Fualaau was stopped by police in Sea Tac, Washington for speeding and was arrested for drunken driving (Stritof). Is this young man coping with his past, as well as his present situation? Will there be more incidents such as this in his future? If so, how will it affect his marriage and children? In Hammonton, New Jersey, fifteen year old Jason Eickmeyer was a champion wrestler with hopes of advancing to a Division I school, until he was seduced by gym teacher, Traci Tapp, 26. His grades dropped, he quit wrestling, and was suspended from school. Tapp plead guilty to "offensive touching." Her penalty was a \$225 fine and being barred from teaching in public schools in New Jersey. No jail time at all. Jason contends, if she was male and he was female, she would have received the highest penalties (Female Sex Offenders). As long as antiquated, sexist ideals continue to govern the judicial system, these and future generations of young boys will continue to suffer damage at the hands of female sexual predators.

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Boogers by Natasha Gibbs

The grassy land passed as a constant murky blur through the car window before Bri's eyes, along with the memories. Her eyes took in the creeping shadows and the dazzling dark sky as her lungs inhaled the humid night air and her mind the scene of a night that occurred only two weeks ago- the night that Bri walked with Robert beneath the same enchanting sky.

The monotonous sound of the Walkers' van engine droned along as Krista said, "Dad, can we listen to the radio?" Bri turned the warm can of Sierra Mist in her hands as she watched Krista drink the rest of hers. Bri took a sip and almost gagged. She vaguely wondered if her friend's pop tasted as flat as hers.

Bri heard the "oldies" station grow louder, but found herself unable to identify the song that began to play. On the contrary, Krista began to sing loudly to all the words she knew and some she did not know. The two girls and Krista's parents laughed and teased each other as they all tried to sing or listen to Krista's voice.

This continued for several songs until they began to lose the station, at which point the driver and three passengers began to lose their patience and the radio got turned off. Bri wondered if the church vans still followed closely behind them. She then noticed that she had finally stopped wishing that she hadn't agreed to ride with Krista's mom and dad instead of riding in one of the church vans, which carried most of her friends. She leaned forward in her seat and tried to spot one of the large white vehicles in one of the car's side mirrors, but saw only darkness. Bri sat back and watched Krista dig in her black purse, which matched the shirt she wore. The black blouse had Pink

letters on the right arm that read the label "Abecrombie & Fitch", and a pink shirt beneath it that brought out the freckles on her arms. Krista finally pulled out a nail file and began working on her long, French manicured fingernails. Bri tried to suppress a sudden pang of jealousy and glanced sullenly down at her own chipped, short fingernails and her Clemency Concert tee shirt.

Krista sighed deeply before she said, "I already miss camp!"

"I know. I can't believe we were only there for two days! Everyone seemed so sad about leaving!" Bri said.

Bri watched Krista's mom's plump face light up with interest. Mrs. Walker, unlike Mr. Walker, had a face that glowed with every aspect of her animate character. She wore no make up, though her full lips and round eyes only enhanced her "flower-child" image. Mrs. Walker joined the conversation, elongated eyelashes brushing her eyelids, lengthy brown locks flowing as she moved. "When we were packing up and cleaning the cabin, everyone seemed kinda' down." Mrs. Walker knew every sixty's and seventy's song. Always the first to start a protest and the first to admit it, her eccentric personality never failed her. "Especially Kyle. What's his girlfriend's name?"

"Whitney." Bri answered triumphantly.

"They make a cute couple." said Mrs. Walker.

"I don't want a boyfriend anymore." Krista commented with a wrinkled up nose. "You can't trust boys."

Bri thought she saw a twinkle in Mr. Walker's eye in the rear view mirror, but he stayed silent throughout the "girl talk".

Mrs. Walker turned slightly in her seat and said, "Well, now, there are some pretty cute boys in the youth group, aren't there?"

"Yeah...but the only ones you can trust have girlfriends."

Bri felt that she understood her new friend. They had just become good friends at camp, though they had met before. She met Krista through the charming, good-looking Robert. Actually, she had first thought that he and Krista were "more than friends", but when Robert and Bri began dating, Robert only said that Krista liked him and that he thought she seemed a little strange. However, Bri felt a real connection with Krista, especially concerning the whole "you can't trust boys" theory. She, of course, thought of Robert when she said, "Yeah...they're really...flirty." Surprisingly, Krista's eyes enlarged, head nodding, curly red hair bouncing.

"I know! Especially Robert!" Krista exclaimed.

Bri's head suddenly tilted with curiosity and she failed to keep herself from saying, "Exactly!"

Mrs. Walker turned around in her seat and asked Bri, "You mean he's led you on, too?"

Bri allowed a heavy, grim, laugh to escape her lips when she nodded.

"Oh..." Bri began hesitantly, "we went out a couple of times and then at church he completely ignored me and acted like nothing happened."

Krista's eyes became giant almonds, mouth gaping open, before she said, "He did the same thing to me!"

"Bri, when did you say this happened?" asked Mrs. Walker.

Bri began to feel more comfortable. "The first time? A few months ago. But then he did it again, within the last couple of weeks."

Krista's hand went to her mouth, but Bri heard her gasp.

"He was with Krista last Saturday," said Mrs. Walker.

Bri recalled that Robert asked her out for that Friday, but stood her up. She also remembered the humiliation she felt when her brother told her at the following Sunday's lunch that he had seen Robert at a car show the night before with a girl. "That was you?" she thought at Krista.

"So it all makes sense," said Krista, breaking Bri's train of thought. Bri watched Krista who seemed deep in thought, pale skin tense, rosy lips puffed and pink cheeks reddening with concentration and anger, "he's totally come on to both of us, and then dropped us once he knew that he'd won us over."

The two friends sat thinking about this in silence. The sound of the engine picked up the conversation with its muffled groans. Finally, Bri said, "Girl, we've been played."

In response, Krista shook her head in disbelief, saying, "He told me I was his first girlfriend since fourth grade. He told me that he loved me! He kept calling me! It was *not* the other way around!"

Bri related to her what he told her about Krista being "strange" and having unrequited feelings for him. If these things made Mr. Walker concerned (or if he even listened), he didn't show it. His eyes stayed carefully on the road ahead. Mrs. Walker, however, didn't bother hiding her outrage. "I can't believe that boy! And his mother, all the time tellin' me that he doesn't do anything on the weekends and just stays home all the time." she said, delicate eyebrows raised.

Bri remembered her and Krista following Robert around at camp, each hoping the other wouldn't notice the target of their affections. She remembered Robert teaching her how to play pool, and then inconspicuously letting her win. Then she thought of the way he walked right by her—no, through her, to hang out with all of his friends. She saw in her mind the way his friends looked at her, almost as if they thought of the whole thing as funny. Before now, Bri foolishly thought of that look as envy or acceptance. Yes, "played" was the right word for the way Bri felt, if any word could somehow encompass the intense sinking feeling of humiliation at the pit of her stomach.

During the rest of the ride home, everyone tried to listen to a soft rock radio station. Bri sat in her leather seat,

squished between pillows and ice chests, trying to make the feeling of betrayal and heartache disappear with the stale air that left her lungs. She realized that the air had first left her lungs when she met Robert, and it had never fully returned. She looked at Krista who stared at the back of her mom's seat, arms folded across her chest, legs crossed, and eyes glaring at an invisible Robert. She knew that if she asked her, Krista would help Bri get revenge.

Bri laid her head back and gazed out through the window, searching for something to fill the hole left by Robert and his flattering words. She realized how ridiculous she seemed in spending so much time seeking a serious relationship with Robert— or any boy, for that matter. She suddenly asked herself why she even needed that kind of relationship at her age, a mere sixteen. As she thought back on how her life got turned upside down by Robert over the last few weeks, she finally gave up trying to find a reasonable answer. Her reflection in the blackened window gazed back at her with a look of gentle reproach.

For the first time in her life, Bri felt that she understood why so many adults told her and her friends to avoid "serious" relationships. She realized that she had a lot of growing up to do before she even needed to know what "serious" meant, and that was okay.

By the time the van pulled into the church parking lot, Bri had decided to give up revenge and saw that Krista, who had just woken up from a nap, had also decided to drop the notion.

Bri took her first deep breath as she and Krista stepped out of the parked van in time to see Robert standing behind his car with his luggage at his feet and his car keys in one hand, picking his nose with the other.

Hero by Jacob Hutson

In times past, in a land far distant from here, there was a small kingdom that lived in turmoil. The good people of those lands were beset by dozens of foul monsters and beasts that roamed the fields and forests in the search of food and plunder. For many years, these devils and demons ruled those lands with evil kings being their vassals. Enslavement, famine, and death was all that one could hope for in that place, for there was nothing but darkness that swelled amongst the populace.

But lo there came a glint of light that shied away the black. A hero, born into a time of need, who had the blood of an ancient line of kings flowing through his veins but also raised in poverty, was destined to lead the good peoples of those lands to glory. It is said that the hero was over ten feet tall and could crush a man's skull in between his thumb and forefinger. Others would say that the hero was so strong, that he could pick up boulders as if they were mere pebbles and hurl them great distances. He wielded a lance that was carved from a mighty and ancient tree, and carried a shield which depicted the emblems of the old kingdoms. It was said that he rode upon a great and noble lion whom he had beaten in mortal combat. It was this hero who began to liberate the good people from their enslavement and slay the evil kings that worshiped devils.

The hero went on to hunt down the monsters and beasts that plagued the land. He slew a great dragon with a single thrust from his lance, he felled many a giant with his divine strength, and it was said that he could even kill a great winged serpent with a single shot from his mighty bow. The hero hunted the beasts of the land, sea, and even the air, to bring the foul creatures to justice. It didn't take long for the hero to vanquish every single beast and evil man that wallowed in his homeland, ushering in a golden age of peace.

Legend grew with the hero's exploits, and stories of his greatness reached far and wide. He was welcome in every home, considered a hero by all. They used to say that even the noble and wise kings, who replaced the evil ones, would kneel before the great hero who had brought their lands out of darkness. Great festivals and celebrations were held in the hero's honor, and he even became a model for citizenship to the kingdom. Titles were given, claiming the hero to have the rights to several thrones or governorship over many cities, but the hero never sought out such titles. Instead, the hero claimed a small plot of land in which to live out the rest of his days in peace. The golden age would continue for some time.

As it was said before, the hero's fame was spread across the world, and just happened to find the ears of other beasts and devils that lived far away. Upon hearing of hero's exploits, many devils and evil men set out in search

of this hero so that they may crush him and smother out the light that he had cast upon the world. When the monsters came to his land once again, the hero jumped to protect his homeland. Although the hero had stated that he much wanted to live in peace, he did so miss the days of his former glory. Great wars and battles were waged against the evil monsters and men that had come to the noble kingdom, and with the great hero at the forefront of every engagement the beasts were driven back to whatever hell had spawned them.

The years of war and death had taken their toll upon the small kingdom, and the people were ready for peace once again. But before they could rest, they turned back to find the causes of the recent atrocities. It would seem that they would all stem from a single source, the hero. Quickly, the people of the kingdom placed the blame of the past years of strife solely upon the greatest hero who ever lived. It was after all, his fault that the monsters had even come to their lands to bring death, it was by the fault of a man who had only done what was right to do. No one knows exactly why the hero was so quickly blamed, for he was practically the sole source of evil's departure, but many would think that the people were looking for something to justify why their relatives and kin had died. They couldn't seem to conceive the thought that it was by the fault of the evil creatures from distant lands that their lands were consumed in blood, and not at all by the fault of the noble hero. Nevertheless, the hero had his titles, lands, and love from the people stripped away. The hero, somehow betrayed by the people he was trying to help, retired, sentenced to never bear arms in "defense" of the kingdom ever again.

It wasn't long after, when the memory of the terrible conflicts were still fresh in everyone's mind, did a lone giant wander into the kingdom. Coming from a great distance, the giant never heard of the hero, and was in fact lost from months of pillaging, but that wouldn't stop the people of the lands to point their fingers at the hero and exclaim, "It is he who has brought the giant here." The hero, despite his sentence, donned his armor and weapons to ride out against the giant in defense of his people. The giant was slain before it could do any damage to kingdom, but the once wise and noble kings took the opportunity to use this incident as a stepping stone to get rid of the troublesome hero. They convinced the people that it had to have been the hero who brought the giant, hoping to reclaim his lost fame and titles. It was said at that time that the hero was accused of trying to bring other monsters and beasts back into the kingdom so that the people would be lured into thinking that they actually needed the hero to survive. To protect themselves from the hero's lies, he would be condemned to exile in a monastery so that he couldn't endanger the nation through his actions.

Many years would pass with the hero confined to exile before the people would eventually forget the betrayal of their hero and move on with their lives. And with the memory of the hero lost and forgotten, monsters began to crawl back out of darkness to exert their power upon a weakened peoples. Evil men and kings were the next to wield their dark magic, toppling to old kings and building empires from the blood of the goodly people. The people, both noble and humble, begged the hero to return from exile in order to save their nation from enslavement and death. They promised the hero money, lands, titles, and claims upon a united throne. At first the hero refused, preferring to take up a life of pacifism rather than risk losing the support of the people again. But eventually the hero would succumb to the wishes of the people and return to save the kingdom.

Dozens of adventures would be held, years would pass, and eventually the hero succeeded in driving out the monsters once again. Looking to live in the love of the people once again, the hero returned from his exploits, expecting the people to show their appreciation for their savior. Instead, the restored kings thanked the hero, held a single feast in his honor, and then politely asked the hero to return to a self-imposed exile. Outraged, the hero left the kingdom once and for all.

But that wouldn't be the last time the people of the kingdom would hear from their noble hero. While the people were rebuilding from the last rise of monsters, an ancient wyrm came to their kingdom. The wyrm swarmed over the kingdom in a rage, destroying fields and cities as if they were nothing. The people and nobles of the land would set out in search for their hero, pleading for his return and truly sorry for turning their backs on him. But the hero was nowhere to be found, no matter how hard they tried. The kingdom tried one final time to confront the great wyrm that had the lands in disarray, to no end. The people were enslaved by the wyrm, and darkness smothered all the light.

Many years would pass before a small girl would go before the wyrm with a simple question that only a child could pose. The little girl asked, "Why great dragon, do you do this?" The wyrm was intrigued by the question, so brave a person, in so little a form. The dragon told the girl a story of a hero before her time. It told her of how this hero had saved a nation many times, only to be blamed for their many problems. Once, the hero was on a hunt against some foul beast or another when he stumbled into the cave of a mighty dragon. The great wyrm awakened from its centuries of sleep to find a man of great stature before him. To much surprise, neither beast nor hero attacked one another, and instead they exchanged stories. The dragon told of his days of old, plundering and destroying the lands around him in the name of chaos, while the hero told the story of an ungrateful nation that he continued to save.

The two made a pact, as the hero didn't want to slay the ancient dragon, and the wyrm didn't wish to do battle with the noble hero, they decided that if the hero was to return to his homeland in triumph, and not be received as by a grateful nation then the dragon would rise up to deliver the punishment that the nation deserved. The dragon chuckled to himself saying, "If only the nation knew how to better appreciate their heroes."

Women's Role in Society As Depicted in The Awakening by Natasha Gibbs

In a whirlwind of a changing and developing young America, a woman by the name of Kate Chopin wrote a novel. Like the world in which she lived, Chopin's story represented a changing nation, especially on the grounds of society for women. Where did women fit in this evolving world? Chopin answers that question through the voices of Edna Pontellier and other characters in The Awakening. As is common with authors, Chopin uses her personal life experiences and the society in which she lived to create her masterpiece.

Kate Chopin lived from 1850 to 1904, raised by an Irish father and a French-Creole mother (Wyatt). Within her family she was surrounded by women, and more specifically, by widows. Her father died when she was only five years old, which would serve as the beginning of many deaths and sorrows for Chopin to cope with during her life (Wyatt). Her mother's experience with losing her husband has been speculated as perhaps being inspiration for Chopin's short story, "Story of an Hour." Chopin was surrounded by shocking women in her family; her great-great-grandmother experiencing the first divorce of St. Louis history and her grandmother giving birth to fifteen children (Wyatt). Despite the consoling circle of female relationships she had been raised in, by the time Kate Chopin was twenty-four years old, she had lost all of her siblings and began a life of solitude and depression.

These two sentiments, solitude and depression, are shared with Chopin's character Edna Pontellier as she declares to Doctor Mandelet that "periods of despondency and suffering" control her (Chopin 105). What causes these emotions to consume Edna? Perhaps it is the expectations she has to live up to. She is expected to be a submissive, devoted wife, dedicated mother, and quiet woman in her community. She is taught and disciplined to be a gentle, nurturing woman; a role brilliantly portrayed by Adèle Ratignolle. These lessons begin from the time she marries Monsieur Pontellier, "closing the portals forever behind her upon the realm of romance and dreams" (19). Perhaps it is this loss of innocence and childlike faith in the world which causes Edna to suffocate, "to feel again the realities pressing into her soul" (31). It is evident that Edna feels a

very potent desire to resist the culture in which she lives. Throughout *The Awakening*, there is a constant conflict between social structure and the unruly, and sometimes childlike impulses that Edna acts out.

Surprisingly, it is Adèle Ratignolle who partially drives Edna to her rebellion against society. Because Adèle is a Creole woman, and therefore recognized as chaste, she is allowed by their culture to speak openly about intimate and otherwise inappropriate topics. When she and Edna begin to bond, Edna is often exposed to casual but risqué discussions, awakening her forbidden and suppressed desires. As shown through Adèle's influence on Edna, the same form of social restraint that pressures Edna to submit also provokes her into rebellion. Even at the beginning of the novel, Chopin explains Edna's conflicting transition through a series of emotions and profound thoughts:

At that early period it served but to bewilder her. It moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness, to the shadowy anguish which had overcome her the midnight when she had abandoned herself to tears.

In short, Mrs. Pontellier is beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. (14)

Had society and Edna's world lifted the burden of their expectations, Edna may not have committed suicide. Although the novel begins when the protagonist is 28, her story actually starts when she denies herself true love and submits herself to an average, responsible marriage. In doing so, she has ultimately surrendered her creativity, freedom, and sensitivity to the world around her. When she finally does awaken to all of these once buried desires, she finds herself in a prison of propriety and social structure.

This structure and the ideals of her family cause her to give herself up to a life with "no trace of passion," eventually leaving her empty (19). As the amount of

pressure builds, Edna begins to turn to direct forms of rebellion, whether they are the beginning of an affair with Alcée Arobin, going out on Tuesdays, or moving into her own home, declaring complete and defiant independence. In addition, as evidence of the importance of propriety in the Pontellier household, Monsieur Pontellier is almost more upset with Edna not staying home to receive visitors than with any of her other impulses.

In the end, Edna acts on her most self-destructive impulse of all when she decides to walk into the sea's "soft, close embrace" and remove herself from any hold that society could have on her (109). It is in the sea, not culture, that Edna Pontellier finds freedom and meaning. Yet, Edna sees it as both, "delicious" and "terror" as she contemplates her choice to put an end to the relentless struggle within her (109). Ultimately, her fear of being possessed outweighs her fear of failing as an artist and being a coward. Perhaps society wins in destroying her, or perhaps it loses in that it fails to make her conform.

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2nd Place Winner in Prose

Graphic Novels Are Books Too

by Ray Lackey

Graphic novels are a series of comic books that have been collected in a concentrated novel form, and are usually dark and gritty. Like Rodney Dangerfield, they get “no respect” as a valid form of literature.

The critics could not be more mistaken on this particular issue. The entertainment medium known as graphic novels is lumped into being “just comic books”, and therefore “mind-numbing”, but these books are no different from “standard” books because graphic novels provide an escape from reality, promote imagination, and provide stories that may have underlying messages.

Graphic novels are a great provider of an escape from reality. A person could leave the boring existence of a CPA behind for the thrill of patrolling Gotham City with the Dark Knight, or even topple a fascist government with the freedom fighter “V”. The attention-grabbing material of graphic novels is the stunning visuals, which in effect makes the novels more like movies than books. Many readers prefer vivid imagery through words, but words cannot ensnare the senses the same way as a graphic novel panel. An example of this comparison could come from the Batman story “The Dark Knight Returns.” The setting is a dystopian future, where crime runs rampant, which is due to Batman hanging up the cape and cowl.

A writer could describe the “Mutant” leader as “a lumbering hulk of a man, three-hundred pounds of evil, with teeth that ended in razor blade sharpness”, as compared to a graphic novel panel with said “Mutant” leader shrouded in shadow, and in the next panel he could reveal himself as a titan with a psychopathic sneer and sledgehammers for fists, and the reader gets the same idea in less time. “The Dark Knight Returns”, or “DKR”, in many ways resembles Tim Burton’s 1989 vision of the nocturnal detective, such as the stunning visuals that help the story unfold, like an aging playboy aching for the thrill of times gone by. Superman reference his age, saying, “You’re not a young man anymore, Bruce... Maybe if you’d learned to slowdown...find your niche...but times have changed, and you—Well, it’s just not healthy.

You’ll burn yourself up”(Miller 118). When he returns to duty, he finds he must use a gun, and when a reader sees the words “pow” or “bang”, one can almost hear the hammer strike home, smell the gunpowder. It is these images that not only capture the senses, but also stimulate imagination.

Imagination goes hand-in-hand with an escape from reality, and this mystical brain pattern enhances the feeling of a good story. For example, the tools that Batman uses, like chemical grenades, give a certain sense of euphoria to the reader, who wonders about the taste the grenades

leave in the mouth, and wish that at that time, the reader could be the Dark Knight.

Another character that seems to be envied is Marv, the resident “bone breaker” of “Sin City.” Marv lives by his own code of ethics, and his code usually contains a few “amendments” about bloodshed. This beast also has the uncanny ability to take copious amounts of punishment as he is doling it out himself, which is a nice quality to have when trying to instill envy in one’s fans. Marv has a very complex story to tell, which leads to the next point, the storytelling aspect of graphic novels.

Graphic novels have excellent stories, not only because of the content and message, but also because of the sub-stories, and what they have to offer. For example, Frank Miller’s “Sin City” stories are complex, character-driven pieces that are about justice, albeit of the vigilante variety. Referring back to the assumption that graphic novels are childish, the critics need only examine Marv’s tale of woe more carefully. Marv trolls the alleys of Basin City, hiring out his questionable services to the next high paying client. Bearing many scars from his job, he is not as handsome as he would like to be, but nonetheless, he meets a girl, Goldie, in a bar he frequents. They spend the night together, after which she is murdered right under his nose. He determines that he has been set up to take the fall, and decides that he must avenge a person who has shown him kindness when not many do. As he sets off, he vows that no matter whom this traces back to, he will kill whoever was responsible, no matter whom it is. This is fitting, as his path of destruction leads to no less than two men of the cloth meeting their end at his hands, one very literally so. Along the way, “poor” Marv displays his ability to take punishment, as he is shot roughly 250 times, and is run over three times by a car going 75 miles per hour. Marv’s journey is beset on all sides by complications, as most of the police are corrupt, and in the highest bidder’s pocket at all times. He eventually makes his way to a farmhouse owned by the Roarks, the Basin City’s most influential clan, not unlike the Kennedy dynasty. He meets the enforcer, a mute named Kevin, who, while small, succeeds where others have not in besting Marv. When the “hero” awakes, he is locked in a cellar, but he can see Kevin talking to a gentleman in a stretch limousine, whom he can only guess is Cardinal Roark. He eventually escapes, taking many lives and a coat or two in the process. Another complication for Marv is an unspecified mental illness that causes him to hallucinate and to forget things, such as where he got his coat. He is captured again, this time by the girls of Old Town, the red light district of Basin City. They assume that, due to his size, he would have had no problem murdering

Goldie, or any of the other girls that have gone missing. He replies that he never hits women, unless they really deserve it, and demonstrates by standing up, breaking his bonds. The girls understand now, as they had been walloping Marv for a misunderstanding, and he just sat in the chair they had him bound in and took his blows.

Upon his release, the girls give him some weapons, including a saw and some rubber tubing, and he makes his way back to the farm. He gets the upper hand on Kevin, and after many hours of slow amputation, he removes the boy's head. Marv ends his retribution by paying a visit to Cardinal Roark, who is distraught by the death of Kevin, an angel in his words. Marv kills the Cardinal by what is assumed to be massive trauma to the head, but the cops show up at just the wrong time, and Marv is shot many times. He survives, partially due to his natural resilience, and also because the city government wants to execute him.

Goldie's sister Wendy pays Marv a visit on the night of his execution, and thanks him for what he has done.

He is led to the electric chair, and strapped in.

After he has 10,000 volts put through him, in true Marv fashion, he survives, only to spit some blood and retort, "is that the best you got, ya pansies?" (Miller 207), at which point he is shocked again.

This time, he finally succumbs to the warm blanket of death. Miller demonstrates in this gory tale that sometimes one must do whatever is necessary, no matter the consequences or manner in which the mission is carried out. Many "experts" would contend that such stories favor style over substance, and therefore have poor storytelling ability. However, some highly known authors, such as Stephen King, give their due respects, as these respected authorities know a good story when they quite literally see one.

Alternatively, graphic novels do stem from comic books, and therefore have to deal with the stigma of being "childish" and having "no redeeming value."

Because of the illustrated panel setup of the stories, criticism exists that suggests that pictures take away from the reader's mental thoughts. Other critics contend that, while the stories are good, they will never compare to the works of Hemingway or Shakespeare. However, graphic novels are usually a more dark and gritty fare than traditional comic books, and as such, are more violent and contain adult themes. For example, "Sin City" contains numerous panels that involve a strip club, so nudity exists, as does foul language, though Frank Miller has the decency to omit the "F" word. Also, the pictures provided in graphic novels do not so much remove the reader's ability to imagine, but actually help it along. The panels usually show the characters reacting to the situation, which provides the reader with added visuals, to a point where the readers can almost imagine themselves reacting. Also, those that say

graphic novels will never compare to Shakespeare are apparently unaware that graphic novels exist that have given a few twists to the bard. For instance, Macbeth has been re-imagined, and has become a medieval tale, not unlike Lord of the Rings, dragons and all included.

In conclusion, graphic novels offer the same entertainment and storytelling value as standard books, just in a slightly better fashion. The price of an average book is eight dollars, where a graphic novel usually goes for fifteen, the same price as an average DVD. Some may see the price and have second thoughts, which is close-minded in a way. The added price is well worth it to get one's hands on these artworks. The pictures exist for visual stimulation, and often offer bits of "fan service", little references to other things, like a reference to Jason Todd, the second Robin, in "DKR". Truthfully, such things could be written out in word form, but some of the impact would be damaged considerably, and would be wordier. Graphic novels are a controversial subject at this time, but so was Catcher in the Rye in its time. Every individual should at the very least glance at a graphic novel. To not do so is foolish, and they do themselves a great disservice when they just write the books off as "just another comic."

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Louis Comfort Tiffany and Dale Chihuly by Linda Qualls

The art of glassmaking is a very old and respected craft. Glass exists in as many shapes, forms, textures, and uses, as the imagination can provide. From the great chandeliers of the most opulent palaces of Europe to the very simple drinking glasses that sit on our everyday dinner tables, glass making requires talent and patience that has given birth to many skilled artists. Louis Comfort Tiffany and Dale Chihuly are both very great examples of American studio glassmakers, but Louis Comfort Tiffany has provided the ground work for studio glassmaking advancement for the future.

Louis Comfort Tiffany had the good fortune of being born into a wealthy family. Charles Lewis Tiffany, father of Louis had a successful jewelry and goods store allowing Louis the backing and freedom to pursue his dreams. Tiffany had the best education money could buy; he attended Eagleswood Military Academy in New Jersey, but his interest lay in the arts, so he continued his education with traveling and studying with the best artists of the time

("Master's"). Louis became a fine painter and colorist, but he was most interested in designing and producing decorative art. He formed a partnership with other famous artists such as illuminist painters, textile and furniture designers. Over time Louis started to experiment with glass. His company was famous for their medieval stained glass. He wanted more, so he stepped it up a notch combining colors and textures with translucence which created his famous stain glass windows. His business made religious and figural windows for churches and landscape and floral windows for business stores. Tiffany was a great artist, but he also hired creative talents to provide ideas, concepts, and designs for his stain glass windows. Though this business was making him money he dissolved it to spend more time on what he loved the most, selling and making glass objects. In the 1890's Tiffany worked with master glassmakers to create the iridescent blown glass which he patented as *Favrile* ("Biography"). This invention will be Louis' greatest accomplishment and out of this creation will come some of his famous art objects such as vases, stemware, place settings, and shades for candlesticks and oil lamps. With the creation of the light bulb he created his famous leaded-glass lampshades. He went on to produce metal accessories such as desk sets, clocks, and candleholders.

Dale Patrick Chihuly was born into a working class family. His grandparents were immigrants from Czechoslovakia and Sweden. Chihuly's father worked as a meat cutter and union leader his mother was a homemaker. As a teenager he became a juvenile delinquent in his neighborhood in Tacoma, Washington. Fortunately, he had the sense not to participate in anything concerned with the law. His youth was not a happy one; his brother died in an accident while training for the Navy and a year later his father died of a heart attack. After that he had no interest in school. Lucky for him his mother was the driving force behind him and made him finish high school and go on to college (Chihuly). Dale Chihuly attended many schools, worked at many jobs. He received awards for works in Interior Design, but his love for glass-blowing overshadowed anything he did. As he said "I was obsessed with glass" (Chihuly). He then studied under the artist Harvey K. Littleton, founder of the contemporary studio-glass movement in the United States. He continued on with schools related to glass blowing and received his M.S. and M.F.A. Wanting to expand his knowledge on glass blowing, he earned a grant from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation and a Fullbright fellowship for glass study. He then left for an island near Venice, Italy and was there for a year as an apprentice (Chihuly).

Back in the United States Chihuly started his own business in studio-glass. Though he lost his eye in a car accident, this did not stop him from continuing his dream. He formed a team of talented artist to assist him in his

glassmaking; he still designs and oversees the work that is done. Dale continues still today amazing people with his works of art.

Tiffany and Chihuly share many similarities in the artistic qualities expressed through their works. One of these was that both artists took inspiration from landscape and nature and incorporated it into their work. Taking his inspiration from the ocean, Dale created a series of works such as "Sea Forms" and "Macchia", whereas Tiffany took from his horticulture experience. Tiffany used floral and landscape designs in most of his lamps and stained glass.

Both artists were always pushing the envelope of glass making. In the beginning of the 20th century, Tiffany's glassware was shocking and almost unaccepted. Chihuly's work was considered vulgar, brazen, and fearless (Geldzahler). They were pioneers in their own right. Through time and perseverance, both artists work has become sought after through the years. Tiffany and Chihuly both owned glass studios; they also created talented teams of artist to assist in the making of their glass work, while still under their design and direction.

Even though Louis and Dale lived in different time periods their work has become the most influential in America for glassmaking. Dale has been compared to Louis as having many of the same traits, they both worked in various styles, understood how glass worked, and they had the determination to let the world know how great their work was.

Although Tiffany and Chihuly share many of the same styles in life and art their work varies greatly in the studio-glass medium. Tiffany came from a very wealthy family this gave him more of an advantage and allowed him the freedom to pursue his dreams; Chihuly grew up in a middle-class working family, but had a troubled youth. Both received education in the art of glassmaking, but their styles and techniques were very much different. Tiffany's work was more functional, but Chihuly was very much unfunctional. Tiffany's work could be used in the home or office such as lamp shades, vases, clocks, candlesticks, and table settings. Chihuly's work was more whimsical and fun to look at. Even though Dale makes chandeliers, Louis' chandeliers were more useful in the home. Dale Chihuly's work was a representation of abstract nature, and Louis Tiffany's was more of a conservative representation of nature.

Both men have been recognized as the most influential artists in America. Robert T. Buck, director of the Brooklyn Museum said about Dale Chihuly, "an unquestionable genius, Dale Chihuly has become the most celebrated glassmaker in the United States since the turn of the century, when Louis Comfort Tiffany made stained glass a prominent feature of American interior design" (Chihuly). Both artist were world travelers, admired nature, painters, interior designers, inventors, and well trained in how

glassmaking works. Tiffany and Chihuly created their own unique styles of glass work, and even though different in their function both are treasured and honored around the world. If not for the determination and talents of these artists the world may never have known that hot, droop, sagging liquid could become, a wonderful work for art and the beauty of what it can do to ones soul when looked upon.

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Judgmental Language by Katherine Love

People use judgmental language every day. They use words like niggers, wetbacks, and honkies in everyday life. They also use words like ho, bitch, and slut to define women. It is wrong, but people still do it. People all around the world use judgmental language. They have different ways of saying it, but the judgment is still there. As John Locke said, "He that judges without informing himself to the utmost that he is capable, cannot acquit himself of judging aim" (228). People often use prejudicial or judgmental language because of their social standings; however, such language results in racism, stereotyping, and hurtful words.

Judgmental language is often racist. Racism is a problem that cannot be solved in one day. It will take many years to solve this problem, but if everyone works together to stop racism, it will slowly come to a stop. Racism can be passed down by generations. It can also be developed by people that are not trained to think right. In order to solve this problem, people need to look at each other like equals, instead of by their race. Racist slurs are used all the time. Some racist words have become a way of talking for some people. They use words like nigger, spics, wetbacks, curs, cracker, beaner, honky, redneck, hillbillies, and white trash. These words are not bad according to racist people. Some people believe that they are above others because of their race and social standing. They think they are better than everyone else, but they are worse because of the way they

treat others. People need to realize the truth that everyone is different and somehow equal. No one person is better than another. As soon as people understand this, they can truly be nonjudgmental. Racism is a form of stereotyping because some people believe that all people of the same race act the same way.

Judgmental language is a form of stereotyping. It is a form of stereotyping because people judge each other based on race, gender, age, or religious belief. Stereotypes are used in everyday life. People have certain expectations of each other based on stereotypes. For example, they expect men to work, and women to stay at home and raise the children. They also expect men to go to war. Some people assume that all black people are criminals, and all Indians are drunks and bums. Stereotypes are hurtful to people. They can hinder how people are portrayed in everyday life. People will say things like, "All women are sluts," or "All black people are niggers!" Statements like these are forms of stereotyping. Stereotyping can be prevented in many different ways. One way to stop stereotyping is to stop putting people into categories. People should be perceived as individuals and not as part of a group. People should be judged by who they are, not what they are. No matter what a person is, it does not determine how that person will act. People need to understand that concept. They also need to know that some stereotypes are hurtful to some people.

Judgmental language can become hurtful words. People use hurtful and judgmental words every day. Some do not know their words are hurtful, while others use judgmental words to hurt others. Some judgmental and hurtful words are whore, nigro, and gout. Some people do not know how hurtful their words can be. They need to understand that everybody has different feelings and emotions. Some people use hurtful words as a way to look down on other people. Everybody has been hurt by something somebody has said. Hurtful words can be prevented by putting oneself in another's shoes. People need to think about what they are about to say before they say it. They should think about what Thumper said in the Disney movie Bambi, "If you can't say something nice... don't say nothing at all."

People need to use less judgmental language, and be more sympathetic towards one another. When people use judgmental language, they tend to forget that it can be hurtful. They need to learn to use more nonjudgmental language and to be open minded. People that are judgmental need to understand that they too will be judged. It may not be until they die, but they will be judged

1st Place in Art

Katie at the Lake

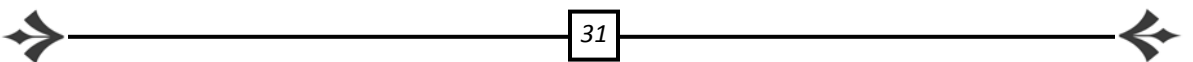
By Natasha Gibbs

Black and White Photograph





The Muse

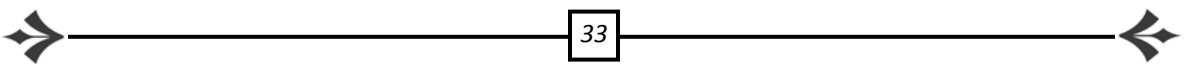


31





The Muse



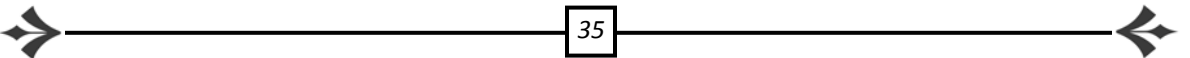
33

3rd Place in Art
The Wagon
by Kenny Green
Black & White Photograph





The Muse



35

Honorable Mention in Art

Meeting of the Waters

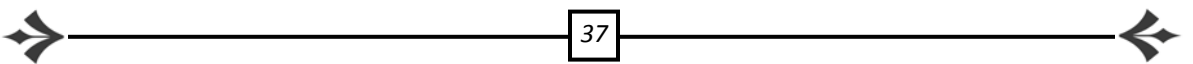
by Meredith Marrs

Black & White Photograph





The Muse



37

Honorable Mention in Art

At Papa's House

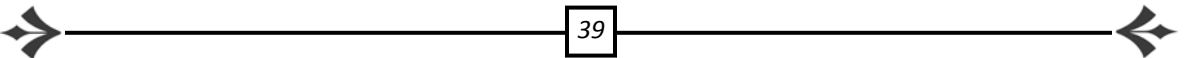
by Natasha Gibbs

Black & White Photograph





The Muse



39

Honorable Mention in Art

Silent Majesty

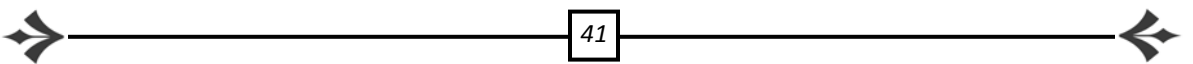
by Kenny Green

Black & White Photograph





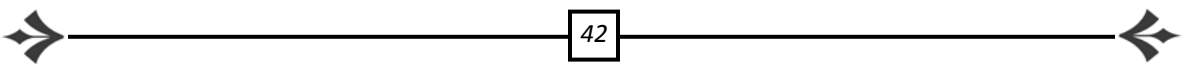
The Muse



41



The Muse



42

one way or another. They need to put themselves in the other person's shoes and think about what they might say. Will it hurt or offend the other person? Is it judgmental? These are some questions people need to ask themselves before talking.

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Dreams by Jon Buckman

Dreams are an important part of our lives as human beings. They motivate us to trudge on through the daily grind of work, school, or play. Every human being has a dream of some kind. Whether it is to be superman, and dodge bullets and fly, or to get that dream job, they are all very unique. Some may be serious and obtainable while others are very improbable. Mine is obtainable. Though it may take many years and countless discouragements, I believe it will be worth all the setbacks that may accompany the road to my dream will be worthwhile. I want to own a tractor dealership, but I also understand that dreams are like a river, changing as life flows.

My dream is to own and operate a small to medium sized Kubota tractor dealership somewhere in the western United States. I have had a variety of experience running different types of Kubota equipment on my family's farm. We depend on Kubota equipment to keep the farm running. On those cold mornings, our Kubota tractors and utility vehicles never disappoint. Dependability is one attribute of Kubota equipment I want to share with my customers. Selling a product you believe in or support is not mandatory, but in my case, I believe I will be selling a product that will satisfy the customer. My Kubota dealership will be clean and inviting to potential customers, have a service department that is top of the line, and I will not tolerate an unhappy customer. I will do anything for customer satisfaction.

Making my dream come true will first require personal devotion to my college education. I want to be a lawyer. Currently I am a senior at Tecumseh High School concurrently attending Seminole Junior College. After I graduate from Tecumseh High School, I will be attending Oklahoma City University. I chose a private school for

several reasons; private universities offer a more personal level of education—smaller class sizes and with that the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with the professor—and classes taught by professors with the highest possible degree in their field. After doing some research, I discovered that at many state universities graduate assistants teach the classes. Another factor in my decision is that at many private universities, the focus is on art and science, whereas many state universities focus on sports. I plan to major in business administration. After I receive my B.S.B., I plan to take the LSAT in hopes of admission to Oklahoma City University's School of law, to pursue a career in Civil law. Upon acceptance, I will then apply for admission to Oklahoma City University's Meinders School of Business. Upon acceptance, I will participate in a joint J.D. /M.B.A. program that will allow me to receive both a Masters in Business Administration - general business – to help me with my future business, and a Juris Doctor—so I can afford to have a business.

After accumulating a large amount of money over the course of my career, (hopefully), I will put together a sound business plan, exploring all possible aspects of a potential franchise. If approved I will then apply for a franchise opportunity then purchase commercial property in a desirable location. Accordingly, I will build a showroom and a service building, purchase inventory, hire employees, and purchase trailers and delivery trucks, all taking place with the help of a bank, and their willingness to provide a loan. I know these are lofty goals, but if nobody has dreams, then we in America as a society are truly lost.

I know there will be many setbacks and much discouragement, but that is true of all great ideas. If people do not set goals for themselves then what is the point of living. Goals are an important part of my life; they help get me through the hard times. I just think it is only going to get better. So when I set a goal, I know setbacks and discouragement are a given. I will push-on; I will not quit.

My dream is very important to me. College will be hard, and expensive, but I do not want to be stuck in Seminole, Oklahoma for the rest of my life. I want to be somebody. Life is too short; I do not want to waste what God has given me by living a somewhat uneducated life here, working on an oil rig, or at McDonalds does not appeal to me. I hope that if my dream comes true, it will change me only on a financial, not personal level. I want to live a life where I am able to do the things I want, and see the places I want before I die, because life is too short to waste. Also I want to have to have a beautiful wife, a son, and a daughter who are able to buy the popular clothes, drive a Mercedes or a BMW, and most of all I want them to be happy. And most of all I want to be a well-looked upon member of a Baptist church in the town I choose, where I will be able to put money in the offering basket and not feel like I am taking

food out my mouth or my family's mouths. My dream is what keeps me going.

If it were not for dreams, humans would be lost, aimlessly wandering the face of the earth. Whether the dream is to be a doctor and help the sick, or to work at McDonalds and live happily off minimum wage, all are unique and special in their own way. Mine will take many years of hard work and thousands of dollars. But life is too short and I have many goals that I want to accomplish in that time. Although I may change majors a few times, or maybe get a "c" in a class, my dream will live on like a river, ever changing as life flows.

The Epic: Identity and Reputation by Natasha Gibbs

Identity and reputation are the foundation of the cultures presented in The Iliad, Medea, and Beowulf. Therefore, they play a major role in the actions and motivation of the major characters. Achilles, Medea, and Beowulf are examined in light of their actions and motivations, as we see that their identities are central to their glories and downfalls. One can also see that their culture has taught them to view themselves and their duties in a certain way. The three main characters are driven by similar and different ideals of whom they are, how they are viewed by society, and what their duties are to that society and to themselves, with a central theme of pride.

Achilles is leader of the Achaens, a valiant warrior who is greatly praised and feared. He was raised by his mother, Thetis, a sea nymph, and given the strength and speed of one who is partially immortal. Achilles is fully aware of his greatness in battle and seems to claim the many rewards bestowed upon him. Thetis helps define his duties and lifestyle when he is upset and she asks him why he isn't enjoying food and sex (book XXIV, lines 155-158). For a person of his stature, it is unthinkable that he does not allow himself to indulge in pleasure. He is often referred to as "swift runner Achilles" (I, 123) and "godlike Achilles" (I, 154), to establish his seniority and fame. His identity is that of a great warrior with a hot temper.

It is because of his pride and temperament that Achilles acts stubbornly in selfishness, sacrificing the safety and security of his own army. He refuses to submit to Agamemnon because he doesn't want to be called a "worthless, burnt-out coward" (I, 343). He constantly acts for the goodness and wealth of his own pride, with little mercy for others. In his pride and selfishness, we see his flaws as a leader. His decisions are not based on what is best for his people, but what will give him the most fame and glory.

Medea is characterized in a much different light. She is not a warrior or anyone of great glory. However, she is the

grand-daughter of Helios, and a very crafty, sly woman. She uses her craftiness, as well as some magic, to get what she wants (lines 9-10). She is very manipulative, despite her political and civil immobility in her society. She works outside the current system of law and order, dismissing any sense of evil or vulgarity by playing the victim.

She cares very deeply about her reputation. She is humiliated that Jason is taking up another wife, and fears that she will be laughed at. This sense of pride motivates her to perform the most evil of acts in her day: the murdering of her children. She states that her "grief is gain" when it can't be mocked (1337). Her only source of emotion, therefore, seems to be linked with her pride and reputation. She refuses to be identified as someone to be laughed at and pitied, so she does what she thinks is necessary to prevent that from happening. Medea, like Achilles, is driven by pride to act purely in her best interest.

Beowulf is a refreshingly noble character in light of the other two. He too, depends on his identity to know how to act, but his identity does not rest on pride alone. He begins as a fairly humble warrior, without a strong reputation to recommend him to fame (lines 2183-2185). Beowulf is motivated instead by the culturally grounded idea of comitatus (2171). His actions are in pursuit of honor and glory not only for himself, but firstly for his King, or whomever he is serving.

It is very important for the warriors in that society to develop a good reputation. King Hrothgar depends on Beowulf, not only because of his warrior strength, but also because of his honesty and nobility (607-610). At very much the opposite end of the spectrum from Beowulf, we see Grendel, whose identity seems to bring about his own horrific fate. He is born an outcast of society and, while loathed and held accountable for his misdeeds, partially not thought responsible for his own actions (137). It is ironic that it is the very defeat of this hopeless creature (and his mother) which gives Beowulf his glory and great fame.

While Beowulf's sense of identity is no less important than that of the aforementioned main characters, his identity is rooted in a very different sense. He strives for nobility in everything he does, with a very strong sense of moral conviction. In his culture, pride alone is not glorified or rewarded. It is his sense of goodness that catapults him to the status of a noble hero. He is unique from the other characters because we do not see any obvious flaws, but someone who "bore himself with valor" (2177). In the end however, the same character flaw which brought about the destruction of Achilles and Medea, pride, destroyed Beowulf when he chose to fight the dragon with less protection and military aid than he could have used. Because he viewed himself at this point as a great warrior, and he knew his reputation of being so, he felt that it would be better to die bravely than to win with help and protection.

Identity is something that exists in every culture. It tells us how to view ourselves, how to treat others, and how to think morally. Each of these characters teaches a lesson through the actions caused by their own identity. While pride is an obvious theme, we also see a major connection of nobility and strength. These are ideals which have survived centuries and still exist today.

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The Unappreciated American Right to Privacy by Katherine Love

Some Americans do not appreciate their freedoms. Americans should be the happiest people on Earth. They have so many different rights that most foreigners do not have the opportunity to experience. Americans should be thankful that they can do so much. They are free from tyrants, religious standards, and much more. Americans should have learned from 9/11 that they need to stand together. The U.S. Government is trying to limit some of the American freedoms because of what happened on 9/11. Many Americans do not appreciate these freedoms, and are willing to give them up without any questions. Americans need to understand that having certain rights is part of what makes America so great. Foreigners do not get the luxuries that Americans do, and they come to America to become free. If Americans allow the United States Government to take what seems like little freedoms, the government will start taking more and more until the United States is no longer free. This is why Americans should appreciate their freedoms and rights; otherwise, their freedoms will be taken away slowly but surely. Some people will argue that the United States government is only trying to protect the American people by taking their right to privacy, but America is great because of the free will of its people. Americans do not appreciate their right to privacy; therefore, they need to know their rights, understand those rights, fight to keep those rights, and understand how the current war affects those rights.

Americans do not know all of their rights to privacy as a United States citizen; therefore, they cannot truly appreciate those rights. Most Americans only know that they have a right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Jefferson 451). They do not know about their

other rights such as their right to privacy. This is "the right to be left alone—the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men" (O'Connor and Sabato 158). This right also covers birth control, abortion, homosexuality, and the right to die. Americans need to have knowledge of these rights, in order to appreciate those rights. Americans who know their right to privacy appreciate it more than those who do not know. Americans need to have some understanding of what the right to privacy really is. Some Americans know but do not understand their rights.

Americans need to understand their right to privacy in order to appreciate it. The right to privacy also includes the privacy of one's home and the conversations within it. The authors of Essentials of American Government Continuity and Change explain the Supreme Court's understanding of this right. Reading chapter 4 about Civil Liberties in Essentials of American Government Continuity and Change helps people to understand the right to privacy. Here is the right to privacy according to authors Karen O'Conner and Larry Sabato:

The right to be left alone—the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men. It was not until 1965, however, that the Court attempted to explain the origins of this right [...] Today, most Americans take access to many forms of birth control as a matter of course [...] In *Griswold v. Connecticut*, seven justices decided that various portions of the Constitution, including the First, Third, Fourth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments, cast what the Court called "penumbras" (unstated liberties on the fringes or in the shadow of more explicitly stated rights), thereby creating zones of privacy, including a married couple's right to plan a family. Thus, the Connecticut statute was ruled unconstitutional [...] When the case [of *Roe v. Wade*] came before the Supreme Court, Justice Harry A. Blackmun, a former lawyer at the Mayo Clinic, relied heavily on medical evidence to rule that the Texas law violated a woman's constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy, which he argued included her decision to terminate a pregnancy [...] It was not until 2003 that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that an individual's constitutional right to privacy, which provided the basis for the *Griswold* (contraceptives) and *Roe* (abortion) decisions, prevented the state of Texas from criminalizing private sexual behavior. This monumental decision invalidated the laws of thirteen states [...] In *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), six members of the Court overruled a 1986 decision and found that the Texas law was unconstitutional; five justices found it to violate fundamental privacy rights [...] Oregon enacted a right-to-die or assisted-suicide law that allows physicians to prescribe drugs to terminally ill patients. (158-163)

The right to privacy includes so many different things. Most Americans do not know all of the parts of the right to

privacy. Americans have fought the government in many cases to ensure the right to privacy exists.

Americans need to fight for their right to privacy instead of allowing the government to have complete control of their rights. Americans are allowing the United States Government to monitor what they say on telephones, including cell phones. They are also monitoring what Americans e-mail to each other. The United States Government is getting new technology to monitor “terrorists,” but who really knows what they are listening to? They are supposed to be monitoring people that use the words, “bomb,” “explosion,” and other words that pose a threat to America, but is that all they are paying attention to? Is the United States Government only listening to threatening phone calls? Are they violating American rights? Some people believe that the government is violating American rights and freedoms. Americans seem like they do not care that certain rights are being taken from them although the government is trying to prevent terrorist attacks. Why does the government need to monitor all American citizens? Have they actually prevented an attack since they have been listening to American’s phone conversations? The people do not know the answer to these questions, yet they are willing to give up rights without any proof that good has come from it. People need to start telling their government officials that they do not approve of certain rights being taken away, and that the American people would like to keep their rights.

Americans need to know how the war on terrorism is affecting their rights. The war on terrorism plays a big part in the right to privacy. The war has brought up several questions about how the government abuses their powers to take people’s rights. People need to start questioning the government although terrorist have not attacked American soil. What about the attacks overseas? Do those attacks mean anything to the American people? Americans are dying in Iraq and still the United States President asks for more men to fight. The president thinks that more troops could help end the war. How is that going to help? How will giving the enemy more targets help America end the war? Americans will always stand and fight for what is right, but how do they know it is right? Who told them it was the right thing to do? Americans fight those who oppose America, but they will not appreciate the rights and freedoms that make America great. They will even give up some rights just to feel protected. How is that fighting for America? The true America is being free from judgment, the freedom to do whatever the people want, and freedom to say anything they want. Americans really need to look back and remember what America really is. They need to look back through history and see what the soldiers were fighting for, and see if those reasons are still American rights. Did Americans give those rights and freedoms away? Do those freedoms and rights still exist? If the rights have

been taken away, then what did the soldiers fight and die for? Why do Americans give something away that people have fought and died for? Would the soldiers have fought if they knew that what they fought for would be given away so easily? Americans will never know the answer to that question, but they should think about it. Americans need to realize that they have rights and freedoms because so many selfless men fought and died for them. They need to start appreciating what they have and fight to keep it, like the soldiers fought to get it. Americans need to stand together to protect their right to privacy the same way they stood together after 9/11 and Pearl Harbor. Americans can look back through history and see people standing together for America and its rights. When someone looks back through history, that person can get an understanding of the importance of standing together as one.

In contrast, some people claim that many Americans do not know their right to privacy, yet they still appreciate it. These people believe that people do not need to know what rights they have in order to appreciate them. Most Americans do not understand their rights, and they still appreciate them. However, appreciation is not understanding, and understanding something has nothing to do with appreciating it. Americans do not need to fight for their rights to appreciate them. The U.S. Government is only listening to the phone calls made to other countries. They are not monitoring all American citizens; therefore, they do not need to fight to keep their rights. The U.S. Government is only trying to protect its people. The American people do not need to fight the government to gain freedom or rights. The U.S. Government was made for the protection of its people.

Most Americans do not know their rights. How can someone appreciate something if he or she does not know about it? They cannot appreciate it. Some Americans take for granted the rights they do know and understand, while some Americans want to know but do not know where to find out about their rights. Americans have been fighting for their rights since America was founded. America has been to war with many countries trying to defend the rights of its people. Soldiers have fought and died defending American rights and freedoms. Americans need to honor those brave men and women by appreciating what they died for.

Americans need to have a knowledge and understanding of their rights in order to appreciate them. Americans who do not want to know or understand their rights are blissfully ignorant on how important those rights are to America. America is the land of the free, but without certain rights and freedoms America would not be free. Americans who fight for their rights appreciate them more than those who will not fight. Fighting does not only mean going to war. It can be protesting a law that violates Americans’ rights, or writing to someone in the government about bills that violate Americans’ rights. Fighting is not

always physical; it can be mental as well. A person does not have to hit someone to fight that person, he or she can argue with the other person. Arguing is a form of fighting that can be used to protect American rights. Americans need to stop taking advantage of their rights, or they will eventually lose those rights.

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Honorable Mention in Prose

Revelations in Sirens

by Scott Cave

The sound of the dog barking just outside my window, like a cannon firing next to my ear, invading my thoughts, intruded on an otherwise peaceful day. I have gotten to the point of requiring silence to center myself, to bring some kind of peace to the inner demons that are fighting for dominance. Sudden noises are just a means to distract me from the monumental task. But there was a time, not long ago, when noise was the means in which all of life's answers could be found. Even in dreams, on occasion, I find myself submersed in the symphony of a city only to be awakened to the slow, quiet cycles of small town life. In those moments, I can still remember from the dream the taste of smog and gasoline on my tongue, the sound of sirens and the blaring of the horn from the guy behind me eager to get to his nine to five job. I step out of my front door and I am greeted by the smell of green living things and the wind blowing through the leaves of trees; already the dream of the city is fading away. Country life has infected me with a need for peace and quiet, but still, the call of the city and the countless adventures in the surreal and strange cling to me. I am reminded of just how much I learned and who I became.

My trip into the weird started with the untimely announcement from my father that he was taking a job in California. So, in an effort to get there in a timely fashion we packed our small treasure trove of items into a faded pale blue van and began the longest, most interesting journey of my life.

The road was strangely numbing, allowing me to hold back the trepidation of moving to a new place and getting to know new people. I was no stranger to moving, there is always a new place to discover, but something about the sheer size of our destination left me rife with anxiety. The journey was mostly a blur, punctuated by the occasional vista or a glorious sunset. Even the transition into California

does not stand out; a gas station surrounded by endless scrubland, dotted with a sign that said, "Welcome to California", seemingly placed there like an afterthought. The moment I finally knew we had passed into California was the carving of the freeway through a mountain pass. On each side of the road, jutting defiantly from the mountain sides, giant wind turbines stood out in stark white contrast. The intensity of the wind screaming through this area was enough to send us weaving side to side in our lane, even the tractor trailers in all of their mightiness were forced to a slow drunken crawl. Just beyond the pass was a layer of brown and black dirty air. As disgusting as it was, there was a beauty to it. The setting sun seemed to set the very air on fire.

My first few months in Los Angeles became so anxiety ridden that even lapses in high school classroom attendance brought me no comfort. It was on one of these lapses that a girl made an appearance; Mari, Asian-American, smart, funny, and beautiful. She was the one who pushed me kicking and screaming into a true adolescent wonderland. All of Los Angeles became our playground; even the simplicity of catching a bus became an adventure.

We would spend hours riding the bus, and all the while she would point out a random place or we would get off the bus and do some exploring. The people that we encountered of every shape and size, of all ethnicities, traveled using public transportation. One of our favorite things to do was people watch. We would often try to guess where they came from or something about their lives. All the various shades of human emotion could be seen on our fellow travelers faces. On occasion our efforts went into forging conversations with unhappy fellow travelers, often times leading to mutual smiles and a parting that left them happier than when they started.

Frequently, after school, we would set out on a new path, some bus route we hadn't taken yet, just to see where it went. Los Angeles always presented some place we hadn't seen; all the little towns of other cultures standing beside one another inviting us in with sounds and sights became too much of a temptation, begging to be experienced. Our path more often than not, always lead to Venice Beach; every aspect of the world could be found there.

All along the boardwalk vendors plied their trinkets to the tourist who always found their way there. Those who couldn't afford a shop would throw a blanket down on the ground and sit back in their chairs, waiting for the next person to show interest in their wares. Then, of course, there was always Rasta man as the locals called him. We would always catch sight of him rollerblading up and down the board walk, his dreadlocks pumping with the sound of some tune he was playing on his electric guitar swinging from his shoulders. He was as permanent as a fixture as the

tourist speaking in mysterious tongues that often piled in during the weekends.

Eventually, a time came when the hustle and bustle of it all began to grate on my father, not to mention the extraordinary expense of a small two-bedroom apartment. So, a year after my fateful arrival to L.A., we once again packed our belonging for a trip over the same set of mountains. Again, another sign confronts me, "Welcome to Lancaster".

I found Lancaster easier to get acclimated to, after all that I had experienced in L.A., suburbia was a sweet cake walk. Of course, suburbia and I are old friends, so it was easy to find the rhythm and beat to move to. Even with a large city nearly at my doorstep, the call of the open desert was enough to inspire hours of entertainment. A few miles from town among endless dunes, just inside the air force base, a small marsh presented itself to us. Often late night camping trips with my rowdy bunch of drunken friends to the sound of croaking frogs and the occasional meteor shower we would talk about for weeks. My father and I once braved the deep desert. With our tent securely fastened to the ground we went and checked out the washes that dotted the landscape. The wind was extremely high that day; we quickly got very tired of scrubbing the dirt and dust off of our faces and trying to get the grit out of our eyes. So we plodded our way back to our campsite only to find a missing tent. I would like to think that the tent went looking for greener pastures. This picture is stuck in my head of a tent bouncing forever across the landscape.

I once met a guy who to my delight owned a horse. Often he would go out of town and ask me to exercise his horse. Bones, his horse and I, became good friends. My feet had a tendency to carry me to that cleft of the San Andreas Mountains where that boarding ranch sat; the smell of horses was an incredible aphrodisiac. Occasionally, well into the setting of the sun, we would tramp across the mountains in and around the ranch. These were some of the most peaceful times I had ever encountered. But one time, to my immense pleasure, we went camping far beyond the humdrum of modern city life. The swish of water in a canteen by firelight under an immense carpet of stars became perfect music to lull me to sleep.

The last few years of my stay in Lancaster found me working in a ranch/kennel; thirty acres, numerous dogs and a whole host of animals big and small, including my boss's kids all vying for my attention and affection. Waking before the sun rose to drive the thirty minutes to work was often a hairy trip, it was often punctuated by the occasional dive bombing bird or miscellaneous deer running across the road. Although my days were filled with endless barking and the smell of dogs and their feces, there was a certain kind of peace I found working with my hands. The first thing I did when I would arrive at the ranch was spray down the kennel runs; fenced in, concreted areas on which the dogs

ran and played. My arch nemesis, the hated septic system which was not designed to handle the amount of waste that was being put in there on a daily bases had to be dug up on occasion to make it work properly. It was my job to get down in the hole, an eight foot hole full of smelly feces and wet mud. To my boss's husbands amusement I sunk down waste deep in that mess and he had to bring the back-hoe over to get me out of it.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job was the birthing of puppies. It is an extraordinary thing to birth a handful of puppy, peel off the birth sack and breathe life into new life, only to watch its little legs struggle, as if working up the energy for that first independent gasp of air. One time, 3 litters were due all at the same time. I stayed up for those days, dragging myself between one puppy being born and another. It was exhausting, but the most unique experience I have ever known. There is nothing like trying to stay awake and clean enough to eat a sandwich with one hand and catching puppies with the other. When it was finally over with, I crawled into my car and drove the distance home with one eye open. I slept for about thirty-six hours.

The ranch and all that I had experienced in California chiseled and shaped me. It taught me so much of who I was and made me who I am. Those types of things cannot be bought or replicated.

Little did I know that very soon I would be staring at another, "Welcome to" sign. My father decided it was time to get closer to the family. So again, we piled our belongings into a U-haul and set off for another trip. This time my trip assailed me with the never ending hits of the Bible belt, even keeping up with the CD changer worked my fingers bloodlessly to the bone. Driving my own car, I had no time to enjoy the scenery, only to search for the next song that I hadn't heard a thousand times already. Just outside of Oklahoma we stopped at a hotel for the night. This was the worst place I had ever seen. It was literally flea bitten, filthy carpets, dirty sheets and bed that hadn't known a flat surface in years. Thankfully we were there only long enough to sleep a few hours then move along again.

I believe there is a purpose and reason for everything we encounter in life and that all the joys and trials that come into our lives are meant to turn us into something more than we are. But, upon arriving in Seminole and seeing the house we would live in, I was sorely disappointed, so much so that it shown through like some beacon in a very dark night. I had to wonder at what purpose this trial was meant to fulfill in my life. What would this beaten down, ragged, seemingly forgotten house; forgotten like the oil that once drove this town to grow from nothing, teach me?

My first encounter with the culture of the Bible belt and minimum wage blues was a job at Wrangler when it was still a vital part of Seminoles economy. An old country

boy, Pog, crashed into my world. It was as if all the stereotyping of country people existed in one person. Pog, despite his ninth grade education and his list of children by various women ran the length of my arm, was always quick to smile and joke about his predicament. He is a good sort, of that I had no doubt, but him growing up in the country made some parts of his life ugly. He introduced me to noodling, which at first I thought was some strange aspect of snipe hunting. I found out later that it involved reaching my hand into very small places along a river bank, letting the fish swallow my hand then wrestling it onto the shore all the while avoiding being drowned. He sure did get a kick out of me when I told him I went crappie fishing; bent over in spasms of laughter he said to me they are called croppy. One day, by mere chance, my journeys brought me through Maud, a speck of town, old and worn out by all appearances. Mentioning this to Pog, he told me of the old Klu Klux Klan that still hide there under their former shadows of hate. I think that was the day I decided to avoid Maud like the plague or if I have to, only see it as a blur from my car window if my passage ever took me there.

My second encounter with culture which was more like an impact falling from thirty thousand feet, involved a very hard to understand man and his angry wife. Working in, of all places, a convenience store, a man walked in and asked for something from behind the counter. The words he spoke to me sounded as though he was chewing on mud, so thick and screwed together. After five minutes of, "I'm sorry sir, I just can't understand you", he walked out from sheer impatience. Ten minutes later his wife came back in and began screaming at me, all because I couldn't understand him. In retrospect, I suppose he may have felt that I was making fun of him, even though I could not honestly understand him.

Another thing that still amazes me to this day, I got a speeding. The next day I found my name in the paper along with others who had encountered police in any fashion. It amazes me that a speeding ticket gets a more widely circulation than the New York Post. I guess due to the size of the town and the idea that everyone knows everyone else; every ugly aspect of small towns get held up to magnifying glass by the residents to be judged. On the flip side, there is always someone willing to wave at you in passing, and if you search hard enough there can be found people of exceptional spirit and quality.

I have been back and forth a few times now and both the city and country has grown on me in more than a few ways. Sometimes the sounds of the city call me to adventure, it can be so overwhelming that my legs cramp in anticipation of seeing what is around the next bend, but my life in the country has taught me the slow casualness and the willingness to explore the human condition. Eventually I hope to leave this place behind, as much as I crave the city and as much as country life has warmed up to me, the place

I need to be is between them, somewhere on the outskirts straddling them both. In ten years that's where I can be found, on some out of the way road, sitting on my porch discussing the turning of the season with my significant other, always though within view of the nearest city. At least in that fashion, there upon that porch, the screeching of a siren can be heard which will wake me from my slumber to all the new revelations and adventure that await me.

Nixon's Plain-Folks Fallacy by Thea Dean

Richard Milhous Nixon was honest and innocent. At least, he claimed in his "Checkers Speech" given in 1952, during his term in the Senate. In this speech, he was protesting having done anything wrong concerning \$18,000 that had been donated by some of his supporters. By diverting the audience's attention he masterfully maneuvers the focus away from the issue at hand, to other topics with no bearing upon the subject in question. His use of appealing to our patriotic emotions, and associating himself with service members by using his military background, bolsters his reputed common man posture, but does this prove his innocence?

While explaining how a Senator's office is financed and operates, he gives an example of a business matter he might conduct. "Business, for example, when a constituent writes in and wants you to go down to the Veterans Administration and get some information about his GI policy" (230). Nixon appeals to our patriotic emotions with an irrelevant argument, a logical fallacy designed to make us believe, he goes out of his way for a veteran, so he must be a good man. "*Irrelevant Argument* reaches a conclusion that doesn't follow from the premises" (86), as defined by Lynn Q. Troyka and Douglas Hesse. Although this would be helpful to his constituent, being patriotic, or helping a member of the Armed Forces, is not proof, or a guarantee, funds were not misappropriated.

He further glorifies his association with service members, while giving his biography, by listing his service record. "My service record was not a particularly unusual one. I went to the South Pacific. I guess I'm entitled to a couple of battle stars. I Got a couple of letters of commendation but I was just there when the bombs were falling" (232). Is a blatant attempt to capitalize on the audiences emotions and sense of patriotism to achieve feelings of equality and kinship. Donna Woolfolk Cross explains *Glory by Association* as, "the propagandist tries to transfer the positive feelings of something we love and respect to the group or idea he wants us to accept" (42). We can respect and appreciate the man's military service, but we must not just accept what he says without further

questions and analysis. Military service alone does not testify to the true character of the man.

Though he uses many logical fallacies in this speech there is one artifice he utilizes repeatedly, Nixon skillfully employs the *Plain-Folks* appeal technique to help gain the listeners confidence as well as feelings of commonality. Cross defines this logic fallacy as "the device by which a speaker tries to win our confidence and support by appearing to be a person like ourselves -- 'just one of the plain folks'" (41). This is a successful ploy, Nixon goes straight for the heartstrings when he describes where he came from. He states, "Our family was one of modest circumstances and most of my early life was spent in a store out in East Whittier. It was a grocery store - one of those family enterprises, the only reason we were able to make it go was because my mother and dad had five boys and we all worked in the store (232). Coming from modest circumstances and working in the family store does not ensure honesty. Nor does this prove he did not misuse these donations.

However, as he progresses through his biography he explains how he worked his way through college and worked some while in law school. In 1940 he married Patricia Ryan, and like most young couples starting out things were not easy, he and his wife both had to work. Then from 1942 to 1946 as he served in the service his wife Pat continued working while he was away. Upon his return he entered politics. At this point, as he lists the amount of their savings, his salary, additional monies from estates from his law firm, speaking engagements, and inheritances, he takes the opportunity to align himself with the *Plain Folks* again. He says, "We live rather modestly. For four years we lived in an apartment in Park Fairfax, in Alexandria, Va. The rent was \$80 a month. And we saved for the time that we could buy a house" (233). Nixon's logic is, "see I am no different from you, I am just an ordinary, struggling, working man like you." The fallacy in this is, no matter what your income is, or how much savings you have, you can still be a liar and thief.

After describing his life insurance, and the lack of, for his wife and daughters, he lists their assets and debts. As he is projecting this sense of honest and forthrightness he is exposing himself for our inspection, how can he not be trustworthy? Even though he is a Senator vying for the opportunity to run on the ticket for the Vice-Presidency, he states, "that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat" (233), no pretension here just plain old common folks like you. What type of coat you have does not nor cannot determine the type of person you are, or the things you do. As well as fur or cloth, which political party you are affiliated with has no bearing on the actions you take.

Nixon deftly guides his audiences attention where he wants it to go, and that is away from the charges made

against him. "We are just plain folks, not rich, I do not drive a fancy car, my wife does not wear fur, we are just like you, struggling along the best we can." This is a dangerous precept that can lull the listener into a false trust that can be used to take advantage of him or her. We must guard against this logic fallacy. When someone is persistently trying to convince you, of how, they are just like you, question their motives. Do not take what they say at face value. Questioning, analyzing, and reasoning are three steps you can take to help you identify and reject propaganda. Otherwise, you maybe led, to believe untruths, into temptation, or perhaps, even into outright evil.

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Stop the Memorization and Start the Application by Sarah Newell

Paulo Freire's describes in "The 'Banking' Concept of Education," two forms of education, "banking" and "problem-posing" education (Freire 430-31). Some people think that "banking" education is an effective and efficient way of imparting information to students. "Problem-posing" education, such as home schooling, is another form of education. The objective of "problem-posing" education is to enhance the development of critical thinking. Some people think home schoolers do not receive a real education. However, a person's education should be about learning and increasing his or her knowledge of the world around them and not about how much information they can retain and memorize for a test.

"Banking" education is a system in which teachers fill students with information; in turn, the students must pass tests to complete school. This type of education is present in most public school systems today. In most public schools, the curriculum is planned without consulting students (the ones who have to learn the material) or their parents. Banking education does not teach students to think and figure out problems on their own. If going to school and getting an education enables people to function in the real

world, what good is banking education if people cannot think for themselves?

“Problem-posing” education is a system of education that promotes critical thinking. Most home schooling is a “problem-posing”/practical learning type of education. In home schooling, students have some control in what and how they learn. In “problem-posing” education, students can apply knowledge learned to real-life situations. Older students may help plan out the school year and decide on a curriculum. Teaching methods can be adjusted to fill the various needs of the individual student. Home-schooled children also have more of an opportunity to learn skills that they can use in the real world. They are not limited to spending seven hours daily in a classroom, but have more opportunities to observe their world by way of field trips and tours.

In Plato’s essay “Allegory of the Cave,” the people who are casting the shadows on the wall control what the prisoners see. Plato writes, “To them [the prisoners], the truth would be literally nothing but the images” (548). Students in a public school system are much like the prisoners in the cave. The teachers have control over what the students learn, hear, and

can say in school. To students, whatever the teachers teach is believed as true. When the prisoner left the cave, he realized and understood, on his own, that the cave was not the whole world. Home schooling is the same as coming out of the cave; it allows students to understand and figure out the world around them on their own.

“Banking education (for obvious reasons) attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing” (Freire 437). Students in public schools who experience the “banking” concept are constantly filled with information they are required to learn in order to obtain an education. In some states, teachers are required to teach a certain amount of material in a specific amount of time. If students are not understanding the concepts, can more time be taken by the teacher to explain or allow the student to gain understanding? Are the students really being educated or are they just being rushed through school?

Home schooling education is “problem-posing” education. It is easier for a student who is home schooled to work with the teacher one-on-one, than a student in a public school system. When home schooled, students have greater accessibility to the teacher’s individual attention. In public schools the student teacher ratio is about 20 to one--how can a teacher successfully give each student enough

individual attention to ensure that they learn the material? Often in home schooling, the student is the child of the teacher; therefore, the teacher understands the needs of the student better.

In “banking” education, the letter grade a student receives is generally used to measure how smart the student is. In home schooling, if a student has trouble understanding a new concept, more time is allowed to ensure that the student understands the material. Is it better for a student to take two years to learn Algebra and make a B, or take one year to learn it and make a D or F?

Education should be an instructive, enlightening experience. If students are being filled with information to regurgitate back on tests, are they really learning anything that will be useful in life? If a student earns a poor grade, has he really learned anything? Similarly, if a student earns a high grade on an exam, has he really learned anything, or has he simply memorized facts and performed successfully on the test? Is “banking” education an instructive and enlightening experience, or is it repetitive and rehearsed? “Problem-posing” education enables a student to think for himself rather than merely what to think.

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*Winner 3rd Place in Prose***Ambivalent Wishes****by Stewart McCain**

The past four days have been a blur. Looking back it is as if the events did not really happen to me, like I was watching some strange movie. I have lost touch with time and reality. No, for the first time I am actually in touch with reality. For the first time in a long time, I realize what I must do. To fully understand, let me go back to the beginning.

Several weeks ago I received a strange letter from my uncle. He was on an archaeological expedition in southwest Asia, where he had been for the better part of five years. During this time my immediate family and I lost touch, so I was happily surprised when I saw the letter. Inside the envelope was a carelessly written note. The only readable part said "I found it. I finally found it." The rest was a jumbled mess of foreign letters and symbols. At the time I did not understand what the message meant, but now I know all too well its meaning. A few days later, news came that my uncle disappeared. The workers decided to celebrate their discovery by traveling into town and having a long weekend. When they returned Monday the excavation site was destroyed and his room was in shambles. Initially, the workers thought this was the work of the local extremists because the archaeologists had the government permits, but were digging on the people's holy land.

Four days ago, the memorial service and reading of the will were held in my hometown. My uncle was not a rich man; he devoted his life to the past, never planning for the future. After the memorial service most people decided to leave. I remember that a noticeable drop occurred when the food ran out. By the time of the will reading there were few people left. As the executor read off the items on the will along with their new owners, I lost focus until my name was called. I received his house and all of its possessions. No one, except for me, thought it was strange that my uncle, who constantly traveled, had the time or money to afford a house. After everything had been put in order, I received the keys to the house. Noticing that the address was just outside town, I decided that since it was still daylight, I would head over and check it out.

I have lived in this town my entire life, and I have never seen or heard anyone mention this place before. A secluded dirt road lead to the house, which sat in an enclave of trees. With my uncle having been away for quite some time, I expected the house to be in shambles, but to my surprise the house was immaculate. When I entered the house I saw that it was fully equipped. Everything in it was completely new. After exploring the many rooms for quite some time, I found one of notable interest. The study was in a large room; on the walls there were a plethora of books, some so old it looked that with a slight breeze the information

within could be lost forever. In the middle of the room stood a large desk completely covered with notes. Upon examination all the notes appeared to be from my uncle. I also noticed that things were covered with only a thin layer of dust. It was as if someone had been there recently. Behind the desk was a trap door to what appeared to lead to the wine cellar. I thought I should check around some more when I suddenly noticed a small black gem. It was about the size of a half dollar. There was something about this gem. It called to me, compelling me to possess it. It soon became dark, so I decided to return the next morning to renew my investigation. I picked the gem up and placed it into my pocket and decided to head home.

That night I could not go to sleep. I would wake up every few minutes then drift back to sleep. The dreams I did have were strange. At first my dreams started out good, but then suddenly they would turn to nightmares. That lasted all night. Finally, unable to go back to sleep, I decided to head back to the house. I arrived just as the sun was rising. The best place to start looking seemed to be back in the study. As I walked in the first thing I noticed was a book sitting in the middle of the desk on top of all the notes. I was positive that the book had not been there the day before. As I approached I saw that the book was opened to its middle pages. All it said was "svegliarsi ascoltare la concessione." I quizzically said these words out loud. All of a sudden a dense fog started seeping from the pocket that housed the gem. As I pulled the gem out, it became obvious that the gem had produced the fog. As I watched on with a mixture of wonderment and fear, the gem started to pulse as if it were a beating heart while it became hotter and hotter. Then suddenly it stopped. I watched the gem in amazement, when a deep booming voice said, "You have said the words to release me, now I can grant you three wishes."

Turning around I saw a most unusual creature. It stood at least seven foot tall and appeared to weigh close to 500 pounds. Although he was gigantic his movements were smooth, as if the laws of gravity did not apply to him. He did not seem to walk as much as he glided. Wherever he went puffs of smoke followed. The first thing I thought to ask was if he were some type of genie. He replied, "You may call me that if you want. I will grant you three wishes, but there are many rules you must follow. You only have three wishes, you cannot ask for more, you cannot ask for me to raise the dead, and you cannot ask to make someone fall in love with you. Also, each wish has to be made within twenty-four hours of the previous wish. These are but a few of the rules, to list the rest would be too cumbersome." Still in shock, I had to decide what my first wish would be.

After spending a few moments thinking about all the things I could have I decided on my first wish. I cannot raise the dead, but he did not say I could not talk to the dead. Partly because I wanted to know if it would work and partly because I was curious about what happened to my uncle, my first wish was to talk to my uncle. The genie nodded as suddenly a familiar voice could be heard in the air. "Help me! Do not make any wishes" ...then silence. I wondered what had happened as the genie said, "You did not say how long you wanted to talk to your uncle." I knew from that point on something was terribly wrong. I decided that before my next wish I should do some research to find out what I had gotten myself into.

For the next twenty-three hours I searched through every single book in the study that I could find, but had trouble finding anything useful. It did not help that I could not understand much of the information within the books. Because of this I thought that for my next wish I would wish for the truth. To know what was really going on, who the genie was, and what happened to my uncle. I will never forget the strange smile on the genie's face as he granted this wish. What came next was a barrage of knowledge; everything I wanted to know and many things I did not. Suddenly, I knew exactly what had happened to my uncle along with numerous others, and, for the most part, knew what would happen to me if I did not change something.

This genie did not tell me the complete truth; in fact a more accurate description of him would be demon. He left out some useful information when explaining the rules, such as the wishes I had made were not free. Each wish cost me one third of my soul, and after I made my third wish the demon would claim my soul and kill me. Although I already knew, I could not help but ask out loud how Good could allow this to happen. I was not listening, but could follow along when the demon explained, "Eons ago the two sides you call Good and Evil made a pact. Each side wants your soul and each go about getting it in different ways. By setting me free you have agreed to take part in this game. Have I not given you everything you have asked for? You people blame me for not knowing what you are getting yourself into. No matter, you have less than twenty-four hours to make a wish."

I have been thinking about what I could wish for a long time now, but have not yet figured out what to do. So now my predicament is known. There are only minutes before I must make my final wish. There has to be something that will prevent this from happening. I have just one chance to set this right. I understand what I must do now. For my final wish, I wish that I could go back and relive the past four days retaining all the knowledge that I have now. The demon laughed as he said, "You think you have won, after I grant this wish your soul will be mine. Eventually someone will release me again and when they do I will claim what is owed."

With a flash I suddenly wake up, it is the day of my uncle's memorial service. For the rest of the day I mimicked what I did days earlier until I received the key to my uncle's house. I rushed to the study and quickly found the gem and the book. I found a chest and placed these items into it and then locked the chest. Thinking the wine cellar would be a good place to store the chest, I opened the trap door and proceeded down. What I saw was no wine cellar, but instead a gigantic museum. It held many more books than the study had. It also had strange looking items, ranging from small charms to heavy weaponry, in display cases. I decided to place the chest in the farthest corner, underneath a loose stone tile. No one is going to open this chest for a long time. I wonder what else I can find down here.

Honorable Mention in Prose

Don't Dance on Company Time

by Jeff Harrison

Oklahoma summers can be a hell on Earth. Unfortunately a large part of the economy is in manufacturing. The hardworking men and women who work here are friendly, sociable and even stop to help strangers broke down on the side of the road. Industrial plants, smoke stacks and oil rigs dot the landscape. But where there are smokestacks, there's fire. Or worse. Furnaces.

Leonard Fairbanks had just moved into Okemah, OK from Mobile, Alabama. Jobs were scarce and good luck was non-existent. He finally landed a job working in a small copper mill on the graveyard shift 11-7 am. It was February and he was grateful to be placed in the casting department where the copper was melted and refined. He was a big man with a hearty laugh. At 6'3 and 250 lbs., no one much messed with him. For the next three months he tried his hardest to learn his job. He kept busy even when the permanent employees were goofing off. He wanted to make a good impression on the boss so he would be taken off temporary status thus enabling him for benefits and higher wages. But as hard as he would try, he would invariably screw something up. Samples were taken twice an hour for lab analysis but he rarely remembered. The furnace temperature had to remain a constant 2300° F, which he was to monitor (an easy job), but at least once a week his trainer Ryan would have to intervene and adjust one of the burners up. He had been told more than once that some of the equipment was old and needed attention but he just couldn't remember. This became a nuisance to Ryan very quickly. It was easily remedied by Ryan but kept him away from his duties. Leonard would just have to move along.

Complaints to Ryan's boss, David Burns, didn't help. Leonard was too hard of a worker and Ryan could pick up

the slack. Ryan realized that if something wasn't done, they would eventually hire him and he would become an every day problem. Ryan began to visualize a plan. First, two of Leonard's car tires mysteriously became flat one night at his home before work. No problem. Leonard had such a pleasant demeanor that he had developed several recent friendships and one of them was all too happy to give him a ride into work that week until he replaced the tires. Strike one.

A 'mickey' of Ryan's own concoction did do its job but only kept Leonard out of work for a week. Leonard knew the coffee he had had that last night didn't taste quite right. He lost 7 lbs. that week in bodily fluids but with the doctors note in hand, next week he was back hard at work. 'I knew I should have made it stronger,' Ryan said more to himself than anyone. Strike two.

'Okay,' Ryan thought 'this is it'. No more mistakes, nothing left to chance. Leonard just wasn't getting the hint. Or was he? He knew his tires may have been damaged crossing the construction zone near his apartment. Springtime brings allergies and viruses are caught easily but one thing happening on the heels of the other made him wary. Bad things normally come in three's he had heard somewhere. He didn't want to think of what other trouble might come his way but he sure wasn't going to take it lying down.

Ryan wasn't usually a violent man but the last few months had changed him. True enough, Leonard had become more efficient at work and caused fewer mistakes but Ryan's anger only increased causing the mere sight of Leonard to send Ryan into a fit of rage. Even coworkers noticed the change in him.

Ryan planned to work the same weekend as Leonard when production was down. It would be slow and easy at work and the full staff would not be required as during the week. That was when Ryan figured he could get retribution. Business was indeed slow that weekend and some workers even called in 'sick' to enjoy the beautiful spring day. Ryan was planning on enjoying his day too. Ryan and Leonard were the only two working in casting that day. The mild 70° temperature outside only made the 100° plus inside even worse. By midday, both were drenched in sweat. An hour before quitting time, Ryan started to think about all the problems and frustrations Leonard had created. The heat from the molten copper just fueled his anger more. When Ryan thought he couldn't stand it anymore he called Leonard over to where he was working. Ryan was loading some scrap copper back into the furnace to be recycled. There were steel hoppers all over the plant to catch the odd pieces and wrong sizes of the tubing and pipes being made. Ryan would load the hoppers on an elevator that dumped its contents into the furnace. Foreign metal was to be taken out, if possible, before emptying it. Tin, steel and aluminum would occasionally be found in the

form of popcans or steel bands off material shipped into the plant.

"Leonard, can you reach that steel band? You have a little better reach than I do." Leonard smiled revealing his pearly whites. While leaning over to retrieve the steel band, Ryan knew this was the moment of truth. All his problems could be solved with one whack over Leonard's head. He grabbed a large wrench that was close by and raised it over his head. Sweat trickled down his face more now. 'I just can't do it. This is crazy,' he thought. Slowly he lowered the wrench and put it back where he had taken it from. He was angry at himself for not being able to carry his plan out but was also relieved that he couldn't take another man's life. Leonard stood up and handed the steel band to Ryan. "Here you go shorty," he chuckled. "It's my turn to load the hoppers anyway Ryan. Would you send that sample to the lab I just made?" "Sure Leonard." He was glad for the chance to get away from even the vicinity of Leonard. It calmed him down and helped him try to forget what he had almost done. Ryan sent the sample to the lab and monitored the furnace temperature. It needed adjusting again. Another 45 minutes and a twelve pack should help me forget, Ryan thought.

Another 15 minutes passed and Ryans heartbeat was down to where it should be, not that of a crazed killer. He was sorry that he had signed up to work the weekend now. He could have been out soaking up the sun and weekend frivolity but at least work was almost over.

From Ryans vantage point, he could see every square foot of the casting department. The furnace was forty feet up and he could see Leonard loading the hoppers down below. A horn sounded. This was to let the workers know they had thirty minutes left in the shift. Leonard shouted as he always did at this time, but he also started to do a little dance. This amused Ryan until he noticed Leonard getting too close to the hopper on it's way up. The last thing he wanted was to have to fill out an accident report. 'Watch out!' he shouted, but Leonard only looked up and smiled. Leonard kept dancing in a backwards fashion like a moonwalk. Suddenly Leonard stopped. Actually something stopped him. It was the hopper already four feet off the ground on its way up to be emptied. Leonard had backed into it during his little dance. Bumping into it didn't hurt him but it did catch the top of his suspenders and began to slowly lift him off the ground. Now Leonard really began to dance. He tried to dance right out of his pants. But the more he wiggled, the more apparent it was that he was not going to be able to break free. He yelled to Ryan for help. Ryan was rigid with fear as he knew the fate that Leonard faced. What was once a goal to be accomplished was now terrifying. The second call for help broke Ryan out of the trance as he hurried down the stairs to reach the emergency stop button for the elevator. As he reached the second landing taking two steps at a time, he noticed

Leonard was already 15 feet in the air struggling to release himself. The leather suspenders he wore proved to be stronger than they looked. The stairs leading down from the furnace had taken Ryan further away from the controls. He had 50 feet to cover by the time he hit the floor. Leonard was now 35 feet and still climbing. And still struggling. Another 15 feet and it would be too late. Ryan took off at a hard run. Sweat was pouring down his face from both his exertion and fear. 10 feet. 20 feet. He hadn't run this hard since he was a kid. 30 feet, 40 feet. Now Leonard was almost to the curve in the track that would take him up and over into the orange glow of the furnace. Leonard was already feeling the heat as he rose higher and higher, tears streaming down his face. When Ryan reached the emergency stop button, Leonard was starting the arch in the track. Only seconds to go. In that split second Ryan remembered his anger from earlier, his intent, the plan that he couldn't carry through with would now be done by no fault of his own. But not hitting the button was as terrible as cracking him in the head. The proverbial good angel, bad angel was tormenting him almost to madness. If he didn't push the button he was not to be at fault. He simply couldn't get there in time. But he would have to live with his inaction the rest of his life, especially in bed right before sleep when things seem to haunt us most. Could he live with that? If he saved Leonard, he would feel the immediate release of fear and a sense of having saved someone literally from death itself. Along with that though would be the same old grind and rub of working with public enemy #1. What a dilemma.

As Ryan reached for the controlling factor in Leonard's life and possibly Ryan's own sanity, he looked up into the terrified eyes of his coworker and felt both remorse and rage all bundled together. He lightly touched the button trying to force his will to press it further and stop the torment he was feeling. He had to choose one way or the other. Leonard yelled, "Please, push it!" But that was the last thing Leonard ever said. The hopper had reached its apex and dumped 800 lbs. of scrap copper and 250 lbs. of Leonard Fairbanks into the furnace melting them together for eternity.

Ryan just stood there a minute not believing what had just happened and what he had witnessed. Only after 30 seconds had passed, but what seemed infinitely longer, did he survey his surroundings to see if anyone else had witnessed the tragedy. The room was empty with only the dull roar of the jets of fire blasting away in the furnace. Anxiety began to rise again as Ryan realized he must again make a life changing decision. This day was beginning to drive him mad! Should he report the incident or let it remain a mystery as to what happened to poor Leonard? If he did nothing, some investigation would likely come about but what evidence would there be? The furnace had taken care of that. However, if he reported it, he ran the chance

of possibly being implicated for the death. Several workers around the plant knew of his resentment towards Leonard and that would supply the police with a motive. Jail time. Criminal record. Humiliation. This last thought cinched it. He would have to keep quiet and play dumb.

Only 15 minutes left of the shift. Better hurry and get ready for the next shift he thought. A quick cleanup, check the burners and one more sample to the lab ought to do it. He adjusted the burners up and started sweeping when Jack and Tex came in. "How's she been running today?" Jack asked. "A little temperamental but not too bad. How ya doin' Tex?" "Ready to mount up and ride off into the sunset. Where's Leonard?" "I told him to go ahead and get cleaned up. Probably in the bathroom." So far, so good. Remember, he thought, just play dumb. The shift change happened with the sounding of the horn and Ryan was on his way to the parking lot when he remembered he had forgotten to take the lab sample. Upon reaching his car he began to dial the numbers on his cell phone to call Tex and ask him to take the sample he had missed. The images of the last hour were churning within him when he realized that maybe he shouldn't have the sample taken. Leonard's remains might show up on the lab analysis. He called anyway and told Tex that he had taken the sample on the current batch and they didn't need to. He didn't want them discovering where Leonard had gone. After that Ryan headed straight for the bar. He needed a drink in a bad way.

When Leonard didn't show up for work the next two days, management just filled out the paperwork showing him as being fired. There was a little talk among the workers but that died off by the end of the week. Ryan got a new trainee who seemed to learn the job quickly. It was work as usual at the plant.

At Leonard's apartment, his phone was cut off due to non-payment and then his lights. After two weeks of his disappearance the landlord sent letters and phone messages requesting rent payment.

Usually Leonard called his mother every Saturday. When he missed the second Saturday, she decided to call and see if anything was wrong. She had to leave a message and by the following Wednesday when no return call came, she called the local police to file a missing persons report. Two days later a police cruiser showed up at Leonard's apartment. Apartment 302 was on the third floor and as Sgt. Brown reached the top landing, he was almost out of breath. Gotta lose some weight, he thought. He knocked and waited. No sign of forced entry on the door. It was a pretty spring day and he didn't mind being outside. He knocked again and loudly identified himself as the police. At this point, the next door neighbor opened his door and came into the breezeway. "He hasn't been home for a couple of weeks now," he said. "I'm Sgt. Brown with the

Okemah police. Mr. Fairbanks mother has filed a missing persons report on him. Do you happen to know of his whereabouts? Any information would be helpful." "Well I'll tell you what I know but that isn't much. He pretty much kept to himself. However, I did see some of the people he worked with come over once in a while. One time he watched my dog for me when I went out of town one weekend. He seemed to be a nice guy. We saw each other when he came home from work but that was little more than a passing 'Hi'. I think he worked at Southwest Metals, the copper plant." "Well, thanks for your help. Give me a call if you think of anything else." he said while handing out a business card. "No problem. Sorry I couldn't tell you more." Sgt. Brown headed for the rental office then to see if he could gather any more information. He did verify that he worked for Southwest Metals which was on his rental application. Since the rent was late and the police was looking for him the landlord asked him to accompany him to Leonard's apartment. He would use the pass key and maybe both of them would learn something. No such luck. Upon entering his apartment, they just found a sparsely furnished apartment of a single man. The air seemed stale and the one plant he had was practically dead. "Definitely looks like he hasn't been home in a while," Sgt. Brown said to the landlord.

Sgt. Brown called Southwest Metals to set up a time to interview some of the workers along with their boss. He would have to go early as the workers left by 7 a.m. He also placed a call to the temporary agency that employed Leonard. He learned that Leonard's paychecks had not been cashed although they had not been returned through the mail. The next day, Sgt. Brown got an early start and arrived at the plant at 5 a.m. He started interviewing with Ryan. When Ryan Parker heard his name paged to go up front, he was nervous. He had been told the police were coming to ask some questions relating to Leonard's disappearance. He had expected this but couldn't help being jittery. Ryan's boss David Burns was in the conference room along with Sgt. Brown when he came in. "Ryan, this is Sgt. Brown with the Okemah police. Since you worked with Leonard he wanted to ask you a few questions." They shook hands and sat down. "When was the last time you saw Leonard?" "A couple of weeks ago on Saturday, the last day he worked." "Did he seem different that night or anxious?" "No." "Do you know who he spent time with away from work or where he might be?" "I think he might have hung out with some of the other temps. I usually saw him with them together at break time." Sgt. Brown wrote some notes on his pad. "Okay. I think I'm about finished here. One last thing Ryan, do you know if he had any enemies?" The question he feared most shot right through him. He couldn't avoid it. It would be better coming from him instead of someone else. "Well, it's no secret that at first Leonard and I were far from fiends. He

was harder to train than most but he does a much better job now. Or did." "I see." He wrote some more in his notebook. "Thank you very much for your cooperation Mr. Parker. If you can think of anything else that would help please give me a call." "Sorry I couldn't be of more help. Hope you find him."

After interviewing the other temps, Sgt. Brown was nowhere closer to finding out any useful information into Leonard's disappearance. Calls to Leonard's bank showed no activity so Sgt. Brown decided to sit on the case for a little while to see in anything developed.

Ryan was nervous the rest of the day after being interviewed by the police. He heard and saw others go up front to go through the same routine but he had more riding on this than others. Luckily, no one noticed his agitation that day. Days began to pass and at the end of the week, he had almost completely pushed the fears aside. There was still an aching in the back of his mind and occasionally when hoppers would dump their contents into the furnace, he would grimace. Sometimes he almost smiled. It looked like things would be alright.

A week later a small detail Ryan had overlooked came back to bite him. Not a deadly bite but one that drew blood. That Tuesday, Ryan was walking out to his car when he noticed a wrecker picking up a car in the parking lot. As the car was raised he recognized it by the new tires that were on it. It was Leonard's! He was so surprised that he tripped over the curb and fell, skinning his hands and knees. He had forgotten about Leonard's car. Not that he could have done anything about it anyway. Leonard's keys were in the same place Leonard was, in a billet. But it did point a finger back to where he was last, at the plant. The car was taken to an impound lot and dusted for fingerprints on the interior. Nothing turned up. Rumors really started to fly when Leonard's car was taken off the premises. Someone claimed that Ryan had given him a lift his last day and left him to die on an old country road. Someone else said they saw him at the bar and some bikers drove off with him to do God knows what. The best one was that he had been brainwashed and joined a cult of the Hare Krishna's. But as days and weeks passed, so did the rumors. And Ryan's fears.

The case was growing cold fast but with no other leads to follow and no new information, he reluctantly placed a call to Mrs. Fairbanks. He couldn't discuss some of the details in the case to her when she pleaded with him not to give up. "Mrs. Fairbanks, I've got a grown son also and I'd be the last to call it quits but for the moment, I'm at an impasse. Sometimes these things have a way of working themselves out." He said this more to appease her as he knew most disappearances ended up as either a corpse found or unsolved. With the sound of sobs in the background he told her he would let her know if anything

came up. After he hung up, he closed the folder and placed it in the missing person's file. Along with the other 57.

It was June now and Ryan had been moved to the day shift. Almost two months since that one fateful day. The long summer days almost melted the workers under the tin roof of Southwest Metals. They could feel the heat escaping their body as it tried to relieve itself. Ryan was anxious to leave work after a blistering 100° day. Each step left drops of sweat behind him. The air conditioning in his car didn't work so he had to settle for the hot wind against his face.

The coolness of his house welcomed him home. He immediately hung his clothes to dry and showered off the days work. Now he was ready to relax. He popped a beer and turned the stove on. Time for a pizza. He noticed a hissing sound and quickly turned the stove off. After inspection of the gas line he noticed a break in the copper tube. Not too big a job but I'm hungry now, he thought. He grabbed his keys and headed for the Pizza Palace. The smell of pepperoni's guided him the last half of mile. After the fifth slice from the buffet, he decided to call it quits. With a mint in his mouth from the checkout counter he headed over to the hardware store for some replacement tubing and flux solder. How nice of the hardware store to carry a great line of copper tubing, he said under his breath as he picked up the box with the Southwest Metals logo. He even recognized the coding on the box showing what day it was made. April 17th. That date would forever be etched in his mind. He decided to take that one to commemorate his achievement. True to his estimate, he had taken the old line out and replaced it in just a little over an hour. He turned the gas back on and crossed his fingers. All OK. He caught the end of a baseball game and went to bed.

Ryan was looking forward to the next 7 days. He had a vacation planned and would take some much needed rest. The first day of his vacation was spent piddling around the house and watching TV. He had some home maintenance to do but was putting that off till Thursday. Early Wednesday morning he awoke to the smell of sulfur. "Oh Crap! The line I fixed must have busted." He was groggy but stumbled his way through the dark into the kitchen. The smell grew stronger, keeping pace with his racing thoughts. As he fumbled for the light switch and turned it on, he saw that he was facing the far side of the dining room. His eyes squinted from the sudden burst of light and as his vision came into focus, it became riveted on the thermostat across the room. He realized the A/C wasn't running but if it kicked on, he was a goner. Now he raced across the room just as the mercury switch made connection, sending a spark to activate the compressor. The entire house lit up as Ryan Parker exploded into a thousand tiny pieces.

The fire department came but had no problem putting out the few small fires still smoldering from the blaze. It was more an explosion and not a consuming fire. The next

day the fire chief came out to investigate the cause. With the reports from the firemen along with the burn pattern, he was able to find where it originated easily. The stove had been blown out into the back yard and there was the gas line Ryan had replaced. It was heavily charred but where it had been split was the last few digits of the company coding. He recognized it as one of Southwest Metals tubing. How odd he remarked. The decedent worked there. After checking the condition of the oven and gas line outside, he called the gas company. No repairs had been logged and no anomalies showed up. He took the fragments of the severed gas line back to the fire departments internal lab for analysis. The report showed a high concentration of steel thus making the tube brittle and unfit for the pressure exerted on it by the gas line. Old log books were dug up back at Southwest Metals and showed that there were no tests done on it. Management was informed and an internal investigation took place.

When David Burns found out he was furious. He took pride in his departments precautions and safety measures. He asked Tex and Jack separately about the day in question. Tex remembered exactly what happened that day. Two odd things had happened that day. It was the last day that Leonard worked there and Ryan had called him about a lab sample already being taken. Usually Ryan wouldn't have bothered so it stuck out in his mind. David thought it extremely odd that the sample Ryan had told Tex he had taken resulted in Ryan's death. Why would he lie if we don't have a record of a sample being taken? Mr. Burns called Sgt. Brown requesting the analysis results. He was told about the high concentration of steel. He thanked Sgt. Brown for sharing the report with him and would be back in touch if he found anything out. Mr. Burns was thinking that maybe Ryan had covered up for one of Leonard's mistakes. Maybe Leonard took off for fear of losing his job. Mr. Burns got out Ryan's and Leonard's personnel files. There was nothing special or revealing in either of their files so he turned to the notes he had taken during their respective interviews. He read his own notes concerning the interview with Ryan which dated back four years ago. It brought back some old memories but nothing of use. Then he turned to the notes on Leonard. The words almost leapt off the page at him. He had forgotten about Leonard having a motorcycle accident several years earlier. He had been in the hospital for over 18 months. Almost his entire bone structure had been reconstructed with steel plates and pins. Could this have been the high concentration of steel found in the analysis? Mr. Burns could hardly conceal his apprehension when he called back to check some of the other chemicals found in the analysis. When asked if he was looking for something in particular, he replied Calcium. It was one of the most abundant chemicals found in the human body and would have shown up as it's boiling point is close to that of raw copper. Sure enough, his conclusions

were correct. David Burns had solved two mysteries at once. Ryan Parker had been killed as a result of his coworker Leonard being melted in the furnace and his remains caused the weakness in the copper produced. Ryan had killed Leonard but Leonard had killed him back.

Honorable Mention in Prose

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" Is Relevant To Today's Society by Thea Dean

In today's society, the alcoholic's struggle to attain and maintain sobriety is one example providing proof that Plato's philosophy is as relevant to modern day society as it was in his lifetime. His *Allegory of the Cave* reads like a blueprint for the alcoholic's ascension into sobriety. Comparing contemporary alcoholic James T. to Plato's prisoner illustrates how education and enlightenment can lead to a greater good, for not just the individual, but society as well.

In the *Allegory of the Cave*, Plato utilizes the parable of prisoners chained in cave unable to move, only able to see one wall, and the shadows projected upon it by a fire at the other end of the cave, noise and voices distorted by the echoes. This distortion keeps the prisoners in a netherworld, separated from reality and truth (548). The prisoners are released, the movement and light causes pain. When told his former life and beliefs in the shadows was false, and this new life of pain in the blinding light is real, he runs back into the cave. (548) Again, he is dragged from the cave back into the light of truth, and forced to stay until he accepts reality (548). The prisoner reflects upon his former life and beliefs in the cave, still held by the ones left behind (549). He understands how much better he is to know the truth, and would rather be among the poorest of the poor than go back to his former state of becoming, a world known only through physical senses (549). This new knowledge of the truth brings him into the world of being; thoughts, ideas, concepts that allows the mind, and soul to comprehend the physical world (549). Now that he has accepted reality he must continue his education until he attains the highest level of good he can. But, against his wishes he is compelled to return to the cave to teach others and lead them, out of darkness, into the light of truth and reality also (551). Only then does he reach his greatest state of good (552). For who is more qualified to teach the prisoners, chained in the darkness of ignorance, than a former prisoner.

Plato's allegory begins with people chained in a dark cave, prisoners, unable to see around themselves, "they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another" (547). The state of these prisoners are mirrored in the life of the alcoholic James; living in an atmosphere tolerant to

liquor consumption, he begins drinking while still a teenager. As he grows through his twenties, so does his alcohol consumption. After receiving his sixth or seventh Driving Under the Influence charge, the court mandates he attend Alcoholic's Anonymous meetings for one year. However, this does not curb his drinking. As years pass, between a few brief periods of sobriety, his drinking escalates, until his wife files for divorce. And like the prisoner he is forced into the painful light of reality. He must choose a life alone, chained to his addiction, or sobriety with his family.

The prisoner freed from his bonds "is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated?...He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world" (548). The plight of the prisoner corresponds with that of the alcoholic. James, fearful of the changes truth will bring, is reluctant to admit to, and take responsibility for, the pain his actions has caused, but his wife's filing for divorce forces him to painfully scrutinize himself. He realizes he does not want to lose his family, so he chooses sobriety. Utilizing techniques learned years earlier from Alcoholic's Anonymous, determined, yet knowing he could not maintain sobriety on his own, he turns to God. In Plato's allegory it is said of the prisoner, "And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?" (549). James, after reading the Bible and reflecting on his former haunts, barrooms and jail cells, he no longer wants to return to his former life. Now, desiring to learn more about God, he starts attending church.

Plato states; The business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all--they must continue to ascent until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now....they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allow; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labors and honors, whether they are worth having or not. (551)

Now attending church, James does not sit idle in the pews, but he participates in many different capacities. He plays the guitar, drives the van, teaches an adult Sunday school class, first through fifth grade boys Wednesday night class. Every year he uses a week of his vacation time from work to teach a class in Vacation Bible School, as well as another week to attend Falls Creek church camp as a sponsor. He is a fully ordained deacon and participates in most of the youth activities, as well as many other miscellaneous activities. These pursuits provide endless opportunities for him to share his testimony. As Plato asserts, "Whereas the truth is that the State in which the

rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed" (552), James had no thoughts or desire to teach others, yet he has become not only a teacher, but an inspiration to many, not only with words but also by the way he lives his life.

The comparing of James to the prisoner shows how education and enlightenment has lead James to a greater good, which has also been good for society. By taking what he has learned from his years of drinking and enlightenment through sobriety, and using this in his testimony and ministry, James has helped to lead many others out of the darkness of ignorance. To ensure civil

society continues, we must follow his lead, get off the pew, take action, share our knowledge with others. We must strive always to bring the less fortunate out of the cave. How do you use your knowledge, your own personal gain, or take what you have learned and use it to help others, which will benefit society as a whole, the choice is yours.

Works Cited

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THE MUSE is seeking submissions for its Fall 2008 anthology. We accept works in the following categories:

→Black/White Photography →Painting →Poetry →Short Fiction →Essay

We may award cash prizes* to the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place winners in poetry, prose, & art.

Official Guidelines:

- SSC students, faculty, and employees may enter original works for publication; however, only students are eligible for cash prizes.
- No entry fee required.
- All written works submitted must be in Microsoft Word and transmitted via email or labeled disk/CD.
- Artwork should be submitted on disk as a jpeg (journal printed in b/w only).
- Those submitting works must fill out a permission of publication form for each entry. You will find these forms outside Kelli McBride's office, Scott #109-8, and by the Sigma Kappa Delta bulletin board in the Scott Building.
- Deadline for entry is August 25, 2008

*The amount of cash prizes depends directly upon the availability of funds raised by members of SSC's chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Two-year Colleges. We accept and appreciate donations. Please contact faculty sponsors Kelli McBride (382-9274 or k.mcbride@sscok.edu), and Rayshell Palmer (382-9563 or r.palmer@sscok.edu) if you'd like to make a donation.

1st Place in Poetry

**Ignorant Minds
by Brian Mitchell**

Keep building your temple
Keep building your stairway
Keep looking for yourself
Keep searching the hallway.
Finding the pictures, looking beyond the door.
Keep rowing your boat until you reach the shore.

Ignorance and beauty these are what propel you,
Closed minds and steeples these are what will fail you.

I don't know how to open you
I don't know how to free your soul
I don't feel right with what you teach
For I find comfort in rock & roll.
Covering rights with wrongs suffocating the truth.
Looking for answers I dig to the roots.
Evolution can't be stopped, no matter how hard you try.
Science doesn't prolong the life, cause everything has to die.
Cold blood courses through my veins, right unto my very eyes.
Brothers bringing brothers too much pain.
It's the reason you're the one I despise.

Anew by Aaron Buchanan

A ray of light floods my world of darkness
Bringing forth a renewed hope of things once thought lost forever
Can those feelings; now lost deep inside the heart be renewed?
Or are they lost, damning me to an eternity alone?
Are we doomed to roam in darkness forever?
Or can we be given new life by this light of an unexpected angel?

Live, Love, Laugh by Stacey Danielle Hill

Live with no regrets
Love with no hesitation
Laugh until you cry
See all days as adventures
Never become bored with life

2nd Place in Poetry

**Growing Up
by Virginia Little**

It just took me a little bit longer;
To get my head together,
To read the classics,
To dance around the clock,
To ride a two wheeler.

It just took me a little bit longer;
To learn that love exists between a man and a woman,
To understand we all have a purpose,
To know that a kiss isn't always the beginning of romance,
To know that one cannot catch a falling star,
To understand the true meaning of life,

It took me a little bit longer;
To know there is life after losing a loved one,
To know that love is patient and kind,
To know-who I am,
To know there is more than one kind of love,
To get my life together,

It just took me a little bit longer,

You see growing up is the hardest thing I have ever done.

**The Song of the Widow
by Meredith Marrs**

The wind plays upon my face, bows through my hair.
Flowers' fresh blooms send me wafts of sweet fragrance.
Does the springtime grow so strongly for you there?

At night I sit in awe of moon's radiance.
The day is dark, so lonely here, without you.
But though you're not here, I still feel your presence.

I felt your hands in my hair as the wind blew.
You sing me your love through the songbird's whistle.
These songs hold me until I may be with you.

3rd Place in Poetry
An Apology
by Natasha Gibbs

One day it began to rain
 Big black heavy drops from a vast
 And dizzying sky.
 I felt them fall flat and wet
 Upon my white skin
 And felt that it would never
 Wipe off- not in a million years
 Of scrubbing and washing.
 I threw up invisible arms to the sky
 Like a clean white umbrella
 And covered my head just in time
 To catch the word "sorry"
 Across my arms in a sloppy printed form
 And new that all this time
 (as "I" fell upon a pointy rock)
 I was no person after all
 But rather a blank white page
 To be slobbered and desecrated upon
 With meaningless words.
 I sat down in a puddle of
 "forgot about" with tears
 running down my face
 and smacked my hand down hard
 in the middle of "you."

Evening Prayer
by Natasha Gibbs

And so I pray
 To somehow learn to cope someday
 With that ever aching flower caught
 So that pain sinks away with every distraught pose
 In quiet reverent thought
 As the gentle shine of oil stains
 In parking lots and service lanes
 Reflects the risen crimson rose.
 And so I pray
 To fall and bend and break
 As the clouds shift in colors bright
 -Feel that tinge of orange that flows
 In humble glowing light.
 And as they swiftly fade and pass
 My flesh, I know, is merely grass
 Yet that I may be the patch that grows.

My Battle
by Brian Mitchell

Looking out a window I see what I don't want to see.
 Killing and blood shed born upon hypocrisy.
 Anger then fills me, hatred then fuels me.
 Something inside me is what drives me.
 Always wanting to be right, but you know your always
 wrong.
 I can't change the world not even with a beautiful song.
 Wishing to be a king, wishing to rule the world.
 Wanting to be everything all of it just for me.
 People fight for control and they kill for money.
 Too bad they can not see what its like to be free.
 Trying hard to resist, trying hard to find my way.
 Trying hard to get on top, and that is where I'll finally stay.

Honorable Mention in Poetry
Waiting at the End of Time
by Aaron Buchanan

Sometimes we think
 We've nothing left to learn
 We think we know it all
 Until our life takes an unexpected turn
 Whether it's for the best or the worst
 Just go with the flow
 Whether we're blessed or cursed
 Is not for us to know
 These feelings I have
 I wish I didn't own
 As I go down my chosen path
 I walk, but I walk alone
 Until the end of time
 Alone I shall be

Sunset
by Stacey Danielle Hill

Looking
 Across the sea
 A beautiful sunset
 Peacefully gleaming in the sky
 Splendid

Honorable Mention in Poetry

Penny For Your Thoughts by Tytiana Tobin

Can I offer a penny for your thoughts
Matter of fact how bout I offer you three
One penny for you, one penny for me, and one for our
minds
Engaging not so sexually, getting intimately closer as we
reach the altitude of new sensational conversation
Because I am trying to get to know you,
Everything about you from the neck up,
So these are not your typical poetic pros,
I am trying to close the door on that all too familiar foreplay
of which people try to approach you
While they are trying to get deeply imbedded in the fine
fibers of your bed sheets,
I am trying to define and fine the fibers of which your mind
speaks.
I want to engage you by putting a 2kt diamond on your
mind and marrying your every thought.
I want to lick every inch of every crevice so I can get an oral
fix of your passionate imagination.
I would rather be naked and exposed and relying on your
tears
While you describe the tough times you had in your life
And how you don't know if you can be in a relationship long
enough to be someone's wife
I want to feel the heartbeat as they are leaping towards
your warm feminine thoughts
Swimming from breast strokes to backstrokes.
I am penetrating every entrance to your mind
Taking my time to find out everything about you.
Did I ever tell you about the time you fell asleep in my
presence
And gave me an essence as you laid by my side
I pushed the blinds aside and through the moonlight
I counted 72 eye lashes on the upper eyelid of your right
eye
Because as you sleep they remain slightly open
While we probably moved to quickly into some sexual stuff
I've always cared more about what came between your lips
meaning your voice
So now I am standing here naked and exposed ready to
trade in all the sexual acts that we've performed for the
chance to reform the basis of our relationship
And I offer you another penny for your thoughts.

First Kiss by Stacey Danielle Hill

Two hearts
Beating quickly
Passionate love blooming
Trembling he leans in toward my lips
We kiss

Young Woman by Stacey Danielle Hill

Like a rose blooming
A young woman she becomes
Beautiful Blossom

Roses by Jacob Hutson

A bed of roses,
Filled with many bright colors;
The reds for passion,
Yellows for unending joy,
And the whites for innocence.

Are you a bright red?
Does passion fill up your soul
With the love of life?

Are you a yellow?
Where even on the bad days
Your spirit soars with birds.

Or are you a white?
One whose soul is clean and pure,
Living without sin.

These are some colors,
There are many, many more,
Of roses deep in hue.
If you had to choose just one
What color would describe you?

Sunset on Bradley Street
by Natasha Gibbs

I feel the tinges colored
of dying light and fray,
gasping quench of breath
-a risen starry ray

Tilt the gendered diadem
the perfect place of peace
in harnessed quiet light
where hearts will pause and cease

Prose and written hymns
a hundred dying lines
of precious moment patterns
made alive in lonely minds.

My Apology
by Brian Mitchell

Hey Man, can I ask you a question?
Do you like the situation your facin?
I feel, like I am broken.
On the fumes of life I am choked.
Hey Boy, where you going?
Doesn't matter cause the river keeps flowing.
Hey Dad, you went to your grave.
But it's ok cause your soul's been saved.
This is my apology, cause I don't care what you think of me.
I see on MTV
A bunch of idiots who look stupid to me.
Lip Sync, Power trip
The whole pop culture is full of it.
Don't try, to explain
Power of thought puts strain on your brain.
I hope, I find sanity
Before the world has it's way with me.
This is my apology, and it will be the same for eternity.

Yesterday (A.K.A. The Day After)
by Aaron Buchanan

When you lose what you know is truly perfect
You lose every sense of direction that you have
Because all that you are left with are thoughts of yesterday
Yesterday then became the worst day of your life
It consumes your everything and your mind
It becomes an obsession replaying in your head
You then lose all that it truly you
It died when the perfect was gone
It left and now it's done
It's died and now it's no fun
I am hoping to find a place where peace can ease my mind
But no matter where I go there's only these thoughts
These thoughts of Yesterday.

Moon River
by Natasha Gibbs

There is a darkness pool of wonder
That flows in waves of moon delight
The waves I'm under cool the mind
And so the darkness turns to light

I splash the liquid up above
To ponder thoughts of breath and life
And think of older ways I've tried
To swim away in quickened flight

Moon shadows hide my peaceful face
In stunted creases and withered halves
I wished and spied the way a-bright
A swimmer, golden in water light

The shadows give to liquid chase
Catching all I have and am
As I view collision, perfect sight
And change the way I think of night.

November
by Natasha Gibbs

Such a transition as I have seen:
To accost the gate of sudden dreams
-and I remember the boat
That sailed along an Italian coast
And wonder with feeling
In an hour quiet with reflection-
Where shall we find
The old religious spires?

The feelings in my toes are thoughts
Encrypted thoughts of rhythmic pose
And I cannot feign
That the feelings are not light
Trivial even for the month of May
But superfluously dire
In the mist of November gray
And the man in the tattered hat is fishing

Like rain in a jar
I am captivated and content
Waiting for some different
And some more and better
I feel the sand on my feet
And look through the distance
To observe the sparkling roofs
Along the shore of treasures

I know that I am not lost
Because the air is friendly
As the pebbles lie grouped and merry
I think I shall join them
And walk in the coolest breeze
With a scarf much too long
And think in the shortest phrases
Of "Why, yes, of course!" and "I'll be!"

And so I shall thrive
In the Month of November.

To Death and Recollections
by Tucker Martindale

Standing and looking upon starry visions,
Remembering the pain and tears.
Crossing the river into deadly missions,
Vexing life and destroying crippling fears.

Looking to the brightest hour,
It sits on my darkest day.
Forging onwards to memories sour,
Connecting to spirit's ghastly sway.

Glorious shouts of battle echo far,
Frozen winters blaze the field.
Alone upon wastes and furies scar,
Smiting the fruits of war with shield.

Wings
by Tucker Martindale

The wings of death rise upon the fiery planes of earth,
They signal the defeat of evilness and bring about rebirth.

Scorching and burning all life across its blazing path,
Leaving no deductions for human life its marked through
the math.

The wings of white stretch the sky like great hands of god,
Claiming all creation with feats atrod.

An armeggedon started by the cruelty of sin,
a end to the beginning and the death of men.

Philosophy and the Fragile Heart by Natasha Gibbs

The world is blazing and I'm sitting by the fire
on a cotton couch made green by time and children's jeers.
The flecks in my eyes grown dim with the night
will open again and air will come through rays of light.

I watch the words spin out from Genesis lips and admire!
They splash down upon an unfinished weaving rug that
hears
(old words full of spite and reckless aching pressing
from the heart- a fatal crash wrapped up in blessing.)

The window is cold because of the wind that blows.
Gently it tells of spite and human death and fears
as it beats upon the glass. And the debt is paid
as a Fragile Heart is burning in the fire the world has made.

*I roasted a marshmallow because I was famished
from all the meanings of life that left me emptier than
years.
Remember that gossiping wind that knocked on my
windows
had darker eyes than night and so it goes.*

I laugh in halting echoes that billow up towards the roof
in puffs of smoke as I tell the rug through fringy tears
"The world is at my feet. Come, smell the ashes."
I glance towards the window and watch as it crashes.

I hear the crackle that calls me back
from night to warmth and light "move away, dear,
from the window with its spidery cracks"
and the sound of breaking glass hurts my ears.

Mary, Mary by Jacob Hutson

I
Mary was born as all others in her family were,
Born into money,
Born into wealth,
Born into the things that people wish for pleasure.
Mary had a hard working father, and loving mother.
One whom she didn't see often and one whom she loved
like no other.
Mary, Mary; living in her childhood free,
Pure and ignorant of sin.
Everyone loved her, everyone adored,
A perfect white rose was she.

II
Into her teenage years Mary did go,
With her wishes,
With her wants,
With her dreams of the future in tow.
Her father was replaced by a boy who's ever present
And her mother was forgotten,
Where friends and companionship was her mother's love
replaced.
Mary, Mary; leaving behind her childish innocence,
Gathering her friends and companions,
Reveling in the pleasures untold,
Her purity quickly becoming past tense.

III
Mary was at a party one night,
Living a dream,
Living in sin,
Living to party was hers by right.
When her boyfriend offered her something new, something
fresh,
She did not know what it was, what it could do,
But how could she refuse her boyfriend Seth,
When he offered her a line of meth.
Mary, Mary; far faraway is your childhood now,
Partying until the sun comes up
Snorting up lines of white powder.
Who for pleasure would you bow?

IV
Mary is now living the dream,
Without a care,
Without a worry,
Without anything to fear it would seem.
Her boyfriend is mostly gone now, going to other girls for
his pleasure,
But every once and awhile he would return to give Mary a
piece of the white angel,

While he would get something of a mess and a tangle.
 Mary, Mary; now without a care or companion in the world,
 But she doesn't need them now,
 She has what she wants and gets what she needs.
 She knows not, however, how her life has curd'ld.

V

Mary has changed much since your youth,
 Her body ever aging,
 Her skin growing more pale,
 Her addiction satisfying everything but the truth.
 She cares not for her ailment,
 For she cannot see how she has been corrupted,
 Tainted by the meth that she has befriended,
 And pushing away all help that is lended.
 Mary, Mary; why can't you see what is happening to you,
 Can't you see the lines of age scarring your face of youth?
 Can you not see your skeletal visage that cries out for help?
 Or are you beyond all hope of feeling any rue?

VI

Mary looks nothing like her former self, resembling
 something more like the living dead.
 Snorting up lines of meth,
 Snorting up all she can,
 Snorting until there's nothing left, then laying down her
 head.
 Blood slowly began to fill around her nostrils,
 While vomit reached the corners of her mouth.
 Her eyes began to glaze over,
 And as she slept she looked little more than a collection of
 fossils.
 Mary, Mary; this is what your life has become,
 You sought nothing but pleasure,
 And thus you had received,
 But now your body cannot take anymore, growing cold and
 numb.

VII

Mary is in a coma now, not able to live or die.
 Wallowing in her pain,
 Wallowing in her misery,
 Wallowing and knowing not the reason why.
 Lying on a hospital bed, she is lost in her thoughts,
 Left to think upon her past crimes and sins,
 Praying for life, but wishing for death,
 Asking God whether this was the fate she had bought.
 Mary, Mary; praying to God to wash away her sin,
 Sorry for the life of pleasure she led,
 Showing remorse for the things she had done,
 Promising to change her ways if she were blessed to live
 again.

VIII

Mary seems to have been forgotten in her state,
 And although she cannot see, she is still aware;
 And although she cannot speak, she can still hear;
 And although none of her friends come to see her, her
 mother comes to visit and often stays up late.
 When her mom visits, she often tells Mary about her day,
 She lets her daughter know that she isn't forgotten,
 That she will always love her no matter what.
 She tells her everything will be okay.
 Mary, Mary; who can't tell her mother that she is sorry,
 though she tries.
 When in the end Mary did pray to God to forgive her of her
 sins,
 To which Merciful God granted her thus.
 Then, in peace and harmony, Mary dies.

IX

Into deepest sleep Mary did go, and then she awoke a short
 time after,
 Not knowing where she was,
 Not realizing that she was dead,
 Not even when she heard a maniacal laughter.
 All at once she felt the hot flames lick her body,
 Writhing and burning in agony, till no end.
 No remorse for those who have sinned a terrible sin,
 Or any to those who had done something rather naughty.
 Mary, Mary; did scream and cry,
 Throwing a stream of curses at her tormentors.
 Wailing in sorrow, wailing in agony,
 Demanding to know the reason why.

X

Mary was left there burning in hell,
 Left in that dark place,
 Left in the place that ever burns,
 Left with someone whom she knew quite well.
 Beside her in the flames was her old boyfriend Seth,
 And unlike Mary, he knew his crimes and why he was there.
 He kicked and screamed and cried,
 Paying for all the lives that he had put to death.
 Mary, Mary; after what seemed like years, God has finally
 heard her,
 Taking pity on his child, and deciding to give Mary an
 answer for her "why,"
 Deciding that it was best for her to know.
 To which God did reply, "Mary, Mary you are here for
 murder."

XI

Mary was left stunned, taken aback from the chilly
 proclamation.
 "Tell me who I have wronged so,"
 "Tell me to whom I committed such an atrocity,"
 "Tell me anything that might grant me emancipation."

Mary begged the Lord to give her just one more answer,
 To tell her who had been murdered by her hand.
 Once again, Almighty God complied with her request,
 Telling her the tale of her life as a cancer.
 "Mary, Mary; I have forgiven you of your life both sinful and
 wild,
 But the act of murder cannot simply be forgotten.
 You had your fun, had your pleasure,
 But then you went and murdered you child."

XII

Mary's sentence in hell would be carried out for all eternity,
 Guilt would become her companion,
 Guilt would be her ultimate punishment,
 Guilt for the death of her unborn child, and her poor
 maternity.
 Mary's child, her baby girl, will never know what it is like to
 live,
 She will never learn to ride a bike,
 Never grow old with the one she loves.
 In heaven she will be, along with all the angels, and all those
 who love to give.
 Mary, Mary; let this be a lesson to all those who do not seek
 a horrible life or death,
 To those who desire pleasure for themselves above all else,
 For those who forsake the love of others,
 Perhaps your sacrifice will teach the dangers of meth.

**Saint Evenrude
 by Tucker Martindale**

Upon the misty shores of saint evenrude,
 where crisp sunsets and waves crash along, there he stood.
 Unadorned with no jewels of kingship he bathed in regret,
 a duty he so dutifully performed, the props no longer with
 set.
 Harkening to another world, a universe somber to destiny
 fade
 life had sang to him of death and love, he pushed through
 water;wade,
 From castles mystic peeks of metal and stone;
 to the bottom crests from the sea of bone.
 Throwing off his pride, waited so patiently for a return
 conscious surrounded him, and sang in gleeful spurn.
 And upon the death of saint evenrude without a bit of spite
 laid the ghosts of heaven, him and pride stricken from sight.

**The Toil of Time
 by Scott Cave**

The brook is whispering to me,
 The water breathing upon the rocks,
 Calling me to lie beside them,
 To close my eyes,
 To breathe deeply: to forget.
 An old rotted tree falls,
 Just beyond the brook,
 A deer softly crunches the leaves
 Of the fallen tree,
 Testing the air with its' nose,
 Drawing ever closer to me.
 I open my eyes and see before me
 The eyes of the dear
 Staring back, wondering.
 I close my eyes,
 The sound of the brook filling my head,
 Numbness spreading over me,
 Consuming me.
 Release is crying to me,
 Letting go of the pain etched into me,
 The fear that has haunted me for so long,
 It's grip loosening from me,
 Oh... sweet release.
 I have lived as long as I dare,
 For only pain awaits me,
 Hopelessness is all that is forward
 Backward is rage and sorrow.
 The moment is what the moment is,
 Gone from me, they all are
 I open my eyes once again,
 Ants have started a long line
 Never ending, ceaseless
 An army with one purpose,
 Single-minded in it's course,
 The trail has started over me,
 Like a belt cinched to tight...purpose,
 A bird swoops down,
 Disintegrating the belt,
 There purpose gone,
 Wandering off like an errand left to be done.
 Disinterested the bird steps to the brook
 For cold water is heaven on the lips of nature,
 It dips its' wings into the water,
 Spraying droplets upon my face,
 Like tears rolling onward to oblivion,
 I blink naught, faceless...
 My finger reaches to the surface of the stillest pool
 Shattering beneath my touch,
 Undulating, forgetful of its' perfectness
 Of its' stillness,

I lift a stone from the brook,
 Rounded from its' pain,
 Curved smooth by its' years of toil
 Small fractures, where it has just given in
 And let time take its' course with it
 I will walk no more
 Numbness is my companion,
 Unable to release what is mine,
 For years I have become this rock
 Smoothed and fractured
 Crumbling... wasting
 There are no pieces to put back together
 Like all the stones stretching backwards from this brook
 One has become many
 And the water has worn away the edges
 Until there is no possibility of finding away to put it
 together
 So are the seeds of my life
 Worn away by the water,
 Broken by time and struggle and strife
 Scattered, forgotten
 I have become this brook
 And like these rocks
 I have given into time
 The only answers are those in this water
 Insistent, ceaseless, pressing onward
 Wearing down layers of protection
 Until there is nothing at all
 Nothing to signify an ending or a beginning
 Nothing to ever say it was there.
 If I had the will to scream
 Or the strength to cry
 Or the desire to walk beyond this brook
 Over that next hill
 I am always reminded of the stones
 In this small brook,
 To close my eyes against the glaring of the light,
 To forget my place in this world,
 Whatever that was,
 Wherever it was supposed to be
 Has lost all consistency
 Edging closer to it,
 Finding comfort in nothingness
 In peace, the last breath escaping from me
 Eyes slitting slightly,
 Heart that once beat its' purpose upon my chest
 Ceaseless, driving me onward
 Now slows its' progression its' charade,
 The blood that flowed through me slows its' dance
 And I find comfort in it
 Peace... I feel her wings upon me
 I feel her take me into her arms
 And her tears on my cheeks
 And her voice calling me home

I have no strength to open my eyes
 Nor the will to smile,
 Maybe beyond the next hill,
 She whispers to me,
 You shall find what you seek
 But deep down inside
 I am always reminded of this brook
 And the toil of time...

**Valence from the Word
 by Tucker Martindale**

The way the words reach through the pen.
 They seek out my name, its constant beat.
 When treaty and war fight within,
 The words flow in soothing melodies upon the sheet.
 Cascading with pain, love and death,
 Imminence billowing through door and stall
 The frosty sentence upon his breath.
 Hear the voice of heaven call.
 Letter upon letter in a joyous approach,
 Sing jubilant and expectant hymns of elegance.
 Shepherd and farmer doth have words to loathe.
 In a variable unlike the royal magnificence.
 Writing upon with flexible jade,
 The hands at which stories be born,
 Conspiracy to thoughts before they bade.
 In essence the words from sheet to scorn.

**My Love
 by Stacey Danielle Hill**

His touch comforts me
 His gentle breath chills my bones
 His love surrounds me
 His soft kiss mesmerizes me
 He is the love of my life.

**Marriage
 by Stacey Danielle Hill**

Two lives now as one
 Joined by a sacred union
 Not to be broken
 An unconditional love
 Outweighing trial that will come

Finale to the Love Song by Tucker Martindale

Oh dear love:

We began this journey amid happiness, and tranquility.
Never exchanged the good-bye owed to us by months of
depart.
I gaze out upon the old wooden pier a symbol of the
distance.
Shattered and broken lay the pieces of heart you left for me
to assemble.
Desperate pain seeps through my being, fate thoroughly
searched me.
Yet, no return, a message in a bottle never washed upon
the crimson sand,
Singlet tears stream down to greet the old love letters that
we wrote.

Future anniversaries never to part with the thought that
brought them.
Strength never kept me, whimsical fantasies our love-
creation would birth.
The water's deep secret abides desolation eerily haunting
my spiritual
agreement to understand the deathly specter that haunts
my visage in the
mirror.

Your love letters never left my grasp as we walked to the
final destination,
overlooking the southern Pacific, an island miles out
specked the horizon
with visions of paradise a humble idea capable of suiting
your Grecian needs.
And as one last tear grips to the contour of my ever-calm
face I realize, and
in total dismay cry out to your painful experience to my life,
the way you noticed my heart beat from the other spirits,
you touched me, and
gave me only a taste, however bad our relationship ended,
you felt me.
I remain in purgatory, a dimension arid with aloneness and
silence.
You never left my grasp as I watched the sky and world
around me blur
together.

Transpiring I grappled at the air around me to suppress the
addiction it felt to the land, and as the last remnants of my
vision operated, I gazed once more to the sun, jealous of its
tremendous life-span its constant relationship to the moon,
lovers for eternity.

A slight smirk behooved me and I pushed the love letters,
your final absence of life and longevity to my breast and
accepted your invitation to the golden streets of Avalon.

The Question by Tavi Ponder

I have searched for years, though there is one thing I can't
find.

A haunting shadow of my past, there is no peace of mind.
I'm not the first and not the last to dread this honest query,
So if you dare, then close your eyes to let your mind see
clearly.

All passions aside, and thoughts unkempt for just a little
while,
For better to be alone in soul, than dead with the heart of a
child.
As fire consumes, I also fear what answer I will find
When doubt has overtaken and the tears have drowned my
eyes.

This necessary evil that no one has yet escaped;
It shows the way to manhood, but also to the grave.
Life is here for just a time; it seems betray our trust.
It breathes its fullness, trials and gold but also seems to kill
us.

So if you can, then take the step that others have before,
Be truthful to your hardened heart, it is your open door.
The question that we ask is this, this very one destroys us:
Whether 'tis better to live full of pain and reward, or to live
in a fear that protects us.

Men wiser than I have walked before and many more will
come,
But I have gained a grain of truth that beats on like a drum.
It is said that the brave man, he doesn't live forever; he
marches to his fall;
But pity the cautious and fearful man; he does not live at
all.

No one to call mine
Nobody but me
When I reached the end of my road
I didn't know what to do
Because at the end of my road
Waiting for me...was you.