I

AM

Legacy
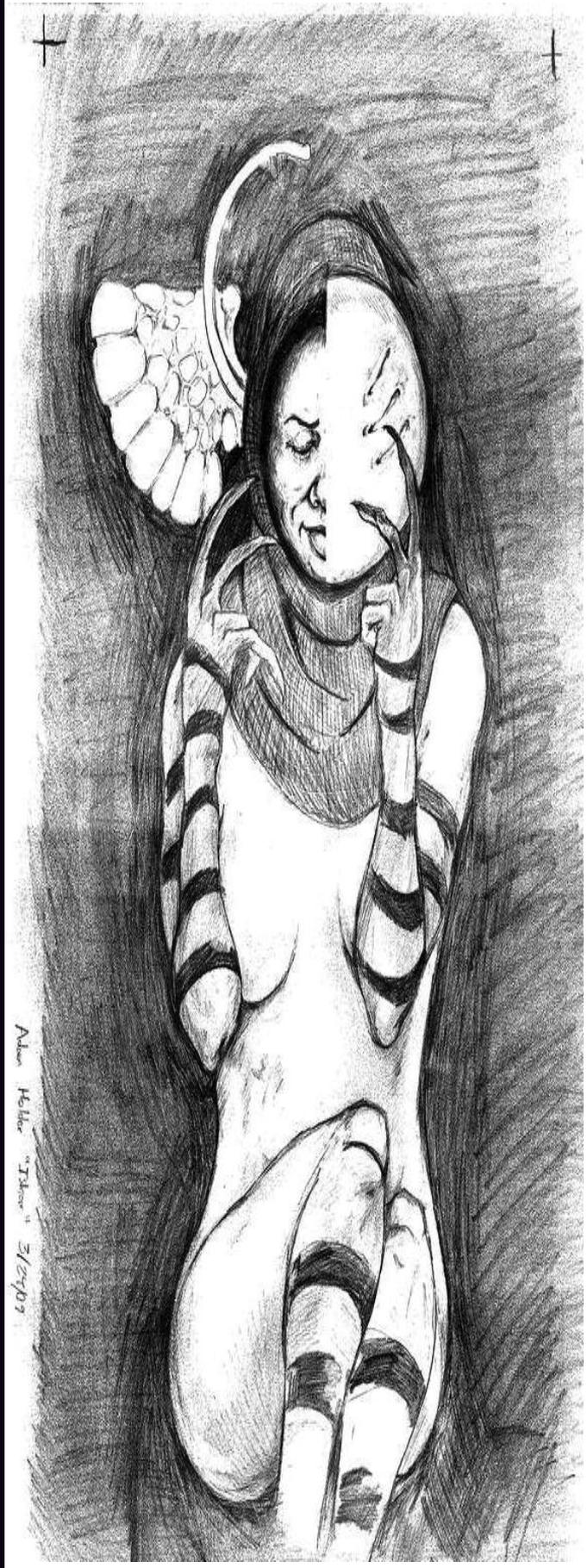
Volume Eight
May 2009

Legacy, Volume Seven Awards

Columbia Scholastic Press Association, 2008
Gold Medalist, Annual Critiques

Gold Circle Award
1st Place for Single Illustration Rendering Photographic
Material: Black and White
Sarah Jeffris

Gold Circle Award
3rd Place for Page Design: Literary
Multi-Page Presentation
Sherri Colton

Gold Circle Award
Certificate of Merit for Cover Design: Spot Color
Sherri Colton and Reuben Wilson

Gold Circle Award
Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration That Complements
the Content of the Accompanying Copy: Portfolio
Adam Holder

Gold Circle Award
Certificate of Merit for Photographs: Portfolio of Work
Reuben Wilson

LEGACY

Reading Area Community College
Volume Eight   May 2009

To the Reader:

"I am …" From our earliest childhood, we define ourselves with these words. We lisp in our childish dialect: "I am three years old," or "I am a girl/boy." In later years, our definitions change to specify locations, activities, and emotional states: "I am in first grade," or "I am going to play," or "I am happy." As we grow and look ahead, "I am" tackles our nebulous futures: "I am going to be a …"

For most adults, the predicate of "I am" remains the same – a static noun that defines an occupation, a social designation, or a family role. We call ourselves "cashier," "bartender," "child," "parent." Yet something within us rebels against these pigeonhole classifications as the sum of self and desires to expand the "I am."

We attend college for varied reasons, but share a common dream – the drive to change our personal definitions. We are no longer content with the status quo of our lives and the "I am" designation must change. We come to college to seek higher education to obtain a job promotion or to make a leap of faith and shift careers. We explore new subjects, discover new ideas, and begin to make sense of the world in new ways. Above all, we draw personal satisfaction in expanding our minds, deepening our wisdom, challenging our intellect, and enriching our characters. As students of Reading Area Community College, we are in flux between one plane of existence and the next. We are evolving away from the "I am" we once were and changing into what we will become, redefining our future and revising our life's narrative. We are all stories being written in real time, with the endings wide open as we grow into new definitions of "I am."

—Jennifer Fernandez

Acknowledgements:

I

Am

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I am ...

"I am me" is the only accurate way to end that statement. I will always be evolving into a better father, son, husband, friend, student, and person than I was the day previous.

I started at RACC with the goal of becoming an elementary teacher. RACC has opened my eyes to many different possibilities that I may not have previously considered. I still hope to reach my goal of becoming a teacher, but I have my eyes open for any other opportunities that may come along as I work towards my goal.

-Jeff Leopold

I am …

What makes me who I am? What words define me to the outside world and to my inner self? The words that describe me yesterday may not be the words that describe me tomorrow. I am proud of yesterday's "I am," who birthed today's "I am," which in turn engenders tomorrow's "I am."

College has taught me that my future is limitless and my potential is boundless. "I am" represents all the possibilities that lay before me if, to paraphrase Robert Frost, I have the courage to take the road less traveled by ~ because that will make all the difference.

~Jennifer Fernandez

That day, the day that began and ended all
Innocence lost and tragedy brought forward,
They met the fearful day—with pride and fear—
While those who accused and sentenced watched on:

"Now keep eyes open ye you who have chosen
Who put we nineteen on the gallows to hang,
Like we were meat in the common smokehouse
No humanity, watch as the souls leave our corpses.

"That warm tenth day of June in 1692
I was the first, whose life was taken too soon,
A wife and mother deemed too unruly
Left this earthly plane saying, I know not what a witch is.
"Those to follow my premature demise
Another warm day in 1692 of July 19th
Rebecca aged seventy-one, religious and respected—
Hung without esteem among four other women.
"A daughter was she, one Sarah Good
Her father a prosperous Innkeeper, his own life he took
She married twice, left in the end begging to eat, to live
Accused and hung as a witch accused by her own child!
"A mother of eight married to a blacksmith
Fined 20 shillings—acquitted the first time of charges,
Twenty three years later to return, accused again
Hung and thrown in a hole was Susannah Martin.

"Denied her admission into Ipswich holy society
Testimony of preternatural mischief she did,
Elizabeth Howe accused by her own coven—a Witch
Baptized by the Devil himself in the river with each was she.

"The murder of Sarah Wild whose reputation was not clean
Once arrested for wearing scarves too full of color for the time,
One child she bore, Ephraim who followed his father in politics,
Arrested his own mother through accusations of others in Salem."

The year was 1692 and from summer to fall the gallows swung
In all 200 were arrested, nineteen were hanged—one pressed,
Lives lost, tortured souls wander, families torn apart
Witches, Warlocks, Magicians, Practitioners or Mid-wives be they.

This seems to be, dismissed as a bad memory
1711 brings renewed fire, General Court apologies,
To replace their lives—Money
Money to pay for each and every murder, those lives lost.

Jennifer Moody-Crammer

Beauty of Women

She speaks with elegance, an accent, in English, Spanish, French, and more.
Her eyes are crystal blue, forest green, bedroom brown, black as night.
Her lips ruby red, crimson, pink with pride.
Her hair long and flowing, tied up in a bun, behind in a ponytail, short off the shoulder.
Her hair brown, blonde, black, red, with highlights.
Her legs short and lovely, long and slender, tanned, pale white.
Her bottom nice and round, plump, petite, teardrop shaped to make you cry.
Her smile hypnotic, ear to ear, just a small grin.
Her fingers with neatly painted nails, just plain as day, white as snow.
Her voice enchanting, like a beautiful song, loudly, softly, penetrating my ears.
Her personality shy, outgoing, quiet, always having something to say, funny.
She sits there all beautiful, waiting, wanting, needing nothing at all.
I gaze upon her time and time again. My eyes shifting side to side, up and down.
Her beauty is hypnotizing, immeasurable, worldly to many.
She is one, some, more than few.
She could be them, her, or maybe she is you.

Richard D. Reiter, Jr.

F-Monster 2

Adam Holder

I am ...

To me "I am" is empowerment by self recognition.

I would like to accomplish the building of a strong base of knowledge from my studies at RACC that I can carry proudly to another school when I transfer.

~Gino Maturi

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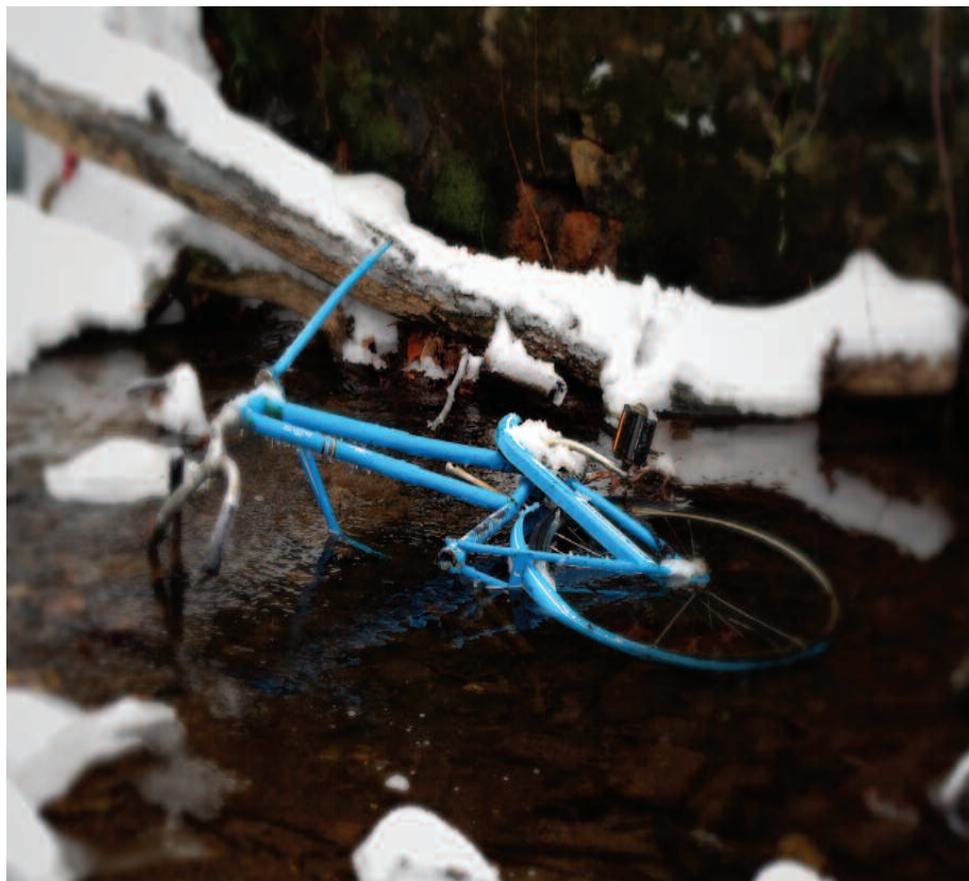
Jon Carlson

Leaf in Winter

Jon Carlson

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Chelsea Hostetter

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Jon Carlson

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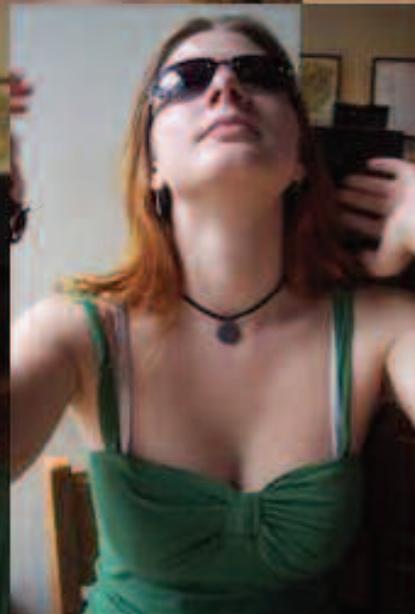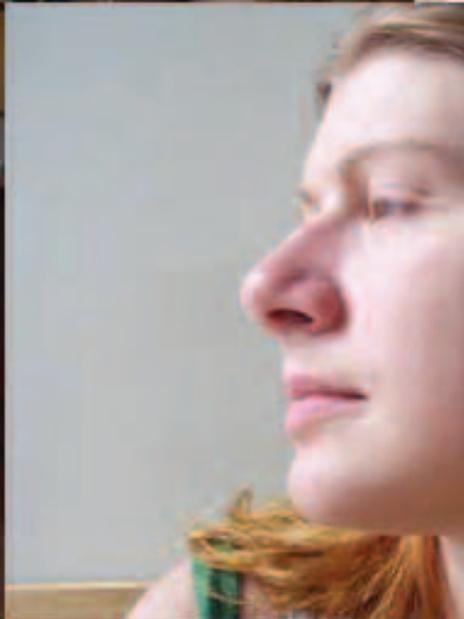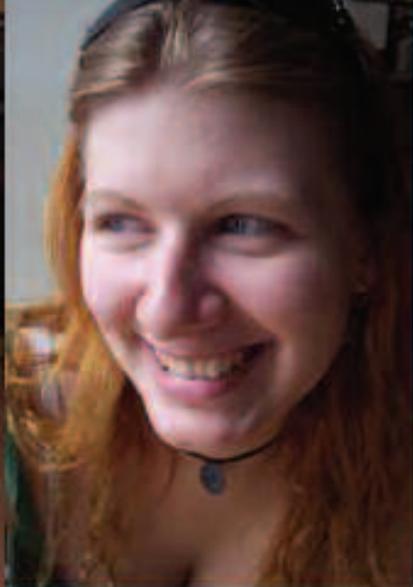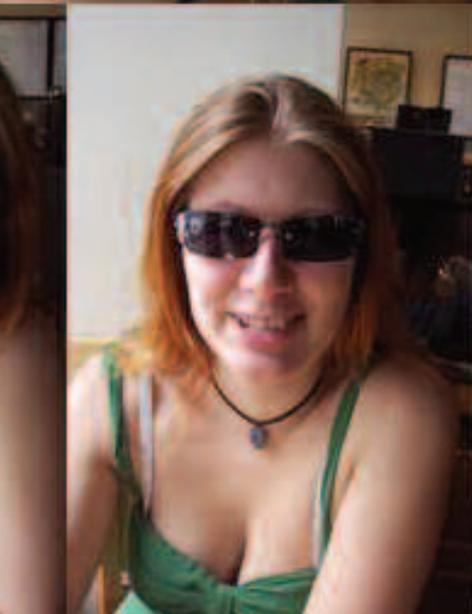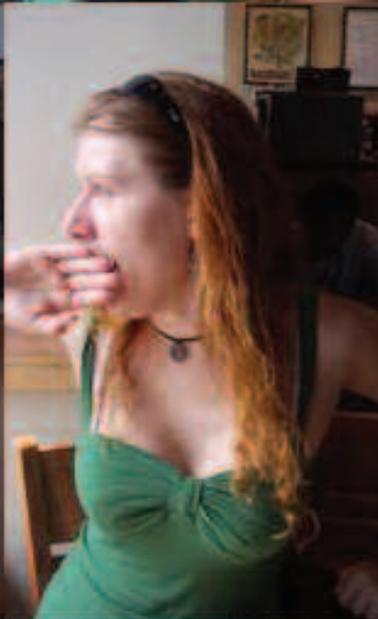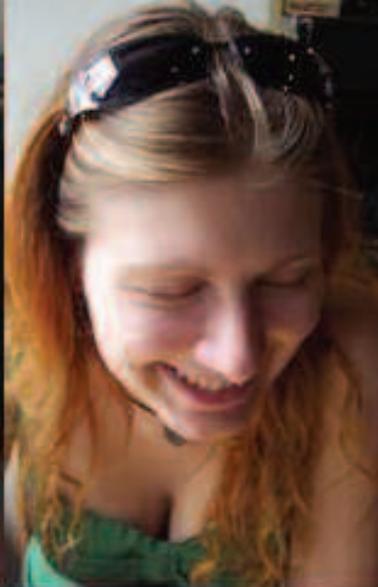
The beach

Jennifer Crose

A Day of Bliss

The water sparkles, reflecting the sun,
gold tones, the breeze smells of salt.
The sand is clear with many tiny shells.
children playing, sand castles, digging holes
in the sand, motes are the plan. Water tag,
is the water cold? Their feet tells the story,
further in, or being chased back.
Seagulls foraging for food, Pelicans diving
for fish, Dolphins playing in the distance.
Sitting in my beach chair, Relaxed
What's This?
Sand in my food, salt in my soda pop.
AWW the beach, Peace, my Bliss.
Boats are in the distance, surfers waiting for the
next big wave, children on body boards, attempting
wake boarding.
AWW the beach, A day of pure bliss for me.
Boardwalk is lighted, rides and games are in play,
ice cream, taffy, and boardwalk fries, people
laughing, children happy.
The beach home for me…

Debra Zerbe

Weeds

Your love is a weed in my exquisite garden
Creeping, Lurking, Masquerading
as a flower
Depriving delicate blooms of essential sustenance,
embezzling treasures from terrain tenderly sown
When carefully plucked and cast upon refuse
your persistent head rears again
accompanied with greater vigor
Smirking, Provoking, Taunting
me to raise the stakes
Spring will prove how worthy an opponent
you are
for the asphalt promptly prepared
to improve the plot

Cheryl L. Tyson

The Intrusion of love

You call my name
(I hesitate to answer)
To be yours you utterly proclaim
(You slowly pull me in)
My mind is not convinced, but my heart won't let me
turn away
(I sense you are around me, I feel you deep within)
You are my biggest fear......
You are my greatest sin.......

Jinneth Jimenez Rauseo

Affluence of Love: Happy Families 101
Claire Studenroth

It lurks in every home, in every family, in the mind of every individual: a small thought which can grow into an all-consuming obsession—the desire for more. That desire can grow into conflict, into crime, into war. The old saying "money is the root of all evil" might be more accurately restated as "the desire for money is the root of many evils," as it is the desire for more that sometimes leads people to lie, murder, and steal. Even when money is earned honestly it can become an absorbing and compulsive preoccupation, one which crowds out other aspects of life. Yes! Money is an essential part of our world, but is bigger always better? Is the affluence of a family an inherent guarantee of happiness?

Affluence affects families in many ways. Perhaps no one is more qualified or authoritative on these effects than a person who has experienced both extreme affluence and poverty. My former writing mentor and friend Wendy Scott was born into what she considered a wealthy family. When I arrive at her brick twin house, she is sitting on the floor in her small and cozily cluttered living room, talking with Corrie, the young daughter of one of her numerous friends. She offers me a drink and when I request some of her famous tea, she is soon sidetracked from the interview at hand and laughingly demonstrates how to drink tea through a cookie—a highly improper method of taking tea, which she learned from an old friend to the horror of his British mother. Her five-month-old puppy, Dylan, curls up in my lap and promptly falls asleep. After our impromptu tea party, Corrie pulls out her schoolwork and Wendy settles back in her chair to answer my questions. Because of her bright smile and kind welcome, it is all too easy to forget that she suffers from severe, chronic and inexplicable pain, which has persisted daily for the past five years. Her health keeps her from working, but her generosity with her time knows no bounds.

I do not know much about her past, for the simple reason that she is always eager to know how I am doing. I ask her to tell me about her childhood, knowing that her family was fairly well off, but having no idea how wealthy they were. Her voice is quiet and thoughtful as she reflects: "[My family and I] didn't lack for [material] things per se. We lived in New York City in a 15-room apartment; we had nannies. My father had his own travel agency, so we would rent an island in Bermuda for vacation for the summer" (Scott). Living in New York City

in such a grand apartment and spending summers on a personal island sounds idyllic, but her memories are not of a perfect childhood; in fact, they are far from it. "My parents would fight about money," she told me. "When I was eight, they got divorced. By then we were living in Virginia, on a large property with barns and horses. My mom was no longer on an unlimited income . . . so things took on more importance [to her]." An elegant set of fine china, which was a gift to Wendy from her mother, is packed away in a cupboard in the back porch and hardly ever used, not so much for practicality as that to Wendy fine possessions are fraught with painful memories.

After the divorce of her parents, her life changed from one of high end living to a life of ever increasing poverty. Her father had been adamant that her mother should not pursue a career or any form of training during their marriage. Thus Wendy's mother lacked the skills to work and manage her own finances, just as she lacked the skills to raise her two young daughters. Her debts from extravagant spending piled up and she used the savings accounts of her own children and money from the sale of their home to pay them off. Wendy's memories came flooding out in her interview, revealing a childhood of distrust and turmoil, former feelings of betrayal and anger, and a broken past. Affluence and worldly "success" had not been enough to hold her family together and she was unprepared for what she would face. When she was thirteen years old she began working and used her own money to buy her clothes. Her mother bought fifty-dollar tennis dresses for herself, yet there were times when they did not have enough heating oil, and the house was cold and they had to take cold baths. At the age of sixteen, she left home to go to college, after graduating from high school early. She lived on a trust fund she had been given by her parents for the first year and a half of college, but that money was soon gone. It is hard for me to imagine what she was facing by the time she was my age and had left home to live on her own with no one else except a roommate. She recollected, "I was basically penniless when my trust fund was gone. I was seventeen, living in Allentown, earning minimum wage. I didn't have a car, so I had to walk to work or take the bus, which was dangerous at night coming home" (Scott).

Growing up in broken homes has become so common in our society that it is no longer surprising to hear of a child being raised by only one parent and in many ways it is no longer as difficult. With the stigma against unwed or divorced mothers significantly lessened, a woman's consideration of how society will view her is not such a deciding factor as it once was. With more and more women pursuing

higher education, it is increasingly more feasible for a woman to support herself and her children. In their aptly titled book, "Spoiled Rotten: Affluence, Anxiety, and Social Decay in America," authors Brian Goff and Arthur Fleisher state:

> Because of the vast improvements in income and wealth since 1990, a single mother now may well be able to provide an existence that allows for many of the typical 'luxuries' of American life—microwaves, color television, CDs, video games, fancy basketball shoes. In this environment of material abundance, decisions about sex outside of marriage and separation from families to find greater personal fulfillment take on a whole different slant. (145)

As affluence increases, the desire for a strong family support system seems to diminish because money and worldly goods often come between individuals. When money becomes more important than family, the family suffers.

My close friend, Katianne Janney, has not experienced an affluent childhood such as Wendy's. There have been no nannies or islands in Bermuda; Katianne often helps to care for her younger siblings and their family vacations typically consist of "roughing it" in their small and frequently unreliable camper. "[Our lack of affluence] kind of bonds us together," Katianne comments, "because we don't have to worry about money." Her words are almost drowned out by the screams of Jonathan, a baby too young to communicate verbally yet, and a three-year-old Joy, whose present mood is a reflection of an emotion quite the opposite of her name. The entire family has assembled for Sunday breakfast after church, although it is nearly 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and is eager to help me with my research despite their busy lives and the tired young ones. They express no shame or denial about their low income and laugh about what many Americans would consider deprivations. They take turns answering my questions and I struggle to keep up with their answers. I ask how affluence (or lack thereof) has affected them negatively and positively and the eldest son Ted is quick to reply: "I don't think [being poor] has affected us at all. I think it's more about attitude. A positive attitude, whether you have a lot or a little, is a positive attitude" (Ted Janney Jr.). That positive attitude shines through as the family lists their material blessings,

everything from daughter Allison's harp to accessible medical care, a necessity for their accident-prone family. Mrs. Janney notes, "I think the problem is [that] in the United States we aren't considered affluent. [However] we have food, we have clothing, we have shelter" (Laura Janney).

Wealthy in comparison to much of the world they may be, yet the family has had to make sacrifices. Mrs. Janney readily admits: "There have been disappointments. When Ted had his cancer, we had to pull the kids out of their activities." Busy with driving her husband back and forth for chemotherapy treatments and doctor appointments, the whole family had to pull together to get through a very challenging time. Regarding the negative aspects of being poor, Katianne adds, "You sometimes feel like there's no space to think. And I think for me at least I [have] a tendency to compare myself to other people. Sometimes when I see more affluent people I don't feel like I measure up." Mr. Janney also concedes that being poor is not always an easy thing for him to accept: "I'm in and out of houses every day and some of them are obscenely large. And I have to admit that I struggle with jealousy every day" (Ted Janney Sr.).

Poverty and affluence both have their downsides. According to the research of one author, "[Poor children] suffer the consequences of stress and anxiety in disproportionate numbers. Their food, housing, and medical care are all inferior. Consequently, they get sick and die more often . . . this is not just unfortunate; it is unjust and ought to be regarded as a form of systemic violence against children" (Books 42). While this author is correct in her assertions, the sad reality is that affluent children face stress and anxiety as well. Authors Goff and Fleisher ask the question, "What would rising affluence possibly have to do with increases in single-parent families, out-of-wedlock births, divorce, and related matters?" (142). At least part of the answer may be that affluence can be a blinding and almost overpowering "force," which can split family members apart. Couples fight over money and worry about it. The anxiety of it can attribute to harmful behaviors such as alcoholism and drug use. Wendy confirmed this when she told me, "My mother was a drinker and I'm sure that at least part of the reason she was a drinker was because of the stress" (Scott). Just the determination or desire to get rich can be harmful to family relationships.

In the movie, "The Pursuit of Happyness," which is based on a true story, actor Will Smith plays a man who is determined to break out of his life of poverty, no matter what the cost. His wife leaves him

and he is forced to leave his young son at a less than desirable daycare for long hours in order to keep his place at a highly competitive internship. He is evicted from his apartment and spends nights in the subway, in public restrooms, and in homeless shelters. At one point, the strain becomes so tremendous that he screams at his own son. While his motive may be commendable (wanting to provide a better life for his son), his methods of going about it cause conflict and strain with those dearest to him. Sacrificing family in order to become rich cannot be justified. Authors Suniya Luthar and Shawn Latendresse, who conducted an extensive study of youth from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, report that children from upper-middle-class families experience "isolation from adults, both literal and emotional":

> Among upper-middle-class families, secondary school students are often left home alone for several hours each week, with many parents believing that this promotes self-sufficiency. Similarly, suburban children's needs for emotional closeness may often suffer as the demands of professional parents' careers erode relaxed "family time" and youngsters are shuttled between various after-school activities. Again, results showed that both literal and emotional isolation were linked to distress as well as substance use. (50)

It is critical for parents and children to be able to spend time together and enjoy a strong, loving relationship.

While impoverished children do face deprivations and sometimes danger, the love of a family outweighs the lack of a shiny new bicycle or piano lessons. In "We Had Everything But Money," a collection of reminisces from the Great Depression, one woman recalls: My only bad memory is a time when I saw Mama crying and heard the word 'foreclosure.' I knew it must be a bad word. My memory album is filled with happier times, like the days I followed my dad around. He was a jack-of-all-trades . . . sometimes there was no pay for odd jobs, but Dad was happy to take care of the neighbors' 'fix it' problems." (Long 26)

Being there is one of the greatest gifts any father can give his child, far more valuable than anything money can buy. Just as Long recalls following her father around, I recall my father working at home

and devoting Mondays to household projects such as gluing our broken dining room chairs back together, chairs which were eventually replaced when they became reliably unreliable and unfortunate guests were startled when they sat down. Mondays were not the dreaded days that they are for so many people; I looked forward to the start of the week, which always began with a pancake breakfast shared by the entire family. Certainly, my father could have earned far more money by using his extensive college training in botany instead of being the pastor of a small church, but I was very happy that my Daddy was able to work at home so much more than anyone else's Daddy I knew!

When my father was eight years old, his father made the difficult decision to leave Lancaster, Pennsylvania and move his family to a remote town in Alberta, Canada, where he would train to become a minister. At that time, he had a beautiful home he had built for my grandmother as a wedding present and a successful career as a life insurance salesman. When his barber found out that he was moving away to train for a job where he would make significantly less money he cursed my grandfather to his face. While my grandfather's decision meant that he could not afford a luxurious lifestyle, his choice made a lasting impact on my father and in turn upon me. He placed people above wealth and left a legacy behind him far more valuable than money.

If wealth is not essential to happiness, then what is? According to Katianne, it is "unity." "If we all believe the same thing, have the same goal," Katianne says, "we can all work as a unit." Her father adds, "I was in a house with three generations and they all had their own space. There was no interaction, no interaction" (Ted Janney Sr.). As the Janney family swapped stories and ideas around the table, laughing and teasing each other, Mrs. Janney shared a piece of wisdom she had learned from her experience in raising a family: "I think having a sense of humor is essential" (Laura Janney). Her words reminded me of a saying I once read inside a Dove chocolate wrapper: "The family that laughs together, stays together." Ted expressed his opinion, one that he personally demonstrates on a daily basis—that members of a happy family need to care for one another. Wendy listed off several characteristics she found essential to the happiness of a family: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Mr. Janney's view was similar when he stated that it is vital for families to "[know] others' needs [and] not be self focused." Self-help books abound, but perhaps what people need is not to spend as much time and money helping themselves, but to help others. Would

a decrease in self-absorption lead to an increase in happiness and closer families? According to Robert J. Samuelson:

> As material wants are satisfied, psychological
> desires ascend. But these defy easy economic
> balm. 'Most of what people really want in life—
> love, friendship, respect, family, standing, fun …
> does not pass through the market,' writes Gregg
> Easterbrook in his book 'The Progress Paradox:
> How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse.'
> . . . Indeed, affluence may make matters worse.
> In 1957, 3 percent of Americans felt 'lonely,' . . .
> now 13 percent do. Although more people can
> afford to exist apart, it may not be good for them. (2)

This growing epidemic of loneliness and isolation echoes Mr. Janney's concern over families separating themselves from one another and having their own "space."

It was after my grandfather's funeral. A small gathering of family members and friends from church had gathered to share a late evening meal. An onlooker might have thought it was a party and not a group of funeral attendees. It had been a difficult day, but as we gathered around two long tables, thus overwhelming the local diner on a slow weekday night, the atmosphere was one of a celebration. My grandfather had lived a full and happy life. He had not left a large inheritance for my father and his sister; he had not left much in the way of worldly possessions either. During the last several months of his life, his few clothes, family photos, and his well-worn Bible could have easily fit into a small suitcase. What he left behind for us was his concern for other people and the knowledge that in the long run, money does not matter much. A family may be affluent and may even be happy but if their satisfaction in life depends on their affluence they will always live in the fear that their wealth may dissipate. As Wendy reflected, "Happiness is kind of elusive with material wealth. The problem with material wealth is you're never really satisfied . . . it's not a permanent thing." A person can be a millionaire and lose all of their money, but a strong family, or, in Mr. Janney's words, a family that is "affluent with love," is not destroyed by a failing economy.

Author's Note

"I was intrigued by how families from all spectrums of the 'affluence scale' relate to one another and by how their happiness was or wasn't influenced by what they earned or owed." - Claire Studenroth

Claire is a part-time, first-year student at Reading Area Community College, who plans a future in nursing and/or midwifery.

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Thoughts of a Madman

Thoughts of a madman, screams of his pain. Yet everything remains the same. What goes up must come down. But his mind is scattered around. Tit for Tat. Where is he at? Neither here nor there, I've looked everywhere. Between the ground and the sky, while checking every passer-by. Out of sight, out of mind. How I wish I could rewind the hands of time to see what I can find. I've crept while you've slept and searched where you were perched. What can I do? I'm about to come unglued. Could it be true? That it is you that I hide on the inside. With the cards that are dealt and the pain I've felt. I begin to melt away. Forget today, there's always tomorrow to bring about new pain and sorrow.

Chris Kretz

Tess Gallagher's Sudden Journey

Maybe I'm seven in the open field-
the straw-grass so high
only the top of my head makes a curve
of brown and yellow. Rain then.
First a little, A few drops on my
wrist, the right one. More rain.
My shoulders, my chin. Until I'm looking up
to let my eyes take the bliss.
I open,my face. Let the teeth show. I
pull my shirt down past the collar-bones.
I'm still a boy under my breast spots.
I can drink anywhere. The Rain. My
skin shattering. Up suddenly, needing
to gulp, turning with my tongue, my arms out
running, running in the hard, cold plentitude
of all those who reach earth by falling.

Debra zerbe

Diadias-Reux

Chapter 6,

Adam Holder

Micro/Macro

The moment of conception, two cells meet and expand explosively.
Two cells, four cells, eight cells, sixteen cells, growing outward like some prolific vine
following a predetermined plan.

The beginning of our time; a single point explodes with the furry of Old Testament gods.
It expands and fills our space with possibilities, being driven by unknown forces out into
a great eternal void.

A form develops; a thing reminiscent of times primordial takes shape.
No ego exists; no separation from here or there, and no sense of the flowing of this into that.

Energy swirls in every direction, encompassing ever larger fields of space, taking shape,
and moving outward as one incredible wave of force. A pattern
emerges, but time and the laws to which we are bound do not exist as they do now.

A new phase of development begins.
Cells begin to specialize and fall into place.
New tissues grow: organs, the nervous system, the brain, veins, a heart, a mouth,
a stomach, intestines, lungs, a liver, and kidneys.
Then, after several months, a living thing is born.

Order sets in as energy cools.
Molecules develop: quarks, leptons, protons, electrons, and neutrons.
They form and condense into matter making galaxies, massive clouds of gas, stars, dust,
comets, meteors, planets, solar systems.
Eons pass, and then on a few of these celestial bodies, life begins.

Rand Williamson

Evening Enchantment

Brilliant speckled orbs
sprinkled celestial mojo
magical night sky

Nicole Davis Vergara

E-Prime and General Semantics: Being All You Can Be

Rand Williamson

How can one improve the human condition? This question drives western civilization forward—with all of its benefits and faults. It has inspired an army of philosophers, scientists, and visionaries of all sorts for hundreds upon thousands of years. Everyone contributes to this struggle in someway to varying degrees: some people answer this question by carrying out acts of kindness for others; some focus on improving themselves and try to set a good example; finally, some answer this question with their own novel ideas and hope that they might shift the course of human thought and culture in a direction they find more harmonious with their conception of truth. The most obstacles and hardships reside within the third choice, but so do the most profound benefits for humankind. Many scientists and philosophers as well as many more obscure thinkers, not well known to most, walked down this path, and we can attribute much of our social and technological progress to their ideas. Alfred Korzybski, with his theory of General Semantics, is considered to be one of those that have walked this path. This essay hopes to demonstrate how Korzybski's theory of General Semantics and the practice of E-Prime, a variation on speaking and writing in standard English which sprang from Korzybski's theory, constitutes an improvement in how humans go about viewing the world and communicating.

Korzybski first presented his Theory of General Semantics in 1933 through his book, Science and Sanity (Kodish and Kodish 17). He began formulating his theory during the First World War to answer the question of how the human collective could advance so far technologically and at the same time remain so dysfunctional in its day to day affairs. Korzybski found that one major obstacle in the quest for human solidarity lay in the average person's inability to let go of what he called "demonological thinking." In Science and Sanity, Korzybski defines demonological thinking as "the mental imputation of an essence to an item which either does not show up in direct observations or fails to be provable/disprovable" (35). This problem springs from a person's inability to recognize that every perception or interpretation of an event, no matter how much evidence one has, amounts to little more than an abstraction, a condensed symbolic version of what actually happened. Because this process of abstraction is inherent in how the human mind interacts with reality, people often go about their entire lives without

noticing this. To bring this abstraction to people's attention and lower it to some degree, Korzybski proposed eliminating the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication from the English language. David Bourland Jr., a student of Korzybski's, later expanded upon this aspect of General Semantics to eliminate all forms of the verb 'to be,' which is now known as E-Prime or English prime (Bourland and Dennithorne, To Be or Not to Be, xxiv).

One should note that while E-Prime has links to Korzybski's General Semantics, it only received public attention fifteen years after Korzybski's death, and he in no way advocated the complete removal of the verb 'to be' from the English language. In fact, one of Korzybski's most famous quotes, "The map is not the territory," contains the 'is' of identity. Some who follow his school of thought feel E-Prime poorly expresses Korzybski's ideas. However, many believe that E-Prime has a variety of proposed benefits: From spicing up one's writing style to tweaking one's perception of the universe, E-Prime potentially could help change the way human beings operate for the better.

> E-Prime does, in fact, do much more: it also serves to better clarify language in general, making it less ambiguous.

One of the most talked about benefits of E-Prime has to do with its ability to make writers, especially inexperienced writers, rethink what they want to say and how they want to go about saying it. It thus has the potential to improve style as it forces writers to adapt to a new set of rules that in the long run will help increase the number of words in their arsenal. In the article "'To Be' in Their Bonnets," Cullen Murphy writes, "[E-Prime] forces one relentlessly to confront sloppiness, laziness, fuzziness, blandness, imprecision, simplistic generalization, and a half dozen other all too frequent characteristics of casual prose" (125). In this continually modernizing world—where the rate of technological advancement increases exponentially year by year—we find expectations for acceptable writing becoming more and more lenient. Speculations for why this might occur abound: one such speculation claims that software tools such as spell check have made it easier for young writers to get by without learning the rules; another claims that advances in communication such as e-mail and cell phone text messaging constitute a majority of modern written communication, and both forms of communication demand little or no conformity to traditional rules for standard English; yet another claims that alienated and marginalized

youth simply have no respect or appreciation for academics or the rules of standard English that come with it. While E-Prime would do little to encourage disenfranchised youth to appreciate their education, it would help those who are willing to learn the traditional standard English to identify and fix some of the lazy semantic word habits that they have picked up.

E-Prime also improves writing by making it almost impossible to write in the passive voice (Murphy 125). Many consider the use of passive voice unnecessary and often undesirable. On one hand, it tends to be overused just like 'be' verbs in general in any writing and, on top of that, it also allows for a misplacement of emphasis on cause and effect. Consider the following sentence: "My hamster was killed last night." Sentences in passive voice often provoke more questions than answers: who committed this action and why? However, in E-Prime it becomes much harder to avoid clarity with passive voice. Consider this sentence: "My cat killed my hamster last night." Now that the sentence uses active voice, one can place accountability on the cat that played a role in killing the hamster. E-Prime does, in fact, do much more: it also serves to better clarify language in general, making it less ambiguous.

Perhaps language evades questioning because of how closely we associate it to the core of our personalities. Language starts becoming a part of culture as soon as a child leaves the womb, and some argue that this process may even begin to take place before that as a baby hears people interacting outside of his or her mom. At a glance, there seems to be nothing inaccurate with the words and structures of our language. However, if one takes a closer look, he or she can see that appearances can have a deceiving nature.

The English language contains several assumptions that do not have anything to do with given human experience. One such assumption in the English language has to do with plurals. In the book, Language, Thought, and Reality, authors Benjamin Whorf and John Carroll explain that plurality in English is applied in two ways: to real plurals, as well as to "perceptible spatial aggregates and metaphorical aggregates" or imaginary plurals (137). To further clarify this with an example, imagine six cats on a merry-go-round. This would fall under the real plurals category because one can actually experience six cats at the same time in an objective manner. Now consider this: they were on the merry-go-round for six days. If one looks closely, he or she can find that a key difference between the idea of six cats and the idea of six days exists. One can only experience one day at a time objectively. The other days have either vanished into the past or have yet to actually exist, and

therefore, only exist in imagination. This oversight occurs in many situations, such as taking six steps sleeping for nine hours, or with anything happening over a period of time. This difference never gets reflected in the structure of our speech. However, in the language used by a group of Native Americans called the Hopi this difference is accounted for. Whorf and Carroll explain in Language, Thought, and Reality:

> In Hopi there is a different linguistic situation. Plurals and cardinals are used only for entities that form or can form an objective group. There are no imaginary plurals, but instead ordinals used with singulars. Such an expression as 'ten days' is not used. The equivalent statement is an operational one that reaches one day by a suitable count. 'They stayed for ten days' becomes 'they stayed until the eleventh day' or 'they left after the tenth day.' (140)

While users of English habitually try to objectify the human experience of time into discrete measurable units, the Hopi Indians see a difference between discrete objectively experienced things and a human being's subjective experience of moving forward in time. Both groups reflect this in their language, so those who believe that their language is based on and represents an objective reality maybe they should take a closer look.

The attempted objectification of matters that are purely subjective does not stop with the English users' objectification of spatial aggregates; it occurs habitually in many aspects of our language and in every human form of communication. As a matter of fact, every time we use the 'is' of identity we very likely become guilty of this fallacy. Another reason E-Prime constitutes such a benefit to language users comes from its ability to remove the 'is' of identity. It forces us to acknowledge that what we are saying constitutes merely observation based on their sensory experience and nothing more. Blanket statements—which often encourage prejudice and racism—lose their power under these conditions. "Mexicans are lazy" becomes "In my personal experience I have seen Mexicans behaving lazily." This constitutes a huge difference: things stated as facts, which in actuality do not fall into the category of fact, are revealed as opinions. This becomes a very important aspect of E-Prime because a lot of hurt and injustice committed throughout

history seem justifiable under blanket statements using the 'is' of identity. Imagine, if things that passed off as facts could have translated into E-Prime before consumption by the general public, humanity might have avoided events like the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and the military operations the U.S. currently undergoes in Iraq.

E-Prime and General Semantics remind us that the words we use, which we believe to convey truth, convey only the truth as far as individuals can experience it. Human beings have such multiple levels of consciousness and complex webs of ideas and motivations that often even the individual they reside in knows little about them. 'Is' statements attempt to cover up this truth by taking all the incredibly complex constructions that make up a human personality and cramming them into an incredibly finite symbol (Bourland 74). Even statements pertaining to objects such as "this drink is cold" become more accurate with the use of E-Prime because it forces the messenger to describe the tools with which he or she makes the observation. The 'is' of identity tricks us into what Robert Wilson calls "Naïve Realism," also known as direct realism, which he defines as the idea that our thoughts and interpretations equal reality (Quantum Psychology 83). General Semantics views all perceptions as abstractions of the real world and rejects direct realism in favor of a theory of indirect realism: the notion that the world we see comes from our own brain as it collects information via our senses (Lehar 1). So, through the eradication of the verb 'to be,' we can see how E-Prime gives writers a helpful tool to progress their skills, helps to lower the amount of abstractions in communication, and promote open mindedness by forcing people to own their observations and question their notions of reality.

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This open mindedness will become more and more necessary as humans progress technologically and societies once isolated from each other have to integrate because of globalization. However, ridged dogmatic thinking still thrives in our society for a variety of reasons. In his book Quantum Psychology, Robert Wilson claims that part of the problem stems from something he calls the "mammalian territorial imperative." This trait of primates expresses itself in an ape when it stakes claim to a land or territory, and Wilson speculates that in humans this trait expresses

itself in the tendency to claim mental territories with ideologies and religions (77). Wilson also claims that the macho image connected to making absolute statements encourages dogmatic thinking. In this view certainty, solid stances, and truths seem much more ideal than wishy-washy, sissy girl statements and uncertainty. A good portion of the problem may stem from institutional conditioning in all aspects of society: political, religious, and educational. These institutions on various levels may purposely try to quell open minded thinking to perpetuate their own existence. Many followers of General Semantics claim the acceptance of something known as Aristotelian logic creates the major factor holding back a more accepting open-minded society.

Aristotelian logic, named after the Greek philosopher Aristotle, holds that things 'are' either A or B; Aristotelian logic sees the world through a black-or-white, all-or-nothing perspective (Langor 45). This type of thinking has greatly influenced western thought to this very day, but many general semanticists and modern philosophers say that Aristotelian logic may finally have become outdated. Increasingly, we find that modern scientific theories no longer abide by the ridged confines or the either-or mode of seeing the world. The final two nails in the coffin of Aristotelian logic came from Einstein's theory of Relativity and the field of Quantum Mechanics that sprung from the discoveries Einstein made. Famous author and theoretical physicist Michio Kaku explains, in his book Hyper Space, how many modern day physicists believe that electrons, negatively charged sub-atomic particles, can exist both as waves and particles depending on how we measure them (111). This theory and the evidence supporting it completely destroy the Aristotelian notion of either A or B in science. General Semantics and the use of E-Prime promote a post-Aristotelian logical view that not only has 'yes' or 'no' as options, but also contains 'maybe.' The inclusion of the choice 'maybe' may seem small, but it helps to incredibly reduce the paradox that the traditional logical view creates.

One should note that this post-Aristotelian view of logic promoted by General Semantics and the use of E-Prime does not just apply to the quantum world, but also to the everyday world in which we live. For example, there once lived a boy who was given the name of Joe by his parents. Now at school the other boys on the football team call him Skiddy because of an unfortunate accident in the locker room his freshmen year; however, his girl friend calls him Snuggles. As Joe goes about his day he fills not just one but all three of these identities and depending on which one of his names you hear, you may get locked into certain opinions about him. However, any conclusions you may draw

based on the name Skiddy or Snuggles or even Joe would ultimately prove inadequate in describing him because each one only represents a small portion of his whole personality. Each name has a piece of the puzzle but lacks the ability to fully express all aspects of his personality.

All of this aside, the use of E-Prime remains highly controversial not only among the general academic population but also among those who prescribe to Korzybski's theory of General Semantics. Since its public debut in 1965, many people have expressed their doubts about E-Prime. While this essay's intent primarily involves expressing the benefits of E-Prime to the reader, it also seeks to stay in line with the principles of open mindedness promoted by the theory of General Semantics—which E-Prime owes its creation to.

James D. French, in his article titled The Top Ten Arguments against E-Prime, articulates many of the problems that the opposition of E-Prime have with its use. Some people question the actual benefit to one's writing that comes from completely removing the verb 'to be' (79). They propose these problems could be solved by simply cutting back on the verb and that cutting it completely out is equivalent to chopping off a hand because of an infected finger nail. Also, context often softens the dangers of the 'is' of identity and predication. For instance, saying 'this pizza is good tasting to me' is just as good as 'this pizza tastes good to me.' French also claims that some 'is' of identity statements have little to no negative effects, and that E-Prime does little to actually remove the problem of identity from language. He argues that E-Prime eliminates even phrases that fall in line with the principles of General Semantics, such as phrases that use a form of 'to be' as an auxiliary verb.

While E-Prime has its critics, the benefits it provides remain clear to an ever increasing number of people. The theory of General Semantics when first published in 1933 too had a number of critics. Korzybski had no Ph.D, and no formal affiliation with any university at the time he first released Science and Sanity (Bourland and Dennithorne, To Be or Not to Be, xxiv). While this at first put off many academics, the ideas and Korzybski's determination spoke for themselves. E-Prime promotes many of the theories and ideals of General Semantics. It promotes open mindedness and free thinking; it causes us to question our notions of fact and reality; it forces us to own and take responsibility for our thoughts and observations, and forces us to better describe the tools with which we make those observations; it promotes a system of logic consistent with modern science and human progress; it has the potential to vastly improve the style of any writer willing to take a little extra time to give their writing a second look over. These benefits can come from even

dabbling occasionally in the use of E-Prime. Korzybski, Bourland, Johnston, Wilson, and many other promoters of General Semantics and E-Prime all have a visionary quality about them. They looked to tomorrow conscious of but undeterred by the troubles of the past and dared to ask how we could improve the human condition.

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Factorial Monkey

Adam Holder

Mindblow
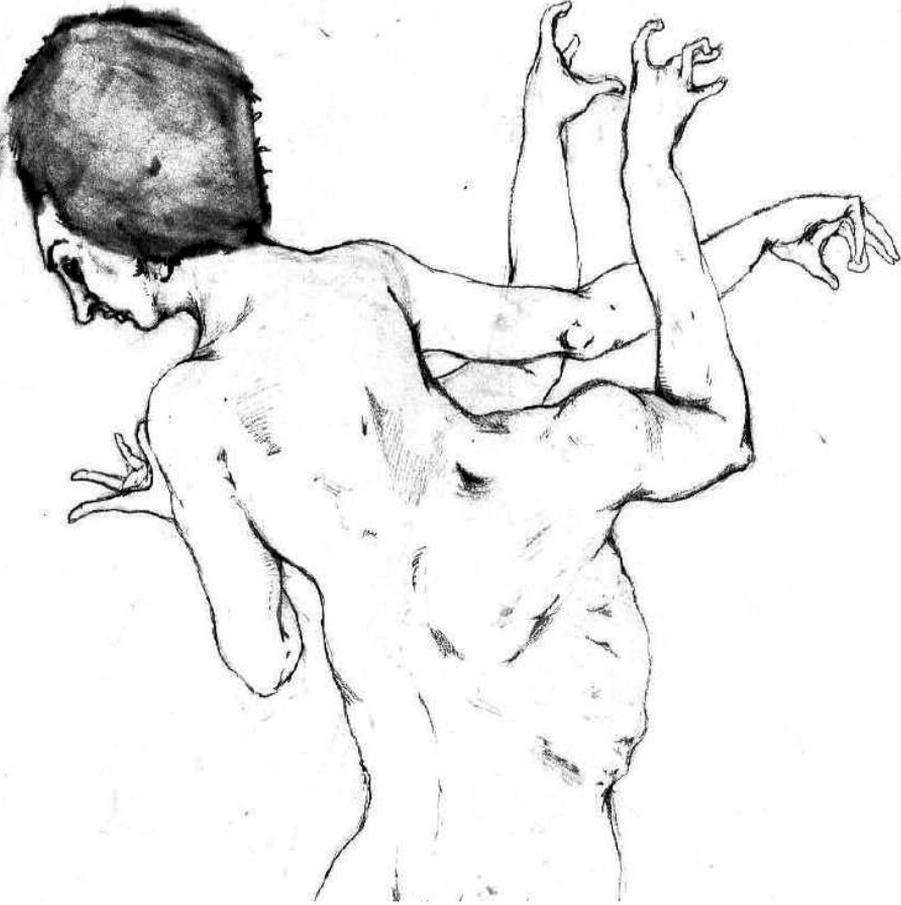
Adam Holder

Spider

Spiders wielding might
Spinning silks for lonely stars
Gossamer web glows

Stefanie O'Brien

Caterpillar

Small, meek
Inching, munching, foraging
Feet, body—string, habitat
Resting, hanging, protecting
Calmly, quietly
Cocoon
Morphological, silky
Waiting, growing, evolving
Metamorphosis, confinement—wings,
independence
Fluttering, hovering, soaring
Beautifully, daintily
Butterfly

Tanner Althouse

Hold on

Why hold on
The joy is gone
No music or laughter
What comes after
Some people know
The pain is real
Still others say
Just move on dear
So much easier
To just let go
Let the water
Take me far away
Warm or cold
It matters not
I'm finally home
No need to roam

Linda Thompson Saknit

Reading in 3D
Jon W Carlson

I grew up watching nothing but black-and-white television. It is not that color had not been invented yet: my family simply could not afford a color television. Robbed of the immersive characteristics of color, I turned to books as my portal to other worlds, other lives, other experiences. Much like the children in Lewis' Narnia series, I found myself transported to another realm. The prose of my favorite authors came to vivid life, engaging my intellect and sense of wonder far more than the black-and-white images of our television. Reading was like watching a movie while wearing those dorky 3D glasses; I knew it was not real (usually), but it seemed like the characters and I were inhabiting the same world.

My earliest memories of literature are being read to by my parents. We worked through nearly all of the classic children's texts. Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon* was a standard bedtime story. Although I enjoyed interacting with that ritual regularly, her story *The Runaway Bunny* was far more engrossing. I was enthralled by both the vivid

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illustrations and the rich writing. The story was far more "real" to me than *Sesame Street* or anything else on television. The witty rhymes of Theodor Seuss Geisel, as read to me by my parents, became another constant companion of my childhood. Although I did not always understand the allegorical nature of *Horton Hears a Who* or *The Butter Battle Book*, I certainly entered the world of *The Cat in the Hat* and the hapless children of the story. The Lorax and the Wocket seemed to be a part of my world.

When I graduated from "being read to" to reading, I did so through a popular series of Basal readers, an updated version of the *Dick and Jane* books. I read about Dick running and Jane jumping, a far cry from the rich storytelling of a Maurice Sendak or a Hans Christian Andersen. I quickly tired of my adventures with Dick and Jane, choosing instead to pursue other forms of reading that were more stimulating to my imagination. I became engrossed with fiction, non-fiction, historical fiction; I would read just about anything.

I loved to read Madeleine L'Engle and C. S. Lewis. Later I discovered Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, her rough sketch of an otherworldly

experience provided great stimulation for my imagination. I spent weeks thinking of what happened to Jonas: did he live, die, find refuge, find a home? My exposure to the fantasy genre led to a deepening interest in science fiction. I would dive into many books set in the *Star Trek* universe, the words on the page being far more real than the televised images. Although I later realized just how atrocious most of the writing was, the relatively short, fully contained, easily resolved stories made for great reading in my spare time. The books were so realistic to me that there were occasions when I mistook a memory of a book for a memory of an actual TV episode (and vice-versa).

Over time, I delved deeper and deeper into science fiction, often engaging books that were far beyond age-appropriate. I remember becoming engrossed in William Gibson's short story *Johnny Mnemonic.* One night, my parents were out for the evening, and I was home alone. Reading dystopian science fiction is not the best idea for a ten-year-old boy, especially one who reads as vividly as I did. Somehow I became convinced that someone else was in our apartment (for some reason, all of the lights in the house were off, save a small lamp by my bed). I became so frightened that I ended up calling 911. The police officers found nothing, but suggested that I turn a few lights on. It was for this reason that I tended to avoid R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series and similar texts within a horror genre, even those geared towards children. While I generally could differentiate between fact and fiction, the frightening scenes were rendered so realistically in my head that I often did not even enjoy the reading experience.

I also never developed a taste for Stephen King, although somewhere around the 4th grade I discovered Tom Clancy and John Grisham, the other two members of the Holy Trinity of pop fiction. Clancy's stories of international intrigue piqued my interest; by the time I was a teenager I had read nearly everything in his catalogue. His work dovetailed nicely with my developing (if ultimately passing) interest in international politics, US government, and military history. Jack Ryan was a real person to me: even Harrison Ford was only a pale imitation in his on-screen interpretation. The great Sean Connery could not do justice to Captain Marko Ramius in *The Hunt for Red October.* Ben Affleck's Jack Ryan, starring in a bastardized version of *The Sum of all Fears*, was taken as a personal affront. The memories of my reading were more engaging, more realistic, and more three-dimensional than anything on the screen.

During the time I was discovering Clancy, I was also living in foster care. My parents were engaged in a lengthy, complicated legal battle with Children and Youth Services, so I naturally gravitated to the

justice and fairness of the classic Grisham novels. *The Client* was probably my first; I found myself identifying quite closely with the juvenile subject of the book, forced to testify in a case he would rather not be involved in. I longed for a lawyer as strong, protective, and motherly as Reggie Love. Grisham's tight and suspenseful prose paved the way for his other works. I devoured *The Pelican Brief* and *The Firm*, loved *A Time to Kill, The Rainmaker, The Runaway Jury…* even though I realized rather quickly that occasionally I was reading the same basic story again and again, with minor details changed. It was his variations on the theme that kept me hooked: I read *The Chamber* just as I was starting to weigh the merits of capital punishment, *The Testament* as I was learning about missionary service around the world. All of Grisham's characters and plots (contrived as they may be) were richly textured, multi-dimensional images lodged in my psyche.

It was high school that robbed me of this ability to read in three dimensions. As I was told what and when to read, as correct meanings were explained to me, as I was forced, rather than allowed, to discover works such as *To Kill a Mockingbird,* text was reduced to black words on white, flat pages. No longer did I inhabit the worlds of the characters I read about; I was made to analyze them instead. The joy of discovering a new author or a new genre

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was taken from me; I was force-fed a highly-regimented diet of well-rounded fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. In the past, I would read about things that interested me; in high school I was told to read what was age-appropriate. I did not read for enjoyment; I read to get a grade. For at least four years, and probably longer, the simple pleasure of reading was gone from my life. It took quite some time for me to rediscover my love of literature.

The rediscovery probably began with Dostoyevsky. I was assigned *Crime and Punishment* in 10th or 11th grade. It was classic literature—and it was dense. It is difficult to read something in three dimensions when it requires sorting through the subtitles first. Although I was reading a well-produced English translation, the cultural disconnect between 19th-century Russia and modern-day America was the least of my worries. First I had to sort out the patronymics and diminutive forms of the Russian names. Sofia, Sonia, Sonechka… one and the same? I must

have started, stopped, and restarted the book eight times. I could not connect with the story or the characters: everything was flat. I cannot pinpoint when the breakthrough came, exactly, but it was somewhere after the murder. I found myself inhabiting 19th-century Russia, understanding the names, and seeing the rich mosaic of redemption, grace, and forgiveness painted by Dostoyevsky.

From that point on, reading regained its vibrancy. No longer were words reduced to the flat, textureless pages that house them. They again sprang to colorful, dimensional life. I became enthralled with the inter-textual richness of Hugo's *Les Miserable*, seeing how each medium, literature, film, or theatrical musical, supported and complemented various aspects of the redemption narrative. I was free to rediscover Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* not as a beautiful romance, but as a cynical criticism of the impetuousness of young love. I found some of the great voices of our day: Garrison Keillor's short stories and novels, Anne Lamott's fiction and memoirs, Marilynne Robinson's poetic narratives. Joseph Heller's absurdist humor made *Catch-22* a perfect re-imagining of World War II, with a richness that was lacking in many of the films I watch on the same topic.

So it has been for nearly anything: the book is better than the film, better than the TV show. TV is black-and-white, even when it is color. Film is flat, even when it is "3D." Only in reading those splotches of ink arranged on a page is my mind free to fill in the gaps, to add the texture, create the back-story. Only in reading is a narrative rendered as reality.

Ophaer the Drunk

Adam Holder

Stuck Inside

Contemplation of the inner mind
Which causes me to find
The blackness in my soul
Reaping what I hold
Would rather I have sold
Better yet been told
Of this misfortune
That I have been sorting
Ever since been hording
Feelings of my own
Keep them never shown
My cover never blown
Masculine while it's happening
Inside is where I trap it in
Light of the day
Never will be seen
Because light in the day
Never will there be
Tragic is his escape
But it is his fate
Alone in sorrow
Until tomorrow
Or ever after
Happily he shall not be
This is no fairy tail
More like a scary hell
Stuck filled with anguish
Wishing the end of this
However much repeating
Never any defeating
Unless it is him that loses
Constantly feeling foolish
The winning wish never granted
A chorus he has chanted
Free me
Free me
Free me
No longer do I wish to be he

Chris Kretz

Calling all Thieves....

Calling all thieves back to the scene of the crime
where you inserted the knife, and broke it off in my mind
where I thought I was safe, with my righteous defenses
I spent years laying traps, digging holes, mending fences
and other such tactics, all designed to protect my integrity
but a ghost was in bed with me
whispering strange lies denying my right to the comfort even of a pillow
and as he weeps like a willow, bending in the wind
rending me again, all new trends and old friends
tell me...when does it end? In silence….
Cause I'm alone at home, an old girl in a cold zone
nobody calling on the phone leaving mixed messages
and miscommunicated passages through the underworld
leading to a primeval forest
and where the hell are you when I need you anyway?
I guess it is Labor Day, so nobody is working.
Or they all got laid off, or paid off to stay soft
my mind's a spacious loft, with a vacancy
wanna date with me?
In a date or three you'll come to see I'm capably equipped to be
everything she wasn't.
or at least I'll be around to kiss your scars when I'm done
it's not like you can get rid of me once my hooks are implanted
I'm just trying to be candid, since I'm dying an addict
locked up for stealing angels' wings
got 'em strapped to my back with gears and springs
I'm steam-powered!
but the teen's been deflowered, the milk's all gone sour
and no maiden's waiting at the top of the tower
jaded, hating, a sneer and a glower
throwing insults down and hoping I'll cower
weak and afraid, so pathetic, deranged
schizophrenic, insane in this final hour
gotta kill the clock...make it bleed
hold on to each precious second
but I feel them slipping through my cupped hands
I try to raise them to my mouth
to get one sip before they all run out
and wouldn't it be magical, wouldn't it be fun,
if we could take a step back to when things were undone?

Mr. Snakeskin

Adam Holder

before I became unhinged and you became dead
just voice in the maelstrom that lives in my head
what a strange wailing our love song became
as each golden note drifted shy of our aim
and you preferred poison to living with pain
the pain of losing us…
so, I'm by myself with a notebook on the back of this bus
and every male passenger's a passing blur
I'm too crass for him,
and I know my face looks nuts,
but my mad eyes still scheme and scan
try to make new plans
and all I need's the proper angle of attack
calculating a trajectory that brings me back
to the top of the dog heap
keeping an eye on the mindless sheep
trying to pull the wool over my ice-age mindset,
but there's no motion in these cold waters.....

Chassity Merkel

> *I've just completed twelve years in a classroom*
> *environment. I'm eighteen years old, and have lived*
> *with my parents all my life. Now I'm expected to*
> *continue this excruciating, brain numbing routine*
> *for a few more years. I promise you, if I get out from*
> *under my parents, the last thing I will want to do is set*
> *foot into another classroom.*

This, obviously, does not pertain to all students, but it is the all-too-common approach to the concept of college after graduating high school. The majority of freshmen entering college have absolutely no idea what they want to do with their lives, what life is going to expect from them, or what life looks like beyond the classroom. Yet, they are constantly put into positions to make these decisions prematurely. Without real life experience, high school graduates have no idea with what to associate, compare or contrast their classroom learning. Experience must take place elsewhere—in the real world, where lessons are not just classroom exercises. This is why it would be a good idea for colleges and universities to have an admission requirement: two years of a service-oriented job program. In *Compulsory Miseducation*, educator Paul Goodman points out two reasons for this "two-year period, after high school, spent in some maturing activity": to break the monotony of the never-ending classroom in order to motivate learning and to provide high school graduates with some life experience to "be educable on the college level, especially in the social sciences and humanities" (52). Students who have experienced real world issues and engaged with real world tasks will be better able to see the relevance and necessity of the abstract lessons of the classroom.

Many young people who are now sitting in college classrooms suffer from burn out. Twelve years of their lives have been dominated by classroom education. In Goodman's words, they do not "grasp" that academic subjects are "about something." Here is why, Goodman explains, classroom life has "no connection" for the young college student:

> He has had so little experience of society or institutions.
> He has not practiced a craft, been in business, tried to
> make a living, been married, and had to cope with children.
> He hasn't voted, served on a jury, been in politics, nor even

in a youth movement for civil rights or peace or Goldwater. Coming from a modest middle-class suburb, he has never really seen poor people or foreigners. His emotions have been carefully limited by the conventions of his parents and the conformism of his gang. What, for him, could history, sociology, political science, psychology, classical music or literature possibly be about? (55)

A year or two as a volunteer in Americorps, Habitat for Humanity or an internship at the Red Cross would not only refresh these young people's minds but, perhaps, give them something they could not find in school: a purpose. This concept has become known as a "Gap Year," and its popularity is spreading. In her article "The Possibilities of the Gap Year," Holly Bull refers to this time-off as "a jewel of a period of time for students to creatively step away from the lock-step path of high school to college"—as an invaluable learning experience that they bring back to the college classroom with them as "wisdom" to "take full advantage of [its] offerings."

The problems most eighteen-year-old students encounter have academic solutions; thus, as far as their experience goes, algebraic equations or rules of grammar can be applied to any situation. Maybe that is a bit simplistic, but academic solutions seldom prevail in the real world. And, by today's standards, eighteen-year-old high school graduates who can take care of themselves in the real world are the exception, not the rule. Of course, a year or two will not make these young people seasoned veterans by any means, but, as Goodman writes, "[i]f young persons have been out working for a living, or have traveled in foreign parts, or have been in the army, a college can assume that they can take care of themselves" (52). And many colleges today are, in fact, "recognizing the obvious benefits of a freshman student who is more mature and focused, and less likely to drink to excess or flounder about changing majors" and therefore "publicly endorsing the gap-year option" (Bull).

> Experience must take place elsewhere—in the real world, where lessons are not just classroom exercises.

According to Verle Emanuelson, a high school Earth Science teacher, "About fifty percent of the high school graduates do not have the discipline required for independent learning they would need for college," which again brings into question the maturity of today's young adults. Maturity levels in teenage high school graduates are not what they used to be. In today's society,

many adults take for granted that their needs will be met, and this attitude is passed on to their children. The result is often a lack of accountability at ages that were once considered responsible enough to function on their own. A perfect example of this is the legal drinking age. Set forth by our legislative branch, in 1984, the Minimum Legal Drinking Age, or MLDA, was raised from 18 to 21. Studies indicate that the lowering of the MLDA showed an increase in traffic accidents among teenagers. Likewise, an increase in the MLDA directly correlated to a lowering of rates of injuries and death due to alcohol and, once the youth became of age, alcohol consumption was still reduced (Toomey and Rosenfeld 6). This would indicate that what was once expected at 18 years is now expected at 21. The amount of maturity gained between these years is obviously substantial.

New high school graduates have only the faintest glimpse of what avenue they want to pursue. They enter into a career field knowing nothing about what it entails. This is one area where the military becomes a viable option. In fact, the United States Navy's Career website boasts, "It doesn't matter if you're college-bound, prefer to take college courses at your own pace, or are still in high school, the Navy can create and customize a career path for you" (Careers & Jobs: Navy). There are almost as many job titles in the military as there are in the civilian sector. Moreover, paid training, meals, clothing and housing are provided. Military experience serves a dual role: it could also be beneficial in minimizing behavioral issues. Young adults, away from their parents with little to no accountability, can be inclined to act out. According to a Higher Education Report, "As a legacy of the student rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the accompanying judicial scrutiny of disciplinary decisions, today's codes of conduct tend to be heavy on process and light on real guidance for the student" (Dannells 3). Not only would the maturity obtained after a couple of years in the military help keep foolish behavior at bay, the leadership shown by having a few veterans among the student population would be evident. As more students became more disciplined, the rest would follow suit.

> Maybe that is a bit simplistic, but academic solutions seldom prevail in the real world.

My first realization that I knew nothing was quite embarrassing. I spent my first two years in the US Navy as a student. At Data Systems Technical School for digital computer systems, I was taught a considerable amount of theory, down to the lowest component. We had 'fan out' labs set up where the computer equipment cabinets stood

open, and test equipment was set up and ready to go, in order to learn "practical" technical skills. Shortly after I transferred to my ship, I responded to an equipment malfunction. When I approached the equipment, I stood there, foolishly, realizing I did not even know how to open it. That was only the first of many experiences where my training had proven severely insufficient to handle a real situation. Four years later, when it was time for me to transfer from the ship, I went back to teach these same courses. I vowed, although it would deviate from the prescribed curriculum, that I would teach real troubleshooting, actual situations and how to deal with them. Unfortunately, I found out, it does not work that way. Frustration set in when my students, who grasped the theory, could not visualize these situations. Regardless of my attempts, I found out that life could not be taught in the classroom.

The results of our current system of education are evident. Our economy is stagnant at best and plummeting at average. Our elected leadership act as though they are still in high school; they cannot seem to stop partisan politics, or catering to lobbyists, long enough to get anything accomplished. It is obvious that we are not going to change our society from the top down. If we desire to stop pushing the issues on superficial differences and focus on real progress, we must start at the bottom. Education should be geared toward what needs to be learned rather than what is convenient to teach. If colleges and universities were to require a two year 'life gap' prior to admission then this seemingly insignificant change could easily escalate into the generation this nation needs to break the cycle. We need to let life teach our young while they are still teachable and perhaps they will enter society with a new approach.

Authors Note:

"As a 'non-traditional' student, I realized how much my life experience influenced my respect for education. I have quite a bit of experience but relatively little education. When I graduated high school I was not ready for college. Like I wrote in my paper, I served in the US Navy and volunteered in Americorps. The difference for me was that my "gap year" lasted 20 years. I do not recommend waiting 20 years but the experience definitely gives one an appreciation of education." ~George Farmer

George is a part-time, first-year student at RACC. He is studying to become an IT professional and plans to graduate in May 2011.

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LIFE ETERNAL TRANSCENDS

Sprinkling promises
enlightening testament
creator descends

Abnormal crimson
frozen time, final exhale
baby's breath ascends

Cold dew, staining grace
sorrow evolves, form anew
life continues and transcends

NICOLE DAVIS VERGARA

Close of day

Jennifer Crose

Inequality, Innovation, and the Free Market
Jon W Carlson

There is an iconic photo from the 1990s that often works its way into discussions of poverty. A gaunt African child with deformed legs kneels in the middle of a barren landscape, her head grossly out of proportion to her shrunken body. In the background, a vulture stands poised, ready to consume the starving Sudanese child. The photograph was published by the *New York Times* and eventually won a Pulitzer Prize.

Considering this sequence of events, one is struck by a dichotomy: a photographer, saddled with thousands of dollars worth of equipment, travels to Sudan to document events transpiring within the country. One of his pictures is sent to New York, thousands of miles away. The next morning, that picture could be seen in millions of homes and businesses across America and around the world. The picture was viewed by people sipping their morning coffee, safe in their comfortable, climate-controlled homes. Vast amounts of resources and technology were employed to distribute a photo of a starving child about to be eaten by a vulture. This child's poverty was not caused by a global lack of resources or lack of innovation. The free market

> The vultures of disease, malnutrition, and death continually lurk in the background of many people's lives.

failed to account for the needs of the most desperate, channeling resources and innovation that could improve their lives towards the wealthy and away from the poor. If, however, its principles are reexamined and applied creatively, market-driven innovation holds the greatest potential to improve the lives of billions of poor people.

Much of the world today finds itself in a situation similar to the Sudanese subject of the photograph. According to the World Bank, nearly 3.1 billion poor people lived on less than $2.50 per day in 2005, with 1.4 billion of them at or below the international poverty line of $1.25 per day (Chen and Ravallion 19, 31). $912 each year is far too meager a sum with which to provide food, clean water, shelter, transportation, and education. The somewhat euphemistic term "developing world" is used to describe regions of Africa, Asia, and parts of South America where much of this poverty is concentrated. Author and activist Ronald Sider notes, "Thirty thousand children die every day of hunger and preventable diseases. Thirteen million people die every year from infectious and parasitic diseases we know how to prevent" (3).

The vultures of disease, malnutrition, and death continually lurk in the background of many people's lives.

Paradoxically, our planet is home to both this dramatic poverty and tremendous wealth. The majority of Americans and Western Europeans live incredibly lavishly. Advances in applied sciences and technology have made our lives much easier and made many of us very wealthy. Even those of modest means (judging by American standards) are in the top tier of the global economic spectrum. For example, someone working full-time and earning minimum wage in the United States still has nearly twenty times more income than the three billion people who live on less than $2.50 per day. Life expectancy continues to increase, with diseases that previously seemed incurable now treated with a simple inoculation. Droughts or famines that previously would have been devastating are now considered minor inconveniences to Westerners who regularly purchase fresh produce grown thousands of miles away. Vast databases of information are indexed and searchable at the touch of a button. Communication across the globe happens instantaneously via e-mail, instant messenger, and videoconferencing. Billions of dollars are spent each day on frivolous luxury items. This gulf of inequality poses a tremendous challenge to the ethics of affluence. In the words of Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, "Capitalism has improved the lives of billions of people. . . . But it has left out billions more."

> This gulf of inequality poses a tremendous challenge to the ethics of affluence.

Capitalism is the dominant economic system in the world today, having vanquished Communism in the Soviet Union and weakened it in modern China. Also known by the terms "free market" or "market economy," capitalism can be defined as "an economic arrangement in which the bulk of the wealth and means of production are privately owned and most wages and prices are set by supply and demand" (Sider 135). The efficiency of these free markets is unrivaled. By encouraging innovation and creativity with the incentive of economic reward, free markets cultivate entrepreneurial spirit and drive continual innovation. Economist Muhammad Yunus attributes "remarkable technological innovation, scientific discovery, and educational and social progress" to capitalism (Yunus and Weber 3).

Where the free market has failed, however, is in responding to the poor. Gates explains that the poor "can't express [their] needs in ways that matter to markets." Poor people, by definition, lack the financial resources, or 'capital,' to participate in markets by purchasing

goods and services. Capital can also be viewed in broader terms than just financial resources, as Sider explains: "About one of four people in our world have almost no land, very little money, and virtually no education" (138). Without physical, financial, and educational capital, poor people cannot create the incentives that would channel market resources to meet their needs. The United Nations Development Programme warns that "2 billion people are in danger of becoming marginal to the world economy" (qtd. in Sider 138).

Societies that function by these capitalistic principals are not entirely ignorant concerning the plight of the poor. Traditionally, charitable donations have been the primary tool for addressing poverty. As free markets and innovation create excess wealth, many people choose to donate a portion of their money to help others. Philanthropic foundations, both religious and secular, along with governments, make direct donations of money, food, and other materials to assist needy people. Private organizations like Compassion International allow people of means to sponsor impoverished children, using donated money to provide food, shelter, and education. Governments dig into their coffers to address both ongoing poverty and disastrous events like the tsunami that devastated parts of Asia in late 2004. These charitable responses showcase human decency and compassion in the face of troubling events such as death by starvation, which Muhammad Yunus describes as:

> the most unacceptable [death] of all. It happens in
> slow motion. Second by second, the distance between
> life and death becomes smaller and smaller, until the
> two are in such close proximity that one can hardly tell
> the difference. . . . And all for the lack of a handful of
> rice at each meal. (Yunus and Jolis vii – viii)

There have been attempts to fuse the functions of business with the functions of charity. Economist Milton Friedman cites Whole Food's decision to donate five percent of corporate profits to charity and argues that was merely establishing an informal charitable foundation within their existing corporation. Friedman goes on to pose this question: "What reason is there to suppose that the stream of profit distributed in this way would do more good for society than investing that stream of profit in the enterprise itself or paying it out as dividends and letting the stockholders dispose of it?" Bill Gates, an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and one of the richest people in the world, points to the example of Product (RED), an initiative of activist and musician Bono that allows companies to brand certain products as (RED) if they donate a portion of

the proceeds to fight AIDS. These charitable gifts, while necessary and honorable, rarely lead to the types of seismic innovation that companies often harness to further their own self-interest.

Sociologist Tony Campolo believes that many of these well-meaning gestures of charity have unfortunate consequences. Those who "reach out to the poor with love and sacrificial giving . . . in spite of their good intentions . . . often end up doing more harm than good" (123). He goes on to say that "generosity, when wrongly expressed, can humiliate and even further impoverish those who are the targets of good-willed intentions" (123). Sider relates this example from Bangladesh:

> In an attempt to increase agricultural output and reduce poverty, the World Bank financed an irrigation project in [a] rural village. The largest landowner in the area, however, was also active in the ruling political party, and he managed to gain control of the new irrigation project and get a monopoly on the new water supply. Naturally, the benefits of the new technology flowed to this powerful landowner, not to the poor. His agricultural output did expand, but this did not help the most needy. (125)

Sider also shows how government aid is often used a tool of geopolitical power, a way to exert influence in regions like Africa and Latin America. This type of "aid" often props up corrupt dictatorships rather than helping the poor (126-27). Even when this type of abuse is not present, charity alone rarely has the capacity to effect the systematic change needed to reduce and eliminate poverty. As the adage says, "Give a man a fish and you have fed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime."

Gates himself views charitable giving (the non-profit sector) and governmental solutions as the weakest of three potential systems than can address poverty. "As I see it," he says, "there are two great forces of human nature: self-interest and caring for others. Capitalism harnesses self-interest in a helpful and sustainable way but only behalf of those who can pay." He explains that governments and nonprofits must play their part, but "improvements will happen faster and last longer if we can channel market forces . . . [and draw] in innovators and businesses in a far better way than we do today" to address the needs of the poor. Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus agrees: "The volunteer, charitable, and nongovernmental sectors . . . devote a great deal of time and energy to dealing with poverty and its consequences. But business –

the most financially innovative and efficient sector of all – has no direct mechanism to apply its practices to the goal of eliminating poverty" (Yunus and Weber xiv). Several promising ideas put forth by Yunus and others may be just the mechanisms the private sector needs to tackle these intractable problems and allow people to "do good and do well at the same time" (Gates).

One of the most promising innovations in bringing the tools of capitalism to bear in the fight against poverty is, paradoxically, the very thing that has brought the West's financial system to its knees: sub-prime lending. Financial journalist Daniel Gross writes:

> The massive extension of credit [in the developed world to people who lacked extensive credit histories and documented wages seems, in hindsight, supremely stupid . . . But in an era when a great deal of foreign aid has been wasted or has fallen into the hands of corrupt officials, microlending has built a track record of effective poverty relief.

Microlending, also referred to as micro-credit, was pioneered by Muhammad Yunus as a way to extend capital to those without credit or collateral. Yunus recognized that in Bangladesh "No formal financial structure was available to cater to the credit needs of the poor" (Yunus and Weber 50). Often people became stuck in a cycle of poverty for the lack of incredibly small sums of money, as little as pennies.

In the developed world, wealth is created utilizing debt, or leverage, as a tool. Entrepreneurs borrow against their good credit history and collateral such as their home or land and use that borrowed money to purchase raw materials, hire workers, and transport their newly created goods. Entrepreneur Julia Dunst understands this well; she founded a nurse management agency ten years ago to provide staffing to hospitals and other medical caregivers. She explains that easy access to credit "took us from operating out of our home into an office, allowed us to bring on two or three additional clients, hire an office manager, and expand the business." They continue to utilize leverage in their daily operations: "We float credit to all of our clients for ninety days. During that time, employees and bills still have to be paid. We use credit to meet

> Often people became stuck in a cycle of poverty for the lack of incredibly small sums of money, as little as pennies.

those obligations." She says that without easy access to credit, the business "never would have happened; it could not have happened."

Poor people quite often possess sharp intellect, valuable skills, and ideas that could compete in the market, but without the ability to borrow money their ideas cannot become reality. Their poverty becomes self-reinforcing, with lack of opportunity feeding lack of opportunity. Yunus's genius was to employ the fundamental mechanism of capitalism (lending capital) on behalf of those who trapped in this disturbing cycle. "Out of sheer frustration," Yunus writes, "I had questioned the most basic banking principle of collateral. . . . To my great surprise, the repayment of loans by people who borrow without collateral has proven to be much better than those whose borrowings are secured by assets" (Yunus and Jolis 57-58). The 98% repayment rate is not unique to the Grameen Bank that Yunus founded. Some microcredit organizations boast a repayment rate surpassing "'consumer credit-card portfolios in the U.S.,' says Premal Shah, president of Kiva.org, an online microcredit organization" (Gross).

By November of 2006, 100 million poor people had received microcredit through the Grameen Bank (Yunus and Weber xii-xiii). These people were then able to act in their own agency to create and market their goods and services. Yunus describes the variety of borrowers by explaining that:

> Some need only $20, others $100 or $500. Some
> want to husk paddy. Some want to make puffed rice.
> Some make earthenware pots and pans, while others
> buy cows. But – and note this, development specialists
> around the world – not one single Grameen borrower
> requires any special training. They either have already
> received this training as part of their household chores
> or have acquired the necessary skills in their field of
> work. All they need is financial capital. (Yunus and Jolis 205)

Borrowers not only use microcredit to better their own circumstances but often provide valuable services to the rest of their community:

> [These borrowers] have entered the age of information
> technology by leasing and purchasing cellular phones.
> The mobile phones not only create a new business
> opportunity for the poor, but also bring access to
> information, market, health and other services to the
> remote rural areas of Bangladesh. This was a major

innovation, placing modern cell phones in the hand of
the woman from poorest households in remote villages,
something that no telecom operator had dared to do in
the past. With Grameen Bank financing a . . . borrower
buys a mobile phone to become the Telephone Lady of
the village. She provides the telecommunication services
 to the village while earning profits for herself. By the end
of 2006, there were more than two hundred seventy-eight
thousand village phone ladies. (Village Phones)

By transforming the view of poor people from those only capable of
receiving largess from the wealthy to viewing them as competent,
capable individuals who can succeed on their own when able to access
the same tools as their wealthy brethren, a new framework for
eradicating poverty emerges. Once this transformed view has taken hold,
poor people can begin to interact with the broader global market as both
producers and consumers.

Bill Gates states that "the poorest two-thirds of the world's
population has some $5 trillion in purchasing power." Businesses miss
out on selling to this market, he claims, because companies are unaware
of its potential. His approach advocates that businesses "stretch the reach
of market forces so that more companies can benefit from doing work
that makes more people better off." Companies that learn how to reach
these markets simultaneously maximize shareholder profit and work
towards social progress. This marketing to the poor is not without its
dangers: the desire to maximize profit can lead to exploitation and
further perpetuate economic injustice. A combination of social
 peer-pressure, (such as the type applied against Nike when the
conditions of their Asian factories were revealed), internal policing, and
governmental regulation may help to minimize this risk. When leaders in
business begin to understand the market potential of the developing
world, the tremendous innovative potential of capitalism will be applied
to the needs of the poor.

Leading experts recognize that capitalism's contribution to ending
poverty does not stop there. Building on the success of the Grameen
Bank, Muhammad Yunus has taken his economic theorizing one step
further and is now advocating a new concept in the fight against poverty:
"social businesses." Social businesses function like traditional
"profit-maximizing businesses" but measure success in terms of "social
benefit" and do not pay dividends to investors (Yunus and Weber 21-
23). He uses the phrase "non-loss, non-dividend" (24) to describe the
functioning of these new entities. This differs from the charitable sector,

wherein organizations rarely recoup the costs of their activities but rather rely on donations from individuals or governments which are never repaid. It also differs from traditional business models in that borrowed money is repaid in full to investors, but no interest or dividends are paid.

Yunus described the success of a social business partnership between Groupe Danone , best known in the U.S. for Dannon yogurt, and Grameen Bank in a radio interview. Danone joined with Grameen to manufacture and distribute yogurt, as with Danone's "profit maximizing business," except with the purpose of providing needed nutrients to poor people rather than generating profit. Danone did not invest their corporate resources into this endeavor; they raised new money from investors specifically for the social business. All investors fully understood that they would not earn financial dividends from their investment but would instead use their money to tangibly improve the well-being of others (Moss-Coane and Yunus).

All of these approaches show tremendous potential: microlending, marketing to the poor, and social businesses all build on the tremendous creative potential of free markets to meet the needs of the most desperate. In a world where someone in the developed world may eat breakfast (made of food grown five hundred or more miles away) while driving (fifty or more miles) to a job (that pays fifty thousand or more dollars) and spend all day teleconferencing with colleagues (five thousand or more miles), it is not unreasonable to expect that all six billion people on our planet can drink clean water each day and have enough food to feed their children. The entrepreneurial spirit that fueled the Industrial Revolution, invented the automobile, dreamt of air travel, sent a man to the moon, and created the Internet must certainly be able to tackle seemingly intractable problems such as lack of clean water or insufficient nutrition. The same market-driven innovation that can document and distribute images of a starving child about to be eaten by a vulture can certainly provide her with food, shelter, and the path to a better life.

Author's Note:

"The ongoing poverty in Africa and the rest of the Third World is the greatest moral crisis of my generation." - Jon Carlson

Jon is a full-time, first-year student at Reading Area Community College. His future goals include a career as an educator.

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Anon

Adam Holder

Societal Culpability in "The Lottery"

Chad Moyer

> *The lottery was conducted--as were the square dances,
> the teen club, the Halloween program--by Mr. Summers,
> who had time and energy to devote to civic activities.
> He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal
> business, and people were sorry for him, because he had
> no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in
> the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a
> murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he
> waved and called, "Little late today, folks." The postmaster,
> Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three- legged stool,
> and the stool was put in the center of the square and Mr.
> Summers set the black box down on it. The villagers kept
> their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the
> stool.*
>
> —"The Lottery"

It was 1948 when Shirley Jackson wrote "The Lottery." The world had gone through a tumultuous time, still reeling from the effects and inhumanity brought forth during World War II. The revelation of the Nazi "final solution," resulting in the Holocaust, in which millions of innocent civilians perished, horrified the world and shook the foundation of humanity. During the subsequent Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals, the question arose as to the culpability of the German populace in allowing their government to wage genocide within their midst. By evoking this question, Jackson's "The Lottery" demonstrates how a population of supposedly good, decent people allowed such inhumane acts to continue unchallenged (Goodman). Through the villagers in "The Lottery," Jackson shows us the shocking consequences of an apathetic, albeit comfortable, society that refuses to stand up and hold itself accountable for inhumane acts carried out by its authority.

Shirley Jackson begins her narrative on a peaceful, warm summer day. The villagers—men, women, and children—gather in the center of town for an annual lottery.

> *The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the
> fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were
> blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. . . .
> The children assembled first, of course. School was*

*recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty
sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together
quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play
. . . Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own
children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and
taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones
in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled
rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house
dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk.
They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip
as they went to join their husbands.*

The drawing proceeds along as villagers' names are drawn from a box as
the families wait patiently, engaged in small talk with others in the
crowd. Tessie Hutchinson wins the draw of the random lottery. The
villagers, including her husband and children, then viciously stone her
death and seemingly go on about their lives.

There is a ritual aspect to the homicidal lottery. The reason for it
being held yearly is vague and distant, and the villagers are always
concerned with returning to their everyday lives. Amy Griffin, in her
article, "Jackson's 'The Lottery,'" relates the apathy of the villagers
toward the heinous act stating, "They endure it almost as automatons—
"actors"— anxious to return to their mundane, workaday lives" (45).
Thus, to the villagers, it seems that the automatic path of least resistance
is the easy way back to normal.

*Mrs. Hutchinson . . . began to make her way through
the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to
let her through: two or three people said, in voices just
loud enough to be heard across the crowd, "Here comes
your Missus, Hutchinson," and "Bill, she made it after all."
Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers,
who had been waiting, said cheerfully, "Thought we were
going to have to get on without you, Tessie." Mrs.
Hutchinson said, grinning, "Wouldn't have me leave
m'dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?," and soft
laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back
 into position after Mrs. Hutchinson's arrival. Well, now,"
Mr. Summers said soberly, "guess we better get started,
get this over with, so's we can go back to work." Anybody
ain't here?"*

*All right, folks." Mr. Summers said. "Let's finish quickly." . . .
The pile of stones the boys had made earlier was ready
. . . Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared
space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as
the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A
stone hit her on the side of the head. Old Man Warner
was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams
was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs.
Graves beside him . . . "It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs.
Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.*

Author Ward Churchill, regarding a population's culpability in
inhumane acts carried out by its authority, asserts, "There is a vast
difference between not knowing and not caring" (7). It is clear that the
villagers did not care about the result of the lottery or the fate of Mrs.
Hutchinson. All knew what the ending atrocity would be, but upon the
arrival of Mrs. Hutchinson, the crowd engaged in "soft laughter"
(Jackson 407), waiting "good-humoredly" and "cheerfully" (407). No
one in the village took any action to stop the senseless killing of Mrs.
Hutchinson. As Churchill asserts, they knew, but did not care.

The apathy of the villagers proposed by Jackson mirrors the
German populace's inaction during the Holocaust. Churchill labeled the
populace as "Good Germans," civilians who did not take any active part
in the war or other German atrocities. However, Churchill reminds the
reader that this populace was not innocent by any manner, and, as
acknowledged by the U.S. at the Nuremberg Trials, thus shared a
collective guilt:

Good Germans . . . [looked] away while the Nazi crimes
were committed, never attempting to meet the legal/moral
standards of human decency. . . .   For these sins, it was
said, they, the Germans, civilians as well as military
personnel, richly deserved the death and devastation
that had been rained upon them by America's . . .
Air Force. (7)

By having the villagers actively take part in the stoning death of Mrs.
Hutchinson, symbolizing the Holocaust victims, Jackson effectively blends
the passivity of the German populace with the guilty hands of the Nazi
officers who pulled the triggers or switched on the gas chambers. Thus

the Germans, symbolized by the villagers, in their collective guilt have as much blood on their hands as the stone throwing villagers. Jackson presents this idea in the narrative as Mrs. Hutchinson, unaware of the fate to befall her, shows up late to the lottery. Forgetting what day it was, Mrs. Hutchinson "came a-running" (Jackson 407), suggesting her eagerness in attending, but also, upon arriving, Hutchinson "dried her hands on her apron" (407). This act could be viewed as the symbolic cleansing of the blood of guilt from her hands for taking part in the ritual.

The setting is another important aspect that Jackson uses to make the connection to the atrocities committed. The peacefulness and beautiful morning in the beginning symbolize the comfort that the villagers enjoy in the mundane lives, and what they hope to return to after the lottery. It also provides a contrast to the inhuman act that will take place later in the story. Patrick Shields conveys the inherent sense of irony stating, "This setting . . . conveys an atmosphere which is deceptive since this pleasant summer gathering will sharply change and eventually lead to ritual murder" (413). The mention of the old traditions of the villagers reciting a ritual chant and the "salute" that was given during the picking of the lottery brings to mind the podium speeches of Hitler with the chanting mobs giving the "seig heil" salute. Although Jackson has this tradition lapsing, it, nevertheless, symbolizes the nationalism needed to have a populace heed or passively stand by while atrocities are committed against other human beings.

One last aspect of "The Lottery" is the sheer inhumanity and callousness toward another human being displayed by the villagers, seemingly without feeling or emotion. Mrs. Hutchinson's friend, Mrs. Delacroix, chooses a large stone in which to bludgeon her friend with and even her little son, Davy Hutchinson, takes part in his mother's death.

> *Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. . . . Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up." . . . The children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson few pebbles. Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head. Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone."*

Beyond the aspect of the collective guilt question raised regarding the German populous, there is the matter of human nature choosing apathy and personal comfort over moral and human action. Readers were initially shocked at the narrative of a "relatively modern culture committing such heinous acts" (Griffin 45). Jackson responded by relating that the graphic depiction was necessary to "reveal the general inhumanity of humankind [sic]" (45). Shields, regarding the lessons of "The Lottery," states that "it is not just an attack on mindless, cultural conformity; it is a suggestion of evil inherent in human nature" (412). Combining this primitive instinct with careless indifference within a society towards its authority breeds a recipe that facilitates the creation of the fictional villagers and the very real "Good Germans."

The parallels between the villagers and the "Good Germans" are clear. Both display an apathetic attitude toward the violence sanctioned by their respective authorities. Both displayed a common disregard for their fellow man. Both choose the path of comfort and regularity over the moral path of resistance. Both shared the same collective guilt. Jackson's narrative effectively relates this to the reader, allowing a wide audience to, perhaps, reflect on their own roles and culpability regarding their governmental authorities' actions.

Author's Note:

"As a future History major, the role of a society's populace in sustaining wars, genocide, and other acts of aggression has always fascinated me. I believe that we, as a society, need to heed the world." - Chad Moyer

A second-year RACC student, Chad plans to study historical research and writing, archival research, and teaching.

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Cross-Cultural Ethnology of Greeting Observances: From Hands-Free to Hug-Full
Jennifer Fernandez

Every society has a culturally accepted norm when inhabitants greet one another. These etiquette forms vary greatly when comparing different parts of the world, and even between neighboring countries. Some variations occur depending on the formality of the social setting, the social status of the participants, or the level of personal intimacy. Certain customs are based in religious principles and as such are the standard for the participants internationally. Other forms are the result of centuries of tradition. These traditional forms are inherently recognized by "natives" of that country.

At some point or other, we are all strangers. A "stranger" may be defined as "anyone entering a relatively unknown or unfamiliar environment." This definition is especially apt when dealing with a foreign culture where there is "a relatively high degree of strangeness and a relatively low degree of familiarity" (Gudykunst 25-26). How close should one stand when greeting someone? Is a handshake expected and, if so, does one use a firm grip or a limp squeeze? When is a kiss on the cheek an acceptable touch or a social disaster?

Fortunately, socially inappropriate "behavior does not spring from malice but from ignorance" (Hall, The Silent Language xiii). The confused stranger moves from one culture to another, experiencing a wide range of social greetings. As the "right way to greet people . . . varies enormously from one place to another," no universally correct greeting form exists (McCrum 1). From Afghanistan to Zambia, the use of touch in greeting changes in significant ways. The stranger must learn to adapt to social greetings that run the gamut from no contact to limited contact to total body contact. As such, a clear understanding of acceptable variations as well as offensive deviations is necessary for successful interpersonal global communication.

Hands Off

One extreme in greeting rituals requires that participants have no physical contact. Greetings without touch may involve a simple head nod or a bow from the waist, singly or in combination. "People in low-contact cultures tend to stand apart and touch less," as is seen in Asian cultures (Asante 168). The absence of physical contact is very common in most Asian societies and polite greetings vary greatly in form. On the surface, bowing may appear to be a commonplace gesture used in greeting. In fact, it is a complex ritual with multiple variations

based on culture-specific traditions. A bow may be a shallow bob or a deep bend at the waist. A single bow may be sufficient for some situations, while multiple bows are required in others. A person may bow with hands flat at his sides or in front of his thighs. With palms together, hands may be at the waist, chest, chin, or forehead. Most Asians appreciate Westerners who respect cultural traditions and bow in greeting. A good rule of thumb is "[w]hen in doubt –

> The degree of physical touch may change depending on the relationship of the participants as well as the social context of the greeting.

bow" (Turkington 265). However, Westerners should not feel compelled to untangle the many layers of meaning involved in bowing that occur even in the simplest social situations. In most cases, a clumsy but respectful attempt is graciously accepted.

Even in traditional Asian cultures, variations of contact occur. The degree of physical touch may change depending on the relationship of the participants as well as the social context of the greeting. For example, contact may occur between close friends and relatives in informal social situations. Many Asians have adopted Western forms of public greetings and have learned the value of a handshake in establishing business relationships. Nevertheless, more formal social situations tend toward traditional forms of no contact, such as when greeting persons of higher status or dignitaries. Although Asian cultures tend to dominate the hands-free form of greeting rituals, a few African societies also practice a form devoid of physical touch. The Shona of Zimbabwe and the Chewa and Nsenga of Zambia clap their hands lightly in greetings, which seems to be a unique practice in African countries (Jenkins).

The Northern European Influence

There is no denying the broad influence of European culture on the world. European, or Western, customs are pervasive and found in most societies. These styles have traveled around the globe and into widely spaced corners of distant lands. Many far-flung countries now favor Western greeting rituals in business settings over their own traditional forms. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall sums up the general concept of acceptable touching in greeting rituals for most European and European-influences cultures: "In the Western world, the person is synonymous with an individual inside a skin. And in northern Europe generally, the skin and even the clothes may be inviolate. You need

permission to touch either if you are a stranger" (Hall, The Hidden Dimension 157). Permission to touch is implicit in Western greeting rituals.

The most common type of greeting among European-influenced cultures is the handshake. For most cultures, a secure clasp, a few vertical pumps, and a couple of seconds are sufficient for a broad range of social situations. Variations most often occur in the length of the handshake and the firmness of the grip. For example, in Europe Germans, Austrians, and Brits prefer a firm but brief handshake (Turkington 103, 154). Belgians and Scandinavians shake hands with everyone in a room or a given social situation (Turkington 79, 180). When greeting a woman, an old-fashioned Polish man may add a kiss on her hand (Turkington 192). The European influences on the United States, Canada, and Australia is evident in the universal practice of the handshake in social settings.

African countries almost universally practice the handshake. When not prohibited by religious rules, in Africa "[e]veryone shakes hands, all the time. . . . Everyone shakes, every age with every other age, in most societies. There are some variations, but in general, every greeting includes some form of handshaking. It would seem extremely excessive to most Americans" (Jenkins). Distinctions in the handshake can be found across the continent, though as a general rule the handshake lasts for a long time (by Western standards). It is not uncommon for a Bantu handshake to continue for 10-15 minutes (Jenkins); on the other hand, some Bantu women kneel when greeting elders (CultureGrams World Edition). The Kikuyus practice a three-way handshake involving a normal hand clasp, then an upward hand clasp, followed by a return to the original hand clasp. Additionally, some Kikuyus add a finger snap at the end of the handshake (Jenkins).

> In countries where cultures overlap, it is easy to be confused about appropriate greeting rituals.

However, the Kikuyus are not the only Africans who alter the "traditional" Western-style handshake. A number of African cultures increase touch to show respect to elders or leaders. Kenyans will hold their right forearm with their left hand; Burkinabè will touch the other person's hand or elbow (CultureGrams World Edition). On the other hand, the Maasai and natives of Botswana do not hold hands in greeting; they either "touch palms, or touch and slide all the way off" (Jenkins). It is also traditionally for many Africans to offer their wrist or closed fist in lieu of their open hand if they feel their hand is dirty (Blakely).

Gender-Based Greetings

Religious-based forms of greeting recognize no specific political boundaries. Adherents follow the directive of their religious greeting rituals regardless of the country they inhabit. Orthodox Jewish men are prohibited from shaking hands with a menstruating woman; Hindus and Muslims will shake hands with members of their own sex, but never with the opposite sex (McCrum 5). Some Islamic followers carry this practice of strictly same-sex contact to extremes. If a woman shook hands with a devout Muslim man, "he would be required to ritually cleanse himself before he could pray again" (Turkington 306). The Islamic tradition of gender-based contact follows the trail of Arabic expansion across northern Africa and into the Indian subcontinent. Handshakes are common among Muslim men, and sometimes a more intimate touch may follow, such as placing a hand on the shoulder and kiss on each cheek (McCrum 7).

In countries where cultures overlap, it is easy to be confused about appropriate greeting rituals. The Indian subcontinent is comprised of a variety of religious practices with specific customs. The traditional Indian greeting is the "namaste," used in place of shaking hands. It is performed with a short bow or head nod accompanied by hands at the chin, palms together (Turkington 306). Indian Hindus and Indian Muslims follow religious gender-based rules and shake hands, but may also offer the "namaste." Malaysia also boasts a complex range of cultures that adhere to a broad spectrum of greeting rituals. The influence of Islam, Chinese, or Hindu practices influence the type of greeting offered. Believers in Islamic and Hindu creeds will offer a same-sex handshake following their religious practices. However, Chinese Malaysians will bow. Newcomers will find the best tactic is to wait and see what inhabitants do first and follow their lead.

Hug-Hug, Kiss-Kiss

At the other extreme of the greeting spectrum are societies who engage in a high level of physical contact. In the *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*, speech communication specialists Hecht, Andersen, and Ribeau discuss the identification of such societies:

> Cultures that display considerable interpersonal closeness or immediacy have been labeled "high-contact cultures" because people in these countries stand closer and touch more. . . . High-contact cultures (e.g. those of South Americans, Southern and Eastern Europeans, and Arabs) create immediacy by increasing sensory input . . .

[and] include most Arab countries, the Mediterranean
region, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Indonesia. (qtd. in
Asante 168)

The level of intimacy found in diverse locations sometimes follows
historical patterns. Origins of high contact may be traced in much the
same way that the gender-based Islamic traditions may be traced,
through colonization of the mother country to new lands.

Southern European countries tend towards intimate contact in
greetings. Kisses on the cheek and friendly hugs are common in Portugal,
Spain, France, Italy, and Greece (Turkington 90, 114, 125, 134, 168). A
kiss on the cheek may be shared between participants (male or female)
and frequently a man may kiss a woman's hand. Russians favor hearty
handshakes and kisses on the cheek (Turkington 201). In fact, one
source refers to Russians as "serious kissers" who enjoy "bear hugs and
damp smooches" (McCrum 9).

Nearly all residents of Central and South America favor a high
degree of physical contact in greeting rituals (Turkington 67-68). When
one considers the colonial rule of Spain and Portugal, themselves
high-contact cultures, in the New World, it is as easy to trace their
greeting ritual as is the pattern of English and Dutch colonization in
North America, Africa, and Australia.

In the island nations of Oceania, greeting rituals run the gamut
from no contact ("namaste" and a bow in Palau and Micronesia) to hugs
and kisses on the cheek in New Caledonia and Guam *(CultureGrams
World Edition)*. French Polynesia, which one might easily expect to have
high-contact cultural greetings based on its historical French connection,
contents itself with a handshake (though kisses among close friends and
family occur).

The most intimate forms of contact are found among Hawaiians,
Maoris, and some Polynesians. Native Hawaiians hug and exchange
breath in a custom called "aha" (Dunn). The Maori of New Zealand
practice the "hongi," which involves pressing noses and foreheads
together to share breath or "ha." Polynesians exchange a nose kiss called
the "honi" (McCrum 10).

Why Touch Changes Globally

What are the possible reasons for cultures to have a higher or
lower level of greeting contact? Religion is a major factor in the use of
touch in greetings. Among the followers of Islam and Hindu, a gender
bias exists (though some "Westernized" Muslims will shake hands with
women in business dealings). Within these boundaries, some Muslim
societies are more liberal with physical contact than other Muslim

groups who only shake hands. Many Islamic countries proceed from a handshake to friendly pat on the shoulder, a hug, or kisses on the cheeks. It is difficult to trace any pattern to the native traditions of the inhabitants' countries. In spite of increased physical touch among some groups, the gender bias holds reasonably constant.

Crowded living conditions over the centuries may be postulated as a theory for high-contact cultures. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall notes that the French particularly are crowded and sensually more involved (The Hidden Dimension 144). The continued experience of close proximity in cafes, in homes, in businesses, and on the streets spills over into greeting rituals. Hence, one expects intimate contact in this aspect as in other aspects of French lives. In a similar manner, Hall noted that Arabs "do not like to be alone" and thus increased levels of physical contact occurs (The Hidden Dimension 158). Westerners often feel uncomfortable in the Middle East due to the Arab habit of standing "breath to breath" (Hall, The Hidden Dimension 160). In this fashion, Arabs share a similarity with Hawaiians and Polynesians who share breath or "ha" when greeting others. Nonetheless, other cultures have experienced crowded living conditions and have not developed into high-contact cultures. Other reasons must be sought.

Theories suggest climate conditions produced intimate greeting rituals. Hecht, Andersen, and Ribeau postulate environmental conditions as the cause of physical contact:

> Interestingly, high-contact cultures generally are located in warmer countries and low-contact cultures in cooler climates. . . . Cultures in cooler climates tend to be more task-oriented and interpersonally "cool," whereas cultures in warmer climates tend to be more interpersonally oriented and interpersonally "warm." The harshness of northern climates may explain this difference because survival during the long winter requires a high degree of task orientation, cooperation, and tolerance of uncertainty. Cultures closer to the equator may have less need for planning for winter but more need to conserve energy during the heat of summer. Even within the United States, the warmer latitudes tend to be higher-contact cultures. (qtd. in Asante 168)

At first glance, this theory appears plausible. Upon further review, much of Russia is in a cold climate and therefore should be a "low-contact" culture, but in fact, it is a very touchable society. Furthermore, several

Asian countries lie near the equator and practice low-contact greetings, despite their warmer climate. Thus, environmental factors alone cannot explain why some cultures touch more than other cultures.

In his groundbreaking study, Alan Lomax notes multiunit dance movement in Asian cultures. My own findings show that most non-contact cultures are Asian. Lomax also notes single-unit dance movements existed in cultures that used simple tools and tended toward foraging. Areas that Lomax mark as single-unit or two-unit movement are not well matched with my own areas of medium levels of touch (noted in the handshake) or high-contact cultures. It would be an interesting project to delve deeper into historical cultural greetings to discover if more similarities existed between touch and tool use or touch and traditional foraging/agricultural societies.

<center>Removing the "Strange" in Stranger</center>

The presence or absence of touch is a vital part of greetings worldwide. To offer a person physical contact when it is not wanted may be offensive, but to turn away from that same contact from a different person may be equally insulting. A touch one culture views as a necessary facet, another sees as a religious or social faux pas. The facilitation of beneficial diplomatic treaties and the conclusion of successful business deals result from insider knowledge of greeting rituals. The impact of displaying sensitivity to cultural norms in greetings cannot be lightly dismissed in the global market. The skilled executive and resourceful envoy will only benefit from the application of appropriate greeting behaviors.

Author's Note:

"The chance to research a universal global greeting form instead resulted in an unanticipated diversity. Knowing when and how to touch (or not at all) is vital when saying 'hello' to a stranger." - Jennifer Fernandez

Jennifer is a part-time, second-year RACC student who will be transferring to a four-year university in 2009. She plans to study Classical Archeology and Medieval Studies.

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The Case for the Abolition of the Electoral College
David Kalis

Who votes for the President of the United States of America? Whose votes actually count? The answers to these questions are not as simple as most of the American people think. The current system, known as the Electoral College, is an archaic method that made sense at the time of the drafting of our Constitution. However, the Electoral College has evolved along with the formation of our present two-party system which did not exist during the Constitutional Congress. The concept of "one person, one vote," so elementary to our nation, is damaged significantly through the use of this 18th century concept, which is both unnecessary and harmful to our democracy, and as such, it must be abolished.

The Electoral College is, to most Americans, an arcane and mysterious "organization." That, alone, should give pause to "we the people" and cause us to reconsider the system by which our chief executive is selected. Most people know, particularly during a Presidential election year, that the electoral votes are what determine which candidate succeeds at his or her campaign for the White House. Many of those same people may also be aware that the number of electoral votes needed by a candidate is 270. But the process by which the votes of the people translate to the Electoral College is an indecipherable mystery to most Americans.

As Dunham, Walczak, Dwyer, McNamee, and Starr (2004) report, part of the issue stems from the idea held during the time of the Constitutional Congress that "unfiltered democracy—[was] then equated with mob rule" (para. 15). Between the effort by the Founding Fathers to protect the nation from this form of rule and the successful efforts of early legislators to maintain the power of smaller states (resulting in the assignment of a larger percentage of the electoral votes than those states' percentage of citizenry), the Electoral College was formed. Dunham et al. believe that the formation of the Electoral College was necessary at the time to reach an agreeable middle ground by the various Founding Fathers (para. 15), but as the nation grew and a two-party system emerged, the system of the Electoral College has become a means to prevent the entrance of other political parties into the arena.

> The Electoral College typically uses an "all or nothing" approach when determining how votes from the states are cast.

The Electoral College typically uses an "all or nothing" approach

when determining how votes from the states are cast. In most cases, all of the electoral votes from a state go to the candidate who received the majority of the popular votes in that state. As a result, there is often no representation via electoral votes for the millions of voters who chose a different candidate. With the exception of Maine and Nebraska, the "winner takes all" system is in full effect and strips all of the opposing voters from having a voice in the election of the President. In some states that have reliably and historically voted in the majority either Republican or Democrat, voters of the opposing party often become disenfranchised and choose to stay away from the polls on Election Day. Even worse, the candidates who represent parties outside of the traditional two parties stand almost no chance of receiving any electoral votes at all. This situation effectively silences the voice of millions of voters from each state. How can such a system appropriately reflect the will of the people?

An emeritus from West Chester University, Turner (2007) states:

> Direct popular election of the president would also
> disrupt our political equilibrium by opening the
> campaign to sharp ideological debates leading to severe
> fragmentation in the electorate and possibly irreconcilable
> splits in our society. These tensions always exist below
> the surface in America where, like a steaming volcano,
> the right forces would permit them to erupt. (p. 414)

This argument in favor of maintaining the Electoral College puts forward the opinion that without the system, the entire nation is in imminent danger of splintering into factions that cannot be expected to work together. This idea is fear mongering at its simplest. The argument that the status quo must be maintained, lest horrific forces that are lying in wait and preying on our society be released upon us, is an argument based entirely on fear. If indeed these forces exist, we serve our own interests best by identifying them and, as necessary, eliminating them rather than keeping them at bay. Moreover, in a nation where "we the people" are our own government, it is incumbent upon us to allow the voices of all of the electorate to be heard. Cardin and Shift (2007) observe that "we have remedied the disenfranchisement of women, African Americans and many others since the days of the Continental Congress" (p. 16). Can we really argue that we are in danger of fragmentation due to our differences while we work so hard to give the right to vote to so many different people equally?

The Electoral College does not properly reflect the will of the people. There have been four times in American history when a

candidate has won the popular vote but lost the presidency. In 1824, 1876, 1888, and 2000, the choice of the popular vote -- the will of the people -- was not carried out by the Electoral College. Jefferson-Jenkins (2001) points out that in 1800 and 1824, "the House of Representatives chose Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, respectively"

> Moreover, in a nation where "we the people" are our own government, it is incumbent upon us to allow the voices of all of the electorate to be heard.

(p. 179). This was because, in those election years, neither of the candidates had received the necessary number of electoral votes to win the presidency. If it is possible for the popular vote and the electoral vote to differ, as well as for the winner to be selected by some other method than the popular vote (as has clearly been the case), how can we genuinely believe that the will of the people is being obeyed?

Even when the process of the Electoral College is followed, issues can rear their ugly heads at the last moment. While the election is held the Tuesday after the first Monday of November, the Electoral College does not meet until the Monday after the second Wednesday in December. These electors are expected to cast their votes according to the commitments they have made beforehand, typically in keeping with their political affiliations. As Bennett (2006) points out, the issue of the faithless elector does exist. Bennett says, "Some states have statutory provisions that explicitly purport to 'bind' electors to vote in accord with their prior commitments" (p. 121). However, in a Supreme Court decision in 1952, "the court explicitly reserved the possibility that [these pledges were] 'legally unenforceable because of an assumed constitutional freedom'" (Bennett, p. 122). While electors are expected to do what they are called upon to do, they have the freedom to do whatever they choose. Electors who act differently than expected are typically called "faithless" and in 2000, one such elector abstained in the presidential balloting, "while in 2004 another elector…voted for John Edwards for president, rather than John Kerry" (Bennett, 2006, p.122). Given that the electors can individually choose whether to vote either for the candidate who received a plurality in their state or for another candidate (or even for no candidate), can we really believe that the system of the Electoral College is always representative of the will of the people?

The process of abolishing the Electoral College can take one of two forms. The first, amending the Constitution, is a long and difficult road to travel. However, it came close to happening in 1969. According

to Waldman (2008), "In 1969, the House overwhelmingly voted to end the Electoral College system" (p. 20). The vote, 338 to 70, was incredibly bipartisan. Although President Nixon endorsed the amendment, it was "filibustered to death in the Senate by senators from low-turnout, mostly southern, states, who worried that their interests would be overwhelmed by black urban voting blocs." Because, Waldman reports, "it's so hard to pass an amendment, people have searched for creative ways to fix things without changing the Constitution" (p. 20). One "creative" way is the National Popular Vote (NPV), which is, as Waldman explains, "a campaign to get each state to pass a law entering into a binding agreement to award all their electors to the candidate who wins the national popular vote in all fifty states and Washington, D.C." Waldman adds:

> While this arrangement is rather complex, it has the advantage of being fair and utterly nonpartisan – and could take effect as soon as enough large states agree to participate. If that happens, it would force public officials to represent a much broader segment of the populace out of electoral self-interest. (p. 21)

This second technique, while not actually abolishing the Electoral College, would give the power to select the President to the popular vote. Many proponents point to a 40% plurality of the popular vote being the line to cross, but whatever the delineation is, the direct election of the President would be the result. It would be accomplished, using the NPV, without amending the Constitution. Ultimately, the NPV would allow the decision for the chief executive to be determined by the will of the people. And that is as it should be: "one person, one vote" and the voice of "we the people" that would be heard clearly throughout the nation.

Author's Note:
"I wanted to learn more about the Electoral College and the process we are using to elect our Chief Executives." - David Kalis

As a full-time, first-year student, David hopes to transfer to a four-year university in 2010. He plans a career in secondary English education.

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Snake and Flower

Jennifer Moody-Crammer

After the Fall

Though my frame was not hidden from you,
I've been in pursuit to change it ever since-
because defect is a constant possibility,
I've been persistently perfecting a remedy,
concocting an equation yielding beauty,
and I've failed at it quite miserably.
With everyday is a new beginning,
but I've long past soiled such a thought.
I look for you in everything
because I'd never doubt that you'd turn up.
I've never found you, but you've always found me
and even when I am found, you can see right through.
You see past the cotton, you see past the lace,
you see past the marks that embrace my waist.
I never doubted you, when you said you love me,
but my vain attempts have proved me otherwise.
You saw my beauty in the full, and you wanted it all.
I was such a fool, trying to take it away from you;
it was the Eve in me, after the fall.

Chelsea Hostetter

The Forgotten Door

Jon Carlson

Piano in Hiding

Jennifer Moody-Crammer

Untitled

Chelsea Hostetter

Untitled

Chelsea Hostetter

Untitled

Sheryl Lan

Moon Peek

Jennifer Crose

St. Vernal

Sacred Equinox
Recompense Thy Solstice Sins
Frozen Ground Atoned

Cheryl Tyson

Untitled

Colleen Flemming

Untitled

Samantha Bauknecht

The Jigsaw Puzzle: My Reading Process

Gino Maturi

The sequence of the automated firing of synapses in the brain, as a reader consumes the words on the page, through the eyes and into the mind is as unique as our fingerprints. "There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work," as Rosenblatt writes: "There are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works" (24). There are countless determinants that a reader brings to the "literary table" when reading a text. The properties of the text are bowed, twisted or contorted by the reader's expectations and hypotheses and "meaning emerges as the reader carries a give-and-take with the signs on the page" (Rosenblatt 26). The proceeding is the assembled jigsaw puzzle that depicts my give-and-take, or rather my interaction, with the poem "The Mother" by Gwendolyn Brooks, documenting the connections and pictures that occurred in my head as I read the text. The pieces of the puzzle—created not by length, stanza or flow, but rather by the pauses that occurred in my initial reading—meticulously detect my reading process and, when put together, they reveal insight into actions that are typically subconscious and go unnoticed as I read.

Piece One: "The Mother"

I read the title with a whisper "The Mother" and, even before the first line, I began to create the text to come. I envisioned my mother immediately, or rather, automatically. Memories of my childhood rushed through me and set a joyful and lifted mood. I was feeding my feelings into the text, creating a union of existence between myself and the poem, which reminds me of Rosenblatt's words about the reader's function as the performer of the text: "The reader approaches the text with a certain purpose, certain expectations or hypotheses that guide his choices from the residue of past experience" (26). With just reading the title I concur with what Rosenblatt is relaying. The words of the title painted an immediate picture of my mother, which happened to instill fond and happy thoughts. I was now expecting a positive, feel good text to follow—prepared for what I thought the text would offer.

Piece Two: The First Line

With a light hearted and idyllic jubilation that was bestowed upon me from the title, I read the first line of Brooks' poem (Lynn 71-72).

Abortions will not let you forget.

The words darkened my feelings and froze further reading. Thoughts of sadness entered my mind. It was a powerful and gloomy statement right out of the gates. I took a hard blink with half a head shake and read it again aloud.

Abortions will not let you forget.

The line shattered my previous aura: the joyous memories of my mother left my head in an instant and I wondered what dark hole I was following the rabbit into. The "new critic" in me had read the title for what it was, assuming it was not a metaphor for something else. And the first line altered my expectations for what was to come. This is the predicament that "reader response theory" can get the reader into:

> As the text unrolls before the reader's eyes, the meaning made of the early words influences what comes to mind and is selected for the succeeding signs. But if these do not fit in with the meaning developed thus far, the reader may revise it to assimilate the new words or may start all over again with a different expectation. (Rosenblatt 26)

The title got me in one mind set and I fused with the text. The very following line then separated the bond and dosed me with the "new critic" reality that the text dictates its own meaning. The previous envisions created in my head were destroyed by this point, leaving a clean slate to chisel new expectations.

Piece Three: "You"
As I continued to read, I felt as if the whole text were a warning: the mother was cautioning others ("you") of the repercussions and ill-effects an abortion could have on their soul ("your soul"). The mother was stressing the word "you" as if she was pointing her finger:

> *You remember the children you got that you did not get,*
> *The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,*
> *The singers and workers that never handled the air.*
> *You will never neglect or beat*
> *Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.*

You will never wind up the sucking-thumb
Or scuttle off ghosts that come.
You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,
Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye. (Lines 2-10)

I started to picture religious figures, Planned Parenthood protesters, and irate conservatives. I had a million different faces for the mother as I continued to wonder how she would proceed and if she was a mother who had an abortion, speaking of her mistakes, or a mother who has children and is trying to change the mind of a mother who wants an abortion.

I continued to read, puzzling through these questions. And here comes yet another surprise: the shift from "you" to "I."

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed children.
I have contracted. I have eased
My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck. (11-13)

"She now begins to tell her own story," I thought, "the consequences of her distressed feelings after her abortions." I was aware of the pain and grief the mother was expressing and I found myself merging and separating from the text sequentially. I was displaying what Wolfgang Iser explains in "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach." Iser gives the literary text two poles: the artistic and the aesthetic. He describes "artistic" as the text created by the author and "aesthetic" as the reader's realization of the text. The two-pole theory claims that the poles cannot exist separately and it derives that for the text to come to life the literary text has to lie between the two stated poles (50). This is what I felt I was experiencing: it was a duel of these poles pulling me toward each end and as I got closer to one I was pulled back to the others, realizing that I must remain in between to understand what the text was up to.

Piece Four: "If"

It was particularly difficult not to drift too much from the artistic pole, but I tried my best; I resisted the urge to come to a conclusion too soon and read the next few lines, which give a strong sense of regret, but not a denial of actions:

> *I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized*
> *Your luck*
> *And your lives from your unfinished reach,*
> *If I stole your births and your names,*
> *Your straight baby tears and your games,*
> *Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches,*
> *and your deaths,*
> *If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,*
> *Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.*
> (14-21)

I tried to envision an expression on the mother's face when she wrote "even in my deliberateness, I was not deliberate." I questioned her confusion—or wondered if it was my confusion. She curiously uses "if" as though she were not sure whether she took life: did she steal their births? did she poison the beginnings of their breaths? The "ifs" made me wonder if she was inviting the reader to participate in a new form: to explore the complexity of the issue without falling into a "yes" or "no" response:

> A text that lay things out before the reader in such a
> way that he can either accept or reject them will lessen
> the degree of participation, as it allows him nothing
> but a yes or no. Texts with such minimal indeterminacy
> tend to be tedious, for it is only when the reader is given
> the chance to participate actively that he will regard the
> text, whose intention he himself has helped to compose,
> as real. For we generally tend to regard things that we have
> made ourselves as being real. (Iser, *Prospecting* 10)

As I pondered over the possibility of not being deliberate in one's deliberateness, the text became real: it began to function as a criticism of the either-or perspective that we bring to many social issues. And it became challenging as I was left with nothing but my own cultural baggage to judge. So I kept reading:

> *Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.*
> *Though why should I whine,*
> *Whine that the crime was other than mine?--*
> *Since anyhow you are dead.*
> *Or rather, or instead,*
> *You were never made.*

But that too, I am afraid,
Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?
You were born, you had body, you died.
It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried. (21-30)

Piece Five: "Believe me"

As I read these lines, the text became more familiar, the rhythm emerged, and the flow enticed even more feelings. I felt her pain and sorrow. Unexpectedly, though, I found that I was not only dealing with her dilemma but also mine: "How is the truth to be said?" I was not sure and therefore in no position to judge her. However, I found myself divided about wanting to console her when these words arrived: "Believe me, I loved you all / Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you/ All" (31-33). The last word echoed in my head: "All." I felt a sense of magnitude and wondered just how many abortions has she had. The many faces I had given the mother lines before merged into one. It was a saddened yet strong face; I visualized the mother hanging her head with a silence in her eyes and emptiness in her heart. I still do not know if I would want to look into her eyes and say, "It is OK!"

The Question

The pieces of the puzzle came together in my head—not in the form of a secure and definite answer, but a challenging question: "How is the truth to be said?" And those pieces are intact for the time being, but a puzzle can always be taken apart and put back together. The question that remains is if the jigsaw puzzle will look the same the next time I piece it together.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

"The essay was written to explore and document my thoughts and reactions on a conscious level when reading a text for the first time. The inspiration for writing this essay came from the excitement of the discovery of my reading process and really exploring myself and sharing it with others." ~ Gino Maturi

Gino is a first-year student at Reading Area Community College. He plans to transfer to a four-year university in 2010 to further study financial advising.

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The Baby, the Book, My Son
Jeffrey Leopold

An alarm sounds from the monitor again. I was told minutes ago, and not for the last time, to expect the monitor to go off periodically and to not be concerned. I watch as a line forms almost uniform peaks and valleys on a green electronic display. Various other monitoring and life-sustaining equipment crowd the small bed with an even smaller occupant inside. Concurrently, I am having the best and worst day of my life. A baby, who was supposed to stay safe and warm inside his mother's womb for the next three months, was lying before me in a special crib with a lamp overhead to provide warmth. I could not hold him because he was just too little and too frail. I again read the monitors that show his respiration rate, pulse rate, and oxygen saturation. This is a routine that I would run through seemingly every ten seconds for the next three months when I visited him in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). I read the sign above his cubical: "Baby Boy Leopold." He was "Baby Boy Leopold" because we had thought we still had plenty of time to decide on a name.

From a young age I had a voracious appetite for all things written. I hopped on pop, solved mysteries with the Hardy Boys and Encyclopedia Brown, fought the Empire alongside Luke Skywalker, and ran away with Holden Caulfield. When my wife told me she was pregnant, it was only natural that I began to read everything I could related to babies and children. I read books on pregnancy, fatherhood, baby names and their meanings, and all the magazines that related to parenting. I had the outlet covers, the toilet-seat lock, the cabinet locks and the refrigerator locks ready to go. I was sure I was going to be the smartest and most prepared father I could be. However, as I would find out, there are some things in life for which we would never be prepared.

> He was "Baby Boy Leopold" because we had thought we still had plenty of time to decide on a name.

The nurse, Diane, was at my side now. She got me to smile for a picture with my newborn son, even though all I wanted to do was to run from the room screaming. She provided words of encouragement that I only half heard. There were too many questions running through my head to hear her clearly. What if he died? What if he was disabled? Is this the best place for him? Is my wife ok? Am I ok? Why did this happen to us? I was trying to be brave but I am sure my face and body betrayed how scared, uncertain, and distraught I felt. I was going

through the darkest time in my life and wondering how, or if, it would end when Diane handed me the book she had tucked under her arm. It was a book for children titled *Mommy, Daddy, Me.*

Surely this nurse could not be serious. This baby, whose future is uncertain, is lying before me with wires, tubes, and tape covering his frail body and she hands me a children's book. I wanted to read his vital reports or books on prematurity or anything that would tell me that everything would be ok -- not a children's book. This child before me, whose skin was so thin one could see through it, would not even understand what I was reading. I opened my mouth to tell her there was no way I was going to read this book right now, but the words never came. It must have been her gentle sincerity that got me to read the book aloud to him, this tiny and frail baby whom I was scared to get to know because his future was so uncertain.

> I was still scared, uncertain, and distraught when I finished reading the book, but less so.

I cannot remember the story in that book I read that day. What I do remember is the emotion that I felt when I read it. I was still scared, uncertain, and distraught when I finished reading the book, but less so. I also felt hope that the days ahead would get better (and they did), hope that he would grow up healthy and strong (and he is), hope that I would be reading to him at home one day (and I do, everyday). I also felt another emotion forming deep inside my soul. It was an emotion I had never felt before and I was not sure what to do with the new feeling it invoked in me. I was feeling the emotion of being a new dad.

I left the NICU almost immediately after I finished the book. I left because I had to do something I did not want my son to see or hear. With shaking fingers, I fumbled with the lock on the restroom door. No sooner had the lock clicked than the tears began to fall down my face. I cried for many, many reasons in the restroom that day. I cried for the present and the future. I cried for the why's and how's—most importantly, I cried for my son. In the course of reading that book, I bonded with my son. When I read the book, I realized I was not just reading to a sick premature child. I was reading to my sick premature son, with whom I was going to get to know and love and share many more books.

The next three months were filled with many highs and lows. He would receive blood transfusions, develop a mild brain bleed, be put on a respirator, develop a blood infection, and receive many more treatments and medications than I would care to remember. I would read many different books on prematurity and neonatal care and treatment during those months. However, none of the books I read in those three months,

or to date, would mean as much, or give me as much hope, as that first book I read to my son. Books can teach us, inspire us, and take us places we have never seen. The book I read that day taught me, inspired me, and let me see the future I wanted to see—a future where the one pound and fourteen ounces of newborn "Baby Boy Leopold" would grow to be a very healthy fifty-two pound four-year-old Luke Leopold, more importantly, my son.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

"I read a book to my son every day for three months while he was in the hospital after he was born premature. Reading books was one of the only ways I could bond with my son as I was unable to hold him in my arms for almost two months. I wanted to share my experience when I read that first book to my son because it was such an important time in my life." - Jeffrey Leopold

Jeffrey is a part-time, first-year student at Reading Area Community College. He is studying to be a teacher.

I am ...

To me, "I am" signifies one's contribution. Somewhat like a butterfly effect, whereas a seemingly insignificant contribution could have a major impact on someone's life or even escalate to change society as a whole.

I would like to eventually become an IT Manager. I have extensive experience with computers and networks but my people skills are by no means impressive. I am hoping my experience at RACC will enable me to become more of a leader.

~George Farmer

Editorial Policy

Legacy is published once a year by students currently enrolled in credit courses at Reading Area Community College. Submissions to Legacy are accepted only from students in attendance within the current academic year. Legacy's main purpose is to provide an annual showcase for outstanding student work—essays, poetry, artwork, and photography. All work must be submitted with proper submissions forms. Submission forms can be found online or in the Humanities Department, Yocum. All rights, including e-rights, reserved. Copyright for individual works reverts to authors and artists upon publication. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the general staff, or the college. Legacy is available free to all students.

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Philosophy

Legacy is produced and managed entirely by RACC students. Legacy's student staff seeks to inspire intellectual curiosity, excellence, and creativity in research, prose, poetry, and visual arts by presenting student work in a publication that honors the principles of RACC – equality, diversity, and community.

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Colophon

The eighth annual edition of Legacy was designed using an Acer Aspire 5515 laptop. The software used was QuarkXPress 8.0.

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Essay titles are 14 point Copperplate Gothic Bold and body text for essays and poems are Footlight MT Light.