

Delta Winds

Volume 27 A Magazine of Student Essays 2014

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Letter from the Editors

While we generally *read* what has been written, we do have occasion to experience script through other means. At San Joaquin Delta College, students published in *Artifact*, *Final Draft*, and *Delta Winds* share their works in an oral reading called “Writing All Over the Place.” This event, for some, is the first time hearing an author speak and feeling the author’s emotional connection to the words. The experience has the potential to carry a powerful message. Students in an English 87 class attended last year’s “Writing All Over the Place” and offered these insights:

Derekia Davis: *“I was really moved by the young lady and her story about her mother. I remember reading this particular story in class, and it was a touching story then. But sitting there at that moment, listening to her story and the pain she had behind it was more moving than the whole class reading it aloud. We could never put the heart behind it like she did because she’s walking in the shoes whereas we were just reading about her life.”*

Danh Nguyen: *“Delta Winds readers shared touching stories. Adrienne Silver told us that she picked up the idea for her essay after seeing the name of a suicide teenager who was a victim of bullying. The event made me change the way I look at writing. I believe that all the works are rooted in emotion. There were so many students we did not have enough seats for them.”*

Jerry Vang: *“I could imagine the pictures of the poems and the essays that were read. I could understand the stories like I was in the stories. This emotion makes me think that I should study harder and practice to write and read in the way these writers did. This experience will become part of my knowledge and will help me to become a better writer and reader in the future.”*

Salwa Sanany: *“I liked how one girl read the poem, acted it out, and made funny sounds. It was the first time I listened to very interesting poems that actually made me laugh.”*

Nga Pham: *“In ‘Small Asian Woman,’ Kelly Pheng hurt her mom’s feelings and blamed her mom a lot. But today, she read a new essay to apologize to her mom for what she had done. She was crying and speaking to us. She made me cry too. She made me think about my life, my family through her story. I also should say, ‘Thanks a lot’ to my mom for still supporting me to go to school and to have something brighter than her.”*

Juanito Sanchez: *“I realized that writing is not just a form of communication, but a unique way for us humans to express our feelings and thoughts. This has encouraged me to continue developing new ways of improving my reading skills. This experience made me realize all the things that I have taken for granted. So from now on, I will take advantage of all the opportunities presented to me.”*

Letter from the Editors

Antonio Gomez: "As soon as they started to read their poetry or stories, they caught my attention. When the first reader began, I was frozen by how amazing she expressed herself. It was beautiful how she paused and how she raised her voice. After some good experiences with poems, we took our journey to the stories, stories in which some readers let out their feelings and began to cry. While they were reading their touching stories, I was getting more involved because in some way I had passed through those same experiences. This event was a good example of what we can do with our writing."

By late spring of 2013, the students in English 87 had read numerous essays in *Delta Winds* over the course of the semester. They had written summaries of *Delta Winds* essays and had written responses to these essays as they prepared for their next level of composition classes. However, they had never experienced writing as they did that day in Goleman Library. Many students were profoundly impacted by hearing authors read their essays aloud.

We wish to thank our colleague Paula Sheil for coordinating this event. Her efforts allowed our students to experience the written word in a more personal way, to feel the power, depth, potential, and beauty of language, by witnessing the strong bond between the writing and the writer.



Education is the most
valuable tool for life and nobody
can steal it from you!

Siv Taing



You Can't Go Home Again

by Chad Hammerback



Chad Hammerback is a very happily married father/step-father of nine with children ranging from two to twenty-one. He is also a grandfather to a three-year-old grandson. He is an avid reader and sometime writer hoping to one day publish a novel or two. As a South Dakota transplant, he quite often struggles to understand Californian society and many of his essays deal with this disparity as he pursues a degree in Philosophy and Religion.



I grew up in a small town of a thousand people in South Dakota. Nestled atop a bluff overlooking the Missouri River, it was a quiet and peaceful town. From the age of seven, I was free to run the streets with little to no trouble. And should I be the one causing the trouble, it was guaranteed that I would be chastised and set straight by someone in no time at all, regardless of who they were or if they even knew me, or I, them. All in all, it was a good place to grow up and, should one happen to leave, a good place to come back to when it was time to settle down.

We had everything we needed there. Nothing more, nothing less. All of the basic necessities were there:

a grocery store, drug store, clothing store, bank, service station, newspaper, and a lumber yard. For entertainment, there was the bowling alley, parks, and the free swimming and boating in the river. We had the ever-present Tasty Treat for hamburgers, hot dogs, and ice cream cones, a café for the traditional “home-cooked” meals, and for fine dining, a steak and seafood joint at the marina. Primarily, it was a

farming community, but we did have one factory, a private school for underprivileged Indian girls, a small state college, and several churches.

Community was everything and we took great pride in ours. Despite its small size, or perhaps because of it, there was always something to do in this little town, and the entire town usually turned out for whatever was taking place. There was football and basketball (both high school and college) in the fall and winter, Bingo at City Hall every Saturday night, and the city softball league just about

We had everything we needed there. Nothing more, nothing less.

every weeknight during the summer. The 4th of July and Homecoming (which by some miracle

of scheduling brought both high school and college alums on the same weekend) came complete with parades, carnivals, races, and competitions of all kinds. August brought the annual Farm Show to the college gymnasium for an entire week of farming, gardening, and building extravaganza. Then, there were the Christmas pageants at the churches, Christmas programs at the public school, and the county-wide Easter



Cantata every spring. I couldn't even begin to count the number of potluck lunches or soup suppers thrown every year, nor the myriad reasons for the occasion of such. Last, but definitely not least, there was hunting and fishing all year long.

Yes, all in all, it was a very good life. One couldn't ask for a much better place to grow up. In fact, it is my opinion that any one of us could have spent our entire lives in that little town, never once stepping foot outside of it, without missing a thing at all.

But we all know that the only constant in life is change, and when it came, it came with a vengeance.

It all started when I was in the sixth grade. I was stoked because after that year, I would be in the massive three-story building attached to the elementary school where the middle- and high-school students were housed. Finally, I would be one of the "cool" kids! About halfway through the year, however, it was announced that the high school was being combined with the high schools of two other towns in the county. Our class sizes were too small for the communities to support on their own, and so, due to lack of funds, the high-school students would be bussed to the county seat where the composite school was to be located. Meanwhile, the middle-schoolers were kicked back to the elementary school building, where we were to be relegated to the two classrooms that were once the Art and Music Rooms. These rooms were moved to the basement of the old high school while the rest of the building was sealed off.

Two years later, our beloved governor, in all of his benevolent wisdom, announced that he was closing down the state college. It, too, was no longer profitable and had to go. After the massive uproar of disapproval, he offered to sell the college to whoever was willing to take it over for the

unheard of price of \$1. For Sale signs went up, and in protest, several of us kids stole all of them and placed them on the lawn of the grade school. There was another roar of protest until it was discovered just who it was that had had the audacity to pull such a prank. Instead of chastisement and rebuke, only sadness emerged from the town as the adults realized that, as young as we were, even we realized that our town was for sale to the lowest bidder. A few businessmen considered buying the college for various purposes, but in the end, no one came forward to save our college. It was shut down, and the state legislature turned it into a prison instead. How that was any more profitable than a college, I'll never know.

The gymnasium went with the college; apparently the prisoners had more need of it than the locals did. The loss of the gym also meant the loss of the annual Farm Show and the local National Guard unit. Both had utilized the gym, and the town had nowhere else to host either one.

The library was lost as well. Where we once had public access to a state-of-the-art college library with additional access to all of the other campus libraries throughout the state via a lending program, our new library became a 15' x 20' room in the basement of City Hall. The entirety of the college library was either divvied up with other campuses or retained for the sole use of the prisoners. Again, the prisoners apparently had more need and right to the educational opportunities of library materials than did the law-abiding citizens of our fair town.

We left town shortly after and moved to Nebraska, where I finished out high school. Sadly, the changes in my hometown were far from over, and tragedy continued to strike. Two years after the college closed, the school for Indian girls finally ran out of money.



[Our governor] offered to sell the college to whoever was willing to take it over for the unheard of price of \$1.



It had been unable to obtain sufficient donations to continue to run the school. This, too, was taken over by the state and turned into a school for delinquent boys.

Things settled down for a few years, but change wasn't finished ravaging our town. The local factory was eventually bought by a French company that promptly shut it down within a matter of days of the sale and moved the operation to Mexico. As the employees were working one day and laid off the next without notice, the supervisors and lead-employees were offered the caveat of a few extra weeks of pay if they were willing to go to Mexico to train the people that took their jobs. With this last fatal stroke, change had officially turned our town into nothing more than a dusty prison town.

At this point, many years have passed since I left my hometown. The population has dropped drastically from one thousand people to less than five hundred. All of the schools, with the exception of the elementary school, are gone, and in their place, prisons stand. The factory is gone. The National Guard unit and the Farm Show; the softball league and the Homecomings; the café, the restaurant, and the bowling alley. All gone. Everything that once made this town a happy and vibrant place is gone.

Even the hunting and fishing are gone. As farming has become less profitable, the local farming families, in order to survive, are saving the hunting and fishing rights to their private property for city-slickers. The city boys carry far more coin than the locals who tended to pay with a share of the take by way of open invitation to the end of season cookouts.

A few years ago, as I was passing through the area, I decided to go a bit out of my way to stop by and see my

hometown again. I was devastated to discover that my hometown was gone. The town was still there; it was just not *my* town anymore. Instead of the vibrant town I grew up in, all I found was an emaciated skeleton of what once was. There was nothing left. Only the prison, with the hopes and dreams and the very soul of this little town jailed up inside, remained. As I walked through the town, I found that all my old haunts were just that . . . haunting memories of a time past. It saddened me to see that this place, which was once as energetic as I, had turned into this old, gray man dying a slow, cancerous death. I could only hope that as I walked those streets once again, it too remembered those days, and me, as fondly as I remembered it, and gave a little smile to see me once again.

Growing up in that little town, as with most kids from small towns, I couldn't wait to leave. I wanted out to see the world, make my name, and move to the city. Now, I yearn for that quiet little town that I loved so much. My soul cries out in anguish at the very thought of all that has been lost. For after living in cities on both coasts, and in several places in the Midwest, I have finally come to understand just what it was that that little town had offered me. It offered a simple life. A life where one could *exist* and just *live*. We worked hard, and we played even harder. And we *enjoyed* life and everything it had to offer, far away from the rat race of the world. As I have become older, I have come to appreciate that little town and the lessons it taught me, for it is those lessons more than any other that have made me the man that I am today. I can honestly say that I am proud of where I come from, and should any person ask, I stand tall and with much pride declare, "I come from Springfield, Sout' Dakota. It didn't offer much more than a good life. But THE Good Life it was."



The Mists of Éire

by Caitlin McDougall

The blue above us seemed endless, limitless, freckled with perfectly formed white cumulus clouds that looked soft to the touch. It was perfect. It was what I had always imagined the heavens would look like, and it was real: and it was all around us, hugging us.

We slowly worked our way up The Devil’s Ladder, which had more foot traffic than I would have liked. We were sharing the trail with professional climbers and locals who made me feel silly and underprepared. They wore wind- and water-resistant clothing, and used walking sticks to help them scale the mountain at an unimaginable pace. I was working very hard to keep up with Craig and Kyle, but did not want to leave Jessie behind. She did not share my competitive and determined nature. I could tell that she was not enjoying herself and felt very uneasy

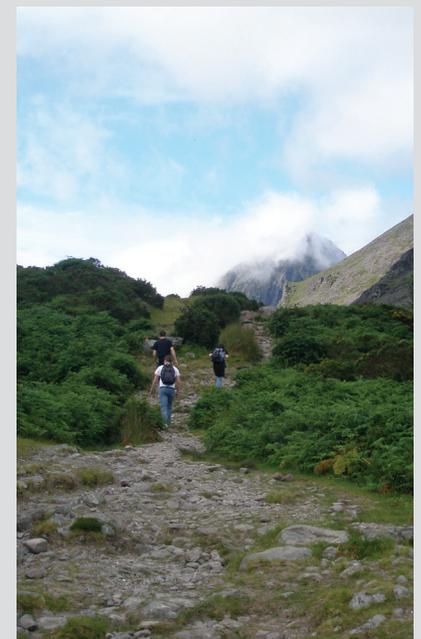
on the slippery stones. I tried to rally her and boost her confidence, but it required many stops, and I became frustrated with her unwillingness to soldier-on. I convinced her to climb ahead of me and keep pace with us, so that if anything happened to her, we would be close enough to help. We moved as a unit, trudging up the hillside like the packs of wild goats that called Carrantuohill home.

The sun was high in the sky, but the massive cottony clouds created frigid shadows that chilled the sweat on my back. We eased onto a plateau at the top of the steep climb, and I could feel my ponytail sticking to my neck underneath my hat. I was exhausted and sweaty, but we were not even halfway there. I paused, took a deep breath, and closed my eyes for a moment, relishing my victory over The Devil’s Ladder. I could hear the blood pounding in my ears and feel it pulsing through my sore muscles. My thighs

I paused, took a deep breath, and closed my eyes for a moment, relishing my victory over The Devil’s Ladder.



Caitlin McDougall is a Stockton native, but currently resides in Los Angeles, California. She graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in 2010 and was a member of the 2010-2011 theater company. She plans to complete her associate’s degree and transfer to a four-year university to obtain a BSN before continuing on to a Nurse-Midwifery graduate program. It is her dream to travel with Doctors Without Borders to teach women in underdeveloped countries healthy birthing practices.



burned and begged for rest, but we needed to move forward. I took one more look at the gorgeous land that we had covered, and felt a small sense of accomplishment. I did not want to think about having to go down The Devil's Ladder on the way back, one thing at a time. I turned back to the group and nodded my approval; it was time to tackle our next obstacle.

The last stretch of the hike was a great mound of unstable broken sheetrock. My calves strained to keep me upright on this mobile ground, and I lost my balance several times, falling hard on the jagged rocks. The air was so still and quiet and the

landscape so serene it intensified my physical pain. I tried to think about other things and distract myself from the raging sensations in my body, but in this place there was nothing to be distracted by. I had to recognize and experience my pain, instead of ignoring it and waiting for it to subside. Pushing through my pain made me feel incredibly in tune with my body and with the earth. All of my senses were heightened, and I knew that I was strong and capable. I would not allow myself to succumb to fatigue when we had come so far and worked so hard.

As we made the ascent, the mist returned, and got thicker every moment. We had stepped into a cloud. The heavy moisture collected in our eyebrows and eyelashes until we were blinking at each other and laughing

at this otherworldly experience. The cloud made everything around us magical and weightless. We knew we were near the peak. "We're so close, I can feel it. Do you feel that?" Jessie breathed behind me. I could feel it, we all could. A sense of ease and calm settled over us in knowing that we were almost there, and we seemed to glide through the remaining sweep without toil. When the mist broke, we found ourselves at the summit; the sight took my breath away. The sun was so bright I had to squint and use

Above the clouds
stood a large oxidized
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into the ground.

my hand to shield my eyes. Above the clouds stood a large oxidized steel cross, driven deep into the ground. Tears pooled in my eyes and I felt the weight of our

journey return to my body. I sunk down to the stones and willed myself to breathe. I was humbled and grateful. I had hiked the tallest church in all of Ireland, the closest that one could get to God and the heavens to whisper prayers into the ether.

At the top of Carrantuohill, my heart was open and I felt vulnerable, but I was not afraid. I have always thought of a church as a place, rather than a building of worship. It is a place that inspires an undeniable feeling and knowledge of love. I was overwhelmed. I knew I was safe and accepted without conditions or religious constraints. We had stumbled upon a natural sanctuary where we felt at home, and I walked away with a new view, knowing that perseverance was the key to achieving all of my goals.



Motherland

by Mohammad Afghani



I slowly open up my eyes as the pilot announces through the intercom, “Fifteen minutes until arrival at Kabul International Airport.” Struggling to keep my eyelids open, I look down through my window to be awakened by beautiful green valleys and intimidating dark mountains topped with patches of radiant white snow. I glance behind to see the contentment in my parents’ faces as they rejoice in their return to the place that in the ‘80s they abandoned as refugees. The plane drops the landing gear, and I keep a firm grip on my armrest as we land on the runway.

I have no idea what to expect after seeing the terrifying images about this place all over news stations and hearing my parents’ many stories of their lives here.

My father, Hamid, was a helicopter pilot for the Soviet-led Afghan Air Force before the U.S.S.R.’s invasion in 1979. After he learned about the true agenda of the Soviets and

witnessed many atrocities, including seeing his close friends blown into pieces, he left the Air Force and joined the Mujahedeen. He spent two years in the unforgiving mountains of Afghanistan fighting against the Communist intervention before he and my mother brought our family to the United States. Once here, they did not forget where they came from or let

While other children my age were reading about *Captain Underpants*, I was reading about Prophet Mohammad’s passion to save his people from ignorance.

me forget. At night my father used to read to me about the stories of the prophets from the Quran, teaching me about the qualities of Noah, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammad. I felt very much inspired about how they lived their lives and how they led the greatest movements ever known. While other children my age were reading about *Captain Underpants*, I was reading about Prophet Mohammad’s passion to save his people from ignorance—about how he abolished the practice of killing baby daughters at birth, advocated for harmony, and strove to unify Arabic peoples regardless of their wealth, race, tribe, or language.

Mohammad Afghani was born in 1994 in Afghanistan, during a civil war. When he was two years old, his father was able to save his mother and him from the worsening conditions of the time and bring the family out to live in the Bay Area. Mohammad’s life experiences are what makes him an optimist. He is attending school in order to become a physician assistant, who can one day work abroad to assist people in war-torn areas. His favorite hobbies include basketball, football, and reading. He likes learning about history, politics, and social matters.





observe the scars left behind in the area when I see the homes, made from mud and bricks and marked with bullet and mortar holes from the constant decades of war. The sewer system runs along the roads with no cover. The roads

I looked up to men like him and not the professional buffoons all over the TV screens and radios. Now, I am here to see for myself the culture and the country I have heard about all my life.

have no concrete whatsoever, and the snow leaves a mud-covered mess. I step out of the taxi to be welcomed by a sweet winter aroma, from a mix of wood burning and the food being prepared.

I take my first steps off the airplane with mixed emotions. I'm eager to see my birthplace, and I have always wanted to know what the other half of my family

I step out of the taxi to be welcomed by a sweet winter aroma, from a mix of wood burning and the food being prepared.

My first week in Afghanistan becomes the most nerve-racking week of my life. Instead of the normal toilet that I have been accustomed to, I

looked like. I can't get over the fact that I'm stepping into a war zone with an American passport. I keep walking with my mother's enormous duffle bag in my hand, filled up with all the nonsense she could find back in the States. I'm battling a very cold, whispering wind while snowflakes are gently tapping my shoulder.

We find a taxi to escape the harsh weather. The taxi driver, probably in his mid-40s, has an intimidatingly strong beard, shiny black hair, and a very deep voice. He turns out to be a very pleasant and welcoming person, who doesn't even accept the fare once he finds out that we are visiting there after almost ten years.

have to do my business in a hole on the ground. To drink water I can't just turn on the faucet; I have to walk out to the backyard, drop a basket into a well, and pull it out. On my third night, it's 2 a.m. and I'm still recovering from jetlag when all of a sudden a thunderous explosion from nearby shakes the house, followed by a complementary full round of rapid machinegun fire. My mother and I jump up in complete disarray. We start running around the house in hysteria until my uncles and aunts show up with a lantern. They all start laughing about the petrified looks on our faces. They inform us that random shootings and explosions are nothing out of the ordinary.

My grandparents' house is in a small district of the capital city, called "Share-Now," which translates to "New City." It most certainly doesn't live up to its name, because the whole area is an old broken down slum. I easily

After my jetlag subsides, I decide to step outside. The remnants of snow are now gone, and the dark grey clouds have opened up to the bright sun, lighting the face of the city. I put on a black beanie and a gray sweater, with

my favorite winter boots. I stroll down a couple of blocks until I see an area full of tents. I wonder, why tents in the middle of winter? The hundreds of tents in that area are occupied by families of the less fortunate. The families live in extreme poverty; they suffer from malnutrition, lack of proper clothing, and diseases. A small child has his hands extended towards me and is asking for money.

I nervously approach the child and start a conversation with him. I try to make sense about the condition he is living in. He says his name is Khalid. He tells me he is a ten-year-old orphan, whose mother died during his birth. He never had a chance to attend school, and he is selling chewing gum in order to provide for himself. His father was a heroin addict, who gave up on life two years ago. His older sister, who happened to be sixteen at the time, was left to take care of him and his two younger siblings. Here I am a kid from the inner cities of America face to face with a war child in Afghanistan. I realize this kid could've easily been me if I wasn't given the chance to prosper. I frantically take off my beanie, sweater, and boots and hand them all over to

the kid. The smile on his face makes him look like he had been awarded the whole Earth.

This journey to the other side of the world had a dramatic effect on shaping the person I am today. I set off on my journey with fear and contempt.

**They all start laughing
about the petrified
looks on our faces.**

I returned with an understanding about the other side of reality. Witnessing hungry, orphaned children on

the streets with nothing on their feet, houses full of bullet and mortar holes, and the sounds of gunfire on given nights changed my perception of life. I have a comfortable home, where in the summer time I can turn on the air conditioner, and in the wintertime I can turn on the heater. I wear clothes that keep me warm with no rips or holes in them. My refrigerator is full of food, and I don't have to worry about going to sleep with an empty stomach. I live in a place where there is an opportunity to reach for the stars. I realized that we Americans, who have it all, are too often ungrateful and do not take advantage of all the endless opportunities available to us. This is the main force that drives me to never give up in my quest to establish something for myself and perhaps something I can leave behind for others such as Khalid.



Logging Off

by Valerie Garcia



Valerie Garcia, 18, was born and raised in Lodi, California. She lived in Mexico for four years before moving back to her hometown at the age of eight. She attributes her desire to study abroad and work in the Peace Corps to the experiences she had while living there. She plans to continue her education at one of the UC schools and earn a degree in Biology or Kinesiology. Valerie also hopes to minor in French or ASL, and pursue her passion for languages.



Tweet. Poke. Reblog. Text. Imessage. Email. Share. These are all methods we are now using to stay “connected” with one another. Falling out of touch with people who don’t live near us is a fear of the past. These methods of communicating through social media allow for instant connections to occur at any time and from virtually any place. The simple convenience of these website features is what makes them so appealing. Why call a friend to see how he is doing, when we can simply look at his Facebook wall? Why waste time making a call to check on a sick friend if there is a live feed of her condition on Twitter? Ironically, as people become more “connected” with these websites, they in turn disconnect from the real world and from the people around them. In the film *Disconnect*, directed by Henry Alex Rubin, social media are explicitly linked with dysfunctional family relationships. The film’s protagonists are driven to make rash decisions and “log off” from the real world because they have substituted computers for intimate kinship.

Perhaps the most tragic victim of a distant family relationship in the film is Ben Boyd. A music lover with long hair and “emo” looking clothing, Ben is an outsider, even to his own family. Indeed, for a large chunk of the movie, it seems like his family doesn’t know him at all. Early in the film, Ben’s relationship with his sister, Abby, is given center stage. While he attempts to talk to her and her friends, she simply blows him off. In one scene, Abby’s high-status blonde friend, in refusing to give Ben a ride home, even refers to him as an object, saying,

“THAT’S not going in my car.” This scene is particularly important because Abby doesn’t defend him. She shows that she doesn’t care to protect her little brother and cares more about what her friends think than what her brother might feel. Her negative attitude toward Ben makes it easy to see why he would feel more comfortable with speaking to someone online, someone who may not necessarily know that he is a “loser” at his school and in real life. Abby

Why waste time making a call to check on a sick friend if there is a live feed of her condition on Twitter?

shows how little she cares about her brother’s feelings and well-being despite knowing that he doesn’t have any friends. Her disdain for Ben is ultimately what makes her finding his

hanged body after his suicide attempt especially poignant. This scene suggests that the only way for her to pay attention to Ben is for him to do something desperate. Although Abby is not the sole reason Ben is driven to kill himself, she is a part of the problem and a contributing factor to his depression.

Ben’s connection, or lack thereof, with his father also contributes significantly to his suicide attempt. Rich Boyd is a busy attorney with no time for anything but work. One of the more eye-opening scenes of *Disconnect* shows him at the dinner table glued to his Blackberry. His work affairs are so important that he makes them a greater priority than his family, and he leaves the table without a second thought. His separation from Ben is also intensified by their different interests. While Rich is more practical and focuses on work, Ben is passionate about music, something his father doesn’t pay attention to. Rich doesn’t even listen to Ben’s original compositions until

after the suicide attempt. In addition to not having male friends, Ben doesn't have much of a relationship with his father, so he has no male role model in his life. This lack of responsible male support and guidance lead him to make self-destructive decisions, like sharing nude photos of himself online, to impress a girl.

Overall, Ben's family doesn't pay much attention to him and his emotions. To Abby and Rich, Ben is not important since he is not on their cell phone screens. He is not a priority, so he is disregarded. It can be argued that Ben feels his invisibility. He knows that his family doesn't truly know or understand the real him. They aren't even aware of the bullying he is now facing as a result of his leaked nude picture. His suicide attempt can be interpreted as a cry for help and not necessarily a real attempt at ending his own life. Before stepping into his noose, Ben plays obtrusively loud music, and only then does Abby go into his room. It can be inferred that Ben plays the music loudly because he wants to be found. He wishes for his family finally to pay attention to him and to realize he needs their support and love. He wants to be *seen*. Perhaps he even wants to be saved.

Another dysfunctional family relationship in *Disconnect* is that of the Dixons. For the majority of the film, Jason is the antagonist and the bully who drives Ben to suicide. However, as scenes depicting his strained interactions with his father unfold, we see that Jason is a bully because he feels he's bullied. Jason, like Ben, doesn't feel close to his dad and feels as though he isn't loved. In one of the online conversations he has as the invented Jessica Rhony, Jason expresses that he feels imprisoned by his father and is unhappy with their relationship. Ironically, Jason is able

to open up to Ben via Jessica Rhony, although he would never have spoken to him in person. Jason initiates the childish and immature prank because he is rebelling against his father's strict parenting. He uses Jessica as an anonymous outlet to bully Ben in the same way his father bullies him. It can also be assumed that Jason is a bully because he is in control of or expects to be in control of the pranks, whereas he couldn't control his mother's death, which led him to be raised by his resentful father. Jason's personal tragedies make him feel like the best way to show control over his emotions and his life is to not show any at all until his tears cascade at the film's end, when the horrors of his prank gone wrong finally hit home.

When watching this movie, I definitely saw ways in which the issues presented were relevant to my life. In the same way that the Boyds are so attached to their phones, my family is attached to technology. Some days, my family will be gathered in the living room, but we won't be truly interacting with one another because we each will be connected to something online. There are times when my family is watching TV shows simultaneously: my mother on our computer, my brother on his cellphone, and I on our TV. Although we are all watching shows, our house is completely silent because we are all wearing headphones. My mom has referred to this euphemistically as "separate togetherness" and a more contemporary way of "hanging out." While this separation doesn't actually cause a rift in my family, I do see it being harmful in the future as we could become accustomed to not really interacting. The greatest issue in my generation is our obsessive use of social media. It's ironic that social media were meant to connect people, but what they really do is create more

To Abby and Rich, Ben is not important since he is not on their cell phone screens.





While this separation doesn't actually cause a rift in my family, I do see it being harmful in the future as we could become accustomed to not really interacting.

space. Many people confuse having information with being close to someone, so they don't even realize that everything they know about their friends and family is learned while looking at a computer screen.

Disconnect tackles some of the contemporary world's most compelling issues. In today's culture, the most pervasive threat to family harmony isn't financial trouble or gang violence, but social media and our constant connection to technology. While we are so focused on the screens in front of us, we miss important things happening in the world that surrounds us and in the family we say we are a part of. For the Boyds, their constant connection to technology created a rift in their

family, and blinded them to Ben's obvious struggles as an isolated teenager. For the Dixons, technology was the toxin that Jason resorted to as a result of his tragic family life and disconnection from his surviving parent. In both families, relationships were rocky, and it seems like no one really knows about each other. In a world where being logged in is so important, they were actually logged off.

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Closeted Girl Gamers: An Analysis of Sex Prejudice in Online Video Gaming

by Michelle Livingstone

We do not always show every facet of our personalities to every person we meet. We can act very reserved, or we can be our uncensored true selves. It often depends on the people we are interacting with. In each situation, certain behaviors are considered appropriate and others inappropriate. In my experience as a female gamer, I have learned that sometimes we augment our personalities to fit into groups that otherwise would not accept us. Because individuals wish to be included in and accepted by the group, some females conform to the gaming group's standards. Gordon Allport's concepts of sex as an in-group, the changing nature of in-groups, reference groups, and the group-norm theory of prejudice help explain the minority female's desire to be a part of a group that discriminates against her.

Some gamers believe that females do not belong in the male-dominated online gaming community. There is an assumption in the gaming group that females are not proficient at video gaming. Noticeable differences between the sexes exist, but these differences do not make female players less capable. As Allport puts it, "Such primary and secondary sex differences as exist are greatly exaggerated and are inflated into imaginary distinctions that justify discrimination" (72). Misogynistic gamers believe that a female's only value in video games is for their objectification. Females often

experience unwanted sexual advances if it is suspected that she is not a he. Female gamers are automatically "outed" in games that require instant voice communication for success; she cannot easily hide the fact that she is a female from her teammates in these games. In my experience as a female gamer, women experience more sexual harassment when men hear their voices. When text communication will suffice, most female gamers that I have known will choose to type rather than speak, even when it is more inconvenient. However, prejudice against female gamers does not always produce negative results; some men will give known or suspected females

No one ever gave me a video game as a present until I started playing Sega with my father.

gifts or allow poor performance to go unaddressed. But most females play video games because they enjoy playing, not because

they crave male attention. Some females will change the way that they communicate in order to not stand out from the rest of the group.

A woman may feel that she is part of the gaming community, but some male gamers do not agree; they assume that females are uninterested in video games. Allport explains, "even two members of the same actual in-group may view its composition in widely divergent ways" (75). Who is included in a given group subjectively varies from individual to individual. When I was growing up, parents typically bought their children action figures or dolls to play with, but video games were usually reserved for the boys.





No one ever gave me a video game as a present until I started playing Sega with my father. He did not purchase the system for my entertainment, but for his own. When I showed interest in the games he was playing, he taught me how to play, and ever since then I have considered gaming to be my hobby.

In game, if they do not call each other by their screen names, many gamers call each other “bro” or “fag,” depending on their disposition towards their teammate. If a gamer complains, his teammates often say, “he needs to get laid.” Because many females do not openly display the fact that they are females, some male gamers do not realize that lots of girls like to play video games too. This perpetuates the stereotype that girls do not play video games. When a female actually insists that she is a female, typically after being called a man, male gamers often reply “tits or GTFO” or state “she has a penis.” Instead of trying to prove their sex, many females would rather avoid any actions that might cause a teammate to think she is a woman.

Some women who are ostracized in the gaming community for being female still desire to be included in the group’s membership. Female gamers believe that they should be included in the gaming group because they share the same enjoyment of video games that brought every male gamer to the community. Insults and sexual harassment may diminish her enjoyment of the game, but she yearns for acceptance in a group that she feels she should be a part of. Allport explains, “[she] may be entirely loyal to [her] minority in-group; but [she] is at the same time always under the necessity of relating [herself] to the standards and expectations of the

majority” (77) because “[she] would like to partake of the privileges of [the] majority, and be considered one of its members” (76). If she goes against the standards of the gaming community, she risks losing the tolerance of a group she seeks to be included in. When trying out for a team in an online game, I often keep quiet at first to get a feel for the team’s standards and expectations. When I have a reasonable understanding, I attempt to conform as best I can in order to gain the group’s acceptance. Sometimes, I learn that the group’s personality is incompatible with my own. When I know the group and I would *not* be a good match, I will often modify my behavior to conform, even though I do not intend to join the group.

When trying out for a team in an online game, I often keep quiet at first to get a feel for the team’s standards and expectations.

Sometimes there is not another option for teammates. If a female wants to play the game, she may be forced to play with men who do not accept her. She can choose to be herself and risk harassment or force herself to conform to the group. A female gamer sometimes feels that, in order to maintain the group’s privileges, she must choose her achieved gamer status and dismiss her ascribed female status.

Some male gamers discriminate against what they consider to be female outsiders. Because the prevalent view among male community members is that females do not play video games, males believe that females cannot be “gamers.” Allport explains the nature of this prejudice by arguing that groups “develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs, standards and ‘enemies’ to suit their own adaptive needs” (79). Groups invent enemies to exclude, believing that this will protect the group. Male gamers might consider females to be distractions. Other male gamers might

believe that the group's success will be hindered by carrying an inadequate female player. Either way, females are the enemies or outsiders that will keep the men from enjoying their game, and they must be excluded. If females are allowed to participate, they must perform at the same level or better than the group members, or they will not be respected.

This is true for all members of the gaming

community; adequate performance and acceptable behavior are required to gain the respect of the group members. However, males do not face the negative stereotypes that females have to overcome in order to be accepted into the group in the first place. Males must perform at a certain acceptable level. However, females must prove that that they can get along with and act like one of the guys. And they must not be too slutty or whiny as to be distracting. Female gamers that I know, myself included, sometimes choose to refrain from complaining so that the men on their teams do not accuse them of being "bitchy females on their periods." Females who do not conform to a male's standards for membership in the gaming in-group are sometimes ostracized. Some

However, females must prove that that they can get along with and act like one of the guys.

females feel the need to change their natural behaviors and censor what they say in order to be respected by the community.

Based on previous experiences or on stories told by fellow female gamers, many females conform

their behaviors out of fear of rejection. The majority of the online gaming community is not misogynistic. But on the Internet, we interact with many

more people than we would in real life. We are bound to experience extremely pleasant and helpful people as well as horrible, hateful, angry people. We tend to weigh negative information more heavily than positive information, so these negative interactions can discourage us from approaching similar situations in the future. However, we may also choose to censor our personalities to conform to the acceptable behavior of the group in an attempt to discourage the group from discriminating against us.

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How to Alienate Female Gamers.



My Husband Listens to Rap Music

by Soumaly Faiivae

My husband listens to rap music. My brothers and cousins listen to rap music. I personally despised rap music and the entire lifestyle it represented: the sagging oversized jeans, the large gaudy gold chains, the diamond encrusted dental work, and worst of all, the butchering of our beautifully complicated English language. This hatred included all forms of rap music—past, present, and future.

Naturally, my husband was aware of my feelings about this. So, one hot day last summer, on a drive out of town, my husband asked me to close my eyes and open my ears. That is exactly what he asked me to do—open my ears. So I lay back in the passenger seat and did

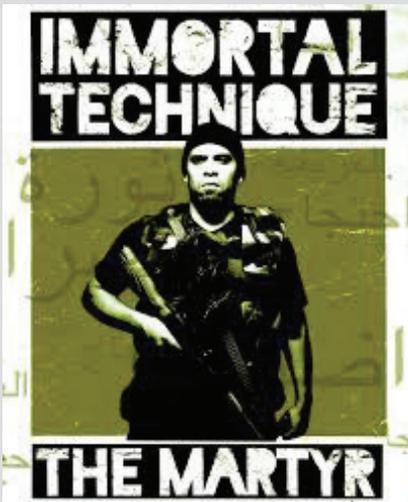
what he asked. I heard the familiar rhythm of a hard bass-line, the thump-thump, thump-tha-tha-thump beat, immediately rolled my closed eyes, and emotionally began to “check out.” My body slumped into a lazy pile of uninterested flesh and boredom. “Please, just listen. Give it a chance,” he pleaded. Then, it happened. It was like nothing I had heard before. I was listening to a tragic love story of how a man who lived in the projects fell in love with a “good girl” from his neighborhood. She was unlike everyone else he knew—poised, graceful, intelligent, well spoken, and beautiful. His love for her inspired him to change into a better person. When he finally worked up the nerve to tell her he loved her, she left him. Years passed and he still couldn’t stop thinking of her. He decided to stop by her old house and found that she had left a note with her mother

to give him if he should ever stop by. The letter simply said, “No one loves you more than me.” He didn’t know that she had died from complications of HIV contracted through a blood transfusion. She left him because she wanted to spare him from the pain of her impending death. Then, it spoke of the beauty of true love and the heartbreak of loss and death: the moral being never to take loved ones for granted.

The next track played was even more heartbreaking and extremely graphic. It was about a young boy who grew up without a father and with a drug addict for a mother. But she had since changed her ways. He sought fame and money and

“Please, just listen. Give it a chance,” he pleaded.

the kind of attention he never had growing up by becoming a big time drug-dealer. The notorious group he so desperately wanted to become a part of proposed a test for guaranteed membership in their group—to rape and kill a woman. He accepted. He later realized the woman they brutally beat and raped, with her bloody, bruised, and broken body, was his own mother. He then committed suicide. The moral of that rap story is found in the following lines: “And now the devil follows me everywhere that I go / In fact, I’m sure he’s standing among one of you at my shows / And every street cypher listening to little thugs flow / He could be standing next to you, and you wouldn’t even know / The devil grows inside the hearts of the selfish and wicked / White, brown, yellow and black colors is not restricted / You have a self-destructive destiny when you’re inflicted / And



The notorious group he
so desperately wanted to
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membership in their group—
to rape and kill a woman.

you'll be one of God's children that
fell from the top / There's no diversity
because we're burning in the melting
pot / So when the devil wants to
dance with you, you better say
never / Because the dance with the
devil might last you forever."

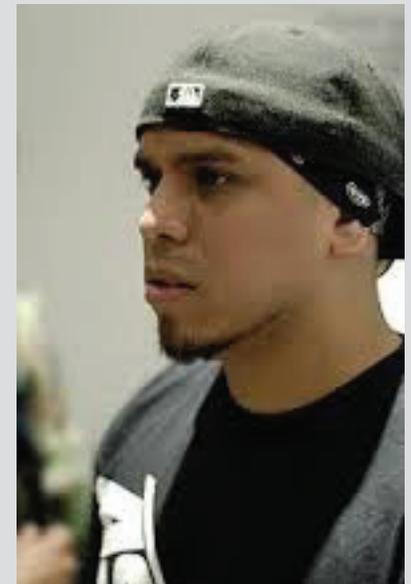
It felt as if a cover had been lifted
from my eyes. Needless to say, I
was impressed and shocked. It was
not because of the artistic prose and
expression but rather the raw exposure
to a perspective I had purposely
shielded myself from as a blanket
attempt to safeguard my sensibilities
from the entire stereotypical genre
of rap music. However, these lyrics
made me feel like I had just watched
some kind of uncut documentary.
After that moment I was not only

completely open to listening to
this new *intellectual* rap music that
I never knew existed, but I was
actively searching for similar artists.
I found out this type of rap music
is not considered mainstream and
can usually only be found in the
"underground rap" circuit.

I realized that my prejudicial attitude
toward rap music stems from many
different perspectives. The recognition
of these errors of my perception has
allowed me to expand my frame
of reference and re-consider other
strong judgments and opinions I have
used as a protective fence of self-
identification.

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Stefany Ensor is a 23-year-old Communications major and superhero-in-training who is incredibly excited, honored, and humbled to be published in Delta Winds for the first time. Writing is her passion: a byproduct of her lifelong obsession with books and language. (She thanks her parents for always letting her be their “Belle.”) Stefany is a writing tutor and reader for Delta College, and hopes that the experience will prepare her for a future teaching career. In addition to transferring in the fall, Stefany is looking forward to participating in the Greatest International Scavenger Hunt the World Has Ever Seen (G.I.S.H.W.H.E.S.) for the second time in August. “Last year, I wore toast underwear, created a GISH-mobile with my best friend, and realized just how precious sleep really is. It was seven days of absurdity, and I can’t wait to see what’s on ‘The List’ for this year so I can do it all over again!” She hopes that she and her team can help creator Misha Collins change the world, and bring “Death to Normalcy!” Of course, it is difficult to contain all of Stefany in a simple bio. She is like the Matrix. No one can be told what she is...you must experience her for yourself.

AMERICA: THE WORLD'S GREATEST FIRE SALE

by Stefany Ensor

An old proverb claims, “The best things in life are free.” But when you are a citizen of the United States of America, you know that a dozen deep-fried Twinkies are some of the best things in life, and they are certainly not free. You also know that if you get cheap on your upcoming wedding anniversary (again), then you will have to revive your E-Harmony account and lower your standards. The great American promise is this: the more money you have, the greater your life will be. Just ask Lil’ Wayne, Drake, or any other rapper in the music industry. Money brings you women, success, fame, and more women. But money itself is rarely ever free of responsibility and expectation. Murders, shootings, and other violent crimes are committed because of money every day. In times such as these, monetary value outweighs the value of life. In his short essay, “Too Much of Nothing,” Charlie Creekmore poses an important query: “What is it that really counts?” In the 25 years since he posed this question, America still cannot agree on a definitive answer. Creekmore argues that endless advertising, increasing demand, and conflicting values make us blind to what matters most.

Living in America, we are interminably assaulted with puffed-up promotions and false promises: “Never diet again! Lose 20 pounds fast with this new pill!” “The zombie apocalypse is coming! Are *you* ready for it?” “The technology you have

is extinct! You need an *upgrade!*” The list of things that you absolutely, positively cannot live without is never-ending. In addition, advertisers have caught on to this country’s secret anxiety disorder, which is why most promotions belittle and patronize consumers, convincing them that they are nothing without this miracle product. Creekmore claims, “[a]dvertising is a good barometer of the American psyche[.]” The content that is promoted is a direct reflection of our society’s wants, but not necessarily our needs. Any media broadcast shows clearly that America wants sex, violence, food, and drama. But these things are not the only essentials for our survival,

We confuse want with need, not realizing that the trivialities we pay for offer us nothing but artificial comfort.

especially in the oversized amounts that we consume on a daily basis. We forget about the air we need to breathe, and the loving touch that lets us know that we are loved, in favor of the cigarette we want to smoke, and the flat screen TV we want to buy. We confuse want with need, not realizing that the trivialities we pay for offer us nothing but artificial comfort. Nevertheless, advertisers promise that all we need is more in order to be happy.

Creekmore states that as Americans, we are conditioned to “expect more and more and more.” Any fast-food menu or department store lets us know that bigger is best. All meals are super-sized, and America’s most popular shopping spots are the ones with three stories or more of merchandise. Even the amount of weight on a person

can be measured by Creekmore’s advertising barometer. In every cartoon, political or otherwise, the “one-percenters” are always depicted as crude, gluttonous, and overweight. The other “99 percent” are thin and bony, showing that their poverty is more than just social status. This “more, more, more” mentality Creekmore describes is precisely why a thin and wiry CEO does not have the same psychological impact as an obese CEO. “[W]e are constantly conditioned to purchase our pleasure,” and everything that we are “amount[s] to the material that we have accumulated throughout our lives” (Creekmore). People with a true appreciation for nature or something that is not man-made or store-bought are demonized. They can be called anything from a hippie to a communist. This mindset is the reason advertisers can get away with subliminally demeaning their prospective buyers because blunt force is preferred over calm suggestion. In America, image is everything, but what is on the inside is what truly matters.

The contradicting values portrayed through media do nothing to provide an answer to Creekmore’s question. “Our government and society constantly pay lip service to traditional values[,]” he claims. True, there is always an allotted amount of space for traditional values in every political speech. The old proverb “Money can’t buy happiness” is passed down through generations in every household. But, Creekmore points out, “at the same time, our government and society are set up to perpetuate another ideal entirely. Buy.... Purchase all those products...that promise to make us happy, truly happy.” In today’s

fast-paced society, traditional values are dismissed as antiquated: “old school.” Is traditional really better? Who knows? Values have been so thoroughly twisted that differentiating modern from traditional is near impossible. Similarly, the definition of happiness has also been obfuscated. The government says that happiness is ignorance—a pill taken once a day. Mass media claims that happiness is the newest iPhone, along with a shiny new Lexus and a steak dinner. Happiness has become simply another

Happiness has become simply another item to sell, and its value depends on how much is in your bank account.

item to sell, and its value depends on how much is in your bank account. Simply put by Creekmore: “We are lost.”

Creekmore asks us, “What is it that really counts?” Counting is a national obsession. American life thrives on quantity, despite the fact that there are only two denominations: “more,” and “bigger.” On occasion, you may get “extra,” like that thirteenth Twinkie in the dozen you paid for. And that may make you happy for a while. But nothing lasts forever, and once you run out of things to buy, what will you have left? The unquenchable thirst for more. Creekmore’s essay is a warning to all of us that unless we put down the plastic and unplug, we will die without ever knowing or appreciating things like grass beneath bare feet, a true friend, “the ability to create in [our] own way” (Creekmore): the things that never cost us a single penny.

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Separation and Resolve

by Stormie Stocke



When I was fifteen years old, I walked out of my mother's house with no intention of ever returning. Eight years later, at the age of twenty-three, I can still recall the traumatic event as if it happened just **yesterday**. Only great internal pain can cause a person to break a parent's heart. Great pain and great resolve. Sometimes in life, extended family members and friends can become dearer to a young girl's heart than her own mother. I have experienced this revelation firsthand.

The summer of 2005 was one of endless adventure and overwhelming fun. I spent my days driving, talking, laughing, and



exploring the world with my best friend, Valerie. Valerie and I had been inseparable since we were five years old. And my

mom married her uncle! Those days were some of the most carefree of my life. Some days we lay in bed all day reading books, wasting away in worlds we would never see. Some days we walked to the park, just so she and I could sit on the swings and talk. Still other days, we drove around aimlessly with her older sister, singing at the top of our lungs, headed nowhere in particular. When the **sun** was shining, worry and stress were things too heavy for our young hearts. However, when the lights began to dim, my world transformed.

It was no secret to my family that there had been tension building in my home before the summer. My stepdad worked a typical nine-to-five, while my mother bartended until all hours of the night. These circumstances left me at home, caring for my three younger sisters throughout the school year. Although I love my sisters more than most things in life, back then it

was hard to not feel burdened by my predicament. Nonetheless, I spent my afternoons keeping them entertained, fed, and well cared for. I thought my performance in a motherly role was top of the line. There must have been something not up to par, however, because almost every night my mom reminded me of my flaws.

It never did seem to matter what time it was, or what commitments I had the next day, my mother still woke me up. She would pull me from a deep sleep to sit in the kitchen while she belittled me in all sorts of tones and decibels, remind me how I did this or that

**When the sun was shining,
worry and stress were
things too heavy for our
young hearts.**

wrong, or how I was a terrible teenager, or how I was disrespecting her all the time. The story was always different, the demeaning

comments always changing, but the hurt stayed the same. My entire freshman year of high school went on this way. At least it continued that way until that precious summer. That summer . . . saved my life.

My mother and I still fought many nights of the week, but my days took away the heartache. When I was gallivanting around with Valerie, there was not much else on my mind. Every day was a reprieve and a chance for rejuvenation. Those adventures and the love of my best friend, I soon learned, would give me more strength than I could have ever imagined. It would give me the strength to finally walk away.

Like most nights, I was sitting with a group of friends playing various card games. In the midst of our laughter, I received a call from my mother. I was to return home immediately because I had disobeyed her in ways



I did not even understand. Regardless of her absurdity, I went home. When I arrived, she was waiting on the front porch with my stepdad. She did always seem to use him as a bodyguard when she wanted to start an argument.

“Sit down” was all she said when I walked to the house.

For the next two hours, she ranted and raved about how I did not get permission to be anywhere except my cousin’s home. (We had been playing cards at her older sister’s apartment). I argued that she had always been aware we spent the majority of our time there, but she refused to acknowledge that point. Eventually, I simply quit talking and allowed her to go on and on and on. When she finally slowed down, her final points were made. I was grounded for an entire month and never allowed to hang out with my cousins again. Period. The outrage! There were so many things I could have said, but instead I bit my tongue and went to bed.

I remember crying until my eyes stung from the salt in my tears. I tossed and turned with the greatest mixture of internal rage and heartbreak I had ever felt. Just before the dim hours of morning came, I was resolved. I was going to pack my things in the morning, call my dad, and move out. Even if I was still grounded and unable to see my cousins, I would try to live with someone who would not take my family away from me as a punishment.

That morning was a blur of guilty words, tears, and pure anger. I managed to pack most of my things without her even bothering to see if I was awake. When I had the necessities together, I calmly walked to the kitchen and picked up the phone. That is the moment she noticed me.

“What do you think you’re doing,” she asked. “You are GROUNDED, young lady!”

Without emotion, I muttered, “That may be so, but I’m calling Dad. I’m leaving, and I’m not going to come back. Ever.”

The look on her face still haunts me today. Outrage, disbelief, and hurt twisted her face. First she tried anger and threats. When those did not work, she tried tears and apologies. When those still did not change my mind, she did the one thing I have still not forgiven. She held all three of my sisters in front of her in my doorway. While I had packed, she had riled them up. She told them that I was leaving them and not going to be around anymore. Of course, at their tender age, this broke their little hearts and put them in fits of tears. So there they stood, all three of them crying their eyes out, with my mother standing above them with a hint of victory in her eyes. That was the moment I lost all self-control.

“You can stand there, holding all three of them while they cry, and I am still not going to stay. I am not going to stay, and I want you to know with every inch of your conscience that it is one hundred percent your fault.” I never broke eye contact, I never raised my voice, and I never looked back. Within an hour I walked out the front door. There was not a single goodbye.

I revisit that day often in my mind. I consider it repeatedly. Did I overreact? Did I make the right choice? Yes, to all of the above, and every other doubt. My own mother had banned me from my family, my family that had saved me from a living nightmare—a nightmare my mother orchestrated nightly. To this day, I have never completely forgiven her, and I have never been mad at myself for my choices. Sometimes, extended family and friends can become dearer to a young girl’s heart than her own mother. I know this, because mine did.



The Value of a Degree

by Joanne Minasi



Joanne Minasi, a transplant from Ontario, Canada, followed her heart and moved west. After being out of school for a few decades, she set her sights on continuing her education, and is now in her fourth year at Delta College, shooting for an A.S. Degree in Mathematics. Taking only one or two classes per semester, she is about halfway done. She thoroughly enjoys being a student, almost as much as she enjoys singing, playing guitar, reading, hiking, driving all over the country, and being a beach bum. Joanne is a mother (some are kids she has acquired, some are her own), a Nana (just to one right now, but looking forward to many more!), and the wife of the guy who is her constant cheerleader and unwavering ally. Joanne works full-time at a software company in the Bay Area, and has her mind set on a Master's Degree in Business Administration from U.O.P. someday.

In the article “Arguing Our Value,” by Jennifer Brannock Cox, the student Jill (not her real names) struggles with the question “Is it worth it?” Jill works full-time, attends classes, and is part of a few organizations, and at times it gets overwhelming for her. I can completely relate to Jill’s struggles, as I am also overwhelmed at times. I work full-time, I am a student, I am a mother of six kids, and I participate in a couple of activities that allow me to blow off some steam. It’s hard to keep it all organized at times, and I’ve thought about giving up school again, but the benefits of getting a higher education far outweigh the extra hours quitting would add to my week. There are several benefits to having a college degree: higher wages, more opportunities to advance, and being a valued asset to the company you work for are just a few.

To begin with, employees with a degree enter the workforce at a higher rate of pay than someone without a degree. When I started working at EMC over eight years ago, I was thrilled to just have a job. I didn’t have a high school diploma or a college degree. About five years later, I was still earning a low salary and had received very few raises. I decided to make a change and go back to school. About a year after I started working toward a degree, and making my progress known to upper management, I suddenly started receiving higher raises each year as well as receiving bonuses to celebrate my accomplishments. I had the opportunity to hire a new employee

to work on my team a couple years ago. I was surprised when I saw the starting pay was thousands of dollars more than what I had started at. When I questioned the amount, I was told that a degree raises the starting base pay by a certain percentage. It took me over five years to receive the same rate of pay as this person’s starting pay. The more I work on meeting my educational goals, the more I have been rewarded by my company, but I sometimes wonder how much I would be making today if I had started with that increased percentage that people who have a degree start at. It is great motivation for me to keep following the path toward my degree.

To begin with, employees with a degree enter the workforce at a higher rate of pay than someone without a degree.

The author makes a good point when she writes, “Most career-track jobs nowadays require [degrees].” It is a simple statement, but a very true one. I see more and more

often that the jobs I would like to advance to in EMC have a degree requirement more advanced than my current educational path. This includes the position I currently hold. I was fortunate to be promoted to my current job based on the experiences I had garnered over the past eight years. Someone applying for my job today must have at least a bachelor’s degree along with several years experience in the field. These days, a high school diploma just isn’t going to get you very far. In fact, I have seen some applicants passed over for someone with a degree. I was very fortunate to get my job, and I’ve been fortunate that the work I have done in the past was taken into consideration. I advanced solely on my work and my reputation. That doesn’t happen very often, and so I feel that I’ll stay in the

job I have until I am able to meet the degree requirements for the next job up the corporate ladder.

Finally, Ms. Cox writes that in her own experience, she was “given the fantastic opportunity to fail” while she was in college. She likened her experience to “juggling knives while wearing body armor.” Learning how to do something is one of the things we expect from our degree.

Something we don’t expect is to learn at the same time how not to do things. This opportunity to fail in a safe place can definitely be a benefit because it won’t cost us our jobs. Making mistakes teaches us not only what not to do, but also how to avoid making that mistake over again—and how to fix it if it does happen again.

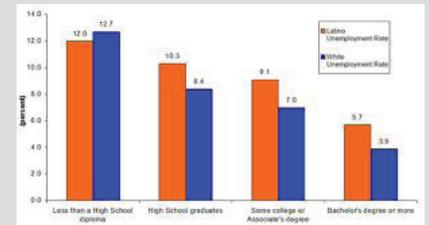
There are several side-benefits to working through college, one of which is time management. I know from personal experience how one area of life can overlap into another. If you aren’t good at time management, life becomes chaotic and frenzied. I’ve learned how to juggle work, school, singing, and family over the years,

and I’ve learned that sometimes you have to compromise. I’m sure there will be several more times when I’ll want to throw in the towel because things become too overwhelming, but I am also sure that the thought will be a fleeting one because I have already experienced the benefits of pursuing a degree.

Learning how to do something is one of the things we expect from our degree. Something we don’t expect is to learn at the same time how not to do things.

It’s easy to just tell people they need a higher education; after all, that’s what I did with my own kids. It was only

after my youngest graduated from college that I decided to get a degree myself. Since then, I have experienced the rewards of a higher salary increase than I received before, I’ve been promoted to a position that used to be out of reach, and I have the future opportunity to advance even further. Because of the things the author failed at in college, she discovered how to get things right. She learned to “absorb education not just in the classroom” but also throughout her life. This skill made her more valuable to every employer that she worked for, and gave her confidence to keep learning. If Jill were to come to me today and ask “Is it worth it?” I would tell her it absolutely is!



Luke Flaig-Brummett is a Computer Science major, mentor to the Jim Elliot Robotics Team, and free-lance writer. He loves science and the joy of discovery it brings.



Selling to the Public: Thoughts on Advertising Political Agendas

by Luke Flaig-Brummett

After the terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001, Americans were struck with fear and uncertainty about the future. This fear spurred the government of these United States to take action against the people responsible for these attacks and to broaden security measures to prevent another attack akin to what came to be known as 9/11. While natural, this fear caused the public to be malleable—to be swayed easily by pleas of logos,

pathos and ethos, though the latter two would be emphasized. The past decade has been ripe with campaigns aimed at justifying the broadening of the

role of agencies such as the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). At the time, I bought the justifications and believed the logic provided by speakers and commentators on TV; however, looking back, I now question my initial reaction. Recently, I identified the pathos and ethos appeals and since then have been contemplating the criticisms of these government agencies.

The pathos, or emotional, justification for the broadening of intelligence gathering has been effective, mainly through its consistent use of fear. This fear is not unfounded, since it is natural to fear an attack. But the constant reinforcement of that fear by those who have an agenda, however pure and noble it may be, defuses any debate on the subject since those who

oppose broadening of intelligence gathering can be viewed as accepting more attacks. A notable example of this would be Senator Diane Feinstein and Representative Michael Rogers stating on December 2nd that the United States “is less safe, that bombs are being made en masse, that violence is on the rise,” and the only solution is our intelligence gathering (YouTube/ CBS). While this may be substantiated with evidence, the delivery and

phrasing primarily uses pathos for the end goal: to persuade public opinion.

At the time, I bought the justifications and believed the logic provided by speakers and commentators on TV.

Ethos—the appeal to the viewer’s respect of the speaker—is

also used to convey the message. Regardless of one’s opinion of her politics, Diane Feinstein has been a United States Senator for over two decades and is the Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. She arguably knows more than any of us about what our intelligence community has gathered. Other senior Senators, such as Lindsey Graham, have voiced their approval of the policies and actions taken by the NSA and other agencies. This presence of authority figures and those who have more information available to them does help persuade the audience, and it did for me.

This summer, however, is when my confidence in the message wavered. The reporting of the leaks provided by Edward Snowden has revealed aspects of intelligence gathering that

This presence of authority figures
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have contradicted the express purpose and policy by which the government has claimed it has conducted itself. Acts such as gathering over 5 billion phone record data a day on people, including Americans, to track them and map out relationships (Gellman), and a program that cached most of the Internet to parse and store for later use (Greenwald) have almost no obvious relevance to foreign terrorists. These revelations coupled with the glaring use of pathos and lack of logos in the justifications of these acts has brought me to reconsider my stance and to further investigate.

This example of media has made use of advertising practices, such as the use of pathos, ethos, and a conspicuous lack of logos to persuade and compel the public to support the institutions in question. One must be careful, however, to not take any dissenter's opinions and accusations as immutable evidence; one must conduct research and investigation for oneself. Pathos and ethos can not only market consumer products, but also advertise

political stances and agendas, and the prominence of pathos and the lack of logos in the conveying and delivery of said agenda warrants an objective investigation by the audience to ascertain the truth.

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Bluffing Harry

by Laura Hull



Laura Hull, a San Joaquin County native in her twenties, is an English major because she wants to learn to write with technical skill, and in a way that will lead others to find hope and to love one another. Her favorite writing projects are literature class essays, and both fiction and nonfiction short stories. However, Laura does do more than write: she backpacks, works in food service, draws, tries to keep up with loved ones, and, of course, quotes Shakespeare as often as is socially acceptable—and then some.



Although I loved reading William Shakespeare's history play *Henry V*, one scene initially left me angry, disappointed, and confused. Henry's speech to the Governor of Harfleur nearly destroyed the admiration and sympathy that the other scenes were building for King Henry (or Harry, as he is often called). Seeking the surrender of the Governor of Harfleur, Harry speaks quite graphically about what would happen if he chose not to give in. Towards the beginning of the speech, Harry boldly dares them to "defy us to our worst; for I am a soldier, / [...] If I begin the batt'ry once again, / I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur / Till in her ashes she lie buried / The gates of mercy shall be all shut up" (3.3.5-9).

These lines are harsh and war-like, but the lines become really offensive and ominous when Harry explains what their "worst" includes:

"What is't to me [...] If your pure maidens fall into the hand of hot and forcing violation? [...] Look to see The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters; Your fathers taken by the silver beards, And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls, Your naked infants spitted upon pikes" (3.3.19-38)

Harry warns of many frightening outcomes. His attitude is that if the French surrender now, they are guaranteed his protection; if they do not surrender, then he is sure his soldiers will run wild in the frenzy of battle, and he will consider the fault lies with the French, who provoked the English to a second round of fighting. Harry seeks to absolve himself of any barbarous deeds of his soldiers by

saying that once they are in the heat of battle, he cannot control them, and therefore, he cannot be blamed for anything they do. Thus, Harry not only distances himself from responsibility for his soldiers' possible deeds but also uses the possibility of their brutality to create fear and to bend his political enemies to his will.

What does this cold-hearted speech say about Harry's character? Does Harry really mean what he says, or is he bluffing? These two questions have haunted me ever since I first heard the speech. I have come to the conclusion that most of what Harry says to the

governor is a lie. But getting to this point involved much thought and study. First, we will explore the impact that

I found almost immediately that Harry lies to the French about being unable to control the ferocity of his soldiers.

film interpretations have had on this opinion.

When I originally read the Harfleur speech, I imagined a quite cold and almost inhuman king delivering it. I must confess watching the Kenneth Branagh film version, as well as the newer Tom Hiddleston version (from *The Hollow Crown* Miniseries), somewhat altered my perception of Harry. Both of these films put a likeable face and voice to Harry, making the character come alive. In both films, the scene seems less harsh to me. After the Governor of Harfleur surrenders, Harry tells his uncle Exeter to enter and "use mercy to them all" (3.3.54). The films portray Harry as relieved to have avoided conflict and pleased to command mercy. His face loses its hard expression quickly and fades into something gentler and more benevolent. These film portrayals influenced me into thinking perhaps Harry does not relish all of the cruel things he says in his speech. These actors' interpretations were the first step toward my seeing Harry in a new light.

The films made me question the truth of Harry's harsh words. Next, I began to look through the play to see whether or not any textual evidence existed for my new opinion. I found almost immediately that Harry lies to the French about being unable to control the ferocity of his soldiers. Many scenes in the play demonstrate how much power he does, in fact, have over them. A great orator, Harry bends them all to his will frequently, such as in the St. Crispin's Day speech, or in the "Once more unto the breach" speech. Moreover, Henry and his captains demonstrate that they are capable of maintaining order in the ranks and that they value that order. When the rough Pistol pleads for the pardon of Bardolph, who has stolen a pax from a French church, Captain Fluellen replies, "Look you, if he were my brother I would desire the Duke to [...] put him to execution; for discipline ought to be used" (3.6.55-58). Soon after this, King Henry expresses a similar sentiment when he pronounces the following:

"We would have all such offenders so cut off: and we give express charge, that in our marches through the country, there be nothing compelled from the villages, nothing taken but paid for, none of the French upbraided or abused in disdainful language; for when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner" (3.6.112-119)

Such directions are at odds with his statements at Harfleur. "The gentler gamester is the soonest winner" are his eloquent words, and they undermine the toughness of his earlier speech. Harry presents contradictory sides of himself and his war policies; it is up to the reader to decide which one reflects Harry's nature more accurately. I am inclined to think that the words at Harfleur are an aberration, a terrifying

departure from the normally order-loving nature of Harry. Ordinarily, Harry has an inner love of fairness; he is revolted by the thought of the defenseless being harmed. We especially see this when all of his army's pages are killed. He becomes enraged and retaliates by killing all the French prisoners. His boys should never have been touched; it was against the rules of war. His extreme anger can be seen as a response to injustice that goes beyond just a general outrage over losing a valuable member of his party. The incident shows that Harry values life and law.

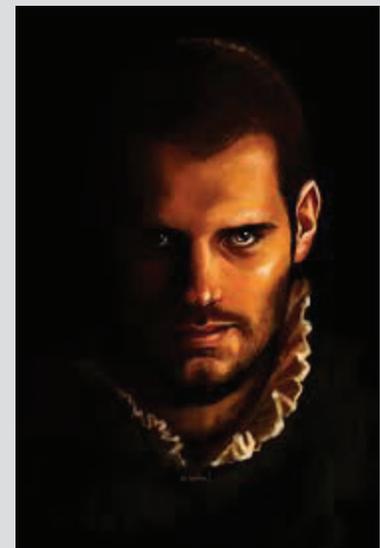
That being said, Harry finds himself in a desperate situation in Harfleur.

As a result, he deliberately makes the choice to undermine his nature because it might help him win the war. His soldiers are tired from battle. The "winter is coming on, and sickness

[is] growing among the ranks" (3.355-56). His men need rest. The case can be made that Harry is bluffing to the French, hoping that they will be cowed by his fierceness and that he will never be called upon to prove the threats that he has made. Harry would much rather not spill more blood. He states what he thinks the governor needs to hear, and it does get him the result he desires.

It is a lie, or a half-truth at least, that he *cannot* keep his men from going mad and wreaking havoc on innocent civilians. He could choose to let them run mad *if he wished*, but it is not necessary. A few stern warnings to his soldiers could conceivably keep "impious" behavior to a minimum, and any person caught overstepping the laws of war could be made an example of (3.3.15). King Henry, while not exactly meek, is not a true brute either. He is a politician: highly pragmatic, at times a gifted liar, but a man who still respects life and law. I hesitate to fully believe every seemingly uncaring and cruel word that he shouts in the face of the governor and the townspeople of Harfleur.

Ordinarily, Harry has an inner love of fairness; he is revolted by the thought of the defenseless being harmed.





Caitlin McDougall is a Stockton native, but currently resides in Los Angeles, California. She graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in 2010 and was a member of the 2010-2011 theater company. She plans to complete her associate's degree and transfer to a four-year university to obtain a BSN before continuing on to a Nurse-Midwifery graduate program. It is her dream to travel with Doctors Without Borders to teach women in underdeveloped countries healthy birthing practices.



So Enid and Dorothy from West Covina Can Hear You

by Caitlin McDougall

My sophomore year in high school the elective of my choice was full, so I was placed in a theater class. I enjoyed studying iambic pentameter and working on scenes. But I was certainly not considering auditioning for the school play. Only die-hard drama nerds auditioned for plays, and I did not fit that description. My teacher was directing the play and asked me to

audition because it would be “fun” and I had “nothing to lose.” Two days later I dropped all of my other extracurricular activities to be Bianca in William Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. I fit right in with the other thespians and started to treat the black box theater as my second home. I loved performing on the stage, so it was not long before I decided that acting was what I wanted to do as a career. Of course I wanted to spend my life feeling liberated and free to express my full range of emotions—behind the guise of a character. After graduation, it made sense to go to

an acting conservatory to pursue my dreams, until those dreams had to adapt to the climate of “The Industry.” The dream morphed into a product of my environment. The dream became glamour, money, and fame. But there

Because everything is so rushed, they are robbed of sharing their artistic experience with one another before the camera starts rolling.

is no glamour, money, or fame in being a theater actor, so my focus shifted to the silver screen. I began to audition almost exclusively for film and television, but when I finally landed

my first role in a short film, I was surprised by what I found. The process was not what I had anticipated, and all of the things that I loved about being in a play seemed to be absent. They were replaced by a whole new set of rules specific to the camera and its role in my performance. It was an eye-opening experience, and it forced me to question why I wanted so badly to become an actor. I finally realized that acting in a film is an immensely gratifying experience, but nothing can compare to the raw humanity of acting in a staged play.

One of the most rewarding aspects of putting on a play is the rehearsal process. From the table read up until the very last dress rehearsal, the preparation is a group effort. Spending day in and day out, cast-mates develop a deep bond and trust. Rehearsal is a safe and intimate environment that allows actors to explore characters in relation to others. By interacting in this way, actors are given the freedom to try different things and to evolve with their characters. This is incredibly helpful and fosters truthful performances and organic line delivery. It gives the actors time to find the things the writer intended to show the audience, but did not write on the page. Without this period of experimentation, the play would be stiff and lackluster. With each rehearsal, actors become increasingly more comfortable baring their emotions and building relationships with fellow actors. These relationships will be carried over into performances. The more human and heartfelt the interaction onstage is, the more involved the audience feels, and the more they sympathize with the characters. The rehearsal process can last for a month or more before the play opens.

In the film industry, establishing relationships and finding the emotional truth of a scene are also priorities. But the rehearsal process of a film is usually only a few days long. The actors in a film are expected to learn their lines at home and arrive on set ready to learn their blocking and to establish relationships quickly. Character choices are often dictated by the director, or made individually by each actor without the joint effort of exploring to see what comes naturally. While this method saves money and time on a movie set, it is not as emotionally rewarding for the actors. Because everything is so rushed, they are robbed of sharing

their artistic experience with one another before the camera starts rolling. Time, after all, is money. In lieu of repeated rehearsals, the actors are taped doing the scene multiple times until the cameramen have what they need. This may be advantageous for the filmmakers, because they have the ability to capture every moment of the emotional journey, but it may not give the performers the preparation they need to develop the strong human relationships appropriate for their characters.

Every character has an arc, an emotional journey from beginning to end that tells his or her story. A character may start out in love, be cheated on, go through a terrible divorce, and then find love again. When all of this happens over the span of a two-hour play, the actor gets to experience

Some of the best moments in theater are when something unexpected happens.

each part of the journey in sequence. The love scene occurs immediately before hearing about the spouse's infidelities, making the betrayal feel all the more real to the actor. The story unfolds and the actor has each scene to build up a range of emotions. This style of performance is undeniably the most natural and fulfilling for the performer.

With movies, however, an actor almost never has the luxury of experiencing things in order. More often than not scenes are filmed out of sequence, based on the days the location is booked. This is done out of financial convenience. The actor is given the task of conjuring emotions without experiencing the character's arc as it was originally imagined. She may have to fight with her cheating ex-husband in one scene, and tenderly love him in the next. The actor never gets to complete a character's journey full circle, only an unsatisfactory piecemeal version of it. It becomes a disjointed performance—later edited





into the proper order and used to elicit an emotional response from an audience. Whether or not it is effective after the scrambled filming process is dependent on an editor's ability to recreate the story. The actor, however, will never get to feel that full arc.

In a play, there is only one chance to get it right. If an actor cannot bring tears to his eyes at the appropriate time, he has missed the opportunity for the night and will have to try again tomorrow. This happens all the time in theater because not everything goes according to plan. Some of the best moments in theater are when something unexpected happens. The actors are forced to think on their feet and have very real and sometimes comedic reactions.

It is surprising and exhilarating for the actors and for the audience. Not knowing what will happen next is exciting, and that is the beauty of live theater. In contrast, if something goes wrong on a movie set, you simply stop the camera and do another take. If you cannot cry on cue in a scene, you can keep filming it over and over until you can cry. Doing a series of takes of the same moment captures the desired product, but may have its own drawbacks. The potential magic is lost, because it does not translate as "magic" on film; it's just a bad take. There is no "the show must go on" when acting in a picture, and therefore less opportunity for spontaneous creativity.

Another thing that makes a stage performance so special is a live audience. A theater audience has a collective energy that can feed actors. The audience's laughter can cue an actor to the comedic timing needed for a scene while the audience's tears can heighten the emotion in a dramatic moment. An audience's energy provides a sense of communal human experience, which is much

if something goes wrong on a movie set, you simply stop the camera and do another take.

more powerful and tangible than an individual performing in front of a camera. For people who love to attend theater, sheer proximity to the action is enough to feel drawn in. A theater audience is made a part of the play and a part of the journey. A Shakespeare professor of mine told us that it was our job to give the audience members a cathartic experience and to use our whole being to reach them. She believed that a lot of what connected us emotionally was the physical vibrations of the voice in the room—changes in tone, pace, and resonance. My professor would say an actor gets that message across by projecting

"so Enid and Dorothy from West Covina can hear you." In film, the voice's flexibility is still incredibly important, but less effective because the sound is recorded by microphones and heard

through speakers instead of directly from the actors. Projecting to reach each and every human being in a room is a much more visceral form of expression and feels more satisfying on a basic physical level.

Before taking part in a film, I thought that the two acting styles were the same, and that I would get a similar emotional result from each. I thought that acting in front of a camera would feed my soul and desire for community in the same way that acting in a play did. It has become clear, though, that while the end product's effect on the audience is similar, the actor's experience is very different. A play offers an environment of creativity in which actors share art with a live audience. Making a film can be a special process shared by a group of people as well, but the process is fragmented and less creatively fulfilling. Only one is an emotionally and physically thrilling journey. Only one provides the instant gratification of having a profound and visible effect on other people. And that is what live theater is like.

Duh!

by Deana Ceja

A journey . . . no, *the* journey of life is the road of discovery that will never cease to amaze. There is no other thing like it one could ever encounter, and no matter how long one has been walking this journey, there will still be something out there just waiting to change one's course on the road. Sometimes these surprises are unpleasant, but sometimes they are for the better, and one can actually learn from them. This was the case for the narrator in "Zaabalawi," a short story by Naguib Mahfouz. This was also the case for Sylvia in the short story "A White Heron," by Sarah Orne Jewett. As a consequence of their unexpected detours in the journey of life, these characters come to see the world in a new light.

I myself had to go through a journey to become the person I am today. I used to loathe socializing with others because it

In middle school, I had about three people I could call friends, and even that was pushing it.

made me nervous and I didn't have much confidence in myself. In middle school, I had about three people I could call friends, and even that was pushing it. Then, I went to high school, and I realized that I knew practically nobody there. It dawned on me that this would be my last opportunity to make any attempt at finding the true meaning of friendship before I was coldly flung into the adult world. I not only was looking for friendship; I also needed to find something to look forward to everyday, something that could give my life new energy and get me through what was yet to come. I needed to find my Zaabalawi. I searched high and low for friends and people who could tell me the genuine meaning of friendship and honest emotion. Like the narrator in

"Zaabalawi," I made every single effort I could to find what I was looking for.

The main character in "Zaabalawi" is down on his luck and in need of a cure when he finally asks himself, "Should I not seek out Sheikh Zaabalawi?" (86). The protagonist of this story first hears of Zaabalawi when he is a child, and his father tells him that Zaabalawi is a true saint of God. It is this that makes the main character set out on his journey, which is the beginning of his internal struggle to change. The mere fact that he is willing to set out on a journey that can take him God knows where means that he is willing to make sacrifices to reach his goal, even if that means getting out of his old ways of life. This determination

is made quite apparent when the protagonist sets out to find the local sheikh for the second time. The map that the narrator is given serves as a wonderful guide and

helps him get through the streets (91), but it also serves as a reminder that his goal won't be obtained so easily. The map isn't going to pinpoint the location of Zaabalawi. He still has to work hard to get where he wants to be. Only he can find Zaabalawi if he really tries.

"A White Heron" follows a girl named Sylvia, who lives a very comfortable life in the countryside with her grandmother. That is, until a strange man looking for a beautiful rare bird arrives and causes her to consider what she truly believes in. It was all very awkward for me in the beginning. Like Sylvia, I didn't really know how to handle other people when I had to interact with them (60). I can even go as far to say that I was



Deana Ceja is a seventeen-year-old student who became a San Joaquin Delta College student through her high school, Middle College. After spending four truly unforgettable years at Delta College, she transferred over to University of the Pacific to study biology. Writing had been a personal interest for her when she was younger, but she left it behind when she started high school. It wasn't until her spring 2013 English class that her fascination with writing and literature was rekindled. Her English class helped her see literature with a new light and gave her a different perspective on writing. She believes that "paper and pencil are the keys to a world unbeknownst to any other soul but the author; it is up to the author to decide how loud that world will speak to the universe."



startled by them at times because I would be trying so hard to get on their level and reach out to them that their kindness and willingness to cooperate would catch me off guard. As time went on, I learned more about the people that were in my life, and I developed friendships with them that surprised me. It never occurred to me that I could actually get along with other people, and, like Sylvia, I began to gain confidence with myself. In Sylvia's story, "At last evening began to fall, and they drove the cow home together, and Sylvia smiled with pleasure when they came to the place

where she heard the whistle and was afraid only the night before" (63). Sylvia becomes more confident in herself, and along with this confidence comes independence from

the influence of her grandmother and the hunter in the story. Although she doesn't know it yet, she will soon make a decision based on her own feelings, not based on what the others want.

I reached a dilemma in my life. Even though I had made friends, I still couldn't fathom what the true meaning of friendship was. What exactly made my friends stay and meet me the next day no matter what mistakes I had made the day before? The main character in "Zaabalawi" is just as determined as I was to discover the whereabouts of Zaabalawi. Just as the narrator comes so close to his goal, into his road comes an unexpected detour, which requires him to drink wine. The main character then falls into a drunken sleep and, as he says, has:

"a beautiful dream the like of which I had never experienced. I dreamed that I was in an immense garden surrounded on all sides by luxuriant trees, and the sky was

nothing but stars seen between the entwined branches, all enfolded in an atmosphere like that of sunset or a sky overcast with cloud. I was lying on a small hummock of jasmine petals, more of which fell upon me like rain, while the lucent spray of a fountain unceasingly sprinkled the crown of my head and my temples. I was in a state of deep contentedness, of ecstatic serenity. An orchestra of warbling and cooing played in my ear. There was an extraordinary sense of harmony between me and my inner self, and between the two of us in the world, everything being in its rightful

In the short story "A White Heron," a girl named Sylvia lives a very comfortable life in the countryside with her grandmother.

place, without discord or distortion. In the whole world there was no single reason for speech or movement, for the universe moved in a rapture of ecstasy" (93).

It is at this point that the main character of the story reaches a turning point. He becomes at peace and is able to come to terms with himself. His dream displays the harmony and contentedness that he has longed for in himself. It is perfect. Unfortunately, when he wakes up, he discovers that he has just missed Zaabalawi, who sits right next to him the entire time he is asleep! The main character of this tale is distraught because Zaabalawi is so close, yet completely out of reach. Does that mean the main character's journey is for nothing? I began to wonder the same thing about my own journey.

I felt as if I was running out of time, but I couldn't understand what I was missing to make myself complete. I had friends, and I had the desire to understand, so what was I missing? I followed in the steps of the protagonist in "Zaabalawi" and ignored my dilemma for a while (94). Once I was able to forget about my quest for the true meaning of friendship, I became fully immersed in my relationship



with others and devoted myself full-heartedly to them. Just like the main character from “Zaabalawi,” I became happy with my life. I can honestly say I looked forward to every single day.

Then came the end of my junior year of high school and the beginning of my last summer as a child. I decided to go through summer school to knock out a class I would have to take in college. I met a new friend in this class, and he really made me think about what I had done in my high school years. It was during a study break when we decided to grab some ice cream from the store. We began talking about our high school days. We found a comfortable hill that was nicely shaded by a nearby pine tree. He asked me, “If there was anything you could go back and change, what would it be?” That’s when it hit me. It all suddenly became clear to me in a way that can only be compared to Sylvia seeing everything that is to be seen:

“Sylvia’s face was like a pale star, if one had seen it from the ground, when the last thorny bough was past, and she stood trembling and tired but wholly triumphant, high in the tree-top. Yes, there was the sea with the dawning sun making a golden dazzle over it, and toward that glorious east flew two hawks with slow-moving pinions. How low they looked in the air from that height when one had only seen them before far up, and dark against the blue sky. Their gray feathers were as soft as moths; they seemed only a little way from the tree, and Sylvia felt as if she too could go flying away among the clouds. Westward, the woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the distance; here and there were church steeples, and white villages, truly it was a vast and awesome world” (65).

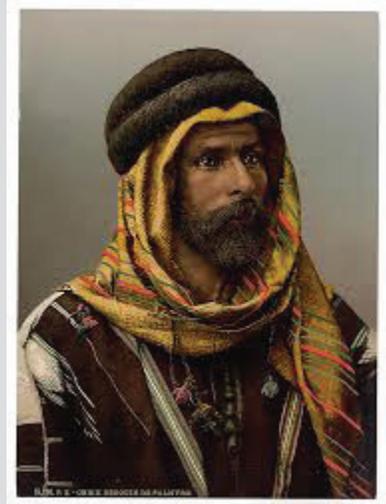
Sylvia is above the entire world. Everything that she knows and cares for is set out before her and underneath her. Seeing all of that opens her eyes to what kind of world really is around her. It is at that moment that she realizes what it means to carry the weight of knowing where the white heron is. Finally, seeing the herons makes her feel a strong sense of being, makes her feel she is on the same level as them, and her connection with nature becomes more obvious to her than ever before. She climbs the tree with the intentions of locating the heron for the hunter,

Even though I had made friends, I still couldn’t fathom what the true meaning of friendship was.

but she climbs down the tree and goes home with every intention of keeping the heron safe. She knows what she has to do.

Like Sylvia, I could see the ocean and everything else the world had in store. I felt tiny and suddenly very conscious of the size of the world, but that was all right because all my struggles and feelings suddenly made sense. The question my friend asked me suddenly made sense to me. Even the sudden cold from my rapidly melting ice cream and the soft quizzical gaze my new friend gave me seemed strangely right. His question to me made me think. Was anything I did worth all the trouble? I remembered how I had to fight through my very own barriers to be able to reach out a hand to people who were, at that time, simply my fellow classmates. To my pleasant surprise, when I thought I was reaching out into the darkness, I found the strong grasp of friends I didn’t even know I had. That’s when I realized how I truly felt.

I turned to my new friend and responded to him by saying, “Ya know, I don’t think I would ever want to change anything that has happened.” He raised an eyebrow at me and asked me why. I told him that when I came to this school, I came





Sylvia is above the entire world. Everything that she knows and cares for is set out before her and underneath her.

here looking for something. It was something that I felt I desperately needed, yet I had no idea where to find it. It turned out that, through every single event that happened to me, I was able to come a little closer to finding that one thing that I was looking for. It turned out that what I was looking for was there, right in front of me, the whole time. My friend responded, “Me, too.”

The protagonist in “Zaabalawi” and Sylvia in “A White Heron” go through the same types of changes in life that I have encountered. Through these changes, we all begin to see life in a new light. This isn’t something that only happens in stories; detours in life’s journey can happen anywhere and anytime. Of course, they may not always be completely obvious every time they pop up. Sometimes they appear as lessons that we must

learn. If one thinks about it, it is these moments that make life richer. These detours that tend to happen in our lives can make us say, “Duh!” Sometimes, like in “Zaabalawi,” we learn that the answers we have been looking for have been right in front of us the entire time. We all go through our own little journeys, but each one of them is unique.

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