

Palabras

WORDS



John McCallister

Spring/Fall 2006

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Palabras publishes original research, essays, fiction, poetry, and art by Clovis Community College students and residents of New Mexico.

Palabras is also an academic journal and accepts submissions from students across the United States who are currently working on undergraduate degrees.

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Palabras

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Palabras favors an open submissions policy: anyone who would like to submit, may. Please submit work in hard copy format to the editor in **Faculty Office 509**, in e-mail format to **palabrasje@hotmail.com**, or in hard copy format to the **CCC Bookstore**. Please include a phone number or e-mail address so the editor may contact you.

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from the Editor...

THE DA VINCI CODE

GINA L HOCHHALTER

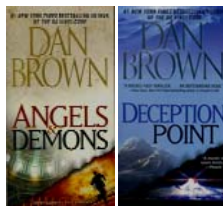
I love *The Da Vinci Code*. It's sometimes not a popular novel about which to feel this way, but its debate certainly sparks ideas. "Jesus had children" and "The Grail is a woman" are two controversial factors emerging from the novel. I don't understand, on a human level, why they are problematic.

Is it not possible to believe that Jesus was so connected to us that he could be likened as one of us? Is it not probable to think that he not only died as one of us, but lived as one of us? Is it not plausible to consider that he came to save us precisely because we are human, but that in order to come to that conclusion he had to *be* human?

Is it absurd to have faith that what Jesus said – that he'd come back to us some day – can be accomplished genetically and genealogically through the line he left behind when human? If we are God's children, is it unreasonable to believe that Jesus's soul needed to experience his Father's creation by way of his Mother's womb?

The problem of the novel is more – I think a bit bluntly – that Jesus had sex with a woman. But as flesh, God told humans to be fruitful and multiply, so it baffles me that Jesus-as-incarnate, as fully embodied, is a troublesome notion to so many. I guess my question is: If Jesus is God, then why is it so terrible to be human if we are God's children?

The Da Vinci Code isn't quite as "disturbing" as is *Angels and Demons*. But when reading his novels (*Deception Point*, *Digital Fortress*), it didn't take me long to realize that Dan Brown is a brilliant novelist who writes page-turners imbued with interesting plots and twists. His novels are definitely worth the read; I can't wait for his next one.



THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

AMANDA PINKERTON

I am curious as to the impact the world of Art has on my life. I've reflected on my reactions, and of course, not all art appeals to me, so I will talk about those that do, and how they invoke in me a curiosity and imagination I didn't realize I have. On the horizon of my mind, I begin to understand my ability to explore and escape the banal life we tend to lead.

My passion in the arts lies in books. More specifically, fiction novels. Fiction is a spectacular form of unreality. I can travel to the far corners of the world, a world conjured by an author. I become the character, sharing in the adventures. I hide under my covers, seeing creatures not of this Earth take shape in the shadows of the room, haunting me. I await in the prison of a rival clan as a Scottish warlord rides to my rescue and whisks me into the night. I stall, reading as slowly as possible, trying to decipher a mystery before the writer unravels the puzzle. I, in essence, become one with the characters. An author is fascinating in the ability to form feeling, expression, action, and life into words. Writers conjure images and ideas that would not otherwise occur to me.

In non-fiction, people do things so great and daring, I sometimes forget they were real. I can read about people and the lives they have lead. Many people accept their lots in life without ever questioning. I cannot even contemplate the courage it took for our ancestors to step forward to forever change the injustices in society when the world was pitched against them. Whatever my mood, I find books encourage me, enkindle dreams, galvanize in me the urge to do something more with my life.

Visual arts are much the same for me. Charcoal portraits invoke curiosity about lives and feelings the artist captures. I feel as if

the subjects are giving me a glimpse into their lives. I think of dramatic scenarios: possibly a great love lost, or a child separated from the life it knows, or a soul adrift in the sea of devastation.

Landscapes give shape and form to places I've never seen or that are vague in my mind's eye. It is inconceivable to me not knowing what a tropical island or a waterfall inside a lush tropical forest looks like. I've never physically seen either. I can travel back in time and visit the pond so opaque in my mind, and picture the beautiful water lilies that enthralled me. It was as if it were yesterday, not twenty-some odd years ago. Because of the visual arts, I can close my eyes and travel the far corners of the earth.

Music invokes thought and feeling through rhythm and song. I put on upbeat music and dance around the room. I can sit with a glass of wine, bask in the sweetness of the nature, and

bathe in the tranquility of the moment. I think of people from my past, and wonder what became of them. I think of my mother, who loved to dance, and how she would make us laugh with her silly antics. I release despair when the world seems to be crumbling down around me. I am affronted by the injustices in the world around us, and feel as if I should rebel against it. In me, music invigorates, calms, distresses, or even causes dissent.

I could not possibly delve into the multifarious arts. I can only speak of those that directly influence me as an individual. Art is all around us, in architecture, parks, libraries, museums, our homes. As long as I have the arts, I have a place to go when I need to abscond from reality. I have hope and inspiration, a spirit that cannot be quashed. I want to close with an astute quote from a master in the arts, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973): "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."



MUSIC, THE RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

CHRIS ISHAM

What kinds of music, as a reader, do you favor? Hip-Hop? Classical? Country? Tastes vary in regards to the different genres, but if people listen to anything that they love regularly, the music can be very healthy. I know that if I were to listen to my favorite song when I'm mad or sad, it will always make me happier. If a person is having a stressful day at work – or it just seems like that clock is moving by so very slowly – singing a favorite tune will make the time pass by more quickly. From the time I wake up to the time I fall asleep, music is a part of my life. I hope for it to be a part of my job.

Today when I woke up, I turned on the CD player and listened to a friend's favorite; then when I was driving, I had my CD playing in the car; when I arrived at my destination they had music playing in the store. Music is everywhere. Music is a healer that can make anyone happy.

All over the world music can be heard: the African with their many drum; the Mayan with their pan flutes and guitars; the American with the weirdest sounds; the Middle Eastern with the most exotic intonations. Music is universal. For example, on every street corner of New Orleans can be found a performer! I even have a friend studying music in Zimbabwe who is currently teaching percussive music to the children. It is wonderful to hear about children learning the art of music; I've heard that "kids who enroll in the arts do better in life."

As for adults – when the clock hits 4:30 and someone is tired of work or just upset at the boss, she might need music to sooth her for the evening. Maybe even at a karaoke bar, singing a favorite tune will heal some of that madness. As Costello says:

Music has a powerful effect on the body. Music can relax you when you're stressed and energize you while exercising. It can

even help you deal with pain. RX FOR PAIN=MUSIC. Listening to your favorite song relaxes you after a rough day at school or work. You move your feet. You bob your head and sway to the beat. You sing along. Suddenly, your mood is lifting. Changes are happening inside your body too.

Music is good for the body, the mind, and the soul. I should prescribe music to some people I know because they sure need music! Everyone needs a break, why not with music! Everyone has a bad day at work, and then we come home and decide to dance away those blues with a song or two from our teen years, enjoying and laughing at the same time.

What about the kids? Some research has shown that this generation of kids prefers to *make* music over listening to those tunes (Morrison). This is wonderful news to the ears of the music educators or future music educators, like me.

Forget about iPods: the child of today wants to make real music. Our correspondent and other enthusiasts guide you to the instruments of choice. To put the question in a nutshell: are you buying them an iPod or a musical instrument for Christmas? To grow as musicians, children need to absorb and create. The problem is that the active path is more trouble and, let's be honest, more expensive than the passive. It requires a real effort of will from parents. (Morrison)

As reported by Morrison, after a decade of kids not wanting to have been seen with an instrument, now times are changing and a new trend is setting in. Kids want to be seen with a guitar or piano. Researchers also suggest encouraging kids by telling them that at first it may not be easy, but like all things, nothing is easy at first.

Music is also known to calm a person and sooth the mind. If anyone walks into a dentist's or even a doctor's office s/he will hear that annoying "elevator music." That elevator music

drops the anxiety level while waiting. If a patient were to go walk into a department store and hear nice classical music, this would also be a clue that even around the holidays when everyone's tensions are high, the music is here to calm us. "The slow, positive effect that music has upon babies and pregnant mothers, patients with psychiatric disorders, even animals and plants, has been recorded in various studies conducted across the world. Music in the waiting area and elevators is used to relax worried relatives" (Jaisinghani B5).

Finally, can listening to music actually make smarter adults of the future? Recent data from the University of Texas indicated that those students who received an arts education that included music received higher SAT scores (Jenkins). Many studies from Jenkins have shown that music can benefit cognitive abilities, particularly spatial abilities, higher reasoning and motor skills, and higher achievements in language and math. There are certainly other measures of smartness in addition to a person's intelligence. For example, music has also shown to increase overall intelligence by shaping the types of attitudes, interests and discipline within children. Many types of music can be inspiring and incredibly motivational, thereby helping children focus and improve their listening skills. They could have a love for hard rock, and this will help them focus; if anyone were to put some vocabulary words into a rap or rock beat or something equivalent, the kid would learn faster and achieve more.

Finally, music can give children the self-confidence and self-esteem they need to succeed in many academic areas or in defining personality traits as they grow older.

Sing With Your Child, if the child loves to sing, promote it, sing too! Even if you look like a fool, it will be fun and your child will LOVE IT!!! Introduce Your Child to Different Types of Music; even if you do not think your child will love those oldies, think again. My parents got me hooked on all kinds of sixties music and I

now love it, so give all different music a chance not telling what they will like! Try enrolling your child in a music class or piano lessons, they will appreciate it in the long run. If piano is not what they like, try guitar! (Stone)

There are many ways to get children involved in music, and it can be fun at the same time!

Music can be good for learning and other things, or just simply for the enjoyment of its sound. Even if someone or he(r) child does not like music at first give it another try. As for any other activity, it will take more than one try to get something done. Music will never be accomplished in the first try by any means. I recommend after reading this, the reader go and get a favorite CD and pop it in the player. Trust me, people need time to relax, let music do this!

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A LOVE FOR LANGUAGE, BUT NOT FOR WRITING

AMY MADDEN

I have always loved reading. I love language! I will read almost anything – books, instruction manuals, the directions on the back of the shampoo bottle – it makes no difference to me. I will even try to read other languages, just to see how much I can understand. Foreign languages have always been very interesting to me. I have studied a lot of Spanish; some French, German, and Latin; a little bit of Ancient Greek, Sign Language, and Japanese; was once fluent in Pig-Latin; and I studied some other alphabets and writing systems, just for fun. I remember telling a science teacher I wanted to be an etymologist (person who studies word origins). He got very excited, because he thought I said "entomologist" (person who studies bugs – yuck!). Even English is very interesting, with its many quirks – those so-called "exceptions to the rule" in grammar and spelling, which seem to dominate the language. However, in my love of language, there is a

catch. I hate writing!

I took Introduction to Linguistics at my first college. I find it fascinating that each language, even dialect, in the entire world, has its own peculiar pronunciation, which, after around age two, we have a difficult time mastering. It is usually easy to tell when someone is from out of town, or out of the country. If I could record myself saying "Dunkin' Donuts" for this essay, it would be apparent that I am from New York. When I talk to my mother on the phone, I hear the way I have begun to assimilate into this Eastern New Mexico/West Texas culture by the way I say the words "fine" or "time," and by the way I can hear my mother's accent now, which I never noticed while I was growing up. People offer my kids' "suckers," which I no longer have to translate into "lollipops" for them. I find myself getting confused when I tell my children to put their toys "away," and they ask if they have to put their toys "up." "Up where? Just put them on the shelf!" This is nothing compared to living in Maine. I remember someone saying to my daughter, "That's a big crackah ya got theah!" Somehow, the letter "r" has been removed from the language in New England. These are all interesting and amusing things to me. Only, writing drives me crazy!

Essays, papers, book reports, compositions, even short-answer essays – they all give me stress! There is far too much variation in a possible "A" paper. There are infinite possibilities for expressing one simple thought! How can I ever know when I am finished writing? How do I know when it is correct? Never. No, this essay will never be correct! It will never be perfect!

There is far too much creativity involved in writing, which is much too time-consuming. Give me a spelling test any day – I will not try to use creative genius in



Alma Gonzales

spelling. I heard a comedian talking about the odd spellings of English words, and he came up with "ghoti" for "fish." It sounds crazy, and perhaps I am just a little bit crazy, because I love language, but I hate writing!

I put off writing as long as I possibly can, doing anything else I can find first. The most difficult section is the introduction. If the introduction is boring or confusing, who would want to continue reading? Each introductory sentence could potentially become its own paragraph in the body of the essay. Those sentences need to be very clear, interesting, and organized. They need to give an accurate account of what is to come. Then, to make matters worse, the introduction has to be rearranged in such a way as to become the conclusion! Those same migraine-producing thoughts that were the introduction now have to become a summary! Oh, the agony.

How will it ever be perfect? It will only be judged "good" or "bad" by some other person's standards. Someone else will judge all of the stressful planning, thinking, procrastinating (cleaning the house, washing the car, doing laundry, etc.), the drafting and revision... That someone may or may not be in a good mood that day, and may or may not happen to like what I have written. The reader may be overly critical or not critical enough. It is worse not to be criticized enough, because then what would I have to learn from all of my hard work?

The funny thing is, the more time I spend thinking and writing about why I hate writing, the less I hate it. I see (in my writing) how ridiculous my anxiety is. It is even a little bit fun to write about it. (Oops – did I let that out?)

The biggest problem with my writing is myself – my self-conscious, perfectionist attitude, and the way I tense up at the thought of having to write. I make too many excuses for not wanting to get started. I have found (through writing) that when I am comfortable enough with the topic, and when I stop acting

as if my life depends on my essay, writing is not quite as intimidating as it once seemed!

Of course, if I actually think about it logically, the purpose of learning a foreign language (which I love to do) is to communicate in that language, and most communication is by writing. In fact, if I could have any job involving languages, it would be to translate books. Writing also happens to be the easiest way for me to learn and study a language. Hmm... Is there a problem with my argument? I see that I have entirely contradicted myself. Perhaps I do not hate writing altogether... That will have to take some thought – maybe even in writing!

FROM AN EARLY AGE...

TAMIKA NANCE

From an early age I have felt like I was destined for greatness. Throughout my life there have been many obstacles that have made me rethink this supposed greatness. I've endured a number of hardships, but I wouldn't take back any of them because without them I would not be who I am now. I've been told that I think things out and analyze everything too much. Is that such a bad thing? Most of the time I'm just thinking of the consequences of my own and others' actions. At times I do think too much, but I'm confident most of the time that I have made the right decisions for my children and me.

I have been told that I am quiet, too secretive, and that I look like I'm always up to something or in other words, that I'm sneaky and not to be trusted. Only one of those assumptions about who I am is true: I am quiet. I was not always a shy person; as a matter of fact, in the fourth grade I was voted the class clown. Somewhere between then and now I have managed to lose the part of myself that I loved the most, my humor. Sure there are things that put a smile on my face and make me laugh, but it doesn't mean that I am happy. Most of the

time it means that I am just wearing the smile as a mask to hide my pain or discomfort for whatever may be going on at the time.

I used to be quite conceited when I was in high school. At that time I realized that I was not as ugly as I once thought. While in middle school I had to wear glasses and braces. During this time my parents thought that I might have needed to wear a brace or some kind of cast for my back as well. I took a physical so that I could play softball and found out that my back was a little crooked. It probably still is because I was able to convince my parents that I didn't need a cast on my back. Either that or they just didn't have enough money to get one for me. I got to high school and all of a sudden boys were interested in me. It was like being high, all the attention that I was getting. I learned how to do my own hair and put extensions in it, and there was no telling me that I wasn't beautiful. Now that I look back, I am glad that I am not that person I was anymore. But I do wish that I had a little more confidence than I do now. I don't like what I see when I look in the mirror anymore. I think my body could use a nip and tuck here and there, but don't most of us? If I wasn't so afraid of surgeries I would get my breasts enhanced and get a tummy tuck. Unfortunately, everyone in my family has ample breasts except me. After I had my third kid, my body just didn't go back to how it once was. There are times when I have "pretty days," but they don't happen often.

There are many people who have influenced my self-concept. My step dad had a major impact on shooting my self-esteem to the ground. I had always felt like he didn't really pay attention to me like he did to my brother and sister. The only time he would pay any kind of attention to me is when I got in trouble for something. I can't remember my step dad ever hugging me or giving me words of encouragement, but I can remember plenty of times when he disciplined me, sometimes for things I didn't even do. I didn't even find out that he wasn't really my dad until I was almost twelve, and then it all made sense to me. From then on I

managed to just kind of stay out of his way. When I was fourteen my parents decided to get divorced. Most children would be heartbroken about something like that, but I felt relieved. Since their divorce I can count the number of times that I have talked to him on one hand.

Another person that had a major influence on my self-concept would have to be my ex-husband. From the moment I met him he was putting me down. He would talk about the kind of clothes that I wore, how I fixed my hair, how I took care of my son, pretty much anything he could think of. He took it as far as throwing away my "revealing" clothes while I was at work one day. I didn't think that any of my clothes were revealing.

I don't really know what I was thinking back then, but we both decided that I would quit my job and stay at home to take care of my son. That was a huge mistake. He controlled all of the money, and would give me ten or fifteen dollars a week to get food for my son and me. I left him more times than I can count, but I always went back. I moved all the way to Florida to get away from him. I didn't last long there because I didn't think that I could take care of two children on my own; now I know better. Having men constantly putting me down or ignoring me has torn me up inside. I don't think that I will ever be able to trust a man, let alone try to love one.

My mother had an impact on how I view myself as well. While I was in high school she got hooked on drugs pretty bad. So bad in fact, most of my twelfth grade year I was homeless or lived somewhere that had no electricity. I lost interest in school for a while and would go every other week or so. I was the only one working, so I had to take care of my sister. I bought her school clothes, fed her, and made sure she didn't know what was going on. At this time I closed myself off from the world. I had a few close friends, but no one really knew what was going on with me at home. I was able to hide it fairly well. My secretive and shy natures

probably are the result of having to learn how to act like everything is alright when in reality everything is all wrong. Being homeless or without electricity made me try a little harder to look good. I didn't want to look like I was living outside.

I used to think like a majority of the black women, that in order to be accepted in today's society we must have straight hair.

I don't know any black women who were born with straight hair; most get a relaxer put on their hair by the time they are five years old. There aren't many famous black women who wear their hair natural, but when Lauryn Hill came out with her solo album, I was totally in love with her hair. I figured that if she could wear hers natural and not care about what the world around her thinks, maybe I could do that, too. I started letting my relaxer grow out, and got freaked out when my hair started falling out. No one ever told me that in order for a relaxer to grow out, all of the hair that is relaxed starts to fall out when the natural hair starts growing. So I started getting my hair relaxed again. A few years later I attempted to "go natural" once again, and I have stuck to it since then. I just had to look past the few rude comments about my hair and learn to love it in its natural state. Wearing my hair natural has brought me on a journey to love myself for who I am, not what society thinks that I should be. It is an ongoing process, but in the end I know it will be worth it.

My loyalty is one of the few things about myself that I truly appreciate. I don't have a large

group of friends, but the ones that I do have are very special to me. I know that I am a very loyal friend, and sometimes this is my downfall. I am too generous, and when I see that a person is down on her luck I try to help out; sometimes, though, she mistake my kindness for weakness. I know that I need to learn to say no every now and then. When my friends need

“When we advocate righteousness, we win,” says Dick Arme y. “When we mandate it, we lose.”

– quote from Eleanor Clift’s “The Pelosi Years,” *Newsweek*, November, 2006. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15615377/site/newsweek/page/2/>

Ben Franklin said something similar in 1737: “I think vital religion has always suffered, when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue...”

– in Bernard Fay’s *Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929, p. 183.



Photograph by Melynda Crouch

someone to talk to or if they need to vent about situations, they know that they can come to me about whatever it is. There isn't much that I haven't been through, so I can usually relate their problems to some I may have had. I am not a very religious person, but I do believe that people are put in life for a reason, even if it's a bad situation. We live and we learn. Another thing that I appreciate about myself is that I have a talent for writing. I have been working on a book, but I don't want to get it published when I get around to finishing it. It's a very personal book and I am not sure if I would like for people to read it; I am worried about how I would be viewed afterwards.

I worry too much about what others think of me, so I try to go unnoticed most of the time. I don't like being in the spotlight. I figure that if I am quiet, then not too many people will notice me, but it doesn't always work like that. I don't like worrying about everything, but sometimes my worries keep me awake at night. I worry about being alone when my kids are out of the house. I worry about not being able to find someone that loves me for who I am, and if I do find that person, I worry about how they will treat my children. I worry about my friends and their well being, I worry about bills, school, pretty much anything there is for me to worry about. I worried about so much this past summer that it affected my health. I lost too much weight, and I started having panic attacks. If I could get rid of one thing that I don't like about myself, it would definitely be my worrying.

In order for me to change the way I feel about myself, I would need to reevaluate my surroundings, who I hang out with, who I talk to, the types of things that I do for fun. So far I have only truly looked at the things that I do for fun. I was going out to the club almost three nights a week for a while, and drinking every one of those nights. Now I limit myself to going out three times a month, and I don't drink at all when I do go out. I know there are some friends that I need to give up, but I just don't know how to do that. The way that I view myself really affects the way I communicate

with others. I am too quiet and keep to myself too much. I have been told that I come off as cold, distant, or even uninteresting. I would like to communicate with others better, without worrying what they will think of me. Everything I do right now is a growth process, and when the finished product is ready, I will finally possess my greatness.

STEREOTYPING: "IGNORANCE IS BLISS"¹

ALMA GONZALES

All Americans wear baseball hats and eat apple pie. Anyone who defends the "nerd" must be one as well. She enjoys the intimacy of sex, she's definitely a slut. He just asked me if I love Celine Dion as much as he does, I am guessing he is gay. I loathe most men that I meet or that are attracted to me, so my mother KNOWS that I am a lesbian. If I "go black" then it is safe to assume that I will never go back.

Mind boggling!

These and many more stereotypes pollute the air every day and I cannot help but wonder what the reasoning is. I realize that it is a part of life and I am not sure if it is a necessary evil or if it is just a natural part of life that is beneficial to us all in some way. I feel that there are many conclusions to be drawn about stereotypes. It is a common way of life that consumes us all and the reasons for stereotyping are both negative and positive.

Growing up I was very particular of the people I kept in my company; I was in tune with the activities and interests of my friends, and I always felt better about myself when I was around someone who was "different." By this I mean I was intrigued by the "fat kid" who smiled incessantly despite the fact that he volunteered everyday at recess to be the community trampoline. He smiled and laughed

despite the remarks and horseplay. What IS it about him that he smiles in the face of such elementary danger? I was fascinated by the unusually skinny boy in my kindergarten class who was the butt of everyone's jokes. He was so thin that he had to wear suspenders everyday to hold his pants up. The consequence was that his ass-crack was always visible. Regardless of the taunting and teasing, he was the kindest friend I ever had and he never cried. He never once said he was hurting.

These experiences (and many others) make it all the more confusing to me as to whether or not stereotyping is good or bad. I have learned so much throughout my life from different types of people. I have to admit in this weird attraction I have toward people who live their lives against the grain, I have created my own stereotypes about them! I assume that if a person is standoffish and artistic, that there must be this mystical fire of intelligence burning just beneath the surface. It becomes my ultimate goal to get to know this person on a personal level. The stereotypes that I have invented in my own brain attract me to people I would otherwise pass on by. From a certain angle, I can view stereotypes as a positive and important part of my life.

I am a single mother and I have learned to have a perfect hate for people who don't know what to say when I tell them. "Oh...", they respond, in a sullen, I'm sorry attitude. It is like I all of a sudden go from being this really interesting, maybe attractive, artsy, hottie-bo-bottie to a no-life, boring, meek lil' bunny rabbit. I don't get it! Usually when I come across people who make assumptions about me based on minor details about my life, I literally see the ignorance oozing out of their ears.

I will never understand why we stereotype. I cannot pretend to know why it occurs and I am not sure that anyone will ever really have that answer. Maybe it is a way for us to feel secure that we are different but at least the same enough to fit into a category of some sort.

Maybe we all need to identify with someone to feel complete. Honestly, when I think about the word "stereotype," I think it is just another word we use to understand human nature.

¹ Thomas Gray, 1742.

COMMERCIALIZATION

AMANDA PINKERTON

Keeping up with the Joneses is inherent in American culture. We are a nation inflicted with avarice and cupidity. We define ourselves by the materials we possess. Do we think so little of each other and ourselves that we must base our worth on so little? Who are the Joneses upon whom we so precariously base our standards? Commercialization has played a huge role in our perception. It has become an enemy we must not ignore, poisoning us with treacherous images of the "ideal life," devouring any shred of self-respect or self-worth in the process.

Advertising shouts out to us the need for self-improvement. Products boast of weight loss or fewer wrinkles. Commercials campaigning colognes can attract women in flocks – or a change in hair color that will make us worthy. Worthy of what? We have to ask ourselves if losing a little around the thighs is going to change our world. Would we want people to flock to us only because of the way we smell? One purpose to advertising is to fulfill a desire

Perspectives

Articles or essays of controversy are one of Palabras's favorite pastimes. If you'd like to write a refutation or an alternate perspective to any article herein, please do.



we find lacking in ourselves, but at the same time, isn't it manipulating us into a false feeling of adequacy?

Media splashes faces and products about in a maniacal fashion. Movie stars, musicians, athletes, all sorts of celebrities buy into the game. They use their fame shamefully to peddle their lavish lifestyles. Unable to deny their beauty and talent, they beckon us with the misconception that we might become similar in fashion. They slap their name on merchandise and, suddenly, it becomes a "must have," selling the products for a modest fortune, much higher than the cost of production. The Nike Jordan basketball shoe, for example, *starts* at \$100 (nike.com), whereas a basketball shoe at Payless Shoe Store starts at \$32 (payless.com). Celebrities sell their names to the highest bidder without considering the product being endorsed, in essence, becoming a whore in the advertising scheme.

Commercialization thrives also on innovation. Newer improved models are equipped with more luxuries, improved formulas, or progressive styles. First we had the vinyl records, then eight-track, then tape, then the CD. Automobiles at one time were not even equipped with radios. Now we have satellite feeding into our vehicles, along with inexhaustible other indulgent options. Boundless supplies of products spread through households like wildfire. We are on a continual shopping spree with hopes that we have the choicest of what is being offered.

However, marketing is a manipulative game wherein the deepest parts of ourselves are targeted and perhaps subtly victimized. Twitchell quotes Helen Cass: "Sell them their dreams. Sell them what they longed for and hoped for and almost despaired of having. Sell them hats by splashing sunlight across them. Sell them dreams – dreams of country clubs and proms and visions of what might happen if only. After all, people don't buy things to have things. They buy things to work for them. They buy hope – hope of what your merchandise will do for them. Sell them this hope and you won't have

to worry about selling them goods" (411). Commercialization is not all erroneous. Without it we would not know of the choices available to us. It is the fundamental way we meet our daily needs. We are able to make educated decisions on what products best suit our needs. Twitchell himself argues: "Consumption has become production. While this is dreary and depressing to some, as doubtless it should be, it is liberation and democratic to many more" (415). In this, I can agree to an extent. After all, we all need hope and something to strive for to escape the black-hole of despair that threatens to engulf us. Who would want to work without reward? However, I contend that the effect of commercialization can be damaging. What dream does it fulfill if we can never possess desires so blatantly thrown in our faces? How are we to be liberated if we can never achieve the desired status? Are we to feel ourselves inconsequential because the lifestyles we want are financially impossible to maintain? An effect of striving for the impossible would be a feeling of incompetence.

Never-ending in its endurance to keep consumerism thriving, advertising will continue to manipulate and connive. Perhaps instead of being lured into it, we should take the time to truly know the people around us. If we endeavor to find pleasure in the simpler things in life, maybe we would be more content in our lifestyles. Most importantly, we must find our own self-importance, for only then can we become the victor in the battle commercialization has waged with our psyches.

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Twitchell, James B. "In Praise of Consumerism." *Seeing & Writing 2*. Ed. Donald and Christine McQuade. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 411-415.

These poems are from *The Garden of Everything*, Poetry by the Students of Lodge Grass High School and Lodge Grass Junior High, 2004-2005 school year.

Mick Fedullo, author of *Light of the Feather* (1993) and *The Maze* (2002), teaches Creative Writing to students in **Lodge Grass, Montana**. These poems are from students in the English II class.

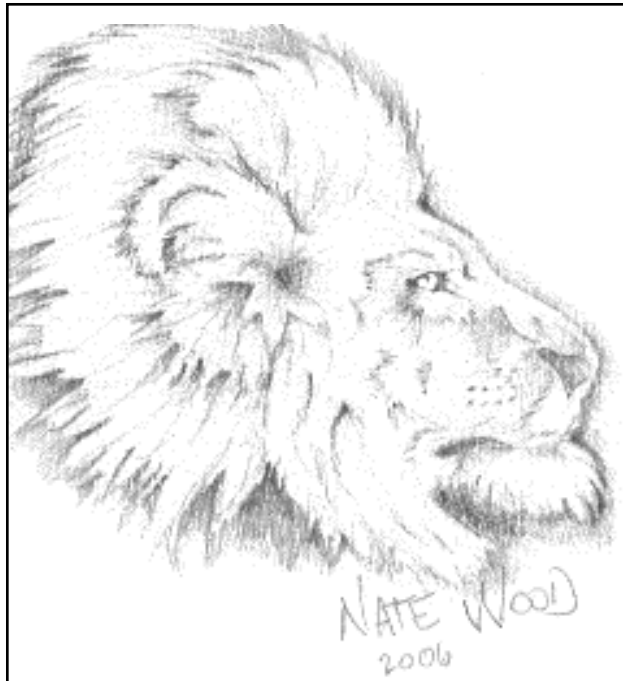
DEATH

ALANA KRUGER

Quietly waiting, wondering.
When will it come?
When will it go?

Pain or peace?
Heaven or hell?

It creeps up upon the old ones
and sometimes the young,
but with every life it takes
another's just begun.



THE RIVER

GRETCHEN NOME

The river is like
the Energizer Bunny,
it just keeps going,
going, and going,
until it hits the ocean.

When it hits the ocean,
it chills and evaporates
into the clouds.

The rain falls,
and the water goes, goes, and goes
back into the river.

LIFE

THOMAS MORNING

Life is like a puzzle.
Everything comes together
as you get older. But some
pieces you might lose,
like people you know who
have died. The middle must
get hard, as life goes on
yard by yard.

RELIGION

CARDELL JEFFERSON

Who's right, who's wrong.
No one knows, but they
think they do. As do I
think that I am right.
There are many, there
are different kinds.
There are many that
are one in the same.
Some branched off, some are
made up, some are traditional.
Many have fought over

whose is right. Some
people don't have one.
I also am a victim
in this war over who's
right and wrong.
I am a good person in some's
eyes, I am a bad person
in some's eyes; they think
this just because
of what I believe.
What will be of those
who are wrong and right
We will only know
when we die.

The following are from *The Endless Depth*, Lodge Grass Poetry, 2003-2004, English I & II

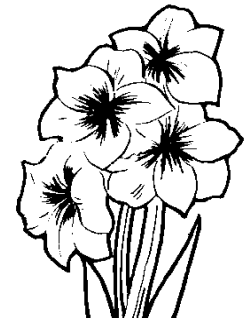
THREE DIMENSIONAL POEM

TAIJA LITTLE LIGHT

Rain - it's beautiful
drips from - the clouds
the sky and - the heavens
into - oval shapes
puddles, splashes - like a fountain
like a pool - of red roses
of water. Then slowly - it sprinkles
the drops start - going away
fading away - then a sunny day
a cold day, then - a warm day
a beautiful day - night and day

As the field burns
At the setting of the sun.

Watching a stranger
Swaying with the
Wind, disappearing
As the sun drops
Below the hills.



Seeing an unknown
Shape drifting away
Toward the stars. Hearing
Strangers in the field
Their sounds
Flowing to me through the wind.

MY BEING

OTTIE LION SHOWS

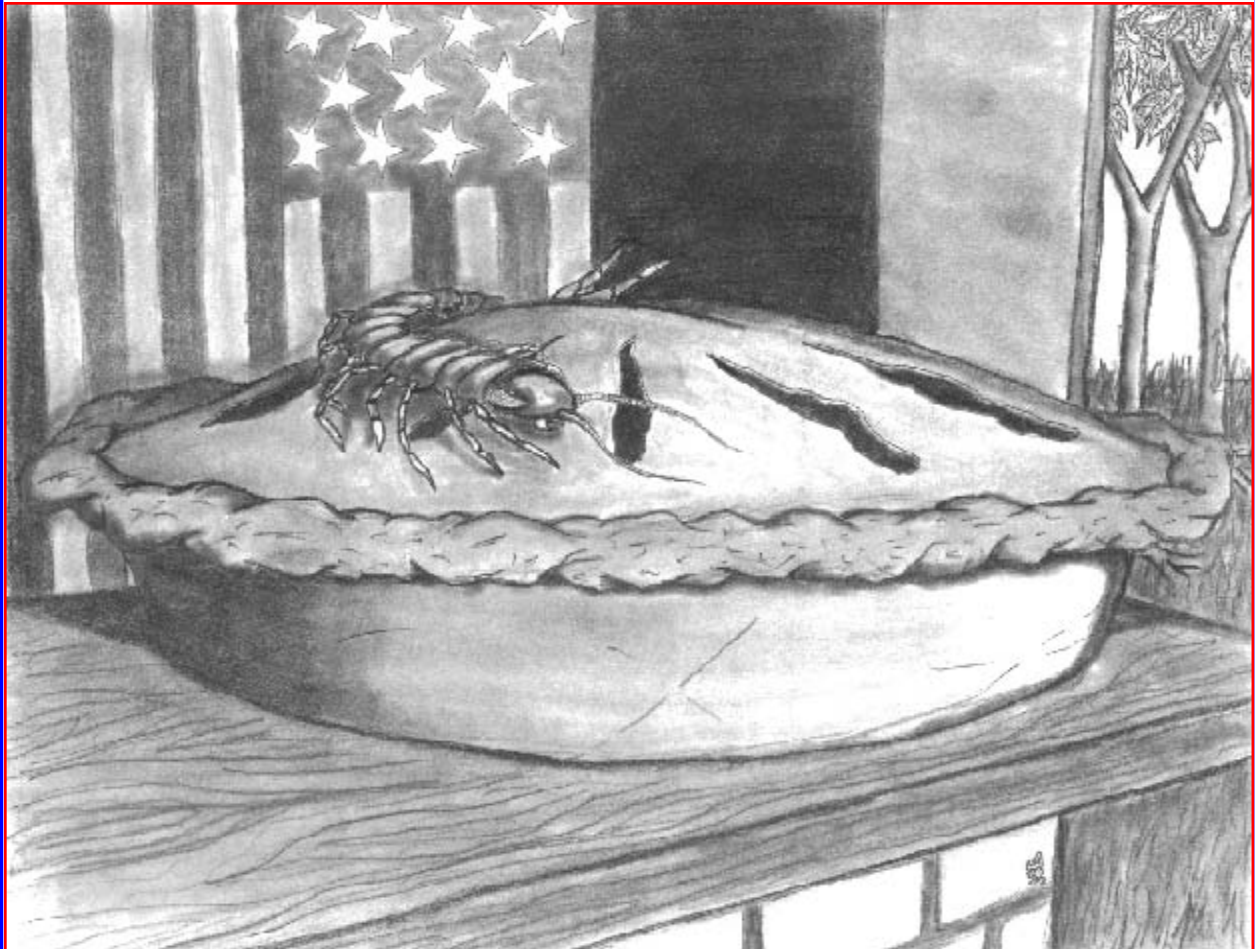
By a field
So different
From my being
Be still and
Know that
I am a stranger.

Feeling the cold
Touch my back
Like hands of the deceased.
Soon raindrops fall and
I get a sense of knowing
That my being
Will always exist
As a stranger.

By a field
Sitting, watching

“You cannot have a new strategy (in Iraq) with the same incompetent management directing it,” Rep. Rahm Emanuel, D-Ill told “Today” co-anchor Meredith Vieira.

– quote from MSNBC.com’s “Democrats Win Control of Senate,” November 8, 2006.



Drawing by Kerry Budding

Bye Bye, 2006

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