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hoi polloi
an anthology of essays

volume 2
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hoi polloi

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contents

Continuing in the tradition of past issues of *hoi polloi*, 1995's edition makes no concessions in the quality of writing it contains. The nine essays in this magazine, selected from more than sixty submitted, represent the best of a good bunch. Within this issue are also the winners of the 1995 Gainesville College Writing Contest for formal and informal essays.

This year, the English Club decided to include four "non-traditional" works modeled on Cicero's outline for a legal argument (the two defenses of Aeneas), in which a lawyer (the author's fictional persona) lays out a defense for a client (in this case Aeneas) and on formats utilized in medieval sermons ("Whether a Weatherman Would" and "With Intent to Dissuade"). In the latter a priest (the author's fictional persona) attempts to discourage a subject from committing a deadly sin, and in the former, Johnny Beckman in "Whether a Weatherman Would" is humorously called to task. Though these essays do not follow the form of typical English classroom essays, they do represent creative interpretations of ancient formulas and patterns.

I wish to express my thanks to the staff members who worked diligently on the production of this latest edition of *hoi polloi* and to Dr. McLeod for her selfless devotion of time and energy to the project. Thanks go to Eileen O'Brien for judging the formal essays and to John Haw for judging the informal essays. I also want to express my appreciation to the faculty members who helped with proofing and suggestions. Most of all I'd like to applaud the students who submitted their essays for consideration in this year's edition and encourage all interested students to submit some of their works for the next issue of *hoi polloi*.

Curtis Durham

introduction

into each others' arms. Ah, but what happiness they found there! Would that my client were just a man! He might have spent the rest of his life loving the exquisite Dido. But the fates would have it otherwise. Jove sent Mercury with orders for my client to move on to Rome. Pious Aeneas is a man who set about following the will of the gods. Making his ships ready to leave, my client pondered how to break this ill-fated news to the woman he loved; but Carthage, always a nest of spies, whispered in Dido's ear. Taking Aeneas' delay as proof of his deceit and cruelty instead of his love and concern, Dido lost her reason. Raging at him one moment and pleading with him the next, Dido cursed Aeneas unto death and burdened both their peoples with everlasting conflict. My client's only choice was to flee this murderous insanity, though it grieved his heart to do so. Then poor, mad Dido, puppet of the gods, chaff before the fates, took her own life.

Fortunately, there are many areas where the heirs of Dido, who saw fit to bring this suit, and the heirs of Aeneas can agree. First, we can all agree that Aeneas had no choice but to leave Carthage. When fate commands, who among us can defy? We can also agree on the fact that there was no marriage between Aeneas and Dido. Aside from the fact that there were no mortal witnesses to this union, Aeneas never presented himself as Dido's husband (IV, 347). We can agree that Aeneas and Dido loved each other. We can also agree that fate had no room in its plans for this love. I think we can also agree that Dido had been unbalanced by these cruel fates. If I may paraphrase Euripides, "those whom the gods would make mad, they first make lovers." Our only point of contention is the intent of Aeneas. As my opponents suggest, was Aeneas simply abandoning a woman who no longer served his purposes, or was he a man who simply erred in trying to save his beloved from pain? The answers to these questions can be made known from the evidence at hand.

My lord, as I have said, my case is a simple one. I intend to prove that Aeneas acted out of *humanitas* in delaying to tell Dido of his departure from Carthage. Aeneas was simply a man trying to avoid hurting the woman he loved. When my client first heard the commands of the gods to leave Carthage, he was terrified (IV, 280). He must leave, but how can he do it without hurting Dido? Attempting to let her down as easily as possible, he thought, "He will see what he can do, find the right moment to let her know" (IV, 293-4). But it was all for naught. Some spy of decadent Carthage, perhaps some jealous courtier who disapproved of Aeneas' influence, sent word of Aeneas'

In Defense of Aeneas

Byran James

My lord, happy am I that it is you who will hear this case. Your *pietas* is exemplified by your position and your place: it is expounded on by all who, by your grace, live and prosper in Rome. The praises of your *humanitas* are sung by loyal Romans from the highest patrician to the lowest slave in your household. Your *gravitas* is respected from the chamber of the imperial seat to the halls of the Roman Senate. Fortunate are we who will here defend Aeneas, father of the line of Rome. Fortunate are all here who put their faith in your decision. My lord, my case is a simple one. My client's only sin was in not knowing the mind of a woman, and what man may know that? I will prove that Aeneas' actions prior to leaving Carthage were simply the actions of a man driven by fate, who was trying to shield a dear woman from the pain of his departure.

Buffeted by the winds of fate and compelled by the gods, Aeneas came to Lybia's shore. The Queen of Carthage, in her mercy, took Aeneas, his son, and his men in. Queen Dido's heart was warmed by my client's visage, but she did not take advantage of this man bereft of his wife; nor did Aeneas pursue the beautiful Queen of Carthage. It took the intercession of two goddesses to compel these ill-fated lovers

departure to Dido. Then "like a woman mad" (IV, 302) Dido raged against Aeneas. What could my client do, my lord? About this Aeneas, the poet Virgil tells us, "Jove bade him keep affection from his eyes, and grief in his heart" (IV, 308-9). Here is a man in a most heart-wrenching dilemma. Should he disobey the gods, defy the fates, and throw away his son's inheritance, or hurt the woman he loves? And while he is in this dilemma, what does Dido have for him? She has nothing but curses--curses and spite. She curses his line, his country, his love for her, his gods, and his future (IV, 379-412). And still he wishes to spare her from this torment. And thus he stands before her rage, "good Aeneas, longing to ease her grief with comfort, to say something to turn her pain and hurt away, sighs often, his heart being moved by this great love, most deeply, and still -- the gods give orders, he obeys them" (IV, 419-23), as must we all. It is no sin to obey the will of the gods. It is no crime to be set upon by fate. It reveals no fault to attempt to spare another pain.

My lord, my opponents argue that Aeneas showed some lack of *pietas* in his actions. Let us be serious: this is the man who left Troy carrying his father, his son, and his household gods (II, 730). Who among us is worthy to question the *pietas* of the founding father of Rome? It is far more believable that no debt of *pietas* existed, that the romance of Aeneas and Dido was just that, a romance. It began; it ended. But no debts were incurred. Even the gods have called on Aeneas' *pietas* (IV, 276). How may mere mortals question it? My opponents have also questioned Aeneas' *humanitas*. To that I answer that this whole sad affair proves my client's *humanitas*. My client simply tried to avoid bringing Dido pain. This question is one of intent. But who may know the mind of another? This question must be ruled controvertible.

My lord, might I digress? This is not just a case against Aeneas of Troy. This is a case against the honor of Rome. Here we have the royal house of our most ancient enemy attacking the father of Rome. If this case goes forward, who else will sue the scions of Rome? Might not the Gauls sue Julius Caesar? Do not the heirs of Cleopatra have cause to be aggrieved at Octavian? My lord, if this case is successful, we will never hear the end of its like.

In conclusion my lord, all Aeneas tried to do was shield Dido from this agony. His actions on leaving Carthage were those of a man with great *humanitas*. If fault exist here, it lies with the fates. This whole trumped-up case, my lord, is an attempt to sully the honor and

purloin the treasure of Rome. My lord, Aeneas gave up everything he ever wanted--an honorable death at Troy, the love of Dido--to bring about Rome. I think we owe him better than these accusations. We must find for Aeneas, for him, for ourselves, and for Rome.

Thank You.

A Defense of Aeneas

Victoria Myers

In the course of history great cities have risen and great cities have fallen, but few have had such an important impact as Rome. The founding of Rome is one of *the* most important events in history, needing a very special man to bring it about: a man dedicated to the Roman ideals of *pietas* and *humanitas*, and known for his goodness and devotion. Such is the nature of the client I defend. Aeneas was grief-stricken at the loss of Troy and death of his wife. He wanted to die along with Troy, but did he dwell on his grief? NO! He moved forward with great determination to fulfill the destiny ordained for him by the gods. Aeneas has remained true to his Roman ideals; therefore, he is not liable for any claims or damages pressed on him. It was Dido who violated her own standards and promise to her husband; these violations caused her suffering.

The facts of this case are clear. Aeneas arrived on Carthage's shores and received hospitality. Both Aeneas and his men were welcomed by the queen of Carthage, Dido, who, being the virtuous and charitable queen that she was, aided these shipwrecked sailors and empathized with Aeneas' tale of suffering. She broke with her sense of rectitude (the vow to her husband and her devotion to her people)

and pursued Aeneas. Dido felt they were married one evening after a hunt, but this marriage had no mortal witnesses and was never acknowledged by Aeneas. Concerned by the delay of the founding of Rome, Mercury visited Aeneas and told him that he must adhere to his destiny, leave Carthage as soon as possible, and create Rome. While Aeneas made preparations to leave, Dido accused him of abandoning and ruining her in such a vehement speech that Aeneas was left speechless. Dido listened to no amount of reason; so Aeneas, owing *pietas* to the gods, his men, and to Italy, left Carthage. Dido, unable to handle this abandonment, committed suicide.

I do not contest that Dido suffered when Aeneas left for Italy. I do not contest that Aeneas stayed on in Carthage for many months when he should have been in Italy. I do not contest Aeneas' responsibility for his own actions. What I will prove is that it was not my client who harmed Dido; but it was Dido, herself, who self-destructed. She self-destructed not only because she failed to carry out her promise to her husband, but also because of the decrease in her devotion and care for Carthage.

Dido is described as a "fair partitioner of toil and duty" and "a giver of law and justice" (I. 532 & 531). Indeed her standards did include being fair to the suffering and being true to her ideal of *pietas*. She suffered a personal tragedy when her brother killed her husband, Sychaeus, on the altar; but she proved her *pietas* when she established Carthage and ruled it. Dido further proved her *pietas* towards her people when she told Aeneas that she must "help the wretched" (I. 665). What is also true is that Dido had a personal standard regarding love. She promised Sychaeus that she would never love again.

Yet Dido abandoned this devotion, this *pietas*, and this promise when she allowed herself to burn with "hidden fire" (IV. 2) and become obsessed with Aeneas' masculinity. Dido told her sister, "here is the only man who has moved my spirit . . . shaken my weak will" (IV. 15-21). And later that same evening Dido was "held fast by this disease, this passion which made her good name meaningless" (IV. 89-92). Dido totally abandoned her standards when she pledged herself to Aeneas in the cave in front of immortals. And it was this abandonment which marked her for eventual death because she subconsciously knew that with this pledge she would lose everything. This was the "first day of death, first cause of evil. . . and Dido [was] . . . unconcerned

. . . with how it seem(ed) to others. [The union in the cave was] a marriage for her, not hole and corner guilt: she cover[ed] her folly with this name" (IV. 164-167).

One must see this error in judgement to understand Dido's reaction to Aeneas's plan to leave. Transformed from "all majesty, all beauty" (I. 522) to a mad, emotional, irrational woman capable of terrible rages, Dido called Aeneas a "betraye[r]" (IV. 306), but Aeneas was not given an opportunity to explain his actions. Dido further showed her irrationality when she stated that she was a dying woman: she had lost her honor and he had made her people hate her. Then she cursed him: "I will be there to haunt you, a shade all over the world" (IV. 414). These are the words and threats of a vengeful, egocentric woman, not a devoted queen, charitable to her people. This irrationality, not Aeneas's departure, caused her death.

The plaintiff may say that Aeneas failed in his *pietas* toward Dido because he married her and then abandoned her, but this is a badly stated premise. What is totally evident is that no mortals witnessed a marriage between Dido and Aeneas. And Aeneas certainly never acknowledged such a contract. Furthermore, Aeneas did not fail in his *pietas* toward Dido because he actually stayed in Carthage much longer than necessary out of duty to her. The plaintiff may argue that if Aeneas had left Carthage sooner, no one would have suffered. Again, this is an invalid premise. Speculating on what might have happened is useless. Only actions that did take place can be speculated on, not actions that might or might not have been. Both these premises are false. Aeneas has not failed in his duty or in his personal standards. He became involved with Dido, and did his duty to her (a duty not equal to that of a husband to a wife) without sacrificing his duty to his men.

Not only have Dido and Aeneas suffered from her lapse, King Iarbas and Carthage suffered as well. There is a definite bias in Dido's standards. Dido selfishly used men as instruments that would gain her anything she wanted: a kingdom, money, and love. To King Iarbas Dido was "a woman, who used to wander around my lands . . . to whom we gave some ploughland and a contract [and who] disdain[ed] me as a husband" (IV. 210-213). Dido led men on in this fashion. Are such selfish acts worthy? No! Dido also became "heedless of ruling" (IV. 192) when she used Aeneas to satisfy her passion. As a result her sister, Anna, stated, "You have killed me, sister, not only yourself, you have killed us all, the people, the town" (IV. 729-730). Even if Carthage

had not suffered, was her shameful usage of men commendable? No! No amount of bias, no selfish usage of anyone is to be rewarded. A firm stand needs to be taken to insure that future generations will not mistake the truly ignoble for the truly noble deed.

Aeneas had every right to leave according to his standards of *pietas* and *humanitas* toward Italy, his men, and the gods. And Dido had a right to be upset over Aeneas's departure because she loved him. But her destructive behavior resulted from a violation of her own standards. This sort of self-destructive, irrational, shameful, and undignified behavior is unbecoming a queen or anyone else. Because of Dido's actions, a prosperous and trustful kingdom became distrustful of rulers who break their promises and standards. Her actions further delayed the founding of an important city and may set precedent for others to behave the same way. Compensation should not be awarded to Dido's family but to Rome and Carthage for the delays and sufferings they've endured because of Dido's broken faith and *her* betrayed standards.

A Paternal Departure

Jennie McDonald

Children have a special relationship with their father. This relationship, even if it is abusive, is a bond that cannot usually be broken—even by death. A father can be loved, respected, copied, and worshipped, among other things, and is certainly a major influence in a child's life. When that major influence dies, grief is sometimes difficult to accept and hard to express. The poetry of Sylvia Plath, in "Daddy," Anne Sexton, in "All My Pretty Ones," and e.e. cummings, in "the sky was" show how these poets dealt with the deaths of their fathers.

In her poem, "All My Pretty Ones," Anne Sexton, obviously grieving for the loss of both her mother and father, painfully picks through her deceased father's belongings, reminiscing over what she finds: ". . .[a] residence [he] could not afford: / a gold key, [his] half of a woolen mill, / twenty suits . . ., an English Ford, / [and] boxes of pictures of people I do not know" (5-7, 9), and comes to the realization of how much she truly did not know about her father who had lived a separate life. She silently weeps for this man, this stranger, as she guiltily reminisces about when she "cried on [his] fat shoulder . . .[the] year . . .[he] meant to marry that pretty widow in a one-month rush"

(27-30). Thereby, she delayed the marriage that was to be her father's "second chance" (29), for "three days later [he] died" (30). She discovers in his belongings ". . .the yellow scrapbook that [her father] began the year [she] was born" (21-22). This discovery touches her. She is mourning, not only for her father, but for their lost relationship: "Now I fold you down, my / drunkard, my navigator, my first lost keeper, to / love or look at later" (39-41). Thus she attempts to suspend her grief until she can, perhaps, deal with it better at a later time. Although she tries to defer her sorrow, she fully comes to terms with it in the last stanza of her confession: "Only in this hoarded span will love preserve. / Whether you are pretty or not, I outlive you, / bend down my strange face to yours and forgive you" (49-51). Even though she does not always have the best--the most attractive--memories of her father and their life together, she still loves him and misses him. This poem is Sexton's way of coming to terms with her father's abrupt death.

"the sky was" could be interpreted as one of many poems e.e. cummings wrote in regard to his beloved father's violent death. Cummings' father, who died in the 1930's when a train struck his automobile at a crossing, was Cummings' inspiration; he worshipped him. The poem starts out slowly, like a train beginning its journey, and describes the beautiful array of colors seen in a sky of either sunrise or sunset:

the
 sky
 was
 can dy lu
 minous
 edible
 spry
 pinks shy
 lemons
 greens coo l choc
 olate
 s. (1-12)

These wonderful, colorful images are darkened by the next word: "under," (13)--for how can a sky be *under* anything, unless Cummings is speaking about death. Cummings is speaking of his father's death. Within the next lines the locomotive is picking up speed:

a lo,
co
mo

tive (14-17)

When the poet describes the train hitting his father's automobile, the poem slows down and insinuates the lasting impact upon Cummings and how violent, tragic, and sad this incident was that killed his father:

. . .s pout
ing

vi

o

lets (17-21)

History shows how much e.e. cummings cherished his father, and this poem delivers that history with a beautiful, closing punch. e.e. cummings has come to grips with his father's death; he has experienced closure and can productively go on with his life.

"Daddy," by Sylvia Plath, is a completely different approach to dealing with the loss of one's father. The persona, obviously enraged--furious--with her father, for he had died before she was ready--before she could actually deal with her loss, rages: "Daddy, I have had to kill you. / You died before I had time--" (6-7). Her own way of working through this anger is by belittling her father's memory . . . in her own heart. The ranting lines: "Brute heart of a brute like you" (50) and "But no less a devil for that. . ." (54) show just how much she wanted to punish him for leaving her; and in turn, she knowingly punishes herself. This poem was written after World War II, a timing that enables the reader to understand the frequent, hateful references to Nazi Germany which she heaped upon her father, as in this stanza: "It stuck in a barb wire snare. / Ich, ich, ich, ich, / I could hardly speak / I thought every German was you. / And the language obscene" (26-30). Sylvia finally put her poem and her anger to an uneasy rest by stating: "Daddy, Daddy, you bastard, I'm through" (80). If one writes and reads untruths often enough, those are the images that stick in one's head--the images that one fools oneself into believing are the truth. For this reason, I do not believe she ever fully laid her father to rest in her heart. Sylvia was an emotionally disturbed woman. She felt she was wronged by her father along with all of the other men in her life. She was a very unhappy and angry woman who died an early death by her own hand.

Both subjects, fathers and grief, are two completely different, extremely emotional, and complex subjects to understand. The three poets outlined throughout deal with these subjects in exceedingly different manners. Anne Sexton works through her grief in a step-by-step process with a final conclusion of forgiveness and completeness. e.e. cummings expresses his grief as a reenactment of the scene of the tragedy by combining words and sounds, through the meter of the poem, to come to a conclusion within himself. Sylvia Plath works through her grief by emotionally blowing up. That is, perhaps, the way she deals with life in general. Where both Sexton and Cummings came to a satisfactory conclusion within themselves, Plath never fully concludes. One can sense within her poem Sylvia's need to continue, her need to come to a type of closure.

All of the poems in this study are extremely powerful in their own individual way and can be possibly seen as working through the grief process--particularly, if one can imagine all three poems written by a single artist. This imaginary writer begins by relieving extreme anger, as does Sylvia Plath; the writer then expresses forgiveness, as does Anne Sexton; the writer would finally conclude the grief process with a reenactment of the tragic death, as does e.e. cummings. This imaginary artist would then have come full circle in an individual's grief process; the artist would have come to closure. These three commanding poems certainly demand one think and examine one's own reactions and the ways one expresses those feelings.

Dionysus Denied

Bryan James

On its surface, Euripides' "The Bacchae" seems to be a condemnation of Dionysian excess. The image of Agave literally tearing her son, Pentheus, limb from limb must be one of the most horrific in literature. But why then does Pentheus, the very portrait of Apollonian logic and reason, pay the ultimate price? The classical Greek mind was a swirl of polar opposites striving for balance. Reason should control passion; emotion should temper logic. The madness that afflicted Thebes in this play was the result of a lack of symmetry between the Dionysian extreme and the Apollonian mean, a lack illustrated by Agave's murder. In "The Bacchae," then, and in this act of murder, Euripides has called for a balance between the ecstatic and logical in life, a balance whose absence generates tragedy.

The German philosopher Nietzsche postulated that Greek thought and drama were a dance between the Apollonian mean and the Dionysian extreme. To Nietzsche, the Apollonian mean represented logic, reason, the life of the mind. The Dionysian extreme, on the other hand, represented instinct, ecstasy, the powers that make the human animal animal still. In "The Bacchae," Euripides used Pentheus to portray cold, unfeeling logic, the Apollonian mind of the state.

Dionysus, on the other hand, depicts the anima, the powers at large in wild nature, and most importantly, the potential for ecstasy in human beings. It is with these three forces that Dionysus will lay Pentheus low.

Pentheus the male, the athletic Greek warrior, stalks onto the stage. How sure he is of his power and his place! Not only does he deny the divinity of Dionysus, but he also denigrates the worship of the Bacchae as "frisk(ing) in mock ecstasies among the thickets on the mountain" (232-3). Pentheus believes that this worship is a fad, that the celebrants are "dancing in honor of the latest divinity, a certain Dionysus, whoever he may be" (234-5). But Pentheus' main problem seems to be that the Maenads may be enjoying their revels. Sex and wine, music and dancing: something must be amiss here. Pentheus complains that "the women wander off to hidden nooks where they serve the lusts of men" (237-8). Pentheus pontificates that "when once you see the glint of wine shining at the feasts of women, then you may be sure the festival is rotten" (278-80). This fear of the carnal and the ecstatic, this Apollonian need for control, and the repression of Pentheus' own feminine side are the faults that the god will punish.

According to Carl Jung, all human beings have a masculine and a feminine side, an animus and anima. The anima incarnate, Dionysus, glories in his femininity. Beardless, perfumed, and curled, Dionysus almost swishes on stage. Pentheus ridicules Dionysus' curls and fair skin: "And what fair skin you have--you must take care of it-- no daylight complexion; no, it comes from the night when you hunt Aphrodite with your beauty" (494-6). This contempt is paid back in kind when Dionysus uses Pentheus' own lust to beguile him into female garb. Like most prudes, Pentheus secretly burns for that for which he feigns repulsion. Dionysus tempts Pentheus with the sight of the Bacchant's revels, but Pentheus would have to go dressed as a woman. "Dress? In a woman's dress, you mean? I would die of shame," Pentheus protests (875-6). But Pentheus' lust to see the Bacchanalia overwhelms his shame, and Dionysus dresses him as a Maenad, releasing his long repressed anima and driving him mad in the process. A bedizened Pentheus asks, "Do I look like anyone? Like Ino or my mother Agave?" (978-9). This humiliation, going from lusty warrior to simpering sycophant, completes the first stage of Pentheus' fall.

Dionysus is a god of an untidy realm, nature. His followers suckle fawns and wolf cubs and bind their clothes with snakes, "that lick their cheeks" (739). He is generous, however: "Those who wanted

milk scratched at the soil with bare fingers and the white milk came welling up. Pure honey spurted, streaming from their wands" (748-50). Imprisoned by Pentheus, Dionysus uses this power over nature to gain his freedom: "Let earthquake come! Shatter the floor of the world!" (621). The god orders, and Pentheus' palace lies in ruins. And as Dionysus leads him to his doom, bedazzled Pentheus sees the god in the form of a bull. He cries: "And you--you are a bull who walks before me there. Horns have sprouted from your head. Have you always been a beast? But now I see a bull" (973-6). His disguise lifted, Dionysus, the generative principle of nature made flesh, escorts Pentheus to his sacrifice.

Most of all, Dionysus is the god of the grape, the giver of wine, the lifter of cares, the bringer of ecstasy, an ecstasy which has its dark side. The foremost drawback of the gift of Dionysus is madness. The Bacchae, who one moment are nursing wild young, are tearing domesticated cattle to pieces the next: "unarmed, they swooped down upon the herds of cattle grazing there on the green of the meadow. And then you could have seen a single woman with bare hands tear a fat calf, still bellowing with fright, in two, while others clawed the heifers to pieces" (777-81). It is into this madness that Dionysus flings Pentheus. Using his followers' madness as the instrument of Pentheus' destruction, Dionysus offers up the king of Thebes. At the sacrifice, Pentheus' "own mother, like a priestess with her victim, fell upon him first . . . She was mad, stark mad, possessed by Bacchus. Ignoring his cries of pity, she seized his left arm at the wrist; then, planting her foot upon his chest, she pulled, wrenching away the arm at the shoulder--not by her own strength, for the god had put inhuman power in her hands" (1162-6). And thus Dionysus settled his account with Pentheus.

And thus Euripides shows the cost of an unbalanced life. Pentheus has not only rejected the god, Dionysus, but the values he represents. Dionysus uses these rejected values as weapons to destroy Pentheus. In "The Bacchae," Euripides gives the reader an object lesson in the madness that comes from repressing the darker side of human nature.

A Day at the Movies

Lee Rider

Once simply a means of entertainment, movies have evolved into a growing art form and a definitive method of expression. By far the most imaginative examples of cinematic art are those of the fictional format. In these, almost anything possible in the movies then becomes probable. Myriad types of stories are available as a basis for the massive motion picture industry. *Indiana Jones*, *James Bond*, and *Star Trek*, each representative of a fictional movie series, contain situations that I would like to experience in the real world.

Archaeology and history are definitive studies in boredom to the average layman; however, characters of the *Indiana Jones* movies instill excitement and wonder in these areas. I can imagine searching the globe for an antiquity and, upon finding it, learn that the object is the key to an ancient lost treasure. Risks and unforeseen dangers would be lurking everywhere, but I would relish overcoming them. *Indiana Jones* dealt with legends of past civilizations, such as the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail. I would envision myself finding the lost continent of Atlantis or solving the mystery of Stonehenge. Finding items of a major archaeological significance or proving myths of ancient times to be true would be a means of unparalleled adventure in the world today.

Like archaeology in the movies, espionage is also a dangerous and serious business, but the portrayals in the *James Bond* movies romanticize the practice. Secret government organizations are generally believed to exist, and I am sure men and women covertly risk their lives everyday for the cause of democracy. The idea of living the life of the secret agent persona, as defined by the *James Bond* films, excites me to the extreme. In a sense, I would now have the means to save the world from the evils that plague it. Also, I can identify with the "license to kill" aspect. Circumventing the red tape involved with the administration of the legal system is an ideal many people wish were possible. If I were judge, jury, and executioner, an enormous amount of grief and expense could be prevented. Being a member of a secret organization and dispensing justice over evil would provide me with a sense of duty and accomplishment.

Finally, if espionage and archaeology can provide thrills on earth, space travel can expand those thrills to other worlds. "Space, the final frontier . . ." are the famous words that suggest discovery and exploration, the hallmarks of the *Star Trek* motion pictures. Never have so many been so influenced by visions of the future as have the spectators and fans of this series. The idea of travelling throughout the cosmos fills me with awe. Aliens are purported to have visited our planet for many years, and it is about time we followed their example by sailing for the stars in search of them. The vast influx of technology cannot be ignored. Travelling faster than light, transmitting and reassembling molecules of matter, and scanning an object and instantly knowing its composition are ideal examples of technological leaps. The *Star Trek* films furnish endless possibilities. Encountering new life forms and utilizing new technology gratify my inner need to explore the unknown.

Without a doubt, *Indiana Jones*, *James Bond*, and *Star Trek* movies present desirable situations which I would welcome and support in the world today. Historical events would come to life through adventures, and the events would be better absorbed into our collective wisdom. Saving the world from crime, a present-day dilemma, would be handled in an absolute fashion. Discovery and exploration would lead toward visions of tomorrow. Thus, one could link past, present, and future events together to serve the common good. I hope so, for I enjoy a happy ending.

The Human Monster

Jennie McDonald

Monster can be defined as a creature of our imagination who is part human and part animal and whose cruelty and wickedness are specifically designed to horrify others. The human monster, Grendel, the subject of the novel, *Grendel*, by John Gardner, and a terrifying character in the epic poem, *Beowulf*, is the epitome of one's typical monster in the most terrifying of nightmares. A monster can also be described as a portent of misfortune--an omen. Could one consider Grendel's misfortune as an omen--an omen of man's misfortune? Could the monster within Grendel signify the monster in oneself? Should we, as a society or individually, be concerned regarding the omen as illustrated within the creature of Grendel? Grendel's quest for the meaning of life can be further explored as a pilgrimage for love, sought through his mother, through the Shaper, through the priest, Ork, and through the marriage of the king, Hrothgar to Wealtheow. Grendel's quest is our quest as an individual and as a society.

Grendel's quest for love is assumed. He never admits through speech or within his thoughts that he can possibly want, need, or even miss the ability to love, although it is expressly implied. The implication of his need for love is shown through the continual

mentioning, even with disgust, of his mother as, ". . . pitiful, foul, her smile a jagged white tear in the firelight: waste" (55). Grendel may not like nor respect his mother, but he does not leave her. He remembers his childhood and how she loved him: "She loved me, in some mysterious sense I understood without her speaking it. I was her creation" (17). He also remembers how much he loved her at one time: "Ah, ah, how I love you, Mama--dead these many years!" (146). Grendel hates to admit it, but he needs his mother's company--he selfishly needs her to be there physically, to take the hurts away, to be loved unconditionally, whenever he deems it necessary. He desperately seeks his mother when he is hurt and unable to fend for himself: "Thing after thing tried, cynical and cruel, to foist itself off as my mama's shape . . . but falling back, melting to the blank, infuriating clutter of not my mother. 'Please mama!' [he calls out to her] sobbing as if heartbroken" (19). Even toward the end of his life, when Grendel is finally beaten--the opponent being himself--he bawls out, "Mama, Mama! I'm dying!" (173), as if she can save him once again. He never accepts his mother's unconditional love. He sadly twists his mother's love by saying, "For even my mama loves me not for myself, my holy specialness . . . but for my son-ness, my possessedness, my displacement of air as visible proof of her power" (158). Grendel, perhaps, needs to re-assess his feelings for his mother, for she gave her love so freely to Grendel--whether he deserves it or not. If love is to be successful, it has to be a two-way street. Grendel never comes to realize reciprocation and its importance.

Grendel's mother is not the only one (or thing) that Grendel refuses to love. The Shaper's poetry and music capture him, even possess him, for he "wanted it . . . was addicted [to it]" (54). The Shaper lulls him; Grendel says, "I believe him. Such was the power of the Shaper's harp!" (51). Nevertheless, Grendel refuses to accede to this type of love either. He ridicules and analyzes the poetry, the music, and even the Shaper himself in order to arrive at his lonely conclusion: "He feels [that the Shaper] takes what he finds . . . and by changing men's minds he makes the best of it. He sang for pay, for the praise of women . . . and for the honor of a famous king's hand on his arm" (49). Grendel seeks advice from the Dragon, the optimal pessimist, in understanding the Shaper and the meaning of his songs. The Dragon replies, "Illusion" (62); "[the Shaper] provides an illusion of reality--puts together all their facts with a gluey whine of connectedness. Mere tripe . . . Mere sleight-of-wits" (65). Grendel knows that much of what the

Dragon had to say about love and life in general is one-sided and untrue, such as in the speech regarding the Shaper, but to know one side is better than not to know any side at all. Grendel is torn, but opts for the easier of the two courses--to forgo love, for to reach love one has to cross many obstacles. "Let man be warned about love," Grendel might advise us, for man truly knows nothing about it.

Is it novelty, curiosity, or both that lure Grendel to the circle of gods that the priests pray to in Hrothgar's camp? Grendel often chats with God, just in case He might be there, listening: "I looked up through the treetops, ludicrously hopeful. I think I was half prepared, in my sad, demented state, to see God . . . scowling down at me, shaking his bloodless finger. 'Why can't I have someone to talk to?' . . . The stars said nothing, but I pretended to ignore His rudeness" (53). Perhaps, this is one of the reasons he turns to the priest, Ork, within the ring of gods, and asks him, "Tell us what you know of the King of the Gods. Speak to us concerning His unspeakable beauty and danger" (131). Grendel is seeking spiritual love and unfortunately does not accept what he finds.

"How many times must a creature be dragged down the same ridiculous road?" (108), Grendel asks himself when regarding his feelings for Hrothgar's red-haired queen, Wealtheow. Could a monster be affected by romantic love? He watches as she is acquired in a trade of war between Hrothgar and Wealtheow's brother, the young king, Hymgod--"I will show you a treasure that will change your mind, great Hrothgar" (99). Grendel, outraged at this act, cries silently, "O woe! O wretched violation of sense!" (101), for he sees the senselessness of this act. He watches as the nights go past, how the queen "had given . . . her life for those she loved" (102), just as his mother had for him. Wealtheow stirs feelings in Grendel that he does not know exist. The queen not only softens the whole of the meadhall and its occupants, but she softens the monster too. She adds light where there is nothing but darkness. How can Grendel not be touched by this--this act of complete unselfishness? "She was more child, those moments, than woman" (104), Grendel says, speaking of her remembrances and what she has lost. Perhaps impossible romantic love coupled with lost childhood, maternal love, stops Grendel from killing the queen when he has the chance. He may muse that killing the queen will stop the pain of wanting what he can never have. Imaginably, those are his thoughts when he whispers to the trees, "I hung balanced, a creature of two minds; and one of them said--unreasonable, stubborn as the

mountains--that she was beautiful. I resolved, absolutely and finally, to kill myself, for love of the Baby Grendel that used to be. But the next instant, for no particular reason, I changed my mind. Balance is everything . . ." (110). If Grendel kills the queen, he stops the torment. By balancing the scales, and not killing Wealtheow, he further punishes himself.

Grendel's quest for the meaning of life--his quest for love--is denied. He, in fact, pushes his goal away each and every time it is offered. Refusing to love, or for that matter, to accept *being* loved, is the "accident" (174) that leads him to his fall and ultimate death. Can this monster be an omen to us all? No, not an omen, but one should consider Grendel to be a powerful warning to live a more optimistic life, for Grendel, the eternal cynic, is punished horribly. To avoid his fate, we must be less questioning and hostile--more open to our own inner feelings. Grendel's ghost may advise us to take a chance and not hold back our emotions when it comes to love. This quest is a journey that we all need to take, a quest in which we all hope to succeed.

With Intent to Dissuade:
A Noble Priest Directs a Sermon to Pier delle Vigne

Howard Keeley

For Pier delle Vigne--sometime counselor at the court of Frederick II of Sicily and a writer of troubadour-style poetry and Latin prose--who took his own life having been accused of treason by his master.

This sermon assumes that delle Vigne is yet alive but familiar with the passions and confusion that would precipitate his suicide; indeed, a central premise of the address is that suicide is as much a disposition or state of mind as it is a physical act.

A priest, a clerk in holy orders, may be imagined to be delivering this homily on the First Sunday in Advent for which the Epistle is Romans 13.8-14. In that letter, Paul reiterates the sixth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") and indicates that to fulfill God's law is the stuff of loving (according to Dante, the ultimate means to God); he proceeds to exhort his audience to "cast off the works of darkness, and . . . put on the armor of light."

Father in Paradise, grant that we, who, as Saint Paul saith, carry in our bodies the death of Jesus, may reveal in our bodies the life of Jesus so that, when hard pressed, perplexed or persecuted, we may not be crushed, despairing, or destroyed (2 Corinthians 4.8-11). In the

name of Christ--whose giving of his life upon the cross was a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world--we pray. Amen.

Brethren, the psalmist says that the law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul (Psalms 19.7). Thus, as the conversion of our souls to the way of Christ is the foremost reason for our existence (and a choice that we must daily make in this difficult, inequitable world of men), it behooves us absolutely to follow the Lord's righteous laws. Moreover, in today's Epistle, Paul states that obeying divine ordinances and loving are one and the same thing. Therefore, let us consider the most elemental of our duties: the responsibility we bear to our own lives. We disaffirm life when we take it; we confirm life when we confront it courageously. Suicide, precious brethren, is the conclusive, outward sign of an inward denial of God's gift of human life, his grant to us of a standing a little lower than the angels (Psalms 8.5). However, it is the state of denying life that precedes, precipitates, and transcends the act of suicide that is the real issue; as with the sin of lust, a suicidal disposition and its cogitations are equal in kind and gravity to the actions that bear them out.

A suicidal attitude, then, is a prime sin. Even the ancient Greeks, void of Christian enlightenment, believed that it was the recourse of a coward and a contradiction of natural law. Our Church's recondite theologian, Saint Thomas Aquinas, tells us that it is a sin on three counts: it violates the self; it violates society; and, most grave of all, it is an impertinent attempt to violate inviolable God. Let us be clear, however, that we are speaking here of self-taking rather than self-giving. Christ's sacrifice was in faithful obedience to God and supremely generous; escapist suicide rejects love, not to say reason, and is terminally selfish. The wrongful nature of willful, self-directed killing by one who has been baptized in Christ is well indicated both in the nature of its punishment in the second ring of the seventh circle of Dante's Hell and in the fate Christian suicides' bodies may expect upon the corporeal resurrection that will accompany the Second Coming.

Our divine Creator purposely implanted in us, as in all His creatures, vigorous and necessary instincts of self-preservation and self-love. Our constant striving to obtain sustenance, shelter, safety, comfort, and pleasure and our inclination readily to defend our lives and what fortifies them are seminal indicators of these instincts.

Furthermore, like Aeneas fleeing Troy, we recognize responsibilities towards the lives of our parents and children, respectively the inherited wisdom of and forward hope for the race. Thus, to commit an act of irreparable violence against the self is to oppose heaven's design. Indeed given God's indication to our forefather Noah that from each man He "will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. . . for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 5-6), we can but imagine how insistent will be His seeking of an individual's inventory of his own life. The pagan Aristotle's contention that, because the decision to commit suicide is a personal one, the act cannot be a violation of the will is flawed: brethren, the will is manifestly desirous of life; the anguish and confusion visited upon it by the fall into a suicidal mentality are indications enough that one's sentient person is denied and mutated by self-inflicted death. Consider a man (by name, Dante Alighieri) who, a short time from now, will confront and be "bewildered" (13.24) by the stunted, pained essence of suicide and who will, moreover, be much impeded in coming to a rational understanding of that form. He will doubt reason itself and imply that it is unable fully to comprehend the condition; he will speak ambiguously such things as "I believe he believed that I believed"(13.25).

What we must believe without equivocation is that suicide is an offense against society, and that on two counts. In the first place, it deprives society of a basket of consequential benefits that suicide embodied; secondly, it affronts societal morality and sensibilities. The community is a function of the economic, political, and, by no means least, religious efforts of its individual members. It has a right to expect that those whom it succors will interact positively with its essential make up and not opt out as the flux of that dynamic make up presents challenges to and imposes stresses upon them. Indeed, this truth would seem to have been a constant before the apogee of society in Christ. There are recorded comments from the golden age of Greek civilization to the effect that an Athenian's suicide was unjust to his fellow *polis* dwellers. Significant psychological damage is sustained by the populace when it endures a suicide in its midst. The noble principles which underpin rational, ascendant societies are enfeebled by the lack both of discipline and altruism manifest in suicide. Indeed, in our beloved Sicily's court, there have been suicidally narrow premiums placed upon the import of state appointments and upon stilted forms of language (as if the *dolce stil nuovo* did not exist); for

example, I have heard a temporal position that should be distinguished by humble service being spoken of in narcissistic and affected terms as a "glorious office" (13.62). However, the affairs of the State are, perforce, subordinate to the affairs of the Church, Christ's body upon earth. How can this body retain its sanctity if it violates itself? Brethren, be mindful of the words of Saint Paul, "[Y]ou are the body of Christ, and each of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12.26). Society and the Church, therefore, have legitimate claims upon us as individuals. Beware, though, for the Epicurean Lucretius seductively avows that such claims are limited; heretically, he holds that there is no life beyond this sphere and, therefore, earthly pleasure should be the goal of human endeavor. To commit suicide, according to his crafty reasoning, is to deny the only opportunity for pleasure we can ever enjoy; self-murder is seen as a matter of equivocal significance. Consider the fate of the Epicureans Farinata and Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti in the sixth circle of Hell (they are denied knowledge of present time, that is to say, of real consciousness); consider and be wise.

The greatest wisdom, however, is a recognition that the self-taking of life is a slight against Creator God. Saint Thomas Aquinas maintains that, "Because life is God's gift to man . . . whoever takes his own life sins against God, even as he who takes another's slave sins against that slave's master" (*Summa Theologica* 2.2.64-65). God Himself has declared, "I put to death and I bring to life" (Deuteronomy 32.39); Paul, too, has spoken, "[N]one of us live to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord" (Romans 14.7-8). Thus, we must regard our bodies, in Pauline terms, as temples of the Holy Spirit, remembering that we are not our own but that we were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6.19-20). In Christ, God the Father made the unique sacrifice necessary to confirm life. This earthly existence is the valley of the shadow of death leading to the kingdom Christ has gone ahead to prepare for the faithful; God's will is that we faithfully endure this place so that, in the fullness of time, we may have life everlasting. The argument that suicide can be a dignified response to a catastrophe merely indicates a dearth of trust in God's loving, healing aid; to contradict Louis McNeice's "A Fanfare for the Makers," life cannot "be confirmed even in suicide." Willful suicide is a grave sin for the Christian as it denies the adequacy of Jesus's sacrifice as the means to overcome the tribulations of our current condition. The rejection of the animate self

as a vital limb or organ of Christ's body militant on earth can only be magnified in dismal, impotent Hell. There, the suicides, who have forsworn gracious God's redemptive power, must endure reasonable God's inflexible logic: their impudent acts of bodily destruction result in their being denied human form; indeed, even after the Final Judgement their bodies will not be restored to them (13.103-105). Their sense of having been victimized by the world and their concentration on the wrongs perpetrated against them cause their souls to be trapped in a "dark / . . . knotty and twisted / . . . poisonous" (13.4-6) state like that of a blighted tree. The suicidal disposition is both rigid and stunted; so too is its punishment. Brooding, plaintive self-absorption in life will find no relief in death: break, as it were, the merest branchlet off a "suicide tree" and it will "lament" that it is being persecuted (13.35); the tribulation and woe which the suicide tries to escape will sit upon his soul, debilitating and debasing it, throughout eternity.

My dear Sicilian brethren, array yourselves in the armor of light so that ye may overcome the barbed and tangled places of this mortal life; cast off any suicidal thought or conceit so that ye may honor yourselves, the State, the Holy Mother Church, and our Divine Father God.

Let us so live that to God may be ascribed, as is most justly due, all the appointed days of our lives in humble and forthright service. Amen.

The translation of the *Inferno* used above is by H.R. Huse.

Whether a Weatherman Would . . .

Jon Thompson

In the words of an old catch phrase, ignorance is bliss. Sometimes it is indeed, but I have also to note that this same ignorance can lead a soul astray and into the fiery maw of Hell. Knowledge is not an easy burden for such a sinner as I, but the Lord places this burden on me to better myself and any fellow soul He blesses me to come in contact with. I pray that the Lord will grant me the wisdom and the words to show why you, Johnny Beckman, and the rest of your fellow meteorologists need to repent of your sins.

As stated in Exodus 22:18, "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live." One aspect of witchcraft is telling of future events. Truly, such an act is an affront to God. Such an act is typical of our sinful attempts to replace flawless divine knowledge with our own flawed scientific knowledge. We may believe that our knowledge is enough, but, in the end, it is as if defeated by Aaron's rod in Exodus 7:12.

In this sermon, I would like to illustrate the ills of this sin with two points. One, if one practices such an art as meteorology, then one is guilty of replacing all knowledge with faulty knowledge. Two, if one then equates one's own knowledge with the Lord's, one, in effect, is trying to turn others away from God so that they will give one glory

instead. Through God's grace, I will show you how this road leads to damnation.

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 16:2-3, Jesus states that "when it is evening, you say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red. In the morning, it will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O you hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky; but can you not discern the signs of the times?" In this passage, Jesus indicts the weathermen for their chief offense, their inability to understand what forces are behind the change in the weather. Since they cannot really understand the reasoning behind the weather, how can they honestly say they understand the weather?

The "science" of meteorology is like the house of sand: the foundation upon which it is erected is not capable of support one hundred percent of the time. Our weathermen use fancy gadgets such as Doppler radar, barometric measuring devices, and so on. Sometimes the equipment breaks down and can no longer do its job effectively, if it ever did its job effectively to begin with. Since it is established then that this "science" is not accurate, what is the result? Confusion and distress, the eternal fruits of sin.

Let us explore an example in the life of my friend Suzy de Meer. Last week, when Suzy listened to the morning news, the weather center said that the day would be a beautiful, sunny one. Delighted to hear this, Suzy decided to go to the lake and swim for a while. While swimming in the lake, she was horrified to see a thunderstorm appear suddenly. A bolt of lightning struck the lake, killing Suzy. Our not-so-accurate "science" counselled a path that was fraught with danger. In trying to look ahead, our weatherman totally forgot about the here and now, an oversight that led to the death of Suzy.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the soothsayer, the magician, the diviner, and all who attempt to see into the future are punished in a gruesome manner. Their heads are twisted around, and they are forced to walk backwards. All things considered, it is a fitting punishment. In life, these people attempted to see into the future and divine a path to take. In Hell, they are forced to look back on their lives, lives wasted by trying to conjure a vision that was not meant for them. Their incomplete vision leads not only themselves, but also any that follow, down into damnation. Shall we suffer such things to come to pass? No. We must be ever vigilant, then, to eradicate this arrogance from our life. Let us pray then, to be spared this sin.

Heavenly Father, please hear the pleas of a repentant sinner. We know that Yours is the only true knowledge and that all others is false. Help these men like Mr. Beckman by showing them that Yours is the only way. Give them the wisdom to understand your grand design as you did with Noah, the original weather forecaster. All this we ask in your name. Amen. May you go with God.

An Argument for Evolution and Its Place in the Curriculum

Amber Chambers

A great deal of controversy exists surrounding the teaching of evolution in our public schools. Many people perceive the idea of evolution as impossible and inconsistent with the tenets of Christianity. In light of all the evidence supporting this process, it is puzzling that some people refuse to consider its possibility. People should realize that the existence of evolution need not be incongruous with religious beliefs.

Evolution should be taught in science classes because it, unlike creationism, involves scientific ideas that can be tested, researched, and perhaps proven. Creationism, on the other hand, involves supernatural claims that cannot be studied. We can see proof of evolution in the fossil record, in the field of embryology and in observing the vestigial organs of many animals, including humans.

First of all, let us examine the fossil record. Creationists have set forth the concept that all organisms were made simultaneously and fully developed six thousand to ten thousand years ago. A careful study of rocks and fossils tells us that the earth is 4.6 billion years old, which is much older than the proponents of creationism would have us believe. It is important to realize that scientists arrived at this conclusion only after studying the results of tests that were performed

by almost one hundred independent laboratories worldwide during the course of thirty years. Scientific conclusions are made only after repeated tests by different individuals yield similar results; they are not arbitrarily made.

As a general rule, the oldest rock layers contain the fossils of more primitive organisms. Researchers see this separation of fossils as evidence that all organisms were not made simultaneously. For example, rock strata formed in the earliest era, the Precambrian, hold fossils of algae and invertebrates such as jellyfish. The next era, the Paleozoic, saw the rise of hard-bodied invertebrates such as trilobites, as well as fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Mammals and birds came about in the Mesozoic era. The Cenozoic era marked the rise of primates and eventually of human beings.

Embryology also yields much evidence against creationism. Early in their embryological development all vertebrate classes, including mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and birds, resemble one another to a great extent. All vertebrate embryos undergo a stage in which gill slits are present. Creationism is at a loss to explain this, but these occurrences are readily accounted for in the theory of evolution.

Evolution is also supported by the presence of vestigial organs. Rudimentary femurs exist in the skeletal systems of whales and in some snakes, thus upholding the evolutionary claim that whales arose from land mammals and snakes from lizards. Humans as well have vestigial organs such as tail vertebrae, ear-wiggling muscles, a veriform appendix, wisdom teeth, and a nictitating membrane. This suggests that humans originated from less advanced life forms.

Many people who would otherwise be willing to consider the evidence in favor of evolution refuse to do so for fear that it would be a denial of the existence of God. Science and religion do not necessarily have to be conflicting elements, however. Many people believe in theistic evolution, which is the notion that evolution is God's plan. In 1950, Pope Pius XII said in his book, *Humani Generis*, that "a Catholic is free to accept any scientific theory about human origins provided it is acknowledged that at some stage, God infused an immortal soul into the human body." Science has never taken a stand one way or another regarding the existence of gods or souls. Most of the mainstream Protestant denominations such as Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians are also willing to accept the theory of evolution. Evolutionary theory is taught in the same manner in the

universities founded by these religions as it is in the large public universities.

After a careful examination of all the proof that evolution exists and that science and religion need not come in conflict it is obvious that there should be no controversy surrounding the teaching of evolution. It is a valid theory that does not interfere with Christian beliefs.

The Simple Beauties of Nature

Brenda Rone

Leaves of a tall, weathered oak tree billow in the wind. Nearby, resting motionless on an exquisite pattern of dew dropped webbing, a spider waits patiently for its next victim. Suddenly, without warning, a circular ripple emerges on the water surface from a hungry fish acting on instinct to catch its next meal. Overlooking these such simple acts of nature, I used to take my surroundings for granted, but that quickly changed from a recent experience. A saying by John Keats, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," describes the feelings I have carried with me since that special day.

My new found discovery occurred last year when my biology class took a trip to the school forest. Bugs buzzing around my head, snakes scurrying across my pathway, cobwebs neatly strung between trees engulfing my body, and mud from a previous rainfall soaking my feet did not give me an enthusiastic first impression. Our day began with sample testing pond water and different species of plant life for acid concentration. Although I found these experiments interesting, picking up slimy, mold covered specimens did not rate high on my list of pleasurable activities. Breaking for twelve o'clock lunch, I began my aggressive battle with the ants and flies for my chicken sandwich and

apple. After successfully finishing my meal, I started to relax and enjoy the beautiful, warm fall day.

Ending an unusual morning, my classmates and I chose teams and set off on an adventuresome scavenger hunt. No more than five minutes passed before I came face to face with my worst nightmare. Less than five feet away, a garter snake, the length of my arm, slithered out from under a pile of newly fallen leaves. Fortunately, dealing with snakes did not bother my partner, Seth, as he carefully picked it up. Sitting on a rock observing, I felt the panic-stricken feeling leave my body. To my surprise, I saw a strange beauty in that snake. Throughout the rest of our hunt, I held it admiringly with an intense fascination.

Shortly after our excursion, my biology teacher, Mr. Stineman, asked us to go off into the woods individually and write about what we observed. Sitting at the edge of the pond with my befriended, slithery reptile, I observed the natural setting. Amazingly, I never realized how much I took nature for granted. Guilty all my life, I always looked at the total picture and did not take the time to observe the smallest hidden features.

That day, I felt a refreshing awakening to a whole new world. I found beauty in the way the wind rustled leaves of spectacular hues that I thought only belonged in a box of Crayola crayons. Oddly enough, nature seemed determined to prove to me all it had to offer. Out of nowhere, dragonflies and butterflies gracefully landed on my arms as if they accepted me as part of their world. Meanwhile, my little friend showed its impatience by dancing on my lap and weaving between my fingers. Knowing that it needed to get back to its duties, I gently let the snake out of my hand and watched it slither away.

In the end, my experience lasted only a short time; however, since then, I view my surroundings differently. Taking in all the beauty that nature offers gives me an indescribable feeling within myself. I encourage everyone who realizes he has spent little time with nature to stop and take the time to appreciate these wonderful gifts.

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contributors