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Technicolor Sunsets: The Deceptive Glamour of Smog

Erica Anderson

Glamour and smog appear to be exclusionary opposites. Yet they find a common ground in Hollywood. While luxury and material wealth line the avenues, smog blankets the sky – a stark reminder of the harmful consequences of human industrialism. As manufacturing, machinery use, and the global population expand, so too do pollution and, more specifically, carbon dioxide emissions. Smog is an unequivocal manifestation of such emissions that distorts our view of the sky, making the natural appear unnatural as Ellen Hart articulates in her poem “Sunset by Dow.”

Eloquently illustrating a sunset in smog-laden Hollywood, Hart reveals that the sunset’s brilliance is in fact attributable to the pollution in the air. Dedicated to Al Gore, the poem functions similarly to Gore’s film An Inconvenient Truth by conjuring up a visual reminder of the environmental degradation we humans are responsible for. Paradoxically, the sunset represents both the revelation of environmental degradation and the commerce and commercialism responsible for its synthetic quality. It mimics the role of commercialism in our lives by deceiving the viewer, as Hart confesses. Her humble admission allows the poem to operate on a more personal, reflective level rather than a pedantic one and to succeed in subtly imploring the reader to recognize the seriousness of global warming before it is too late.

By revealing the pollution plaguing our atmosphere, the sunset alludes to Al Gore’s film. Hart immediately characterizes the sunset as composed of and produced by chemicals in the title “Sunset by Dow.” Dow ostensibly refers to the Dow Chemical Company. During my interview with Ellen Hart, she explained that she knew Dow was a chemical company and assumed it had a poor environmental record. However, she offered that the title “just came to me. I didn’t go looking anything up” (Hart). Upon my own examination, I found that Dow epitomizes the chemical industry’s environmental negligence.

Currently the second largest producer of chemicals worldwide, Dow possesses an appalling environmental and human rights record. During the Vietnam War, Dow manufactured and supplied the military with the caustic chemicals Napalm and Agent Orange, responsible for thousands of deaths and birth defects among Vietnamese civilians. Subsequently, Dow subsumed Union Carbide, a chemical producer in Bhopal, India that leaked enormous quantities of toxic poisons in 1984. Dow has refused to clean up the toxic spill. Lastly, Dow holds responsibility for dioxin contamination and the production of Chlorpyrifos, a carcinogenic pesticide (“Dow Chemical Company”). All of the above endeavors demonstrate Dow’s lack of consideration for the human and ecological cost of chemical production. Considering the company’s role in polluting the planet, “Dow” is an appropriate term to denote ecological destruction.

Hart develops the theme of contamination, writing that the sunset “wasn’t natural” (line 1) and that the “Technicolor spectacle was spun from smog / chemicals of commerce” (5-7). The sunset’s neon radiance manifests the presence

of industrial and transportation emissions in the air. Hart reiterates this correlation between the brilliance of the sky's colors and air pollutants by describing the aerial palette: "smoky violet / luminous silver / burnt sienna" (13-15) and classifying it as a "carbon collection" (16). The adjectives used in defining the colors insinuate the process of industrial production. Hart refers to smoke, light or electricity production, and combustion. These processes contribute significantly to the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as she asserts. Hart explained that she did in fact live in Hollywood and noticed the particularly vibrant sunsets. Upon learning of the role exhaust plays in their formation, she was disturbed (Hart). Literally bringing light to the smog covering the sky, the sunset raised Hart's awareness of pollution. Gore's film has similarly impacted many.

Though most people are aware of global warming to some extent, especially in Santa Cruz, An Inconvenient Truth has encouraged individuals to take concrete actions to reduce fossil fuel consumption. The film elucidates the severity of climate change through stark visual imagery. Gore exemplifies the warming planet by juxtaposing photographs of past glaciers and the barren, dry land now in their place. Such compelling imagery contributes to the film's inspirational quality. One friend explained that after seeing the film, she planned to redesign her home in order to make it more energy efficient. Though Hart did not write her poem in response to the film, she was impacted by it. She mentioned that after watching the film, she bought multiple copies of it to distribute in order to raise awareness and encourage action in regard to climate change (Hart). The film underscores the urgency with which we must act to curtail further environmental damage. Gore's dramatic visual presentation is paralleled by the vivid language and spotlight on smog offered by the sunset in the poem – a connection furthered by Hart's film references.

Through her location and artistic reference, Hart reinforces the link between the sunset and Gore's film. The Hollywood setting alludes to the movie industry and indirectly to An Inconvenient Truth. Additionally, Hart strengthens this relationship by describing the sunset as a "Pointillist canvas" (9). Pointillism refers to paintings in which dots of primary colors are applied to the canvas to convey an image, similar to the way in which television screens transmit color ("Pointillism"). Thus, the sunset communicates the visual message in the same way that a film does. Hart's choices in framing and composing the sunset underscore the shared content and imagery between it and Gore's film. However, while both serve to expose environmental damage, the sunset simultaneously mimics commercialism, as its superficial beauty distracts the viewer from the smog enveloping the sky.

Serving as an instrument of seduction and deception, the sunset symbolizes the industry and commercialism responsible for its unnatural brilliance. Hart's reaction to the sunset demonstrates the power of visual glamour to entice regardless of what lies beneath the surface. Hart writes of "plotting my escape from the poisonous maze" (19-20), revealing her intention to extricate herself from smoggy Hollywood, or more broadly from commercialism and materialism. The reference to the toxicity surrounding her functions both literally and metaphorically. It alludes to the pollutants in the air and to the mentality of consumerism that lures us in. Hart acknowledges her submission to this su-

perfidious attraction, admitting, “still I was seduced by the set / captive like the rest” (21-22). In spite of her desire to escape from the poisonous atmosphere of chemicals and commerce, she is enthralled by the stunning facade of the sunset or the face-value of material goods.

Hart confirmed this interpretation, explaining that Hollywood and the entire poem allude to movie sets and facades. “It’s not real. It is this chemically-induced stupor,” she said in reference to Hollywood. She explained that living in Hollywood you are seduced by your surroundings. Individuals focus on making a living without realizing the toxicity of their environment, both in terms of chemicals and relentless commercialism, which entice and deceive (Hart). By divulging her capitulation to the trappings of a materialistic society, Hart exhibits an uncommon humility among authors discussing social problems. She includes herself in the broader human community of captivated, unquestioning viewers.

Cars exemplify the role of the sunset in relationship to its viewers. We humans are dependent upon them and readily consume them, lured by their shiny facades without considering their detrimental ecological impacts. The product’s radiance distracts us from its byproducts, as the sunset’s striking colors draw Hart’s attention away from pollution and the need to alter her environment. Though she recognizes the prevalence of contamination and the importance of changing her lifestyle, the sunset’s brilliance overrides these impulses. Similarly, although many individuals are aware of global warming and their role in it, the marketing and consumerism mandated by society, particularly in the United States, overwhelm ecological considerations. Thus the superficial glamour of materialism or of the sunset in the case of the poem overpowers individual conscience. As a result, consumption and pollution increase. However, such public deception is no longer tenable as the dire environmental situation becomes evermore apparent.

While Hart evidences the tendency to succumb to deceptive commercial messages, she indicates that ultimately the reality of the climate crisis and its encroachment on our lives must precipitate our acknowledgement of it. The terse, abrupt ending to the sunset is declared by the final two lines: “Then the curtain came down. / The show was over” (23). Such definitive finality emphasizes the fleeting beauty of the spectacle in contrast to the persistent, lingering pollution that remains after the light descends. The entire poem romanticizes the sunset, and the ending thrusts the reader into reality, a reality that is grim and dark. By identifying the curtain falling, Hart alludes to the end of a performance, classifying the sunset as a fictional facade masking pollution. Upon the sunset’s termination, we are confronted with the reality of human-induced environmental destruction and encouraged to personally consider it. The closure serves to deflate the sunset’s surreal magnificence. It belies the idea that the chemicals comprising the display are harmless. Hart seems to suggest that despite the manipulative ploys of commercialism, acknowledgement of environmental contamination will prevail due to the magnitude or darkness and omnipresence of the harm already done.

In commenting on her poem, Hart discussed “being lulled and then waking up” to the realities of Hollywood and our environment’s condition. She explained that like the sunset, Hollywood seduced and distracted her, and then she awoke

to the devastating impacts of industry and frenetic commercialism. Asked if she would consider dropping the final line, Hart explained that she wanted to keep it in order to emphasize the finality of the sunset and more broadly of climate change. She highlighted that there will not be a repeat of natural resources and beauty "if we don't wake up" (Hart). Thus, she communicated the urgency with which we must act to curtail ecological destruction.

A bittersweet ending is a fitting finale to a poem characterized by opposing ideologies. Hart delineates the process of bringing to light global warming and the obstacles obscuring it. She posits, however, that the gravity and unavailability of climate change will and should spur individual efforts to face and hopefully combat it. As an initial step in this process, she urges the reader to recognize and contemplate environmental degradation by concluding the poem with an allusion to the bleak ecological condition of our planet. She asks us to awaken as she has done and then to consider what actions we can take in order to reduce our individual contributions to the severe climate crisis we face.

The evidence of global warming is strikingly strong, including rising global temperatures, melting glaciers, and rising ocean levels. Public recognition of it, too, has increased in large part due to Gore's campaign, and he deserves credit for his achievements in this area as Hart suggests. However, it is tragically ironic that Gore has taken minimal action to render his own home energy efficient. Though he purportedly acquires power from a green power plant and is installing solar panels, Gore's energy consumption in his Tennessee home increased substantially during 2005 from 16200 kWh to 18400 kWh per month (Pilkington). The key to arresting global warming is transforming awareness into action. And until leaders, especially those advocating for ecological preservation, begin to sacrifice their own luxury to conserve resources, individual citizens, who do not have access to green power plants, will continue to consume without restraint, deferring responsibility to future generations. As Gore himself and Hart point out, time is of the essence. We all, including Gore, must conserve now in order to lighten the dark horizon before us.

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Losing a Part of Ourselves

by Tegan Dixon

“There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved” (Sand), but what happens when that love is gone? In the poem *Without You*, poet Susan Allison tastefully illustrates the emptiness faced when the loss of a loved one occurs. Simple brief lines set the tone of the poem and add to the poem’s effectiveness. Perfectly worded, the title is essential and ties the poem together as a whole. The loss of the five senses is covertly compared to the loss of a loved one, challenging the reader to think critically and look beyond the surface of the poem. *Without You* effectively communicates the emptiness in a person’s life when their love leaves, and how in losing a loved one, a person loses part of their self.

When the loss of a loved one occurs, there is a tremendous feeling of emptiness. The simple short lines of one to three words in *Without You* help contribute to the tone of the poem. Although the phrases are coherent, they are merely sentence fragments and therefore are lacking in themselves. The lines are incomplete just as the person experiencing the loss, and this sentence incompleteness matches the tone of the poem, adding to its effectiveness.

Titles can make or break a piece of writing, and often titles are a phrase that is found later in the writing. The poem *I Am Waiting*, by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, repeats the phrase “I am waiting” over fifty times throughout the poem. Although the title fits with the repetition of the poem, hearing the phrase “I am waiting” over and over makes the reader weary. In *Without You*, the title makes the poem. The title *Without You* shows the reader that the poem is about the loss of a loved one. The actual poem makes no reference to another person, but is a comparison to the title itself. The poem comparing to the title is powerful and clever, for it is an interesting and unusual way of presenting the poem without being redundant.

Without You compares the loss of the five senses to the loss of a loved one. A person lacking touch, sound, sight, taste, and smell, would be incomplete. Each of these inborn senses are part of being human and without them life would be bland. Each of the references to the senses is hidden beneath the surface, creating more depth to the poem and making the reader think critically. In “an empty well” (line 1), a person is unable to feel the cool wetness of water, and therefore, the sense of touch is lost. Not only is touch gone, but the purpose for the well leaves as well. Sound cannot be heard in “a silent orchestra” (line 2). Orchestras are known to create beautiful music, and once the music is gone, the essence of the orchestra also leaves. “Invisible stars” (line 3) cannot be seen. Stars’ bright beauty has astounded human kind since the beginning of time, and the sun has brought life to planet earth. Without stars fiery light, not only would the star lose its splendor, but it would lose its purpose and life would be unable to exist. “Tasteless summer corn” (line 4) is unfulfilling to the palate. Without corn’s sweetness, it would be an undesirable. The pleasing taste of food has become part of society’s expectations, so the corn would no longer be wanted and be useless to society. The smell of ocean spray disappears when “ocean waves” (line 5) are “suspended / in mid air” (line 6-7). Not only is the scent of the ocean lost, but also the powerful movement of the water no longer exists. Without its movement, there is only a standing body of water, not

a wave. When these 5 senses are gone there is a sense of incompleteness. Not only are humans incomplete without their senses, but the well, orchestra, stars, corn, and waves lose the element that completes them. A loved one becomes a tremendous part of a person's life. In losing a loved one, a person loses a part of their self as well.

When separating from my boyfriend of two years, my heart was broken and I felt a deep emptiness. He had become not only the person that I loved, but my best friend as well. In losing him, I lost my best friend. Although the heart heals and new friends can be made, I lost something more. I am no longer the naïve girl I once was, trusting love to be enough. I will never again be able to give my heart away as freely as I had to him. I now have a shell around me in order to protect myself from getting hurt. In losing him, I lost a part of me.

Without You by Susan Allison uses short phrases adding to the tone of the poem, for the sentences are incomplete as the heart of the speaker. Unlike many poems, *Without You's* title is essential and sets up the poem without being redundant. The poem goes deeper than the surface. References to the loss of the five senses hidden throughout the poem are compared to the loss of a loved one, evoking the reader to reach for more meaning. The comparison is effective not only because the person suffers; losing the ability to touch, hear, see, taste and smell; but the orchestra, stars, corn, and waves lose their innate qualities and are lacking as well. Often poems accomplish little in many words; it is rare to find a poem that accomplishes as much in as few words as *Without You*. Through the poem's themes of loss and incompleteness, found both in the sentence structure and content of *Without You*, the poem achieves completeness. I may now be a different person due to my loss, but it has made me what I am today. I too am complete.

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News You Can (Not) Use

Erik Chalhoub

Debra Harmes Kurth, the author of the poem, “Inside the Rabbit-Hole” is disgusted with the insignificant news articles that are seen in the media today. I share the same point of view with Kurth; the media has gone too far in reporting senseless articles, and there seems to be no end to it. The news does provide you with important issues that occur everyday, but these stories seem to take a backseat to pointless articles in the breaking national news, such as reports about celebrities who just had a baby, or the results of a reality television show. With the state of the media today, many people are left uneducated about what is truly happening around the world.

In the poem, Kurth writes, “You can only eat so much paper.” (Line 5) To me, the “paper” is referring to a newspaper, and “eat” seems to mean “read.” What she is saying is that you can only take so much of these stories the media feeds you until it annoys you so much that you stop reading the news altogether. The reason why people stop following the news is because they are tired of trudging through completely meaningless stories just to get to the important articles. Significant articles should always be the first stories you see when you read a newspaper or visit a news website, but unfortunately, that is not always the case. While I was reading the online edition of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, I looked at the breaking national news headlines. At the top of the list, I found a headline, “American Idol Cuts another Contestant.” Was this story really worthy of breaking news? I think not.

It’s incredible that the media actually allows these stories to be published. Kurth feels the same way. When she writes, “In notebooks which came from the wrong kind of trees,” (Line 11) she is saying that paper is being wasted by these stories, and that no trees should be used for these inane articles. She also compares editors with “predators.” In any newspaper, it’s up to the editors to decide which stories should go in and which should not. By calling them “predators,” Kurth seems to suggest that the editors are money-hungry; destroying newspapers with useless articles just to collect their next paycheck.

“I have searched for years for an answer, / a rhyme, a reason...” (Line 1) Kurth has been wondering for years what the importance of some of these articles are. The book, “Telling the Story: The Convergence of Print, Broadcast and Online Media,” summarizes what news is in three words: relevance, usefulness, and interest. In order to see if an article qualifies as news, according to the book, you have to ask yourself, “So what?” or “Who cares?” Regarding most stories in the media, they couldn’t be classified in these categories. If you ask yourself “Who cares?” it will likely take you years to find an answer, just like Kurth has experienced.

In line 10, Kurth seems to switch over to the voice of the media, “Nothing comes out right when you live with a critic.” Critics will pick apart your article piece by piece, offering suggestions on how to change it, or they might just say that the story should never have been published. This is why the media might think that “nothing comes out right” with a critic, because by the time they’re done critiquing your story, it will be a shell of what it used to be.

This poem has an original form; in the fourth line of each stanza Kurth uses a different way of rhyming, for example:

“ingesting...digesting” (Line 4)

“lines...academic fines” (Line 9)

“editors...predators” (Line 14)

“ticking...old dog’s licking” (Line 19)

What is interesting is the comparison Kurth applies, for example, editors can be seen as predators. At the end of the first and last stanza, Kurth repeats “You can only eat so much paper.” To me, this reinforces her main point; that you can only read so much of the media’s articles until you become fed up with them.

As someone who is looking to have a career in the media, I’m concerned over the direction it is headed. The media focuses too much on the war in Iraq, or politics, and rarely does it cover positive news. It seems that the only thing that is worth reporting is death. If a story isn’t about death, then it is usually about something ridiculous. For example, I really don’t care about which celebrity got married, what President Bush does in his spare time, and so on. What would be a welcome change would be a focus on more positive news, such as the economy becoming stronger, and gas prices falling. The sports media, which I’m most interested in, seems to report sensible events, such as game recaps. But then again, a while back it reported that Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns had gotten a haircut, so the sports media isn’t all that different.

The media today has gotten out of hand, and there doesn’t seem to be an end in sight. At least there are some people, such as Debra Harmes Kurth, that are so disgusted with the media that they ignore it. The media cannot be trusted; even if you read every article in the news, you will never know what is really happening around you.

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A Rainy Season

E. Blessing

"I love the idea of plum-like rain. Rain like plums." States the narrator of "Rainy Season". The short story, "Rainy Season" is a chapter from a book in progress. It follows a teacher through a day of teaching at a Japanese middle school. Though this story has some bits that are difficult to read the overall lesson of the piece is read loud and clear. Through this short amount of time we see a glimpse of life in the everyday happenings of this teacher. The story is laced with Japanese words and ideas, which fills it with culture and makes it more intriguing to read.

This prose piece was a wonderful story but was hard to read. The author often jumbled the sentences so it required the reader to have to go back and read certain sentences over again, wrecking the flow of the story. In the first paragraph the author writes, "There's an etymological reason for it, involving a certain reading of the Chinese character for plum pronounced *bai* in this particular Japanese word although the Japanese word for plum is *ume*." This sentence is just illegible in the first reading. After several readings it is obvious the author meant to say that people confuse the Chinese reading for plum as the Japanese word for rainy season, therefore they get plum rains. Or, another problem area is, "As I'm leaving, two of the girls run out of the building to hand me one of the school's *kasa*, the traditional oiled paper umbrellas still used in public places and to be returned." The last bit of that sentence makes it slightly confusing. It would have been better if the author had broken up this sentence into two that went something like, "As I'm leaving, two of the girls run out and hand me a *kasa*. This is a traditional umbrella, made from oiled paper, which is used in public places and returned." Maybe it is less poetic, but it makes the story flow better. The last noticeable mistake by the author that disturbs the reading is the sentence, "Some of the kids squatting down to look under there are my English club kids, mostly girls talking excitedly." Though it is less of a nuisance than the other sentences it would have been more easily read as, "some of my English club kids are squatting down to look under there, mostly they are girls talking excitedly." It would have been better for the author to have read through some of this story to see for themselves if it read smoothly or not.

Despite the occasional re-read, the story was very well written and really sucked the reader in. The first paragraph starts us off with why the Japanese call their rainy season *nyubai* or literally translated as 'plum rains'. The author discusses how this came to be, but with a little research I have found that the author was either wrong or mislead. According to Japan-Guide.com, "In early summer, most parts of Japan get visited by a rainy season, the so called *tsuyu* (or *baiyu*), literally meaning "plum rain" (Japan-Guide), because it coincides with the season of plums ripening." And it is not, as the author said, a mystery of the language why it is called plum rain. One cannot say why the author said that it was a mystery, but certainly it made for a better story. After the first paragraph it starts into the true story about the teachers one-hour job teaching an English conversation club. It then evolves into a story about life and things we all need

to learn.

The story is very sweet in that it shows how life can throw you for a twist and the people you least expect can turn out to be heroes. The teacher is trying to teach the children English, and we discover that one of the children, Hirose-san, is a farmer's son. The statement was made when Hirose-san seemed unable to respond in English. In comparison with another character, Enya-san who is the brightest and the prettiest girl in class, Hirose seems almost dimwitted, looking to his friends for help during a lesson. However later when a kitten is trapped underneath a building and all the girls can do is coo at the kitten Hirose is the one that shines. In the end he becomes the hero of the story. For some this is how life can turn out, one minute the under-dog and next you're the hero. Born into a farmer's family it was understandable the Hirose did not seem as educated as the other children, yet when a crisis came up he was the one that was most able to deal with it.

In the end of the story the kitten is saved and given to the teacher by the children, this is a proud moment because this is proof that they must trust the teacher. They must love the teacher enough to give it something as precious as a kitten. The teacher takes it with little reluctance, but after letting it sink in life seems a little lovelier to the teacher.

Though the story had its tough-to-read parts and the error in facts it still was a very nice read. In the end the whole thing was tied together through shoes. At the beginning the narrator of the story tells about their riding shoes, and how in the rainy season that is all they can wear. It is so muddy in the rainy season their riding shoes are the only ones that can stand-up to the mud everyday. In the last paragraph the sentence, "All the way back to the station, my shoes thickening with every step, I warm my hand by reaching into my coat pocket to make sure he's alive in the *furroshiki*." I think the author did very well keeping the story together, especially considering that this is only one chapter of a book. The continuity makes up slightly for the odd bits of writing. Overall this is a very enjoyable piece of prose and I would suggest everyone to read it.

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Exposing the Brownies

Megan Fitzgerald

Read “Naked Brownies” and you can overhear the Wilbourne sisters agreeing that a ‘naked’ dessert—such as a pie without any topping—is shameful. “‘All that chocolate and nothin’ to cover it up!’” The narrator who puts us in the position to eavesdrop on these characters, however, clearly holds a contrasting philosophy. Clifford Henderson manages to lay the rich interiors of the sisters’ lives bare before us as the story plots the course of a single Sunday afternoon and the narrator allows the reader into the character’s minds and memories. Once Henderson shows what is beneath the surface of a single day, we can see how our unanswered longings continue to shape us even after we try to cover them up.

The two main characters are introduced to us as Piggin and Heifer—names that seem appropriate (even if rude) once their physical statures and eating habits are described. Farther into the story, the narrator reveals that “Piggin” and “Heifer” are actually nicknames for Rose and Grace, respectively. The duality of their birth names and acquired nicknames, the former as more beautiful and pleasant and the later as ugly and unpleasant, is in accord with their experiences as youths in contrast to the harsher realities they met growing up. The text suggests that Rose was molested—and probably raped—by the father she loved. And that Grace fell in love with a friend, only to be rejected by her because of the pressures of a heteronormative society. Both sisters become addicted to food for gratification and escape from these past traumas, thus assuming the identities of Piggin and Heifer.

A metaphor from the third paragraph of the story introduces us to the motif that will carry throughout: food as a coping mechanism. The narrator informs us knowingly about Heifer: “She’s always quick to tell you how much simpler grocery store walking is. ‘The food keeps your mind off the walking’”. Apparently Heifer would literally acknowledge the power of food as a distraction within the context of walking through a grocery store, but the “walking” in that statement can also be seen as a representation of the act of going on with life in general. For Heifer, walking through the grocery store is strenuous and uncomfortable, but she brings herself to go out and do it because of all the food she can occupy herself with. Similarly, both sisters use food and the cultural rituals surrounding its preparation and consumption as a way to preoccupy themselves and be able to go on with their less-than-ideal lives. The way food dominates their lives is similar to the effects of more classical addictions, such as those involving drugs. Scientific evidence suggests that obesity-related over-eating and substance abuse disorders share a neurobiological pathway (Joranby, 202).

As Piggin and Heifer eat biscuits together before they begin preparing dishes for the church potluck, the role food plays for them is illustrated: “Piggin slathers a biscuit with butter and apricot jam. The smell of apricots reminds her of when she was happy, when she was still...Rosie Wilbourne!” Similarly, “Across the table, Heifer is deep in her own memories. She swirls her tongue around a bite of biscuit, sweet peach jam and butter, going back to a time when she, too,

was young". Each sister escapes into memories of what their lives were, especially before each of their loves betrayed them (the father by abusing Rose, the friend by judging Grace as if their affection had been wrong). The pleasure of eating temporarily fills the void that ruined love left behind. Grace even recalls kissing her friend as "the sweetest thing she'd ever known", which connects the sweetness of a feeling like affection to the palpable kind of sweetness that is much more accessible to her in the form of foods like jam or a dessert.

The author employs other metaphors in the story by utilizing insight about seemingly limited subjects, such as a single character, to represent the nature of the story as a whole. For example, near the beginning of the story, the author uses Heifer's inclination to lose her house key as a representation of her approach to dealing with the keys to her own life. "But Heifer insists on storing them in her junk drawer where they sink below layers of memories she's not decisive enough to throw away, nor practical enough to use". Later in the story, Heifer contemplates some of the most important memories of her life: the time she spent with the girl she was in love with. She mulls over these memories, "not decisive enough" to give them up and stop thinking about her, "nor practical enough" to take steps to resolve her feelings.

A major theme of the entire story is shown through the narrator's commentary on Rose, "Piggin still loves to sing and does so with a gusto at church, but people try to ignore her. Her voice has a longing that scares 'em. And folks being how they are don't much like being reminded of what could be". The longing the others can hear in her voice reminds them that they all have their own. And if simply hearing Piggin sing evokes the unanswered longings of the church members, all Henderson has shown us can easily do the same for the readers.

The narrator makes sure we know that the element of *what could be* is a crucial part of the characters' thoughts. The interaction between the two sisters consists of food-related activities and gossiping about fellow church-goers, both of which are forms of distraction. Each of them entertains *what could be* in their private thoughts (Rose about singing and Grace about the girl she loves), but they do not ever actually bring those subjects up. The conversations stay on the surface because they would rather be distracted from the deeper issues than be reminded of them.

When Rose considers her awareness of Grace's love for another woman, she categorizes the subject as "One of those things their mama would say was 'best left unsaid'". The characters in the story—the sisters as well as a general feeling of the shared town sentiment—would agree with Rose's mother. The author, however, has chosen a conflicting stance to their view. We see the concrete consequences of suppressing emotions with the mention of Heifer's literal heart attack being caused by a broken heart. The reader can then consider whether the love Heifer had for her friend was really 'wrong', or if the fear of it is. Likewise with the general attitude of leaving any certain topic unsaid: what has ignoring their problems actually done to the characters?

Like those who hear the undertone of longing in Rose's singing voice and are reminded of their own sense of *what could be*, we are left to consider what the currents of yearning Piggin and Heifer try to hide remind us of. Luckily, in exposing his characters for us, Henderson has provided an alternative to leaving things unstated and unexamined.

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The Consequences Of A War Triolet

Jared Carlsen

The reality of war is this, people die. It's a sad thought but it's true. The poem "War Triolet" is a very simplistic poem. Yes, the poem follows the Triolet format, however, with weak rhyming and a message that everybody knows about. "War Triolet's" message is the violence and uncleanness of war and the innocent people who become involved.

But everybody knows war is violent and unclean. If you research "War Triolet" you will not come up with any results. This may be because a triolet about war does not work out, due to the fact that war has so many things to say in a poem. The poem "Prayer In Time Of War" exemplifies this because it shows the broad topics of war, such as the soldiers turning from god and following the devil into war; in addition the soldiers asking god for forgiveness because they have killed. Religion is the main topic of "Prayer In Time Of War". When the soldier says, "God! We have but one prayer to-day—O Father, teach us how to pray./ For prayer is strong, and very strong; But we have turned from Thee so long To follow gods that have no power "(Nesbit). This quote shows the soldiers loss of religion due to the horrific consequences of warfare. To this soldier the battle field has become a resemblance of hell blinding him from god and heaven. The soldier is asking god for forgiveness because he has forgotten the prayer of god. This intertwines with the next stanza because it tells the reader the reason for the loss of prayer and religion of the soldier. The soldier tells god they were "following a god with no power". The author may be saying that the god with no power is Lucifer. These two stanza's represent the depth of meanings a war poem can have. This poem represents the soldier's loss of religion because they have followed Lucifer into battle, and in their last moments of life they ask god for forgiveness.

Unlike the poem "Prayer In Time Of War", War Triolet is an attempt to send a message about the uncleanness of war. However this message will have zero effect, because war will always be unclean and every body knows war is unclean. The poet then uses examples of how war is unclean: "Innocents get killed, bullets miss" (line 3). The author's message here is so simple and plain. The author is telling the reader something the reader already knows. I do agree with the author that killing innocent civilians is terrible, but it's a part of war. After WWI an estimated 17,000,000 (Matthew) civilians were killed around the world, WWII an estimated 30,497,000 (Matthew) were killed around the world, during Vietnam an estimated 1,000,000 (Matthew) civilians were killed in North and South Vietnam combined, and in the current Iraq war 100,000 (civilians have died, however, this poll for the Iraq war was taken in 2004. This proves the point that the author is telling the reader may already know about, and therefore have no effect on the reader. The author's next point is: "Someone attacks, someone resists, / Our lives are mangled in between" (Lines 5 & 6). In this stanza the author is referring back to the stanza about innocent civilians. A war begins when a country attempts to invade another country. When this happens, the civilian's lives are caught in between and during the war the civilians life will be changed

until the war is over. The war in Iraq is a prime example of civilian's lives changing. Not only are the people in Iraq affected by the war but immigrants from Iraq and neighboring countries have been affected.

After the World Trade Center was attacked, eventually leading us to the Iraq War, president Bush signed the Patriot Act into law. This relates to "War triolet" because it refers to the quote, "Our lives are mangled in between". The majority of people, who targeted by the Patriot Act were of Middle Eastern descent. One of the most tragic results of the Patriot Act was the delayed-notification searches, also known as the "sneak and peek"; this allows investigators to search a person's home or business and to seize property without disclosing for weeks or months that they were there. This would begin by a person assuming their neighbor or someone they know may be a terrorist, and then the person would report the suspect to the FBI. As a result thousands of suspected terrorists were taken from their homes and detained at a local detainee center. Many of these suspected terrorists were innocent and had never committed a crime in their life; however, they were found dangerous based solely on stereotypes. Not all suspected terrorists were sent to local centers, some of them were sent to Guantanamo Bay. At Guantanamo Bay there are no restrictions, elderly men and even young children are held captive. This shows that war effects everybody involved in it, even if they are thousands of miles from the battle site.

War will never change, thousands of innocents will die in every war and civilian lives will be changed during the period of war. Writing a triolet about war is very difficult to write to about, because the topic of war is so broad. Also a triolet consists of only 8 lines, which could create difficulty of getting the authors point across. In the case of the poem "War Triolet", the author's message of the uncleanness of war and the innocent people affected by it fails to capture the reader because the poem gives no imagery or metaphors for the readers imagination.

The Veiled Cost of War

Kenny Roberts

Today, the monetary cost of the Iraq conflict has cost the populace of the United States a projection close to \$410,000,000 thus far. One of the largest social problems that face the United States is the lack of education that our children are getting, and the culprit behind the lack of education is the lack of funding. With the amount of money we have spent so far in Iraq we could have hired what is projected to be around 7,500,000 teachers, or gave scholarships to an estimated 19,876,000 students to public universities. These numbers are mind blowing, and give obvious reason as to why it is imperative for a resolution to be found in Iraq; but what about the hidden costs of wars? What about the shattered lives of the children of Iraq, lack of medical and social services for veterans returning from war, or the way families must adapt when a family member does not return home from Iraq? *War Triolet* may be short, but its repetitive form is the strength to the poem. The poem *War Triolet* evokes many emotions, images, and ideas of how truly costly war can be.

Can you imagine just for a moment's time that everything you knew and loved was taken from you? Your entire family killed, your neighborhood reduced to rubble, and no one to turn to for help "Innocents get killed, bullets miss, // Our lives are mangled in between". That is what faces an estimated 40,000 displaced children in Iraq in 2006 (IRIN). The Children of Iraq have been swept aside like trash and have just blended into chaos that is Iraq. Children have had their innocence and childhoods destroyed by their families dying before their eyes, constantly moving, and their schools destroyed. It has been projected that 818,000 children ranging from 8-11 are no longer attending school (Eccleston).

Conflict disrupts normal life, forces millions of families to flee their homes, separates children from their families and reduces schools to rubble... Every day, these children wake up to a life characterized by hardships and work, and a bleak outlook for their future. (Eccleston)

To be in a situation that only looks more miserable and depressing as each day passes has to be tremendously hard on the lives of the children. The effect of having to watch their lives crumble has begun to take effect, one study found that 1 in 10 children in Iraq have post-traumatic stress disorder (Eccleston). That is the same disorder that affects thousands of US troops that return home from the Iraq conflict. They have had their childhood stolen from them in a war that they did not want to fight.

Thousands of people lining the streets waving flags, confetti raining down from tall buildings, and a parade with troops returning home from war, what happened to those kinds of welcoming home? Today a soldier's welcome home is a Veteran Affairs Hospital administration that is in shambles and has had many top Army officials resign or forced into retirement because of their inability to handle the services that are supposed to help our troops return to their normal lives. Walter Reed VA hospital in Washington D.C. is supposed to be one of the top VA hospitals in the Nation, but yet. Conditions of the hospitals are " mold, rot, mice and cockroaches, but also a larger bureaucratic indifference that

has impeded some soldier's recovery."(Priest and Hull). "The real problem with war is this--/ It's almost never, ever clean." How is it fair that everyday people are thrust into the conflict and are maimed or disabled for the rest of their lives, and when they return they are pushed into a medical system that is decrepit and out of date? The average length of stay at Walter Reed was about 300 days (Priest and Hull) , and the care was overwhelming sub-par by medical standards today. The problem was not just Walter Reed though, the same problems have come up with VA hospitals throughout the country. In Vallejo many of the workers are working well past their prime, and are unable to keep up with the work that is required of them.

The VA hospitals are not good either except for the staff who work so hard. It brings tears to my eyes when I see my brothers and sisters having to deal with these conditions. I am 70 years old, some say older than dirt but when I am with my brothers and sisters we become one and are made whole again.(Priest and Hull)

Medical caregivers are overworked in VA Hospitals and the equipment is run down or broken. There are about 24.5 million veterans in the United States and the VA Hospitals are overworked and under funded, and the political body has until recently failed to even recognize the need for a complete overhaul of the VA.

Soldiers have given up their humanity and their life in what they believed was a just cause to free a nation. "Someone attacks, someone resists," this has happened in Iraq. When we attacked and overthrew Saddam Hussein régime, we also empowered many local militias and religious leaders to have their say in their government. We now fight not against an army, but militias, religious sects, and jihads', fighting guerilla warfare reminiscent of the Vietnam War, with the jungles being replaced by concrete structures. Since the beginning of the Iraq conflict on March 2003 the US casualties stands at least 3,223. Those are 3,233 families that now have to cope with the loss of a family member. Many of these families have lost head of households, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters. How do you cope when the cost of war is so dear? One such family has recently gained national attention when the widow of a soldier killed in Iraq two years ago gave birth to his son. The son was conceived from his sperm that he left when he deployed to Iraq.

Before Brian left for Iraq, the couple hadn't succeeded at having a baby. Brian donated his sperm so K.C. could keep trying while he was away. They never really considered he might not come home. Brian signed a document that stated in the event of his death K.C. could decide whether to use his sperm. Based on that, she made the decision to have Brian's baby. (Oppenheim)

It is hard to image that couples and families that were once planning a life together to have to take some precautions now in case, one might not return home. It's weird to think now that modern science once used for people who couldn't conceive to now have to use the same technology, to create someone with that someone that they have lost. To create that future that these families once hoped for, they now need a helping hand from something that their loved ones have left behind.

The cost of war is never black or white, nor is its victory to its victor. The human loss of life and the monetary funds are easy to count, but what about

those who don't fit into those categories. How do we measure the impact that it has had on our families, on our Veterans, or the children of Iraq and United States that now have to grow up in a conflict that has tainted their view on reality? We can't fit these individuals cleanly into one group or another; they bleed into many other collections of the cost of war. The real problem with war is this—It's almost never, ever clean.

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Lou Harrison was often on the periphery
of my most intense loves in music.
Now I'm thinking, it's like the sun
is on the periphery of life on earth.
unsigned, <http://www.otherminds.org/shtml/Irememberlou.shtml>

O Lou He Was a Sifu

Ilya Baykin

Great teachers are rarely remembered as such. A few times in mankind's history, great teachers were venerated as gods, their teachings twisted and ignored by a deaf worshipful world. Jesus and Buddha didn't charge for lessons, but then again, they either willed food into being or were fed by their followers. Practitioners of skill other than direct transmission of the Word don't usually have the option. Many great artistic figures supported themselves by teaching their craft. They are remembered for their creations, not for what they passed on to the people around them. Painters, writers, and musicians do not gain recognition by guiding lesser talents. J.S. Bach is known for his music, not for his pupils. Salieri's school of geniuses was the exception rather than the rule, and still, he is remembered chiefly as Mozart's rival.

It's rare to experience the teacher aspect of a great artist. It sticks out in one's mind. So it was with great interest that I read the results of an internet search on Lou Harrison, the late subject of "O Lou He Was a Lulu". I liked what the poem had to say about his talents as a teacher, and I figured that a bit of research couldn't hurt. Three hours later, I realized that the poem was completely unique in voice and content. It is completely unlike anything that has ever been written about Harrison. O Lou He Was a Lulu is a low-key remembrance of a departed friend, one that makes no mention that he was the last of his generation of experimental American composers. Instead of being a eulogy, this poem is an invitation to understanding what a real teacher can do, and how his students fail him.

Lou was known for his work with gamelan. Gamelan is a percussion ensemble consisting of gongs, chimes, and metallophones, popular throughout Indonesia. The tunings, notations, and time signatures used for gamelan are completely different from Western systems. The sound can range from discomfiting cacophony to gorgeous waves of bright shimmering beats. "Manufacturing a gamelan" is a reference to his making the first "American Gamelan" with his longtime partner, Bill Colvig. Lou was fearless in his use of the gamelan. His own were made from junkyard materials, his compositions combined western strings and gamelan in unprecedented ways. He could use the sheer number of instruments to produce an unsettling effect, or to make music of great beauty. Ever since learning this, I've found my days haunted by gamelan. It clangs in on the random college stations I listen to and shimmer-shambles through my watering holes, altering the background of my world into something *else*.

Perhaps into the world that Harrison inhabited full-time. A dimension of thought and action through which he guided his pupils, though it was a "realm they would not lay claim to" (19-20). This is the way of teachers, and heartbreakingly often, the way of students. The years of brilliance that a teacher has behind

him or her can be transmitted in the span of moments, provided a student is receptive. In the teacher's absence, though, there is a vacuum of experience. "Everyone speaks of about how he got/them to do things (musical and other)/they'd not the slightest notion *could* do." People rarely allow themselves to do the improbable unless someone gives them permission, often on a subconscious level. "They'd thought it took talent, practice" (12). Without having first proved to themselves that they have done it, can do it, and will continue to be able to do it, human beings feel too uncertain to perform. Taking risks on an unlikely ability is not considered a survival trait. A great teacher will transmit not just his experience, accumulated knowledge and skill, but also his confidence, his attitude of capability. A good teacher inspires courage in performance. Without someone to grant permission to defy the reality of self-doubt and inexperience, the student vacillates and looks to his past for guidance, finding nothing that will carry him through a moment of pure action.

"He taught them to cross a line that wasn't even/there, though it had a certain thickness-/stepping through transparency/into an opening" (13-14). I have had the privilege of being taught by gifted teachers, and can relate. There is a line dividing "can" and "can't". This line can best be defined as "won't", a pervasive human fault, an inability to distinguish between capability and desire. Anyone can do anything provided they want to badly enough. A good teacher inspires his students into wanting, makes them cross over that line of unwillingness.

I write from personal experience. During an aimless and dispirited time in my life, when I had given up my courteous pursuit of lust and greed, I drove my first car off a cliff. By the grace of a loving world, timely relaxation, and Subaru engineering, I got out with one fractured vertebrae. Which, I was told by relatives who knew, would cause me to have to wear an opiate-laden epidural later in life, as well as potentially restrict my physical range. I hate painkillers, and had just invested in a bone-threatening variety of bicycles. So I took my accident as a wake up call and went looking for some sort of physical therapy that would be affordable without health insurance. Something that I could learn and maintain my entire life. I found Yi Chuan, taught by Sifu Cheuk Fung, a few blocks from my house. Over a period a few months, sifu taught me how to align my spine and relax it so it could heal itself. It is worth knowing that *sifu* can mean either teacher-father or teacher-master – depending on which characters you write it with, as well as the relationship; in classical Confucian culture, the teacher was a father figure who taught morality and metaphysics along with healing and martial arts. The modern meaning implies a more business-like relationship; mine was the former. I went from not being able to bend at the waist to being able to do a backbend within eight months. The techniques demanded focus like I'd never known, which allowed me to regain my energy and internal control, leading to a decision to come back to school. So writing this essay is a direct consequence of having been taught by a good teacher. He really did transport his students to another realm, and in his absence, I can only walk to its threshold and knock. I can still align my spine and unify my body into a single effort, but the feeling of liberation from everything inessential isn't there anymore. A good teacher induces focus and the confidence to maintain it. May we all find that and become it.

My roommate, upon reading "O Lou..." and knowing nothing more, said that Harrison reminded him of Neil Gaiman's portrayal of Hinzelmann in "American Gods": "A man who has sipped of the vinegar of life and found it to be mostly whiskey, and good whiskey at that." Upon seeing a picture of Harrison, I had to agree. He looked impish and happily restless, very much a lulu. If the aphorism of "You only get what you give" is true, then Lou had gotten as much as anyone could ask for. Not every teacher is remembered in verse. Recently, a dedicated composer shepherded his opera "Young Caesar" into a production at the Yerba Buena Center. Not every teacher's work lives on after him.

O Lou He Was A Lulu

For Lou Harrison, 1917-2003

All of him listening – eyes intelligent – while his
over-large belly, in Hawaiian shirt, peaceful.

Later laughed in our faces, claimed the two noblest
Virtues were lust and greed

(if you're courteous of course), daring us to say no,
baiting us.

After he dies, everyone speaks of about how he got
them to do things (musical and other)

they'd not the slightest notion *could* do –
for instance, manufacturing a gamelan, or

adlibbing percussion at large public concerts.
They'd thought it took talent, practice.

He taught them to cross a line that wasn't even
there, though it had a certain thickness-

stepping through transparency
into an opening.

They believed they faked it, thought they were
busy lying playing.

They'd learned rules to a new realm they
Would not lay claim to,

though after a few times it became enjoyable,
as if they were truly inside it.

Means, I suppose, that he treated them like himself.



Summer's Setting

Luke A'Dair

Imagine yourself at the end of summer, tan, smiling, and sitting at your favorite coffee house. You're not thinking about anything else but how beautiful the sun is when it sets in the late afternoon, and without batting an eye, you go home and turn in for the night. Just as they have done for decades the leaves start to turn, and before you know it, autumn has snuck up on you and the memories of summer begin to fade. Too many times have I cruised through summer without a care in the world and took the warm inviting weather for granted and lived like it would never end. The setting of summer happens every year whether we like it or not, most think it comes too soon, but others think it couldn't have come soon enough. Whatever we feel about summer, I've noticed that as soon as winter is in full effect, all we want is summer to return, and I think that even though we don't want to admit it, we think summer is the best season there is.

What is it about summer that makes us "wear short shorts, and drink tall beers,"(12), or fall in love, is it the heat, or is it the breeze that picks up your hair and sends it flailing wildly? I believe it's the combination of many things, from driving with your windows down, to wearing sunglasses all day every day. "Summer arrives late, full of apologies,"(1) I love this line that starts off the first stanza so powerfully. This line means a great deal to me because every fall, winter, and spring, all I think about is summer and it couldn't come soon enough. Every time summer arrives I always think about how late it is and how ready I am to start wearing shorts everyday. "She offers us barbecues and endless sunshine./ She lights up the sky with fireworks,/ encourages us to make hot love in the cool sand."(8) These lines in stanza two are amazing, and are dead on in my opinion. For example I met my girl friend on a nice summer night, and I think that the temperature and time of night that we met really helped my odds with her, and she agrees. She is my first love, and I honestly think that it was the time of year, that helped give me the push to get so attached to someone. Summer is in my opinion the most romantic and perfect season that we as human beings are blessed with, and is described as "A period of fruition, fulfillment, happiness, or beauty."(Summer). Growing up in a mountain town with four lakes and four rivers within a 20 minute drive, my opinion on summer is almost as biased as you can get, but this poem tells me that other people feel the same way about summer. Just as it has begun though, it comes to a long drawn out end. "Autumn arrives on time, wearing sensible shoes,/ To collect Summer."(21) with the end of summer, comes autumn, cooling us off and bringing many back to reality. School starts again, and the streets are again empty in the middle of the day. The leaves begin to fall, and once again the air cools off so it's just hot enough to wear shorts in the day, but too cold for shorts at night. The days get shorter, and the party's mellow out and become more gatherings than parties. What is it about the changing from summer to autumn, that mellow's us out and prepares us for winter. I personally think it's the changing of the leaves, and the air cooling down to a nice crisp temperature.

"It is only in the wisdom of winter, /As we sit huddled around the fire,/"

That we think about Summer.”(25) I have an amazing understanding of this line in the last stanza. Where I grew up, in winter it could snow 3 feet in one night, and it did fairly often. It wasn’t uncommon for us to be snowed in, and my friends and I would hike over to each other’s houses and sit by the fire and talk about wakeboarding and what the summer would bring. We would sit around and drink hot chocolate maybe with a little peppermint schnapps, and tell stories about the summer that had just past, and the summer that was on it’s way.

“We finally understand What a fine lady she always was.”(29). And so we sit, wish, and remember how good summer was, and still is, but what if the next summer never came, and those memories were lost forever. The barbecues would stop grilling, there would be no more shorts, and no more ski boats. There would be only winter, and cold. There would be no more days to wake up to at 12:00 in the afternoon, and no more beautiful people in bathing suites at the beach. Those things would die and never come back. Summer isn’t dead though, and those things are still around, so next time you find yourself at your favorite coffee shop watching the sun set at the tail end of summer, take a moment and think about how life would be different if summer was no more.

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Searing Loss

Summer Campbell

“If you have ever lost someone very important to you, then you already know how it feels; and if you haven’t, you cannot possibly imagine it” (Lemony Snicket’s *A Series of Unfortunate Events*). This quote entered my head as I read “Without You”. A very moving and powerful poem describing how it feels to have lost someone you love dearly. How day-to-day and special things are lessened or impossible without the person you care about there. This subject has been used time and again throughout poems, stories and movies. Some are done extremely well and others fall short. I believe this poem not only strikes the target, it goes beyond so that you feel the pain of the author most acutely. This poem could easily have felt clichéd. However, it saves itself by taking these over used ideas, such as the ocean, and puts them in a new light. The idea of waves being suspended in the air, linked to the feeling of loss of a loved one is very well done.

Many people in the world who have lost a loved one believe that no one else could ever understand what they are going through. This poem tries to put into words how those people feel. It is very short and to the point but each phrase is so strong that if it were any longer it would lose its powerful imagery and become tedious. It doesn’t use unnecessary words to explain each phrase and no phrase is more than three words long. It takes simple images and experiences that would normally be beautiful and fulfilling and turns them into painful and empty ones. To suddenly lose taste in wonderful food or be unable to see a beautiful scene is the type of experience that no one wants to feel, yet most people will feel eventually.

As if trying to run fast in a nightmare or grab something that is just beyond your reach, the author takes breathtaking words and causes the body to ache. One of the most affecting lines to me was “a silent orchestra”. To imagine a magnificent orchestra filled with people, instruments, voices and notes hanging in the air and unable to hear it is terrifying. Everyone has had dreams where a person is talking to you face to face, their mouths moving, their face expressive and yet no noise, no words can be heard; an endless nightmare. If this is what loss feels like, if this is how sorrow drains your body of every pleasurable thing, I hope to God it will be a long time before I personally have to go through it.

Some poems use titles and others don’t. Some titles work very well and others seem to take away from the overall work. This poem needs this title and the title furthers the depth and understanding of the piece. To take the title and put it into each phrase makes that phrase much more moving. Without you, the ocean waves are suspended; without you the stars are invisible; these are compelling examples. It is the type of poem that you can mull over and dissect for hours as you try to comprehend the vastness of each statement. The poem tries to help you understand what it really would feel like to be unable to hear, see, and taste the glorious things put on this earth for us to enjoy.

The form of this poem brings a lot to it as well. The double space between

each concise line except for the very end gives you a sense of suspended atmosphere, as if things couldn't continue moving forward now that this loved one has been lost. Also the fact that the title is only three spaces above the poem and capitalized makes it part of the poem and yet you can tell it still is the title. The way the last line is broken up into three lines but only single spaced gives you that feeling of wanting, of continuing your life but frozen where you are. All of this really adds to the effect of the poem as a whole and would not be the same if it were close together in long lines.

I would imagine losing someone special would be like losing a piece of you. "Are you lost or incomplete? Do you feel like a puzzle? You can't find your missing piece" (Coldplay). Those lines from a Coldplay song capture the essence of losing a piece of you to someone who is now gone. Perhaps over time the piece can be found in something or someone else but maybe that part of you, that piece of the puzzle, will be gone forever. I believe that is one of the bigger fears of the human race. We all fear being alone and never finding the thing that completes you.

"Ocean waves / suspended / in mid air". This line immediately gives a picture of a towering wave being frozen. And then it slowly sinks in, the idea of something as amazing and strong as a wall of water hanging there, never crashing. The ocean is used quite often, especially as a bonding or special moment. Two lovers sit and watch the sunset out over the ocean, or a person stands on a cliff overlooking the immense sight contemplating their existence. The ocean analogy is used well in this poem and the poet chooses to put this image at the end as if leaving the reader also suspended.

Each individual goes through similar and yet unique experiences in their lifetime. Part of this is caused by what each person makes of an experience. How each person deals with the situation and how it affects them. This poem is well done because even though that a person is so wholly different from the person standing next to them, everyone can relate to this feeling of emptiness. Everyone understands the tragedy of the human race: the pain of saying goodbye, and this poem captures how someone might feel when they are not in the company of a loved one. This poem could be to any number of people. To a loved one who died, to a love lost, to a love who has had a falling out or broken up. Perhaps even to someone who has been away from the person writing the poem. It is so open ended that it can be interpreted and personalized by the reader, making it their own. We take a lot for granted and don't really understand what we have until it's gone. Maybe this poem can help us realize how important others are and to enjoy each other's company much more. Maybe this poem can give us a glimpse into what a gift love for one another is and the grief of suddenly losing that gift.

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Something

Peter Lushington

When was the last time that you sat down and had a conversation with your family or a close friend and felt that they actually heard you? The author of Nothing is trying to explain that the pleasure of true communication between people is better than that of fucking, or a first kiss. The author explains that real communication is revealing. It is like being naked. Through writing this poem the author is helping to satisfy her need to be heard.

To be able to change the mind of others is a feat not easily met. But once it has been achieved the feeling that you get cannot be more satisfying. "There's nothing as satisfying / As being heard. // Not fucking / Or the first kiss / Or stripping / In the light." (Nothing). Comparing the feeling of a first kiss or fucking to the feeling of satisfaction that comes from being heard seems like a big leap at first, but the author is able to use fierce words that help the reader to agree with his feeling. The author uses the images of "fucking" "a first kiss" and "stripping in the light" as ways to show how raw true communication is. The act of a first kiss is something that only lasts for that moment. After it has ended it only remains as a memory. Whereas being heard and changing the mind of another is something that will have a lasting effect. True communication is being naked. It is saying what you feel and being heard and understood by another.

Satisfaction does not only come from being heard by another, it also comes from being able to change the heart of another. That is what the author considers the "Preferred package." In the 1960s there was an incredible movement for equal rights for blacks and women. Even though these were two separate causes, they both had strong voices. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X would give speeches across the country trying to rally everyone together. The turn out for these speeches would be enormous. Communication was absolutely essential for these movements to get off the ground and be where they are today. After years of being heard and listened to these voices got what they were asking for. They were able to change the hearts and minds of an entire nation. What could be more satisfying than that?

Words can have the ability to have someone rise up and change their heart to beat the same as yours. The author of Nothing uses images of space to touch the reader's mind. "If I say words that travel / From the swimming space / Around my tongue / To the sparkling gem / Of your minds core... // And they land, sink in / Rise up and bring your / Heart with it. // Then we have fucked / We have kissed," (Nothing). The author is showing us how words that change somebody's heart can be more intimate than fucking or kissing. The author is paralleling a conversation to the act of sex. The words that are swirling around his tongue are just like sperm

waiting to burst forth and find the egg. The egg can be seen as the “mind’s core”. The author is trying to find the one word that will penetrate the mind and cause a reaction in the listener. He hopes that these sperm will land on the egg and become fertile. “What the author means by “sparkling gem of your mind’s core” is that it is like an egg because it has the potential to cause life and love” (Lucas). The author uses the word “fucked” as a direct action. He is trying to use powerful words to show the power behind his words.

When the author says; “We are standing / Naked / In the light.” (Nothing) he is showing us how naked true communication is. “Naked is the most organic form for humans. It exposes your entire being. It is all that you can’t hide and can’t avoid. It is the purest form of truth. Being naked is all you are given” (Harmon). After communicating with somebody on a serious level, it leaves the two people naked. If the person has heard you and understands the words you have said then you are the same, naked. Standing together under the same light. The author leaves the word naked by itself to represent oneness because it is a singular concept. The light represents the truth and the truth is what strips the two people of their identities.

The media has made communication so convoluted these days that when people sit together and communicate it is a satisfying thing. In this poem the author is reminding us not to underestimate the power of words. Nothing is more satisfying than the bareness of truth.

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Wings of Glory: The Story of the Unheard Voice

By Sierra Schreiner

We often wonder what people are thinking right before they die and sometimes, we are fortunate enough to know. But for those who die alone, or those who cannot speak, their voices are left unheard. The story of a suicide bomber in the chilling moments before his demise is captured hauntingly, yet beautifully in the poetic prose of "Wings".

The term "suicide bomber" is quite frequently not taken well no matter how we use it here in the United States and most other areas of the world. However, I feel that it is important that we see the other side of this mass murderer, the side where he is worshiped and loved as a hero by his people. We are all people, all of us with different beliefs. Yes, murder is wrong, but when it comes to this mans religion and his devotion to upholding it, annihilation of anyone who stands in the way is just another bump in the road you have to pass over, no matter how unpleasant it is.

"Wings", begins with Rahim, the main character, going about a normal morning in his family home. The only catch is the belt of explosives wrapped around his body under a plain cotton shirt. "It was two months ago that I agreed to do what I am about to do this morning...right down to the tip of my fingertips I feel the buzz of excitement, anticipation" (Wings). It's horrifying to think that someone could be excited and happily anxious right before going to their death, never to see the family they sit with every morning ever again. That tingly sensation he feels is the one you feel when walking into class for a difficult final, or auditioning for something you have always wanted to do. In comparison, Rahim feels this energy as if he were auditioning in front of God for a spot in heaven. This final task will guarantee his place in the clouds above, just as long as he completes it. For those who believe, whether or not to do the test presented would not even be a question. "He said we would be rewarded in heaven, he said we must do our part to cleanse the world of infidels, he said time is running short" (Wings).

The way the writer of this piece makes everything seem so normal is amazing to me, and what's gut-wrenching is the fact that suicide bombers are common in regions of the world. It seems like almost weekly you can open up the paper to read about another attack on civilian lives. "As I (Rahim) go out onto the stone street, I do not look back. I know I am in God's favor, He is smiling down on me, I am like the angel Gabriel" (Wings). This was an interesting reference that truly intrigued me. Gabriel, in biblical tradition was sometimes known as the angel of death. In Islamic tradition, he was God's messenger. Rahim felt as though he was doing God's will and I really enjoyed the reference to the angel Gabriel. When I first read through that bit I was confused because at first thought, I remember thinking, "but that's Christianity, right?" It is, but the relevance is clear because Islamic religion is very similar to that of Christianity.

The writer of this piece makes every event, every action, every moment seem so real, which is ironic because the piece is written in first per-

son leading up to his death. It's hair-raising when the author says things like "I remember", or "I can't remember". Each time I think to myself, of course you don't remember...your body explodes into a million pieces in the end. You can't possibly remember anything, I keep telling the writer, as if they're here now. It's strange because you wonder what motivated the writer to do such a piece. It's not a story from a past experience, it very well may have happened to someone else, but how would the writer know if it went exactly as it did?

To me, it's like God sent the angel Gabriel to earth to tell the story of this suicide bomber, the story that we otherwise would never have known. Maybe he wanted us to know the other side of this problem, the side we brush aside as crazy talk. It's hard to accept certain decisions that people make but I think that it's important that we take the time to hear their reasons for why they do what they do. For me there is no justification in killing innocent people because they do not share the same beliefs as you, but human beings can be incredibly violent. For someone to end their lives and the lives of many others, they would really have to believe strongly that what they were doing was right. In "Wings", right down to the end, Rahim sticks to his feelings that the world yearns to be cleansed of "infidels" and that God wants him to help in the process.

"And just as I begin to pull on it (the wire), I glance up and see a face in the window. It is the face of a man who will go to hell just as I now rise, with wings of glory in the morning air" (Wings). This is by far the most powerful line in the entire story. Even as he is seconds from death, he has the audacity to wish even more bad will on a man he is going to murder while imagining himself rising into heaven after completing a life mission from God. He is glorious and victorious in his own right. Glory is a state of absolute happiness, gratification, contentment (Dictionary) and wings just make that feeling soar. I love this piece of writing solely because it makes something so ugly and as raw as a suicide bombing, a beautiful superbly written story about the strength of the unheard voice.

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Sunset of Smog

Zöe Cross

“Sunset by Dow” (see appendix A) is an emotionally stirring poem that transports the reader into a sunset with brilliant Technicolor, and then into the harsh reality behind the beauty. One is, at first, drawn in by the images of a picturesque twilight, a glass of wine on an orange-tiled roof, much as Ulysses was seduced by the song of the Sirens in Homer’s “The Odyssey.” “These nymphs had the power, as has been already said, of charming by their song all who heard them, so that mariners were impelled to cast themselves into the sea to destruction” (Ulysses and the Sirens). The author uses the warm, intoxicating beauty of the sunset to manipulate the reader’s feelings into a pleasurable state of mind. This intensifies the negativity of the abrupt revelation that its source is found in the chemicals produced by Dow. This information sucks away the freedom to enjoy the sunset, and reminds us of its ultimate cost which is comparable to the price of listening to the Sirens’ song and crashing into the rocks. Beauty rarely exhibits itself free of charge, and so far, as a society we have been willing to pay any price to indulge our craving for it.

Take the marketing of the Hummer, for instance: it’s cool, it’s tough, and supposedly, so are you if you own one. It’s glamorous, especially if you love pumping gas to feed its monstrous eight miles to the gallon appetite. Again, it’s an attractive car, quite the status symbol, until you look at its devastating affect on the environment. Still, does my social conscience keep me from enjoying a Sunday afternoon drive through the country in my friend’s “H2”? Would it be simple hypocrisy for me to lecture my friend about the global irresponsibility of owning such a vehicle while I recover from my Hummer rush? There are millions of examples that one can draw upon to make this point. Beauty and convenience are very real benefits, but they often come with a very high price. The story behind the splendor is not always as easy to stomach as the splendor itself.

This seems to be the dilemma of the poet. Caught between “Layers of: / smoky violet / luminous silver / burnt sienna” and the realization of where these colors are coming from, gives the poem a melancholy air. A similar experience can be had while watching Al Gore’s documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth”. The viewer is mesmerized by the undeniable magnificence of hunks of glaciers falling into the sea. But the majesty is tempered by the clearly stated shocker that this very event is foretelling Earth’s doom. The poem’s author uses the honey-soft lure of the colors of twilight to wake us up to the harsh light of tomorrow’s dawn, if we don’t rise up and take action soon enough.

Much in the same way, charities soliciting donations to end hunger in a wide array of foreign countries, use the heart-warming smiles of young children. What is always so enchanting, so touching, and motivating for me to comply with a donation, is the gigantic smile on the starving child’s

face. When I see children from poor countries that have no school, no clean water, and very little food, I think, how is it possible for this kid be smiling like he has just won the lottery? There is unmistakable joy sparkling in the eyes tucked into a body that feels hunger, loss and pain. And yet the beauty of looking into his face isn't changed or diminished by these circumstances. The promoters of these organizations use beauty to draw attention to a devastating tragedy.

The question now becomes one that the author seems to be asking himself as he sits through "Another wine-soaked dusk – plotting [his] escape from – the poisonous maze." How do we pull ourselves out of our stupor, brought on by toxic conveniences and quests for exquisiteness, long enough to save our planet? Our Earth's ever-warming breath is hot on the back of our collective necks like a creepy guy sitting behind us at the movies. We need to take our eyes off the Hollywood set playing out our fantasies on the big screen and heed the warning of the pending danger creeping up behind us. It's not that we should stop enjoying the sunsets in our lives because we are constantly focusing on the end of the world. As the poet seems to be inviting us to do, take a balanced look at the sunset and the "chemicals of commerce – trapped in the inversion" that created it.

Similarly, harsh, raw beauty is created on the face and in the exposed shape of the head of a patient who has lost all of their hair to radiation. In many cases, for the first time, all exterior embellishments have been stripped away. Only truth, remains, and tells its full story of cancer to the world. As an observer, one can't help but taken aback and drawn in, all at the same time. There is something perversely beautiful in watching the physical manifestation of life and death up close, whether that life and death is of another human being or our earth.

The last lines in "Sunset by Dow" addresses the mortality of Earth, "Then the curtain came down / The show was over". It seems abrupt in comparison to the earlier flow of colorful adjectives, and yet fitting. If our focus remains on the beauty which camouflages the pending catastrophe of global warming, the show will be over very soon, indeed. The crew in "The Odyssey" put wax in their ears to keep themselves from being pulled in by the Sirens' song and crashing into the rocky shore. But perhaps we are smarter and more creative and can figure out a way to safely pay the price of listening to the Sirens' song while keeping afloat in unpolluted water with our rudders pointed straight ahead.

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A Figitious Relationship

Scott Pozzi

Delectable, scrumptious, mouthwatering, exquisite, and heavenly are some of the words that come to mind when you eat something that pleases your palate in a way that makes you melt inside. All of your senses are pleased and a warm exhilarating feeling runs throughout your body and makes you forget all about your worries, even if it is just for an instant in time. In the poem "Biting into a Fig," by Len Anderson, he displays a vivid description of these sensations as he describes the process that he experiences while eating a fig. But, is this what this poem is really about? Well, it is possible that the author is describing the experience that he has when biting into a fig through a wonderful sense of imagery, but after reading the poem in depth I believe the author is using the fig as a metaphor to describe the experiences associated with the different stages and feelings of a new relationship.

In the beginning of the poem the first thing the author does that leads me to believe that he isn't really talking about a fig, but is using it as a metaphor, is he starts by writing "Carefully I place this/ fruit which is not a fruit/ but an inverted flower/ into my mouth" (Lines 1-4). First, he says that a fig is not a fruit, but since most individuals refer to it as a fruit this gives me the impression that he is setting up the reader to notice that the poem could have a double meaning and that the fig is being used metaphorically. Another reason that I believe the fig being used metaphorically is because the author describes it as an inverted flower in the third line. This displays the author's knowledge what a fig is and is almost the exact definition of a fruit. According to the American Heritage Dictionary the definition of a fruit is "the edible part of a plant developed from a flower." By giving this kind of detailed description of a fig Anderson is letting the reader know early on that he knows the fig is a fruit, through his detailed description of it, but that he wants the reader to interpret differently, as he says it isn't a fruit. Realizing that Anderson is using the fig as a metaphor allowed me to then try and figure out what it represented. After reading through the poem more and more I was able to associate the entire poem with the beginning of a relationship and the emotions involved with it. Not just any relationship, a special relationship: a relationship with a nerve-wracking introduction that gives you the feeling of having butterflies in your stomach, a relationship where you have a great time going out and making unforgettable memories, a relationship that builds and builds, and then comes to a point where you begin to miss the initial feelings that you had with that person and seek to find a way to get them back.

The way Anderson portrays that it is a nerve-wracking introduction from one person to another is when he writes, "... cup/ my lips around its soft leather/ so as to lose nothing/. . . cut with my incisors, slow but firm. " (Lines 4-6,8) These lines describe a nerve-wracking introduction because of the use of language and what can be inferred from the differ-

ent actions taking place. Cupping the lips around it describes a physical action, to cup something, which relates to cupping your hands together to hold something—or in this case, someone. What this does is it sets up a hunger for someone and then goes on to describe how this person felt as he went through this experience. The thought of leather brings an image of something soft but tough to mind, which gives the impression that this person is soft on the eyes (attractive) and tough to approach. The reference to cutting the leather with incisors insinuates that the person overcame the nervousness and took action and talked to the other individual. Not because the person wasn't nervous anymore, but because this person didn't want to lose the opportunity to do so and was brought to my attention as the author writes "so as to lose nothing. . ." (Line 6)

Now that the two individuals are talking the author gives a description of how it feels to overcome that nervousness of instigating a conversation of that magnitude. He does so when writing "taking nearly the half/ inside, first the flesh, its juice impossibly sweet/ on my tongue" (9-12). Taking the half inside insinuates the other person responded back. Following that is a feeling of relief and joy in overcoming what was thought to be impossible ("that person will never say anything me") as Anderson describes it to be an "impossible sweet."

Anderson then continues to tell about the joys of the emerging relationship as he writes, "then the seeds,/ each a fruit,/ a kingdom unto itself,/ a few of which I crunch and crush between my molars" (Lines 13-17). With each seed being a kingdom the author is creating a visualization, each of these seeds represents a special/fun day that the two get to spend together. Through the understanding of what the seeds represent the rest of the lines can be interpreted fairly easy. In the beginning of a relationship couples always seem to spend days together in special ways (going to the movies, out to dinner, to the city, etc.), and there are only some days that they will spend time together that will be eventless, and these eventless days are what the author is referring to when writing "a few of which I crunch and crush between my molars."

In the last ten lines of the poem Anderson is telling about how the relationship gets less exciting and what results from it. He believes that the new exciting feelings begin to fade away with time and also gives his opinion of why this happens. "Born of a sacred act,/ this necessary wound,/ whose one half is inside/ slowly becoming myself/ and the larger outside,/ turning in my hand/ while I seek words/ to repeat again and again/ to somehow just for a moment/ close the wound." (Lines 20-29) The first two lines are a description of how it's "human nature" (for the lack of a better term) for a relationship to unfold this way. It is "born of a sacred act" because that is what people seek to have: a partner, a relationship, a witness to their life. But, with this comes the "necessary wound" of the relationship, recognizing it won't always be the exciting new relationship it was in the beginning that has all of the getty emotions associated with it. As you take inside all the wonderful experiences as the half that is slowly becoming apart of you and realize that you have "the [larger] half outside" of you which is the part of that person you still have to learn about. Anderson

ends the poem by trying to figure out how to “close the wound.” This is the part of the relationship where the initial feelings of it have faded away and the couple seeks to get back to the feelings they felt in the beginning— they seek to get back those happy, getty, and warm feelings all over again.

After realizing that the fig is being used as a metaphor the rest of the poem just falls into place. Every part about this poem is truly about the beginning of a relationship and what it deteriorates into. Through the explanation of the fig between the teeth, how to bite through it, the sensations of the different parts of the fig, it becoming apart of you, and the feeling of wanting to close the wound Anderson really characterizes what a relationship is like. I totally agree with the outlook on relationships as the author describes them and feel that through my experiences in relationships I can say that I have experienced these emotions while in a relationship. People will always seek the feelings of a first kiss with someone, the happiness that fills you up inside when you see that person, and all of those other wonderful experiences that are associated with it. Metaphorically speaking—relationships are a lot like biting into a fig.

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Life: Hate it or Love it

Daisy Flores

Have you ever been so trapped within yourself that you'll do anything to get out? You have people around you, but you don't want to upset them. You want to make them happy; but how can you make them happy if you yourself aren't happy? All you want to do is escape to a place you can call paradise and you don't have to worry about anything. In the poem, "In Paradise" the author shows us that if you aren't so happy all you have to do is start over. You need to be able to go through a big challenge and be able to conquer it. Conquering something you never thought you could do before gives you that motivation that you can do anything; giving you that extra reason of why you should be alive. With its short stanzas, diction, symbolism, and overall writing font, the author shows us that the way you come into this world is the way you're going to leave. Therefore, if we want to be free from problems we must learn to control our mind.

The author seems to think he's trapped inside himself. All he wants to do is leave and start over. He really doesn't think about what's going to happen to the people who love and care for him. In my opinion I think he's being self-centered, but at the same time he doesn't want to die knowing he was miserable. He wants to be happy and start a whole new life. Knowing you feel trapped you do anything to try to escape. You want a new life and wish to start all over. In this poem the author locks himself in a mental state of mind where he makes himself think he's locked up in a prison. The prison is a symbol of isolating himself from everyone else. "Each morning I wake in the prison of my self, / then spend the day breaking into a blossoming self" (lines 1-2). The author believes if he locks himself in a "prison," and then escapes he'll be a whole new person. Although the author does have people who care and love him, he decides to ignore it. He has the support of his wife, but doesn't trust her, "*Can't even trust my wife, I thought, I'll have to do it myself*" (line 6). The fact that the author wrote line 6 in italics makes it seem like a stereotype about women. In line 5, the wife has come out with a plan of getting him out of his "prison," but then he says he does not trust her making it seem like the wife doesn't know anything about prisons. Just because prisons are meant more for a man than a woman, that doesn't mean the women isn't going to know anything about it. The author shows us that from his point of view his wife isn't very smart. The author also has the "prototype" (line 8) support of his parents and thanks them for helping, but he rather do it on his own. Using "prototype" in line 8, the author links us to another stereotype that no matter how bad or good of a person you are, you're always going to have the support of your parents. The parents gave him the plan, but as parents they can do so much they can do for him, and that's when the author decides to do it all on his own.

The author believes that if he puts himself in a prison, then it's going to be a big challenge to get out. Prisons are meant for criminals who are locked up in this place because the police know they're not going to be able to get out. The author most likely chooses to intern himself into a prison because prisoners are

“usually deprived of a range of personal freedom” (Prison Wikipedia). He wanted to get away from everything, even his love ones. Knowing people would tell him things like, “you’ll never get out” (line 11) only motivated him to want to start all over. The author describes the prison as “The chamber of torture was the best that hard work could buy, / custom designed so I could run it by myself” (lines 13-14). The author calls it a torture place, but that’s what he wanted; he wanted that challenge. The author thought that by having the challenge in living in a prison, he knew that once he would get out he will be a whole new person. If he was able to custom designed it and be able to run it himself then that would only mean that he wanted to live his own way, to have his own thoughts, his own opinions. He wanted to be free from everything and have a voice of his own.

The author was enlightened by Buddha’s thoughts. Buddha is someone who enlightens and gives wisdom to someone (Dictionary.com); he himself told the author that his own prison was a paradise. Paradise is a “state of supreme happiness” (Dictionary.com). In the last line, line 20, the prison’s walls are described as “a petal of his ever-flowering, ever folding self.” The walls of the prison are what helped him start over. The prison walls were a boundary, but boundaries which he did not dare to cross. These walls kept him inside and helped him overcome everything and forget everything. The walls represented all his problems, difficulties, and all those challenges he never thought he would be able to complete. He wanted to start all over and these walls are what did it for him. The walls were his enlightenment and which they also gave him wisdom to get out and start over. He did it all by himself to get out and it made him happy. Writing “self” and “myself” as the last word of each stanza really showed that he did wanted to this all on his own.

When things go wrong in our life and we encounter difficult situations we tend to look upon the situation itself as the problem; but, in reality, whatever problems we experience come from the inside of the mind. If we were to respond to difficult situations with a positive or peaceful mind then there would not be problems for us; indeed we may even come to regard them as challenges or opportunities for growth and development.

Problems arise only if we respond to difficulties with a negative state of mind. For example, when you fail to get your drivers license, you tend to blame the instructor for being unfair with you or you try to blame the person who thought you how to drive. You always try to find something or someone to try to blame things to make you feel better, but sometimes doesn’t work and you just get madder. Though all you can do is be ok with it. You did something wrong, but you’ll always have another chance to fix it. You’ll get more practice and you’ll try to fix what you did wrong. Being positive only makes you want it even more, you failed the first time, but that only motivates you even more to pass it the second time because you really need it. When you really need something you try your hardest to get it, you don’t want anybody to help you because it’s something for you and not for them. In the end the accomplishment of getting your license only shows that you can do things on your own and you can be able to fix any problem. The image of the “prison” shows how you’re able to control your

mind. The author used a “prison” to isolate himself in order for him to start fresh. Knowing you’ve accomplished something so hard that no one had any faith in you, it only gave you that motivation to do it. The author wants to be free and start a new life. He doesn’t like his life at the beginning, but after locking himself in a “prison” he realizes what he can do to make him happy and start a whole new life. If you really put your mind to do something, and get no help from everyone that gives you the train of thought that you are special and you do matter to this world.