

The

# Ascent

May 2000 Editorial Issue

## Recreational computer use and comfortable chairs: the new Wick

by Jennifer Roush

It's about time carpets sprout across the floors and couches spring up overnight in suspiciously social configurations. We need more places to study! We need more places to lounge! Although Daemen students assume these statements are synonymous, someone Up There figured out what students really meant and gave them what they really were asking for.

No, those social areas are not figments of a Spring Fever hallucination; Daemen College really is getting cozy.

And it isn't going to stop there. Plans are currently being set into action which will revolutionize Wick Center into a Student Union of sorts, replete with recreational computer stations and more intimate surroundings for social interaction.

"People want space to hang out with their friends and do what they want to do," said Dean Jackson, Dean of Students. "This is the first time in three years when I've seen students just hanging out. Not studying, just hanging out," said Jackson about the new social atmosphere of Wick Lobby and Dun Scotus' Patio.

Jackson is not the only one who is excited over the prospect of Daemen becoming more accommodating.

"I have more than a passing interest in this," said Chris Wilson of Academic Computing, "I'd like to see this get done."

Why did it take so long? Various Master Plan

Committees, each consisting of faculty and students, met during the 1998-99 school year to discuss changes on the Daemen campus. Chris Malik, who sat on the Wick Center Committee, said that the committee looked at the current

**"This is the first time in three years when I've seen students just hanging out. Not studying, just hanging out."  
-Dean Jackson**

facilities and other college Student Unions to decide how they wanted to improve Wick Center. All proposals were presented to the Board of Trustees who prioritized the changes.

"We don't have big surpluses of cash. That's why we had the Board of Trustees find out where our priorities are," said Malik. The changes the Board agreed upon are as follows:

•Rat/snack Bar area: The changes in the snack bar area are the most dramatic. The TV on the far end of the room will be moved under the mural as soon as the mural is finished. Couches, plants, and low tables will be available for those who wish to lounge in that area.

The wall behind where the TV is now will be knocked out, and the storage room behind it will be turned into a pizza place with real pizza

ovens, providing competitive quality and competitive prices. There will also be a full-service deli bar adjacent to the pizza area, and a cash register in between. This will reduce lines and be more efficient. The hours would be extended to midnight most nights.

Around the raised area bar stools and a counter will be outfitted for those students who want to grab a quick bite without using a whole table. The vending machines will be moved to the current location of the food service, and booths will be where the vending machines are now. There will be computers at standing height to quickly check email, and plugs for laptops throughout.

•Social Room: The main objective for the Social Room upstairs in Wick is to provide flexibility for meeting groups. With the installation of moveable walls, more than one smaller group could meet at a time, while still providing the normal large area for school-wide events.

•Dining Hall: The Dining Hall will be more intimate, with smaller groups of tables. There will be more greenery.

The balcony area will be opened for student dining use after it is outfitted with new railings, an awning, and a new floor. The railings will bring that area of the dining hall up to code for student use. Bricks in various colors made from recycled tires will be used for the floor of the balcony,

cont. on pg. 4 "Wick"

## Climate of fear threatens academic freedom

by Beth Seilberger

*Academic freedom...applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative of rights.*

1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure

*Controversy is at the heart of free academic inquiry which the entire [1940] statement is designed to foster.*

1970 Interpretive Comments

Earlier this semester, I issued an assignment to another Ascent writer asking him to interview tenured and untenured faculty on the widely debated and controversial issue of tenure itself. The intent of the story assignment was to reveal the range of opinions in existence at Daemen regarding tenure and the process of acquiring it, the necessity of it, its effectiveness in protecting academic freedom, and one's chances of receiving it. We could not have anticipated that the response to our inquiry would reveal such degrees of tension and discomfort surrounding this issue. Not one untenured professor approached on the subject would comment or participate in the interview.

The criteria upon which the acquisition of tenure is based is clearly outlined in the Daemen Faculty Handbook. However, the unwillingness of untenured professors to publicly comment on

this issue suggests that those responsible for granting tenure are maintaining a climate in which candidates perceive a threat. This perception may also be exacerbated by the current financial crunch. The criteria used to evaluate the tenure applicant, as they appear in the Handbook, are as follows:

-Evidence of teaching effectiveness and excellence

-Evidence of productive scholarship of high quality

-Evidence of continuing academic growth

-Ordinarily, evidence of possessing the appropriate terminal degree for the area in which one teaches. In certain areas in which the appropriate terminal degree may be atypical, the candidate should supply a letter from his/her chairperson describing the appropriate terminal degree in that field.

Student and departmental evaluations are examined, as well as any publishing credits, participation in academic conferences and other academic achievements and involvements appearing on the candidates resume.

The definition and limits of tenure, as well as the procedure for application appears to be in accordance with the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure and the 1970 Interpretive Comments, two imperative documents upon which most American universities and college base their policies. One remaining question, then, is whether academic freedom exists before tenure is granted. The unwillingness of untenured faculty to speak publicly on the controversial issue of tenure suggests that it does not. Instead, apprehensions, perhaps even fear of retribution, indicates that criteria beyond what is expressed in the

Faculty Handbook might be factored in to decisions regarding one's acquisition of tenure.

At a time when the practice of granting tenure is being questioned at institutions of higher education nationwide, could a more urgent comment on the necessity of maintaining the practice of granting tenure to qualified candidates be made?

Since one of the functions of a campus newspaper is to expose and discuss ideas and issues relevant to academe and higher education, regardless of how controversial they may be, the reluctance of an untenured professor to make a public comment for the newspaper indicates that his academic freedom may be threatened in at least one public, academic forum where it should be fully protected.

Academe and scholarship persist because of discussion, which necessarily involves different opinions and ideas, and therefore, controversy. The continuation and advancement of scholarship requires a freedom granted only by tenure, but one which should exist, at least to a greater extent than it currently seems to exist, without it. The untenured professor's perception of a threatening atmosphere has the capacity not only, as in this case, to cause him to silence his opinions on potent subjects relevant to higher education, but to create a necessity for some degree of dishonesty and hypocrisy.

As long as a perceived threat to the untenured professors' academic freedom exists, and as long as he is afraid to express what may be an unpopular idea on a controversial subject, the pursuit of truth among students and professors is necessarily hindered.



# Student activism sheds light on authority and academic freedom

by Beth Seilberger

Although student activism is normally reserved for railing against authority to achieve a specific desired result, it can also illuminate the true dangers of the occasionally abusive opposition. In the latter instance, the students learn the difference between adolescent rebellion and the conscious realization of a wrong and the action of correcting it. They also learn the difference between swallowing a dogma for the sake of academic safety, and procuring guaranteed academic freedom for all students after themselves. Recent conflict within Daemen's English Department illustrates this very circumstance.

At the beginning of the semester, a proposal for changes in the English major curriculum provoked a number of students majoring in English, including myself, to act in favor of maintaining the current curriculum. Perceiving the changes as having the potential to severely relax the standards mandated by the current curriculum, students challenged the proposal first through informal discussion with Dr. Robert Morace, Chairperson of the English Department, and then by writing letters to Dr. Kathleen Boone, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College.

Within a week, a meeting was arranged by Boone between involved faculty and students. Students' letters and, apparently, conduct and remarks expressed during the meeting achieved a partial success, as Boone chose not to act on the proposal. However, students' frustrations were still exponentially increased because of the opposing professors' unwillingness to acknowledge the validity of the concerns expressed, the professors'

tendency to dodge our questions during the meeting, indirect and inadequate responses to our concerns, and their failure to respond to the letters which, in many cases, were read after we met.

In effect, these proceedings inadvertently validated and intensified the concerns of students. Student activism, in this case, revealed a vast underlying discrepancy between one major aspect of the ideology behind the proposal for the curriculum changes and the actions of the professors who support it. Their failure to acknowledge and directly respond to student opposition very simply poses a threat to our academic freedom and its potential to afford us a voice and position of some consequence within our department.

Morace, the author of the proposal for curriculum changes, stressed that one of the greatest benefits of the new curriculum was the freedom it offered to students in their course selections and therefore, the direction of their literary study. The accompanying chart illustrates the varying requirements of the current and proposed curriculums, as well as the requirements maintained by both.

According to Morace, the elimination of World literature, Chaucer, the thesis, and one American lit-

erature as requirements in the curriculum gives students freedom to choose four literature electives and, consequently, to specialize in a particular area of literature at the undergraduate level. However, this freedom is granted without consideration for students who may possess an inadequate literary background, or an inadequate awareness of what they should be exposed to. The system, then, poses many threats to a comprehensive course selection process. The elimination of World and American literature survey courses as requirements particularly de-emphasizes the students' exposure to the most vital works of Western literary art. At best, under the proposed changes, the enthusiastic student could take a variety of courses in World, British, and American literature, perhaps opt to write the thesis at the completion of his undergraduate career. At worst, this plan caters to the indolent, apathetic, and less able student who might only choose courses that interest him and are reputed to be easy. This student will be empowered to make decisions about that in which he is uninformed as an undergraduate.

cont. on pg. 4 "Activism"

Both	Current	Proposed
Lit 112 Approaches to Literature	Lit 201 World Literature I	Lit 420 Special Topics
Lit 203 British Literature I	Lit 202 World Literature II	4 free literature electives
Lit 204 British Literature II	Lit 211 American Literature I	1 course in American Literature
Lit 409 or 410 Shakespeare	Lit 212 American Literature II	
Lng 307 English Language	Lit 301 Chaucer	
Advanced Writing	Lit 443 Senior Seminar (thesis)	

## Eating Art

by Dr. Peter Siedlecki

I know even before I put the following words on paper I am going to sound like a Luddite. Most people understand the anti-technological implications of that word. For those who don't, let me say that it was coined after groups of workers in the 19th century became involved in a movement to destroy newly developed machinery because mechanization was taking jobs away. Their leader was a man named Ned Ludd. Since my intention in composing this piece is to question the internet, my sitting here putting it together on my computer makes that intention somewhat ironic—sort of like playing with the monster that is threatening to consume me. But neither the computer nor the internet is consuming anyone—consuming our time, perhaps; consuming our judgment, and even consuming the care with which we once approached writing a letter or the civility with which we shaped that letter. Then again, many of us would not write as many letters or notes as we now do if we were expected to demonstrate such care and civility, so I suppose increased computer use scores one for improved human communication.

Maybe it would be a good idea to remove that last adjective and concede only improved communication to the computer and resist assenting to characterize it as human. I have seen too many people who behave one way on an e-mail list and totally differently in person to give willing recognition to electronic humanness. There is something about the way those little black characters jump onto that white background, displacing the prompt as they move steadily forward, that seems to invite our relinquishing a portion of our humanness. We have always had a tremendous respect for authority. Dostoevsky reminds us of our unwillingness to surrender our dependence upon authority and of our genuine fear of freedom. Citizens of previously totalitarian countries have with greater frequency been bemoaning the passing of the old ways because it was better when someone else—against whom they could rail—was in charge of their destinies. The computer, however, offers a kind of freedom we can live with, one that allows us—at least within the confines of that screen—to seize authority. It allows us the opportunity to become authors and to watch our authorship jump onto that white page pushing that prompt along

inexorably. It is not like the old typewriter—not like that passive old machine whose paper just sat there rolled tight against the platen until we manually did something with it, extracted it, folded it, piled it into manuscripts. That passive old machine demanded effort. Our computers even offer assistance in little sidebars that say, "Hey, it looks like you're writing a letter. Let us help.." or, if you happen to be writing a poem, the computer might insist, being rather conservative, upon capitalizing each new line. If we choose not to forge ahead, the computer might grow impatient with us and jump to the screen saver. It is demanded of us to express our authority, and sometimes, after having done so, we express embarrassment at having reacted too hastily, or not having thought, or having "gone off half-cocked." I know that all the settings that regulate many of the phenomena that drive our authorship forward can be changed, but even that act requires us to respond to the computer's intentions. We remain in its thrall, and it controls our own authority.

And, here I am, paragraphs into this thing, watching my prose dribble letter-by-letter onto the page behind that ubiquitous prompt that is leading the way for my authorship like a blocking back, and I haven't even begun my beef with the internet. I am not going to rant against all the schlocky websites created by dilettantes, fanatics, and groupies, the kind that become anathema to English professors and other professors as well: a man reads a book by Joyce, gets excited, starts a website with his essay, invites other submissions and ultimately becomes a source for someone doing a Joyce paper. Such a situation can be averted by the professor's insisting upon library index-oriented electronic searches. My problem with the internet concerns something even more substantial than scholarship. It is related to the maintenance of humanity itself and to how computer-granted authority can lead to depriving others of their rights of authorship.

Recently, the internet saved me some money. My fourteen-year-old son made a discovery that excited me. He was suddenly into Queen, Led Zeppelin, the Doors, and all of that music that once betrayed intelligence on the part of its makers. I was amazed at his sudden acquisition of good

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The views expressed in the **Ascent** are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the staff or sponsors. Please do not use the rest of us as scapegoats to lynch.

If you would like to respond to any of the editorials or articles in this issue of the **Ascent**, email response to the editor bseilber@daemen.edu or drop off a response in the **Ascent** mailbox at Wick Desk.

## The Ascent

re-established by Beth Seilberger and Amanda Poreda ©1998

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# Daemen Demands

**Name:** Victor

**Age:** 21

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

Maybe if they had more on-campus activities, a better game room, another gym, a 24 hour computer room. A lot of times people have papers and they don't get them done before midnight.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Friends, movies, mall, shopping stuff like that. I don't really hang out.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

Um...how will I do in school. I guess. Not that I'm doing bad, but it's always important.

**Name:** Stacey Rae

**Age:** 19

Commuter

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

If there was cooler things to do around here.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Mainly at my apartment and other people's apartments.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

Getting through the end of the year.

**Name:** Jonathan

**Age:** 23

Commuter

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

I would say, probably, events that are more centered around art, like theater, gallery openings, and also more activities with beer. If they served BEER at artistic activities...

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Home, I'm a hermit.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

The fact that I'm not reaching my potential as a student because I'm a member of the oppressed class that must work TOO MUCH. I have to feed my hungry ass. Eat the rich!

**Name:** Mike

**Age:** 30

Commuter

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

Absolutely nothing. I suppose there could be something, but I can't think of it right now. Women.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Work.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

My classes and the grades I get in them. Oh and whether or not I get into upper division

**Name:** Matt

**Age:** 22

Commuter

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

mmm...next question? A center where more student activities are going on. More events, 3-D movies definitely.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Classic Q and local filthy bars.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

That I have 5 minutes to eat before class

**Name:** Nicole

**Age:** 19

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

Friends.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

I don't hang out off campus. No car.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

School work. Finals coming up.



**Name:** Jen

**Age:** 24

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

More social activities. More sports, better concerts.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

UB.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

Getting through tests. Getting through finals.

**Name:** Stephanie

**Age:** 20

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

More social activities, more people, this place is dead on the weekends. There's really nothing to do here so there's really no point to stay. Decrease the stress of the place so people will stay.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

RIT

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

Definitely finals.

**Name:** Brandi

**Age:** 20

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

Activities, black student caucus, drama club, intramural sports, comedy and jazz sessions, something that's going to make me laugh.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Home in Syracuse, I fly home just so I won't be here. Maybe if I had a car I'd do more. Once spring comes, I'll take the buses and subways!

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

That I have to go to work and I don't want to.

**Name:** Simone

**Age:** 20

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

If there were more stuff in the game room. I always find stuff to do, I'm always running around campus when I'm not in class, talking to people and friends.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Around UB area.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

They don't take women seriously on campus., they only give us a small amount of activities to do and when we do them, they don't judge us right.

**Name:** Yasmina

**Age:** 19

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

If there were more activities, sports during the daytime, more clubs.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

Usually I just go home if I'm bored here.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

My schoolwork.

**Name:** Kerry

**Age:** 19

Resident

**What would make you spend more time at Daemen when you're not studying?**

I hang out at Daemen quite a bit. I'm a social butterfly.

**Where do you hang out other than Daemen?**

I'm never off campus. I don't have a car, therefore I never go anywhere unless I bum a ride from someone.

**What is on your mind RIGHT NOW?**

That we're going to be done with school in 5 weeks and I'm not ready.

photos and interviews by Beth Seilberger and Jennifer Roush



## Continuations

"Wick" cont. from pg. 1

providing color and traction. A new women's room is also being installed next to the men's room.

•Wick Lobby: The new carpeting, couches, chairs, and tables have already been added to Wick Lobby, but plans are being made to take year-book photographs and blow them up to poster size as more decoration.

•Game room: Although the plan for increasing the game room has been temporarily postponed, eventually the game room will be enlarged and made more accessible.

•Room 166: This room, which is currently standing empty as a study room, will be the recreational computer "lab", complete with circular computer stations and ethernet access. Students can come to this area to chat both on and off-line.

During this semester's Ascent student polls, students expressed concerns about a lack of study space here at Daemen and the divisions that exist between student groups and cliques. Usually these two ideas were mentioned in the same breath. As of now, study space at Daemen includes the library, the Rat, the Patio, Wick Lobby, any conference office or unused classroom in Daemen, special study rooms in both the business building and Schenck Hall, and every lounge in Canavan Hall. Varying amounts of light and noise are available.

In fact, walking around campus, I very rarely see residents studying. Mostly I see them complaining about studying and how much time it takes. How would they know if they don't do it?

What Daemen was missing was social space; we had no comfortable places to lounge and gossip and maybe study in groups for a test, or else just bitch about what professor did what to embarrass whom.

The changes, for once in the history of democracy, address both of the students' concerns. A less ascetic appearance --couches, carpets, tables, chairs, cushions-- creates an atmosphere of comfortable intimacy conducive to socializing, studying, and a mixture of both. The more social arrangements of the spaces provides an atmosphere for social interaction. Read here: complaining about how much you study while not studying.

Clearly someone has been listening to Daemen students. And that person is (or those people are) listening not only to the words of the students, but to what the students really mean.

Imagine how much faster this all would have gone if a student said, "Hey, why don't we throw down some comfy chairs and couches?"

Whether these social areas fulfill student desires is now up to the students themselves. If, of course, they can figure out what it is they want.

"Activism" cont. from pg. 2

Of course, this is where supporters of the proposal insist that they will make sure that every student will cover the material that he needs, including sufficient background material for specialized, upper level literature electives which require background knowledge of various literary movements and major influential works of different historical periods. But who is to make the distinction and how will it be made? For instance, how will instructors determine whether or not a student should take a 400 level course in American poetry if the student has not taken American literature at the college level but insists that he has read enough to be prepared? Perhaps, for convenience, students will take only British literature electives, since the foundational British historical survey courses would still be required. Such students will leave Daemen well-informed in only one area of literature. Furthermore, under this system, individual faculty predisposition toward certain areas of literature and types of literary study could influence students to a great degree, or perhaps be forced upon them.

The real issue is how the instructors will utilize the authority that this curriculum offers them. I have only been able to surmise, throughout this entire conflict, that those professors who support the change clearly did not have any substantial concern for or interest in students' objections and basically ignored them in pursuit of their own pro-

## Little Elian is with his Dad

by Justin Gerstein

Elian Gonzalez is with his rightful guardian: his father. Attorney General Janet Reno had to make the tough, but correct, call in the early hours of April 22. Since then, many images from that frightful morning have come from the Miami relatives' home.

The Clinton Administration has come under high degrees of pressure for the methods with which it resolved this, and other, internal conflicts, such as Ruby Ridge or Waco. In both of the latter instances, Reno made tough but correct choices, for better or worse.

The Miami relatives threw a premature victory party when the Federal Appellate Court said that Elian had to stay in the United States until May 11, when the court decides whether the 6-year-old Cuban boy can apply for political asylum in the United States.

Reno and her top negotiators attempted to peacefully reunite Elian and his father, who was allowed to travel to the United States from Cuba.

Until about 4:15 on the morning of the raid, Reno and Elian's Miami relatives were negotiating for a peaceful reunion between father and son, according to a transcript of their telephone conversation that was released by the Miami relatives' lawyers. The final hour, however, was not present on the transcript. I speculate that negotiations broke down and Reno had no choice but to go in full force. At 5:15 a.m. Reno sent federal agents from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.) to rescue Elian from the Miami relatives.

The Miami relatives had this coming. From the beginning, they have been negotiating in bad faith. They also used Elian as a hostage by forcing him to make home videos and by coercing him to say things that he doesn't understand.

On top of this, these protesters drew the two

fessional interests. Students left the meeting with faculty with little more than a somewhat condescending statement of appreciation for their concern. This interaction with current students suggests to me that the only freedom guaranteed by the proposal is for professors to act neglectfully or abuse authority. In the circumstance involving current students, they have done both by ignoring us.

By ignoring our questions, criticism, and to a large extent our concern for the future of the department, these professors have contributed to the validity of our opposition to the proposal and the "freedom" it allows in a way that few of us had ever suspected it would. Their hypocrisy is clear. By allowing us to voice concern without adequately acknowledging or responding to it, they have undermined the potential of our academic freedom. But maybe their unwillingness to acknowledge our awareness of the inherent flaws in their thinking should not surprise me. By making the senior thesis optional, the proposed curriculum does not require the English major to demonstrate or engage in any extensive scholarly research, writing, or thinking. Perhaps we should not think critically, reach our own conclusions, or be conscious of anything except what they feed us, in and out of the classroom.

There is a strong possibility that without student awareness, concern, and willingness to act in opposition to those professors with whom we must deal for the remainder of our undergraduate careers, that this proposal might have been passed due a simple faculty majority in favor of change. Currently, the proposal is awaiting a review by the EPC, this time including letters of student and some faculty opposition. If the EPC again approves the proposed curriculum, the final decision will be left to Dr. Edward Clausen, incoming Vice President of Academic Affairs.

"Art" cont. from pg. 2

taste in pop music. He added that he could download their greatest works at no cost via MP3 and Napster.

This is when saving money made me slightly upset, and my reaction relates to something that has been festering deep within me. I recently joined Garden.com and discovered that if I wanted to procure a particular species of dwarf bamboo, I

most likely presidential candidates, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush, into the middle of the controversy.

Most notably was Gore's defection from the Clinton administration's position to return Elian to his father. This was a poor political choice for the Vice President, as most Cuban Americans align themselves with the Republican Party. Florida, we must remember, only carries 25 electoral votes: it is not the largest or anywhere near the largest state. (California wields the most political power in the presidential election with 54 electoral votes. Even New York has more clout than Florida, as it carries 33 electoral votes.)

After the rescue, the Republican Party demanded to have congressional hearings on the ordeal, and some Republican Congressmen began comparing little Elian to Jesus Christ and martyrs throughout history. This is pretty pathetic: the Messiah of the Republican Party is a 6-year-old Cuban boy who is illegally in the United States.

Who am I to pass judgment?

Last November, little Elian arrived on the shores of the United States, which is illegal under the Immigration Act. The law simply states that you cannot enter the United States legally for purposes of immigration from the sea. However, Reno allowed the little boy's entrance into the United States and put him in the temporary custody of his Miami relatives after his Elian's mother died when their boat capsized off of the Florida Coast. It was Reno's duty to make sure that the child was reunited with his closest blood relative once he came to the United States. Reno made the right choice in sending in the I.N.S. to rescue little Elian and return him to his father. Children like Elian, who have lost their mothers tragically, belong with their Dads, not distant relatives. This is a major victory for all fathers in custody battles.

would have to pay for it. That makes sense, just as it makes sense for me to have to pay Travelocity.com for my plane tickets and Yankees.com for my baseball-fan paraphernalia. But you can download the inspiration, hard work and creativity of Freddie Mercury, and Jim Morrison, and Robert Plant and Jimmy Page for nothing, as though what they have to offer isn't worth as much as a Yankee T shirt or a flat of dwarf bamboo.

And I have enough disdain left over for poetry websites as well, and for those on-line journals. If I want to download a manuscript of 14th century music composed by Guillaume de Machaut, I have to come up with a \$90 initial access fee, but poetry I can get for nothing. Now let us be honest-- poets have never made much money, especially in the U.S. To give art away, however, even within some sort of warped conception of democracy does not produce the effect of making us all better and more cultured citizens. Instead, it devalues the art and might leave it in the hands of those who don't do it well. When it is left in the hands of those who do not do it well, the real poets turn to something else, selling used cars maybe. Oh, I know, somebody out there is going to say, "If the poet is really dedicated, if he is a true bard, giving his composition away shouldn't matter to him."

Yeah, right! The 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza once said, "Conatus sese preservandi." He said it in Latin because that's how philosophers were expected to express themselves back then. What he cautioned was, "Remember to Live." One remembers to live when he considers what is necessary to preserve himself. An artist cannot preserve himself or his art by giving it away. I have noticed that those who speak most emphatically about the need to liberalize access to a band's performance or to a poet's words are those who are usually not makers themselves, or are makers so desperate for an audience that they see free access as a means of circumventing all such obstacles as editors, A & R men, and producers.

If their desperation leads to the demise of real art, it seems to follow that dehumanization will not be too far behind. Because art is what humans do to show they are human. It is what separates us from other hunters, toolmakers or nut gatherers. It is the stamp of humanity.