The Student Writing Anthology
2011-2012

University of Massachusetts Amherst Writing Program

The UMass Writing Program
Anthology Committee

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INTRODUCTION

Last year, the 34th edition of the UMass Amherst Writing Program’s Student Writing Anthology moved closer to realizing our ultimate vision for this text: to make it a campus-wide resource, used at every level, as an integral part of the University’s effort to both celebrate and improve student writing on campus. Prior to the 2009–2010 edition, we imagined our largest audience to be students enrolled in our First Year Writing courses (Englwrit 111, 112, and 112H), and primarily we published texts from the first three units of College Writing, blended with essays from our Basic Writing course, Englwrit 111. Essays were not identified by course or unit.

In 2009, we began re-building the book by including a separate and clearly identifiable section for essays from each unit of Basic Writing and adding selections from Units IV and V of College Writing. But the most ambitious and important change came by requesting submissions from the representatives of the more than seventy Junior Year Writing courses on campus. We now divided the book into three sections and clearly identified the goals of the assignments that inspired each of the published texts in our new Junior Year Writing section of the book. This new format of the book was an experiment, but one I had believed in for a very long time: to showcase various genres of academic writing; to open a window to a wide range of perspectives on a wide range of topics; and to illustrate the wealth of stylistics open to academic writing in the 21st century.

For our 2010–2011 edition, we received almost 300 essays from our First Year writing courses, and Junior Year instructors submitted three times the number of texts we had received the previous year, making selections for the book highly competitive. This year, the number of Junior Year Writing submissions has almost tripled again, and we were delighted to receive papers from departments that hadn’t yet contributed texts. It appears word about the book is getting around campus, and I feel prepared
to say that this new venture is on its way to realizing its goals. Teachers in our 111 and 112 classes discuss how beneficial the Junior Year Writing Texts have been in their teaching. Junior Year Writing instructors have requested copies of the book, as has the Du Bois library.

This book marks our 35th edition of *The Student Writing Anthology*, and it promises to be our most exciting edition to date. The contributions from *Basic Writing*, a complex course that fulfills a diversity requirement because it emphasizes issues of US linguistic diversity, always offer crucial insights into this increasingly important issue. Students read and write about the numerous literacies through which they negotiate their worlds, as they examine how these literacies contribute to identity construction. The excellent writing from this course asks us to consider how various efforts to normalize these multiple literacies leads to the oppression of some identities and discourse communities at the expense of others. Such essential considerations of language, education, culture, and the values of our society must engage all of us.

Our *College Writing* section includes examples of texts from our fourth unit, called the “TBA” because each of our teachers composes a unique project based on his or her personal strengths and interests. Many extraordinary projects emerge in Unit IV, and often include collaborative writing, experimental approaches to academic writing, and many other unique approaches. Often, collaboratively written and edited books are created for community outreach as well as for as college audiences. These TBA assignments are as diverse and intellectually stimulating as the teachers and students who create them—and again, their content and style reach across disciplines and class level.

We have again included examples of our fifth *College Writing* paper called “The Final Reflection.” Throughout the course, students reflect on their writing process and their final product for each unit. In the “Final Reflection,” which comprises the major part of *College Writing*’s final exam, students look back over the whole body of work they have produced in the course, consider their struggles and successes, then synthesize into one paper what they have learned about writing, their writing processes, and what they believe lies ahead of them in their journeys as
writers. These papers offer sound advice and insight to any writer. They offer so much inspiration I could barely restrain myself from sharing some “pre-publication” copies with my current students.

Our Junior Year Writing section has also expanded in terms of the number of departments represented, the variety of genres, the differing lengths of the texts, and the multiplicity of lessons these texts teach us about writing. Specific details about these selections appear as an introduction to each essay in the Junior Year Writing section.

We invite our readers to discover the many rhetorical choices available to us in academic writing and to learn from the wealth of ideas, original insights, and experiences that emerge from each writer’s personal context. Finally, we hope our readers will enjoy the excellent work produced by our UMass Amherst students.

Patricia Zukowski
Chair, Anthology Committee

Assistant Director
University Writing Program
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to so many people who made this book possible: the First Year Writing instructors who contributed their students’ excellent texts to the anthology (far too many names to recognize here), and all the students who so eagerly agreed to share their work so that others might learn from it; the junior year professors, lecturers, and Teaching Associates/Assistants who shared our vision for this book and worked so hard to make the Junior Year section a reality: Kyle Frackman, Laura Heston, Elizabeth Krause, Erinn Kynt, Reed Mangels, Kevin Pallister, MJ Peterson, Sigrid Schmalzer, and Anna Strowe. Their enthusiasm for this project, their willingness to do whatever needed to be done were constant reminders to me of how fortunate I am to work with colleagues who care so deeply about students, their learning, their success, and, in particular, their writing. The efforts of our Anthology Committee members were extraordinary. Throughout the entire 2010-2011 academic year, they were fully engaged in every task that it takes to put even this small book together. Every week, they diligently picked up a new packet of 25 – 40 papers, read them intensively and attentively, scored and commented on each one. We met every Friday afternoon to thoughtfully, thoroughly, and spiritedly discuss each text that had been submitted to us. They also helped with the long and tedious process of editing and putting the book together, then graciously kept offering to do more if needed. These volunteer graduate student committee members, Rachael Katz, Kate Litterer, Sarah Magin, and Lauren Silber, showed graciousness and dedication throughout the entire process. Our sixth member of the committee, Deirdre Vinyard, Deputy Director of the Writing Program, also deserves special recognition. She not only served on the Anthology Committee but also chaired a separate Basic Writing committee that selected and edited all the essays from that course.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Not one step of the processes needed to create this text would have gone forward without the extremely competent, dedicated, and enthusiastic work of our office assistant, Summer Ellis. From transcribing ALL the information from the release forms onto a spread sheet to Xeroxing the essays and creating reading packets for each committee member to recording all scores and decisions, this extraordinary undergraduate student took on this project with as much vigor as if it were entirely her own responsibility, while also very successfully carrying 23 academic credits! Summer was as professional as any permanent staff member, and needless to say, she exceeded in her efforts on all fronts. Special thanks also to David Fleming, Director of the Writing Program, for sharing and supporting the vision for this text and always offering to help with whatever was needed. Finally, I wish to thank Pearson Custom Publishing for agreeing to publish this book and bundle it with UMass Amherst’s custom edition of Lester Faigley’s *Penguin Handbook*, a required text in first-year courses; through this agreement, all our first-year students have access to this valuable learning resource—also a required text in both *Basic* and *College Writing*.

Patricia Zukowski
Chair, Anthology Committee
Part I

Introduction to Basic Writing

This collection of essays represents some of the excellent writing done by students in the Basic Writing course (Englwr 111) during 2010. Basic Writing here at the University of Massachusetts is a prerequisite for College Writing for some students and also grants U.S. Diversity credit. In this course, students read and write about the myriad literacies by which and through which they negotiate their worlds and how these literacies contribute to identity construction. In Unit I, students explore the idea of multiple literacies and discourse communities, focusing their writing on a literacy with which they have experience. In Unit II, they read texts which examine literacies from an academic perspective and then apply this lens to a home literacy. In Unit III, the class examines literacies of power and how certain groups and institutions are supported and normalized by the language society forwards. In Unit IV, students examine educational literacies and how schools work to validate or deny certain literacies, identities, and discourse communities at the expense of others. The essays in this anthology represent important critical work on a topic of increasing importance to the students in this class, and indeed to us all.

Deirdre Vinyard
Editor, Basic Writing Section
Deputy Director, University Writing Program
I love jokes.

Though I can barely make any fun with words in English yet. But I still keep joking with friends here in America, and it is fun, except sometimes my friends don’t make any sense of my bad jokes. However, my roommate, Tony, provides me a lot of vocabulary to modify and complete some of my fun-making projects. Since he is an American-Born-Chinese, Tony can understand my Chinese-type humor very easily and can also help me to joke in more perfect English.

But it is not easy at all, not only for me, but also for Tony, or I should say especially for him. When there is joking going on, I only try hard to express my thought in my limited English. However Tony has to struggle to understand my thought and sense lying beneath my incomplete English joke and reengineer it in his pure English brain, so what Tony does is much heavier than my work. And I think maybe this is the reason why I call him Master La. (His full name is Anthony La).

Or even more than that reason, probably. Sometimes our jokes are related to some impolite words, which are the most embarrassing words that Tony hates to teach me. I have to admit that I’m so bad that I usually pretend to be an innocent linguistic stranger who just suddenly came up with these new words and ask Tony what they mean. At the very beginning, Tony only said, “That’s not good to say those words.” But he gives up keeping it secret when I look at him with disappointed eyes. And he regrets his kindness soon when I pretend to be embarrassed to hear those words and say: “Tony, how could you say that to me—you’re so embarrassing!” Tony knows I’m totally joking when I can’t keep pretending like an innocent child and can only laugh out loud. Yes, he knows everything, about those slang words, bad words, and bad of me. And I think, again, maybe this is the real reason why I call him Master La.

Master La suffers a lot by living with me because his student, at least I think, is somehow talented in the sense of ironic humor, and his student
loves to research the truth of linguistic knowledge so much that he saves every second to practice his language humor on Master La. Once, Tony taught me some British manners, like to call a man “Sir,” to call a woman “Miss,” and of course some more. And one day we were accidently late for our economics class. Tony was a little bit nervous being late, and he kept saying, “Oh my God, we’re late, we’re late!” all along the road from our dorm to Bartlett Hall. Suddenly, I found there were some other guys walking lazily to Bartlett Hall who were obviously late also. And I said, “Master La, look at these irresponsible, disrespectful, unethical guys, they are late for classes, they are just abominations, and I feel so guilty about their pathetic beings.” Tony was totally shocked by my words and asked me, “Ryan, how did you know those words?”

“From you, Master La.”

“Oh… never say like that again.”

“Sir, are you trying to defend these anarchies? Is that true of you? How could you?”

“Ryan, Shut up.”

“Sir, you disappointed me, totally. However, as a responsible, respectful, and honest citizen, I forgive you this time, because I’m so generous.”

“Ryan, you’re not a citizen, you’re a visitor, and I’m the citizen.”

“Oh, you’re damn right, sir. Thank you so much for correcting me. You’re so nice, sir.” “Always.” I am not sure whether Tony gets tired of my jokes, or whatever, but I only know that it really made Tony feel better, instead of worrying so much about being late.

But my joke is not always joyful for him; sometimes Tony really worries me. Once after Japanese class, I told Tony that today I learned how to ask people to be quiet properly in perfect English.

“You learned English in Japanese class, that’s nice.”

“Definitely, Sir. There is an annoying student in my class, and he makes everybody angry every time he disturbs class with his useless questions. And a girl who sits next to me whispered, ‘Just shut your **** up.’”

“Amazing.”

“Of course, Sir. With respect, I asked her to teach me what that means.”

“Oh, come on.”
“And she barely held her laugh and told me this is extremely offensive and I don’t want to use this in public.”
“That’s right, son.”
“And I asked her, would it be more polite if I add some decent words in front of the inappropriate words, like say, ‘Excuse me sir, would you mind if I ask you to Just Shut Your **** Up?’”
“Oh, Ryan.”
“And she kept laughing till the end of the class.”
“Horrible, you’re so dangerous.”
Tony definitely knows I was joking, always, and I definitely know it’s not good if I joke too much, sometimes. But I cannot promise Tony that I will never joke too much next time; since there is somebody who always teaches me and corrects me to joke properly in his patient and friendly heart, I am always tempted to make trouble with language. The only thing I can promise is that I know I have really been enjoying speaking English so much with Tony, my master and also my victim of bad jokes, who always teaches me the formal and informal language, giving me chances and spaces to practice the language, to enjoy the language, and to feel the language. And once I realized this, I found I realized something else.
Tony loves joke, too.
ON BELAY!

Michael Dalton St. John

Unit I: Mapping Literacies

It’s a cool mid-fall day in New England. I’m hang dogging about fifty-five feet in the air on a piece of rope thinner than my finger, held only in place by the friction that my belayer can put against the rope. I call to the ground “Where’s my next hold?” to which someone replies, “Try to your left.” I put my feet high and make the push to get to the next hold and reach the final bolts. I clip in, call back to the ground “Off belay,” set up my rappel and come sliding down.

To the casual onlooker I may have been speaking a foreign language, but to everyone that I was climbing with it was just our second language. Even simple words can become part of our language. To most “Beta” is a fish; to climbers it’s that small piece of advice that gets us through the next few moves. Most people see a “nut” as something that goes on the end of a bolt; any traditional climber knows that it’s the gear you can place in a crack that means the difference between being caught and hitting the ground during a good fall. Anyone who knows something about cars knows that a cam controls the valve timing. The traditional climber may know this, but he also knows the best way to fill a crack and protect himself from a nasty fall. A bolt to every other person in the world is something you use to hold something together, but the sport climber knows it’s the only place to clip into on a wall without cracks, and two placed side by side on the wall mark the end of your route. “Quickdraw” can make even the most timid person reminisce about the Wild West, but to sport climbers it’s what attaches you and your rope to the bolts. Hearing someone yell, “On belay” might conjure up images of using a new drug to some, but those words said before the start of a climb is what tethers the climber to the belayer, who takes in the slack rope, and arrests a fall. A “project” is making all the moves of a hard route or problem and then piecing them together into a “send” or completed route.

It’s Monday night in mid December and the climbing gym is almost empty. Just the small group of climbers I climb with and a few other die
hard climbers are there this late. There are no gym rats to block up the walls, no little kids to worry about, no one that’s going to say anything when we start trying crazy things. Kerrie sets up on a hard V3 with a sit down start. She makes the first three moves and pushes to make the next big move but just can’t get it. “I had my fingers on that jug, but I lost my footing.”

Rofio replies, “You have a foot chip high and right, and you should lean hard left and just static it.” She thinks about it for a second, then goes and tries it again. In the final push to the lip, she gets her hand on the jug and sends the route. When she walks down off the boulder she approaches Rofio and says, “Thanks for the beta—it really helped me send it.”

The different holds even can even confuse people. Some have names that give away what they are, such as “finger pockets.” Others such as “jugs” can be slightly more deceiving. “Pockets,” smaller ones being called “finger pockets” are simple holds that have a place for one or more fingers to go inside. Jugs are simply big meaty holds that allow you to get a firm grip and use your full hand. “Crips” make you use anywhere from the very tips of your fingers to the second knuckle and lock your hand in the position to move off that hold. “Slopers” are just holds that are rounded or slope down and make it hard to hold on to without lots and lots of friction. Friction is usually provided by “chalking up” or applying a light coating of chalk to your hands, much like a pool player would to provide more grip by removing moisture from your palms and fingers.

It was just supposed to be a simple hike, but the sudden appearance of the untouched granite face on the trail changed things quick. We didn’t have the proper gear, but it was all in the truck, just a mile or two down the hill. After a quick lunch we were back and set up with pads and shoes, the camera and chalk. We explored the face and found all the cracks and holds from a few big meaty jugs, down to three finger crimps that would just tear our hands up. There was nothing to guide us, but as Kerrie put it, “Let’s just climb.” The routes weren’t set, the holds were dirty, but the climbing was phenomenal. Beta was given out, routes sort of set, and hands torn up, but at the end of the day we had found our own little piece of climbing heaven.
The type of climbing can extremely effect the terms used. “Trad” or traditional climbers that place their own gear are much more likely to use words like “cam” and “nut.” Sport climbers who climb bolted routes most likely use the terms “bolts” and “quickdraws.” Boulderers use the word “beta” more than any other group as they project hard routes under the protection of just a pad and someone spotting their every move. Also trad and sport climbers are likely to use the Yosemite Decimal System in the way they grade routes. The Yosemite Decimal System or YDS used in climbing is the class 5, with 5.1 being the easiest and 5.15c being the hardest, with only a few in the world being able to climb at that level. Boulderers use the Hueco scale or V scale, which starts out at VB and goes up to V16. Again only a few people can climb at the V16 level.

I’m sitting on belay with my climber pushing hard up a 5.10. The climber before him had left the quickdraws in and he was flying up the route not missing a single draw or making a single slip until he was two bolts from the top. He yells down “Take!!” and before I can draw the slack in I see him lose his grip. I slam the rope down and jam my belay device as I yell back “I got ya.” While he only fell about ten feet, it set him back to work his way through the crux of the route again. He yells “Climbing!” and I feed him slack again. He pushes his way up through the crux of the route again and this time hits his marks. With one final power move he hits the final holds and clips into the last two bolts. He calls out, “Off Belay” and repels to the ground, pulls the rope out and we move on to the next route.
I have found myself altering my language for the benefit of others. I struggle with my identity and find myself changing the way I speak in different discourse communities. At first, I would get tired of accommodating others. I have now realized that in order to accommodate others, I must first understand who I am.

I was in eighth grade. My friends and I were planning a sleepover party. Weeks in advance we were deciding between pepperoni and Hawaiian pizza, who was going to sleep on the futon or the floor, whether to call Jordan or Anthony, and deciding whether to play truth-or-dare or never-would-I-ever. Looking forward to the slumber party was the highlight of that month. My mother, being too busy to tell me, told me two days before the party that there was a 4-H show that my family was going to. She told me I “had to go.” She said, “4-H is your obligation, you have to attend the show.” I could not argue with my mom—she was always the winner. I was heart-broken. I did not even mention the slumber party to my mother. So, I went to school the next day. I walked across the cafeteria and sat down at the usual lunch table with all of my friends. They were talking about the party,

“So, I was walking through the hall next to Jordan, and he asked me to hold his hand!”

“Oh my god! So did you?”

“Well, Ms. Casey was walking right behind us, so I didn’t know what to do. But I grabbed his hand anyways!”

“Oh that’s so cute! I bet he is going to ask you out! Maybe he will do it Friday! Then we can call him at the party! Which reminds me, what type of soda did we decide on?”

I was the person delegated to get the soda for the party. I did not say anything. I sat there, silent.

“I want root beer,” one of my friends said.

“Lindie, you should get root beer instead of cola.”
Another one of my friends responded, “No I think we should have cola—it’s way better.”

“Okay, fine. I guess I will drink cola. Lindie, you’re still getting the cola, right?”

I totally panicked. I didn’t know what to do. I had to tell them, though.

“Actually, something sudden came up. My mom told me I have a 4-H show to go to this weekend. I am so sorry but I have to leave for it on Friday, and I can’t make it to the party.”

All my friends’ foreheads started to wrinkle with confusion.

“We planned this party weeks ago!”

“Yeah, I know, my mom just told me about it last minute, sorry. I wish I could go but I really can’t. My mom is forcing me to go to the 4-H show.”

“Well, my dad will pick you up early, and don’t tell her where you went.”

I wanted to go to the party, but knew that there was no way of getting out of showing my animals, so I spoke up.

“Okay, look guys, I am in 4-H, so I have to go. And I have a lot to do before the show. I have to go Friday because I have to start clipping my goat’s mammary system, clipping the hoofs, checking her coat, and making sure I bag her udder up in time for the show. I have to polish up and clip the fetlocks on my horse, clean his sheath.” I stopped. I was about to go on, but I saw the look on their faces. One of my friends said,

“Okay, wow Lindie, we have no idea what you just said, but whatever, we will talk to you next week.”

They got up from the table and walked away. At that moment I realized that my friends had never heard me talk about my animals that way. If they had not asked me about the type of soda I was going to get, then I would have just sat there in silence. When they asked me a question, I felt obligated to respond. The question forced me to speak out, although I would have to endure my friends’ disappointment and frustration towards me. I was afraid. Not only afraid of embarrassment. Although my friends were aware that I showed animals, I did not feel comfortable talking about it. Throughout elementary school my friends would make fun of me for being a “farmer.” I was the only one in my grade that showed animals. I was considered weird and different. I wanted to be the same as my friends and fit
in. I would not speak about my animals, unless it was a necessity. I felt the need to speak up in this eighth grade situation. I had to give a legitimate excuse for not attending the party. After I spoke, I realized the importance of speaking out and good communication. Having a question posed to me should not be the only justification to speak out. Although I rarely found the need, I gradually became comfortable sharing with my friends the wealth of knowledge I possessed from showing animals.

The eighth grade situation gave me an insight to my identity and to my literacy. Identity and literacy go hand in hand in my eyes. Literacy is a part of your identity. Your identity is a combination of the experiences and childhood that make you who you are. Literacy is a direct result of one's experiences and upbringing that create a unique language and dialect. I relate my literacy to Barbara Mellix. Mellix struggles with language throughout her life. She grew up speaking Black English. She finds herself speaking “proper English” or standard English because people would have more respect towards her. I find similarities and differences with Mellix and myself. Mellix explains in “From Outside, In” the struggle she encounters when trying to accommodate the people around her by speaking a dialect that she does not feel comfortable speaking. Mellix describes to the reader the exhaustion she goes through to please others. Mellix “sometimes gets tired” (77). I understand why Mellix would feel “tired” from living up to an expectation of her job as a writer and teacher. She wants to sound respected and well educated, but is struggling to do so while being herself. At first I felt like Mellix; I was tired. I was tired of “code-switching” (77). Code-switching is defined as altering vocabulary and tone around different types of people. I was altering the way I spoke so I would not be judged or criticized. I would “code-switch” whenever I was with my friends, playing soccer, or showing animals in the 4H Community. After constantly switching the way I spoke around different discourses, I started to experience something quite different from Mellix; I did not get tired anymore. I was so accustomed to “code-switching” that it became a part of who I am.

To this day, I continue to alter my language around my friends and the animal discourse community. Altering my language has become a part of who I am. I do not change my morals or beliefs, but I alter my language for the benefit of myself and others. I notice that people are
more comfortable around me if I try to communicate similarly. I feel more comfortable if I slightly alter my vocabulary or language to feel like I fit in. My literacy has taken on many forms. I alter my literacy for the necessity of enjoying myself. I love to ride horses, show goats, hang out with friends, and play sports, but in order to succeed in all of those areas I must communicate effectively by altering my speech. Having multiple ways of communicating creates success in all areas of my life without compromising who I really am.

**Work Cited**

A cultural narrative is a story that culture (or society) tells you about how to be something, such as your role in society as a woman, man, immigrant, etc.” (Wallace 98). Many people in society can go against these cultural narratives and stereotypes and pick a life path that is different for them. Two examples of people who rewrote their cultural narrative or stereotypes are Amy Tan and Richard Rodriguez. They both wrote about their own changes in their cultural narratives. Here are their stories about how they rewrote their stereotypes.

Amy Tan grew up in the United States, but her parents were both immigrants from China. Since her mother was an immigrant, she spoke very poor English that Tan would call “broken” English. Tan believed that her mother’s “broken” English affected her in the way that it limited her possibilities in life. Tan states that “sociologists and linguists probably will tell you that a person’s developing language skills are more influenced by peers. But I do think that language spoken in the family, especially in immigrant families which are more insular, plays a large role in shaping the language of the child” (21). Tan says that her mother’s language influenced her to score badly on tests and exams in school. She states she was never really as good at English as she was at math and that teachers would push her towards working in the mathematics field and following the stereotype that Asians were really good at math. She decided to be a rebel, though, and disprove this assumption and stereotype and go into the English field instead. One of the reasons that Tan rebelled was because she did not want to be treated as her mother was treated in society due to her “poor” English skills. She realized when she was growing up that people did not treat her mother with respect in public and would either pretend they did not know what she was saying, or they would ignore her instead. Tan did not want this to happen to her when she was an adult, so she continued into the English
field. By rebelling and going into the English field, she rewrote her cultural narrative and did not follow the stereotype that Asians are better in the mathematics field.

Like Amy Tan, Richard Rodriguez also rewrote a stereotype that his society laid out for him. Rodriguez wrote about how men in the Mexican culture should be macho and follow the “Mexican dictum that a man should be feo, fuerte, y formal” (93). Rodriguez’s father would always taunt him about how he would never know what real work was because he was always focused on school work instead of physical work. His mother was proud that her son was focusing on his school work because that meant he was not being seen as a laborer by society. That is the first stereotype that Rodriguez managed to rewrite by being more focused on his school work than he was on physical labor. The second cultural narrative that Rodriguez managed to rewrite is that of men being macho. He did this by being more focused on his schoolwork. The third cultural narrative that Rodriguez was also able to rewrite was the Mexican dictum of being formal. In Mexican society to be formal to a man meant that they did not talk as much as women and did not speak as rapidly as they did either. The most important factor was that men never revealed their emotions at all, even in times of crisis. At home, Rodriguez would be formal by not talking and by not showing any emotion around his family or family friends that were in the house. Outside of the house, Rodriguez would break the rules of being formal and talk all the time to teachers, and this made him sound smart to them. He realized that he got his obsessive talking from his mother, who also talked a lot. In class the teachers would encourage him to write about his feelings in poems and stories. By writing his feelings down and by talking a lot, he became more like a woman which made him informal which also means that he rewrote the cultural narrative of men being formal in Mexican society.

The stories of Amy Tan and Richard Rodriguez are prime examples of how society and stereotypes can shape someone’s life in the United States. Some obstacles that people may have are their race, class or gender. Richard Rodriguez’s and Amy Tan’s obstacle that they both faced was the obstacle of their race. Each of their races held different stereotypes or cultural narratives, which both of these writers were able to avoid and rewrite. Many
people can rewrite cultural narratives as Tan and Rodriguez did, just by realizing the cultural narrative they would like to change and taking the steps possible to rewrite it.

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LEARNING ENGLISH PHENOMENON IN CHINA

Shuwen Cao

Unit III: Exploring the Power of Literacy and Literacies of Power

In Alejandro Portes's essay, “English-Only Triumphs, but the Costs are High,” in the first paragraph, he states, “The surge of immigration into the United States during the past 30 years has brought a proliferation of foreign languages, and with it fears that the English language may lose its predominance and cultural unity may be undermined.” Scholars, linguists and some citizens feel new threats to English everyday as they have seen so many migrants flooding into America from Mexico, Russia, China, and other countries. They fear that English will be replaced by other languages, so some people launched the English-Only movement in order to save English in America. The fear may be caused by the fact that they don’t see the whole world English-learning trend.

Why people learn English

There is no doubt that English is a world-wide language. It is a powerful language because it has a large impact on many other languages, leading to language shift and even language death. There are two types of English learners. One is called active English learners. They learn English because they need to. Maybe they want to live a better life, want to travel all over the world, want to immigrate, want to get a good job, want to get promoted or get a higher salary. In contrast, some are passive learners. They learn English because they are requested to. Because their crazy parents and insane educational scholars ask them to learn. Maybe these scholars have seen the research results of psychologists Kenji Hakuta and Rafael Diaz. After they examined Puerto Rican students in New Haven, Connecticut, they discovered that bilingualism at an early age influenced subsequent cognitive development (Portes 173). There are too many passive learners in China. And this is what is really happening in China right now.
What is happening in China now?

People are losing mother tongues. They overemphasize the benefit of learning English. They think emigration is good, because American life is the best life in the world, because America is the freest nation on earth, because America is the richest nation in the world, because America has the kindest, gentlest foreign policy in world history. Therefore, they put their children into a bilingual kindergarten when their kids even can’t speak Chinese properly. Scholars and educators in some universities in China set rules that all undergraduate students should pass CET4 to get their Bachelor’s degree no matter what major they are taking. It just makes no sense to study English if one is taking a major about Chinese traditional medical science and will work in a field without English. Parents send their children to all kinds of after-hours English schools after their regular school courses in order to make their children more intelligent. They believe that English is power and learning English outweighs other subjects, and they tag “genius” to the kids who can speak English at a very young age. The Chinese people are losing our mother tongues.

The pressure to learn English makes parents and scholars go crazy in a wrong direction. What is more, the younger generations have to bear these over-load pressures to live up to all kinds of expectations that their older generation and public mass media set to them. Plus, China is a special country. It has the biggest population and longest history in the world. In addition, people have been trained for many years to follow their leaders like sheep. This nationwide English-learning trend is unhealthy for the younger generation and dangerous for the whole country.

Losing mother tongues

Gloria Anzaldúa, in her essay “How To Tame a Wild Tongue,” talks about the relationship between language and self-identity. “A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves”(123). What is more, she also adds “I am my language” (126). Only when one speaks his/her language proudly, can one take pride in his or herself. Only when one accepts the
legitimacy of him or herself, can one find identity in this world. For everyone, losing language means losing identity of ourselves. When people hear their mates speak a language that they once knew but now they could not understand, it is like they cannot realize their own culture, they cannot find a place they belong to. They will drop into silence just like when Maxine Hong Kingston first enters kindergarten (80).

**How should English be learned?**

As Alejandro Portes says in "English-Only Triumphs, but the Costs Are High," bilinguals outperform their monolingual counterparts in almost all cognitive tests. And the American labor-market needs thousands of two-language speakers to work for them. So does the rest of the world. What is good for China and the younger generation? The world needs bilingual education, and China needs bilingual education too, but not for everyone.

Language is power, and English is power, but not everywhere.

In America, “English Plus” is formed in reaction to the English-only movement. The intent was to promote greater acceptance of language diversity in the United States in order to encourage a broader American cultural development and more international perspectives. I would like to create a new word, “Plus-English” as a new approach for English learning education in China. With economic globalization, the expansion of the immigrant population all over the world and the success of the World Trade Organization, not only China but also the whole world needs skilled employees who can speak two or more languages fluently. This is why we should learn to speak English: we need to communicate with the world. But, meanwhile, the Chinese have an old saying: “too much water drowned the miller,” or going too far is as bad as not going far enough. The saying is to say we should measure how much we have done. Not learning English at all is bad; it is like closing our minds and behaving like primitive man, knowing nothing about the outside world. On the other hand, the nationwide learning-English campaign only shows an irrational following trend for a blind obedience. China, with a history of 5000 years, has so much diversity of culture and internal languages, why are we abandoning our language so eagerly?
Learn Chinese well first, speak Chinese well first, then add English. Language is a tool to communicate. English is a useful tool, not the food. Kids cannot learn English in kindergarten. Why not wait until they are fully prepared physically and mentally and then let them learn another language. Learning English can be a good choice to kill the after school time, but this should only be considered according to their kids’ interests and desires. Universities and colleges, of course, should make requests to students in order to motivate their learning desires and help them achieve in their academic fields, but the required level of English should be different from major to major. We don’t need art students or traditional Chinese-relevant major students who study the root of Chinese culture to learn English that well. Set different levels for different students and give their free space to explore what they really need to learn and acquire. Control the water we put into our millers. Only when we learn English in a rational way we can achieve our goals and make progress in our fields.

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BILINGUALISM IN AMERICA

Cory Drucker

Unit III: Exploring the Power of Literacy and Literacies of Power

All my life I have lived in Massachusetts; the same town, the same streets, and same house. Never moving, not once! I grew up with two American-born parents who spoke English and as one would expect, taught me to speak English. Like many American children, I picked up on the local accents and dialects. English is my first language and the only language I know how to use. I spoke English at home with my family, at school to my teachers and fellow students, and in my backyard with my friends. Unlike Gloria Anzaldua and Maxine Hong Kingston, I was never made fun of or even discriminated against for speaking English. I was never in fear of being slapped with rulers for not using proper American English and did not feel like I was forced into silence. Anzaldua speaks of the pressure Chicanos or any other Spanish speaking humans living in America experience to learn American English in her article “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” At the same time in Kingston’s article “Silence,” she writes about the fear of talking in English and the silence she was forced into. These two articles show the struggles bilingual children and ethnic groups are faced with defining themselves and their culture in America.

Anzaldua was a Mexican-American born child, but unlike me her parents and ancestors did not speak English. She grew up speaking Spanish at home and did not start speaking English until she entered the American school system. In school she was whipped with rulers for speaking Spanish. “I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler” (Anzaldua 121). A big issue for Anzaldua was being able to define herself. She felt that if her language was not welcome, her culture wasn’t either.

Society would discriminate against Chicanos. “At Pan American University, I, and all Chicano students, were required to take two speech classes. Their purpose: to get rid of our accents” (121). The fact that she was forced to speak English made her feel like her Spanish language and culture were not important. Anzaldua had such a hard time defining
herself because her culture is a mix of many languages and accents. Some of the languages Chicanos speak are standard English, working class and slang English, standard Mexican Spanish, North Mexican Spanish dialect, Chicano Spanish, Tex-Mex, and Pachuco (Anzaldua 123). All of these languages and dialects are a part of the Chicano culture. Anzaldua wanted her culture to be accepted and recognized. I cannot imagine being discriminated against because of my background. I feel the same way about my background. I take a lot of pride growing up in Massachusetts. To me it is the best place on Earth.

However, Kingston did not feel the same need to define herself; it was more of a struggle of overcoming her fear of English. Kingston was a Chinese-American who also did not speak English growing up. At home she would speak Chinese to her family and friends. At school she was a silent girl like the rest of the Chinese students. The silence did have an emotional effect on her. In kindergarten all of her paintings and pictures were in black and white. “I painted layers of black over houses and flowers and suns, and when I drew on the blackboard, I put a layer of chalk on top” (Kingston 80). Kingston with the rest of the Chinese students would attend Chinese school afterwards. At Chinese school there was no English, no fear of pronouncing words wrong, and most importantly no silence.

Anzaldua and Kingston both first became aware of the discrimination to them in school. Their education was in English. They were both forced to speak English even though they were not good at it. Anzaldua was abused and deprived of her self-identity. She felt that the Chicano culture was wrong. Kingston on the other hand was not abused; she, like many other Chinese students, became silent. They both shared the feeling of not belonging.

For Anzaldua the discrimination extended into her culture. Her culture was viewed as uneducated and unintelligent. Society has persuaded them to believe that their language was not real, which made it hard for them to identify themselves with one culture. They were not Mexican because they lived in America, spoke broken English and did not speak proper Spanish and were often confronted by people who spoke other versions of Spanish. “The first time I heard two women, a Puerto Rican and a Cuban, say the word nosotras, I was shocked... Chicanos use nosotros whether we’re male
or female” (122). Chicana women have become ashamed of themselves, partly due to language differences. “To be close to another Chicana is like looking into the mirror. We are afraid of what we’ll see there. Pena. Shame” (Anzaldua 126).

Beverly Tatum defines racism in her text “Defining Racism: Can We Talk” as “a system of advantage based on race” (Tatum 163). The Chicanos were treated unfairly and given a disadvantage in society. In society Chicanos were required to take an extra English class in college, Chinese Americans were left out of school plays, and each race was viewed as a less important and powerful by the dominant English society. Whether one thinks so or not, everyone is racist. Americans do not try to encourage bilingualism. As a child I was not aware of some of the hardships other children went through in America. I was accepted for who I mainly was because I spoke fluent American English.

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THE NEW COLLISION OF EAST AND WEST

Wuxi He

Unit IV: Unschooling Literacy

You must have seen this in a cartoon before, when the protagonist faces a tough choice, there is an angel and a devil who pop up on the either side of his or her head. In my world, instead of an angel and a devil, there is Chinese me and American me debating with each other all the time. Like all parents, my parents do their best to give me a better education. They sent me to one of the best middle schools in Beijing where I learned the pure official knowledge of China, and then they brought me to America for a better college education. But they never noticed both a collision between the two educations and the transformation that will change my life significantly. In some articles like “The Classroom and the Wider Culture” by Fan Shen, “From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle” by Min-zhan Lu, and “Silence” by Maxine Hong Kingston, they do talk about Chinese Americans’ struggle to fit into this American society, but as we know, the world is changing so much in the past few years. New kinds of barriers are placed in front of the new generation of Chinese Americans by the new collision of east and west.

You may think going to school is for gaining more knowledge and having a better life after it. But when you are competing with millions of other students who are just like you for a few thousand seats in the colleges, everything seems to twist a little bit. People call the education in China a test-oriented education. As my middle school Chinese literature teacher always said, “the difference in one point will lead you to succeed or fail.” Maybe it is a little bit exaggerated, but I do see parents paying thousands of yuan more for tuition bills for their children to get into a good college. This situation is pretty unbelievable for Americans who can get into
college if they want. Because competition in Chinese schools is so harsh, I always believed the folk theory that American schools have a better educational system; students have their freedom to choose classes, they finish school not at 6 pm but 2 pm, and some things they learn like math and science are very basic compared to Chinese schools. But the folk theory popped like a colorful bubble after I stepped into an American high school. Some American schools do finish at 2 pm, but I lose the break time between classes and lunch time to studying. Everything proceeds in a very fast pace under this schedule. My experience contrasts with the picture in American people’s mind that every Chinese American student is very successful, but I see eight out of ten of them struggling to define themselves and drowning in this mud which mixes the diverse notions from two countries. In fact, I found out the most important problem is that nobody really notices the barriers we are facing are different from the old generations of Chinese Americans. For example, the transition from a semi-feudal, semi-capitalist, and semi-colonial country into socialist country affected Lu when she was in China. At that time, the Proletarians were breaking into the educational territory dominated by Bourgeois Intellectuals. People all over China were being officially classified into Proletarians, Petty-bourgeois, National-bourgeois, Poor-peasants, and Intellectuals, and were trying to adjust to their new social identities. Under political pressure, Lu’s writing must be very careful. She could not show the mix of the capitalism from her family and the communism her teacher pressed on her (Lu 189). After she came to America, she struggled to free her mind from her political background and state her opinion into words and sentences through writing which is asked and admired by American society. In contrast, for the new generation I am in, we never experience the “classified identities” she mentioned. We are raised in a much freer society in which we can discuss the political leaders which was illegal or inhibitive before the 1980s. Especially after the invention and expansion of the internet, people acquire a lot more freedom with their speech. Therefore our struggles are not caused by those political pressures, differences, and institutions.

Also we are different from the generation of Fan Shen’s because the word “self” doesn’t appear that negatively in my life as Shen states in his paper:
For a long time the words “self” and “individualism” have had negative connotations in my mind, and the negative force of the words naturally extended to the field of literary studies. As a result, even if I had brilliant ideas, the “I” in my papers always had to show some modesty by not competing with or trying to stand above the names of ancient and modern authoritative figures. Appealing to Mao or other Marxist authorities became the required way (as well as the most “forceful” or “persuasive” way) to prove one’s point in written discourse. (Shen 3)

In this passage, Shen states the concept of “self” is seen negatively by old Chinese culture. But it is different now. I believe the one child policy changed people’s attitude of the “self.” Since one family can have only one child legally, children become the center of their families. In addition, parents and grandparents will put superabundant attention on them. This makes a lot of the new generation believe we are the center of the world. On the one hand, we develop more creativity because of the freedom we achieve from China partially stepping into the road of capitalism. But on the other hand, we are facing loneliness as our biggest issue. This generation of Chinese seems to not have social skills when they deal with people.

Things are worse after we come to America. The lack of communication abilities pushes lots of Chinese-American kids into a closet where they only talk to people who speak Chinese. Loneliness strikes them with no mercy. There are Chinese-American students who give up on school and become silent. Kingston brings up this problem in her essay as her own experience when she and her sister lost their voice in an American school but find their voice when they are around Chinese Americans in a Chinese school (Kingston 64). She shows that she is afraid to use the new language perhaps because she is embarrassed. But it is only one small piece of the iceberg.

The new generation is much younger than the old generation when they arrived in America. This little difference in age is the fuse for the new collision between eastern and western cultures. First, we have more plasticity with our education, but also our judgment may have a huge lack since
our family cannot provide us much attention and help while they are struggling at the same time. Second, our Chinese literacy is fading because we are further losing our Chinese education. Since our parents struggle with learning English, this dangerous phenomenon will affect the communication among families. As a result of this, some of the new generation turns into alcoholics, smokers, and even drug dealers. Third, there are many work opportunities for us in places like restaurants, supermarkets, etc. Most of us have never had working experiences before. It is good to give children a notion about working, but on the other hand, I see students like me quit further education for the limited money they can make right now. Furthermore, after working a long time in places like restaurants, this generation’s literacy become limited by their work places.

As we have seen, Chinese Americans’ struggles have changed. But if we don’t know what the changes are, then we cannot do anything about it. I still don’t know which I should listen to—the Chinese me telling me this education offers opportunities or the American me telling me I should quit school and start working. They are debating about everything I face and often offer me different choices. I am still struggling with finding the balance between the collision. But the only thing I know for sure is those struggles shape my identity, affect my literacy, and change my ideology. In solving those struggles which are caused by the collision of east and west, people must be aware of the reasons of those struggles first to prevent the mistake of using an old therapy to treat a new disease.

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SLANG AS A LITERACY

Kyle Wells

Unit IV: Unschooling Literacy

In high school we were taught to write in one way, the right way. You speak properly, no slang, no “don’t” or “won’t” in your writing. You must follow proper grammar. Always proper because anything else was looked down on. Slang or improper grammar was thought to be less intelligent, more ignorant. Always so much focus on spelling and tense, word order or “mechanics” and never enough focus on ideas. High school English courses are often built not to consider creativity or individuality, never mind personal viewpoints. Their only concern is that you write like a proper little robot so that college will accept you. High school teachers seem to think that only by perfecting complete homogenization and robotic behavior will you be accepted into college. When I got to college, professors told me to throw out everything I thought I knew and get ready to relearn. Often a standard can hold back brilliance and keep it tethered at an average, or standard, level.

In this class we talk about how more than one type of literacy is still literacy—it doesn’t have to be standard proper English to relay ideas or for those ideas to be intelligent. Slang is in some ways a literacy of its own, a special language particular to a local area, specific group of people or specific time period. Everything you do has its own little discourse. Texting, talking online, talking football or mechanics, psychology or animal science, they each have their own individual discourse with specific words related only to that subject. Slang is the creation of new words and discourse for new generations or new technology sometimes for fun and sometimes for convenience.

I personally find different slang more interesting than proper English, more fun and expressive. Most people who speak “proper” English look down on that, think that if you don’t use standard English what you have to say can’t be intelligent or worthwhile. It’s probably a fair sized part of why the hippies had so much trouble getting people to listen to them—they were still young and the generation before them who was still in
control thought their slang unintelligent and figured their ideas were based on nothing important or worthwhile because there was rarely a hippie who spoke “properly.”

A friend of mine was writing a paper on '90's culture and what makes kids who grew up in the '90's different from kids who grew up in other decades. One of the things that caught my eye when he was researching was '90’s slang. It made me laugh to see what was considered '90's slang and how I used some of it almost daily like “good to go” or “back in the day”. I like to pick up slang discourses from time to time. Since we researched the '90's, my friend and I have been utilizing our new found '90's slang like calling money “dead presidents” or saying “buzz kill” when something goes bad. I similarly went through a surfer/stoner slang phase—a language that is recently resurging—where I used words like “brah” and “gnarly”. Often the people who hold influence over society will completely disregard anything you have to say if you let any kind of slang like that slip into your conversation. Slang has a negative connotation. Usually it's associated with drug culture, but more accurately it should be associated with young culture. Kids trying to make the world their own create their slang terms and leave their mark on the English language.

Eleanor Kutz, in her article “Introduction to Language and Literacy,” talks about the idea of folk theories. Folk theories are the ideas of the general public, in this case about language or literacy, that allow exclusion and marginalization of certain groups. In her article Kutz refers to a situation where a town doesn't want a teacher with an accent teaching their young students. The folk theory behind this is that the children will acquire the accent if the teacher they all look up to speaks with an accent. There is little to no evidence to actually support some folk theories. “Our folk theories about language provide a common fund of knowledge, with some fairly accurate pictures of the way language works – and some misleading ones” (Kutz 184). The idea that those who use slang are unintelligent is a folk theory that we have today that may be holding us back from listening to the new and innovative ideas of the youth. Kutz states that her old college handbook labels phrases such as “Where she at?” or “She sang good” as “illiteracies,” which are defined as “the crude expressions of uneducated people” (185). This labeling just further reinforces folk theories and creates
a wider gap between those who speak English “properly” and those who do not.

I do appreciate proper English to a certain point. I don’t want to see essays loaded with slang or improper grammar, but I do think slang is acceptable for verbal communication. I think the negative stereotype should be relaxed so that we can start listening to new and different ideas. Folk theories need to be broken down so we can become a more open minded, accepting society. Just because someone speaks English as a second language and has “sub par” grammar does not mean they are unable to have good intelligent ideas – they just might have trouble getting them across, especially with a judgmental society that won’t hear it unless you speak like they do.

**Work Cited**

PART II

COLLEGE WRITING
A philosophical tenet of the Writing Program, and of any writing community, is that writing exists to be read; writers must also be readers—readers of a large and diverse portfolio of works, texts, and genres. Among the important texts and works to be studied, one’s “self,” is a text that absolutely must be read and re-read with great attentiveness for it serves as the foundation from which all future interpretation and interaction with texts can be built. In Unit I, students were given the opportunity to discover new insights about themselves. Through the process of writing, revising, receiving feedback from fellow writers, and re-writing, they were able to take on new perspectives of their own personal experiences. The essays created in this unit were written for a close, personal audience (i.e. fellow class members) and introduced key elements of the rhetorical situation (context, purpose, audience). In this unit, students are the ultimate authorities on the content about which they write.

The challenge to these writers was to look at their stories and their bodies as histories and to examine themselves as they would examine a text. In this way, they began re-seeing themselves through the lenses of larger contexts, and they investigated their experiences as the elements that have shaped them.
During my long summers, I live in a camper that’s as old as I am, with towels in place of shades and a front door that has a set of pliers in lieu of a doorknob. There is a cabinet filled with wool ponchos and a cook stove that doubles as a heater for when it gets really really cold, and plywood covers a window because I accidentally broke it a couple years ago. The floor is sagging, the walls are covered in ugly tan wallpaper, and it feels like home.

I’ve also got this one hat. At night it’s usually kicked under the bed or tossed around in my sleeping bag, but hats are made to be roughhoused, and it goes almost everywhere with me. It’s a red baseball cap with a logo on the front—a J superimposed on a Ferris Wheel, and it says “JEKYLL AMUSEMENTS.” It smells nauseatingly like sausage grease, my name is written on the inside in sky blue marker, and it’s worn in to fit my head without slipping off. This is the crew hat for the carnival my dad and I travel with in the spring, where we sell sausage and French fries for the midway. I wear this hat each day I work, most every day, even when we’re later into the season and affiliated with other companies, and I also wear it quite often when I’m at home running around wherever I happen to go. I wear it because I have a strange loyalty to Jekyll Amusements; I’m proud to work with the weary, friendly crew that I’ve grown up with who now treat me as one of their own. My family’s business is independent of any specific midway, and we travel a circuit that only happens to meet up with Jekyll a few times a year, but they always have a smile and a joke and a kind word for me, never a rude holler or catcall or disgusting leer.

My family runs food joints; we aren’t involved with the rides or the games of the carnival, but last spring I went up to the big boss of Jekyll and asked if he wanted another hand tearing down the rides. He shrugged, and said, “Sure, why not?”
So one Sunday I helped tear down one of the rides with two other guys, and damn if it wasn’t one of the most physically challenging things I’ve done in my life. I rushed around lifting things, shoving pieces into place, climbing all over the equipment, tightening bolts, dragging heavy wires, tossing fences, and getting so greasy I could hardly see my skin—all at breakneck speed because the quicker it was packed up, the quicker we were able to go home or to the next location.

I had only wanted to tear down a ride out of curiosity, to see how the equipment collapsed into a single, transportable unit, but something happened that I didn’t predict: it won me respect, and it’s a powerful feeling to be respected by such an insular group of people. Everyone had always liked me because I’m the cute, friendly, French fry and sausage girl that they’ve known since I was two feet tall and racing around the midway. But on that night, they saw me hold my own as well as any seasoned man among them. Even when my feet were dragging because I could hardly lift them anymore, and my arms were as strong as putty, and I thought I’d never be able to move even an extension cord again, I took a deep breath, centered my body, and did it anyway.

Pain is the most constant component of my summers. Everyone knows in theory that two back-to-back, eighty-hour work weeks is going to suck, but I can’t adequately explain the exhaustion it brings. Each morning I wake up with my muscles still burning from the day before. I feel a bone-deep, gut-stopping fatigue that settles deep into my body, and every piece of me weighs down with a sluggish jolt just from taking a step. At the end of the night, I melt into the nest of hard mattresses and stray sweaters and warm blankets, but then there’s that familiar ache that rarely goes away, a feeling like growing pains but so much worse, which reaches from my toes, centers around my knees, and spreads up to my hips. No matter how tired I am, I can’t sleep for another hour.

Eventually the days bleed into nights bleed into coffee bleed into something we lovingly call exhaustaphoria. It’s the couple hours a week where the sun is so hot and the coffee so strong and the fatigue so oppressive and the ache so consuming and the day so long that it gradually all fades into the background and leaves behind nothing but exhilaration. These are the moments I live for.
Carnies are a tough, hardy bunch (many of the best people I’ve ever known are carnies). We pull stupid hours for stupid money, and we do it because it’s a lifestyle that is so beautiful and tempting (the open road, the nomadic lifestyle, living outside our corporate society), while at the same time torturous. The combination of pain and pleasure sinks its claws in and rips us to shreds, then sews us up mostly patch worked and a little stronger. I know the pull, have felt it since I could count back change from a hundred, but here I am leaving it in the dust.

Now don’t sit me down and spew bull about how there are greater things in life than working all day and most of the night for a measly paycheck because you’ve obviously never walked through the sea of flashing lights and heady wafts of grease or been just too close to the generators when they’re growling like dragons, so deep it vibrates through your bones. This life is a whirlwind of people I’ve known my whole life, of pushing my body as long as it can go and then a couple days more, of proving myself. Don’t pretend to know what you’re talking about until you actually know what you’re talking about.

However, I also hate this life more than anything else I know how to hate. Being a carnie is more than the constant pain and endless hours; it’s how we change in order to cope with it, and I’m scared of what I would look like after an entire lifetime of that; part of me has been itching to get out since I was three days old and at my first fair. The only problem is, everything I know how to hate about the fairs, I love in equally passionate amounts because with the pain comes the satisfaction that I’m still standing.

I’m at war with whether I should stay with the life I hate enough for bile to rise into my throat at the very thought of it but which I also love more than my sanity. Should I forge a different life, away from it all, even though every summer I’ll be staring at the open road with homesickness and longing souring my stomach? Yesterday I was too conflicted, too indecisive; today I’m trying out something new, and tomorrow maybe I’ll understand which lesser of the two evils will actually make me happy. Do I want the freedom of the road, or the freedom of an average life?
A BITTERSWEET DISEASE

Michaela K. LeBlanc

Have you ever felt a complete and utter loss for words, lack of control, or courage? Try closing your eyes and just picture your mom. Picture the woman who birthed you, raised you, and cared for you the past eighteen years in such paralyzing pain that she cannot bring herself to even brush her teeth. While she has no strength and no will to live, you have to be the person who collects the fallen pieces of hair she has not yet noticed shedding. It seems hard, right? Unless you actually feel this, have walked a day in my shoes, there is no way to grasp how mortifyingly hard it is.

A little over a year ago, my mom came home and wrapped her arms around my neck, promising me that everything was going to be okay. It was not until she actually pulled her tear-stained face from mine that she said the words, “I have cancer.” After the initial shock, I seemed to be okay. My family surrounded us and reminded us of the huge support system we had built over the years. My three sisters and I found a sense of unity in each other. A support system no one else would be able to understand.

I am the baby in a family of four girls. My sisters and I were raised in the Catholic Church, brought to every function and event dressed alike, and taught that no one but each other would ever be more important and crucial in our lives. It was that value our parents instilled in us that made us tighter, stronger, and better than we ever could have imagined.

Beth was twenty-six with a two-year-old, and expecting another child, when she found out my mom had cancer. Beth lives in Connecticut, but that night she drove three hours alone just to be with us. I remember the feeling when she walked in. I remember seeing her standing in the doorway, her stomach bulging out, her green maternity pants, and her hair pulled up into a messy bun. She was beautiful. As soon as my mom saw her, she began to cry, insisting that Beth needn’t have traveled all the way just for her. They hugged silently. Beth ran her fingers along the trail of my
mom’s spine, and reminded her that she needed to be here as much as we needed her here. Beth’s presence is settling in itself.

Hailee was only twenty-one when we found out about the cancer. She handled it differently than all of us. Hailee has always had a reputation for smiling. Through the tears and the pain, she was the person on the other side smiling, almost like she was misunderstanding the severity of the situation. But she didn’t feel any less pain than any of us. She, through her big blue eyes, understood her family needed her to smile. One afternoon, shortly after my mom’s surgery, she came into my room and sat down on my bed beside me. She didn’t say much, but silently joined in watching *Gilmore Girls* with me. Eventually she slipped her arm around my shoulders and pulled me in and said, “You know everything’s gonna be all right, don’t you?” I began to cry and told her I didn’t know what to think. “No, I’m telling you. Everything’s going to be all right.” And I felt a little relief flood through me, unknotted the Artillery Loop twisting away in my stomach.

Kate was twenty-four that year, expecting to deliver her first baby later that summer. As an Obstetrics nurse, she felt a little closer to this case. She was there with her colleagues when they diagnosed my mother. Kate has always been the “second-mother” to us. She’s tried to take care of us since we were little, whether it was pushing us in a stroller or brushing our hair. And when my mom decided that she was going to shave the rest of her hair, scattered in patches along her head, Kate was there to pick me up. I was devastated, unbelievably disturbed. I refused to watch and chose to hide in my room and pretend that my life was still pure and innocent, untouched. Kate walked down, knocked on my door, and asked if I wanted to talk. I said no; there wasn’t anything to talk about. But she crawled over me, and slipped under my pink, Christmas-tree-decorated sheets. She slept in my bed that night, but I still felt so incredibly lonely.

My mom has said that we are her pride and joy. Beth and Kate both graduated with top honors as Registered Nurses, Hailee was the most mature and nurturing mother, and me, the baby, was pushing through high school with honors and planning to continue into college. We all had accomplishments, but our biggest accomplishment was deeming ourselves best friends before sisters. Every time my mom was injected with Chemo,
she said she had no choice because she wanted to watch us grow and wanted to see her grandchildren grow.

Chemo infected her body; it rotted away her spirit, destroyed her self-worth, coiled her dignity, and tortured her thirst for life. The poison that ran through my mother’s veins attacked every inch of our family. Of course, her body was taken from her control, but it also managed to take a hold of my grandmother’s emotions, my sisters’ hearts, and my father’s faith. While this chemical seeped through our lives and virtually destroyed us, it was the answer to our problems. This thing that we loved to hate was the only thing that could cure her.

Vulnerability was not a shade my mother wore best. She never let us see her weak, crying, or sick. She was the pillar of our family that stood unflinching in her efforts to protect us. But the night she shaved her head, she showed the entire world how vulnerable she could be. She finally told us in an unspoken way that she needed us to care for her instead of the other way around. We all saw a side of our mother that was frightening and sad in one entity. Behind her hair were her eyes dripping with fear, and the bags underneath them holding her nights’ sleep captive. Suddenly, she seemed smaller. She was not as perfect and full-of-life as she used to be.

In the eyes of any child, your mother is beautiful. It could be the eloquence of each and every word, or how smart she made the dumbest things seem. She is beautiful because she’s your mother, and there need not be another reason. When her world crumbles, our world crumbles. One night she looked in the mirror and sobbed. When she saw her reflection, she saw ugly. When I looked at her, I was captivated by her fearlessness and enticed by her tenacity. For if she only knew how beautiful her courage is, she’d never feel self-hatred like she did that night. If cancer patients could know how beautiful they are, it might change the way cancer is perceived. If only they could see that their will to fight is more beautiful than when the sun sets or moon rises.

She was dressing for an opera show my aunt had insisted she take her to. I walked upstairs to find her in her bathroom, furiously searching through her limited closet.

“I have nothing to wear. I’m fat and ugly. I don’t want to go out.” As each tear fell from her face, it hit me like acid. She was breathtaking.
I helped her find an outfit, adjusted her makeup, and combed her wig in a way that looked like her hair used to. I told her she looked great, and she shrugged me off, still unhappy with how she looked. That night, as I was alone, I took twenty different Post-it notes and stuck them to her mirror. Each Post-it had an adjective written on it, strategically placed, and in the middle I wrote a note: “If only you could look in the mirror and see what everyone else sees.” My stomach was twisting and turning the whole night, unsure of exactly how she would feel about it. It was a noble move, one I had copied from an episode of One Tree Hill. The next morning, she hugged and kissed me. She wouldn’t ever truly believe those heartfelt and meaningful words, but she was appreciative of the support. At that point, support was the only thing we could give, helpful or not.

“The National Cancer Institute estimates that about 24% of adults with cancer are parenting children younger than 18 years old” (NHIS). I am not just a statistic. I am not another victim. Yes, my mom has cancer. But if I learned anything from this experience, it is not that I need pity or sympathy; it is that I need my family. I value every word and expression my sisters have to offer. I thank God every day for the simplest things. The world never seems so full of possibilities and good until cancer affects your family. If the time comes when you find yourself in my situation, maybe then you can understand how I feel. Maybe then, you can understand what it feels like to be me.

Works Cited
Part I

The organ plays hundred-year-old melodies as I slowly follow my family into the already overflowing church I have been going to for the past nineteen years. The snow is not falling outside; in fact, it has not yet fallen once this entire winter season. It’s strange to still have no snow by the last Sunday before Christmas. My dad motions for my mom, my sister, and me to come towards him. As we squeeze into this last remaining spot of pew, I make eye contact and shyly wave to a smiling elderly couple I have seen before. I can’t remember their names; actually, I barely know anyone here anymore. Over the familiar organ melodies that have burrowed themselves deep into my brain over the past two decades, I can hear the fellow members of congregation making murmuring sounds of excitement in almost perfect unison. This murmuring is hushed suddenly as the minister approaches his podium in the same manner a professional baseball player would go to home plate after being on deck. The music stops. The remaining echoes of this sudden silence reverberate off the church’s inner walls. “Good morning,” says the minister. “Good morning,” replies the congregation, now in perfect unison. My focus derails from the minister to the giant cross with Jesus at the front of the altar. I look around at the cheerful congregation, and then back at the cross, back at Jesus with his humiliating crown of thorns and the blood running out of the spear wound on his torso. I look up at the jovial faces all around me, all rejoicing God and Jesus’s love for all mankind. I then look at my hands, at the lines in both my sweating palms, and realize I am not really a member of this congregation.

Ever since I can remember, I have been going to the Sudbury United Methodist Church. This is the place where my parents were married, I was baptized, and I remained extremely faithful until the age of thirteen when I stopped going regularly. When I was very young, I used to love going to that church. I would go straight to Sunday school, see kids my own age,
and create arts and crafts that always had a biblical theme. We were always being taught what was right and wrong, and we were rewarded often with Munchkins from Dunkin’ Donuts. Every week, we were taught a different story from the Bible. It wasn’t until I went to Sunday school for a few years that I really understood who this “God” was that we always talked about. He created earth and everything on it in six days and then rested on the seventh. He flooded Earth to cleanse it of evil men. He led Moses in freeing the Jews and took them out of Egypt. He is the father of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the savior of all mankind. We learned to love Jesus because he loved us. I loved God, I loved Jesus, but most of all I loved Munchkins. I enjoyed Sunday school so much because I loved the socializing aspect of it and the rewards we would receive for participation and memorization of Bible verses. Everyone was so kind at church. Everyone had positive things to say that were unbelievably reinforcing. My parents had me participate in the Christmas pageant and the choir, and I had no complaints. I loved church so much when I was very young, but it was never on a spiritual level.

Part II

The van rattles furiously as we make a right turn onto the bumpy dirt road. As my head hits the ceiling, I struggle to save a fresh bag of Honey Pot apples from toppling over (I shouldn’t have taken my seatbelt off so soon). My sister and mom grip the bottoms of their seats for dear life while my dad holds his breath, concentrating fiercely on maneuvering this large vehicle away from potholes and trees. As we continue to drive, the dirt road tames itself, and I see the large, colorfully painted sign that says “Camp Takodah.” It is Easter, and we are visiting my mom’s cousin and her family. This is a tradition we have been following for years and years. Since my uncle is the caretaker of this fine New Hampshire YMCA camp, he and his family live here year round. The van slows to a halt as we reach our destination. I get out of the van and stretch my upper body and lower back, hearing loud cracks from an arsenal of discomforted joints. I grab the bag of apples and my mom’s well preserved heirloom wicker basket and head towards the house. Inside, I see old familiar faces—some smiling, some scornful, and some deeply saddened. These are not the faces of my family.
These old, frozen faces belong to numerous biblical figures: Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, Judas, the rest of the disciples, the Virgin Mary, Saint this, Saint that, etc. The relatives I am visiting are a very religious Catholic family, and they most certainly have the paintings and decorations to prove it. This family is also probably the nicest and most generous family I have ever met in my entire life. Recently they adopted a 4 year old Jamaican child who suffers from cerebral palsy and therefore can’t walk or speak. It is their constant generous deeds, such as this, that make me very proud to be related to them. Looking around, I notice the house is deserted; I grab the bag of apples and the heirloom wicker basket from where I had just placed them, and head down to the dining hall where I assume the party is being set up. When I meet my cousins and aunts and uncles, I embrace each and every one of them and wish them a happy Easter. They do the same to me. I see little Moses, and my heart sinks and melts out of sadness and love for him. It is now time for communion, and we all hold hands and bow our heads. Not being Catholic, I don’t have the prayer memorized that the rest of my extended family recites during this time. Whenever we have a family gathering like this, we say communion right before we eat. My aunt speaks holy words and blessings; my family becomes a congregation and collectively says “Amen.” Amen… Once again I feel like I am not part of the congregation. I feel alone, segregated even, isolated from my own family through faith. It would be unthinkable to ever question God in this household, yet that’s exactly what I want to do. I want to ask my elderly uncle who wears an absurdly large cross why he believes in God. Do none of you have doubt like I do? Do you all literally believe the Bible word for word? How do you feel about the crusades or the great schism? Why can’t I ask you all these questions, for isn’t the entire point of faith to be able to encounter all doubt and, in the end, prevail? My mind races as I join my cousins at a circular table to eat my Easter lunch.

I was in eighth grade when I stopped going to church on a regular basis. I gradually went less and less and dropped out of my confirmation class entirely by spring. I was bored of church, but my faith remained strong. By my sophomore year of high school, I was angered by churches. I viewed them as corporations that took people’s money, but nonetheless I still had faith in God and Jesus. During the second half of my high school career,
my beliefs started changing again. I stopped believing that Bible stories were literal and began believing that a lot of them were metaphorical. There was no way the earth was created in seven days; science has proven that false. How can there be a hell? Why would God, the Supreme Being who loves us all as much as he does, make us suffer for all eternity? It wasn't until the summer after my senior year that I really began to doubt my beliefs and think like an atheist. What if when you do die, there is eternal nothingness? Is nonexistence what you should fear instead of hell? It was over this summer that I began viewing the world from an entirely different perspective than I ever had before. I fully realized how small the earth is in comparison to the universe, and how seemingly insignificant this planet and the life it houses really is. I had never really embraced this idea before—this idea that maybe we are just an extraordinary phenomenon. It was thinking like this that really made me wonder if maybe we are all wrong, every religion. Maybe there isn’t a heaven, a hell, a God, an Allah; maybe death isn’t the end; maybe we are part of some completely different system entirely, some system that cannot be fathomed by the human mind. It was at this point in my life that I realized how far from Christianity my mindset had really strayed.

Part III

If I close my eyes for a second, all I will be able to hear is quiet sobbing. Through the protective doors and the long line of people, I can just make out a fraction of the casket that is hiding the body. My stomach churns. I can see all of this from the distance where I stand, anxiously waiting. My family is around me. We are walking slowly towards the casket in this somber parade of a line. This is not a “reached old age” celebratory wake; it’s the sad kind. I reach the first set of doors. This entire process is hard. Wakes force you to find closure with the deceased, while funerals force you to say goodbye; they both happen within a matter of days. It’s emotionally overbearing and unfair, but it’s an unfortunate necessity that has to be done. As I pass through the second set of doors, I can see the open casket. It is mahogany, with bouquets of flowers strung all over and around it. I get a quick chill; it’s getting to be that time again—the time when I walk up to the body in the casket, kneel, and pray. My hands start to shake, and
my palms begin sweating heavily. A wave of anxiety splashes through me, and I begin reflecting on my own life again. This is me in the casket—maybe not now but eventually. This is my entire family and all my friends in this line of mourning. This is my last physical interaction with mankind before I become nothing more than a handful of memories. My dad gently tugs on my sleeve, and I realize it’s my turn to approach the casket and the body it graciously houses. I hesitantly take those few steps forward, everything in slow motion. My lungs refuse to release my breath as I kneel before the deceased. A sudden bubble of anxiety bursts so that I cannot think clearly or function properly, but I know what I must do. I bow my head and clasp both my hands together in perfect symmetry. I whisper under my breath my final words of sympathy and love—words that no matter how many times attempted, could never come out as perfectly as I desired. Time freezes, and I think about the time I spent with this person. I think about seeing the deceased alive and filled with personality. I look at the rosary beads woven through the deceased’s still fingers, and I reflect upon the purpose of religion. We need religion; we need it to live with ourselves. We need it to eliminate the fear of uncertainty. We need it to be civil and moral. I had religion, but rational thought and perspective allowed doubt to take its place. I have trouble believing this person is in heaven or hell, but for the sake of my sanity and for my love of the person, I pray. The only thing that allows me to tear myself from the side of the casket is the very idea that I might be able to see the deceased again, at some point in time, in some form. One can only hope.

I am currently a nineteen-year-old freshman who is about to finish my first year of college. This past year has marked a lot of internal growth for me on many different levels. Spiritually, my beliefs have transformed completely. Over the past year, I have come to the true realization that any and every religion in the world might be completely wrong. I have also come to the realization that atheists could be wrong as well since after all, something had to create the universe/the big bang. In my new perspective, I view the world and religion in general as a complete mystery that nobody knows the absolute truth about. In this aspect, I have really become open to many different religions. I have a completely open mind now regarding different faiths and am completely supportive of all the positive messages
each one conveys. Jesus’s humility and love has inspired billions of people. The Ten Commandments have turned barbarians into civilized human beings. The Koran teaches many loving and positive messages. Buddhism, meditation, and the idea of good/bad karma has given many people a better life by influencing self-enlightenment. I support any book/organization whose morals make the world a better place. Positive energy and love is the drive of my spirituality, and my life philosophy is to really enjoy and find the good in each and every moment of life. I do believe in a higher power, and I like to believe that after death, the energy that makes us the people who we are continues on in some form.

Conclusion

I might seem confident in my beliefs, but really I am not. If someone I don’t know was to approach me and ask me right out of the blue my religious beliefs, I know I would tell them I am a Christian. I clearly am not a Christian, yet I can’t seem to strip myself of the label. I am very aware of this self-contradiction, yet I haven’t attained an inner peace strong enough that will allow me to confront and overcome it. I do, however, know why I still refer to myself as a Christian rather than an agnostic or something else; it’s because of fear. I feel that although I don’t believe in hell, it’s definitely where I will go if I completely abandon the Christian faith. I feel like I will let my family down, mostly my extended family, if I announce to them I have abandoned Christianity. On a more personal level, I feel comfort belonging to a group that has more certainty about faith and salvation than I do; it calms my fear and relieves my uncertainty, if only momentarily. I could join any religion in order to feel this needed acceptance, but I choose Christianity because I am and have been rooted in it my entire life. I enjoy going to church, singing the hymns, and praying because it really is a positive and uplifting experience. It is the fear, however, that keeps me here in check. It won’t allow me to fully embrace my own spirituality and set of beliefs. Even now, I feel as if I am performing a sacrilege writing these words, but in reality I am only expressing myself honestly. In an age where religion is being forgotten more and more each day, I wonder how many people are out there like me who face this same or a similar self-contradiction.
I am constantly finding myself in situations that reflect my faith and spirituality. In these situations, I can't help but shake my head and feel the fear of uncertainty and the fear of the unknown. All I can do, all anyone can do, is try to attain inner peace. Some people find it easier than others, and some people don't find it at all. Some people live their lives without a doubt in their mind, while others are filled with fear until the day they die. I don't want to be part of the latter group. Although the fear is currently present in my life, I don't believe it will dictate my spirituality forever. I believe that as I continue to grow, I'll be able to find my own inner peace and absolution. From this, I'll be able to rid myself of all fears, while successfully overcoming this self-contradiction.
Every clothing store is split into two halves, and I’ve always felt as though I straddle the line between them, not entirely comfortable on one side or the other. By halves I mean sections: the men’s section and the women’s section. The entire world is split into these two sections, but in few places is it more painfully obvious than in a clothing store. It’s always an awkward moment when you ask for a dressing room and the smiling staff person asks, “You know that came from the men’s section, right?” The question is a strange one, full of caution and suspicion. It’s not a rhetorical question; she’s really hoping that you’ll say, “Oh my god, it is! Do you have something like this for women?” Then she can laugh it off and steer you over to your half of the store. Of course, it never actually happens that way. Instead, I smile back, and say “I know,” as politely as I can. But no matter how graciously I respond, I still get the odd look, as if the girl can’t quite comprehend why I would cross that forbidden line into the other side, into the forbidden territory that is the men’s section.

I first started to find myself in the men’s section in sixth grade. This was one of the most awkward grades of school for me because it was the first time I began to really choose things for myself. I started flipping through the radio stations in the car instead of listening to my parents’ music. When my family went to the movies, I started voicing my opinion instead of leaving things up to my parents. And, of course, I started to pick out my own clothes. Dark t-shirts with snakes and motorcycles held more appeal to me than sparkly shirts that said “Sweet” or “Cupcake.” This isn’t to say I was a tomboy because with those baggy t-shirts I wore bell bottoms and painted my nails. (I told you it was an awkward grade.) But my parents were concerned, incredibly concerned. First they thought I was having a difficult time transitioning into middle school. Then they thought I didn’t
have enough female role models. Countless times my mom would throw up her hands and say, “But Kelsey, you’re a girl!” As if that was the most obvious reason why I shouldn’t do whatever it was that I had done.

It’s not easy to experiment in middle school, especially with classmates that shout “Kelsey has a penis!” down the hallway whenever you try something new. I’ve learned a lot about fashion since sixth grade, but the spirit of that little girl is still there in the store when I ask to try on a pair of men’s jeans, and the look that the salesperson gives me still makes me want to cringe. In seventh grade, I wore a lot of collared shirts, and, in the spirit of experimentation, I decided one morning to add an additional touch: a tie. It was just a plain black tie, but my seventh grade mind thought that I was being a bit rebellious, especially since I wore these collared shirts with jeans and lots of eyeliner, the way Billie Joe did in Green Day. When I looked at myself in the mirror that morning, I thought I looked like I should be on the cover of a CD. When I got home that night, my tears had streaked all that carefully applied eyeliner down my cheeks in big black lines of shame. It had slipped my mind that morning that girls don’t wear ties.

After that incident, I didn’t touch another tie until my freshman year in high school and even then, I was still made fun of for it. Why? Why is it that when someone dares to cross over to the other section, the entire store is on edge until that person is back where they belong? Why do people force the entire human race in two, pushing everyone into two spheres of behavior that are forbidden to change?

“Traditional” gender roles don’t seem to take into account what feels most natural for the individual. Think about it: the first time you found yourself “in the wrong section,” you probably ended up there entirely by accident. It’s only when someone else calls you out, steers you back to your side, that you feel like you did something strange. I continually seem to find myself on the wrong side of the store, and continually struggle to stay there.

It’s much easier to be defiant in the women’s section, to proudly march up to the dressing room with your pair of guys’ jeans because no one is actually going to stop you. The women’s section is a place of sidelong looks and fake smiles that are begging you to please do what you’re supposed to do and stop making it awkward for everyone. However, things change a bit when you cross the invisible line. Here in the men’s section, you will be stopped,
especially if you are a man. Men can't just try on a skirt or a pair of heels in "their" section because I've seen salesman ask other men, "Are you a fag or something?" And if the salesman isn't bold enough to actually say it, it's painfully obvious that he's thinking it. Women, on the other hand, are welcome in the men's section. Guys like it when they get unexpected visitors from across the way; that is, until they realize that she is shopping for herself, not someone else. Then they love it. "Are you a lesbian?" the salesman asks bluntly, his eyes begging you to say yes so that he can proceed to ask you for your number and if you'd be willing to make-out with his girlfriend. No matter who you are or what you look like, there's a double standard. Though it's most readily apparent in clothing, it extends far beyond that into everything we say and do. It's acceptable for women to wear pants, but it's not okay for men to wear skirts. It's classy for men to drink wine, but trashy for women to drink beer. There are thousands of examples, thousands of situations, all of them creating invisible boundaries around one gender or the other.

Many people have tried to explain away my inability to stay in one section or the other. More often than not, people blame it on my bisexuality, which is why I haven't mentioned it until now. It's not about what kind of people I'm attracted to; it's about being part of a gigantic, global store that hates it when someone knocks over one of its carefully placed labels or signs. It's about a struggle against a world that wants me to stand in line with every other woman and stop being such a pain in the ass. This is not to say that it's an easy war to fight, and some battles I lose. For example, I left most of my "guy" clothes at home for my first semester in college, mostly from the mistaken assumption that I would never make friends if I cross-dressed. It's an ongoing process to discover who I am and why it matters so much what I wear, a process that will hopefully be much safer and easier for future generations of "cross-dressers."

A friend of mine loves plaid, and finds no shame in wearing plaid flannel shirts that she found in the men's section of American Eagle. Though she's been ridiculed for it many times, I've never seen her affected by any sort of criticism. Once I asked her how she could take such scrutiny from everyone around her and not be bothered by it. She just laughed, and finally answered, "Rude comments are just some peoples' way of telling you that they wish they could dress like you but don't have the guts."
SOUL STRUMMING

Karissa A. Rigali

Us

Throughout our lives, we feel compelled to impress others in multiple situations that can control the way we dress, walk, play, behave, talk, and even think. As a student, I aim to impress my teachers for higher grades; as an employee, I aim to impress my boss at the bowling alley for more parties to host or promotions or raises; as an athlete, I aim to impress my crew coach for a seat in a more competitive boat; as a child, I aim to impress my parents with appropriate behavior and intelligence for their praise; and as a friend, I aim to impress my friends for their admiration. With this constant pressure to be superb according to somebody else’s standards, it is easy for me to forget that the most important standards are my own. Self-esteem should stem from the judgments of the self by the self, but if we continue to base it on others’ standards, then we shall never reach a satisfying level of self-esteem because the world will always ask for more. Playing acoustic guitar is my time to build my own self-esteem by witnessing my creativity run wild. When I play guitar, I play in the presence of only myself and my shimmering, black Jasmine, breaking the chains of expectations and judgments that are applied by audiences so I can enjoy my sounds to their fullest potential.

Them

Four of my closest cousins, three of my uncles, and one of my aunts are musically talented in one way or another, making a family get-together without some form of music decorating the air an endangered species. Of course my ever-so-loving and supportive family members urge me to play as well, but the attention usually ends up embarrassing me as I simply reject the request. When people ask me to play for them, I get tense and butterflies flutter a storm in my stomach. I get nervous in front of any size audience, and feel ashamed if I ever make mistakes. I take it as a loving compliment that my friends and family are interested in hearing my strums,
but I know that to them my ability is not as developed as they are expecting and is not adequate enough to follow such stunning acts as those performed by my family musicians. When I play for myself, on the other hand, I can relax and enjoy the strumming and the sound my pick creates as it gives each string a cocky kiss even if I don’t do it as well as George Harrison, because to me, I still sound like the Beatles.

**Each**

Each song in the world is not only unique in content, but is unique in the emotions and reactions it brings out in the listener as well. When a person listens to a song, that person may react with a smile, tears, annoyance, dancing: the reactions are endless. Two people might react to the same song on the outside in the same manner, but those reactions are rooted from different emotions that stem from the inside—the experiences, dreams, feelings, thoughts, and connections that arise from within the individual and are released from the words and rhythm of the song. Because everyone has a different story in life, each person makes his or her own connections to a song that paints a unique interpretation of it, which makes it impossible for everyone to hear the same song in the same way. Songs that touch people in some way or another are usually the songs that those people like the most because they can connect to them. This explains why some people prefer songs about love to songs about war, or the genre of country to rock. Even the same song can sound different to the same person as time proceeds because that person experiences new situations and meets new people and creates new dreams and ideas.

When I play guitar, people who hear the songs I play do not hear them as I do. They may be so distracted by my imperfections or the alterations I make compared to the original that they decide they do not like my songs. Or maybe I’m just scared they think that way. If I like my story rough and edgy, I strum harder and carelessly; if I like my story to be more happy and free spirited, I may sing with a higher pitch; if I decide half way through my story I actually don’t like it, I’ll stop and choose a different one to play. Sometimes I will learn a song that I really connect with and play it the way I like to—once, or repeatedly, for a day or a week, or until I find a new song
of interest. Sometimes I'll have the chords of a song engraved in my memory forever if I love the sounds that much.

I find it is difficult for me to perform for an audience with confidence because I fear that the story they want to hear differs from the one I want to hear. I generally aim to please people, but when it comes to playing guitar, it is an act I do for my own enjoyment, and so I do not cater to the audience by playing what I think they want to hear; I play guitar for myself, and I love it.

It

My interest in guitar began when I was nine years old. I took lessons for about a year, and went through my share of bright blue lesson books with covers showing animated, smiling children playing guitars. I learned “Twinkle-Twinkle,” and how to read music, and how to play not only without reading the music but without looking at my hands. Even though I was improving my skills, I still felt vacant of the joy I thought I would have, and my feelings towards guitar did not emulate the joyful expressions the animated children had on the covers of the lesson books. So I quit. The songs I played to my guitar teacher had sounded like progress, but to me they sounded empty and structured.

After a gap of time long enough for me to physically grow out of my guitar, my interests grew back into it. I fell in love with the sounds of guitar in Red Hot Chili Peppers and Joseph Arthur songs and had convinced myself once again that guitar had the potential to be fun and exciting to learn. This time I decided to take a different approach and took informal lessons from my passionate and engaging Auntie Jeannie rather than with the professional-stranger-man in hope that the experience would be more pleasurable. In a way it was. The material was more flexible to fit my interests, and the scheduling of our lessons was also in my hands. During our practices, I would give her the name of a song, and she showed me the music and how to play it so I could practice it for our next meeting. Eventually I learned that knowing only the basic chords, G, F, A, D, E, B, and C, allowed me to read guitar tabs to songs I wanted to play at a skill level that, to me, was sufficient enough to enjoy the way I sounded. I still
felt the need to perfect songs for Jeannie's satisfaction as a teacher though, and that put a damper on my practices because I preferred to just play a song how I wanted to hear it, even if it didn't match the sounds of the original piece. The idea is similar to coloring a picture from your favorite coloring book; it is expected of the artist to color with appropriate, realistic colors inside the lines. The problem with that is that I don't mind, and even prefer, my pictures having different shades and colors than the norm, and I find it boring and strenuous to have to restrain my coloring to inside the lines.

I wasn't too disappointed or discouraged when it became difficult for Jeannie to find time to meet with me. I understood her busy position and had learned that I prefer to practice alone anyway. By that time, I had my own beautiful, new, black Jasmine by Takamine, which was a present for my thirteenth birthday, so I was able to play without depending on Jeannie's guitars. Having my own guitar grants me the flexibility to play the songs I want to play and hear, when and how I want to; I have finally found the joy I knew guitar had the power to give. Now I pick up my guitar because I choose to, not because I have to.

At first I thought I chose not to share what I learned on guitar out of my shy nature, lack of confidence, and fear of being ridiculed. Although those are all factors that do contribute to my decision, they alone placed my choice in a dim, negative light that caused me to be disappointed in myself. It took India Arie's beautiful, confident, and soothing voice and lyrics in her song “Private Party” to shine my choice under a brighter light. I'm not India Arie and do not know the true intent for this song, but I know what I heard when I heard this song and that was the voice of person who understands my choice. Arie's line, “Ain't no body here but me, my angels, and my guitar singin' baby look how far we've come” immediately struck me the first time I heard it; I had found another person out there who also plays guitar alone, and she is also enjoying the experience. In another of Arie's lines, “I'm havin' a private party, Learning how to love me, Celebrating the woman I've become,” she speaks about the peace and
pride that grows within her when she takes the time to recognize her personal accomplishments and strengths. I connect with Arie through these lyrics, and not only feel less alone and ashamed of my decision to play unaccompanied, but also happy and relieved that I have actually been respecting myself by not depending on other's opinions and judgments to create my pride and self-esteem.

Me

India Arie has taught me that I am not being anti-social when I play my cherished Jasmine by myself; rather I am being healthy by treating myself with respect. Playing my guitar alone breaks down boundaries set by others and frees my conscience of fear of potential judgments so my creativity can flow, and I can play the way I desire. Anyone who sings in the shower can connect to this feeling of freedom; it is as healthy for my well being as drinking water and washing my hands. It builds my confidence and self-esteem and is part of my journey in, as India Arie says, learning to love me.
Preface

Unit II: Interacting with Text

In the first unit of College Writing, students looked at their own experience and wrote personal essays for personal audiences. As they progressed through the semester, students moved from a more personal audience towards an academic one—and thus began the process of writing for the needs and expectations of more distant audiences—audiences they would not see before them such as their fellow classmates, family members, or friends. In Unit II, students were asked to integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others by responding to, or "wrestling with" a published text. Key elements of academic contexts, such as the use of textual sources and citation formats, were introduced.

The essays in this section of the Student Writing Anthology show students interacting with the work of a published author or scholar, and comfortably speaking with some degree of personal authority. In Unit I, students exhibited authority in writing about their own lives. In Unit II, students used the perspectives they gained from their own lives to write within a larger conversation in which their ideas were still central but were not the sole focus of their writing. No person can respond to a text without using and incorporating their own unique perspectives and contexts—perspectives and contexts that stem from their own history and experiences. In this second unit, students have gradually moved from a solely personal context to a less familiar one, while still finding authority in their own personal perspectives as well as in the content of the essays to which they have responded.
CONSIDER THE WALLACE

Derya Akbaba

Be prepared for extraordinarily prolonged, lucid, labyrinthine, and scintillating footnotes. Be prepared for the cynical, sardonic, dry, and almost unbearable humor of David Foster Wallace. But do not expect to find one meaning to his essay “Consider the Lobster.” Written as a review on the Main Lobster Festival that occurs “every late July” (Wallace 301), the essay, published in Gourmet magazine in August 2004, is enlaced with many meanings. The review is filled with meticulous observations on the culture of human cruelty, the universal lack of conscious living, the processes that enable such practices to continue, and many references intended to imply sympathy towards the lobster. But maybe Mr. David Foster Wallace, born in Ithaca, NY on February 21, 1963 to two teachers,

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1 In fact, the reader should be warned of extensive footnotes that are the trademark of Wallace’s works that tend to narrate split stories. Consider yourself lucky if “Consider the Lobster” is the first piece of writing that you have read by Wallace. In comparison to Infinite Jest, a 1000+ page novel with nine hundred pages of footnotes, “Consider the Lobster” is a light(er) read (Contemporary Authors Online).

2 According to Frank Bruni in his New York Times magazine profile, [Wallace] “is to literature what Robin Williams or perhaps Jim Carrey is to live comedy: a creator so maniacally energetic and amused with himself that he often follows his riffs out into the stratosphere, where he orbits all alone” (Contemporary Authors Online).

3 In fact, during many parts of “Consider the Lobster,” Wallace openly admits his doubt that much of his review, which consisted of long footnotes, would be published in the magazine. In his footnote on page 304, he states that “as a tourist, you become economically significant but existentially loathsome, an insect on a dead thing,” while noting “this FN will almost surely not survive magazine-editing.”

4 In an article in Time magazine, written after Wallace hung himself on September 12, 2008, the author admits that Wallace did not have “a cheery worldview, but it was honest. He ate meat but realized, in his essay “Consider the Lobster,” that if a crustacean is trying to claw its way out of a pot of boiling water, you are a cold-blooded murderer when you eat it” (Stein).
James Donald Wallace\(^5\) and Sally Foster\(^6\), simply wrote as an attempt to understand the natural ebb and flow of life. Wallace asks simple questions to the readers of *Gourmet* during his concluding paragraph. Whether these questions are intended to reach out to the reader and create a catalyst that would encourage considerate reflections or merely to reflect his own personal assessment about the nature of life, there is a terribly powerful proclivity to assume that Wallace wrote his sullen words as a result of his persistent struggle with depression, rather than accept that quite possibly the problems lie within ourselves as a human race.

Consider, momentarily, life through the eyes of Wallace. He asks the reader a series of questions such as, “What makes it feel truly okay, inside, to just dismiss the whole thing out of hand…is your [the reader’s] refusal to think about any of this, the product of actual thought, or is it just that you don’t want to think about it?” (314). His hand reaches out from the pages of black and white textual gibberish and grabs the attention [of the reader] that was lost among the endless footnotes about lobster anatomy\(^7\). Wallace seems to be grappling with the true meaning of life, while the majority of human beings\(^8\) choose to ignore the domino effect of the subconscious decisions that they are persuaded to make.

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\(^5\) Donald Wallace was a Philosophy and English major at Amherst College. David Foster Wallace followed in his footsteps ("David Foster Wallace").

\(^6\) Sally Foster would fake coughing attacks with a combination of struggles against choking on imaginary food bits, until Wallace and his sister understood that they had committed a "solecism" and corrected their grammatical mistakes (Knox).

\(^7\) “Consider the Lobster” includes an unnecessary amount of knowledge about the nervous system and structural build of a lobster that can often lead to symptoms of nominal Attention Deficit Disorder, as well as other forms of mild procrastination. Yet, I encourage those who remotely enjoyed his writing to explore his novel *Brief Interview with Hideous Men*. The footnotes are just as copious and just as extensive, but exponentially more interesting as they provide a witty parallel narrative that is frequently present in only rare loquacious individuals.

\(^8\) N.B. There is so much pride among *homo sapiens* that we [homo sapiens] are separate from beasts [*beastialis animalis*] only due to our thought and our conscience.
My purpose is to dissuade the reader from the notion that this essay was a propaganda piece supported by the members of PETA\(^9\) to enforce vegetarianism and to scandalmonger\(^10\) the lobster industry. Sure Wallace chooses to tactfully catalog various images that allude to the pain experienced by the lobster “like those frontal-lobotomy patients one reads about who report experiencing pain in a totally different way than you and I” (312), but this is simply Wallace playing the Devil’s advocate. His attention to detail creates a contrite sort of conscience for the reader, who is guilty of an effortless, circadian lifestyle. It is easy for most of us\(^11\) to pass through the motions of living, without much consideration of what we are doing and why. Wallace, straying from the tidal waves of conventionality, creates a window into the life of a lobster for this explicit reason.

Perhaps for the man who struggled with life, it was extremely important to comprehend the meaning of living for everyone and everything. While attendees of the Maine Lobster Festival enjoyed “over 25,000 pounds of fresh caught Maine lobster, … lobster rolls, lobster turnovers, lobster sauté, ...
Down East lobster salad, lobster bisque, lobster ravioli, and deep-fried lobster dumplings” (Wallace 301), Wallace observed the “intimacy of the whole thing,” the “set of gruesome, convulsionlike reactions” of the lobster, and the everlasting image of the “the pathetic clinging [of the lobster] to the edge of the pot” (309-12).12

The man and his writing are inseparable. Poured into every word are thoughts and pieces of Wallace. In complete and utter contrast to Wallace, I write as an escape, as an intentional approach to live among characters of another world, deficient in mortal standards and laws. Many read for that same diversion of reality. Yet David Foster Wallace chooses to confront the ugliness of humanity and respect its beauty concurrently. Consider the lobster the next time you head up to Maine. Consider the process that leads up to the moment that your fingers touch the brittle shell that is the same color as a twenty-dollar Australian note. Consider the small things of life and appreciate them: for the lobster, for Wallace.

12 Throughout the essay, Wallace includes much factual, mind numbing information about the lobster. Yet, he places feeling into these technical terms such as “frontal lobotomoy,” “built-in analgesia,” “natural opioids,” and “enkephalin” that are all essentially humanoid biological terms (Wallace 312). His tactile descriptions create the image of a defenseless prey, savagely tortured like the victims of “Nero’s entertainments or Mengele’s experiments” (313). The tremendous effort that Wallace spends on understanding the subject he is discussing shines an unforgiving light upon our negligence towards life, leaving our passion for living* quite ironic and simply poignant.

* This poses a questionable argument (i.e. Wallace’s comprehension of life is greater than ours [the readers]), considering Wallace’s use (and obsession) with depression medication (see F.N. 11) to sustain a ‘normal’** life that we (non-depressed readers) are able to maintain without prescription pills.

** What is normal?
Works Cited


Dear fellow *College Writing* student,

Have you ever tripped over your own two feet and fallen flat onto your face in front of an enormous crowd of people? That’s how I felt the first time I read Jamaica Kincaid’s essay “A Small Place.”

_Mistaken_

From the very first sentence, the topic of Kincaid’s essay will become clear to you: tourism. At first, you may think that you have experience with tourism; this is a topic you can relate to. If you’re from New England, then you may be immediately reminded, as I was, of the crowds of “tourists” that always seem to flock to your hometown in the summer, but please disregard any remaining hope that you and Kincaid share some sort of common ground just because you both deal with tourists. On the contrary, you are the subject of her essay.

As a writer, Kincaid settles this issue early on, clearly and almost personally. As she jumps into her essay, she makes evident the fact that no amount of experience you’ve had with tourism connects you to her in any way; for you are the subject of her essay—a tourist. Kincaid writes, “As your plane descends to land, you might say, what a beautiful island Antigua is—more beautiful than any of the other islands you have seen, and they were very beautiful, in their way, but they were much too green, much too lush with vegetation, which indicated to you, the tourist, that they got quite a bit of rainfall” (111). Through such descriptions, in which she cites the reader as the tourist, Kincaid demonstrates not only that the reader’s experiences are not analogous to her own, but that she and the reader are entirely different people. At this point, you will realize that you do not know where she is coming from. You will realize that you were mistaken.
Generalized

Kincaid directs her essay towards a single specific reader—“you”, the stereotypical, Hawaiian-shirt-wearing tourist: “You move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched. You emerge from customs into the hot, clean air: immediately you feel cleansed, immediately you feel blessed (which is to say special); you feel free” (111). This criticism in Kincaid’s writing, however, will not make you feel special. At the description of moving through customs in an airport that is distant and unfamiliar to you, you may start to think about the places you’ve visited. You may also begin to reconsider your previous claims of having experience with a tourist issue. Sure, when summers started heating up, those visitors from New York and other neighboring states seemed pretty arrogant and inconsiderate, but when the harsh and chilling winters rolled around, where were you? Maybe you spent a week in Cancun, Mexico? Vacationed to the Bahamas? Aruba? Turks and Caicos? Places like Antigua? According to Kincaid, you are merely a tourist; a tourist the same as any other. You will become generalized.

Insulted

Eventually, Kincaid begins to build on this generalization to a new extreme. She starts highlighting differences between those she refers to as tourists and the natives of Antigua. While discussing the earthquake that damaged the local library in Antigua, Kincaid asserts, “everyone talks about it that way—The Earthquake; we Antiguans, for I am one, have a great sense of things, and the more meaningful the thing, the more meaningless we make it” (113). Through inserting knowledge and customs that are familiar among the native people of Antigua, she causes her readers to feel uncomfortable about their ignorance of the places they willingly and excitedly transport themselves to.

Kincaid also pokes fun at the way in which tourists seem too bewildered and electrified by the unique scenery and life-style projected by Antigua to reason simply and logically:

The sign hangs there, and hangs there more than a decade later, with its unfulfilled promise of repair, and you might see this as a sort of
quaintness on the part of these islanders, these people descending from
slaves—what a strange, unusual perception of time they have.
REPAIRS ARE PENDING, and here it is many years later, but perhaps
in a world that is twelve miles long and nine miles wide (the size of
Antigua) twelve years and twelve minutes and twelve days are all the
same. (113)

Of course, she is not implying that all tourists are dim-witted but that
they are often so caught up in their own vacations, during which they expect
to be visiting an ideal and superlative setting, that they tend to substitute
appealing hypotheses for harsh realities such as poverty and corruption.

However, she chooses to make these claims in an exceedingly forward
and unsympathetic manner, and if you have not yet caught on to the mix-
ture of a little hint of sarcasm and a muffled scream for a call to attention,
then you are going to feel a bit taken back. You are going to feel insulted.

Lost

Suddenly, Kincaid is going to make a subtle shift in her writing. She is
going to stop referring to you as a mere tourist. Instead, she is going to take
a step into reality—your reality. She begins to talk with her readers more as
individuals by entering their everyday lives: “You are not an ugly person all
the time; you are not an ugly person ordinarily; you are not an ugly person
day to day. From day to day, you are a nice person. From day to day, all the
people who are supposed to love you on the whole do” (115).

This delicate transition serves a substantial purpose. By diving into the
everyday lives of people as natives rather than tourists, she poses the ques-
tion as to why they become tourists; why they so persistently seek an escape
from their usual lives. She continues,

From day to day, as you walk down a busy street in the large and mod-
er and prosperous city in which you work and live, dismayed, puzzled
(a cliché, but only a cliché can explain you) at how alone you feel in
this crowd, how awful it is to go unnoticed, how awful it is to go
unloved, even as you are surrounded by more people than you could
possibly get to know in a lifetime that lasted for millennia. (115)
She proposes that it is this feeling that prompts people to search for an escape; a rest from their routine lives. You will be able to identify with this feeling. You will feel lost.

**Human**

Kincaid chooses to separate people into a binary: they are either tourists or natives. In her concluding thoughts, however, she seems to step back from the writing she has done and places the two categories into one larger, more unified group—humanity. At the end of her essay, she states:

that the native does not like the tourist is not hard to explain. For every native of every place is a potential tourist, and every tourist is a native of somewhere. Every native everywhere lives a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom and desperation and depression, and every deed, good and bad, is an attempt to forget this. Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. (116)

Not every native, however, can afford a tour. The fact that tourists are capable of invading a native’s “banality and boredom” and transforming it into their own escape is crucial and demoralizing.

In order to form a path towards this conclusion, Kincaid makes several risky choices as a writer. She consistently runs the risk of rejection from the reader. However, similar to how the land of Antigua is viewed differently from the perspective of the tourist from that of the native, Kincaid’s essay, too, can be observed from a different point of view. In order to fully appreciate Kincaid’s essay and the point that she emphasizes, one must read her essay from the perspective of a writer. You must ask yourself why she makes the choices she does; why she sends the reader through a mass of emotions. So be prepared. Be prepared to feel mistaken, generalized, insulted, and lost; be prepared to feel how the natives of Antigua feel on a consistent basis.

You will be able to relate to the sense of feeling lost because everyone, at one point or another, has been the victim of such a decimating ambiance. You will be able to verify through your own experiences that all
you wanted when you felt like this was a getaway. You will contemplate the possibility that maybe everyone deserves to feel insulted now and then—anything to wake them from the sleep-like state they’ve been living in, day in and day out; anything to make them aware of the significance of all the little subtleties that pass by unnoticed right under their noses. Surely, Kincaid’s attitude and anger will not make you feel special, but at last, her intention will. You will emerge (from anywhere but customs) into the cool, clean air: immediately you will feel cleansed; immediately you will feel blessed (which is to say special); you will feel free. Perhaps you will realize that you were not mistaken; you and Kincaid do share some sort of common ground after all.

Works Cited

LARA CROFT: AMBIGUOUS ADVENTURER

Kelsey Kinkead

Maja Mikula intelligently dissects the cultural phenomenon that is Lara Croft in her essay entitled *Gender and Videogames: The Political Valency of Lara Croft*. Mikula states that Lara has gained excessive attention because she is an enigma, a paradox, and, most importantly, a woman. A fictional videogame character, Lara skillfully straddles the line between feminist icon and sexual fantasy. She has an ability to ignite strong feelings in people who believe she falls into one category or the other. But, as Mikula points out, “Lara is everything that is bad about representations of women in culture, and everything good...” (182). I believe Lara’s success depends on her ability to defy clear cut labels when society is desperate to peg her as “either/or.”

At first glance, there is no doubt Lara Croft is all woman as her “...breasts are massive...her waist is tiny, her hips are rounded and she wears extremely tight clothing” (Mikula181). Her physical appearance has had many mixed reviews. Mikula quotes feminist author Germain Greer in dubbing Lara a “‘sergeant-major with balloons stuffed up his shirt [...] She’s a distorted, sexually ambiguous, male fantasy...’” (181). On the other hand, Lara has been called “...fairly non-descript and invite[s] diverse readings” (Mikula 186). It is easy to understand how Lara could be interpreted as demeaning to women if judgment is based solely on her appearance. However, Lara has proven herself as an accomplished, independent woman. She is a British aristocrat, schooled to play a role in the changing world, and a world famous archaeologist. She is competition to any man in terms of her ability to rock climb, shoot a gun, or ride a motorcycle. She is incredibly self-reliant, as demonstrated by her ability to survive alone in the Himalayan wilderness after a plane crash (Mikula186). I believe Lara must be viewed as the sum of her body and skills; she is not one without the
other. Critics like to see Lara as either black or white, therefore rendering themselves incapable of understanding her at all. As Mikula points out, “The heroine’s constructed identity is no more than an amalgam of values representing all the different faces of empowerment in advanced capitalist societies: class, wealth, appearance, physical fitness, strong will, intelligence and independence” (185). Lara cannot be reduced to a single image; the fact that she is multi-faceted helps make her, and her game, widely desired.

Mikula states that historically, the world of videogames has been deemed a male arena. Lara made a rather “groundbreaking entry” and has even helped pave the way for a “number of female characters” (Mikula 182). This trailblazing seems like something feminists should be pleased with, even proud of, but even so there is controversy. Mikula ponders, “...accepting that her character is everything that an earlier generation of feminists wished for, does this become irrelevant when she still has to win her place in popular culture by having large breasts?” (182). Perhaps her sex appeal gained her initial attention, but I believe her longevity must be based on more than that because in the videogame genre, “overstated muscles for males and Barbie-like proportions for females are a commonplace...” (Mikula 186). Lara’s intentional audience was masculine, as developers chose to target males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-six. Then the question boils down to whether men enjoy the game because they identify with the main character (Lara) or because they objectify her. Mikula argues the answer is both: “The game makes it possible to be excited about identifying with this strong and capable archaeologist; or to enjoy looking after an excessively feminine character” (184). It is no doubt that for males, “part of the pleasure of playing this game is involved in ‘controlling’ a female character as feisty and attractive as Lara” (Mikula 184). So where do female gamers fit in? It has been stated that “...women enjoy ‘being’ Lara, rather than controlling her” (184). Finally women have the opportunity to identify with someone on screen, and Lara’s lack of reliance on any male character is a major plus.

So then, is Lara the greatest feminist symbol ever? Mikula notes that “she is a role model, symbolizing ‘adventure, independence, possibility and strength’...” (184). She mentions that Lara is everything that a man wants, and everything a woman wants to be. Lara seems to strike the fine chord
between the two genders; she is universally attractive. Her precise label cannot be determined, but either way “...she has certainly been taken up by feminists, and used for feminist ends” (Mikula 188). Mikula explains how some feminists feel that Lara had the potential to be a symbol for a powerful woman, but the possibilities haven't been well enough exploited (188). To many, Lara may always be “...another female ‘creation’ by a male ‘creator’ in a long series of patriarchal representations of women...” (184). However, I think this is unnecessarily reiterating the significance of gender, and Lara should simply be accepted as a well-rounded individual. Again, cast the labels aside and take Lara at face value. As Mikula puts it, “there are many Laras...she is indeed a sex object; she is indeed a positive image and a role model; and many things in between” (188).

Mikula takes a stand by not taking a stand. She is a contradiction like Lara, not able to fully commit to one side or the other. This is respectable in the sense that it gives the impression that she has weighed all sides of the argument. Mikula avoids the calamity of jumping to conclusions by viewing Lara in her entirety. I fully agree with Mikula’s musings on Lara being a conglomeration of ideals. In almost any industry, the goal is to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Lara accomplishes this by being sexually attractive for males and iconically attractive for females. The bottom line is that Lara is too complex to solely fit into one category; she is the gray blur within the extremes.

Works Cited
GOOGLE: USE PROPERLY

Christine McCall

According to Nicholas Carr, in his essay “Is Google Making Us Stupid?,” we are living in a time when our brains are ever-changing. Different from our parents who grew up reading books, we are influenced by the convenience of the Internet. We rely on the constant stream of information to keep us updated and make us worldlier. We use Google with great ease to answer any question we have. Say goodbye to the countless hours lost among library shelves; we are able to navigate our way through Web sites with little effort. Forget reading long, intense novels, as we have become accustomed to short summaries, often losing concentration after more than a few paragraphs (Carr 60). Our generation is labeled as “decoders of information” rather than interpreters of connections (qtd. in Carr 61). We, as a whole, rely too much on the Internet, and our brain is the victim of this addiction. The ways we think and learn are transforming as we adapt to the entanglement of the Web (Carr 59). Carr argues that as the technology industry is rapidly growing, we can only blame Google for our stupidity.

As I read each word of Carr’s piece with extreme concentration, I began to analyze every aspect of my life. Was I the zombie that he described, sitting in front of the computer screen for hours, mindlessly transitioning between Web pages? Had I been taken over by the disease that transformed my thought process into a constant stream of information bits? (60). Was I that dependent on technology that my ability to read, my ability to write, my ability to remember had been compromised? As I began to over-analyze the fact that my own Web browser had four open tabs, and as I began to worry about my constantly drifting mind while reading this passage, I feared the worst: my use of Google has made me stupid. It had infested my mind to the point where it was just a hollow mold of a brain too reliant on technology. The prophecies about the Internet had finally come true, and I was just an addition to those with empty thought processes. I was a follower of
Twitter; I was a member of the Facebook community; I was an information-gatherer from Wikipedia. Where had my independence gone? Where was my ability to focus on lengthy pieces of literature, just as my father had done during his years of law school? More importantly, what did that mean for my success in law school?

I had hit rock bottom; I thought the worst of each possible situation. Anxiety overwhelmed me as I envisioned a future where I was unable to succeed in school because of my poor academic skills. In my mind, I watched as my trembling hands opened the letters of rejection from law schools. I froze, only able to think of how the Internet had ruined my chances of pursuing my dreams. My lack of research skills and inability to focus and remember had murdered my future, and I mourned the loss. In my concerned mind, I had become the prototype of what Carr had identified. But then I realized I was reacting just the way Carr wanted: with fear. I experienced a moment of clarity; I still had the aptitude to succeed amidst the changing methods of the new century. I was able to analyze Carr’s arguments clearly enough that I regained confidence in my abilities. My breathing returned to normal as my exaggerations became less extreme. I hadn’t become a transformed brain in cyberspace; rather, I had become a victorious free-thinker in a transforming society.

As Carr presents, English majors and other literary professionals have witnessed a loss of focus due to the use of the Internet as their means of information gathering (60). However, I disagree with this statement, for although I use the Internet for convenience, I am able to remain focused on a piece of writing, no matter the length. Sit me down with To Kill A Mockingbird, and I will be entranced for hours. Give me a copy of Plato’s Trial and Death of Socrates, and I will be able to follow the intricate wording with ease. But assign me to read an article written by a retired professor with a double-doctorate, and you will watch me struggle through the reading. Research papers require large amounts of focus because the readings have a different structure. Whereas novels involve a story line, an academic journal article may include highly technical language, complex theory, and jargon to support a thesis. It isn’t how we read, but rather what we read. Despite this awareness, anyone who relies on the Internet for their knowledge is still able to read a novel that interests them. They are still able
to use the resources of their brain to remain focused, to stay concentrated, to remember evidence, to form opinions.

Carr also states that “the human brain is just an out-dated computer that needs a faster processor and a bigger hard drive” (64). In contrast, I believe we are just simply reading the instruction manual poorly. The brain isn’t getting rewired; we are being told how to use it in incorrect ways. The structure of society enables us to become confused about the true purpose of technology: to enhance life, not extract life. For example, my high school education system didn’t emphasize the importance of healthy research skills sufficiently. Students relied on the point-click ability of Google to gather information and re-organize it into an essay. But when they reached upper-level college courses, they got a harsh reality check when they realized the tactics they had used failed. With information so easily accessed, it is easy to misuse the convenience of Google and jump from hyperlink to hyperlink. We must calm down from our “click-happy” moods, and focus on the retention of information. Google is not making us stupid with its convenience or structure. Rather, it is our inability to separate accessibility from function that leads to the demise of our brain power.

As Google is constantly misused, it transforms the way society constructs the purpose of technology. It begins in that moment when we get lazy and start to rely on a text message to relay a conversation. It begins when we use a mouse to make our purchases instead of in-person transactions. In a time of instant gratification, the days of patience and anticipation are gone. If we want pizza, we get it delivered hot and fresh in thirty minutes or less. If we want the newest gadget, we get it in two to four weeks after paying shipping and handling. With more courses switching to online practices, college syllabi are being restructured to comply with the standards of a virtual society. However convenient technology may seem, we must remember the importance of action, interaction, and moral satisfaction.

The problem lies within the interpretation of technology rather than the presence of it. As a society, we are encouraged to depend on the Internet for means of research. It is normal that we are constantly attached to our phone, only a few seconds away from a written response. With more news to follow, with more people to meet, and with more activities to
engage in, we are expected to multi-task and stay updated on the newest alterations of technology. If we rewind to years ago, just after the Internet was introduced, we may be able to pinpoint the area in which this abuse started. We would return to the ideals of an independent life with assistance from technology, instead of complete dependence on computers.

Though it may seem our reliance has created technological monsters, all hope is not lost. Society is frequently changing; yesterday’s inventions are mere shadows of the possibility of tomorrow. We haven't lost our ability to read, to understand, to think. We are still able to function in society and form opinions. We are still able to socialize outside our social networking sites. We are still able to walk into a library, collect research, and write a paper about it. While the Internet has made these processes easier, we are still able to survive on our own. Google hasn't made us stupid. It is simply the structure of society that has created a general of reliance on technology. From a young age, children are encouraged to rely on Google in acquiring their information. Social networking offers a medium for easy communication. Playing in a virtual playground, children are able to run free with the tools of the Internet. Proper uses are forgotten as the instruction manual was never written; we are confusing convenience for reality. This misunderstanding makes us fearful of our dependence on the computer that was invented to make our life more efficient.

Support for this claim even dates back to before the common era when Socrates discussed the problems of “receiving a quantity of information without proper instruction” (qtd. in Carr 65). Before technology infested society like a deadly disease, people were able to read lengthy books, retain knowledge, remember more, and be more independent from convenience. But with the introduction of the computer, and more notably the Internet, society has become highly dependent on “efficiency and immediacy” (qtd. in Carr 61). This change is not due to the use of Google, but rather to how we socially construct technology’s influence on thought processes. We need to learn how to implement the correct uses of the Internet into daily life instead of being completely overcome by its powers. I am not stupid because of Google. I am able to retain information, I am able to read lengthy books and stay concentrated. I am dependent on myself, and there-
fore, I do not believe that any invention, no matter how influential, will rid society of human mental processes.

Works Cited
MY UNIVERSITY OWES ME?

Paul Trotta

When the demand curve intersects the supply curve, the product is at an equilibrium point.” It was early morning, and I was sitting in a three-hundred-person lecture hall, half asleep, half tuned in, half oblivious to my professor’s monotonous lecture about supply and demand. Economics 103 is a course designed to deal with firms and businesses; thus, I was taken aback when I heard my professor reference a university, clearly not a business. Well, at least that’s what I thought. I immediately perked up to hear her utter the words “Don’t be fooled kids, education is a business, and you are all investing as we speak.” There you go, right there, plain as day; a college education is a business transaction: an investment. My very own economics professor validated the argument made by the UCLA Student Webzine article, “Ask Not What You Can Do for Your University, But What Your University Can Do for You.”

The allegation made by the article, and later confirmed by my professor, was that today’s undergraduate college students feel that by enrolling in a university, they are entitled to a successful and financially secure future. The Webzine questions students’ motives and accuses them of viewing “their college classes as a capital investment instead of a window to knowledge” (293). The article then goes on to lambaste every aspect of the undergraduate—from their indifferent attitude in the classroom, to their disrespectful countenance towards professors, and even their overall sense of lackadaisical entitlement. But do these allegations have any roots, any basis in fact, any real rhyme or reason?

Of course, the UCLA Student WebZine has some legitimate claims, and they’re even backed by some solid support; however, the article also does an excellent job of overlooking major aspects of the argument as well. Take me in my economics class, for example. The Webzine would persecute me for my alleged “attitude of apathy and disregard for the act of learning” due to my relaxed and not-so-engaged nature (294). It would, however, be
overlooking the fact that I read all the required pages, did all the required homework, and studied the required material. Thus, my understanding of the concepts being relayed was complete to the point that her lecture was simplistic and redundant due to my level of preparedness. So yes, much of what the article states is perfectly true and cannot be refuted, but still much of it can be justified through an alteration of perception. How does it sound if I just play devil’s advocate for a minute and give the undergrads a fighting chance?

To start things off, I need to explore what exactly it means to make an investment. An investment is commonly defined as the act of putting forth some sort of money or capital in exchange for a more profitable return. A fair definition, but like the UCLA WebZine, this definition seems to only focus upon “monetary considerations,” which is only a small part of what the college investment is (293). I personally feel that an investment is the sum of all its inputs. It may just be me, but things that I care the most about are the things that I invest in. I care about those less fortunate than myself, so I’ve invested time and money in programs like Habitat for Humanity. I care a lot about my friends and family, so I invest my free time and emotional energy with them. I care a lot about my education, so I’m willing to invest a lot of time, energy, stress, and money into it, just the same. Investing is more than just merely throwing money at a cause and expecting results.

So why does the UCLA WebZine think making an investment such a horrible offense? The article makes it seem like undergraduates are committing a crime when it snarls “Undergrads become customers at a university-company where they may buy their ticket to a high income-career” (295). This may be true, but is it really such a travesty? Referring back to my economics class, millions of investments are made each day, whether they are a monetary investment, such as in a company’s stock, or a time investment in community service, or even an investment of emotion in a love interest. Regardless of exactly what is being invested, it’s inevitable that we are investing, money or not. Fact: a college education is a huge investment. College students invest years of time, immeasurable amounts of stress and effort, and increasingly larger monetary sums. These are facts, and they are not going to change whether the UCLA Webzine approves or not: college is an enormous investment.
Today, other than a home, a college education is the largest investment a majority of people make in their lives. It is only realistic for undergrads to have lofty expectations for this particular “business transaction of receiving a university education,” which can cost upwards of two hundred thousand dollars (295). A fairly handsome investment, we can agree. So is it wrong for an undergraduate student to want a fairly handsome return? Don’t get me wrong. I am in no way justifying the arrogant sense of entitlement or justifying “the actual learning process and acquisition of knowledge,” being merely “shoved aside” (295). I am, however, demonstrating that it may not be so ludicrous for undergrads to have lofty expectations for their investment. I am completely of the mentality that nothing should be handed to students, and they are solely responsible for their education. Students must be conscientious and pursue their own investment if they ever expect to benefit from it. And by “pursue their own investment,” I don’t mean nagging teachers for the grades they feel they are entitled to. Students must put in the other aspects of the college investment: the time, effort, emotion, energy, and the other essential intangibles. These intangibles make the monetary investment go. Alone, a car is nothing; these intangibles are the imperative gasoline that enables the car that is a college education to go.

This essay was not intended to pick sides or to bash the UCLA WebZine, merely to present the other side of the argument. Furthermore, its goal is to enlighten UCLA WebZine readers that undergrads are not criminals and that there is more to an investment than just money. In an academic arena, it is essential that we scholars (if we’re entitled to call ourselves that now that an education is merely an investment) look at a situation objectively and without bias from all involved perspectives. That was exactly my goal—to put the other half of the argument on the table. It does not matter if you have your own argument, agree with my argument, or take the UCLA WebZine’s argument. Ideally, it’s a combination of the three, but all that really matters is that you take the time and care enough to invest in your education, and to have a stance at all. And who knows? In the process, you may just disprove the argument you are making.
Works Cited
Part II

Preface
Unit III

In the essays from Unit III, writers have traveled even further “into the world” by interacting with a variety of texts in order to take part in a larger conversation around a specific subject or issue. Students began by focusing on a topic they cared deeply about, and then imagined a potential audience that might need or want to hear more about it. Students researched the larger conversation around their topic, and then found a point of entry through which they could contribute meaningfully to this dialogue. These Unit III essays are pieces written for a public audience, using research as the primary “authority” for the papers, although personal perspective (in some cases, personal experience) are sources of authority as well. Here are essays that move beyond the “academic” world and are meant for an audience interested in knowing more about a specific conversation.

These essays are evidence of how writing serves the community. Larger conversations and contexts are drawn upon as students engage in dialogues centered on issues they find important and meaningful. What appeals to the authors, what they find important and meaningful, has so much to do with their own histories and experiences. In the following essays, students found their own contexts in what others have written/stated about an issue and responded to these texts. This writing has brought them into the “world” and has allowed their voices to be heard as new and integral participants in a larger conversation.
The door bursts open to the thunder of frantically fleeing footsteps and the rain of orange and yellow bullets spilling to the floor. Everyone crowds into room 129 in Butterfield House, toting a collection of brightly colored Nerf guns and firing dart after dart at a makeshift target drawn on a whiteboard. Every mind buzzes obsessively with the same thought: “Humans vs. Zombies (HvZ) is back.” That’s right, the apocalypse-themed tag game that has “bitten” college campuses throughout the nation for the past five years returned to UMass Amherst, turning the last two weeks of October into a living nightmare for the “humans” and an all-you-can-eat buffet for the “zombies.” The fall 2010 edition game began with twelve original zombies and over three hundred humans, with human ranks dropping drastically by the hour as they fell victim to the zombie horde.

Laura Wexler, in an article for the Washington Post, described a game of Humans vs. Zombies that took place in 2006 at Goucher College, in which it was clear that all students involved treated the game as though it were an actual zombie apocalypse. The rapidly dwindling resistance forces found themselves camped out in the basement of Goucher’s Van Meter Hall, refusing to leave lest they be caught by the zombies waiting just outside. Wexler describes how the game’s original zombie, Erika Cardona, sat outside the basement door “waiting thirty minutes in the November chill” for the humans to attempt an escape, saying, “It’s a hostage situation. We’re psyching them out” (3). All across campus, students could be seen packing Nerf guns and traveling in tight groups so as to protect the “human race” or, in the case of the zombies, destroy it.
Much like Goucher, the recent UMass Amherst edition of Humans vs. Zombies found students anticipating the game with what could be considered an almost unhealthy enthusiasm. Michael Moura, a student living in Butterfield, reported spending roughly forty dollars on his defensive arsenal, which included two revolvers, sixty extra darts, and a supply of marshmallows. On the first evening of the game, he set out with the rest of group from Butterfield, Nerf guns at the ready and eyes nervously scanning the area for possible zombie attackers. Duncan Edgar, the group’s unspoken leader, was particularly excited for the game. “High volume of darts, low reliability,” he says of his prized possession, an oversized, automatic Nerf gun that can fire up to twenty darts without having to reload (Edgar). As the leader of the expedition to Franklin DC that day, he took it upon himself to ensure the safety of the group. Unfortunately, this act of heroism cost him his humanity on the first day of play: “It was one of those one-in-forty chances in which the gun jammed. It just happened to be the first shot I fired … Having the most powerful weapon, I felt I had the responsibility to make sure that those who were not as well equipped as I was were safe first, which cost me [my life], and, in the long run, the [lives of the] people I was trying to save” (Edgar). Edgar was the first of the group to be “bitten,” and it wasn’t long before more of his former comrades fell as well.

All over campus, hundreds of students enthusiastically participated in the game, a rumored majority of whom resided in the Orchard Hill and Central areas. Robert Moura, Michael Moura’s brother who lives in Dickinson, was awestruck by the rapidly growing horde that began to overtake the area. Robert exclaimed, “It was a madhouse … maybe five or six [of the twelve original zombies] lived in this area, so it wasn’t long before the whole place started getting infected.” By the end of the fourth day, roughly seventy-five percent of Orchard Hill’s residents who were involved in the game had been turned into zombies (R. Moura). The days grew more and more tense. All around, “human” ranks were falling faster and faster, leaving little hope for the survivors, who grew more and more nervous each day. Like the paranoid students described in Wexler’s article about the Goucher game, UMass’s “human” students began to rely more on avoiding the zombies at all costs rather than attacking them. “I would say that, at times, it would be necessary to alter my routine simply to stay alive.
Parts of it would involve skipping class,” admits Robert Moura. Needless
to say, a majority of the game’s participants immersed themselves so deeply
in the game that everything, from schoolwork to tasks like grocery shop-
ning, became temporarily irrelevant.

Seeing this, it’s not surprising that Humans vs. Zombies would be met
with its share of opposition, particularly from the faculty of the schools in
which it’s held. Jeff Myers, an English Professor at Goucher College said on
the subject, “I don’t have anything specifically against the game as a game.
What sort of troubled me was seeing young men walking around campus
in camouflage and doing a kind of walk I would characterize as a swagger
or aggressive pose” (Wexler 2). Students involved in the Goucher game
treated it with such seriousness that the faculty began to worry about the
school’s safety. Emily Perl, Associate Dean of Students at Goucher, said that
her “worst fear is that an outsider will walk onto campus and pull a real
gun, not knowing the kids are using fake guns” (Wexler 2). Despite the
constant reassurance that HvZ is, in fact, just a game, the intense obsession
with violence (even fake violence) continues to arouse concern. Some
schools, including Butler University in Indiana, have banned the game
altogether because of their convictions that the game mocks tragedies like
the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings. “Given the Virginia Tech inci-
dent, we didn’t feel it was appropriate for them to be going around campus
24/7 carrying toy guns,” says Irene Stevens, Dean of Student Life at Butler
(Wexler 2). This course of action is alarming since it seems a bit extreme to
ban a game like Humans vs. Zombies in colleges because of concern that
youth is too impressionable. After all, college students are not elementary
school students, so they should know the difference between a Nerf gun
and a real gun. However, having seen firsthand the intense student invest-
ment in HvZ, I’m beginning to wonder when this “game” becomes more
than just a “game.”

What makes games like this so intense? Why is it that the participants
of HvZ, as well as other games and sports for that matter, become so
worked up over these seemingly meaningless competitions? Allen
Guttmann’s article on the psychology of sports offers some insight into
this topic, identifying aggression and motivation as the most essential
components that make up competition. According to Guttmann, earlier
studies of motivation focused on the person’s tendency to strive for success while fearing failure. In the case of Humans vs. Zombies, the players’ motivation is that of “survival,” in the form of either killing all the humans or dodging and shooting down as many zombies as possible without getting “bitten.” Guttmann helps to explain this further by alluding to Arnold Buss’s experiment on sports spectators. The experiment involved having subjects watch films depicting either sports or nonviolent actions, then asking them to administer electric shocks to another person. The results concluded that observers of games, sports, and violence are more aggressive than those opposed since they were more willing to administer the electric shocks than the group observing nonviolent actions (Guttmann). This can also be said of the students who participated in Humans vs. Zombies, whose intense fascination with both the competitive game of tag and the ever-popular zombie apocalypse scenario results in heightened levels of aggression throughout the course of the game.

In the article, “The Experimental Psychology of Competition,” James Vaughn and Charles M. Diserens describe another study that also helps to explain the extreme nature of the Humans vs. Zombies game. Norman Triplett conducted an experiment that involved the subject racing against a timer or other contestants. Triplett said that “the bodily presence of another contestant participating simultaneously in the race serves to liberate latent energy not ordinarily available.” What he means by this is that it’s natural for people to become more competitive when in the presence of others participating in the same competition. In terms of HvZ, the “humans” tend to show more motivation and aggression when faced with their opponents, the “zombies,” and vice versa. This psychological response coincides with the release of adrenaline triggered by the “fight or flight” response of the human when faced with the zombie. Upon seeing his opponent in the heat of the suspenseful game, the human’s instinct is to react in the extreme, fearing that he or she might be “bitten” (which results in losing the game). The zombie, on the other hand, seeing the human, would instinctively focus on the impending victory, and would in turn leap into “attack mode” (Vaughn; Diserens 88). Knowing this, it comes as even less of a shock that faculty members would react so strongly against the game.
This information tells us that it’s quite possible that the students subconsciously believed themselves to be in actual danger at the time of the game, which caused them to react with such impassioned ferocity.

So why is it that students find themselves fleeing and fighting for their lives in the face of a gaggle of their classmates sporting red bandanas? Edgar attributes this to the fact that the game was dominated by male participants—females tend to make up roughly one-third of the game’s participants (Wexler 2)—who tend to be “incredibly, almost stupidly, competitive.” Vinsula Hastings, a female player, disagrees with this statement. “A lot of people like participating in community events because it bestows a sense of trust and camaraderie upon them and their peers. It’s also fun to get serious about something silly so the feeling of danger is there, without the danger.” Michael Moura also points out that “there’s massive appeal to games where a lot of people can play [as a result of the] bystander effect [in which] people do things if they see more and more people doing them” (M. Moura).

Generally speaking, all sides of the issue seem justified, so it’s unclear what the exact cause of all the commotion is. However, the most likely explanation is supported by Triplett’s theory of competition combined with Michael Moura’s opinion on the bystander effect. The main hook that got most people to play the game in the first place, as Hastings said when asked why she joined, is “because it was something that everyone else was excited about so I figured, ‘Why not?’” (Hastings). After that, the adrenaline and the lust for competition took over, and everyone began to feel the rush of the apocalypse consuming their minds as they prowled through campus in their red bandanas. Now that the frenzy is over, everything appears normal around campus, but chances are, students sill reminisce about that last perfect take-down in the brisk October night, while fantasizing about all the kills they’re going to make in the upcoming game this spring.
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Have you ever been walking down the street and thought to yourself, “Is this the fastest way to get to my destination?” How about looking down from the second story and thinking, “Can I make that jump?” “Could I leap over this railing?” Or my personal favorite, “Wow, this unconventionally athletic police officer is gaining speed on me. I wish I could have a really useful method to get over these obstacles.” If you answered yes to any one of the above scenarios, you were thinking about parkour. Parkour\(^1\) – or l’art du déplacement (from the French: art of moving) – is the physical discipline of getting from point A to point B as fast as one can. This is parkour in a nutshell. Unfortunately, describing a nutshell and what is inside it does not do well to define the whole tree from whence it came and to which it will grow. Parkour has grown from a nut of kids just jumping around to a whole tree of a lifestyle.

First, I have to make sure everyone is on the same page. If you don’t know what parkour is, or if you think that you’ve never done parkour, then I’m glad you picked up this essay. I encourage you to continue reading in case you stumble on the meaning of life or something.

Describing parkour in words is an art of its own. It requires crafty and visual vocabulary as well as trigger phrases. Most of the time that still doesn’t work. One time I said parkour is “where we jump off of buildings and stuff.” My audience thought I was suicidal. I have since refrained from saying that I am a building-jumper. But defining parkour isn’t as simple as “A to B” either. Everyone knows the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. But often the straight line is covered with buildings, and railings, and such. Parkour is just the collective movements to help a traceur\(^2\) travel a straight line despite the boundaries.

Alec Wilkinson observes, “Parkour goes over walls, not around them; it takes the stair rail, not the stairs”(106).
Are these words still not projecting a mental image of parkour? Fortunately parkour has been in pop culture recently, landing TV spots on MTV and in car commercials. In 2006, the movie *James Bond Casino Royale* featured Sebastien Foucan, one of parkour’s trailblazers, in the opening chase scene. I found that this James Bond reference has been the easiest way to describe parkour to other people. I encourage you to look up parkour on YouTube, a Web site that has acted like a tributary to jet parkour into the mainstream Internet. In fact, if it were not for YouTube, I would still have no idea about parkour.

Surprisingly, parkour is easier to practice than to explain. Everybody has done it. Every child has tried to jump from one place to another without touching the ground. That’s parkour! Just walking down a busy street and taking that short cut through the alley is technically parkour. You are getting from point A to point B faster. And because everyone has done it, everyone should continue to do it. Very few sports require almost no equipment to participate. And it’s free. It’s just like running, except fun.

There is, however, a large fundamental difference between training in running and training in parkour. This distinction is the element of fear. Unless someone’s running exercises consist of getting chased by unleashed German Shepherds, there is probably not a fear in running. In parkour there is the constant obstacle of fear that one must overcome to continue. In Steven John Saville’s article, “Playing with Fear: Parkour and the Mobility of Emotion,” he states:

> My argument is that in our tracing of fear’s trail, which, by all accounts, has been stretched and broadened to near all-pervasive magnitudes (evidenced by the now common usage of terms like ‘culture of fear’), we have as yet neglected the possibility that fear can be more dynamic, multiple and possibly productive than a survey of the literature might lead one to believe (6).

Saville hypothesizes that fear is not only part of parkour, but it has a certain usefulness and importance that is usually not associated with fear. This previously negative emotion becomes a tool for exploring parkour and becoming more productive and efficient in movement.
This fear factor may be the most exciting thing about parkour. I thought I would be prepared from my past experiences in gymnastics, but I was in for a drastic change. Gymnasts do have a certain fear to overcome, but each move is over pads and safety devices, and the majority of gymnastics is just perfecting one skill that you already have confidence in performing. Parkour, on the other hand, is performed in a raw environment. A twelve-foot jump over cement needs to be executed correctly the first time, not the last. Parkour is not a perfection of one move, but rather an exploration of all moves. It is the discovery of a new obstacle and a new fear every day that makes parkour invigorating.

It is important to note that parkour in itself should not be feared. The gradual development of movements and confidence will help lead to bigger and more dangerous obstacles. The emotion of fear in parkour is not the same fear one gets from a phobia. It is an emotion that can be harnessed to train harder. As Saville put it, “the traceur is ever questing towards new and often fearful movements, many of which are predicated on the attainment of bodily skill” (3). That is, it is the progression of fear that is important in parkour and to the traceur and not the sudden jump from immense fear. Videos that exhibit people performing outlandish stunts are polished moves from the best in the world. These people are but a small fraction of the parkour community. The traceurs in the videos may look like super humans, but they are only a handful within thousands who practice parkour.

The idea of video is actually contrary to the pure form of parkour. Parkour is about exploring one’s own boundaries and pushing the limit within rather than displaying talents to the world. But the videos on the Internet were by far the quickest way to spread the word of parkour across the world. Before YouTube, parkour consisted of a select few people from France. Mark Toorock, the creator of the first American parkour Web site, tried to contact people through a French Web forum:

I made an attempt to speak to the people in the forum, but they were less than interested in talking to anyone who spoke English, and they weren’t polite about it. I found out later that they didn’t really want parkour spread. It was theirs, or so they felt. It’s a very narrowly defined discipline, and they didn’t want it misunderstood (Wilkinson 107).
This “very narrowly defined discipline” has not changed since the beginning of parkour. Documentaries like *Jump London* and *Jump Britain* will credit Sebastien Foucan with the creation of parkour. Others, like Alec Wilkinson, credit David Belle. But after years of practicing together, both seem to have the same idea of the discipline of parkour. They are content with saying that parkour is not a sport; it’s a lifestyle. No one can be the best of everyone, just the best of oneself. It is the physical act of training everyday and becoming a little bit better each time. It is the mental obstacle of fear that needs to be conquered.

It is the spiritual quest for optimal efficiency through any path. Sebastien Foucan advises that every traceur take time for himself to train every day (*Jump Britain*). This independent time acts as a self-guided and highly physical meditation.

Of course, parkour does not have to be all serious and all perfection all the time. It can’t be. Parkour is too much fun. It is part of the necessary exploration of parkour that people try new and interesting moves, even though intuition says that the movement may not be the most efficient. Competitions like *MTV’s Ultimate Parkour Challenge* may be an abomination to the discipline, but it does well to promote the parkour community. Purists like David Belle may be against calling parkour a sport, but that is usually where people have to start. Like martial arts, parkour must first satisfy the childhood pleasure of pure enjoyment before it can be trained as a discipline. Even as a college student, I find that the best times of parkour is when everyone is just fooling around and having a good time. I’ll support anyone who wants to embrace his inner child and take up parkour.

Who says that stairs were just for walking on? Why do you have to walk on the sidewalk? Is that wall there to stop me or just to hold the building up? These are questions that traceurs think about every day. After a long period of training, every structure seems to hold multiple purposes. No longer does a stairway look like eight steps but instead an obstacle to jump up on. The best part is the mental mind set to step away from the beaten path and take the road less traveled. Just because someone put pavement in a right angle doesn’t mean we have to follow it. Perhaps the best reason to do parkour is to get away from the mundane cycle of society. And perhaps
one day, everyone will have a parkour background; everyone just jumping around and getting to work.

Parkour does not have to be practiced every time you step out the door. Most of the time walking is the ideal choice for a leisurely stroll. It is the option to climb over the wall to get to the other side that is important. The option was already there and will always be there. Parkour just trains your mind to acknowledge the option. This special state of mind is purely developed by a traceur. Once a traceur, always a traceur.

Notes
1) The word “parkour” comes from the French word parcours, which means “route” (Wilkinson 106).
2) Traceur – A practitioner of parkour. From the French word tracer, which is slang for “to go fast” (Tracer Lexicographic).
3) This chase scene received a lot of angry replies from traceurs. At the end of the scene, James Bond catches the bad guy—Sabastien Foucan with the aid of his gun. Foucan had vastly superior skill in escaping and should have legitimately gotten away. If you look this scene up on YouTube, you will see all the enraged comments.
4) Most traceurs acknowledge Georges Hébert as the man who supplied the roots of modern parkour. Hébert was a French navy officer who developed the idea for physical fitness involving quick movements and overcoming obstacles called “Méthode Naturelle” (Dumas). David Belle’s father, Raymond Belle, was involved with the French military and taught David some of Hébert’s ideas of the natural method (Collie). David Belle continued to train and develop this idea of parkour. At the age of fifteen, he moved to Lisses, Paris. Here he met up with Sabastien Foucan, who had also developed similar physical exercises to parkour. According to the documentary Jump London, as a small child, Sebastien Foucan and his friends would jump around on structures and such. These simple games eventually led to physically high demanding movements. By the time David Belle and Sabastien Foucan met, both had a strong understanding of the physical aspects. Together they put the final touches on what is known today as the parkour discipline.

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No matter how much one wants to believe otherwise, all whites are racist. According to Stephanie Wildman, many think of racism to be “voluntary, intentional conduct, done by horrible others,” but it is instead the privilege, or entitlement of advantage, of one race over another (Wildman 21). Racism exists in three forms: passive, active, and antiracism. Passive racists avoid racial issues but do nothing to prevent them. Active racists, on the other hand, are what we typically consider to be “racist” and commit deliberate acts of racial intolerance, while antiracists actively fight against racism. For example, a hate crime is active racism, but how people perceive it could be considered passive racism. Beverly Daniel Tatum comes up with this analogy of racism: while active racists walk along a conveyor belt, passive racists simply ride along it. Both will end up in the same place unless the passive racists are “unwilling to go to the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt – unless they are actively antiracist – they will find themselves carried along with the others” (Tatum 11-12). Many whites have to accept that racism still exists in order to actively work against it to create equality.

An example of the privilege of whites and racism towards blacks occurred on the campus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst on February 3, 2008. Late that night, two white males, John Bowes and Jonathan Bosse, attacked a black student named Jason Vassell. Shaun Robinson writes in the *Daily Collegian* that “it is essential to emphasize that Jason was in his bedroom tending to his own affairs” when the two white males approached Vassell (Robinson). In the article, “Support Jason Vassell,” John Brown reports that after initially yelling racial slurs at Jason, the assailants “kicked in Vassell’s window and later gained access to an outer vestibule of the dorm, where they attacked Vassell, breaking his nose and causing a serious concussion” (Brown). When Bowes punched and...
broke Jason’s nose, Jason realized that he could not simply ask the intruders to leave. After backing away and warningly holding a knife in clear view, Jason reportedly was forced to use the weapon in self-defense.

Prosecutors have charged Jason with attempted murder, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison. On top of this, Jason, then only a few weeks away from graduation, has not been allowed to finish school. John Bowes has only been charged “with civil rights violation with injury, assault and battery to intimidate with bodily injury, and disorderly conduct in connection” (Lederman, Brown). His friend, Jonathan Bosse, faces no charges at all. The two attackers trespassed, broke school property, and both verbally and physically harassed a student. That they are facing lesser charges than Jason Vassell is astonishing. The attack on Jason and his fight for equal treatment in the resulting court cases shows how racism works in today’s society; the debate around his innocence shows that awareness needs to be spread.

Many deny that racism still permeates campuses. When Derik Oslan ran to be a senator for the UMass Central residence area, he publicized Jason’s situation to many students. From hearing a brief summary of the events, most people found themselves supporting Jason. Some people who are unaware of the entire story, however, have claimed that Jason “should have known better,” and some have even questioned why one would have “a vigil for someone who stabs people” (Robinson). These reactions originate from ignorance and demonstrate the necessity for widespread awareness of racism. If people are only exposed to their secluded societies, they will merely view other races as the media portrays them. Therefore, people will not be informed of the accomplishments of oppressed groups, which will form a basis for prejudice.

Then there are those who believe that race should not be taken into account and justice should prevail. Eli Gottlieb, a Collegian columnist, writes that the Committee for Justice for Jason Vassell, CJJV, should not demand reduced charges because “Mr. Vassell stabbed two men with a knife” (Gottlieb). He argues that because Jason hospitalized two men, which constitutes armed assault, that he should be punished accordingly. He does, however, agree that the two attackers deserve to face charges as well, because “here in America and especially in Massachusetts everyone
obeys the exact same laws—no exceptions” (Gottlieb). While abiding by the law is reasonable in most circumstances, the situation with Jason seems to be biased and unfair. Gottlieb shows sympathy when he writes that Jason is not a criminal and should be allowed to finish his education. If Jason is charged guilty then “there lay the injustice: That a man who bravely defended himself against assault from bigots cannot walk free” (Gottlieb). Gottlieb does say, “Hopefully Mr. Vassell’s jury will understand the issues at hand and apply their rightful power of jury nullification by refusing to convict” (Gottlieb). Even though he may support Jason, Gottlieb uses the word “hopefully” to show that he is leaving Jason’s fate in the hands of the jury. While Gottlieb believes that all three should be punished according to their crime, Jason does not deserve the punishment he is receiving.

On the other hand, Alana Goodman, another Collegian columnist, denies a hate crime has taken place. That she blames Jason for the attack is ironic because she writes that the “two white, non-students” were at “4 a.m. in the lobby of Vassell’s dorm” (Goodman). How and why would these men be in Jason’s dormitory at 4:00 a.m.? Goodman claims that “the 5’10, 200 lb. Vassell armed himself with two weapons before leaving his dorm room to meet up with a male friend, who he had specifically called to help him in the event of a fight” (Goodman). Her claim does not quite match the excerpt from the one police report she uses. The police report reads, “[Bowes’ and Bosse’s use of racial slurs] enraged Vassell. He called a friend to help him. Vassell armed himself with an iron and a pocket knife and went to the ground floor of MacKimmie” (Goodman). From Goodman’s quote, Jason appears to be the instigator; he seemed to expect a fight when he “armed himself” and “specifically called” his friend (Goodman). In the report, however, it appears that the two white men started this incident when they yelled racial slurs at Jason. Therefore, Jason had every right to call a friend for support. Goodman also states, “Vassell stabbed Bowes and Bosse nine times, causing them significant blood loss which resulted in emergency surgery at Bay State trauma center” (Goodman). Goodman neglected to report the injuries inflicted on Jason. She writes that the CJJV purposely leaves out the two white men’s injuries, which is false. The police report states that Jason wore a ski mask and was outside with a Latino man when they encountered the two white males. Goodman uses the phrase,
“whether or not these claims are true,” to suggest that whoever initiated the fight and whether or not the men were outside is unimportant (Goodman). By using this phrase, Goodman accepts stereotypes of violent black and Latino men.

The rebuttal statement of Jason’s lawyers proved many of Goodman’s arguments inaccurate. Records show that both white males are taller and heavier than the 5’9 and 185 pound Jason. The lawyers also point out that “although Goodman claims that Massachusetts law only permits an individual to use force ‘equal to the force received,’ in reality, an individual may use as much force as is reasonably necessary to avoid the immediate danger of serious injury” (Hoose, Ryan). Also, only a few people, such as police and lawyers, have access to the reports and the security camera, so how could Goodman see the aforementioned report? Is her report credible, or did she get a report by illegal means? Goodman also writes as if only one police report existed; in fact, there were several. Jason’s lawyers state that Jason never left his dorm and had only one small pocketknife. Indeed, his Latino friend, Vishan Chamanlal, refused to fight with the attackers and only tried to stand in between them and Jason. Jason did defend himself against the two attackers, but they not only initiated the fight, they also did not back down until Jason used his knife.

The president of the Student Government Association (SGA), Malcolm Chu, supports the statements of Jason’s lawyers, and works to prove Goodman’s account to be a fabrication. Chu comments that Goodman “has Jason, masked and armed with a knife and clothes iron out on campus with an ‘unknown Latino male’ accomplice ‘yelling racial slurs’ at his victims, Bowes and Bosse, before ‘Vassell attacked’ them” (Chu). Chu responds that Jason did not leave his dorm that night and strengthens the argument by adding that the state did not contest this. The state also did not dispute that the “two intruders rushed into the lobby and attacked him, striking him to the head. They continued to circle ‘like animals,’ striking at Jason until he managed to escape behind the locked door” (Chu). While neither Bowes nor Bosse suffered any major injuries, Jason “suffered a broken nose and a serious concussion, and actually lost consciousness” (Chu). Chu argues that if, as Goodman says, Jason had stabbed the men nine times, how would they have been able to continue banging on the
door? In contrast to Goodman’s portrayal of Jason arming himself and instigating the fight, Chu points out that Jason has not had a violent incident in the past or even a misdemeanor. Meanwhile, Bowes has admitted to consuming at least eleven beers that night and “was charged with precisely such a crime in his hometown” (Chu). Mark Grinstein comments in another article that witnesses say that Jason held the knife in clear view and asked the attackers to leave, because “he didn’t want to hurt them” (Grinstein). While many people offer evidence to advocate Jason’s innocence, both Goodman and the prosecutors assume Jason’s guilt when they portray him as a violent, black male. While Goodman does not attack Jason in the same, physical way as the two white men did, we must question if her actions label her as an active racist.

The support of teachers and friends for Jason during the confusion after only Jason was charged shows that many believe Jason was wrongfully charged. John Brown points out that Jason is known as a “decent, gentle, young black man and law-abiding citizen described by his professors as a serious, respectful, and diligent student” (Brown). Fred Contrada asserts that students revere Jason “as a tutor and volunteer with younger students and the disabled” (Contrada). At a press conference, Tobias Baskin, a Biology professor, pulls out his own pocketknife to explain how he uses it everyday and says, “If I ever find myself with two large people looming over me with a broken nose—being beaten—that I will take this out and do what Jason had to do. And that is defend myself” (Rosenswaike). This simple statement strongly defends Jason’s actions and Jason as a human being. For a revered professor to say he would act in a similar fashion connects Jason to what a dignified, well-respected person would do.

Both a Web site and CJJV have been set up to raise money to support Jason. Brown comments that the day after the attack, several hundred students and teachers turned out in protest of the arrest. Even though Jason has pleaded innocent to stabbing two men, the prosecutors believe that “Vassell’s actions cannot be excused as self defense” (Contrada). Despite the implicit racism of the prosecutorial claims, students, faculty, and family all showed up to support Jason during his trials. A professor and member of CJJV commented, “The judge was not glad to see you all here [at the pre-trial hearing]. Your presence highlights the colossal injustice of this case”
That Jason’s supporters were not welcomed shows that the judge is uncomfortable with the case and may even realize that Jason is receiving unjust treatment. CJJV argues Jason was only defending himself and this crime shows the depth of the racial issues on campus.

Despite Justice for Jason and other active attempts to prevent racism, it still remains in today’s society. People need to become aware of the racism surrounding them, learn to accept its existence, and work to eradicate it. Only then can they do something to prevent other people from being hurt. Malcolm Chu believes the hate crimes, the violence on campus, the ignorance and the lack of education around the issues of race, homophobia and sexual assault—need to stop” (Rosenswaike). Eli Rosenswaike, Collegian staff, explains that the rally and vigil on February 27 were “intended to raise awareness and lessen his charges” (Rosenswaike). A graduate student at one of the rallies commented, “The incident was indicative of wider societal problems where blacks are automatically assumed to be the perpetrators” (Brown). A leader of CJJV said, “An injustice to Jason is an injustice to the community . . . we all have to be aware; we all have to do something. This is not just a UMass issue” (Grinstein). Despite the rallies and statements by many students and teachers, awareness of Jason’s incident still needs to be spread. When students know that racism still exists on college campuses, perhaps then they will begin to respect other races. The events resulting from the attack on Jason show that students do not know the extent of racism that still exists around them, and this leads to the question: what does it take for students to know?

Merely raising awareness does not seem to be enough to prevent hate crimes. Jason’s case shows that much more needs to be done to prevent racism. Then Chancellor Thomas Cole and Vice Chancellor Esther Terry stated their ideas of how to spread awareness and make UMass a safer campus in “UMass Hit with Bouts of Violence.” While they both agree that everyone on campus “should stand together to make [UMass] the safe, free environment that it should be,” they did not stop Jason’s expulsion (Neale). Some people in UMass Amherst have even been discussing possibilities for a mandatory diversity class. The attack on Jason shows not only how widespread but also local racism can be. Awareness of racism can lead to prevention and advocacy, which may eventually lead to respect between all races.
Stereotyping cannot be prevented, but acting upon the stereotype and endangering another's life constitutes a hate crime, and hate crimes can and should be prevented. The attack on Jason Vassell shows that racism remains a serious setback in our lives. Even though two white males trespassed on school property and attacked Jason because of his color, he is the one under persecution because he fought back. Violence is never a favorable course of action, but in this situation, it was the only solution. Despite the injuries he inflicted on the two attackers, Jason should not be charged this severely. He is only facing such harsh punishments because he is black, and, in this society, whites remain more privileged. If two black men had allegedly attacked someone, they would be charged with more than these two white men are charged with. A black man is being charged when he has been the victim because of stereotypes. Too many people continue to move the wrong way on the conveyor belt, and far too many remain still and let such situations arise. Everyone needs to become aware of the racism around him or her, and turn around to go the right direction, because what we do with these stereotypes moves us toward or away from the violence of racism.

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Above anything else, the purpose of the United State's military is defense of the nation. Over the years, the military has evolved its training, strategy, and technology in order to better serve this purpose. However, the military remains an extremely traditional, regimented, and conservative institution. As civilian society over the last century moved towards greater equality and freedom, the military budged only slightly, most notably with the admission of blacks and women into the armed forces. It is in this traditional, conforming, and exclusive environment that gay service members find themselves.

Gays have always been part of America's armies. In fact, policies specifically against gay servicemen did not become part of the military’s standards until the 1920’s when homosexuality was not yet distinguished from mental illness. By the 1950’s, homosexuality was regulated in the military by the personnel regulation 600-443. This regulation mandated that soldiers “...report to [their] commanding officer any facts which may come to [their] attention concerning overt acts of homosexuality.” By 1981, the military dropped all other reasoning against gays serving and adopted a new blanket policy of exclusion based on their belief that “[gay military] presence was incompatible with good order and discipline” (Borch).

The military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, confirmed in 1993 during the Clinton administration, is an example of how the military has sought to deal with integrating gays into the military without upsetting civilian society’s increasing moral outlook or the military’s long withstanding conservatism. Now that society has made the leap to legalize gay marriage in some US states, the time has come to reevaluate “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the current status of gays in the military once and for all. However, as this issue is examined, it becomes more complicated. To determine the eligibility of gays to serve, two separate questions must be answered. First, whether or not openly serving gays hinder the effectiveness of our forces,
and second, whether the military has the right to discriminate and enforce policies within its structure that would be considered violations of civil rights in civilian society.

One widespread argument for barring gays from military service is that inclusion of gay servicemen compromises unit cohesion, health, and morale (Grant 11). Proponents of this side claim that openly gay service members complicate military showering, sleeping, and training situations and in general make heterosexual soldiers uncomfortable, leading to dangerous mistrust and conflict within the unit. Some extreme anti-gay campaigners even push the argument further by proposing that gays in the military create disorder because they cannot control their same sex attractions, are prone to promiscuous behavior, and spread sexually transmitted diseases in higher rates than their heterosexual peers.

This view on gays in the military is becoming harder and harder to support. First of all, gay and straight people sleep and shower in the presence of one another in every day places such as health clubs, hotels, and dormitories. Not only does this commonly occur without incident, but it occurs in places not strictly monitored and controlled by the military, between strangers without the strong bonds of respect forged between members of the same military unit. Therefore, the idea that gays and straights cannot be housed together peacefully in the military is insulting to both gay and straight adults in the service, as is the argument that considers banning gays a necessity for maintaining troop morale. The real world outside of the military is diverse and vast. If a service member cannot perform his or her duties because of the sexual orientation of another soldier, the issue is their own. Homophobia is the morale downer in this case, not homosexuality. There is really no place for sexuality to play a role in the military, and basing a lack of morale on the sexual orientation of certain service members improperly places the blame where it should not exist.

Overall, it is hard to come up with a situation where sexuality would play a role in carrying out a duty as a member of the armed forces. However, some women, excluded from serving in the front lines, would argue the same about gender, yet they are also limited in their roles as service members. Does the military have the right to exclude and discriminate
against what and who it wants to, whether or not reasonable justifications can be made?

An important distinction to make is that, “there is no such thing as a constitutional right to serve in the military” (Well-Petry xii). Admiral Thomas H. Moorer is accurate, and the same goes for the opposite—not serving in the military. Military service in the United States remains a privilege and a burden only accepted and bestowed upon those willing. However, “Eligibility to join the defenses of the nation signifies citizenship … because society honors those who serve in the military for their patriotism, sacrifice and bravery” (Mucciaroni 175). When looked at in this way, there is greater significance to excluding an entire group of people from service. There is a link between military service and equality which both women and blacks called upon in their respective movements for suffrage. The correlation between equality and eligibility to serve in the armed forces cannot be denied.

Still, one could argue that gays or anyone in the military should not participate if they do not like the way they are being treated. After all, “the military excludes…single parents, felons, handicapped individuals, transsexuals, conscientious objectors, …[patients of] a number of medical conditions…[and] also on the basis of height and weight, physical and mental ability, visual acuity, political beliefs and religious affiliation, language, youth and age” (Wells-Petry 5). This is not because no individual in these groups is proficient enough for a position in the military, but because the military excludes groups, not people. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy enters the issue here over the debate between status and conduct.

The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy was approved by former President Clinton as a compromise between the old policy based on status, and Clinton’s campaign promise to end discrimination against gays in the military. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was supposed to protect gays in the military from the witch hunts being conducted under the old 1981 policy, which actively rooted out serving gays. Under the 1981 policy, gays could be discharged based on their “status,” which was ambiguously defined as any indication pointing towards someone’s likelihood to commit homosexual acts including saying or admitting homosexual things. The new policy was supposed to end this by “prohibiting discrimination on the
basis of sexual orientation,” and requiring conduct and not status to determine serving gays’ eligibility (Owens 26). Only service members caught in homosexual acts, including an admission of homosexuality, could be investigated or discharged. However, seizure of information since 1993, including personal correspondence, has made the new policy ineffective in protecting gays or satisfying the military.

One of the speakers at the March 18th Congressional hearing on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” attested to the failings of the policy when he shared his personal experience as an Admiral in the United States Navy. After thirteen years of loyal service, Admiral Almy described the way he was treated under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”: “I was relieved of my duties leading nearly 200 airmen; my security clearance was suspended; part of my pay was terminated. Even as my commander was relieving me of my duties, he assured me that this was in no way a reflection of performance or my abilities as an officer” (Cong. Rec. 14). Admiral Almy’s termination from the Navy came when, “the commander in Iraq, during the height of the insurgency, ordered a search of [his] personal e-mails solely to determine if [he] had violated “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and to gather whatever evidence could be used against [him]” (Cong. Rec. 14.). In this way, Admiral Almy and others like him have been failed by this policy. Despite holding up his end of the “deal” by never revealing his homosexuality while in the military, Admiral Almy’s service was terminated under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Technically, the emails can be considered homosexual “conduct” because they included references and information that made it possible for the military to construe Almy’s sexuality based on their content. However, discharges like these take advantage of the ambiguous wording and blurred line between conduct and status.

The loop holes created from loose wording in the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy allow higher ups in the military to persecute gay service members unfairly. This agenda based on outdated constructs does not reflect today’s reality or the beliefs of the American public. In fact, about 80% of U.S. citizens are in favor of allowing gays to serve whether their reasoning is in support of equal rights or maintaining a non-conscripted force (Mucciaroni 175). Other supporters of allowing gays to serve in the military simply feel it is unreasonable to spend tax dollars and effort to out and
The question of whether or not gays should be eligible to serve in the military becomes less taboo when considering all of the nations that have abolished their anti-gay regulations already. While Gade, Segal, and Johnson never imposed anti-gay legislation within their militaries, Canada, Australia, Spain, Germany, France, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark have all lifted former bans barring gay service. Additionally, all of these nations are U.S. allies and most are members of NATO (Mucciaroni 175).

The Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed up the current state of affairs involving gays in the military when he postured, “No matter how I look at this issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, personally it comes down to integrity, theirs as individuals and ours as an institution” (Cong. Rec. 6). The current controversy over the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy begs a greater question of society than simply whether the military and gays can mix. It challenges us to ask if we can accept that the institution that protects our freedoms violates the freedoms of those in its ranks.

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DIGITAL MEDIA AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTELLIGENCE

Robbie Straight

From the mainstream boom of the Internet in the mid 1990’s to the release of the Motorola Droid late in 2009 and the iPad in early 2010, digital media has been advancing rapidly. As people adapt to these changes, they form a bond to them. This bond can be seen in homes, workplaces, and schools worldwide, and it can range from young children to their parents and even grandparents. However, it is most present within Generation Y (ages 11-34). These people are constantly “connected,” and experts worry that it may be affecting their intelligence. In Nicholas Carr’s essay “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” he supports this statement when he claims, “Just as there’s a tendency to glorify technological progress, there’s a counter-tendency to expect the worst of every new tool or machine” (65). Carr backs up his statement by talking about how in Plato’s Phaedrus, Socrates regrets the development of writing. Socrates “feared that, as people came to rely on the written word as a substitute for the knowledge they used to carry inside their heads, they would, in the words of one of the dialogue’s characters, ‘cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful’” (65). Another example Carr uses is that of the invention of the printing press. He states, “The arrival of Gutenberg’s printing press, in the 15th century, set off another round of teeth gnashing. The Italian humanist Hieronimo Squarciaphico worried that the easy availability of books would lead to intellectual laziness, making men ‘less studious’ and weakening their minds” (65). As Carr argues, these doubts by Socrates and Squarciaphico aren’t incorrect; they just do not foresee how these technological advances actually “spur[ed] fresh ideas, and expand[ed] human knowledge” [65].

It is this same argument that I raise with today’s advancements in digital media. These experts and scientists in today’s society claim that this “connected generation” or Digital Natives will be missing out on skills
needed for their future, in turn making them less intelligent. These experts are not looking far enough ahead. I feel as if all these various forms of new digital media will actually benefit us and form some sort of new intelligence. It is this question of whether we are becoming less intelligent or if we are simply forming a new kind of intelligence that I will investigate; I will be focusing more specifically on young adults (approx. 16-24 years old). In this exploration of intelligence, I will dive into two topics: multitasking and digital media in—and sometimes not in—the classroom. These two aspects are the most prevalent among young adults, and are the reasons why these experts doubt this generation.

Multitasking is nothing new. People have done it for years, except it seems as if it has almost become a part of our culture in this digital era. With all of these various sources of new digital media, it makes it seem as if you are being told to multitask. This can be seen in nearly any commercial on TV today. If you listen, you can hear that almost all of these smartphone commercials promote “easier” multitasking. The question now arises: Is multitasking a bad thing? Among the majority of experts, the answer is yes. Through various types of research they have found that multitasking prevents one’s ability to actually absorb new and old information alike. In a recent study by Stanford psychology professor Clifford I. Nass, it was found that multitaskers performed drastically worse on cognitive and memory tasks than people who normally focus on one task at a time (“Multitasking May Not Mean Higher Productivity”). This information isn’t really news to these Digital Natives—or most, that is. In a survey taken of over one-hundred of these kids, ninety-six percent say that they multitask when doing schoolwork. Fifty-eight percent say that they believe multitasking is not as efficient as sitting down and focusing on one project at a time (“Multitasking among Students Survey”). According to scientific studies, these kids are correct. A study by David E. Meyer explains how. Meyer, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, shows students in his first year classes a simple demonstration showing how multitasking is ineffective. To start, he asks his students to recite the letters A through J and the numbers 1 through 10, separately and as fast as possible. Both, he says, on average take about two seconds. He then asks them to combine the two, so counting and reciting A, 1, B, 2, C, 3
and so on, as fast as possible. One would think that if separately they both take two seconds that this should take close to four seconds. You’d be wrong. Professor Meyer says that this, on average, takes close to 20 seconds (“Divided Attention”). His study just goes to show that it takes an extended amount of time switching between tasks. In an interview with NPR, he says that in order to get back on the same thought process you were on before being interrupted, you “will have to repeat much of the thought process that created them in the first place” (“Multitasking Teens May Be Muddling Their Brains”). The technical name for this process of creating and recreating these neural pathways is called “spreading activation.” This can take a lot of time, depending on the project. So if it is proven that multitasking has a negative affect on learning, why does it feel like we can do it so well? Journalist and author of The Flickering Mind, Todd Oppenheimer, explains that this multitasking mentality “habituates the brain to a kind of superficial processing, where you can actually do the tasks, but you don’t have sense of the meaning of those tasks” (“Multitasking Mentality”).

There is another side to this argument, however. There must be some good to multitasking. Scientists say that in small doses, it isn’t a problem. For example, if you listen to music in the background while doing homework, there shouldn’t be a problem. However, if something forces itself into your consciousness, say the chime of an incoming message on AIM, you’ll get distracted. The same belief holds true for the students in the survey. Thirty percent of them said that multitasking is sometimes more efficient than focusing on one task for those same reasons. The words of one student exemplify that point: “Focusing on social networking sites can get you off topic, but listening to music can help me focus on the task at hand” (Multitasking among Students Survey). Even though multitasking has proven effects on cognitive ability, is there a need for it? Well, for starters, just take a look at today’s society. What words come to mind when you think about it? Face-paced, connected, busy, progressive. These words seem to promote multitasking. It seems as if it is an essential skill one must learn to be able to keep up with society, whether it be at work or school. Henry Jenkins, Provost’s Professor of Communications, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at USC agrees:
Multitasking is a skill all of us need to embrace if we are going to manage the fullness of information in our lives...All of us living are living in a world where information is coming from all directions, all the time, at a rapid pace. And we need to be able to shift our attention knowingly between different sources of information, to make decisions quickly based on sometimes partial information and try to predict or flush out the whole from the bits of information that are flying at us. (“The Skill of the Future”).

If it’s the case that people who will be the most successful in the future are ones who are not only able to focus on a single task, but also able to multitask successfully, what is going wrong? Is there a problem with society as a whole? Or maybe we should look at where it all begins—the schools.

A lot of the multitasking done by students is either in the classroom or while doing work for school. Why is that? Is it because they aren’t being engaged enough in the classroom? That may be the issue. Massachusetts Institute of Technology is home to some of the most brilliant students in the world; one would think that if anyone should know how to focus, it should be these kids, but that doesn’t seem to be the case. According to some students at M.I.T., if they aren’t multitasking and working on multiple things during lecture, they will fall asleep (“Multitasking at M.I.T.”). There are many that feel that these various sources of digital media used to multitask do not belong in the classroom; that the classroom is a sacred place for traditional forms of learning. Oppenheimer believes that schools should be a “haven from the madness” of the digital media:

My concern with this digital media is it’s such short attention span stuff, that [kids] get bored. That when they reach an obstacle they go sideways, wrap it up and don’t think about what would be the boring elements to it that would make it interesting. Basically take shortcuts in the way they create material. (“A Haven For the Madness”).

In this passage, Oppenheimer is claiming that digital media shortens our attention spans so that when forced to do something outside of one of these media, we get bored and try to “cheat” our way around it. He feels
that we need to protect our classrooms from letting various sources of digital media infiltrate their way in because “classrooms are one of the last places in our society where you can have a sustained conversation about something” (A Haven For the Madness). To him, by letting digital media into the classroom, our students are becoming less intelligent for the future.

On the other hand, there have been a number of educators that feel that by allowing digital media into the classroom, they are benefiting the students. At Chatham High School in Chatham, New Jersey, nearly every classroom has some sort of digital media. As the school’s principal Michael Lasusa says, “We can’t expect the learner of today to be engrossed by someone who speaks in a monotone voice with a piece of chalk in their hand” (Old School, New School). Lasusa makes a point: these Digital Natives and Y Gener’s need to be stimulated in ways that are new to schools around the globe. But these new teaching methods work. Three years ago at Intermediate School 339 in Bronx, New York, only nine percent of students were performing at their grade level in mathematics and twenty-one percent in English language arts. According to teachers at the school, there was a lot of gang activity, and “it wasn’t a place very conducive to learning.” It was then that IS 339 hired new principal Jason Levy to turn around a very disgruntled school and learning environment. Levy implemented a new “digital” approach. He made it so that every student owned a laptop; all of the work done in the school was done digitally. Teachers would set up Wikis and other various means to keep the students engaged and interested. Now, sixty-two percent of students are performing at their grade level in math and forty percent in English Language Arts. “Clearly, 60 and 40 are not where we want to be. We have a lot of work left to do,” says Levy, “But we’ve seen a lot of improvements in teaching, the learning, the school operations, and we’ve seen technology play a part in all the success” (“How Google Saved A School”). It is clear to see that digital media has played a role in the intelligence of people in certain areas. This is only a microcosm of our educational system, though. With technology changing at a rapid pace all the time, what is schooling going to look like in the future? In time, we will acquire the answers to all these questions.
As you can see, digital media has made its way into nearly everyone's lives. However, it is these Digital Natives that hold the key to the future of this media. There has been a lot of controversy over intelligence and digital media. Some say that this generation of people will be less intelligent than the last, while others simply say that this generation will be different, not necessarily less intelligent. Throughout my study, I have viewed the effects of multitasking on intelligence and the effects of media in the schools on intelligence. In both cases, I can see it is still unclear which view is right and which is wrong. Only time will give us the answer to that question, and it is currently in the hands of these Digital Natives to what that answer will be.

Works Cited
Part II

Preface
Unit IV: The TBA

One of the unique strengths of the College Writing 112 curriculum is its flexibility. Unit IV offers teachers (and students) a space to create projects that address themes, questions, and rhetorical situations of their own choosing. Although these assignments continue to build on the skills of critical thinking, cultural analysis, responding and revising that have been so important throughout the semester, they also provide occasions to address new audiences, discover additional genres, and analyze texts outside of our required reading materials.

Our teachers and students have been remarkably creative in rising to this challenge. They have produced ethnographies, candid guides to life at UMass, and letters to President Obama. They have written about subjects as diverse as location, sexuality, food, popular music, and the 1990s. Sometimes they focus on issues of local importance, getting students to speak out on issues that directly impact the communities of which we are a part. On occasion, they examine topics they have previously explored in greater depth or use different rhetorical strategies. Whatever the Unit IV assignment, it is certain to be timely, open-ended, and thought-provoking. And it is fitting that the last formal unit of the semester presents our students with an assignment that orients them not just towards fellow students and academics, but towards the world at large.
**REFLECTION (SHOE STORY)**

Stephanie Chanthavong

_in this essay, students were asked to view “the world as a text.” Their task: to read and reflect on a small piece of their world in the same way they would a print text, but also allow their personal contexts that influence the way they respond to be visible in their “reading.” The following text shows that the most ordinary things can provoke meaning for the writer as it is filtered through her personal context._

_Some days, just walking out the door is such a task. With multiple glances in the mirror, I cannot make up my mind about my outfit. One pair of shoes coordinates perfectly with my outfit, but with the trek across campus to class will surely forge new blisters on my already calloused feet. Another pair up on the shelf is cute, but they pose uncertainty. They are not commonly seen on campus—definitely not trendy. Wearing them doesn't match my confidence level for the day. A third pair is worthy of consideration, but not ideal for the morning's harsh weather. I forfeit, changing into a simple pair of jeans and a tee shirt to match the simple sneakers I slip into. This debate is a common occurrence. My roommate's boyfriend chuckles: “You are so ridiculous.” I'm not being ridiculous; the right choice of shoes is pivotal._

_In the very first week of my College Writing class, the teacher placed a bag on a desk in the center of the room. The assignment lacked formal instruction: “Write about this bag.” In the midst of squinting hard at the bag and trying my best to formulate a story behind it, my vision was averted to something else. Across the room, something more intriguing had caught my eye. Like a masterpiece hung in an art gallery, the wooden legs and desk top of the table framed a pair of dainty legs crossed in modest fashion, and securely strapped to the feet were a pair of worn, brown leather Mary-Jane shoes. On cold days, they were paired with coordinating socks. When moving, they made not a sound. Nudging my classmate beside me, I posed the question: “Where do you think she got those?” He replied “Salvation Army?” Shaking my head, I interjected, “They might have been really expensive; they look vintage.”_
Imagine a child sitting on the ground, carefully drawing out boxes with a stick of chalk. Lines of boxes, some paired one next to another. The young girl stands up, places the chalk gently down on the asphalt, and maneuvers through the boxes, hopping on one foot, one foot, two feet, one foot, two feet. Her strappy shoes tap on the concrete, arms out to her sides to maintain balance, and her eyes are glued to the movement of her shoes, making sure not to step on the lines. These were the shoes of my youthful memories.

From day to day, the story transformed. On a miserably rainy morning, a collection of rain boots entered the classroom. Some were solid bright colors: purple, green, blue; others contained patterns and different prints. This day's framed image contained plain black boots. I whispered into my classmate's ear, "I like those" referring to the simple knee-high boots with adjustable straps in the backs.

Cock-a-doodle-doo. Imagine the sun rises, as does the girl to tend to the chickens in the coop, horses in the stable, and the pigs in the pen. A crunching, rustling sound results when she steps into the chickens' coop, and as she moves on to the sloppy, wet floor of the pig pen, she gets a squishy feeling under the rubber soles. She then makes her way to the barn to end her morning, drags a sitting stool over to Abbey the cow, and gathers milk for her Cocoa Puffs. Staring down at the bucket between two black boots covered in mud and morning dew, she watches the milk spitter and spatter into the silver container. These were the shoes of my early mornings.

"Write a reflection on..." It seemed somebody had pressed mute, and no longer was sound or proper direction audible to me. A glance at the ground in front of me introduces a new story. A not so worn, but extraordinarily used pair of classic Chuck Taylor Low-rise Converse sneakers, in the classic color: black canvas and once-white rubber soles. "How long do you think she's had those?" A mere shrug was the response.

The girl now sports all black clothing with metal embellishments, and purple hair that covers her eyes. Facial piercings, dark eye make-up, and an attitude that says "Who gives a shit?" The bell for class rings. She takes one last puff or her cigarette, tosses it on the ground, and puts out the remaining embers with the browned rubber sole. Showing up to class fashionably late, these were the shoes of my subtle rebellion.
Some days the class lost its voice, but the golden silence was broken by the steps of laced up, brown leather oxfords. The shade of brown took after an autumn leaf. The shoes paralleled those of a cobbler or Jiminy Cricket's. The classic shoes hold nostalgia for the old-fashioned but also present a new eclectic style.

A business man impatiently waits in line for his regular: tall black coffee, no cream or sugar, with an extra shot of espresso. Already three minutes late for his board meeting, the woman at the front of the line has maxed out her credit card and is emptying the contents of her over-sized tote bag in search of her worn-out check book. All that's left to do is stand there and tap his foot. Fifteen minutes later, the same sound is produced as the board members turn their heads to greet their late colleague. These were the shoes of the white collar.

Imagine the shoes of a professor. I've witnessed a broad spectrum of professorial footwear ranging from blindingly-white, New Balance sneakers that in no way correlated with that given professor's attire to expensive, imported, black Italian leather lace-ups, with a fine pointed toe. Mary Janes, rain boots, Chuck Taylors, and contemporary Oxfords are not ideally professor footwear. These shoes echoed a modern twist on educators today. Several classmates mentioned how they expected to have “an old guy with glasses” as a College Writing professor. Instead, our writing skills were transformed with the guidance of a youthful instructor whom we referred to by first name. At first I was hesitant to refer to a figure of authority by her first name. My comfort level grew through an ability to more closely relate to a young woman as an instructor than I would have related to a middle-aged man. And surely, I would have had difficulty being intrigued by the shoes of a middle-aged English professor.

Shoes from all walks of life serve as inspiration for my online shopping habits. Whenever I sit down to indulge in math homework or write a paper, and even when I'm feeling a little down, I take comfort in knowing that shopping is only one click away. Granted, online shopping is just a tease (seeing that I never buy anything), but it helps me de-stress. I spend hours at a time searching for a specific look that I can afford. For example, I might type in my search bar: “cowboy boots for women.” The search
engine will display a long list of stores and online bids for cowboy boots, and suggest in italics: “Did you mean western boots?” As a matter of fact, yes, I am looking for a pair of western boots. It’s almost as if shopping with an extremely knowledgeable friend.

Peering into my closet, one might discourage future shoe-shopping. Of the twenty plus pairs, I use mainly one. They are easy to slip into, and the most basic pair of shoes to match a simple pair of jeans and a tee shirt. However, it is nice to know that I have other personas handy at my disposal, should I choose to switch up my look from day to day. It took one semester to abandon my daily-ambition of dressing-to-impress. I have a wardrobe full of clothes that are dying to be matched and systematized according to looks inspired by teen vogue and street fashions of Amherst. Still I resort to rolling out of bed at the last minute, throwing on yesterday’s jeans and a hoodie. Perhaps it is time to bury my love for fashion.

Upon a typical walk back to the dorm with a fellow floor and classmate, the two of us would observe shoes. Strolling around campus, one is bound to cross paths with several hundreds of people. One day, we came across the most strikingly absurd pair of walking apparatuses we had ever seen. The shoes were constructed merely of a rubbery, silicone material and fit the foot like a glove, literally. Each toe had an individual space, just as gloves. “I think they’re for [rock] climbing,” predicted my floormate. The green, rubber toe-socks resembled Gumbi and succeeded in amusing me. To this day I have never seen anything so absurd.

Shoes serve the purpose of occupying my mind at the most inopportune times. They are like the unsettling kid in class that is always making a ruckus, distracting attention away from the teacher. Sitting in a circle formation for class certainly provided a fantastic view of my fellow students’ footwear. My eyes moved round the circle, as if in a trance, studying the wide range of styles, types, colors, materials, shapes, and sizes. This same exact occurrence also took place in my Sustainability seminar, where we also gather around in a circle. The class continued to discuss sustainability in relation to other global issues, as I would be fixated on a certain pair of calf-high, brown, lace-up combat boots.
In a huddle of shoes, there are stories, statements, and ideas. Shoes can tell where a person is coming from, where they are going, their interests, their personal style, their background. They are by all means a sound artifact for observation and insight into a person's lifestyle, or maybe just a great distraction in class.
“ALL WE WANT ARE THE FACTS, MA’AM”

Daniel Eno

Students were invited to return to the goals of one the previous units of the course, and, while meeting its goals, experiment with a new style of writing. In this essay, Eno returns to Unit II, selects a new text to interact with, and begins by adopting the persona of Joe Friday from the classic TV series, Dragnet. He investigates the “case” raised in Nicholas Carr’s essay, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” by bringing humor and imaginative creativity to a rigorous examination of very serious issues.

The story you are about to hear is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent” (The Human Bomb). Mr. Holloway was an English teacher at Hever Senior High School. At Hever Senior High School, a passing grade in English senior year required a passing grade on the ten-page senior research paper. At Hever Senior High school, there was a student named Archibald Finny. The ten-page research paper Finny submitted to Mr. Holloway had a very well written and striking introduction and a nicely worded conclusion that really tied the paper together. The pages between one and ten were filled with irrelevant information copied from Wikipedia pages about snails, the properties of magnetism, and a bit of prose from the Mabinogion. For his efforts, Finny received a grade of ‘A.’ Finny confronted Holloway and revealed the inner pages of his paper. Holloway was shocked! Finny proposed that Holloway allow him to rewrite his paper, and this time, give it the grade it deserved. Holloway, now knowing the skillful and precisely written introduction was a trap, had no choice but to oblige. What drove Holloway, a well respected, highly intelligent man, to such lengths? The answer eludes us to this day. Holloway refused to comment on the topic, so we can only speculate. But some have said, and others have agreed, that Holloway may indeed have suffered from an extreme case of... The Internets.
The Internets is a condition brought about by Internet use where the Googler (person who uses Google) either Googles (searches for things using Google) or “browse-sees” excessively (flitting from link to link, seeing their contents as opposed to reading them). The Internets is not a condition that is decreasing our brain function; instead, it is changing the way our brain does function. Nicholas Carr’s essay, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” makes a strong argument that the brain’s mental processes are malleable and come to represent the medium by which they are supplemented. Carr contends that the increased use of the Internet has made our thoughts more distracted and mechanical, thus making it more difficult to become engrossed in a long text. In short, the Internet causes The Internets.

I have experienced The Internets first hand. Due to some of the effects Carr describes, I find it much harder to stay focused on a book or other long piece of literature that previously I would have had no trouble concentrating on. Although I agree with Carr’s assessment of the impact the World Wide Web has had on our neural processes, I feel that there are some aspects of this phenomenon that were not explored in full detail. In my opinion, this condition is not due to the use of the Internet for jumping through articles; in fact, it is not due entirely to the Internet alone. Our society, which prizes efficient uses of time, has dictated the way I now read books, and this has inevitably contributed to the problem of extended focus as much as the Internet.

“The style of reading promoted by the Net, a style that puts ‘efficiency’ and ‘immediacy’ above all else, may be weakening our capacity for the kind of deep reading that emerged when with an earlier technology, the printing press, long and complex works of prose became commonplace” (qtd. in Carr 61). The style of reading that Maryanne Wolf, a Tufts University developmental psychologist and author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, is referring to could be described as reading a bit of an article or book to get the gist, then moving on to some other, more immediately rewarding tidbit of the Internet’s seemingly limitless knowledge. This reading style goes by many names: skimming, bare minimum reading, browse-seeing, and in the particular case of Mr. Holloway, grading (Carr 61).
Is grading the sole cause of The Internets? Surely not. I feel that the role of blogs, hyper-links, and browse-sight has been exaggerated by Carr while other key factors, which he does mention, have been grossly uncredited. The instantly available knowledge and thus the expectancy of instantly available knowledge created by Google has done far more to create a distracted reader than articles and blogs. Carr himself states, “Research that once required a day in the stacks or periodical rooms of libraries can now be done in minutes” (Carr 59). How often have you become frustrated when the answer to something you Googled does not show up as one of the results on the first few pages? How long exactly have you been searching? I am not suggesting returning to a time when information retrieval meant hiking 5 miles uphill both ways in 5 feet of snow. I merely suggest that a more appropriate title for this work would be “Is Google Making us Impatient?”—a question to which I would not hesitate to reply with a vehement “Yes.”

The searching style promoted by Google does more than just make us impatient for answers, not wanting to wait to get to the end of the article or book to find out the full scoop or the fate of the protagonist. It can make us value time spent efficiently too highly, as Wolf describes. I do not believe that Carr discusses this in the depth it deserves. Worrying about wasted time may not be a huge factor in Carr’s own focus, but for me, and for others in the position of a college student with limited time for leisure, it is a major contributor. The way I read now is a mere memory of a time of rapt engrossment. Now I read to take a break from work. When I am writing and out of ideas or stumped by a math problem, I read to draw my mind away and come back with fresh insight. But only for 20 minutes (Carr 61).

That’s when I am pulled back to the reality of the work at hand. Just as I start to get enveloped by the narrative and identify with the characters, it is all those feelings that are vacuumed away by the clock. Even when I do have a chance to read without the constraints necessitated by my coursework, I find myself unable to resist the urge to glance at the time every few minutes. As soon as my eyes leave the pages, the images of the landscape of words are lost. Each instance I worry about how I am spending my time, I build another barrier preventing me from diving back into the book.
Perhaps I personally have not felt the full force of the mind-deteriorating effects of the World Wide Web. Unlike Carr, I do not skip from article to article, blog to blog, or fact to fact, hopscotching my way to pseudo-enlightenment. I, do, however use the Internet. I use it quite frequently. In fact, it is required for most of my college courses. The few that don’t use on-line homework services post course updates or reading material on the course Web site. On the homework section of one syllabus in particular, the due dates for every assignment were omitted and replaced by a long column of “See SPARK.” But I do not use Twitter, I do not read on-line periodicals except for a few news updates, I do not blog or read blogs. I do have a token Face book account, but it gets little use. Mostly I am a Googler who Googles little items when seeking such gems of human discovery as, “Did the same guy who directed “The Adventures of Baron Munchausen” also direct “Brazil”?”

My ability to concentrate has been affected by the way I read in a manner different from what Nicholas Carr describes, but the symptoms are the same. I do not expect to sip from topic to topic when reading a book, as Carr seems to; rather, to gain a tidbit of information and move on. But, like Carr and Holloway, I can no longer read the Mabinogion, and thus, for all practical purposes, I have The Internets. Whether its origin lies in the clock that stops my mind, the search engine that scatters Carr’s brain, or the unexplained source that caused Archibald Finny’s grade, the peculiar condition unaffectionately dubbed The Internets reduces us avid readers to a state where, “All we want are the facts, ma’am” (The Human Bomb) (Carr).

Works Cited
With academic discussions and articles appearing as blogs, teaching students how to use this growing method of communicating ideas is a very meaningful assignment. Students were given instructions to write a blog on a topic that was of great interest to them, and were “jump-started” with the following instructions for formatting their blogs: “This is an example of a WordPress page. You could edit this to put information about yourself or your site so readers know where you are coming from. You can create as many pages like this one or sub-pages as you like and manage all of your content inside of WordPress.”

gpekli on December 5, 2010
6 Comments so Far

Have you ever noticed the self-conscious thoughts that fill your mind while walking past a stranger, especially someone of the opposite gender? Do you ever make eye contact with that person? This subtle but very frequent rendezvous has made me wonder why I am here. I have walked past thousands of people during my lifetime, but have I acknowledged their existence with a glance, smile, and brief hello? Sadly, no, not many. Ahhh, this is what our society has come to. It seems students like me restrict ourselves in the ways we meet others; these may include college classes, clubs, activities, and through other friends here at UMass. There are more than 20,000 students here at UMass, and mostly students never acknowledge them! What a boring and narrowed life to live…

I view this as a big flaw of mine that is going to haunt me in the years to come if I don’t change my habits. The most fundamental question this
issue poses: Why do strangers not confront each other with a glance and a hello? A number of extraneous reasons can be given: fear, uncertainty, guilt, and embarrassment—just to name a few. The best explanation for this behavior, I believe, is the lack of cultural ground rules that would give individuals permission to offer polite acknowledgment to one another when out and about. If the ground rules were there, like at Christmas time, when it is okay to interact with strangers — and people do—we would see the same kind of friendly, feel-good interactions every day. Funny how that works! Or imagine the First World War when the US established a total war. Americans must have felt a sense of unity and patriotism that cut down these “cultural ground rules,” for lack of a better term. We do not say “Hey!” or make eye contact because it’s weird, it’s not the norm, and it’s just out of many people’s comfort zones to lift their hand to a stranger and wave. It’s just not the norm to hold your head up high and smile as you walk down from Orchard Hill to the Dining Commons.

Defensive people give the reason for not saying “hello” to strangers because they do not want to attract potentially dangerous attention. We have all this media coverage on women being raped or taken advantage of by unknown people. So why should a girl bother to say hello and possibly attract someone who might be threatening? These people are at another extreme of the spectrum. They believe that by greeting strangers, some type of physical attraction might arise. It also seems to be human nature that people compare themselves to others, and if they think someone is better looking or more successful, they immediately conclude that they are inferior. No one wants to feel this way. No one wants to look up at some handsome guy and say “Hey!” and then be ignored. If we don’t have self-confidence in our looks, we have no drive to greet others if we fear we would be judged harshly. Looks aren’t everything, but they play an immense role in how we perceive strangers.

So will these cultural ground rules ever allow us to openly acknowledge each other’s existence with a smile or greeting? Yes, but one person at a time. Social trends tend to show a progression over long periods of time, over many generations. To change a culture means to change the way we view people, our environment, and ourselves. The ideals a group of people hold constitutes a culture, and by changing our ideals one person at a time,
whole groups will tend to change. In years to come, our Earth will have more problems, but we will have each other to greet and smile at, stranger or not. For the past eighteen years of my life, I have not acknowledged the existence of so many people. I have walked with my head down, not knowing who may be walking my way. The next time I walk down that hill, people will be smiling and feeling good, not because they naturally were, but because I acknowledged them on my way down with a smile and a “Hello.”

jmguire on December 6th, 2010 Edit This

I find this to be an interesting topic. I like the fact that you have an optimistic view of human nature. The world you describe where everyone enthusiastically greets each other certainly would change everyone’s moods for the better, and I would love to see that. I honestly don’t think that people would ever get to a point of openness that they greet everyone they walk by, especially around here [at UMass Amherst]. People always seem to be in a rush, and I can’t picture this changing.

amcsherr on December 7th 2010 Edit This

This is a very interesting topic. I think one of the reasons we don’t open up as much is because we are all taught when we are younger not to talk to strangers. However, as we get older we sometimes see that not all strangers are as bad as our parents portray them to be. But subconsciously, I think we all resort back to what we have been taught by our parents. Also my friend and I have walked down the hill saying hello to everyone we pass, and some of the reactions are surprising. Most people act surprised and those people are usually the ones who respond while other people turn and keep on walking.

mtmoran on December 7th, 2010 Edit This

After reading this, I can completely relate to how you feel about walking by strangers. I still couldn’t imagine just starting a conversation with a random person passing by as I was walking to class. I think it’s because people are worried about other’s judging them…I don’t think I’d judge a person’s looks or personality, but I’d still be afraid of what they thought of me. Even the awkward smiles walking in the lounge of the dorm seem
weird for people. Do you think this awkward social barrier will ever be changed?

gphat on December 7th, 2010 Edit This

This was an interesting topic to choose, and I definitely can understand where you are coming from. Greeting a stranger is out of almost everyone's social norm, and I think that stepping outside of that comfort zone would take a lot of courage from any individual. Personally, it isn't really the act of saying hello that I think people find scary; it's the reaction. If someone were to randomly strike up a conversation with me, I'd definitely respond, just because I'm aware of how gutsy that is. That doesn't apply to everyone, though, which is why I feel like people don't normally do this. I work at the Worcester DC, though, and a lot of the people who work there are very friendly and will randomly start chatting with you, so I don't find it as abnormal as most people do. Do you think that this social barrier has developed over time, or do you think that this has always existed?

bteich on December 8th, 2010 Edit This

This is something that I think about from time to time, mainly because I found myself doing it. I sometimes purposely greet strangers, especially if we're both waiting around for a bus or something. You'd be surprised how willing people are to have a conversation with you when they are not in a rush. It's true that sometimes I'll get ignored or a very short response, but I've made a good number of friends just by talking to people out and about.

I agree with you. If more people were to try stepping outside of their comfort zones and greet others, it would be a much friendlier place.
IN/BETWEEN

Ashley Wilcox

Wilcox suddenly feels at the bottom of the social heap as her parents tell her she will be on her own after her first year of college. She describes her position as being on the margin of the societies she lives in, both in her hometown and at college, weaving into her story her identification with a homeless man who wanders from town to town.

I stared at a large wall of jeans. The minority were folded and the majority were bunched into balls, turned inside out, and hanging off the shelves they had formerly been situated on. It was my job to fold them and organize them by style, color, and size. It was an impossible task, one which often led me to wonder, “Why on Earth am I here?” My response, usually in my head but sometimes said in a hushed whisper, was along the lines of “I need the money.” So I began tossing jeans onto the floor and folding them, as trying to fold one at a time in the cluttered disarray seemed fruitless. As I folded, I tried to remind myself of reasons why I needed to keep working. Half way through the project, my name and muffled message made its way over the intercom, and I approached the register, ready to ring.

Kill me. I do believe my feet screamed that every day at work. I stood on my feet for seven to nine hours a day, catering to a vast clientele. Our customers came from a myriad of nationalities, ethnicities, and socioeconomic conditions. All of them were annoying (this is actually a slight exaggeration). I always believed that there should be no boundaries to trying to get a deal, as long as you’re cordial and sane. People aren’t sane here. If something is one dollar and ninety-seven cents, they want it for ninety-seven cents.

For a while, I’ve been trying to determine if people don’t read the coupons, or if they think of them as guidelines. Ten dollars off a purchase of twenty-five or more is clearly written in bold on the coupon, yet people seem to miss it. I had one customer who wanted ten dollars off a ten dollar shirt. I told her that I could not give her ten dollars off a ten dollar shirt; I’m sorry for this inconvenience. The entire time I was thinking, “I’m actually not sorry.” Had she read the coupon, we wouldn’t be in this
situation, bickering back and forth. I was trying to be professional and not strangler her with the telephone or hit her with my price scanner. I’m proud that I managed to gain complete control over my tongue, or else I’d be out of a job and her confidence might have been taken down a few notches.

I once saw a man with scraggly hair and a toothless smile meandering around town. His clothes were tattered and infested with dirt and grime. He had a crutch, and though its purpose wasn’t always conspicuous, he used it mostly for support, except when he sometimes waved it about silently, as if trying to beat flies from the sky. I always found it strange that my town, a place with such upscale residents, had a homeless person. I soon learned from the adults around me that because he tended to roam from town to town, he couldn’t be considered our homeless person. My conscience wasn’t the least bit satisfied with that logic.

I saw that man one day on my way home from a long day at work. A car pulled up, and the people inside talked to him; then he got in. I was worried that the people in the car would hurt him. I couldn’t imagine anyone doing something nice to a man as imposing as he was. I wouldn’t, though I always found myself wanting to get him food and a new shirt. I would have bought them, but giving them to him was what scared me most. I prayed that the next time I saw the homeless man, he’d be fine, without injury from any adventure taken while in that car.

My house was small compared to the surrounding houses. I used to be ashamed, telling my friends in advance that my home wasn’t as big as their home; it wasn’t spacious or laden with granite counter tops. I’d warn them that we didn’t have three floors, and there wasn’t anything out of the ordinary, like an indoor pool. Other houses were two or three stories tall, with an additional finished basement. They had massive kitchens and themed rooms. Some had fountains in their yards that opened up to pools, while others just had amazing landscaping. The lawns were always well maintained, manicured down to the height of the grass. When the leaves happened to listen to gravity and fall, you could be certain there was someone waiting to catch them before they became a blemish.

Though my house wasn’t magnificent, it had its own charm. My parents put a lot of work into having a house they knew they could afford, regardless of what happened in the future, and because of this, they didn’t
seem to be affected by rising mortgage rates or high interest loans that had caused panic among many other families. I had been ashamed of my house because it was small in comparison to those around me, but after a while, I was damn proud of it. It was what my parents had worked for. They defied the class they were born into, buying a house that may have been small, but was really expensive because of the great school system and town it was located in.

“We’ll pay for the first year and you’ll pay for the next three, graduate school, and post-graduate school, should you decide to attend them.”

As I heard my parents say this, I remember what came to my mind...however, it is inappropriate to write it here. A euphemism would be “Oh my god.” I knew that they weren’t going to pay for my entire college education, and it wasn’t because they deemed college loans a brilliant idea; it was because they couldn’t afford to put two kids through college. So, as I sat with my parents, I planned out a course of action.

“Well...if I work for all of eternity, perhaps I can pay back half the loans,” I laughed nervously. It wasn’t the best idea, but I figured once I was out of college with a degree, I could get a more satisfying job, something with substance...and fewer jeans. My plans to be a teacher made me realize I would probably be staying with the same company for a long time, through high school, college, graduate school, and long after the loans accumulated. This would be more of a time commitment than anything; I wouldn’t be having a weekend off for a long time, and my Tuesday nights would be full of customers and cleaning. The store itself was fun to work in, the employees amiable, and the majority of customers pleasant, at least when it wasn’t a coupon day. I was okay with losing a few nights a week to work, but I soon learned my friends weren’t.

I picked up my phone, noticing I had a text message. I flipped it open and read the black words illuminated on a white screen.

“Do you want to hang out today with us?”

Realizing it’d be with the majority of my friends, I responded, “What are we doing?”

Beep. “Going bowling.”

I hated bowling, and, after renting shoes and paying for multiple games, it’d be quite a waste of money. “I don’t think so.”
A few moments later, I received the following: “Why?”
“I don’t like bowling, and I don’t want to spend the money.”
“Come on. Don’t you want to hang out with us?”
As if that was the reason I wasn’t going bowling. Not because it was expensive, but because I didn’t want to hang out with everyone. I wasn’t paying thirty dollars to “hang out.”
“I’m actually really tired, and don’t feel great. Sorry.” Insert frowning face here (it’s more convincing).
I put down the phone and sighed.
I remember shortly after enrolling in UMass, I received a survey about admissions, financial aid, and miscellaneous subjects that had weighed in my decision to attend in the fall. It had all been pretty easy, filling in circles, writing down my GPA and a few other items, and then I reached the financial aid section. I realized UMass had a very limited view on financial aid situations. I had received little financial aid from the college; there was one grant, I think, which would count if it weren’t so infinitesimally small, but it was better than nothing. I earned two scholarships on my own, and I was damn proud of it.
The survey asked how I’d be paying for school. I checked the options multiple times. There was no “I’m paying for it, and no, you didn’t give me financial aid because my parents, who aren’t paying for it, make ‘too’ much, though I don’t understand why you factored them in.” I don’t even recall there being an “other” option. I only remember becoming frustrated because I couldn’t explain that for three years it’d be only me. Loans with my name on it with high interest rates that would haunt me. Without financial aid, I was stuck in limbo, high loans, and low income. And textbooks are expensive…they cost as much as caring for a small child and weigh even more.
In obdurate glory, I circled the one that fit the most and wrote a note on each side. Even if it was only for my satisfaction, as I’m sure no one made note about the poor middle class girl who was angry that she didn’t get further assistance.
I remembered this as I talked to a friend about next year’s housing. She and I were from the same town and had been friends for a few years. We were making our own “to do” list, except it more closely related with which
dorms we wanted to be in, what furniture we’d bring next time we moved in, and what could be spared. I was looking at apartments, and she was looking at triples, which we wanted to share with a third friend.

“Apartments are expensive.”

Even after you split the rent three ways, it was still an entire paycheck, and that was for a cheap apartment. I only get two paychecks a month.

“My parents probably wouldn’t care. They pay room and board, and I pay tuition, but I get free tuition. They technically should be giving me money because of that, but for some reason it doesn’t work like that.”

I just stared at her. Your parents are paying for the most expensive part of college, and you’re paying nothing, and you want them to reimburse you? Craziness.

“What about you?” she asked.

“I’d have to pay for it.”

“Your parents wouldn’t?”

“No.”

“Why?”

A week before I arrived at college, I saw the homeless man again. He was walking towards the mall, which was in the next town over. His jacket was tied around his waist like a belt, and his pants were rolled up, though one leg had fallen down around his ankle. He still held his crutch, but didn’t use it for support. He was muttering something, as if reminding himself of his “to do” list.
Part II

Preface
The Final Reflection

We are very pleased to add to this edition of the Anthology examples of the last paper students compose in College Writing. While students’ written reflections on their work are an ongoing and critical part of the course, The Final Reflection asks students to review the entire body of work in their portfolios. By analyzing the various roads they have traveled—their struggles, their choices, their triumphs—they compare their past learning with their present knowledge in order to illuminate where they will need to go as writers in their futures. Learning to write well is a never-ending process, so this “final reflection” is final only in the sense of giving some closure to the course. The paper is, in fact, a beginning, launching the student into the world of academic writing. They consider the various “tools” they have assembled in their writer’s “toolbox”: revision, responding to writing, reflecting on writing, writing for an audience, writing with purposefulness and the consciousness of crafting an idea into a final paper. The Final Reflection casts a light on the challenges students will need to conquer in their futures as academic writers.

While we have always wanted to include this genre in the book, it has been difficult because often the texts produced can be highly dependent on the reader’s having knowledge of the goals of particular assignments and the specific drafts of the student’s essays. But by calling for a large number of samples, we were fortunate to find pieces that represent this genre, yet can stand apart from the particular essays the student has written. These following texts are filled with wonderful advice for any writer. We hope you enjoy reading about two students’ journeys through College Writing, and the wisdom they gleaned as they worked throughout the course. Their advice and the insights they share serve as inspiration for us all.

I want you all to think back to our first few weeks in this class. We all sat in our circle awkwardly staring at each other, waiting for someone to answer the questions. To volunteer to read their writing. To provide their own opinions. Very few of us wanted to, especially me. Just the fact that I am standing here in front of all of you shows I have grown as a writer. All of us have. I did not start my speech by saying “It’s not very good” or “it sucks; I don’t want to read it.” No: I’m finally confident about my writing. You may not like it. You may think I’m boring, but you know what? It doesn’t matter to me. I write for myself, with my style and my personality.

This College Writing course revived my love for writing. Eight years ago in my fifth grade class, my teacher, Mrs. Schofield, called me her writing prodigy. For one writing assignment, I wrote a seventy five page story called the “Blue Ribbon Pet.” My story was about a cocker spaniel named Danielle that was a top show dog until one day she was paralyzed after being hit by a car. She was given a “doggy wheelchair” and went around to children’s hospitals to cheer up the patients. Danielle was given a blue medal for her community service. Mrs. Schofield loved it; she even wanted it published. Unfortunately, by the time she had it bound into a book, it was summer and I was moving on to middle school. The “Blue Ribbon Pet” and my love for writing were forgotten. Or so I thought.

I’m sure as all of you experienced, once you enter high school there are no more seventy five page stories or other creative opportunities; just endless five paragraph essays. They sucked the creative juices right out of us and made us into writing robots. No imagery. No sentence variety. No cre-
ative style. Just opening paragraph, three part thesis, three body paragraphs, and don’t forget the concluding summary paragraph. My teachers drilled those concepts into my head. Thankfully, *College Writing* slowly chiseled away those old habits.

Just look back at my first paragraph, for example. It didn’t make any sense, right? Some of you must think it’s just a random mishmash of words I threw together. No offense if you did think I was blabbing like an idiot, but you’re wrong. Those are all the opening parts of each one of my four unit essays. Even just by looking at the first sentences, you can see I have grown. Take my Unit I essay’s opening sentence: “UMass dance team tryouts were downstairs in room eighty five.” Talk about boring. Now look at my Unit Four essay’s opening sentence: “Imagine this.” It grabs your attention. It gets you thinking. It makes you want to read more. That is my most significant accomplishment in this course; I don’t fall asleep reading my own essays anymore.

Now I want you all to think about what Hannah taught us that stuck with you the most? Was it being open to revision? What about commas, semicolons, and colon usage? Or was it even as simple as being able to write about what you like? For me, it is a close tie between “show it, don’t tell it” and being concise in sentences. Before I really grasped those concepts, I thought writing long complicated sentences made a better essay. But you know what? It’s just boring. For example, I know now that writing “He was found guilty” is better than “The jurors unanimously declared him guilty of the crime.” I always try to include little stories in my essays now, too. Whether it is personal or about my lazy roommate or a polygamist FBI criminal, it spices up my essays and makes you want to keep reading.

Are any of you wondering why I told the story about the “Blue Ribbon Pet”? The week before I moved into UMass I was going through my old junk, and I found a sealed manila envelope. It was the bound copy of the “Blue Ribbon Pet” Mrs. Schofield made for me. Inside the cover was a post-it that read “To my future author: Don’t ever let your love and talent for writing leave your side.” Mrs. Schofield saw something in me that I didn’t realize existed until this course. We are all talented writers in our own ways. I realized my style of writing involves a good flowing essay that tells a story and has a gripping introduction. Yours may be different. But just by
reading my essays, I can tell my voice has matured, and I understand the concept of audience. Clearly this was written for a specific audience, you, my fellow *College Writing* peers. There’s no need for formal language like an essay for an academic audience. And even if this was formal, formal does not mean boring!

Whenever I need to write in the future, whether it is a research paper or a speech or a class assignment, I will think back to this class. I’ll think back to those generative writing assignments that I sometimes found tedious, although they really did help in developing my ideas. I’ll think back to Hannah’s countless lectures about sentences. And I’ll think back to the “Blue Ribbon Pet.” We all have a little author inside us. Write for the joy of writing. Write for your ten year old author that is inside of you. *College Writing* is a story of its own, but don’t let your story end here. For me, it is only one chapter.
Dear College Writing 112 Student,

Good Luck! College Writing is a writing class where the standards for your writing are high, and the assignments are challenging. Walking into the first day of class, I was expecting a very challenging course, and I was not let down. When handing in each essay, I was sure that I was handing in my best work, only to be greeted with many critiques and errors outlined in my teacher’s comments. Although I was slightly offended at first (I was not used to any comment that did not say how good my paper was), often, upon rereading my papers, I found myself agreeing with the critiques. The following quotes come from both my teacher’s responses and my classmate’s thoughts that were given to me through “Peer Review,” a process we used a great deal in this course.

“Good news—your metaphorical facility is well used…the bad news is, it’s unfocused.”

My writing has evolved from my first essay in that I take more time to make sure my essay is organized in a matter that makes sense. “My Sneakers Five Pillars” was a jumble of paragraphs about important things in my life with no real connection to one another. My essay would have improved a lot with the use of more conjunctions. Also, after writing this essay, I learned that the webs, lists, and other organizational tools I learned in high school were not a waste of time; they were very useful stepping-stones for my style of writing. The Generative Writing that we used to set up and organize our ideas before writing the first draft improved the quality of my writing a lot.

The complement on my metaphors and use of symbolism increased my confidence in those writing tools. Throughout my other papers, I enjoyed
using metaphors and symbolism to prove my point because I knew it was a strong skill that I had.

“Quotes are used to give your statements credit...you need more quotes from a credible source.”

In Unit II, the class learned about the value of a good quote. Because of *College Writing*, I now understand how to use quotes from a credible source to make my own papers stronger. I now find it difficult to write a paper without referring to another's work. *The Penguin Handbook* will be a resource that I will use for my entire college career. Being a Biology major, I know I will need to do a lot of research and cite a lot of sources. My own “Do We Really Need to Consider the Lobster?” paper was a new style of writing I had never done before. The assignment was to use another person's work as a tool to justify my own original idea. Initially, I made my own thoughts and opinions sound as if they were concrete facts. After peer review, I realized how much more credible I sounded when I referred to an expert. For example, I stated bluntly that members of PETA do not eat lobster, but I now see that the statement would seem more concrete if I took the time to find a quote from a PETA person saying this fact.

“Don't be afraid to tie in personal experience.”

When you have personal experiences that are related to your topic, don't hesitate to use them. My “The Real Mean Girls” would be improved with more information about my own life. Although I touch on my personal experiences involving mean girls and bullies, I do not expand. Comments from both my peers and my teacher said that they would have liked for me to expand on my own personal experiences. They could be used as antidotes to an otherwise boring essay. When reflecting upon my work, I wish I spent more time on this paper because it was extraordinarily interesting.

“It's been a pleasure to see your essay evolve from the first draft to final draft.”

What I would consider the most important thing that I learned in *College Writing* would be the value of revision. The writing process taught in this course included two revisions. One was primarily for content and organization, while the second focused more on copyediting (spelling and grammar). There is no such thing as a perfect essay; there is always room for improvement. The more revisions that are done, the better the paper is.
I think that with a few more revisions, my research paper could be the best paper I have ever written.

“The paper would seem more professional with better copyediting.”

My papers consistently got this comment because it is true. Each of my papers had some sort of spelling or grammar mistake that was stupid and could have easily been fixed. A simple mistake, as minor as a forgotten comma or a misspelled word, can make a reader second-guess your intelligence or credibility. The second part of the revision process is crucial.

*College Writing* has been a very effective course in improving my writing. Reading through my papers, I see a clear progression and advancement in quality. The experience of *College Writing* has been both rewarding and entertaining. I encourage you to enter this class open minded and willing to learn.

Best Regards & Good luck,

Nicole Grandbois
PART III

JUNIOR YEAR

WRITING
Part III

Introduction to Junior Year Writing

This is the third year we have included texts from Junior Year Writing courses in this book, and from the enthusiastic response expressed by both first and junior year teachers, it appears we are on the way toward our ultimate goal—to create a book that will become a campus-wide resource, used at every level, a book that will become a key part of the University’s effort to both celebrate and improve our students’ writing.

This final section of the Anthology celebrates texts from six Junior Year Writing courses. More than 70 Junior Year courses are part of UMass Amherst’s two-part writing requirement. While the essays from Basic and College Writing that precede this section come from first-year courses in general expository writing, junior-year courses are discipline-specific and designed to help students improve the advanced writing skills needed in their chosen field of study.

This is the second year we saw a dramatic increase in submissions from junior year instructors—almost three times the number we received last year and almost all from disciplines who hadn’t submitted papers before! We revel in this enthusiasm, and hope that we receive even more texts for the next book. However, this increase did make selection highly competitive since all the essays were excellent pieces of work, all worthy of publication. Ultimately, selections were based on choosing texts that would appeal to the widest audience and represent the greatest diversity of genres.

The texts that follow are from Junior Year Writing courses in Anthropology, Comparative Literature, History, Music, Nutrition, and Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. The course name and number and a brief description of the assignment appear immediately before each paper. Thus we learn not only from
the essays we have published but from the goals stressed by instructors in their courses. All required academic rigor, a demand for sound and interesting rhetorical choices, and the author’s passionate engagement in a chosen topic. In each assignment, no matter what the discipline, we repeatedly see the instructor’s emphasis on the individual writer’s need to approach the assignment with deep intellectual engagement and also draw on their personal contexts to inform their work.

Special thanks go to Kyle Frackman, Laura Heston, Elizabeth Krause, Erinn Kynt, Reed Mangels, Kevin Pallister, MJ Peterson, Sigrid Schmalzer, and Anna Strowe, all of whom went on the hunt, at very busy times in their schedules, to search for papers to submit to us. Their enthusiasm for this project, their willingness to do whatever needed to be done, were constant reminders of how fortunate we all are to be part of an institution filled with people who care deeply about students, their learning, their success, and, in particular— their writing.
A PERSONAL HISTORY OF
SEXUALITY: CHAPTER I

Elizabeth Todd

Anthropology 364: Problems in Anthropology

The assignment that Todd responds to below is called a reflective power essay. This narrative genre asks students to build on skills of critical thinking and comprehension. The additional challenge here was to add self-reflection to the mix in a way that integrated a power analysis yet allowed the reader to hear the writer’s voice. Students had to imagine that their audience consisted of educated laypersons unfamiliar with anthropology. Hence, theory may inform the essay but should not encumber it.

I was five-years-old when a cat named Chester first told me about sex. I can still recite the words he asserted, “I don’t like it when you touch my tail that way; my body belongs to me,” a statement I heard repeated many times from Chester as he narrated the sexual harassment video my classmates and I were made to watch once a year throughout elementary school. Year after year, my peers and I watched intently as the video showed us the same scenarios of seemingly trustworthy adults, usually neighbors or relatives, treating young children in an “inappropriate” way, inviting them inside for cookies and telling them that they should take off their bathing suits to get more comfortable. The moral of each story was to say something, to not remain silent if and when we found ourselves in these situations. This was a message that affected us, if only superficially, as we jokingly repeated to each other, “my body belongs to me.”

Chester was the first one to break the silence about the elusive term called ‘sex’. Why would we listen to what an orange cartoon feline had to say about such a confidential subject? I can say with certainty that the reason was neither my devotion to Saturday morning cartoons nor my love of animals, but because my teachers stood behind him; showing us this video during class was as if they were speaking to us from the same position of authority that they enacted upon students when teaching us about history, mathematics, or any other subject that we weren’t meant to question.
With this repetitive lesson in sex as a form of harassment, a bad thing that should make us feel uncomfortable, it’s no wonder that I eagerly covered my ears when my mother so much as alluded to the topic. I can still recall my mom’s attempts to have “the talk” with me, which were always quickly and vehemently thwarted and sometimes prompted by pre-teen idol pop songs on the radio that screamed sexual innuendos such as “2 Become 1” and “When the Lights Go Out.” Becoming aware that these songs I sang along with, quite nonchalantly, referred to the word that shall not be named didn’t stop me from singing them, just as I didn’t hesitate to giggle among my friends as we mimicked Chester the Cat. Nevertheless, the mere idea of the subject being spoken between my mother and me was the most uncomfortable and even taboo discussion that I could imagine; the topic wasn’t to be spoken of directly and certainly not between a child and mother, whose sexualities weren’t to be acknowledged.

According to Michel Foucault, “The sex of children and adolescents has become, since the eighteenth century, an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed” (1978, 30). The “pedagogization of children’s sex,” which views children’s sexuality as dangerous due to their highly sexual nature, demands both vigilance and control from parents, educators, and doctors, all of whom play a role in the experience I’ve described (Foucault 1978, 104). The conflict that emerges between the attempts of my school and my family to introduce ideas of sexuality is illustrative of the issues Foucault presents with regard to sexuality in family relations, which call upon doctors, priests, and educators to help shape children’s sexual ideologies. The video on sexual harassment didn’t encourage a discussion but rather a confession arising from the sexual irregularities that were portrayed. This discourse, which focused on the disorders of sexuality, taught me to view sex as problematic and instilled a reluctance in me to talk about sex, thus creating a silence that wasn’t in fact repressive, but rather productive in that it prevented the “pedagogization” of sexuality from relying solely on my family but required other institutions to construct it. However, the responsibility that still exists within the family to address the issue of sexuality may explain my mother’s persistent attempts to talk to me about sex and her need to
know how I perceived the overt sexual content that I was exposed to on a daily basis at school and through the media.

Foucault would argue that my initial analysis of Chester the Cat’s authority is not a thorough evaluation of the power his words held as it did not solely derive from the teachers who showed us the video. Although there are many forces at work in this situation, we don’t have to look very far to find another key player in the propagation of this discourse: the video’s producer, a Doctor of Education, affirms the authoritative role of science in shaping education and thus the dispersal of knowledge in Western society. Foucault addresses this ideology as it relates to sexuality in what he refers to as “scientia sexualis,” in which the correlation between sexuality and science associates sexuality with knowledge and truth through a system of standardization (1978, 59). Scientia sexualis thus invokes the sexuality of a collective other instead of personal experience, causing one’s own sexuality to be something mysterious and secret that must be examined in order to discover the truth about oneself. This, Foucault asserts, is where the centuries-old, Western tradition of confession is evoked as the key to knowledge and truth through the power of coercion. The discourse of confession, however, is often employed in matters that are secret and hidden, causing people to view sexuality as something shameful. The video my peers and I watched, which was produced and dispersed by a person whose title alone indexes science and authority and also enforced the obligation to confess an act of sexual misconduct, began to construct the sexualities of my peers and me as something secret and dangerous while instructing appropriate discourse and behavior.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault introduces his theory of biopower, a technology of power used to regulate the subjects of a state through the discipline of the body and the regulation of population. Through biopower, the body is treated as a pragmatic entity, productive, economically useful and politically conservative, while the population is concerned with dominant ideologies. People’s beliefs and behaviors are thus regulated through aspects of social and seemingly personal life such as customs, reproductive practices, and health. Foucault argues that the management of these behaviors is implemented through sexuality, a concept that is socialized to both adults and children through the various discourses that
meticulously define a single norm of sexual development and all possible deviations. The idea of biopower is exemplified in the control of children's sex, as exhibited in my experience, since children's sexuality is not productive or economically beneficial. The assertion, “my body belongs to me,” could thus be seen as instilling a false sense of autonomy over our bodies since our adoption of the ideologies presented to us in fact caused us to give up power through the self-discipline of our bodies in accordance with socially acceptable behavior.

Foucault argues that the origins of power are not to be found in a single dominant source, but rather as power is acted through the various institutions that can be detected in shaping my history of sexuality, such as medicine, education, family, and religion, and the discourses that are adopted within society that create and perpetuate this power. Power can therefore be described not only as a repressive but also a productive force, shaping relationships between people, institutions, and ideologies and creating concepts of knowledge and truth. As we were shown this video repeatedly within an educational context, my classmates' and my concept of sexuality and its discourse began to shape our relationships with each other. And with each of these institutions, our notions of self-awareness, as well as our behavior, evolved through a socially constructed normalization of each of these facets of human existence.

References

THEY’RE MADE OUT OF MEAT: THE AMERICAN LITERARY RELATIONSHIP TO WHAT WE EAT

Nellie Condee

CompLit 397B: Junior Year Writing

Students were assigned to write a 9-10 page paper on some topic within Comparative Literature that they felt passionate about. The paper was to be presented at their final student/teacher conference. Students could choose the texts, the topics, and the approaches. They were also required to do an annotated bibliography.

The American history of meat has been a strange one. Though we consume livestock by the drove, the typical United States citizen is oblivious to the origins of their meat and the processing necessary to get it to them. Our steak is a slab birthed and swaddled in plastic, and it will die as a slab drowning in sauce. This is a theme visible, and sometimes mocked, in literature as well. A 1990 short story written by Terry Bisson entitled “They’re Made out of Meat” follows two aliens, shocked and disgusted to discover that humans should be made out of as typically an unthinking and dead material such as meat. The story is meant to be slightly humorous, but the reality of meat production is often less so. Meat consumption and production has an immense effect on the individual, an effect which can even be seen through modern literature and the media, namely, through Ruth L. Ozeki’s novel, My Year of Meats, and through current advertisements for fast food chains.

To understand the modern American’s relationship to meat in literature, one must first consider historical context. Factory farming existed in the United States prior to World War II, but it tended to be rare. Meat was still expensive for the average American, the cost-cutting methods of factory farming having yet to take hold. Upton Sinclair’s 1906 novel, The Jungle,
depicted a family of Lithuanian immigrants living in the meatpacking district of Chicago and working at one of the factory slaughterhouses there. The concerns the novel raised had potential to stop a problem before it began, but upon the passing of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act, the American demand for meat increased.

Meat remained expensive up through the beginning of World War II. Red meat was a commodity that only the wealthy could afford in any large quantity. Zora Neale Hurston recounts her Florida childhood in Megan J. Elias’ book, *Food in the United States, 1890-1945*, and states that “We had chicken on the table often…There was plenty of fish in the lakes around town…But beef stew was something rare. We were all very happy whenever Papa went to Orlando and came back with something delicious like stew beef” (13). Recipes from cookbooks of the time reflect meat's costly nature. Chicken was the most prevalent pre-World War II meat, with everything from the still fairly standard Chicken Casserole to the now quite strange Chicken Gelatin offered (*Good Housekeeping’s Book of Menus* 150-151). Red meat, when included, took the form of cheaper cuts, either ground or chipped beef left over from a Sunday roast, or parts of the animal that many might consider “less desirable.” Recipes including beef kidneys, livers, and brains could be found in cookbooks from this time.

The Second World War brought strict rationing of many American commodities, including meat. Upon the war’s finish, American desire for meat saw a sudden surge. In his book, *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser points out the typical 1950s American’s obsession with convenience. As a result, factory farming, taking cues from auto-assembly lines, gained popularity among corporations like never before. Food was reincarnated as a product of new industry processing, made possible with wartime technology. Dinner could now be poured out of a can, or arrived frozen and was simply re-heated. Between 1950 and 1965, American agricultural production more than doubled in an attempt to meet this new demand for cheap food (Foer 162). The demand for cheap meat was obliged by factory farming. Farming became more about profit, rather than quality. This was also the dawn of the fast food age. McDonalds opened, and sold hamburgers for fifteen cents, enabling even the poorest family to go out and enjoy a cooked meal at a restaurant, an impossible scenario before factory-farmed meat.
In his book, *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer points out that meat has only gotten comparatively cheaper since then. In the past fifty years, the price of housing has increased nearly 1,500 percent and new cars more than 1,400 percent. The price of milk, however, is up only 350 percent. The price of eggs and chicken meat has yet to double. In fact, Foer states that “taking inflation into account, animal protein costs less today than at any time in history” (109). Americans today love their meat, and they love it cheap. The influx of cheap labor from Mexico and other nations and a factory monopoly on animal agriculture allow for this.

It is this modern setting into which Ruth L. Ozeki’s novel, *My Year of Meats*, enters. The characters in the novel initially set out to paint meat in a positive light. The plot of the book circles around the production of a beef-corporation-sponsored Japanese television series called *My American Wife!* The corporation, American company BEEF-EX, wishes to exploit the relationship between American love of meat and the success of the nuclear-age family model in order to boost their sales overseas. The protagonist of the book is a half-Japanese, half-American woman, Jane, who works as the director for *My American Wife!* While she is initially agreeable to the show, the agenda of BEEF-EX soon begins to wear on her. Jane’s initial contact with BEEF-EX is through a memo outlining concepts which the corporation finds both desirable and undesirable for its show. Listed among the “Desirable Things” are attractive families with obedient children and docile husbands, exciting hobbies, and a delicious meat recipe to be featured in each episode. “Undesirable Things” include obesity, squalor, and, to Jane’s shock, what BEEF-EX refers to as “second-class peoples” (12). We are also supplied with a motto that is both helpful and easy to remember: “Pork is Possible, but Beef is Best” (12). All families chosen by BEEF-EX, such as Suzie Flowers and her “down-home country” husband, exemplify the nuclear age American family blended perfectly with BEEF-EX ideology.

Throughout the novel, many families are featured on *My American Wife!* However, the last family proves to be the BEEF-EX favorite. Bunny Dunn and her significantly older husband, John, are selected because their family essentially live meat. The Dunns own a feedlot and a slaughterhouse, and though BEEF-EX enjoys the opportunity to portray a beef
family in a wholesome light, it is John who truly interests them. John was seventy-two when he fathered Bunny’s young daughter. BEEF-EX is quick to focus on the fact that John attributes this accomplishment to the fact that he has eaten red meat every single day of his life.

However, despite the best attempts of BEEF-EX, the discrepancy between the average American’s relationship with meat and the reality of meat processing becomes painfully apparent. Bunny and John’s daughter, Rose, is beginning to show signs of early adolescence, a condition known as “precocious puberty.” Rose, at a mere five years old, has breasts and pubic hair. Upon investigation of the practices at the Dunn feedlot, Jane discovers the use of illegal and carcinogenic growth hormones on the Dunn cattle. Artificial hormones are an unfortunate reality in the meat industry. Feedlots require money to keep animals alive. Animals are therefore engineered, either through selective breeding, or through application of hormones, to reach market size faster. Previously, it may have taken as long as three or four years for cattle to reach “market size.” Now, however, the typical cow is slaughtered at twelve to sixteen months. The faster and bigger an animal can be grown, the more money a company can ultimately make. The particular growth hormone discussed in My Year of Meats is diethylstilbestrol, or DES. DES was a hormone used commonly during the 1960s in the poultry and beef industries, and later prescribed to pregnant women to assist fetus growth. In the following years, it was discovered that DES did nothing to assist pregnancy; women who were prescribed the hormone, in fact, had increased chances of developing breast cancer over the age of forty. Children of DES users were more likely to suffer birth defects, including uterine deformities in girls, and they also suffered a higher risk of more rare forms of cancer as they aged. The use of certain hormones in meat production has been linked to sterility in both genders, a fact which is humorous, given the meat industry’s long history of linking meat consumption with virility and manliness.

This link is one still nurtured and maintained in advertisements for meat-centric products and corporations. Burger King, in their 2006 commercial for the Texas Double Whopper, features a man sitting in a restaurant, eating a laughably small meal. The man scoffs at the meal, condemning it as “chick food,” and launches into a song about being manly and
hungry. He is quickly joined by other men, equally manly and hungry, and they all head off to Burger King for a Texas Double Whopper. The commercial denounces tofu, and the men “admit” that they have eaten quiche, as if consuming any food that is not meat is something of which to be ashamed. The men flock in growing numbers towards each other and their beef, confident in their masculinity, and triumphant to have overcome the tyranny of the vegetable. They ultimately hurl a car over a bridge into a dump truck, where it is towed along by another man being led by another Whopper.

Commercials for the KFC Double Down, a sandwich introduced this year, using two chicken breasts in place of buns, uses similar tactics. Again, men are shown triumphant, announcing that “today is the day,” stating things that they will accomplish today. A young man at a skate park states that today is the day that “I will ignore the voice of reason.” A slightly chubby man standing in an elevator with an attractive blonde announces that he will talk to the girl from accounting today (blonde flashes a small, but decidedly flirty, smile). The men, voices building, will “ditch the bun” today, and demand “two meaty filets, two slices of cheese, and two slices of bacon.” The chubby man from earlier, eyes dancing with the fire of possibility, repeats “Yeah, I said bacon.” The men stride off to accomplish all they can accomplish today, emboldened by the promise of meat later on in the day.

Men are the target audience in these commercials. Women, when shown, are either the oppressors keeping men from their meat, or sexual objects that men can conquer once they have acquired their meat. In both cases, meat is pivotal. Nothing may be accomplished without the assistance of meat, but once it is, the world has endless possibilities. The message is clear to all who watch: to eat meat is to be all that may become a man.

These men, however, should be careful when consuming their vast quantities of meat. Sicknesses caused by food-borne pathogens are on the rise. More people are sickened today by bad food than a generation ago. Salmonella and E. Coli poisoning, as well as Listeriosis, are among the three most common illnesses. Equally distressing is a study released by the USDA in 1996 which found that 78.6 percent of ground beef that the department sampled contained microbes spread mostly through fecal matter. This paints
a clear picture as to why Americans are getting sick with these diseases in increasing numbers; to quote Eric Schlosser in his own blunt manner, “there is shit in the meat” (Schlosser 197). However, despite the ready availability of information regarding health concerns and meat, animal protein consumption in the United States still continues to grow.

Factory workers, too, are horrifically affected by the work that they do. The speed of factory lines has increased exponentially over the past several years; slaughterhouse workers are now expected to kill and process as many as 2,050 head of cattle a shift. This increased speed also leads to an increased job injury rate, something which we see, again, in My Year of Meats. Jane, upon entering the Dunn slaughterhouse, refers to it as “walking through an invisible wall into hell” (281). She describes the quick pace with which the processing lines run. “Chains, pulleys, iron hooks, whipped around us with increased speed” (281). However, it’s not merely the chains which move so quickly. Jane notices that “overhead a continuous rail system laced the ceiling, from which swung mammoth sides of beef, dripping, and heavy with speed as they rattled toward us” (281). This is a dangerous environment for anyone, and indeed, Jane finds herself seriously injured when she stumbles into the path of one of these swinging carcasses.

In the real world, workers are often encouraged to work through their injuries. Injury reports, when filed, are riddled with discrepancies. One official report submitted to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration by a Nebraska IBP beef plant showed a difference of more than 1,500 filed injury logs when compared with a separate report discovered on file secretly at the same plant (Schlosser 180). It is feasible, however, that corporate slaughterhouses might claim this as necessary. To keep in step with American demand for meat, slaughterhouses must work quickly, and they must keep true injury rates under wraps if they want meat to be continually viewed as a wholesome staple of the American dinner table.

Though the physical tolls of factory farming are daunting enough, there are psychological ones to consider as well. Temple Grandin, a noted animal scientist and advocate for animal welfare, has commented that the dehumanizing work of constant animal slaughter can make even the most mentally sound person develop sadistic tendencies. Official industry protocol dictates that animals be rendered unconscious with a type of stun gun
before being processed, but in a video taken by workers at one plant and submitted to the Washington Post, animals are shown either improperly stunned, or not stunned at all, but in either case conscious and sent down the processing line. According to the Post, “more than twenty workers signed affidavits alleging that the violations shown on the tape are commonplace and that the supervisors are aware of them...thousands and thousands of cows go through the slaughter process alive...the cows can get seven minutes down the line and still be alive” (Foer 231). The people carrying out these acts of stupendous animal cruelty were, by all accounts, completely normal and mentally healthy individuals prior to beginning their work as factory farmers. While living beings should not, under any circumstances, have to suffer through their own inhumanely prolonged demise, and it is horrifying to read these accounts, it is important to remember that many of these workers, as sadistic as they may have become, are merely a symptom of a larger, much more encompassing issue.

During my research for this presentation, there was one recurring theme that struck me in many of the narratives I read. Jonathan Safran Foer, Michael Pollan, and Ruth L. Ozeki all refer to the act of eating meat as requiring a massive “act of forgetting” on the consumer’s part. It would not be difficult for the average American to learn all they needed to know, and more, about where their meat comes from, and what goes into getting the animal from pasture to plate. The information is there, and it is easy to obtain. At this point, American ignorance has become willful, and even detrimental to our health. Meat is touted in the media as the key to virility, while at the same time, the effects that certain growth hormones will have on the human reproductive system is unknown. Books present meat as a wholesome staple of the American meal while ignoring the possibility that a Mexican immigrant may very well have lost his hand processing that steak. The aliens of Terry Bisson's previously mentioned short story argue that humans, being composed of mere flesh cannot possibly be capable of intelligent thought and action. While these aliens are incorrect in that regard, humans are very capable of intelligent thought, our actions regarding animal welfare and meat consumption render us not much better than the meat upon which they look down, and that we so willfully disembly.
Annotated Bibliography


Adbrands.net features company profiles for many large corporations and their major advertising campaigns. Two advertisements featured on this Web site were analyzed for their portrayal of meat, and how they used preconceived notions of food and gender roles to make the American public want to purchase their product.


This is a short story in which two aliens come to Earth and discuss their surprise at the fact that the leading intelligent life force on the planet is comprised entirely of flesh. This story is used as an introduction to how meat can generally be conceived of by the population at large: namely, that of a dead piece of flesh, devoid of any thought or past life.


This book concerns itself with what Americans were eating in the first half of the twentieth century, how they were preparing it, and the thinking behind why they were eating it. It provides historical context for my analysis of meat-centric literature and media.


Foer’s book offers insight into the environmental, human, and animal rights issues surrounding the meat processing industry, and explores stories we tell to justify our eating habits as Americans. It offers insight into Americans’ relationship with food, and touches on how literature at large relates to it.


This is a recipe book published by the *Good Housekeeping* Magazine in 1922. It shows what Americans were eating prior to World War II, and provides information against which American eating habits post World War II can be compared.


Pollan’s book concerns itself with the issues Americans face when choosing their diet, and how our food choices now will affect our society in years to come. When looking at food in a primarily historical context, and how it relates to literature and the media, it will prove useful to also look at the future of food, and how that could relate to literature to come.

Not only does this site offer information on the types of foods Americans chose to eat at home over the course of the twentieth century, but it also talks about what Americans ate while they were out, and the menus they would offer when having company for the evening. This Web site offers yet more historical context for literary analysis.


Schlosser’s book explores, as he puts it, “The dark side of the all-American meal.” It explores, among other things, the modern meat-packing industry and labor worries among fast-food workers. However, it also goes into great depth, exploring the historical context behind the rise of the fast food industry and America’s love for it.


Sinclair’s book is a work of fiction that deals almost exclusively with food, or rather, food production, and how it affects the people who work in meat-processing factories. It will provide part of one side of the coin when it comes to the American literary relationship with food. It shows the darker side of food production: the details of what goes into getting the average American their meat in the pre-World War I United States.
LA PERONISTA: FEMINISM AND THE RISE OF PERÓN

Daniel McDonald

History 591P History Writing and Political Engagement

Students in this writing course pursue an intensive, independent, politically engaged research project on a historical topic of their own choosing. One step in that process is the historiographical essay based on the secondary sources they collect for the project. They are required to analyze the existing scholarly literature on their topic and articulate a historiographical argument that represents a clear political stand. In the following paper, Daniel McDonald makes a strong case that scholars have focused primarily on Eva Perón, and historians must pay more attention to the “role of women activists, especially in labor, in the Perón years.”

“Yo me siento nada más que la humilde representante de todas las mujeres del pueblo.”

-Eva Perón, Buenos Aires, 1951

In Peronist Argentina, Eva Duarte, or “Evita” as she was popularly known, captivated the national imagination like no other figure did or has done since. Her eminent shadow makes extracting a clear picture of women’s political participation during the period difficult. The historical record affirms her statement, “I feel that I am nothing more than the humble representative of the women of the nation.” Evita is critically important in analyzing gender in Latin America; she redefined what was possible for women in the political arena. However, historians have obscured the participation of the common woman in Peronist Argentina when they focused on Evita as the sole means of analyzing women’s political participation. As a historical field, gender studies in Latin America is comparatively young. In moving forward, feminist scholars of Latin America risk losing the voices of working class women.

Despite the prodigious volume of work detailing the relationship between Juan Perón and activist labor, the mainstream historical record has
given women’s movements passing treatment, if any at all. Jeremy Adelman’s “Reflections on Argentine Labour and the Rise of Perón” echoes this trend. Adelman’s survey of existing literature on the subject turned up no mention of the increasing relevance of women’s movements.\(^2\)

Nationwide, women comprised 22.6% of the workforce, and likely more, in an industrial economy like Buenos Aires.\(^3\) Works that analyzed Peronist Argentina (Doyon & Seibert, 1977; Germani & Yujnovsky, 1973; Horowitz, 1983; Levitsky & Mainwaring, 2006) mentioned women only through Evita’s person. They said she served as an effective means to secure support among the general working class and little more. They rarely mentioned her influence on women’s movements and activism.

As feminist historians sought to emphasize and explore the role of women in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, Evita became a natural subject of interest. She undoubtedly wielded enormous influence at a critical time for Argentina. Marysa Navarro’s treatment of Evita’s life, and the relationship between her own power and Perón’s need to connect with the working class, provided some insightful conclusions.\(^4\) Her presentation of women’s participation in politics was, however, incomplete; she neglected the actions of women activists prior to Evita. Moreover, she presented women’s participation in the regime as an after-effect of Peronist political strategy. In contrast, Adelman concluded that workers and labor unions largely acted on their own accord, though he does not mention women.\(^5\) In fact, women eagerly and enthusiastically participated in politics despite Perón’s reinforcement of conservative family values and gender roles.\(^6\) Their relevance increased substantially after they gained the right to vote in 1951.\(^7\)

*Gender and Sociopolitical Change in Twentieth Century Latin America* by Sandra Deutsch represented the most significant attempt to write a historiographic account of the treatment of women in Peronist Argentina. Writing in 1991, Deutsch realized that the lack of secondary sources on the topic prevented any such account; instead she laid a foundation for further inquiry with a mix of the minimal existent literature and significant substantive evidence.\(^8\) She focused her argument on Evita and interprets the events relevant to women in Argentina relative to her person. Deutsch was probably correct in her assertion that Peronism in general encouraged
women's participation in politics primarily to serve its own conservative ends. Likewise, the creation of the Partido Peronista Feminino to represent women in government reflected organized labor's complex relationship with the Perón regime; it simultaneously enabled and restricted women's participation in politics. However, her analysis presented only half of the relationship between Evita's political program and working class women. Deutsch never mentioned what the women thought of the Partido or of any independent moves to organize. Like Adelman argued, the common people of Buenos Aires thought and acted according to their own interests. Even if many women embraced Evita and her political party, many did so with mixed motives or not at all.

Existing scholarly work on women in the era of Perón has improved in recent times. While mainstream accounts of labor in Argentina did not explore the issue, some Latin American historians have made important advances. However, their use of primary source material that relates almost exclusively to Eva Perón has certain limitations. Evita is a fascinating case, but she cannot be the only means of analyzing the role of women activists, especially in labor, in the Perón years. The next direction is clear: the working class women of Peronist Argentina, las peronistas, must speak for themselves.

Notes
3) Deutsch, 272.
4) Navarro concluded that Evita acted as an extension of her husband, and the he gave her as much power as he could. Her particular abilities served to extend Perón’s reach among the working class further than he, her husband, could or later would be able. She cites her renunciation of being Perón’s vice-presidential candidate in 1951 after the strong negative reaction among elements in the military as an example of the limits of this relationship.
7) Navarro, 229.
8) Deutsch, 261.
9) Deutsch, 281.

**Bibliography**


HENRI DUPARC: REASONS BEHIND THE DESTRUCTION

Kaara McHugh

Music 350, Writing about Music

Students were requested to select a research topic/question of their choice and write a 1000-1500 word paper on the topic. The topic needed to relate to music and be something the author felt passionate about. Authors were instructed to use endnotes or footnotes, rather than in-text citation methods. Papers needed to have a clear thesis, make an original contribution to their subject, and include appropriate methodologies and examples in support of the thesis.

Bien au-dessus des poètes dont s’enorgueillit notre époque neurasthénique” (well above all else poets pride themselves in their time of depression). It is ironic that Henri Duparc expressed this statement in a letter to Francis Jammes since he was a man afflicted by a depressive disorder: neurasthenia. Historians believe that this affliction was the cause of Duparc’s cessation of composition at the tender age of thirty-five, but this does not explain Duparc’s subsequent destruction of the good majority of his works. Duparc was a highly self-critical, religious man with perfectionist tendencies; neurasthenia strikes me as a clever disguise.

Duparc was not your “run-of-the-mill” prodigy; he did not have an interest in music initially. He was highly intellectual and adept at many fields of study even though he ended up pursuing law, a profession that had been in the family for generations. Despite an alleged lack of interest in music, Duparc did study piano with César Franck, who immersed Duparc in the studies of theory and composition. Duparc responded as Franck had hoped: with great enthusiasm.

Duparc, like Franck and Franck’s student, Guillaume Lekeu, adopted unabashed emotive styles in their compositions: “The criterion suggested by his ‘je veux être ému’ (I wish to be moved) is the same as that of Lekeu’s ‘pour moi l’art est infiniment sentimental’(for me, art is infinitely sentimental). This testament was the fundamental aesthetic principle for these French Romantic composers and entailed the depiction of a singular
emotion throughout a composition. Observance of this aesthetic technique required “extreme, artistic sensibility” since it was centered around symbolism that subjected one’s works to several revisions. This meticulous, impressionistic style of writing that Duparc was so fond of may have played a hand in his psychological malady for he would continue to perfect pieces and their orchestrations even after they had been performed. These prominent perfectionist habits were indicative of something greater than extreme thoroughness.

**Neurasthenia.** Neurasthenia is an affliction that first surfaced in the nineteenth century. It was discovered by George Miller Beard in 1869, who documented over 50 symptoms for the disease, the least of which include persistent fatigue, muscular distress, and anxiety. The cause for the disease is unknown (though different schools of psychiatry have formulated some hypotheses), and it is more prevalent in males (though it was initially more prevalent in females) between the ages of 20-55 in high stress occupations. Henri Duparc fits all of the aforementioned criteria: a 35 year old male composer.

There are several subtypes of neurasthenia. Duparc experienced physical pains as well as psychological manifestations; thus it is likely that he had cerebral neurasthenia (characterized by headaches, despondency, anxiety, and fatigue). In Merle’s “Psychologie et Pathologie d’un artiste: Henri Duparc,” Professor Lagrange explains Duparc’s disease as such: “a nicotinic atrophy of the optic nerve.” In other words, Duparc was experiencing a neuron deficiency and subsequent degeneration of the optic nerve that eventually rendered him completely blind towards the end of his life. Lagrange speculated that this degeneration of the optic nerve caused Duparc to see apparitions, as well as experience prolonged nausea and insomnia; all of these were also symptoms of neurasthenia.

Several sources indicate that Duparc was predisposed to neurasthenia because of hereditary influences. Though Duparc peculiarly and (seemingly) abruptly stopped composing in the midst of a blossoming career, Sydney Northcote speculates that this disease was present throughout his childhood, lying dormant and undiagnosed, which “might have offered some explanation of that abnormal self-criticism which prompted him to destroy so much of his work.”
**Influential correspondences.** Throughout his life, Duparc corresponded with various composers and poets. These letters are significant because they contain detailed accounts of his struggles as a composer as well as his reverence for those he corresponded with. One of these major figures was Francis Jammes, a nineteenth century French poet. Jammes, who converted to Catholicism in the latter part of his life, invented the concept of Jammisme, “which embraces but one guiding principle, the truth that is the praise of God.”

Jammes’ early poetry was lyrical and symbolic, simplicity being the underlying foundation for the good majority of his work. Duparc, a Romantic composer with a similar aesthetic for the beauty of simplicity, admired Jammes. Duparc admits in one of his earliest letters to Jammes that he envies Jammes’ work and is tortured by the fact that his disease inhibits him from producing any works comparable to Jammes’.

Jammes formed a close relationship with another French poet, Paul Claudel, who was a zealous Catholic. Claudel, having had a spiritual vision at age 18, believed that “God is the supreme architect of the world” ergo, his writings and writing criticisms were strongly religiously biased. Though correlation does not equate to causation, one should note that during this time (approximately 1905), Jammes’ “poetry became more austere and occasionally more dogmatic.”

In 1906, during one of his visits to the famous Lourdes (the location where the apparition of the Virgin Mary appeared, as well as the location of the miraculous healing spring waters), Duparc met up with Jammes and Claudel. Upon this particular visit, Duparc had “an experience that greatly increased his already deeply religious cast of mind.” It is unclear what this experience explicitly entailed, but the combination of the sacred Lourdes and two ardent Catholics could only have had greater influence on Duparc’s religious practice.

According to Fernand Merle, Duparc delved into a “mysterious” faith after this particular visit and spent everyday praying to keep up with his faith. At this point, he had ceased the publication of any of his works. In a letter to his friend, Jean Cras, Duparc explains his reasoning behind his musical abandonment: “Having lived 25 years in a splendid dream, the whole idea of [musical] representation has become... repugnant. The other
reason for this destruction... was the complete moral transformation that God imposed on me 20 years ago... which... obliterated my past life.”

What is curious about Duparc’s affliction, to which is attributed his cessation and subsequent destruction of music, is that he was able to maintain a normal family life. Generally speaking, a person who suffers from any type of depressive disorder will have an atypical social and/or family life because their brain chemistry is abnormal. In Duparc’s case, there is no evidence or indication of cacophony amid his family life.

Merle states that the Duparc’s talent “fell asleep” at age 35. Perhaps pressured by the demands of the most highly regarded art form at the time, Duparc succumbed to the “drying up” of his artistic creativity. No doubt, neurasthenia played a hand in Duparc’s predisposition for anxiety and perfectionism, but one cannot help but notice religion’s increasing significance in Duparc’s life in his later years. One of Duparc’s aesthetic principles was the beauty of simplicity, which perhaps extended to other realms of his life, including his religious views. Perhaps in the perusal of simplicity for God’s purpose, Duparc eradicated that which was insignificant. However, his own account of experiencing writer’s block is documented in his letters, and one cannot argue with evidence derived from the original source.

“Many neuro-psychological explanations for this sad history have been offered, but it amounts to a major case of composer’s block, with its attendant revulsion against his own works, some of which he destroyed.”

Notes
1) Henri Duparc and Guy Ferchault, Une Amitié Mystique: Révélée Par Ses Lettres à Francis Jammes, à Charles de Bordea et à sa filleule; (suivi de) la prière de tous les jours après la communion (Le Plan-de-la-Tour: D’Aujourd’hui, 1984).
3) Ibid., n.p.
6) Northcote, 42.
10) Cooper, n.p.
12) "Henri Duparc,” Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 10 Nov. 2010
I believe that the general public needs to be better educated about nutrition. No matter what age, basic nutrition education should be informative and simple to understand.

This past summer, I interned at a local hospital to immerse myself in the field of clinical nutrition in both inpatient and outpatient settings. After only a few days of observing dietitians’ meetings with patients, I was shocked to find how little people knew about nutrition.

During my internship, I assisted a dietitian with instructing a class for cardiac rehabilitation patients in reading nutrition labels. The patients in the class were generally middle aged to older patients recovering from multiple types of heart problems and were in a program that combined nutrition counseling with fitness classes. In the nutrition class I helped teach, the dietitian and I began by asking what each of the patients first read when reading a nutrition facts label. Each patient chimed in with “sodium,” “calories,” “carbs,” and “fat.” The dietitian and I had to explain that the first item that should be read on a nutrition facts label is the serving size because without that information, everything else on the label is irrelevant. Already, this one fact was news to the patients. Continuing with the class,
I found that even though the patients knew what important items to examine on a label, they still struggled to understand what the information meant, and were very overwhelmed with which items to concern themselves with the most. Should they consider the caloric amount? What about the sodium levels? Should they buy foods that advertise “low fat?” Understandably, for anyone who does not study nutrition, or has not learned anything about nutrition since early schooling, the reading of a basic nutrition facts label can be a lot to process.

Most people learn the basic nutrition facts at a young age. Although it is vital for children to be aware of healthy eating, it may be even more important for the young adult and middle-aged populations to know because they are the main influences in what food is purchased. Children are not able to examine nutrition facts labels and purchase food on their own; parents, guardians, or babysitters essentially make the decisions. People are inclined to forget what they learned in grade school; therefore, finding ways to make essential nutritional information more readily available and simpler to understand would be beneficial for everyone.

I believe that with easily understood nutrition education, anyone from age five to eighty-five will be able to make better decisions about food. As people age, they seem to know less about feeding their bodies correctly, and everyone deserves to know the appropriate ways to live a strong and healthy life.
In 1951, Edward R. Murrow began a feature on National Public Radio that asked people from all walks of life to state their most dearly held beliefs. While the show lasted only four years, its enormous popularity continued, and today, “This I Believe” has become a national institution with its own Web site, newsletter, published books of past and new statements of beliefs, and curricula models for writing these statements for every level of study—to college and adult learning. For their first assignment in their Junior Year Writing course in Nutrition, students were asked to write on a critical belief they held about nutrition, in a maximum of 350-500 words. While the following essays look deceptively simple, they must follow a very strict formula, including a length requirement, and are very hard to write. The following essay is a fine example of this enduring American genre.

I believe that fasting occasionally is healthy for both the body and mind. I have experienced first-hand the various benefits of fasting through personal practices. In Islam, during the holy month of Ramadan, everyone is encouraged to fast every day, from sunrise to sunset. Year after year I have participated in this tradition, and have found this art to be beneficial to my overall health.

The concept of restricting one’s normal food and beverage intake is considered unhealthy by many, especially if it requires eliminating food altogether. Thus, I have often been faced with reactions of sympathy and hesitance by my peers. However, I believe that fasting occasionally is an effective treatment for psychological, physical, and emotional disorders. Fasting fosters a strong will, self-control, patience, tolerance, and the ability to withstand troublesome situations. All these aspects contribute to a healthier personality. By limiting food intake for a certain period of time, one is able to resist the urges of gluttony, and thus can have a stronger understanding between need and want. This cannot only help control emotional situations that might contribute to binge eating, but can also
eliminate physical disorders such as obesity, high blood pressure, and some diseases of the digestive system.

Through fasting, I have gained values such as controlling my desires, patience through hardships, and, most importantly, I have gained the utmost appreciation for food. Fasting has taught me so much that I choose to continue to fast occasionally regardless of religious obligations. Conversely, fasting should have its regulations as well. Skipping meals can lead to an obvious lack of nutrients, which in turn is bound to harm health and stamina. Therefore it is important to eat nutrient rich meals, especially complex carbohydrates, before the start of the fast so that one may have sustenance for every day functioning. When breaking a fast, it is important to consume foods from each food group and avoid fried and fatty foods that could have an opposite effect on the body. Through this technique, I have developed a general habit of eating foods with nutritional benefits and avoiding fatty substances during my everyday meals.

Finding the balance that works best for one’s self is the greatest way to properly experience the art of fasting. I understand the hesitance of others to accept fasting as a healthy diet because if done improperly, fasting without appropriate food-nutrient intake can have an adverse effect on one’s physical and mental health. Therefore, it is important not to rush into the process but to gradually build up one’s tolerance level. This way, an individual will be able to determine which foods are essential for his or her everyday diet and personal health. Through self-practice and determination, I have found my personal balance with fasting. This practice has taught me values important for my psychological, physical, and emotional health. When done occasionally, I believe that fasting can contribute to a healthy body and mind for any individual.
AGAINST LOVE: A POLEMIC
BY LAURA KIPNIS

Avital Benedek

WGS 391: Junior Year Writing

Students were assigned to write a review on a book that had strong feelings about, following the Lambda Literary Book Review Guide.

We are living in a time when love has become a utilitarian act. Love is work, and we are using it to secure ourselves economically in an organized and calculated fashion. We live in a “hypersexualized culture with Puritan underpinnings” (11). At least, this is what Laura Kipnis so adamantly declares in her book, Against Love: A Polemic. Though Kipnis addresses issues of love and marriage that are important to question, her book is highly exclusive and riddled with poorly integrated social theory; her work and her concept of love is excessively pretentious.

There is nothing contemplative or shy about Laura Kipnis’s writing. Kipnis dives into the nit and grit of relationships. But to narrow her audience, Kipnis makes sure to define exactly what she investigates in her book—adultery in the scope of coupledom, specifically marriage: “[A]ny coupled relationship based on the assumption of sexual fidelity will count as ‘married’” (12). She excuses all those in “Good Relationships” from reading the book; but, she makes it quite clear that the only way one is actually in a good relationship is if they do not have to work at keeping it good. From here, Kipnis launches into the base of her criticism: love should not have to be worked at.

The book begins with what feels like a dance scene from any movie about a love affair. Kipnis takes the reader through the all-too-familiar twists and turns of the stomach that nauseate us silly when provoked by new desirable prospects for intimacy. In her mini-narrative, we are forced to remember our emotions and our excitement—both of which have been stored away or forgotten, deep in the folds of our memory. We are “awakened from emotional deadness” (6).
Kipnis sets the tone right off the bat in this story-like prologue. The narrative has a rhetorical use: one that forces the reader to immediately confront all negative social stigmas cast onto adultery. The story evokes the very thought process the majority of society undergoes when trying to rationalize, understand, condone, or, most importantly, condemn adultery.

Kipnis uses the term used by historians, “companionate couple,” to enter into the perennial discourse of freedom. As she illuminates, in the world we live in today, the “companionate couple” is considered to be the beacon of freedom and individuality when compared to past societal systems. If anything, love alienates us the way Marx identifies work as alienating humans from one another. She positions adultery as a form of resistance against coupledom or monogamy—latent discontent that boils up to the surface and manifests itself in the form of cheating and even vicious attacks against partners. It is revolutionary.

Against Love is a polemic; but it is a polemic exclusive to those in a marriage (or a relationship that resembles one) that fails to provide any real insight into ways society or the individual can reorganize life. It belittles the pain and emotional damage of those cheated on and reduces the actions of adulterers to being, “well, it’s not your fault—it’s just how you were socialized.”

Though Kipnis’s argument is not as base as merely suggesting that adultery is a solution for the repressive “gulag” of domesticity, her argument does fall short in her ability to truly grapple with the reality of individuals’ emotions. The book is heavy with theoretical references to a multitude of white, dominant male social theorists like Karl Marx and Max Weber. Her book also embodies one of the most frustrating traits, in my opinion, a writer can have: wordiness to the point of obscuring the author’s point of view. The combination of these two traits renders the book rather obnoxious and pretentious.

While I appreciated the occasional insight into the complexities of universal emotions like jealousy and anxiety, it is pieces like For Lovers and Fighters by Dean Spade that offer a better avenue into grappling with the structure and systems of love. Spade not only acknowledges the societal aspects that produce the inclination to monogamy, but also the impossible goals of eliminating emotions from our lives. Against Love is more about
marriage than love, and fails to understand the underlying problems of individual reactions even more than love itself. It is clear that Kipnis approaches her work with a specific economic and structural system, but it does not provide a criticism that I believe can be productive towards changing the way we love and think.

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